Since its founding in 1978, Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) has led the agenda for glaucoma research and served as a catalyst in speeding the pace of discovery, translating laboratory findings into clinical solutions, and sharing knowledge. In addition to championing the next generation of glaucoma science, GRF is a trusted resource for reliable, unbiased, and comprehensive information for patients, families, and doctors, through informative print materials, accessible online resources, and inclusive events.

Over the next five years, four strategic imperatives will forward GRF’s mission through the acceleration of innovative research, promotion of patient-centered activities, increased awareness of glaucoma, and strengthened leadership of and engagement with the people that make GRF’s programs possible, our Board, staff, and volunteers.

Growing revenue to support the increase in all program areas will be a primary focus with the goal of reaching an annual contributed income of $10 million by fiscal year 2027.

This increased investment enables GRF to make incredible progress in its mission to cure glaucoma and restore vision through innovative research. And at the center of all these activities is the patient – to improve quality of life through research and education and provide hope for a future free from glaucoma.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) was founded in 1978 by three glaucoma specialists in collaboration with two grateful patients and their generous philanthropic support. The founders were inspired to create GRF as they wanted better ways to care for people with glaucoma – the leading cause of preventable blindness. Over the past 45 years, GRF has made remarkable achievements in driving innovative research and as a result, there are now many more effective therapies to lower eye pressure and preserve vision, as well as advanced tools to diagnose glaucoma and manage its progression. Through the previous strategic planning process, vision restoration was identified as an important goal for research and donor support, as well as new events and programs were introduced to enhance patient education.

The past few years have provided several opportunities to grow GRF’s reach nationally and globally with virtual events and online programming. Philanthropic support has advanced and inspired new areas of research including vision restoration and collaboration with other neurodegenerative diseases. The annual Glaucoma Patient Summit and additional educational efforts have deepened GRF’s patient-centered approach to support, inspire, and empower those affected by glaucoma.

These accomplishments and opportunities drive the focus for this Strategic Plan. Over the next five years, four strategic imperatives will forward GRF’s mission through:

1) the acceleration of innovative research,
2) promotion of patient-centered activities and increased awareness of glaucoma,
3) maximizing philanthropic support, and
4) greater leadership development and engagement with the people that make GRF’s programs possible, its dedicated board, staff, and volunteers.

To forward GRF’s mission and impact the lives of more patients, philanthropy must be a primary focus with the goal to grow annual contributed income to $10 million by June 2027. To realize this goal, we must add additional staff, engage, and develop the current team, continue to build strong and inclusive partnerships with providers, and have a committed Board of Directors to guide and evaluate these strategies.

The following Strategic Plan provides important measures to expand our focus, improve efficiency, and build stronger partnerships with others who are equally committed to improving the lives of people living with glaucoma. This planned strategic growth over the next five years with increased collaboration and outreach will greatly advance GRF’s mission to cure glaucoma and restore vision through innovative research.
MISSION STATEMENT

Cure glaucoma and restore vision through innovative research.

VISION STATEMENT

A future without glaucoma.

THEORY OF CHANGE

How GRF achieves its intended impact in the world

If GRF funds and advances innovative glaucoma research and educates patients, families, and providers about the disease, our communities will be well-informed with vision-saving information, and we will find a cure for glaucoma.
STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Following are the imperatives Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF) will prioritize over the next five years to advance its mission to cure glaucoma and restore vision:

ACCELERATE RESEARCH

Invest in innovative and promising research for improved therapies, vision restoration, and a cure.

EXPAND AWARENESS

Educate and communicate information about glaucoma to patients, their loved-ones, providers, and the public.

MAXIMIZE PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Increase philanthropic support and engagement to fulfill GRF’s ambitious research goals and advance educational programs.

BUILD AND STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP

Recruit, develop, retain, engage, and support a diverse, talented board of directors, staff, and volunteers.
Specific goals and strategies for each of the four strategic imperatives are listed on the following pages:

**ACCELERATE RESEARCH:** Invest in innovative and promising research towards a cure for glaucoma and improved therapies to preserve and restore vision and enhance the quality of life for those living with glaucoma.

**Goals**

1. Advance and expand collaborative research to speed the development of new therapies to preserve and restore vision and improve the quality of life for patients.

2. Invest in the most promising one-year pilot studies and encourage the next generation of vision scientists in glaucoma research.

3. Elevate and support early-stage development of new therapies and diagnostic tools, to speed the pathway to clinical use to help patients.

**Strategies**

a. Advance and support the work of the Steven and Michele Kirsch Catalyst for a Cure Vision Restoration Initiative toward the launch of a clinical trial for a neuroprotective therapy and develop a path for a clinical trial for a mechanism to restore vision.

b. Launch a new consortium focused on solving neurodegeneration that combines expertise across neurodegenerative diseases to uncover breakthrough ideas toward the development of new therapies for glaucoma and other neurodegenerative diseases.

c. Widely promote grant applications for Shaffer Grants for Innovative Research to attract quality high-risk/high reward projects and new investigators to the field of glaucoma; increase the number of funded studies annually to advance GRF’s mission and ensure there are projects to enhance quality of life for patients living with glaucoma.

d. Develop naming and various funding opportunities to further research programs and increase awareness of GRF in the medical and scientific communities.

e. Engage the Scientific Advisory Boards (SAB) for all research programs to seek areas of collaboration and enrichment of the CFC consortia and Shaffer Grants; ensure members of each SAB integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the grant selection process.
f. Through the Glaucoma 360 New Horizons Forum, provide an opportunity to highlight and encourage new advances in glaucoma therapy and diagnosis to address unmet needs and enhance quality of life for patients with glaucoma. This annual meeting will also provide a unique networking opportunity to enhance collaboration with all key participants in new drug and device development and promote GRF’s mission to a broader audience.

g. Investigate the feasibility of Venture Philanthropy to advance innovative technologies and novel therapies to benefit patients in the near term.

**Key Metrics & Activities**

Launch new CFC Initiative to Prevent and Cure Neurodegeneration by July 2022.

CFC Vision Restoration Initiative to begin neuroprotective clinical trial by 2025 and have a clear path and timetable towards launching an additional clinical trial to evaluate identified mechanisms for vision restoration by 2027.

Increase funding for Shaffer Research Grants each year with a goal to fund 15 pilot studies annually by calendar year 2027.

Track and share notable publications of GRF-funded researchers (past and current).

Grow attendance and further build strategic partnerships at Glaucoma 360 New Horizons Forum, increase media coverage, and track the most promising new developments from the US and around the world to benefit patients in the next five to ten years.

Create a Venture Philanthropy task force in FY 2023 to investigate the benefits, risks, and feasibility for GRF.
EXPAND AWARENESS: Focus on patients, expand access to information, and increase awareness among those at greater risk for glaucoma.

Goals

1. Empower glaucoma patients, their loved ones, providers, and the public with access to comprehensive, compassionate, accessible, unbiased, and accurate information about glaucoma to prevent vision loss and improve quality of life.

2. Increase awareness efforts to ensure early diagnosis and intervention particularly for communities at higher risk of glaucoma.

3. Position Glaucoma Research Foundation as the “go to” organization for funding of innovative research.

Strategies

a. Significantly grow and broaden GRF’s constituency base to highlight our programs, activities, and the importance of our mission. While the primary focus will be on national growth, GRF will also look at opportunities to expand international audiences.

b. Identify educational and unmet needs from both patients and doctors. Develop new and update existing print and online materials to fulfill unmet needs and assist doctors with educational efforts in their practices.

c. Increase public awareness of glaucoma risk factors. Explore existing community-based risk assessment activities and strategic partnerships with industry, media, FQHCs and other healthcare organizations, as well as non-profits.

d. Continue to grow the content and use of the GRF website and other online communications to inform patients about glaucoma care and create public awareness about the importance of vision health.

e. Develop materials and training opportunities for existing and future volunteers to share GRF’s mission. Request GRF Ambassadors and other volunteers to highlight GRF’s mission and programs during speaking engagements.

f. Continue to highlight the impact and importance of GRF research programs to its entire constituency as well as the public.
g. Continue to find ways to promote Shaffer Grants and other funding opportunities to the medical and scientific communities to increase awareness and ensure high-quality applications.

h. Provide opportunities to engage and inspire patients and caregivers to be their own healthcare advocates through educational programs including events and webinars.

i. Provide culturally appropriate materials for the populations most affected by glaucoma, including African American, Latino, and Asian American communities, and investigate partnerships to conduct targeted outreach to these populations.

j. Maintain an Education and Communications Committee consisting of Board and Staff members, plus various constituency representatives to ensure ongoing review and development of strategies and tactics to promote awareness.

k. Create a task force to design and recommend a process for the strategic expansion of the GRF Ambassador program and other ways to engage optometrists, comprehensive ophthalmologists, and other providers who care for patients with glaucoma.

**Key Metrics & Activities**

Strategically grow and expand the GRF Ambassador program to engage various glaucoma care providers to build a broad and strategic network of patient education advocates and further build awareness of GRF’s programs and activities. Engage these volunteers in our current activities and develop new opportunities for collaboration.

Use patient and researcher stories to educate the public about our programs and highlight the impact of our research funding and the importance of continued investment.

Increase the production and sharing of our digital content, including videos, social media, and virtual events such as webinars.

Meet or exceed non-profit benchmarks for our communication activities and ensure staff have educational opportunities to learn best practices to increase GRF’s reach and impact.

Increase constituent records and mailing lists (print and online) annually by 10%.
Enhance current program activities and develop more ways to: a) increase public awareness of vision health and, b) promote current treatment and management opportunities to patients with glaucoma.

Investigate and identify partnerships for collaboration on awareness and outreach activities, with a strong focus on expanding the diversity of people and communities we reach, particularly communities at higher risk of glaucoma.
MAXIMIZE PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT: Significantly increase fundraising activities and revenue to fulfill GRF’s ambitious research goals and expanded educational and awareness programs.

Goal       Increase annual contributed income to $10 million by 2027.

Strategies

a. Increase Leadership Gifts and members of the President’s Circle by focusing more staff and resources on our major gift program through prospect identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship activities. Develop ways to recognize milestone donors including those with a lifetime giving of $1 million or more. Through research and prospect review, grow pipeline of major gift prospects and develop personalized donor upgrade and stewardship plans for existing leadership donors. Engage Board members and other staff in face-to-face visits with donors and prospects.

b. Develop various naming and giving opportunities for President’s Circle level donors, and corporate supporters.

c. Grow membership in the Catalyst Circle ($1,000 - $9,999) and identify meaningful benefits and stewardship activities.

d. Expand revenue from the Supporting Gifts level (< $1,000) to further build a foundation of support and the pipeline for the Catalyst Circle. Utilize best practices and explore ways to maximize direct mail, online fundraising, monthly giving, peer-to-peer campaigns, and other programs to increase revenue by FY 2027.

e. Increase donor engagement including stewardship activities for all donor levels including a system to ensure new donor welcome packets, regular thank you calls, research updates and other impact reports.

f. Continue to grow revenue from events including Glaucoma 360 and the Glaucoma Patient Summit through ticket sales and sponsorships.

g. Continue to promote planned giving to the entire constituency base and develop outreach activities to estate planning professionals.

h. Build Development staff and provide ongoing professional development opportunities to nurture future growth and career pathways. Develop the necessary infrastructure over the next five years for the next comprehensive fundraising campaign.
i. Utilize donor stories across all communications and provide training for staff and volunteers on how to share the impact of GRF’s role and highlight how to provide meaningful support.

**Key Metrics & Activities**

Significantly increase the number of Leadership Gifts ($10,000+) to raise more than $8 million by FY 2027 (82% of annual budget).

Grow the number of multi-year pledges, to have a minimum of new 20 pledge commitments of $50,000 or more by FY 2027.

Grow Catalyst Circle membership ($1,000 - $9,999) to raise $1,000,000 annually (10% of budget).

Build Supporting Gifts (> $1,000) to raise $850,000 annually (8.5% of budget).

Increase membership in the Blanche Matthias Society to 150 living members.

Increase number of gifts received to be more than 10,000 annually (single gifts and pledges).

Continue to build online giving to meet or exceed benchmark growth; minimum growth of 15% annually.

Increase revenue from monthly donors by 15% annually.

Continue to increase event revenue by 10% annually.
BUILD AND STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP: Recruit, develop, retain, engage, and support a talented board of directors, staff, and dedicated volunteers and advocates.

Goals

1. GRF will have a diverse, active, committed, and supportive Board of Directors with a range of expertise, knowledge, and backgrounds to fulfill its role as a governing body including setting GRF’s direction, ensuring adequate resources and expenses, and providing oversight to enable GRF to make consistent progress toward its mission.

2. GRF will have a dedicated, collaborative, skilled and engaged team of Staff members to partner with the Board of Directors and carry out the strategies and tactics to fulfill GRF’s mission in the most effective ways possible.

3. GRF will have devoted volunteers and advocates to participate in events, programs, and other activities to share GRF’s mission and encourage engagement.

Strategies

a. Ensure appropriate level of staffing to support and enhance development, education, and communication activities to drive growth and accomplishment of strategic imperatives.

b. Focus on staff engagement including annual professional development opportunities, leadership and growth pathways, recognition, and an opportunity to provide regular feedback to ensure the team is involved, valued, and heard.

c. Implement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles in every area of recruitment and engagement of board members, volunteers, and staff.

d. Create succession plans for expected and unexpected succession of key leaders on the staff and board.

e. Develop the board through committee work and ongoing engagement with staff to support strategic expansion.

f. Provide the board with meaningful engagement opportunities and ensure they have the tools and educational opportunities to effectively communicate GRF’s story.
g. Provide ongoing ways for staff, board members, volunteers, and constituents to provide feedback on GRF programs and operations. Continue to use a formal process for the Board to evaluate their own performance. In addition to the annual staff review process, find, and implement other opportunities throughout the year to assess performance and progress toward goals.

**Key Metrics & Activities**

Add two new staff members to strengthen the Development team by October 2022. Positions will be focused on prospect identification, cultivation, stewardship and building the major gift pipeline.

When appropriate, add additional committees and Advisory Boards to expand engagement with specific constituents. Short term target to continue the *Education and Communications Committee* and create an Advisory Board for Industry representatives to deepen appropriate and meaningful alliances with our corporate partners.

Set benchmarks for percentage of board members and staff reporting they are meaningfully engaged in the work of GRF and create an annual plan to ensure a 90%+ satisfaction rating each year.

Review compensation surveys and employee engagement best practices to ensure GRF offers a competitive package for new and existing employees; work with Insperity for guidance on employee satisfaction.

Add two new committee members each year, who may also be potential future Board members.

Assign staff representatives to Board Committees and other committees and finalize plans to have an annual strategy meeting with both Board and Staff members.

Develop succession plans for CEO and other key staff leadership succession.
**Revenue**

Leadership gifts, realized bequests, and event income continue to be a significant source of GRF’s annual revenue. Additional donor engagement, prospect identification and cultivation are needed as urgent next steps, to build the major gifts pipeline of prospects and secure lead gifts. The adoption of best current practices for all giving vehicles and levels is needed to ensure growth and effectiveness of fundraising. Increased donor communications, the use of donor stories and additional promotion of planned giving will also continue to build GRF’s base of support.

**Expenses**

Expenses will increase for personnel and communications efforts. The research budget will see a significant increase with a second CFC, and the planned growth of Shaffer Grants. With recent inflation, production costs for events and print materials are projected to increase by 10% over the next 12 to 18 months.

**Staffing**

Additional staff and the realignment of current staff responsibilities are needed in order to accomplish GRF’s ambitious fundraising and outreach goals. The growth in staffing will be in stages, with the priority to add to the development staff with the focus on increasing donor engagement and prospect identification, as well as communications and engagement with GRF Ambassadors. As the donor and prospect base grows, an additional development staff person will be needed to focus on leadership gifts and planned gifts and continue to build the prospect pipeline. As research, education, and awareness programs are expanded, additional event and program staff will also be needed as the staff are fully utilized delivering current programs.