


# more yoga, better world

2024-2030 Strategic Plan





**Living the life that  
cries to be lived from  
the depth of our being  
frees up our energy  
and vitality. We  
benefit and everyone  
around us benefits.”<sup>i</sup>**

**–Deborah Adele**  
*The Yamas & Niyamas:  
Exploring Yoga’s Ethical Practice*



# Envisioning and crafting a bolder, more compassionate, equitable, and inclusive world, **GROUNDED IN YOGA.**



This is the first strategic plan Yoga Alliance has developed in the period following recent, generational changes in so many wide-ranging facets of our lives – how we think about and approach human interactions and work, our collective understanding of systemic inequities and their deep-and wide-ranging impacts, the concepts of public health and wellness, and our communities themselves. As such, this effort called for a thoughtful, creative, and broadly community-centered approach. With support from the Board Chair, the Strategic Planning Committee, Barbara Bitondo, an expert in strategic planning and community listening in global organizations, Yoga Alliance opted for an Appreciative Inquiry-based approach aimed at gathering a diverse set of stories and perspectives.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a framework used to engage groups in self-determined change. It was developed in 1987 by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva at Case Western Reserve University's Department of Organizational Behavior of the Weatherhead School of Management. AI focuses on what's working in a system and leads groups to co-design their future. Inquiries are comprised of a "4-D" Process (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) with five key principles: **positivity** (affirmative questions enact positive change), **constructionist** (words create worlds), **poetic** (life is expressed through story), **simultaneity** (inquiry promotes change), and **anticipatory** (imagination drives action).

Yoga Alliance's inquiry included a deep review of feedback from members and the larger community over the last several years; a review of the prior strategic plan; a global survey of the yoga community, broadly defined, and; focus groups to drill down into questions surfaced by these inputs. It culminated in an online Summit titled **Unleashing Our Global Potential Yoga Alliance toward 2030**, which brought together members of the Yoga Alliance Boards of Directors, staff from across the organization, members, and external stakeholders to bring the work of the inquiry into final focus.



## We Bow In Gratitude

We express our utmost gratitude and appreciation to those who generously shared their valuable time and brilliant insights, which were instrumental in shaping our strategic plan. Thank you for your important contributions.

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# Our Strategic Framework

Throughout all the conversations and feedback this community shared with us in the development of this plan, one organizing theme for Yoga Alliance’s future emerged loud and clear – amplifying the power of yoga and improving its accessibility for anyone – wherever they are, in whatever circumstances.

We are steadfast in this purpose. To breathe life into it, we will focus our efforts on three foundational commitments, each of which is anchored by one or more key groups of stakeholders whose buy-in and engagement are essential and/or a key set of levers on which we will push to generate the intended impact\*.

- **Uplift the Transformative Power of Yoga**
- **Surface and Reduce Barriers to the Practice**
- **Build, Engage, and Support this Community**

*\* These stakeholder groups and/or levers are identified within each section that follows.*





Just as the elements of Indra's Net are mirrors of itself, each individual that practices yoga becomes part of the greater whole working towards a shared vision of humanity at its best – knowing that yoga is not simply a personal choice but a collective action that fertilizes the inherent interconnectedness and unity of all beings.



# Uplift the Transformative Power of Yoga



**We advocate for yoga, in its wholeness, and for human beings in theirs.**

**We believe that yoga offers an invitation to wellness and liberation through self-knowledge of which all human beings are worthy, and that our shared worthiness calls on each of us to act on each other's behalf. Therefore, we believe that, through yoga's self-reflection and self-work, we can transform ourselves and, together, transform the world.**

## Key Stakeholders and Levers of Change:

**Yoga, itself** – Yoga Alliance supports yoga teachers, schools, and the larger yoga community; to do this work in integrity, we must, simultaneously, stay focused on *the needs of yoga itself*, as well as those of the individuals within the community. This is a concern of both practical prioritization and ethical and intellectual integrity.

- As a steward of member resources, we will prioritize doing work that broadly serves the community and/or which we are uniquely positioned to offer, rather than duplicating existing efforts or getting in others' way. Practically, as the largest community representing yoga professionals, Yoga Alliance is among few who are positioned to advocate at the systemic level on behalf of yoga traditions and their practices and benefits, so we must hold this responsibility alongside that which we hold on behalf of members.
- The yoga community, like all communities, is comprised of humans with understandable human needs and desires. These may run counter to what is best for the community and for yoga overall, though they may be conveyed by community members with considerable influence or standing. Our team is vulnerable to the same human tendencies, of course, and our organization has made poor choices in the past in the name of some of these. In order for Yoga Alliance to remain in integrity, we will center yoga's needs overall, alongside those of our human community members, supporters, detractors, funders, etc., and transparently hold any tension that may result.

**"Grass-tops" outreach and engagement** – This pillar asks us to push on levers of systemic change – such as health and wellness organizations of all kinds, media outlets, legislative and regulatory bodies, and large employers and other institutions – in order to elevate the general, public understanding of "what is yoga" and whom it is for, and to broaden the understanding of a complete yoga practice as a tool for improving human wellness and advancement.





## How Will We Get There?

We are committed to “advocating” for yoga in its wholeness, and working to dispel common misconceptions such as yoga = asana; yoga is (solely) an exercise practice; yoga is only for people of certain body types, races, ethnicities, religions, genders, etc. We are similarly committed to advocating for greater access to the kind of “whole-person wellness” that yoga enables, including broadening the public understanding of what it means for someone to be “well,” who is deserving of wellness, and the role a yoga practice can play in one’s wellness. We will do this through:

**Public Education and Advocacy:** We will advance a more comprehensive understanding of “what yoga is” and its impact on whole-person wellness, and work toward greater public access to yoga, through outreach and education to decision makers – directly and through institutional partnerships. We will broaden public perception of “who yoga is for” through direct education and engagement.

**Thought Leadership/Amplification:** To advocate on yoga’s behalf with those outside of yoga, we will empower ourselves and others with the knowledge to dispel preexisting misconceptions, misunderstandings, and suspicions. To advocate on yoga’s behalf within the yoga community, we will continuously seek to advance the skills and tools used by teachers for sharing the traditions, while holding true to them.

**Organizational Excellence:** We will continue to center diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our organizational culture and cultivate a model where leaders emerge from various levels of the organization. We will ensure that we are sound stewards of community donations and membership revenue through integrated and innovative procedures, policies, and technology. We will seek to align with vendors, partners, and team members who are committed to our vision and who also strive to broaden the reach of yoga for the benefit of all.



# Surface and Reduce Barriers to the Practice

On behalf of this community, we proactively seek to understand what keeps people from seeing themselves within it. With compassion for all, we will share what we learn and support the community in adapting and growing to meet the need.

**We believe that the opportunity and necessity for self-reflection and growth exist for communities and institutions, as well as individuals. We believe that change is growth, even when it's uncomfortable.**



## Key Stakeholders and Levers of Change:

**Individual practitioners (current and future)** – There can be no sharing of the traditions without students to teach. This pillar asks us to believe that every person is worthy of their own yoga practice and, as such, to listen to and advocate for those students' needs and concerns.

**Yoga Teachers and Schools** – The sharing and transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, from person to person, is itself an integral component of the yoga traditions, and Yoga Alliance recognizes teachers' and schools' expertise in this realm. We believe that these teachers also deserve access to current best practices, tools, and techniques for educators of all disciplines. This pillar asks us to support the wisdom-holders – teachers, and teachers of teachers – with information, tools, and resources designed to empower them to share their expertise and be the best educators they can be in the present context and moment in time.



## How Will We Get There?

**Accessible Points of Entry:** Yoga Alliance will seek to understand what causes people to believe that “yoga isn’t for me” and create resources to address these concerns with the aim – and hope – of genuinely inviting people in.

**Center Safety, Equity, and Accessibility in...:** Helping students find their mats is not enough; in order for students to enjoy the benefits of the practice, they must continue to return to them. Yoga Alliance will support our community’s professionals in creating yoga spaces that both welcome and continuously invite students to remain and return.

- ...Professional Development: Yoga Alliance will source best practice knowledge, tools, and techniques from across education-related disciplines, and share these with our members throughout all aspects of our credentialing platform, including within the standards and accountability framework, continuing education offerings, and community engagement opportunities. We will prioritize those that address the “point of entry/exit concerns” shared with us, such as equity, safety/abuses of power, and accessibility.
- ...and Professional Recognition: In parallel, we will educate the general yoga-interested public and those who hire yoga teachers about this elevated foundation from which Yoga Alliance credentialed teachers work, and we will create new and improve existing tools to help potential students and hiring managers locate Yoga Alliance credentialed teachers.

**Impact Investment:** We will invest in developing knowledge, tools, and infrastructure that address system-level issues which prevent those who are called to teach yoga from being able to pursue that calling, prioritizing supporting others’ work where possible.



**When we are attentive to our actions we are not prisoners to our habits; we do not need to do something today simply because we did it yesterday.”<sup>ii</sup>**

**—T.K.V Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga***

# Build, Engage, and Support Community



**We invest in community building as a vehicle for collective knowledge-sharing, mentoring, accountability, and belonging, and for creating impact greater than any of us can do alone.**

**We believe that community is essential to the human experience. It drives a life of purpose and meaning. We believe that cultivating more and deeper connection, collaboration, understanding, representation, and resources within and among the broad yoga community is the best way to uplift and support those communities and that this will create more access to and belonging within the practice of yoga.**

## Key Stakeholders and Levers of Change:

**Yoga Community** — Communities are comprised of individuals with shared interests, norms, responsibilities, and/or ties; they are not comprised of a power center and people beholden to it. Likewise, for the Yoga Alliance community to flourish, Yoga Alliance must nurture and be part of multi-dimensional relationships with and among its members.

## How Will We Get There?

**Deep Relationships with and Among Members:** Yoga Alliance will focus on delivering individual member value greater than the monetary cost, taking actions and (only) serving in roles which individuals alone could not, and investing in in-person and virtual structures that enable members to engage with, learn from, and support each other.

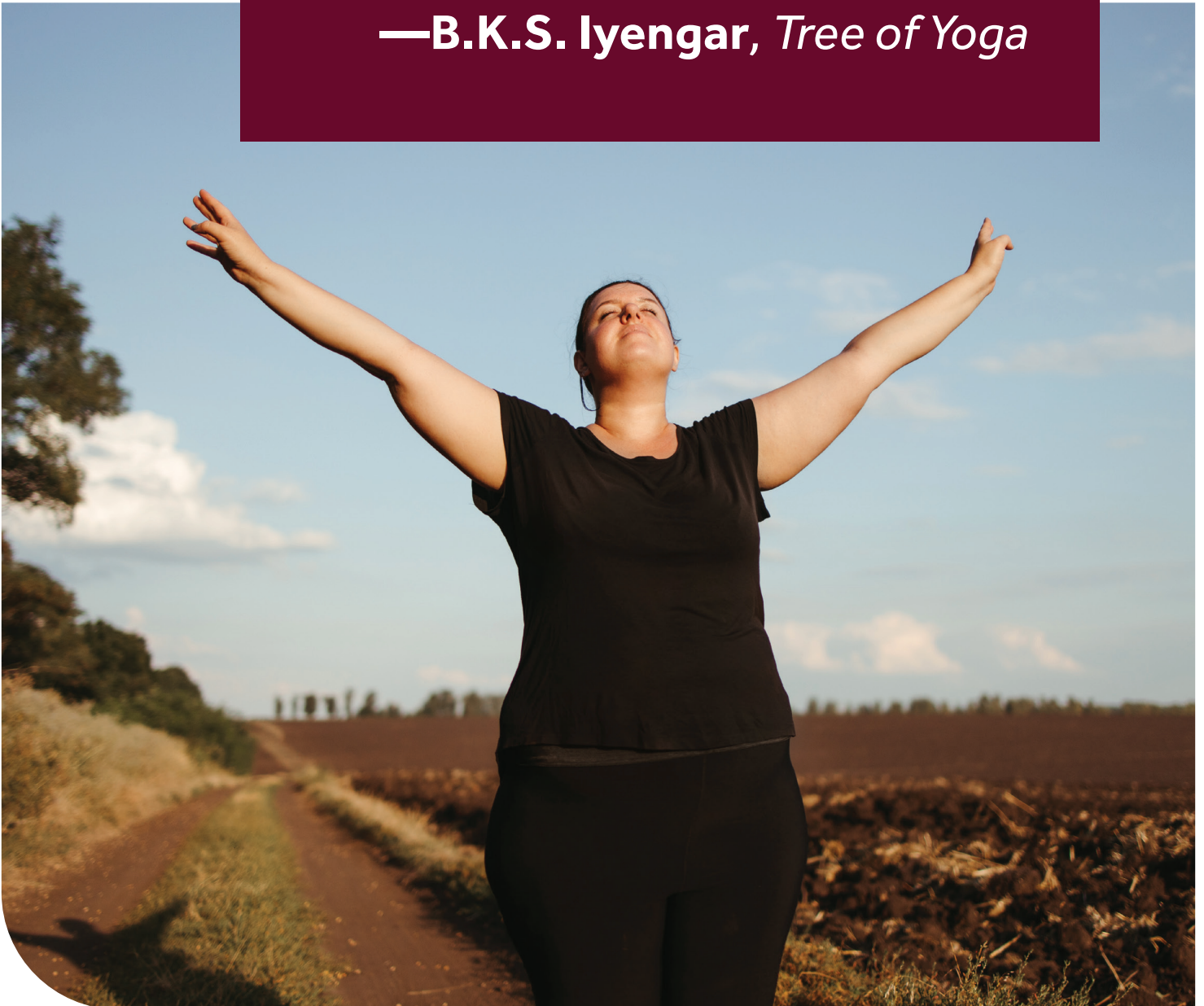
**Center Yoga Teachers/Wisdom Holders:** Yoga Alliance's role within the yoga community is to serve as an unyielding advocate for yoga and to lift up and support those who share its teachings, not to step into the shoes of either.

**Expanded Membership Options:** Yoga Alliance will expand its definitions of membership and affiliation and seek opportunities to welcome and serve people in all stages of their yoga practice.



**Yoga is firstly for individual growth, but through individual growth, society and community develop.”<sup>iii</sup>**

**—B.K.S. Iyengar, *Tree of Yoga***



# What's Next?

This document was written at a high level and is designed as a framework that will guide the six years' of operational choices to come underneath it. This was deliberate, as it would be a nearly-impossible task to write a single operational-level, implementation plan for a six-year stretch of time (or, at the very least, likely a wasted effort – as the last three years have well reminded us all). As such, this strategic plan will be supported each year by an annual internal implementation plan that will articulate the organizations' intentions and goals for the year ahead, informed appropriately by the context of the years that precede them.





# Acknowledgments

In 2024 Yoga Alliance celebrates its 25th anniversary. At this important milestone, we'd like to recognize the countless contributors who have helped shape every aspect of our work. Without them, reaching this milestone would have not been possible. In lieu of naming each one of them, join us as we pause to honor their passion and support for yoga and the yoga community.

We also express our utmost gratitude to Yoga Alliance staff and Yoga Alliance Boards of Directors for their daily contributions to advance our mission. To learn more about the individuals behind this work visit [yogaalliance.org/About\\_Us/Meet\\_the\\_Team](https://yogaalliance.org/About_Us/Meet_the_Team)

# Citations



- i. Adele, D. (2009). *The Yamas & Niyamas: Exploring Yoga’s Ethical Practice* (p. 46). On-Word Bound Books, LLC.
- ii. Desikachar, T. (1995). *The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice* (p. 6). Inner Traditions International.
- iii. Iyengar, B. (1988). *The Tree of Yoga : Yoga Vrksa* (p. 10). Shambhala.







Yoga is there—wherever we are, off of the mats and within our hearts, minds, and lives. It reminds us that when we can transform ourselves,  
**together we can transform the world.**



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