INDEPENDENT BOOK PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION GOALS & STRATEGIES: Fiscal Years 2023–2025

Leading and serving the independent publishing community through advocacy, education, and tools for success.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 4

IBPA Mission, Vision, Core Values, Code of Ethics, & DEI Commitment ...................... 6

Mission – *A summary of why IBPA exists* ........................................................................ 6

Vision – *A summary of what’s possible because IBPA exists* ........................................ 6

Core Values – *The implicitly understood, deeply held convictions that guide the spirit and nature of the IBPA membership, board of directors, staff, and volunteers.* ........... 6

Code of Ethics – *A commitment to professionalism, confirming IBPA’s collective belief that the production of content of lasting financial and/or cultural value is just as important as securing open markets for this content.* ................................................................. 7

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Commitment – *An acknowledgement that the legacy of the book publishing industry is one of privilege, bias, and exclusion, which has significantly affected the books that are traditionally published.* ........................................ 7

IBPA Strategic Goals: Fiscal Years 2023-2025 .................................................................. 8

Goal #1 – Recruit, serve, and retain a diverse and inclusive membership. ...................... 8

Goal #2 – Eliminate bias and enhance diversity and inclusion. ....................................... 8

Goal #3 – Advocate for independent publishing ............................................................. 8

Goal #4 – Investigate and shape the future of independent publishing ......................... 8

IBPA Strategic Initiatives: Fiscal Years 2023-2025 .......................................................... 9

Goal #1 – Recruit, serve, and retain a diverse and inclusive membership. ...................... 9

1.1. Recruit new members .................................................................................................. 9

1.1.1 Invite new members from a diverse range of communities and publisher business models, seeking to add a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to enrich the IBPA community. ................................................................. 9

1.1.2. Leverage the existing IBPA community to recruit and retain members. ............... 9

1.1.3. Nurture relationships with other publishing organizations whose members may benefit from a connection to or membership in IBPA ................................................................. 9

1.2. Serve current members .............................................................................................. 9

1.2.1 Provide benefits and services to promote members’ visibility within the book industry and support members’ profitability and business success. ......................................................... 9

1.2.2. Provide educational opportunities to promote members’ professional growth .......... 9

1.2.3. Provide networking opportunities to promote members’ community building and peer-to-peer education ................................................................. 9

1.3. Retain members ......................................................................................................... 9

1.3.1. Gather and use member feedback, including continual feedback opportunities ....... 9
1.3.2. Invite members to actively engage and participate in the association at all levels, offering multiple intentional membership opportunities..........................................................9

1.3.3. Maintain and protect a welcoming, inclusive, professional environment that values a diverse membership........................................................................................................9

Goal #2 – Eliminate bias and enhance diversity and inclusion.........................................................10

2.1. Enable positive, actionable, systemic change by fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within IBPA leadership, policies, practices, publications, programs, and membership. ..................................................................................................................10

2.1.1 Recruit individuals from diverse populations for leadership positions within IBPA staff, board, committees, and education programs. .................................................................10

2.1.2 Ensure IBPA’s policies and practices welcome, include, value, and support members of underrepresented groups. ........................................................................................................10

2.1.3 Liaise with diverse programs and populations to facilitate a connection to IBPA and the publishing industry at-large. ........................................................................................................10

2.1.4. Engage and support underrepresented groups in IBPA’s community, education, advocacy, and tools for success. ........................................................................................................10

2.2. Develop resources to increase the cultural competency of IBPA’s staff, key volunteers, and members........................................................................................................................10

2.2.1 Provide annual training for IBPA staff and key volunteers in best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion................................................................................................10

2.2.2. Facilitate conversation within IBPA’s membership that leads toward greater understanding and more diverse, equitable, and inclusive outcomes........................................10

2.2.3. Integrate DEI content, as well as a diversity of content leaders, into IBPA meetings, events, programs, publications, resources, and offerings......................................................10

2.2.4. Maintain a robust IBPA DEI Resource Center, highlighting IBPA’s organizational culture, plans, and publications in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and providing resources for independent book publishers interested in advancing their own DEI competency. .............................................................................................................10

2.3. Identify and respond to opportunities for and threats against diversity, equity, and inclusion within IBPA as an association, as well as the book publishing industry at large...10

Goal #3 – Advocate for independent publishing..................................................................................11

3.1. Engage as a respected thought leader in independent publishing..............................................11

3.2. Proactively identify issues of concern to independent publishers and establish meaningful campaigns to address them........................................................................................................11

3.2.1. Quickly communicate—with members and the publishing community at-large, and governmental entities—the association’s concerns, the potential impact on independent publishers, and the steps taken to address them. In most cases this communication should
be published in the form of official position statements, but other board approved means of communication are okay, too. .................................................................11

3.3. Build and strengthen relationships with allies that professionally support independent publishing, including associations, alliances, advocacy groups, book review outlets, awards programs, and independent booksellers. .................................................................11

3.4. Proactively research, establish, adapt, communicate, and promote professional standards for independent publishing and make them accessible to the independent publishing community.................................................................11

Goal #4 – Shape the future of independent publishing through data-driven programs and initiatives. .................................................................................................................11

4.1. Identify opportunities for members to become financially viable long-term. ..........11

4.2. Provide member benefits and education to support members’ business operations, such as strategic planning, financial management, legal considerations, inventory management, intellectual property and rights management, business ethics, and operational best practices of publishing. .................................................................11

4.3. Research and influence alternative solutions for sourcing, manufacturing, and distributing books that address evolving supply chain, market access, fulfillment, and environmental concerns................................................................................11

4.3.1. Identify threats to sustainable distribution options and create meaningful campaigns to address them. .................................................................................................................12

4.3.2. Provide member benefits and education to help members practice sustainable green publishing practices. ........................................................................................................12

4.4. Work closely with independent booksellers, independent distributors, and publishing industry partners to grow market access for independent publishers and align solutions to benefit the greater independent publishing ecosystem.................................................................12

Appendix A: Critical Issues.........................................................................................13

Impact of Global Crises and Industry Challenges .....................................................13

CEO Transition.......................................................................................................14

Appendix B: Good Distribution Practices................................................................15

Portland State University Research ......................................................................15
Introduction

Securing a world where every independent publisher has the access, knowledge, and tools needed to professionally engage in all aspects of an inclusive publishing industry.

Independent Book Publishers Association Goals & Strategies: Fiscal Years 2023-2025

The Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) Board of Directors met with association staff in January 2022 to refine goals and strategies in support of IBPA’s mission to lead and serve the independent publishing community through advocacy, education, and tools for success. As part of the process, the group reviewed progress achieved through IBPA programs, advocacy work, and priority initiatives of the board and member committees, including the IBPA Advocacy Committee, IBPA Editorial Advisory Committee, IBPA Member Benefits Committee, and IBPA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

Navigating the independent book publishing industry’s many ongoing challenges calls for sustained strength and creative solutions. Our community’s collective responses amid significant global crises gives us many reasons to celebrate the resilience of independent publishers.

During these challenging times, IBPA has expanded its membership and programs, and actively participated in strategic allyship with like-minded organizations, establishing a greater collective voice for change.

Major accomplishments included transitioning the IBPA DEI Task Force of the board to an official member committee, reaffirming IBPA’s commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within its leadership, policies, practices, publications, programs, and membership. At the same time, we improved the processes of all IBPA committees, enabling proactive identification of issues impacting our members and meaningful campaigns to address them.

We established many new programs that provide greater benefit and market access for IBPA members. And through a special partnership with Portland State University and PubWest, IBPA
leaders provided guidance for research into good distribution practices, generating potential avenues of sustainability beyond traditional publishing’s legacy systems.

As a strong community of independent publishers, IBPA has the passion and flexibility to build on the positive momentum that has been strengthened by our members’ resiliency.

IBPA is honored to deliver programs and services that help members professionally compete in the business of book publishing. IBPA’s commitment to professionalism in all aspects of its work confirms the association’s belief that the production of content of lasting financial and/or cultural value is as important as securing open markets for this content. Working collaboratively, IBPA and its members are safeguarding a vibrant future for independent publishing.

Representing the voices of more than 4,100 members, IBPA will continue to nurture key relationships with other organizations to leverage our collective strengths for the good of independent publishing. Putting inclusivity at the forefront of all we do will ensure independent traditional, hybrid, and author publishers from all communities have equal opportunity to participate in IBPA and the business of publishing at all levels, so that everyone can find themselves in the content they read.

IBPA has strong leaders in place and a tenacious community of passionate members to achieve these goals. We look forward to writing this next chapter together.

Angela Bole
*Chief Executive Officer, IBPA*

Karen Pavlicin
*Chairperson, IBPA*
*Publisher, Elva Resa Publishing*

**ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF THE IBPA BOARD**

Maria Jesus Aguilo
*VP of Direct & Partner Sales, Berrett-Koehler*

Paige Allen
*Director, IngramSpark*

Dr. Kurt Brackob
*Editorial Director, Histria Books*

Alesha Brown
*Founder & CEO, Fruition Publishing*

Renita Bryant
*Founder & CEO, Mynd Matters Publishing*

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Annette Hobbs Magier
*Senior Dir Marketing & PR, The Collective Book Studio*

John Maher
*News & Digital Editor, Publishers Weekly*

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*Director of Sales & Marketing, Familius Publishing*

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*Senior Editor, American Academy of Pediatrics*

Victoria Sutherland
*Treasurer, IBPA*
*Publisher, Foreword Reviews*
IBPA Mission, Vision, Core Values, Code of Ethics, & DEI Commitment

Mission – A summary of why IBPA exists

IBPA’s mission is to lead and serve the independent publishing community through advocacy, education, and tools for success.

Vision – A summary of what’s possible because IBPA exists

IBPA’s vision is a world where every independent publisher has the access, knowledge, and tools needed to professionally engage in all aspects of an inclusive publishing industry.

Core Values – The implicitly understood, deeply held convictions that guide the spirit and nature of the IBPA membership, board of directors, staff, and volunteers.

IBPA’s core values are:

- **Service**, which expresses IBPA’s commitment to openness and accessibility. IBPA’s desire to be authentically helpful without further agenda reflects an understanding that the essence of leadership is service.
- **Leadership**, which is expressed through IBPA’s position as the largest professional publishing association in the United States, as well as in its commitment to providing expert programs and perspectives to aid independent, hybrid, and author publishers in the business of publishing.
- **Independence**, which reflects a deep commitment to independent points of view and the belief that enabling access to these points of view is essential to creativity and innovation.
- **Inclusivity**, which ensures that people from all communities have equal opportunity to participate in IBPA and the business of publishing at all levels, so that everyone can find themselves in the content they read.
- **Data First**, which emphasizes IBPA’s adherence to making responsive, evidence-based decisions using trusted and easy to understand facts and figures, thus relying on insight and experimentation rather than intuition alone.
Code of Ethics – A commitment to professionalism, confirming IBPA's collective belief that the production of content of lasting financial and/or cultural value is just as important as securing open markets for this content.

As part of the independent publishing community, IBPA members pledge to the following code of ethics:

- To uphold the highest standards of our industry, to create works of lasting financial and/or cultural value, and to pursue editorial, design, and production excellence.
- To respect the rights of authors and other creators and stakeholders, to observe all copyright laws and conventions, and to never knowingly publish plagiarized work.
- To reward authors and contributors for their work, to be honest in our financial dealings, to write contracts in understandable language, to resolve all disputes promptly and fairly, and to foster equal opportunity in our workplaces.
- To not mislead readers or buyers with false promises, inflated sales data, or manipulated reviews.
- To not publish works of hate speech or works that encourage discrimination, oppression, or violence.
- To recycle, reuse, and follow green practices whenever possible.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Commitment – An acknowledgement that the legacy of the book publishing industry is one of privilege, bias, and exclusion, which has significantly affected the books that are traditionally published.

- To realize its vision of a world where every independent publisher has the access, knowledge, and tools needed to professionally engage in all aspects of an inclusive publishing industry, IBPA commits to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within its leadership, policies, practices, publications, programs, and membership.
IBPA Strategic Goals: Fiscal Years 2023-2025

IBPA achieves its mission and vision and adheres to its core values through a commitment to a set of defined Goals (broadly defined desired outcomes) that guide the association in building upon its successful 40-year history:

Goal #1 – Recruit, serve, and retain a diverse and inclusive membership.

Goal Statement: IBPA membership is valuable and beneficial to a broad range of organizations and individuals and is strengthened through outreach to those who are underrepresented within the association and whose programs reflect diverse points of view.

Goal #2 – Eliminate bias and enhance diversity and inclusion.

Goal Statement: IBPA invites and promotes equitable participation by all persons in the association and the profession of independent publishing.

Goal #3 – Advocate for independent publishing.

Goal Statement: IBPA identifies and speaks with a unified voice on issues of concern to independent publishers as a means of supporting and strengthening the vital profession of independent publishing.

Goal #4 – Investigate and shape the future of independent publishing.

Goal Statement: IBPA identifies and paves the way for financially viable solutions for its members as they navigate an evolving independent publishing landscape.
IBPA Strategic Initiatives: Fiscal Years 2023-2025

Goal #1 – Recruit, serve, and retain a diverse and inclusive membership.

Goal Statement: IBPA membership is valuable and beneficial to a broad range of organizations and individuals and is strengthened through outreach to those who are underrepresented within the association and whose programs reflect diverse points of view.

Strategic Initiatives:

1.1. Recruit new members.

   1.1.1 Invite new members from a diverse range of communities and publisher business models, seeking to add a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to enrich the IBPA community.

   1.1.2. Leverage the existing IBPA community to recruit and retain members.

   1.1.3. Nurture relationships with other publishing organizations whose members may benefit from a connection to or membership in IBPA.

1.2. Serve current members.

   1.2.1 Provide benefits and services to promote members’ visibility within the book industry and support members’ profitability and business success.

   1.2.2. Provide educational opportunities to promote members’ professional growth.

   1.2.3. Provide networking opportunities to promote members’ community building and peer-to-peer education.

1.3. Retain members.

   1.3.1. Gather and use member feedback, including continual feedback opportunities.

   1.3.2. Invite members to actively engage and participate in the association at all levels, offering multiple intentional membership opportunities.

   1.3.3. Maintain and protect a welcoming, inclusive, professional environment that values a diverse membership.
Goal #2 – Eliminate bias and enhance diversity and inclusion.

Goal Statement: IBPA invites and promotes equitable participation by all persons in the association and the profession of independent publishing.

Strategic Initiatives:

2.1. Enable positive, actionable, systemic change by fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within IBPA leadership, policies, practices, publications, programs, and membership.

   2.1.1 Recruit individuals from diverse populations for leadership positions within IBPA staff, board, committees, and education programs.

   2.1.2 Ensure IBPA’s policies and practices welcome, include, value, and support members of underrepresented groups.

   2.1.3 Liaise with diverse programs and populations to facilitate a connection to IBPA and the publishing industry at-large.

   2.1.4. Engage and support underrepresented groups in IBPA’s community, education, advocacy, and tools for success.

2.2. Develop resources to increase the cultural competency of IBPA’s staff, key volunteers, and members.

   2.2.1 Provide annual training for IBPA staff and key volunteers in best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

   2.2.2. Facilitate conversation within IBPA’s membership that leads toward greater understanding and more diverse, equitable, and inclusive outcomes.

   2.2.3. Integrate DEI content, as well as a diversity of content leaders, into IBPA meetings, events, programs, publications, resources, and offerings.

   2.2.4. Maintain a robust IBPA DEI Resource Center, highlighting IBPA’s organizational culture, plans, and publications in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and providing resources for independent book publishers interested in advancing their own DEI competency.

2.3. Identify and respond to opportunities for and threats against diversity, equity, and inclusion within IBPA as an association, as well as the book publishing industry at large.
Goal #3 – Advocate for independent publishing.

Goal Statement: IBPA identifies and speaks with a unified voice on issues of concern to independent publishers as a means of supporting and strengthening the vital profession of independent publishing.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

3.1. Engage as a respected thought leader in independent publishing.

3.2. Proactively identify issues of concern to independent publishers and establish meaningful campaigns to address them.

   3.2.1. Quickly communicate—with members and the publishing community at-large, and governmental entities—the association’s concerns, the potential impact on independent publishers, and the steps taken to address them. In most cases this communication should be published in the form of official position statements, but other board approved means of communication are okay, too.

3.3. Build and strengthen relationships with allies that professionally support independent publishing, including associations, alliances, advocacy groups, book review outlets, awards programs, and independent booksellers.

3.4. Proactively research, establish, adapt, communicate, and promote professional standards for independent publishing and make them accessible to the independent publishing community.

Goal #4 – Shape the future of independent publishing through data-driven programs and initiatives.

Goal Statement: IBPA identifies and paves the way for financially viable solutions for its members as they navigate an evolving independent publishing landscape.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

4.1. Identify opportunities for members to become financially viable long-term.

4.2. Provide member benefits and education to support members’ business operations, such as strategic planning, financial management, legal considerations, inventory management, intellectual property and rights management, business ethics, and operational best practices of publishing.

4.3. Research and influence alternative solutions for sourcing, manufacturing, and distributing...
books that address evolving supply chain, market access, fulfillment, and environmental concerns.

4.3.1. Identify threats to sustainable distribution options and create meaningful campaigns to address them.

4.3.2. Provide member benefits and education to help members practice sustainable green publishing practices.

4.4. Work closely with independent booksellers, independent distributors, and publishing industry partners to grow market access for independent publishers and align solutions to benefit the greater independent publishing ecosystem.
Appendix A: Critical Issues

The implementation of this strategic plan coincides with critical issues that may significantly impact IBPA, its members, and the publishing industry. The IBPA Board of Directors recognizes these challenging circumstances and reaffirms its focus on the strategic initiatives outlined in this plan, to be periodically adjusted as appropriate amid an evolving publishing landscape.

Impact of Global Crises and Industry Challenges

Global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, climate change, war in Ukraine, and economic recession, continue to significantly impact publishers' business operations, especially as these crises exacerbate the effects of long-emerging publishing industry challenges, including closed and repurposed paper mills; publisher, printer, and distributor consolidations; and changes in consumer purchasing habits and content consumption.

Paper shortages combined with manufacturing labor shortages, fewer printers, and an influx of domestic print jobs due to overseas container price increases and delays, continue to constrain US printer capacity, leaving publishers competing for press allotments, adjusting for press delays and flex publication dates, and absorbing price inflation and higher costs of alternative print options. Rising costs of paper, packaging, and freight further the economic impact.

While individuals and businesses have generally adapted to virtual and hybrid work environments, many publishers are experiencing staffing challenges, including burnout, amplified by the impact of increased troubleshooting of industry challenges, mental health effects of the pandemic, economic strains, and at-home family care needs. Supporting a hybrid office model requires shifts in team responsibilities and processes, creative team-building efforts, as well as adapted training, communications, and technical support. Remote and hybrid workspaces bring the opportunity to hire talent from anywhere, but also add the burden of accounting for multiple state employment and insurance regulations.

Though in-person events, such as trade shows, conferences, author events, and educational programs, have largely resumed, COVID-19 variant surges continue to factor into event planning, risk mitigation, unpredictable attendance, travel disruptions, and potential post-event staff absences for quarantine and recovery.

Increased severe weather disasters, including floods, fires, and severe storms, have caused bookstore and publisher office evacuations, disruptions in shipping and travel to certain locations, and event cancellations.

In response to the complex interconnected effects of these collective challenges on business operations, the association, independent publishers, and publishing partners must continually adapt the way they create and deliver products and services.
CEO Transition

In June 2022, IBPA CEO Angela Bole announced her resignation effective November 30, 2022. The IBPA Board of Directors appointed a CEO Succession Task Force to manage the search, selection, and onboarding of a new CEO who is aligned with IBPA’s mission, vision, core values, and code of ethics; is prepared to advocate for a diverse community of independent publishers; and will lead the implementation of IBPA’s strategic plan, building upon the strong foundation established under Ms. Bole’s nine years of leadership.

Ms. Bole is departing at a time when the association is financially and procedurally stable, with an excellent mission-driven staff and growing membership. While the IBPA Board of Directors and IBPA Staff are committed to business continuity, we recognize such a significant transition has the potential to impact the association, staff, and members in unforeseen ways, and therefore note this transition as a critical issue to be aware of in the implementation of this strategic plan.

Through its advocacy, education, and tools for success, IBPA remains committed to inform and encourage independent publishers as they navigate, innovate, and define the future of independent publishing.
Appendix B: Good Distribution Practices

In 2021, amid heightened supply chain and distribution challenges, IBPA volunteers formed a distribution discussion group to investigate critical questions about industry practices and possible solutions.

Portland State University Research

In January 2022, IBPA and PubWest partnered with the Portland State University (PSU) Graduate Program in Book Publishing on a set of student-led research projects aimed at helping the book publishing industry achieve Good Distribution Practices (GDP).

Industry advisors from IBPA and PubWest included Mel Corrigan (Scribe Publishing), Karla Olson (Patagonia Books), Karen Pavlicin (Elva Resa Publishing), Brooke Warner (She Writes Press), IBPA CEO Angela Bole, and PubWest Executive Director Michele Cobb. The student research was directed by Portland State University assistant professor Dr. Rachel Noorda.

Through surveys, interviews, and review of secondary materials, students researched five publishing distribution questions:

- How can the book industry decrease the return rate for books sold into trade channels from an average of 30% to an average of 15% (or less)?

- As consumer buying habits further migrate from retail to online, what does efficient and cost-effective delivery of print books to readers look like going forward?

- What needs to be done to make book printing truly carbon neutral by 2050?

- What’s stopping the industry from embracing POD as the preferred means for printing non-illustrated, black-and-white trade books?

- Although the COVID-19 pandemic did not create the book industry’s supply chain problems, it certainly exacerbated them. What shortcomings in the book industry were most exposed due to the pandemic?

Insights gained across the projects include:

- Local buying can restrict supply chain disruptions caused by outsourcing and support cost-effective delivery.

- Paper company emissions assessments are important first steps toward eco-friendly publishing and carbon neutrality in the industry.
• Trade organizations such as IBPA and PubWest are vital for creating systems and alliances for the best publishing distribution practices.

• Reduced print runs and more effective book marketing and promotion are key to minimizing returns.

• Pre-orders (especially direct-to-consumer) can be particularly effective for combating returns and accurately determining print runs.

A full report can be found on the IBPA website.

As sustainability becomes increasingly important and supply chain disruptions continue, independent publishers need to find financially viable alternatives to the industry’s long-standing wasteful practices.

IBPA is committed to continuing the discussion, research, and opportunity assessment of potential solutions.