Strategic Plan

2026-2030





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Message from Trustees



This plan aligns our mission with measurable outcomes, partnership-led scale, and continuous learning for improvement, ensuring that impact is not only achieved, but sustained"

Welcome to the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan of the Custodians of African Literature (COAL), the beginning of our next chapter of accelerating access to quality education, creativity, and youth-led change.

Over the past two years, we have taken time to reflect on who we are as an organisation shaped by our community, creativity, resilience and who we must become to meet the realities facing children and young people today. Together with our partners, youth, and communities, we examined how COAL can grow stronger and more responsive amid persistent educational exclusion, economic uncertainty, and the lasting effects of conflict and inequality.

Our vision for the next five years will deepen impact ensuring grassroots communities own education solutions; children learn and stay in school; young people continue to create, earn through sustainable livelihoods, and lead with confidence; and youth voice and agency shape narratives and systems across Sub-Saharan Africa. This plan aligns our mission with measurable outcomes, partnership-led scale, and continuous learning, ensuring that impact is not only achieved, but sustained.

As we look ahead to 2030, this roadmap invites our community of supporters, donors, partners, and young leaders to move forward with us, learning, creating, and leading together. With shared purpose and collective action, we will continue to work toward a future where every child can learn, every young person can create, and communities can shape their own paths to resilience and lasting change.

Sunga Kufeyani
Trustee

About Us

The Custodians of African Literature (COAL) is a nonprofit in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, a city known for its cultural diversity and artistic brilliance, yet deeply affected by recurring ethno-religious conflict and violence. Working closely with communities, we believe that lasting change begins with local skills, ideas, and early investment in children and young people. By strengthening access to education and fostering creativity for social change, we invest in grassroots education initiatives to accelerate education for underserved children, and work with youths to create for social change. We are local by design with a global outlook, COAL creates safe, inclusive spaces where learning and creativity thrives, especially where opportunities have been hardest to reach.

OUR BIG IDEA

Supporting communities to own education at the grassroots, and young people to create for human good — ***social change led by those who live it.***

OUR REASON

Because every child and young person deserves the opportunity to learn, create, and shape their own story, not just survive it.



Vision

A thriving Africa where every child and youth has unfettered access to quality education and skills to lead fulfilling lives.

Mission

Accelerate access to quality education at the grassroots and support youth-led social change in creative arts.

OUR VALUES

Local: We start from the ground up, trusting in the power of local people and ideas to drive change. **Creative:** We use art, imagination, and bold thinking to solve tough problems. **Excellence:** We show up, do the work excellently, and push through challenges with purpose. **Brave:** We speak up, and stand for what's right, especially when it's hard.
Real: We keep it simple, honest, and humane in everything we do.



THE REALITIES WE ARE RESPONDING TO

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, inequitable education systems shape the life chances of millions of children and young people. Systems change is slow and complex. But every day that exclusion persists, children fall further behind, youth lose opportunities, and communities bear the cost.

Families continue to face unprecedented barriers to quality education, psychosocial support, and pathways to meaningful work, especially in regions affected by conflict and poverty. These realities show up in classrooms disrupted, talents unrealized, and futures narrowed.

The Custodians of African Literature (COAL) has worked alongside grassroots communities to expand and accelerate access to education and creative opportunities, centering local knowledge, creativity, and youth leadership. Conflict, rising insecurity and economic instability continue to further exposed the systemic failures demanding our collective and immediate attention.

Global education crisis is growing

251M

Children are out of school globally

50%+

Are in Sub-Saharan Africa

20M

Children are out of school in Nigeria alone

75%

Of Nigerian children (ages 7–14) cannot read a simple sentence or solve basic math

Poverty, violence, and exclusion is shaping childhood

2 in 3

Children in Nigeria live in multidimensional poverty

50%+

Of children in Nigeria experience violence before age 18

2 in 5

Girls in Nigeria are married off before the age of 18

In Plateau state, Nigeria:

Recurrent ethno-reliogious conflict, insecurity and violence disrupts schooling

65%

Of learners show trauma-related symptoms

Absenteeism, dropouts, and learning loss are rising

Nigeria is home to a young, vibrant, and highly creative population, with significant potential in the growing creative economy. However, access to opportunities remain unequal, with most opportunities clustered in urban cities

70%

Of Nigerians are under 30

50%+

Of young people are unemployed

But, Nigeria's creative economy is working

Nigeria's creative industry is valued at

$4.5B+

and the second-largest employer of labour

4.2M

People engaged in the creative industry in Nigeria

The creative sector is projected to grow to

13.6B

by 2028 becoming a global exporter of creative talent.

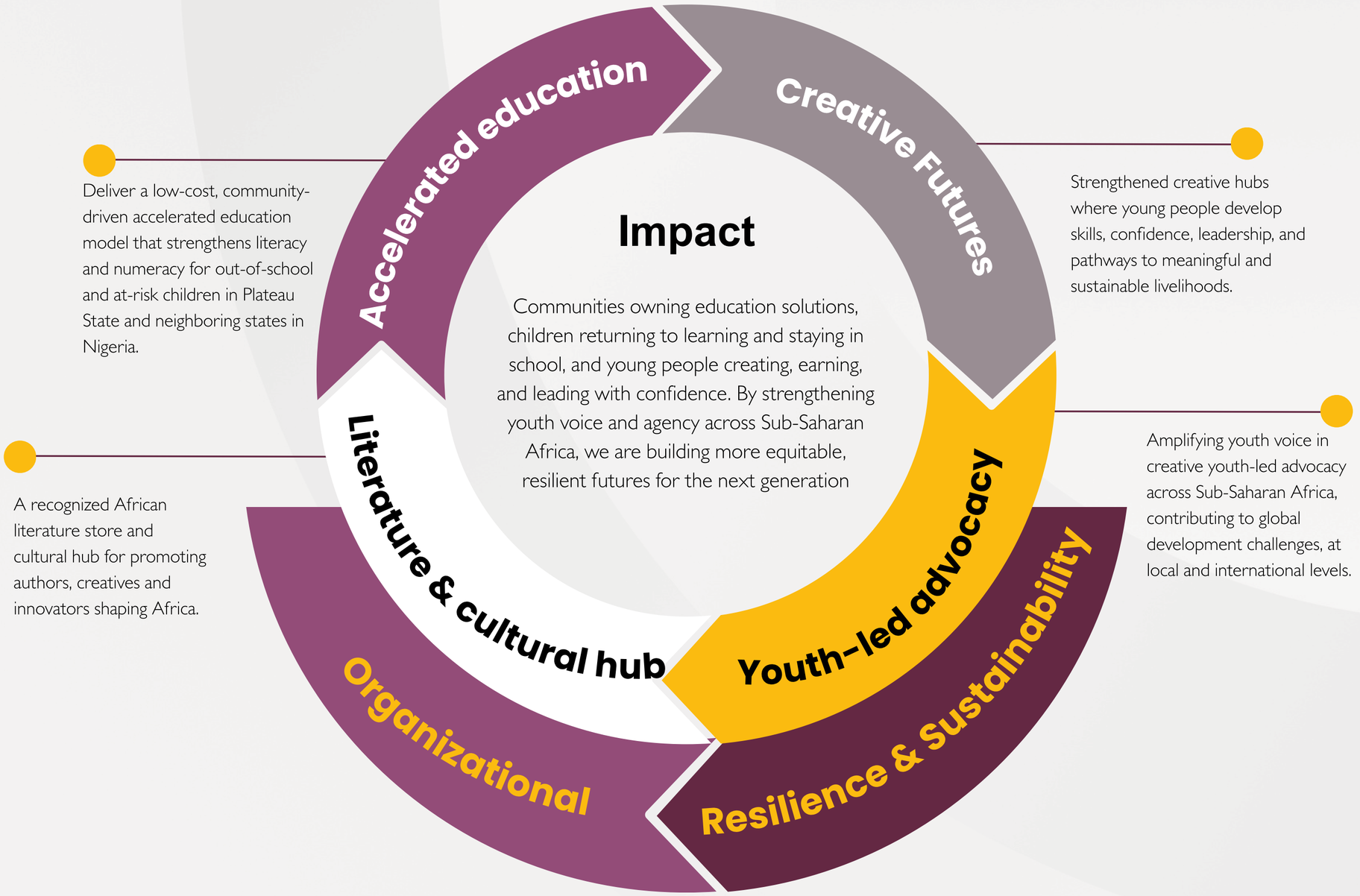
$18

Approximate contributions of the creative industries to Nigeria's GDP in 2020



Strategic Goals 2026- 2030

Our new bold strategy is underpinned by a theory of change which posits that, ***if*** underserved children and youth gain access to quality education, creative skill-building, and platforms to express their voice, ***then*** they gain the agency and capabilities to shape their own futures, contribute meaningfully to society, ***and*** challenge the barriers that have long defined them.



Pillar one: Accelerated Education

Target

5,000

Learners supported by 2030, and enable 40% of out-of-school children(OOSC) in target communities transition to mainstream schooling.

Through COAL's Grassroots Accelerated Education Fund (GAEF), we will support learners in target communities in Plateau and other neighbouring states. Within a 3 year learning cycle, 70% of participating learners will demonstrate measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy skills. As the model stabilises, COAL will explore measured expansion into nearby states in North Central and Northeast Nigeria, such as Nasarawa and Bauchi, through partner-led replication. The focus will remain on communities where educational access is limited and public infrastructure is weak, ensuring our interventions are relevant and impactful.

How we will do this

1. Develop Context-Responsive Curriculum

- Design a bespoke accelerated literacy and numeracy curriculum tailored to low-resource contexts.
- Align curricula with national frameworks such as Nigeria's Accelerated Basic Education Programme (ABEP), with built-in assessment and evaluation tools.
- Pilot curriculum modules by 2026 and validate two full modules (literacy and numeracy) by 2030, including adaptable teacher guides.

2. Strengthen Transition & Retention Pathways

- Build and maintain 3–5 strategic partnerships annually with organisations providing school reintegration, psychosocial support, parental engagement, community mobilisation, and family economic empowerment.
- Implement a learner journey mapping system to track each child from enrolment through transition and retention in formal schooling.
- Use learner data and stories to strengthen programme learning, evidence-building, and grassroots education advocacy.

3. Deliver a Sustainable, Low-Cost Model

- Maintain an efficient delivery cost per learner annually, ensuring affordability and funding predictability.
- Phase growth based on evidence, funding availability, and community readiness.
- Support community- and citizen-led education initiatives through micro-grants, training, mentorship, and volunteer retention pathways into teaching roles.

4. Embed Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

- Implement a robust MEL framework combining digital and manual learner tracking systems.
- Conduct periodic literacy and numeracy assessments to measure learning gains.
- Hold annual partner review meetings to assess transition, retention, and delivery quality.
- Use MEL data to inform continuous programme improvement and decision-making.



Success measures

5,000

Learners supported through GAEF by 2030 (Direct and in-direct)

40%

Of OOSC transition to formal schooling through partner-led interventions

50

Learner story maps documenting transition and retention journeys, used for learning and advocacy

1

Inclusive, low-cost accelerated education curriculum developed and adapted locally

10

Accelerated learning centres replicating accelerated education model

70%

Of learners demonstrate measurable improvement in literacy and numeracy

Pillar two: Creative Futures

Target

5000+

Young people supported and engaged in creative skills with at least 500 youth transitioning into paid dignified jobs and sustained creative practice.

We recognize the transformative power of creativity in shaping youth futures and influencing culture. Through this pillar, we will provide young people in Plateau state, across Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa with pathways to develop their talents, confidence, and professional skills in creative and performance arts, connecting youth with local, national, and international creative industries, fostering dialogue, cultural exchange, and economic opportunities. Whilst over the years, we have focused in literary and performance arts, we will expand to interdisciplinary collaborations and initiatives that align with the interests and aspirations of young creatives. By positioning youth as leaders in their own development, initiatives will cultivate both artistic excellence and social impact, ensuring that young people's voices are amplified and valued.



How we will do this

1. Creative Skills, Mentorship & Platforms

- Deliver multi-tiered programmes combining creative technique, digital media, entrepreneurship, and project incubation.
- Provide mentorship from established creatives, cultural institutions, and industry professionals.

2. Creative showcases

- Host regular open mics, poetry slams, creative workshops, and digital storytelling exhibitions, while documenting youth creative projects digitally to amplify youth voice nationally and internationally. These will serve both as public-facing platforms and developmental labs for young creatives.

3. Pathways to Sustainable Livelihoods

- Provide creative prizes and seed grants for youth-led creative projects and enterprises.
- Build partnerships with creative industry actors to support transitions into jobs, paid gigs, freelance work, publication, and performance.
- Track alumni pathways to document income generation, professional growth, and creative impact.

4. Learning & Sustainability

- Involve youth in co-designing programmes to ensure relevance and ownership.
- Sustain programmes through a blend of grant funding and earned income from events, publications, and creative services.

Success measures

5000+
Youths supported/engaged in creative arts initiatives

500+
Youths transition to jobs, paid gigs/creative work/creative enterprise

200+
Of creative features in published or commissioned works

50+
Creative events & showcases

70%
Of youth attest to increased confidence and growth in creative practice.

50
Local and international arts-based partnerships established

Pillar three: Creative Youth-led Advocacy

Target

500+

Youth advocates contribute to global and regional development discourse in Sub-Saharan Africa

In the next five years, we will work with young people to lead conversations that define Africa's development agenda, where creativity becomes both a tool for advocacy and a bridge between communities, policymakers, and global advocates. Building on our successful implementation of cross-border intercultural awareness campaigns, we will, through creative storytelling, spoken word, and evidence-based advocacy, shape narratives about African communities, centering youth agency, amplifying lived experiences, and contribute to policy discussions from the ground up.



How we will do this

Arts-based Advocacy

- Use arts-based storytelling, spoken word, and creative media as tools for advocacy and civic engagement.
- Mobilize youth voice to drive awareness, advocacy, influence public discourse, and advance inclusive development across Africa on critical social, civic, environmental, and development issues such as education, economic empowerment, gender equality, climate justice, migration, social cohesion, peacebuilding, and democratic freedom.

Capacity Building & Fellowships

- Expand partnerships with advocacy organisations, cultural institutions, and regional networks.
- Implement a Creative Advocacy Fellowship to train youth in storytelling for policy, media engagement, communications, and campaign design.
- Support youth to co-create creative outputs linked to clear national and regional advocacy goals.

Platforms, Influence & Ethics

- Create digital and physical platforms for youth advocates to engage in dialogues, exchanges through regional and global forums.
- Ensure ethical storytelling, safeguarding, and non-tokenistic participation in all advocacy work.

Success measures

500+

Youth advocates supported/engaged across Sub-Saharan Africa

100

Youths advocates featured in regional and international advocacy forums

50+

Partnerships established across Sub-saharan Africa

5

Cross-border campaigns launched by 2030

10M

Media reach across advocacy initiatives

1

Cross-border advocacy and cultural exchange fellowship launched

Pillar four:Bookstore and Cultural Spaces

Target

500+

Readers served, engaging 60 african authors, creatives and innovators across Africa

We will grow the COAL's bookstore into a dynamic cultural space that celebrates and sustains African storytelling. It will become more than a bookstore functioning as a creative and intellectual hub where readers, writers, innovators and artists converge. Through curated collections, book readings, author-driven campaigns and podcasts. Integrating physical and online platforms, we will ensure accessibility across Nigeria, while events such as readings, workshops, and literary events will nurture emerging talent and build a thriving literary community in Plateau and beyond. To achieve this, we will invest in a strong digital presence and strategic marketing.



How we will do this

Partnership Expansion

- We will expand and strengthen partnerships with authors, publishers, and bookstores across Nigeria to diversify our catalogue and deepen collaboration within the literary ecosystem.

Literary events

- The store will host regular literary events such as book readings, signings, and creative writing workshops that promote dialogue between writers and audiences.
- Curated book fairs/exchange themed around social issues, with notable authors connecting literature to community development, while integrating bookstore activities into COAL's creative events.
- We will engage high-profile authors for quarterly book readings either in-person or virtual to attract wider audiences and strengthen COAL's cultural engagement. In the long term, these collaborations should evolve into a structured annual lecture/symposium series focused on cultural exchange and the exploration of ideas.

Digital marketing

- A robust digital platform will support online book sales, author features, and community interaction, with targeted marketing campaigns designed to reach younger readers and literary enthusiasts nationwide.

Success measures

60

Authors engaged in in-person/online book chats

500+

Readers served through the COAL's bookstore

5M

Media reach and visibility of COAL's bookstore/online authors series

20%

of COAL's annual budget contribution from bookstore sales

Pillar five:Organizational Resilience and Sustainability

Target

Operate diverse and predictable funding streams and maintain an overhead of 30%

As we expand programmatic impact, we will prioritize modest but steady institutional growth, investing in our people and systems that ensure continuity, innovation, accountability, learning, and operational excellence. The goal is to create a lean, resilient organization that balances innovation with structure, and ambition with sustainability. We will prioritize financial diversification to reduce dependence on single funding sources. Our funding mix will combine earned income through service delivery, grants, corporate partnerships, and philanthropy, each carefully managed to align with COAL's mission.



How we will do this

Fundraising Strategy

- We will develop a fundraising strategy, adopting a phased approach, by deepening relationships with current partners while expanding to new ones, and implement a structured donor mapping and engagement plan. An individual donor cultivation programme will be launched alongside corporate partnership packages, and earned-income streams such as consulting, creative services, fundraising events.
- By 2030, we aim for a balanced revenue mix of 50% from earned income and 50% from grants and philanthropy. This diversification will allow for predictable cash flow and financial stability, supported by prudent budgeting and transparent financial oversight.

Investing in our people

- We will invest in our people through hiring of skilled staff and structured professional development plans, periodic performance reviews, training budgets, and retention incentives. Overhead will be managed prudently, kept under 30% of total spend, while reserves will be built to cover at least six months of operating costs.
- Governance will be strengthened through an active and skilled advisory and trustee board, drawing members with expertise in education, finance, the arts, and social innovation to provide strategic guidance and oversight.

Systems, Governance & Learning

- Strengthen financial management, data systems, and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL).
- Maintain transparent reporting, regular audits, and active board oversight.

Volunteer program

- We will enhance our volunteer program by building a pipeline of skilled young professionals interested in the development and creative sectors. We will refine our model through structured onboarding, targeted training, and job-shadowing opportunities across COAL's portfolios.

Success measures

50%
Of mobilised resources from earned income through service delivery

80%
Staff and volunteers report annual job satisfaction rate

80%
Staff and volunteers report annual workplace culture satisfaction rate

30%
Of total annual budget spend maintained for overhead cost

100%
Of staff and volunteers participate in a minimum of 4 professional development programs annually

5
New corporate partnerships established

TIMELINE

Build

Strengthen

Scale & influence

Sustain

2030

Transition

2026
Foundation & Pilots

- Pilot accelerated literacy and numeracy curriculum modules
- Strengthen accelerated education centres in Plateau State
- Conduct youth creative needs assessments and talent mapping
- Design creative advocacy Fellowship framework
- Establish groundwork for partnership building and stakeholder engagements
- Establish baseline data for learning outcomes and youth development pathways

2027
Strengthening & Early Scale

- Refine accelerated education model based on pilot
- Expand partnerships for learner transition, psychosocial support, and reintegration
- Scale youth creative training, mentorship, and showcases
- Launch creative advocacy Fellowship with first cohort
- Deliver cross-border creative advocacy campaigns
- Grow bookstore programming and digital sales presence

2028-2029
Regional Expansion & Midterm Review

- Expand accelerated education through partner-led replication beyond plateau state
- Increase number of youth transitioning into paid creative work
- Conduct midterm evaluation to assess progress and adjust strategy
- Package learning, stories, and models for sharing and replication



2030
Consolidation & Future Readiness

- Reach cumulative targets across all five pillars
- Conduct independent evaluation
- Publish learning products, toolkits, and impact reports
- Institutionalise successful models for replication and adoption
- Set strategic priorities for the next phase (post-2030)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Oluwabusola Oni*
- Nnonye Obi
- Olisa Omenye

*Strategic Planning Comittee



Join Us

Donate

Donate to COAL and help open doors to education, creativity, and opportunity for children and young people who need it most. Your support turns learning into possibility and talent into lasting impact.

Partner

Partner with COAL to strengthen community-led education, expand creative pathways, and amplify youth voices. Together, we can scale solutions that are locally rooted and built to last.

Volunteer

Volunteer with COAL and use your time, skills, and passion to support learning, creativity, and youth leadership. Join a community-driven movement shaping brighter futures from the ground up.





Accelerating access to education and driving youth-led social change.

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