



## Strategic Plan

**Adopted by the Compassionate Atlanta  
Leadership Team  
April 25, 2021**

### Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Who We Are.....	4
Background.....	5
Vision, Mission and Values .....	6
SWOT Analysis.....	7
Priorities for 2018-2021 .....	9

## Executive Summary

Our world has changed in ways we couldn't have imagined just a few years ago. From an unprecedented pandemic that has widened the gap between the haves and the have nots at the most basic levels of healthcare at one end to human rights movements that are bringing people together to make a real difference (Me Too, Black Lives Matter, etc.), dialogue is becoming more and more necessary for us find commonality in our humanity.

Dialogue is the first step to being more connected with those whom we share our communities, municipalities, nation, and globe. These concepts are what fuel the work and strategy of Compassionate Atlanta.

Our strategic plan intends to define a clear direction through 2023 while preserving the ability to remain flexible and creative throughout our journey. This plan intends to drive conversation amongst diverse groups of people within our communities and provides a sharper focus on how we will engage our audience, Charter Partners and Board Members in a manner that aligns our efforts with our priorities.

Compassionate Atlanta has accomplished a lot in the last two years and finds that much of its work is typically organized into three categories: consulting, connecting and creating partnerships and ideas.

This strategic plan focuses on the next three years of Compassionate Atlanta's work as we move towards maturity in our goals and objectives. At the same time, the plan strongly reaffirms our commitment to the Charter for Compassion and the intent that Karen Armstrong had for this global initiative by uncovering opportunities for concrete, practical action in a myriad of sectors.

Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on these four objectives that anchor us in the work that will help achieve our vision.



As we execute this strategic plan, we will work with our partners and community to develop activities that will best achieve these objectives.

## Who We Are

Compassionate Atlanta is a grassroots movement that seeks to raise awareness about the benefits of compassionate action in the Greater Atlanta area. The Compassionate Atlanta Planning Team, which was formed in 2013, was instrumental in getting the cities of Atlanta, Berkely Lake, Clarkston, and Decatur designated as "[Compassionate Cities](#)."

Our world has changed immensely, with so much **CONFLICT** that is fueled by fear. This fear is damaging and is making us turn inward. We are becoming more and more exclusive of who we surround ourselves by and the category of 'other' is widening.

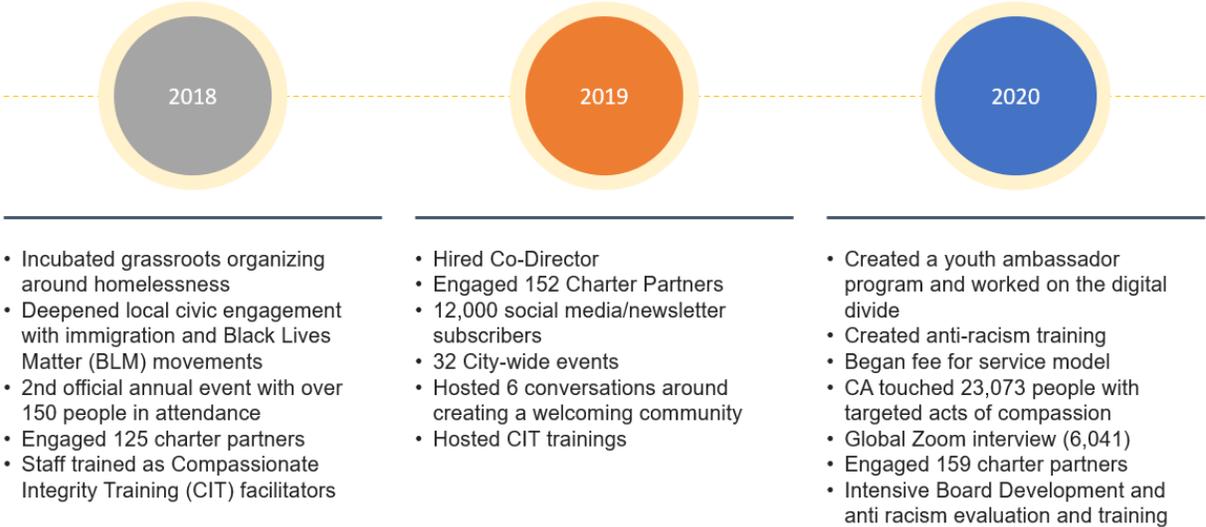
To reduce this fear, we must find ways to practice **COMPASSION**; to understand that all of humanity is striving for the same things- safety, freedom and protection, among other basic needs.

We must **ENGAGE** with each other through authentic dialogue. This is the only way to truly know ourselves and eradicate our fear which is based on the unknown.

In this way, we will be more **CONNECTED** in our communities and recognize the interconnectedness of humanity.

# Background

Compassionate Atlanta has had many notable accomplishments in the past several years, demonstrating maturity as an organization. Despite restrictions around the pandemic, our organization was able to lean on momentum and the credibility we've established in our communities to continue to realize our mission.



# Vision, Mission and Values

## Our Mission

To educate, engage, inspire and empower Greater Atlanta to spread compassionate action.

## Our Vision

Connected communities built on conversations, relationships and compassionate action.

## Our Values

- Inclusivity
  - We honor diversity and promote community and believe the power of 'we' is greater than the power of 'me'
- Empathy
  - We believe everyone has a story. Dialogue allows voices to be heard to promote understanding.
- Respect
  - We treat everyone with compassion. We engage in dialogue for understanding rather than confrontation. We celebrate differences and connect through our common humanity.
- Optimism
  - We believe the ethics of the Charter of Compassion will lead to a more peaceful and just society in which every human being is able to pursue happiness and self-actualization.

## Our Diversity Statement

We are dedicated to greater diversity and inclusion and provide equal opportunity to people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, classes, genders, sexual orientations, gender identifications/expressions, range of abilities, socio-economic background, educational status, ages, geographic locations, philosophies, and veteran statuses at all levels of staff and governance as well as within the communities we serve.

We aim to lead by example with our own practices, encouraging our communities and partners to engage in diversity and inclusion, as these are true expressions of compassion.

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- **We have a worthy mission**
  - Our vision, mission and values are radically inclusive and our core work is relevant to the present cultural/political climate.
  - We are connected to the Charter and to the International organization, which makes us credible and provides a sound foundation for our existence and work as an organization.
  - We promote compassion within the greater Atlanta region
- **We are a credible and respected partner**
  - We honor partnerships with other organizations and have an excellent reputation in the

community.

- We are uniquely positioned to help educate and support other organizations in deepening understanding of compassion and compassionate activity
- Being connected to Compassionate Atlanta's 150+ partners is an amazing opportunity to bring compassion to life in a multitude of ways.
- **We have strong leadership**
  - The leadership of CA is dynamic and cultivates an energy of collaboration and intentionality.
  - Our leadership is agile and allows us to respond to current events; ensuring our relevance.
- **We have a strong, diverse Board of Directors**
  - Our Board is comprised of diverse, well connected, committed, and passionate people who bring varied strengths and connections to the organization
  - The Board is open-minded and supportive and at the same time, willing to express their opinions to make us stronger as a collective
- **We are agile enough to respond to current events; keeping us relevant**
  - We had a quick and creative response to the need to engage our community in dialogue for addressing racism/sexual abuse/political polarization
  - We have diverse programming
- **We are a well-managed organization**
  - We serve as a successful example of Co-Directorship of two part-time contract staff members with high performance quality
  - We have financial reserves
  - We were able to achieve intended outcomes from our previous strategic plan

## **Weaknesses**

- **Fundraising**
  - We operate as a grassroots organization despite our 150+ partners
  - There is a lack of diversified funding sources (we rely on several larger funders)
  - Our Board members have not been able to secure funding from sources where they may have established relationships
- **Engagement and representation of Board Members**
  - Our board should represent more diversity as a reflection of the communities we serve
  - We are unable to maintain a consistent level of Board member engagement
- **Partner Engagement**
  - Minimal success in sustaining collaborative planning with most of the first-year municipalities that formally signed on as partners
  - Minimal success in monitoring if/how charter partner organizations promote and track compassion
  - Lack of engagement of the 160 organizations/individuals who have signed the compassion charter.
- **Measurement and Articulation of Compassionate Atlanta's Work and Success**
  - Due to the broad scope of CA's work, it can be hard to articulate what Compassionate Atlanta is and what it does

- It's always a challenge to actually measure the impact of "compassion" around greater Atlanta. Efforts have been made to develop measures...but this continues to be a challenge.
- **Operationalize Ways of Working**
  - Currently, there is no Board member functioning as a Secretary
  - We need a better way to empower working groups and committees with organizational technologies such as processes for meetings and creating volunteer groups to focus on certain areas (i.e., Slack or Teams)

## Opportunities

- **Zone Into a Few Key Areas of Focus to Make a Measurable Difference**
  - A narrower focus in direction and strategy may help us expand our reach. We have enough experience now to identify needs in the community and provide focused support in areas we can make a real difference by providing appropriate tools for developing compassion.
  - Focused efforts in influencing leadership organizations such as government, education, other non-profits may further CA's mission in measurable ways.
  - A unique value proposition could be CA programming for immigrant communities during the transition with respect and dignity regarding values and cultural rituals. We may have had a missed opportunity in Clarkson as a pilot and beyond. Findings can create a fee for service revenue from the knowledge, data capture and cultural competency that CA has and will continue to obtain.
  - Programming around the issues of compassion as it applies to equality, race, diversity, legislation both local and national
  - The current social construct and political unrest is an opportunity for CA to address the trauma via Compassionate programming and amplification of the role of the organization as a solution to the deep-rooted systemic racism and trauma that is an outcome of broken systems.
  - Be a catalyst for more interaction between our partner organizations
  - Find another regional city to join as a municipal charter partner....to continue our comparative unique-in-America way of engaging greater metropolitan areas
- **Spend Energy on Compassionate Atlanta's Public Relations**
  - Define a strategy to engage our 150+ partners to be more involved and be a voice for CA
  - We need to get our name out more widely in the community to develop a higher profile of the great work we do.
  - Utilize tools like compassionate storytelling to bring people, organizations and communities together... empowering and inspiring our partners to speak up and out
- **Empower Board Members to Lead Based on Strengths and Interests**
  - Our vibrant board with its new members can take the organization into new communities and new areas of interest. They should lead efforts and initiatives of interest and report out on progress of goals.

## Threats

- **Financial Stability**
  - Approx. 70% of our budget dependent on our grant money, making sustainability a threat
  - Many Board Members are not currently securing multiple sources of funding and our partner participation is not at a sustainable level.
  - Competition for philanthropy dollars intensifies as the overall economic income divide continues to create greater percentages of poverty and inequity.
  - Funders are often focused on immediate results and transactional programming rather than long term culture change
- **Articulating Compassionate Atlanta's Work**
  - Without a simple, clear, concise way of communicating the view and purpose of the organization, the message may be diluted without a common objective to rally around.
- **Compassionate Atlanta's Scope May Be Too Large**
  - Because compassion is all-encompassing, there may be a temptation to spread too thin.
- **Political Environment and Priorities Heavily Impact CA's Momentum**
  - Due to the 2021 run-off, local organizations scope of work and the regional exposure of the lack of social, political and community and economic development and inclusion is a threat.
  - The political climate and priorities often impact the appetite or willingness of organizations to prioritize compassion.
- **Other Threats include:**
  - Our inability to prioritize succession planning for Compassionate Atlanta
  - Another potential strain of COVID-19 may hinder the momentum at which we do our work
  - The greatest threat is that we fail to grow and engage our already existing base of support. Growing the base requires engagement and leadership from the Board and staff. Developing a strategy for an engaged staff and Board is essential for growing our base of support.

## Priorities for 2021-2023

### 1. DEEPEN AUDIENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Compassionate Atlanta has 160+ partners that have expressed commitment and intent for partnership. This is a key strength for Compassionate Atlanta. However, currently, there is no systematic way that we engage them.

**Goal One:** In 2020, with the pandemic, organizations have had to prioritize their own survival. To re-engage our partners, we will begin by conducting an assessment of all our partners.

We want to determine:

- Who they are
- Why they chose to partner with CA
- Whether they are an active or passive partner currently
- How compassion is part of their organization today
- How we can work with them in the future
- How they are supporting CA and how CA is supporting them today

We aim to complete this assessment by end of Q3 (September 2021). We believe that completion of this assessment will help us determine where to focus our efforts and how we can continue to work with our partners in meaningful ways for mutually beneficial outcomes. (**Note:** This is a pre-requisite internal step that does not require reaching out to our partners to complete. Further validation of our assessment will occur as a second step.)

**Goal Two:** To ensure we are partnering with individuals and organizations that will help further Compassionate Atlanta's work, we will define roles and responsibilities for individuals to become Compassionate Atlanta Ambassadors by the end of Q3 (September 2021).

## **2. STRENGTHEN KEY PARTNERSHIPS AND DEVELOP NEW MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

After a difficult year of COVID-19 related challenges (among others), 2021 offers an opportunity to renew, re-engage, re-educate, and refresh relationships with our Charter Partners. The pandemic and the powerful social movements that gained momentum in the previous few years were a good time to intentionally practice compassion and engage in compassionate action.

**Goal 1:** By end of Q1 (March) 2022, we'd like to survey all our current Charter Partners to ask:

- 1) How are you promoting compassionate action within your organization?
- 2) How can Compassionate Atlanta help you promote compassionate action within your organization?

**Goal 2:** Based on the results of the survey, we will develop a plan to engage partner organizations that demonstrate interest in an active partnership with CA by May 2022. To develop this plan, we will create a skeletal template to customize where appropriate, and will use the Compassionate Index (if available).

**Goal 3:** By May 2023, we will deploy the Compassionate Plan to active and willing partners.

## **3. CONTINUE TO BUILD A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION**

While we have made some headway on this key objective, it remains the one we have the most area to grow and one of the most critical for our sustainability as an organization. While the awareness of our organization is strong, we would like to expand our income sources.

We have been able to build awareness of our cause over the last few years and now can focus on sustainability of our organization.

To focus on building a financially sustainable organization, we will:

**Goal 1:** Develop a financial strategy by November 2021 that includes the following:

- How big are we as an organization and how big are we prepared to become? (Big defined in terms of reach, volunteer base, potential impacts, dollars, etc.)
- How does our newly articulated structure inform our strategy? [e.g. Consult, Connect, Create] and how can we implement fee for service for our consulting?

**Goal 2:** Create a plan for individual / corporate donor pyramid by August 2021

#### **4. CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION**

To be successful in achieving our lofty goals for this strategic plan cycle, we must ensure our Board is:

- Diverse as a reflection of the work we do and those we serve
- Empowered to lead initiatives of interest that they are accountable for and report back on
- Enabled by our staff to execute required tasks
- Engaged and operating to its maximum potential

Currently, there are 12 members on the Board (2 of whom are unengaged). The bylaws state 15 Board Members at maximum.

To ensure our Board is operating at its full potential, we will:

**Goal 1: Consider restructuring the Board to operate within the framework of the 3 Cs: Consult, Connect, Create**

Develop a strategy where each Board member chooses a major of these 3 Cs or a 4<sup>th</sup> one, COLLECT, focused on fundraising. The Board member can establish goals at the beginning of the year and report their progress at each monthly meeting to ensure accountability.

In addition, they can set up committees to further their progress.