

BOMB

2022–2027 Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

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In early 2022, BOMB Magazine (BOMB) embarked on a strategic planning process. This organization-wide process endeavored to reflect on BOMB's first 40 years, to imagine what might be possible in the next 40, and to chart a course for continuing to deliver the artist's voice in innovative, relevant, and impactful ways over the next five years.

This strategic plan represents the culmination of nine months of listening, research, interviews, and facilitated discussions. Led by Julep Consulting, the process was rich in discussion and engagement among both internal and external stakeholders, all of whom were eager to reflect on their experiences with and visions for BOMB. A work group made up of senior staff and a representative from the Board of Trustees met biweekly throughout the process while the planning committee—composed of the full staff and two additional Trustees—met at key moments. In total, this process involved more than 40 meetings, in addition to one-on-one conversations, and engaged 34 external stakeholders.

I. Planning Process Overview

Phase 1

The initial phase (February–May) focused on developing a baseline understanding of BOMB’s history, current situation, and potential direction(s). This included a review of BOMB’s existing materials, one-on-one conversations with key team members, a values workshop, interviews with external stakeholders, and a survey of the full BOMB staff. The research phase culminated with a report of key themes and recommendations that was shared with the full board and staff.

Phase 2

In the second phase (May–August), we took a deeper dive into the issues surfaced in phase one. This included posing a set of questions to our broader community—readers/subscribers, contributors/subjects, and Oral History Project stakeholders—through three listening sessions, the findings summarized in a report shared with the full board and staff. In addition, this phase saw the extension of Julep’s contract to undertake near-term work on human resources and administration gaps identified as critical in phase one.

Phase 3

The final phase, launched in August, focused on vision, goals, and strategy setting. BOMB staff members engaged in a series of facilitated conversations about the themes that emerged from the listening sessions in phase two. The work group and strategic planning committee then synthesized this into a set of organizational goals and strategies, completed the values work begun in phase one, and updated BOMB’s mission statement to better reflect the organization’s current and future status. In addition, BOMB and Julep completed planning related to human resources, administration, and fiscal management. The planning process concluded on December 5, 2022, when the BOMB Board of Trustees formally adopted the plan.

II. Key Themes

As we interrogated the complexities of BOMB's current and imagined future, the following themes cut across many of the conversations with both internal and external stakeholders. Framed here as a set of questions, these themes were refined through our ongoing dialogue and directly informed the strategic direction outlined below.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Labor

Who is being asked to put their relationships on the line for BOMB, and how? Who are the gatekeepers, and who has the power to decide? Who gets to tell the story? How can we foster greater transparency around decision making and internal processes? Who has access to BOMB's content? How can we ensure equitable labor practices for our staff and our broader community of contributors?

Platforms

How, when, and why does content appear across BOMB's various platforms (print magazine, website, social media, podcast, in-person gatherings, etc.)? How does this communicate allegiances, accord (or deny) prestige, and/or foster a sense of democratization?

Community & Place

How can we respond to the strong hunger for community building among our stakeholders, creating spaces for them to gather and cross-pollinate? What does it mean to meet our communities where they are at—physically, virtually, and/or conceptually?

III. Organizational Language

As part of the planning process, BOMB revisited its mission statement in light of its accomplishments to date, the evolving external environment, and the new organizational priorities detailed below and settled on the following:

Founded in 1981,
BOMB Magazine delivers
the artist's voice. We
publish and preserve
artist-generated material,
spotlighting artists in
conversation and offering
unique insight into the
creative process.

III. Organizational Language

BOMB also established the following organizational values, which represent our collective core beliefs and guide us in how we approach our work, including how we engage with people and how we make decisions.

Authenticity

Through collaborative discourse, we honor the integrity and autonomy of the artist's voice, offering candid and intimate windows into artmaking practices.

Inclusivity

We are committed to equity—on our masthead, in our pages, and within our audience. This includes seeking out new and underrecognized voices as well as diversity across disciplines, geographies, and demographics.

Sustainability

We recognize the need to evolve as an organization, examining and investing in our own practices and infrastructure so that BOMB remains a vital resource for artists and the wider community.

As BOMB enters its fifth decade of delivering the artist's voice, we seek to strike a balance between honoring our legacy and evolving as an institution while continuing to operate on the leading edge. To that end, we intend to pursue the following goals and corresponding strategies over the next three to five years:

Goal 1: Inclusion

Actively cultivate community across time and space.

Strategies:

- Nurture a cultural community where diverse peoples feel welcomed.
- Build mutually beneficial relationships that are additive rather than extractive.
- Increase our intentionality around who we publish and what we cover.
- Engage in proactive practices to diversify our audiences so that they mirror the diversity of our content.
- Offer curatorial and editorial opportunities to emergent voices and those who have not historically had access to a wide audience.
- Ensure that our commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in our staff, Trustees, and advisors—that is, those that serve as gatekeepers.

Goal 2: Transparency

Strive for greater transparency across the organization, recognizing that our internal practices manifest in the ways that we show up for our community.

Strategies:

- Clearly articulate and share the pathways into and through BOMB, including our editorial structure and processes.
- Create more space for communication and discussion among and between departments, as well as between Trustees and staff.
- Establish more collaborative decision making, fostering a greater sense of ownership among all staff and Trustees.

Goal 3: Sustainability

Ensure that BOMB has the internal capacity to remain a vital resource for artists and the wider public for decades to come.

Strategies:

- Continue to grow and engage BOMB's audience, recognizing the need for continual replenishment.
- Diversify BOMB's revenue, including strengthening our fundraising program and increasing earned income.
- Invest in the people who work for us, including ensuring appropriate compensation and benefits, providing ongoing professional development, and professionalizing our fiscal and human resources practices.
- Engage in board development aimed at strengthening this group's capacity to provide oversight and support fundraising, including ensuring that the Trustees have adequate support to thrive.
- Develop and activate a mechanism for monitoring progress on this strategic plan.
- Ensure that institutional knowledge is dispersed throughout the organization and that there is a solid foundation for a future leadership transition.