2017–2019 Strategic Plan

Introduction

ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This 2017–2019 Strategic Plan articulates PeaceGeeks' long-term direction and is a map to guide the organization's work over the next three years. This is a "big picture" plan and is the framework that will be used to develop future operating plans, partnerships, staff work plans, and all decisions to devote time, money and energy to the fulfillment of our mission. Each year, PeaceGeeks' Board of Directors will formally review the Strategic Plan to ensure that it continues to draw on the organization's unique strengths and opportunities; it continues to be informed by and relevant to the needs of the community; and that PeaceGeeks continues to develop forward-thinking programmes to meet those needs.

ABOUT PEACEGEEKS

PeaceGeeks is a nonprofit organization that builds technology tools and capacities to support and strengthen the work of communities and community leaders working to promote peace, human rights and humanitarian action around the world.

WHAT IS A GEEK?

A Geek is a skilled volunteer who is passionate about donating talent and time to support community-based changemakers around the world and to empower the world's most vulnerable people.

VISION

A world where changemakers are empowered to amplify local voices, build local resilience, and make communities safer

MISSION

We build technology and innovation capacities to strengthen peace, human rights and humanitarian response.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PeaceGeeks is committed to:

Empowerment

We empower our community-based partners by focusing on opportunities that further their mission, and by acting as equals with shared commitment.

Collaboration

We build strong and complementary teams and create effective and collaborative relationships with our partners.

Excellence

We pursue excellence by acting with clarity and professionalism, and by committing to best practices.

Openness

We commit to being open, honest and transparent, and to prioritizing open-source technologies.

Empathy

We work in inherently challenging situations; therefore, we commit to acting with patience and empathy, and to recognizing success as it happens.

Learning

We are agile and resourceful, we commit to learning equally from success and failure, and we strive to create opportunities for growth.

Engagement

Volunteers are the life of our organization—we commit to engaging them in meaningful work that uses and develops their skills, and to recognizing their contribution.

Strategic Priorities

PeaceGeeks has identified the following four priorities for 2017–2019:

- **PRIORITY 1: Promoting Peace through Online Narratives**
- **PRIORITY 2: Empowering Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons**
- **PRIORITY 3: Strengthening Digital Security and Privacy**
- **PRIORITY 4: Increasing PeaceGeeks' Strength and Resilience**

These priorities are described later in this section.

In our work we will continue to focus on helping changemakers do their work safely and with impact by:

- **Building their technical knowledge and skills;**
- **Building new technology tools or adapting existing tools to meet unique needs;** and
- **Engaging the Canadian public in a dialogue on the intersection of technology and global issues.**

PeaceGeeks will continue our focus on the Middle East and East Africa Great Lakes, with consideration given to potential impact and organizational capacity when considering work in new geographic locations. In addition, we will look for opportunities to serve communities at home in Canada.

PRIORITY 1: PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH ONLINE NARRATIVES

In recent years, extremist groups have developed a strong narrative outreach strategy as an essential complement to their military strategies.

In response to this challenge, and in an attempt to dissuade young people from becoming persuaded by extremist narratives, efforts at countering these narratives have become increasingly vital. Narratives that challenge extremist messaging and promote peace typically fall into two categories: 1) those produced by regional governments; and 2) those conceived and produced by independent individuals and collectives, including filmmakers, artists, musicians and other producers.

Content produced by most governments has had limited success in reach and legitimacy because of its focus on the military and security dimensions of the conflict. PeaceGeeks believes we are most likely to achieve success in promoting peace and undermining the appeal of extremist groups by consolidating and amplifying the efforts of credible messengers, with a focus on strengthening awareness of local drivers of radicalization, amplifying messages that challenge and prevent extremism, and building community

resilience to prevent emerging forms of extremism.

KEY INITIATIVES

1 **Launch a multi-year capacity-building, engagement and content development program to support activist and cultural content producers in developing and executing a coordinated and collaborative strategy that addresses extremist narratives** *2017*

2 **Complete a research project that explores how to evaluate the value and impact of counter- and alternative narratives in online spaces** *2018*

PRIORITY 2: EMPOWERING REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Humanitarian crises are happening more frequently and growing in scale, while technological advances have the power to transform aid coordination.

In humanitarian situations, refugees and internally displaced persons often do not have access to information on basic services, or are dependent on third-party organizations to access that information; this limits access to services and adds to the work of already-overstretched service providers.

PeaceGeeks' Services Advisor platform centralizes the collection of services data, eliminating the need for organizations to maintain their own lists of services that are available to refugees, and empowering refugees to access the information directly. There is high demand for additional deployments of Services Advisor but deploying one-off instances for each humanitarian situation or area limits the impact we can have. While a number of past initiatives have attempted to address the problem of services information management, so far none have succeeded in taking these projects to scale.

Under this *Strategic Plan*, we will continue our work to empower refugees and internally displaced persons through Services Advisor, while looking for ways to sustainably scale the program. We will also consider expanding our reach to the Canadian context.

KEY INITIATIVES

3 **Complete deployments of Services Advisor in Turkey and Somalia** *2017*

4 **Pursue additional one-off deployments of Services Advisor only if our capacity allows and funding is sufficient to support staff time, overhead, and ongoing product improvements** *2017–2019*

5 **Explore opportunities to sustainably scale Services Advisor** *2017–2019*

PRIORITY 3: STRENGTHENING DIGITAL SECURITY AND PRIVACY

The collection of sensitive data has significant potential to put the privacy, security and safety of our partners and the communities they serve at risk.

PeaceGeeks has worked with a wide variety of nonprofit organizations on a range of projects that have included reporting on human rights violations, disaster response, conflict violence, epidemics and political monitoring. A significant proportion of these organizations conduct work that involves the collection of sensitive data, and a lack of awareness, capacities, and accessibility to methods and tools that help assess and respond to digital security risks is problematic and requires response. In some cases, our partners lack basic awareness around matters as fundamental as password protection.

In the context of global populism, in which a number of policies and measures have emerged that threaten human rights at home and abroad, and with a significant and growing gap between the digital security knowledge and practices of policy makers and civil society organizations, PeaceGeeks has an opportunity to contribute to strengthening security and privacy for human rights defenders, peace advocates and humanitarian organizations, and to help position Canada as an emerging leader in digital security and privacy in the area of human rights.

KEY INITIATIVES

6 **Launch a digital security and policy research program to report on the state of digital human rights practices and trends, provide recommendations for human rights organizations, and provide recommendations on how Canada can lead on digital security matters** *2018–2019*

7 **Launch a digital security capacity building program that aims to build awareness of security and privacy issues among Canadian policymakers, funders, civil society organizations and community-based organizations in the Global South** *2018–2019*

8 Create a new, flexible, secure and user-friendly tool that strengths collection, transmission, storage and analysis of sensitive data for human rights defenders, and conduct an outreach campaign to raise awareness on how to build new tools *2018–2019*

PRIORITY 4: INCREASING PEACEGEEKS' STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

In order to achieve the strategic priorities described in this *Strategic Plan*, PeaceGeeks must build on our strengths and capabilities to ensure a strong and resilient organization. The key initiatives below are related to the following **essential capacities** that we will focus on over the next three years:

- **Sustainable financial base;**
- **Strong profile and brand;**
- **Strong and resilient Board of Directors and stable staff team**; and
- **Robust internal planning processes**

KEY INITIATIVES

9 **Develop and execute on a multi-year fundraising strategy that will ensure we build and maintain a sustainable financial base going forward** *2017*

10 **Develop and execute on a strategy to build our profile and brand as experts on the intersection of technology and peace, human rights and humanitarian action, and ensure messaging across platforms is clear so stakeholders better understand our work** *2017*

11 **Develop clear mandates for the Board, directors, Board committees and key operational positions, and develop succession plans for key roles** *2017*

12 **Develop and execute on thorough planning processes, including an annual strategic review and operational planning and budgeting processes** *2017*

In addition to the above key initiatives, PeaceGeeks will evaluate the feasibility of establishing a local presence in the Middle East or Africa, to address the operational challenges created by the physical distance and time difference that separates us from our beneficiaries and partners.

Annual Review

This *Strategic Plan* will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to draw on the organization's unique strengths and opportunities. The Board as a whole will be actively involved in discussing, reviewing and approving any changes to the plan. Directors are a valuable strategic planning resource as they provide a fresh perspective and can ask questions to satisfy themselves that the plan is well thought out, realistic and compatible with the organization's mission, vision and values. To ensure sufficient time for review and discussion, a special strategy session will be scheduled early in the fourth quarter of each year (October) to allow adequate time for the subsequent annual planning and budgeting process. This session will be significantly longer than a regular Board meeting. Final approval of changes to this *Strategic Plan* and of future strategic plans will take place at a Board meeting.