



**INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION**

*Protecting the natural nighttime  
environment since 1988*

**2019-2021  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

## International Dark-Sky Association

# Strategic Plan 2019-2021

### Dark Skies

Dark skies are fundamental to all life on Earth. The balanced relationship between dark nights and light days supports harmonious functioning in living systems such as sleep, eating habits, and digestion.

Dark skies are critical for astronomical discovery, global navigation, and human inspiration. Throughout human history, our ancestors were awed by a night sky brimming with stars. Starry skies have inspired discovery, science, religion, philosophy, art and literature.

Today, we find a world out of balance with the natural rhythms of day and night. Technological advances in artificial light at night have allowed us to continually brighten our neighborhoods, streets, and gathering spaces at night. With proper use, humans can enjoy the advantages of light at night with minimal impact on ecology, astronomical discovery, and cost.

The improper use of light threatens our dark skies, our wealth, and the necessary balance between light days and dark nights. The result of unsuitable lighting practices is an earth at night that is now brighter than ever before.

IDA's mission is "to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting." We envision a world where the public protects, values, and shares the night.

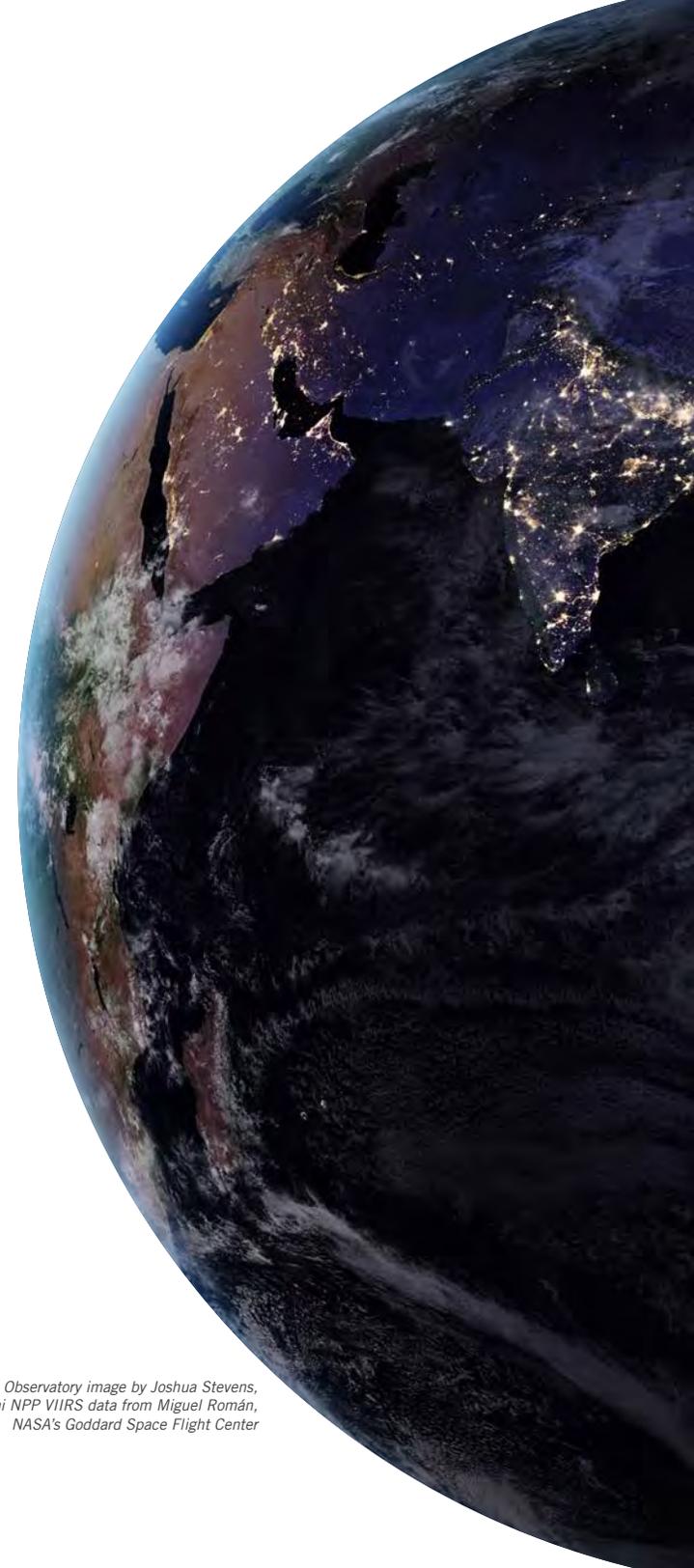


Image Credit: NASA Earth Observatory image by Joshua Stevens, using Suomi NPP VIIRS data from Miguel Román, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center



### **30 Years of Natural Nighttime Advocacy**

Protecting the night sky from light pollution is a critical mission that supports human health and heritage, preserves wildlife habitat, saves money, and provides visual access to celestial discovery for professional and amateur astronomers alike. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) leads the way globally in the mission to protect and preserve the nighttime environment.

Through its programs and advocacy efforts, IDA has brought awareness of the issue of light pollution to the general public since 1988.

We have influenced the conception and design of lighting manufacturing by participating on international lighting committees, attending lighting expos, and providing objective feedback to lighting designers. Our Fixture Seal of Approval program leads the lighting industry in the

development of environmentally friendly lighting by providing guidelines for luminaires that minimize glare, reduce light trespass, and lessen the destruction of the night sky. We certify luminaires that conform to these guidelines, and IDA-approved Dark Sky Friendly lighting fixtures can now be purchased anywhere in the world.

Our award-winning International Dark Sky Places program has led more than 100 private individuals and public land managers to conserve and preserve more than 73,814 square kilometers of dark lands and skies as International Dark Sky Places.

Most importantly, we have built a massive network of dark sky advocates. IDA Chapters and volunteers have become an unstoppable movement, driving the work of implementing evidence-based best practices in outdoor lighting, and connecting people with the wonders of the natural nighttime environment.

Image Credit: NASA Earth Observatory image by Joshua Stevens, using Suomi NPP VIIRS data from Miguel Román, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

## The Challenges Ahead

The need to protect and restore the natural nighttime environment is more urgent than ever. The negative impacts of light pollution, consistently confirmed by emerging evidence, affect the environment, wildlife and its habitat, human health and heritage, and our visual access to the cosmos.

Technological advances in lighting provide increased energy efficiencies, making bright lights cheaper and more accessible. As these technologies advance, more light is being used to brighten our neighborhoods, our streets, and in turn, our skies. A study released in 2017 by an international team of scientists measured a 2% increase in light pollution each year over the previous five years.

## Looking Forward

To carry out our mission, and achieve a world where the public holds a cultural view of the natural night as a common space worth defending, the International Dark-Sky Association has developed this three-year Strategic Plan to help us remain focused and effective in our efforts to protect and preserve the natural nighttime environment.

We have identified three goals which we believe, over the next three years, will make the organization stronger, more visible, sustainable, and effective as we aspire to a world without light pollution.

## Evaluation and Assessment

These goals, and a plan to achieve them, are outlined in the pages that follow. We will use this document to guide our work over the next three years.

An Operational Plan will be developed from the IDA Strategic Plan to define the specific tasks and timelines required to achieve the goals and benchmarks of the Strategic Plan. A written report measuring our progress and recommending adjustments and revisions will be prepared annually by the Executive Director and reviewed by the Board of Directors at the last board meeting of each calendar year.

## Strategic Goal #1

IDA will lead a worldwide movement by developing programs and operations that advocate evidence-based best practices in outdoor lighting, public policy, and conservation in support of our mission: To preserve and protect nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting.

## Strategic Goal #2

IDA will be a financially sound and sustainable organization with the financial capacity to support our mission.

## Strategic Goal #3

Members of IDA's Board of Directors will be informed leaders who support our mission by operating under a shared vision and governing with strategic policies and streamlined processes.

# IDA'S HIERARCHY OF INFLUENCE

## Advocates

Individuals and organizations whose relationships with IDA are defined by formal agreements (Chapters, Delegates, Affiliates) and are working with IDA to advance our mission.

## Allies

Individuals and organizations that have no formal agreements with IDA, but whose values and efforts align with our mission. Allies are working cooperatively with IDA to advance the mission.

## Members and Supporters

Individuals and organizations who have made a financial contribution to IDA to support our mission.

## Followers

Individuals who subscribe to IDA's broadcast channels: blog, e-news, social media.

## The General Public

## Strategic Goal #1

IDA will lead a worldwide movement by developing programs and operations that advocate evidence-based best practices in outdoor lighting, public policy, and conservation in support of our mission: To preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting.

We will lead a worldwide movement of nighttime conservation by leveraging our position as the recognized authority on light pollution.

With this in mind, we will strategically focus our efforts to empower and enhance those who are working on the ground to educate the general public and promote our mission by:

- Communicating clear and strong positions that are based on credible evidence and aligned with our mission,
- Ensuring that our programs are aligned with our mission to maximize our impact,
- Strengthening our reach and presence outside of the U.S.,
- Developing a communications strategy to strengthen our voice and enhance the movement, and
- Increasing membership to IDA.

# Strategic Goal #1

Objective	Benchmarks
<p><b>1.1 We will communicate strong and clear positions</b></p>	<p><b>1.1.1</b> Establish and communicate clear and strong positions regarding the abatement of light pollution</p>
	<p><b>1.1.2</b> Employ evidence-based positions to drive calls to action that reduce light pollution</p>
	<p><b>1.1.3</b> Establish strategic collaborative relationships with advocates, including agencies, organizations, educational institutions, and influential individuals to advance IDA's mission</p>
	<p><b>1.1.4</b> Media-train all board, staff, volunteers and advocates to understand and effectively represent IDA's positions</p>
	<p><b>1.1.5</b> Solicit input from traditional and minority stakeholders about technology, cultural indicators, and social influences that may impact IDA's effectiveness and positioning</p>
<p><b>1.2 We will ensure IDA programs are strategically aligned to the mission</b></p>	<p><b>1.2.1</b> Perform evaluation of current programs based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alignment to IDA mission</li> <li>• scale of impact</li> <li>• funding availability and ROI</li> <li>• sustainability</li> <li>• applicability to global representation</li> <li>• ability to increase members and supporters</li> </ul>

## Strategic Goal #1

	<p><b>1.2.2</b> Based on evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sunset ineffective programs</li> <li>• enhance existing programs</li> <li>• build effective new programs</li> </ul>
	<p><b>1.2.3</b> Integrate programs and increase collaboration across operations, programs, and governance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing communication across operations, programs, and governance with training and tools such as Google Docs and Slack team-building platform</li> <li>• producing cooperative, integrated annual work plans that consider each program’s priorities and needed support from other programs, operations, and governance</li> <li>• instituting an organization-wide annual agenda</li> <li>• utilizing this Strategic Plan to establish priorities and focus efforts on strategic goals</li> </ul>
<b>1.3 We will strengthen our global presence</b>	<p><b>1.3.1</b> Establish benchmarks for engaging a selected number of countries that are well-poised for working with IDA</p>
	<p><b>1.3.2</b> Establish and/or enhance support for existing advocates and allies in these selected countries</p>
	<p><b>1.3.3</b> Translate IDA outreach materials into languages appropriate to selected countries</p>

## Strategic Goal #1

	<p><b>1.3.4</b> Expand resources appropriate to the region for advocates and members outside the U.S.</p>
<p><b>1.4 We will refine our communications strategy to empower and enhance the movement</b></p>	<p><b>1.4.1</b> Provide communications tools to help advocates and allies collaborate and unify toward our mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create, host, and moderate team-building platforms for Chapters and advocates to collaborate and share advocacy best practices</li><li>• Develop “playbooks” to support advocacy organizations and implementation of IDA policies</li><li>• Provide simple “one-page” documents that provide concise, easy-to-digest information about important issues related to light pollution and nighttime advocacy</li><li>• Update all public outreach materials (brochures, posters, etc.) to reflect current and up-to-date information about lighting, light pollution, and nighttime advocacy with appropriate IDA branding</li></ul>
	<p><b>1.4.2</b> Administer surveys to solicit annual feedback from advocates to measure whether IDA positions and messaging are inclusive and accessible to our target audiences; use this feedback to inform communications strategy to reach as broad an audience as possible without diluting our message</p>
	<p><b>1.4.3</b> Reconfigure darksky.org to enhance engagement and utility</p>

## Strategic Goal #1

	<p><b>1.4.4</b> Develop outreach training for staff, board, and advocates to ensure that the general public receives coordinated, consistent tone and message across all platforms</p>
	<p><b>1.4.5</b> Share success stories to motivate and inspire action that supports our mission and vision</p>
	<p><b>1.4.6</b> Develop advocate training to educate the movement about resources that IDA offers to support this work</p>
<p><b>1.5 We will increase membership to IDA</b></p>	<p><b>1.5.1</b> Enhance IDA's membership program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define and communicate membership structure to all members and supporters</li><li>• Define and communicate benefits of membership</li></ul>
	<p><b>1.5.2</b> Develop communications that increase awareness of the benefits of IDA membership</p>
	<p><b>1.5.3</b> Develop communications that support members in their efforts to advocate for dark skies</p>

## Strategic Goal #2

IDA will be a financially sound and sustainable organization with the financial capacity to support our mission.

As of 2018, IDA has sustained three consecutive years of financial growth, ending each year in a budget surplus. The year 2017 was ended with a two-month operating reserve.

Through continued financial growth, IDA will remain a healthy and thriving organization. We will develop a three-year business plan to ensure sound financial management and sustainability, we will meet revenue goals as outlined in the business plan, and we will adopt sound financial management practices.

We will work to recognize and further engage members and supporters through a strategic philanthropy plan. We will be

mindful that as 72% of annual financial support to non-profit organizations comes through private donors, our gratitude for the generosity of our members and supporters must remain front and center in our work. We will develop an organization-wide culture of philanthropy that focuses on relationship-building to expand our resources.

Objective	Benchmarks
<p><b>2.1 We will increase revenue and financial sustainability which is aligned with the goals of the Strategic Plan</b></p>	<p><b>2.1.1.</b> Develop a 3-year business plan that ensures revenue growth through sound management and sustainability. The business plan shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish vision and insight for long-term financial security that includes benchmarks, annualized growth projections and cost management</li> <li>• Identify mission-aligned program and revenue opportunities and strategies that support growth projections</li> <li>• Identify potential risks and threats</li> <li>• Project program growth and associated costs</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2.1.2</b> Implement endowment plan</p>
	<p><b>2.1.3</b> Annually review financial management plans to ensure that our practices are aligned with current industry best practices</p>

## Strategic Goal #2

**2.2 We will build on our relationships with stewards and increase philanthropic gifts to IDA**

**2.2.1** Implement philanthropy plan to:

- Enact stewardship protocols for all major donor and member-supporter groups to ensure strong relationships and increase giving
- Use donor database to full potential
- Ensure full board enrollment in giving and participation in development activities
- Increase number of mid-level and major donors by a specific number each year
- Increase number and average size of gifts from major donors by a specific number each year
- Increase support from corporations and foundations by a specific amount each year

**2.3 We will increase earned income**

**2.3.1** Implement earned income plan

## Strategic Goal #3

Members of IDA’s Board of Directors will be informed leaders who support our mission by operating under a shared vision and governing with strategic policies and streamlined processes.

Governance is the process of strategic leadership by a governing body that ensures viability and fulfillment of the

organization’s mission. It entails the functions of setting direction, making policy, overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and ensuring accountability.

A shared vision and clear policies are essential to a productive governing body so that the body can manage less and govern more. The Board of Directors will establish a vision for the organization that

supports IDA’s mission, strengthens the board through recruitment and training, refines and implements clear governance policies, and assesses its committee structure for maximum efficiency in governance.

Objective	Benchmarks
<p><b>3.1 We will establish a vision for the organization that supports the mission</b></p>	<p><b>3.1.1</b> Prepare an organizational vision to support IDA’s mission</p>
<p><b>3.2 We will strengthen the board</b></p>	<p><b>3.2.1</b> Strategically recruit members of the board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a recruitment matrix to determine skills and assets that will benefit the organization</li> <li>• Evaluate increasing board size to support IDA’s growth and impact</li> </ul>
	<p><b>3.2.2</b> Conduct annual trainings so that board members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand their roles and responsibilities as individuals and members of the board</li> <li>• act as an effective governance body with a clear understanding of how the board’s work contributes to the success of our mission</li> <li>• are, individually and collectively, effective advocates for IDA</li> </ul>

## Strategic Goal #3

	<b>3.2.3</b> Complete leadership succession planning for board and Executive Director
<b>3.3 We will refine and implement governance policies</b>	<b>3.3.1</b> Assess policies needed for stronger governance
	<b>3.3.2</b> Develop a board policies manual
	<b>3.3.3</b> Review and update board policy manual annually
	<b>3.3.4</b> Evaluate an amendment to the bylaws which will modernize and streamline IDA member roles
<b>3.4 We will ensure that Board committees are strategically aligned to IDA's mission and governance structure</b>	<p><b>3.4.1.</b> Evaluate the structure and effectiveness of IDA's committees and task forces</p> <p>Based on evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish new Board committees and task forces to support our work</li> <li>• Disband Board committees and task forces that are ineffective and/or do not align with IDA's governance structure</li> </ul>



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International Dark-Sky Association  
3223 N. First Ave.  
Tucson, Arizona 85719  
[www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)  
(520) 293-3198