

Our Values in **Action**

Mission Partners'
2023 Impact Report

A Letter From Our Founder

April 2024

Dear Friends,

As a purpose-driven social impact communications firm and Certified B Corporation™, our values are the heart and soul of our company. They drive our business decisions, guide our client service approach, and inform our workplace processes. Our values also hold us accountable to each other and to our work:

- We value **people first**.
- We value **integrity and excellence**.
- We value **courageous leadership**.
- We value **strategic thinking and thoughtful execution**.
- We value **continuous learning and growth**.

Operating in service of these values means being willing to go wherever our employees, our communities, and our planet require—and to see those actions through even when it becomes difficult.

- We know with certainty that when we are living these values—fully and universally across our team—we can achieve our greatest impact. And 2023 was a solid reminder of that.
- We supported 40+ purpose-driven organizations: nonprofit organizations, foundations, and social impact companies advancing breakthroughs in public health, higher education, sustainability, democracy, journalism, and the arts, and who share our commitment to building a more just and inclusive society.
- We re-engineered our compensation model in service of transparency and pay parity and rolled out a new core competencies model that further reduces bias in the hiring and promotions process.

- We published a best-selling book on courageous communications and hosted two more seasons of our award-winning podcast, Mission Forward™.
- We expanded our groundbreaking Social Entrepreneur in Residence program to address the racial disparity among communications agency owners.
- We published national research that examined the role of executive communication in advancing business strategies and the public good.
- And, we furthered our commitment to building a work environment where mental health and well-being are prioritized. We were recognized with a Platinum Bell Seal from Mental Health America for this effort.

In this year's Social Impact Report, you'll learn more about how we lived these values and the positive benefits they had on our employees, our communities, and our planet. As you read, we hope you find that values matter, and when they're clear, the impact is undeniable.

With gratitude,

Carrie Fox



Carrie Fox (she/her),
Founder and CEO,
Mission Partners

About *Mission Partners*

We're a break-the-mold group of passionate communicators who build public awareness in support of causes we care about.

Mission Partners is a Certified B Corporation™ and a Certified Women-Owned® social impact communications firm that counsels nonprofits, foundations, and purpose-driven organizations across the U.S. and around the world, as well as the partners who fund and support their work. We help ensure our clients are authentic in their words, equitable in their strategies, and intentional about their impact.

Our expertise is in guiding organizations to realize their greatest moments of impact, while contributing to more equitable, inclusive, and connected communities.

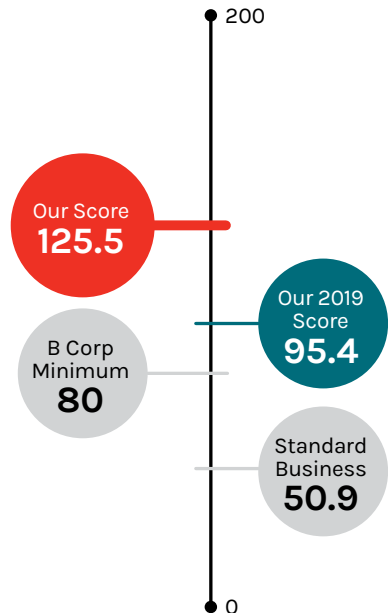
Our Public Benefit Statement

We pledge to foster a radically inclusive and richly regenerative economy. Our company voluntarily invests in meeting significantly higher standards of sustainability and governance and giving back to the community in our daily operations. At Mission Partners, we believe business is a force for good, and we are committed to providing an environment of mutual respect for all employees and partners. We believe the more inclusive we are, the better our work will be.

Our B Corp Score

In June 2022, Mission Partners was recertified as a Certified B Corporation and increased our score by an impressive 30.1 points, from 95.4 to 125.5. Our increased score directly relates to new and improved policies to support our team, clients, and world.

We will begin the recertification process again in 2024, with the goal of recertifying in June 2025.

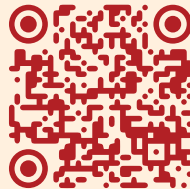


Our Values

Mission Partners is built on the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Those principles are embedded in every value we hold as a company.

- **We value integrity and excellence.** We are honest, open, ethical, fair, and eager for feedback. People trust us to adhere to our word, and we work hard to earn and maintain that trust. We always bring our best—to our work, our clients, and each other.
- **We value courageous leadership.** We act with courage, challenge the status quo, and find new ways to drive impact and equity as we grow our company and each other.
- **We value strategic thinking and thoughtful execution.** We are not just seasoned consultants; we are experienced doers and collaborators. We understand the value of thoughtful analysis, clear rationale, and contextual communication in moving from ideas to implementation.
- **We value continuous learning and growth.** We practice radical listening and learning at the edges of our comfort zones. We are curious, ever evolving, and dynamic in our approach.
- **We value people first.** We are more than what happens during our office hours. We are human first, and we strive to show deep respect for every person inside and outside our company. We know that company culture matters, and we work to create an environment in which our team can thrive as people and as professionals.

Scan the QR code to watch a two-minute short about Mission Partners' values in action.



We Value *Integrity and Excellence*

We work hard to earn
and maintain trust.
We always bring our
best—to our work, our
clients, and each other.

**Trust is the heartbeat of our
relationships at Mission Partners.**

We set high standards for ourselves and our work, and we ask our community to keep us accountable. We view feedback as a gift and a critical component of our process. It's how we ensure we are bringing integrity and excellence to our work.



OUR VALUES IN ACTION:

In 2023, Mission Partners received recognition as a Top Global Impact Company by *Real Leaders Magazine*, and we were a finalist for the 2023 *PRWeek Purpose Awards Small Organization of the Year*. We were also honored to receive the Platinum Bell Seal from *Mental Health America* for our commitment to workplace mental health.





We Value *Courageous Leadership*

We act with courage, challenge the status quo, and find new ways to drive impact and equity as we grow our company and each other.

At Mission Partners, we believe communication is one of the most powerful tools to advance social justice. We acknowledge our privilege as a white, cis-gender women-owned company and B Corp, and we believe our highest responsibility is to use our influence and capital to shift and disrupt white dominant norms and false, toxic, or misleading narratives.

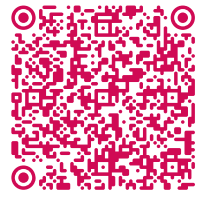
OUR VALUES IN ACTION:

We are proud to be investing **\$2.5M in Black-led and women-led organizations by 2025**; a commitment we launched in 2020. Our commitment is distributed across skills-based pro bono, a signature Social Entrepreneur in Residence program, and donations to values-aligned nonprofits. In 2023, we achieved 82% of our 2025 goal.

Scan the QR code to read more about our investment.



As part of our commitment, we announced a three-year investment in Generation Hope and their mission to ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed and experience economic mobility.

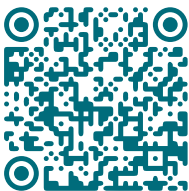


Mission Partners' Social Entrepreneur in Residence

The **Mission Partners' Social Entrepreneur in Residence** is an 18-month executive-level program designed to shift capital to Black-led communications firms, in line with our Race Equity Plan and our 2025 commitment to Black-led and women-led organizations. In 2023, *Inc. Magazine* highlighted Mission Partners' program model as model for businesses to impact the future of their industries.



Scan the QR code below to listen to “What We Do With the Power We Have: A Conversation on the Impact of the Social Entrepreneur in Residence Program.”



“There are very real structural inequalities baked into many sectors, and we need real allyship to step up and make anti-racist commitments and choices. I hope that other organizations, who maybe dabbled in this, maybe flirted with it, but didn’t make the move, are more likely to act, now that they can see what’s possible.”

Ryan Pintado-Vertner,
Social Entrepreneur
in Residence,
Mission Partners

We Value *Strategic Thinking* and Thoughtful *Execution*

We guide leaders and their teams to be more authentic in their words, equitable in their strategies, and intentional about their impact.

We've counseled hundreds of foundations, nonprofit organizations, and social impact organizations, providing strategic planning and communications services often during critical moments of organizational change.

OUR VALUES IN ACTION:

In 2023, we partnered with 40+ organizations across a variety of key issue areas, including civic engagement, affordable housing, education, public health, journalism, the arts, and sustainable communities. Nearly 50% of our clients in 2023 were returning clients, speaking to the strong relationships we've built.

To take a deeper dive into our client work, explore the case studies on page 12.

“Many strategic consultants give ideas, but Mission Partners actually did incredible work. It was additive to both our capacity and our thinking.”

Jillien Meier,
Managing Director of Program Partnerships and Campaign Strategy,
Share Our Strength

Our Clients

Here is a look at some of the clients we worked with in 2023.



We Value *Continuous Learning and Growth*

We are a dynamic team, continuously learning, innovating, and improving. We seek first to understand and apply what we learn to evolve and improve our work.

Mission Partners embraces a teaching hospital mentality, where talents are celebrated and shared through experiential learning. Our agency invests in employees through opportunities that support professional development, collaboration, and mentorship across teams. This mindset helps us bring a sense of curiosity and freshness to every project.

OUR VALUES IN ACTION:

In May 2023, building on her 20 years as a social impact consultant, Mission Partners' founder Carrie Fox published **More Than Words: Communications Practices of Courageous Leaders**, which rose to immediate best-seller status on Amazon. *More Than Words* is a compilation of stories and insights that Carrie has shared with Mission Partners staff and clients over the years, and that informs our point of view as a strategic communications firm. The book is a practical and inspiring resource for leaders and managers as they seek to become more authentic, inclusive, and connected communicators.



206
hours

of continuous learning and
growth across team members

“More Than Words is a deeply thoughtful book, full of practical wisdom, for anyone who seeks to communicate effectively to share ideas, build trust, and create a better world.”

David Bornstein,
Author,
How to Change the World

OUR VALUES IN ACTION:

In 2023, Mission Partners was awarded Mental Health America's Platinum Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health, Mental Health America's highest possible recognition for our commitment to our team's well-being. Our flexible and remote work policies, and employee mental health benefits contribute to a people-first workplace.

We also formalized our commitment to salary transparency and pay parity, along with a process to reduce biases often present in salary adjustment policies. We believe that a transparent culture where employees feel valued for their skills and time is a vital part of taking care of our team.

21.75 PTO days

on average taken by team members

We Value *People First*

We are more than what happens during our office hours. We know that company culture matters, and we work hard to create an environment in which our team can thrive as people and as professionals.

From our inception, Mission Partners has worked to build a business where people can thrive, leaders at every level can learn, and teams can advance bold goals. We actively foster a positive and progressive workplace culture where team members have the resources, support, and encouragement to put their well-being first. Across our operations, we prioritize and value each team member's mental health, as we do for our clients and extended community.





American Press Institute

Message + Brand Development

For nearly 80 years, the American Press Institute (API) has guided media and journalism leaders navigating changes in the field. In recent years, the field has grown increasingly crowded and API needed a new way to communicate its unique value, and better engage with key audiences.

Mission Partners began with a landscape audit of API's peers, as well as a series of in-depth interviews with members of the API community. Through this process, Mission Partners discovered that API's legacy brand was not effectively communicating the fresh and forward-thinking work of the organization. Carrie Fox led the team through a design

thinking session to help unlock the future of the brand, which also informed new messaging and a new visual identity, which were formalized in a new brand and style guide. The Mission Partners' team then applied the new brand to a refreshed and user-friendly website and brand materials.

API's new brand and accessible website was met with an enthusiastic response from its community and received recognition from GDUSA in their 2023 American Graphic Design Awards for branding and identity programs.



Democracy Fund, in support of Press Forward

Partnerships, Program Development + Coalition Building

Limited access to local news and civic information continues to threaten our democracy. To tackle this challenge, Democracy Fund joined peer foundations, including the MacArthur Foundation and Knight Foundation, to create Press Forward, a national coalition of funders investing more than \$500 million over the next five years to revitalize local news. Democracy Fund enlisted Mission Partners to support their work with Press Forward, including launch communications and coalition building.

Mission Partners created an onboarding toolkit to ensure alignment across participating foundations, developed board slides and infographics, and

advised Democracy Fund on the coalition's governance. To help amplify Democracy Fund's commitment to racial equity within Press Forward, Mission Partners led on developing a blog post for the foundation's website.

The strategic guidance and tactical support Mission Partners provided helped equip the Democracy Fund team to launch this groundbreaking initiative with their peers in September 2023. The Press Forward launch garnered significant media attention, with features in Poynter, Axios, the *New York Times*, and more.





Mental Health America

PR, Campaign Development + Activation

Following 114 years of impact in mental health services, education, policy, and research, Mental Health America engaged Mission Partners to increase consistency across its brand and messaging, lead communications planning for the organization's milestone moments, and publicly position its President and CEO as the newest leader of Mental Health America.

Informed by research, Mission Partners updated Mental Health America's messaging and visual brand, and incorporated the new messaging and brand on Mental Health America's website and within a style guide. The refreshed brand acted as a foundation for the

organization's spring communications strategy and activation plan. The plan included key priorities throughout Mental Health Awareness Month and during Mental Health America's annual conference, as well as thought leadership opportunities for Mental Health America's President and CEO.

As Mental Health America team members focused their energy on the most pressing mental health matters of our time, Mission Partners added capacity by serving as an extension of the Mental Health America communications team.





Center for Cooperative Media

Design + Creative Services

In 2022, the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University and a group of dedicated volunteers launched an annual nationwide reporting initiative on September 15: Democracy Day. To encourage more news organizations and partners to participate in future Democracy Days, the Center for Cooperative Media wanted to showcase the success of the initiative with an impact report.

Mission Partners developed a 16-page impact report that tells the story of Democracy Day's purpose, provides information about pro-democracy journalism,

and spotlights the impactful stories that news organizations have published as a result of the initiative. Throughout the project, Mission Partners supported the client team of part-time volunteers who run Democracy Day in addition to their separate full-time positions.

The report was published in early 2024, providing the Center of Cooperative Media with a resource to recruit participants and partners for the year ahead.

Share Our Strength

Strategic Planning

Share Our Strength has spent the last four decades moving more than \$600 million to programs that address the root causes of hunger and poverty among children and families. In 2023, leaders of the Share Our Strength program team engaged Mission Partners to strengthen its workplace culture, following workplace changes related to the pandemic.

To gather a comprehensive bank of workplace culture feedback, Mission Partners facilitated retreats, leadership meetings, and office hours with Share Our Strength program team members. Mission Partners also held conversations among employees at the same professional level to create an opportunity for team members to connect about shared workplace experiences.

Informed by the perspectives shared during these convenings, Mission Partners developed a Culture Workplan to guide the program team to support with identifying organizational agreements and shared team values. The resources developed emphasize the importance of inclusion, diversity, empathy, equity, and accountability in building a strong workplace culture.

To date, Share Our Strength upholds and has expanded upon its shared agreements. With a strong workplace culture intact, Share Our Strength can enhance and deepen its essential mission.



Communications to Advance the Public Good

At Mission Partners, everything we do starts with listening. Our continuous engagement and learning with purpose-driven leaders has revealed that empathy and emotional intelligence are essential in a workplace, but we wondered how regularly leaders apply these communication skills. In 2023, we surveyed 831 purpose-driven leaders and identified a critical trend in the field: **leaders who highly value communication as a business strategy under-invest in growing their own communication skills.** Our first research report, “From Soft Skills to Hard Truths: The Role of Executive Communication in Advancing Business Strategies and the Public Good,” outlines a path forward to communicate for change and drives the conversations communicators need now.

“Carrie Fox and her team are simply extraordinary. As a 100%-dedicated social impact communications firm and Certified B Corporation, Mission Partners centers purpose in all they do. They know how to activate strategic communications as a critical tool to drive missions and impact forward.”

Carol Cone,
CEO,
Carol Cone ON PURPOSE



Three-quarters of executives

view communications as very important to move their work forward.



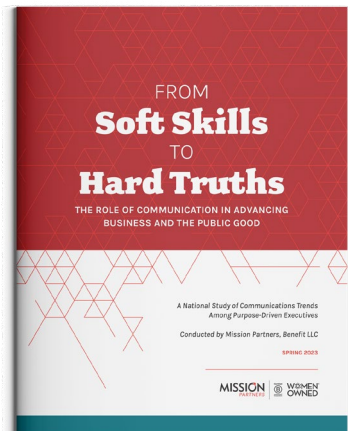
Nearly half of executives

commit less than 3% of their time to improving their communications skills.



51% of purpose-driven leaders

cite “leading through challenging moments” as one of their top communications challenges.



Read the report at
mission.partners/reports.

More Than Consultants; *We're Community Partners*

We are committed to sharing and distributing our knowledge with leaders and communicators around the world through our public education platform, Mission Forward™.

mission
FORWARD
with CARRIE FOX

Mission Forward by the Numbers

5 Star

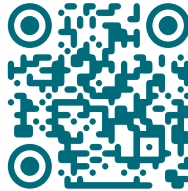
Average Rating

5.8K

Monthly Downloads

38

Countries Listening



Scan the QR code
to join the Mission
Forward community.

Learn more at
missionforward.us.

“Carrie Fox effortlessly holds conversations with thoughtful leaders who offer diverse perspectives on topics we should be paying attention to today.”

Podcast Listener



Award-Winning Podcast for Communicators on a Mission

Hosted by our very own Carrie Fox, and produced by TruStoryFM, each episode of Mission Forward explores the power of communications. With just the right mix of practical and thought-provoking content, we take on the issues that matter to you, and that support your work as a communicator for change.

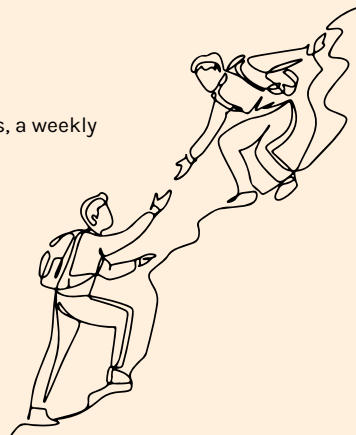
Together, we explore topics that are on your mind, from how to tackle tough conversations, how to communicate through change, and to how to build bridges across the issues that divide us.

Listen in at missionforward.us/podcast.

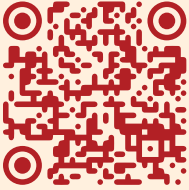
Practical Wisdom in Each Weekly Essay

In 2023, Carrie published her second year of Finding the Words, a weekly column that delivers practical insights at the intersection of communication and life. Carrie has written 100+ Finding the Words articles, covering everything from courageous leadership to advancing diversity, inclusion, and accessibility through communications. This weekly series is read around the world and has become a go-to resource for purpose-driven leaders as they navigate issues of the day.

Subscribe at missionforward.us/finding-the-words.



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Carrie Fox,
Founder and CEO,
Mission Partners

Learn more and partner with us at mission.partners