

PROJECT SANKOFA

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2029

03 Founder Celebration

04 Executive Letter

05 Meet The Team

06 Where We Work

07 Root. Rise. Return: A Theory of Change

08 Our Vision

09 Our Mission

10 African American Scholars Project

11 EMERGE

12 The Next Black Workforce

13 The Programmatic Ecosystem

14 The Strategic Plan Goal

15 Strategic Plan | Year One

16 Strategic Plan | Year Two

17 Strategic Plan | Year Three

18 The Brighter Futures Fund

DR. MAISHA Beasley



In the true spirit of Sankofa, we celebrate Dr. Maisha Beasley, whose visionary leadership launched a program and an organization that has stood in the gap for Black students and families for 10 years.

As the organization continues to grow and strategize, we remain rooted and committed to creating community and meaningful impact.

PROJECT SANKOFA

Dr. Maisha Beasley
Founder | Project Sankofa

A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Project Sankofa has done remarkable work with limited resources. It has carried that work through leadership transitions and through the uncertainty that comes with building something that matters in places that are not always resourced to receive it. The people on this team held the mission even when the infrastructure around it was not where it needed to be.

In 2026, after 10 years under our founder's leadership, new leadership is in place. A new mission and vision were shaped with the full voice of our team. For the first time in our history, we have a formal strategic planning process, and it began with three questions put to the people who do the work.

What do we need? What are we building? What comes next?

In September 2026, staff and African-American Scholars Project facilitators across California answered a two-part survey on the values, priorities, and signals that should shape the next three years. What came back was a clear picture from people who care about this work and are ready to go further. The team is hopeful and purpose-driven, and they are asking for infrastructure that matches the ambition of the mission. This plan answers that charge.

This plan is my commitment, as Executive Director, that the infrastructure will catch up to the mission. The systems will be built and the financial floor will be laid. The story will be told. And the team will have what they need to keep doing what they already do well, and then go further.

We did not build this plan in a boardroom. We built it by listening, and we will keep building it the same way.

Persist With Purpose.



Dr. John Edwards
Executive Director (Acting) | Project Sankofa



MEET THE TEAM



Dr. John Edwards
Executive Director (Acting)



Tyrone Cutkelvin
Director of Operations



Tarik Ross Jr.
Manager | Strategy & Innovation



Dr. Theo Fowles
Director of Programs



Wentrelle Mcintosh
SoCal Program Manager



Dr. Saianna Smith
NorCal Program Manager



Dr. Maisha Beasley
Founder & Board President

WHERE WE WORK



100+

*IDENTITY-LED, COMMUNITY FOCUSED WORKSHOPS DELIVERED BY **PROJECT SANKOFA IN 2025**.*

*IN 2021 NATIONAL SURVEY, **ONLY 54%** OF BLACK HIGH SCHOOLERS FELT CONNECTED AT SCHOOL, COMPARED TO **65%** OF WHITE STUDENTS.**

PROJECT SANKOFA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

BRIDGEWAY ISLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL | WESTMORE OAKS MIDDLE SCHOOL | THE AL WOOTEN JR. YOUTH CENTER | THE SEED SCHOOL LOS ANGELES
RIVER CITY HIGH SCHOOL | MOTA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL

McKinnon, I. I., Krause, K. H., Suarez, N. A., Jones, T. M., Verlenden, J. V., Cavalier, Y., ... & Mpofu, J. J. (2024). Experiences of racism in school and associations with mental health, suicide risk, and substance use among high school students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2023. MMWR supplements, 73.

PROJECT SANKOFA

ROOT. RISE. RETURN.

Our programs help young people build **ROOTS** in who they are **RISE** into adulthood with confidence and **RETURN** to lift the next generation.

A THEORY OF CHANGE

Students & Learners → Educators → Communities

When students experience culturally affirming, high-quality programming, **they grow**. When educators are recruited, trained, and supported, **they lead**. When communities see their students and educators thriving, **they are affirmed and invested**.



OUR VISION

TOGETHER, WE BUILD SPACES WHERE STUDENTS THRIVE, THE NEXT WORKFORCE IS RECRUITED AND PREPARED TO LEAD, AND COMMUNITIES ARE AFFIRMED AND SUPPORTED.

PROJECT SANKOFA

OUR MISSION

TO CREATE AN EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM WHERE BLACK BRILLIANCE IS CULTIVATED, OPPORTUNITY IS ACCESSIBLE, EVERY LEARNER AND EVERY WORKER EXPERIENCES BELONGING, AND COMMUNITIES THRIVE.

PROJECT SANKOFA

AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS PROJECT

180

PARTICIPATING AASP SCHOLARS IN 2025.



AASP Scholars visiting UC Davis.

The African American Scholars Project is our legacy school-based program for Black students--creating space and place for identity development, bringing families into the college-going process and preparing them for life after high school.

ROOT.

EMERGE

EDUCATION | MENTORSHIP | EMPOWERMENT | RELATIONSHIPS | GROWTH | EXCELLENCE

50 HRS

OF EMERGE WORKSHOP SESSIONS SINCE 2025 LAUNCH.

Our community-based program meets young adults ages 18 to 24 who are stepping into adulthood.



RISE.

NEXT BLACK WORKFORCE

SOFT LAUNCHING SPRING 2027

The Next Black Workforce is a cohort based community that provides space and place for young professionals across industries to navigate the early career experience.

This work **is an expansion** of our previous workforce development experience which focused on supporting Black educators.

By providing mentors, tools, and resources to better understand employment landscapes, interview and hiring trends, and financial literacy, we strengthen job retention. Strong retention allows the community **to lift as we climb.**

33%

of Black employees leave their organizations within the first two years of hire according to research on early-career dynamics.

Nwoga, A. (2023). **Why are black employees leaving? Reducing black employees attrition.** Open Journal of Business and Management, 11(5), 2247-2272.

RETURN.

3 PROGRAMS

AN INTENTIONAL ECOSYSTEM

AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS PROJECT

Scholars build community, explore identity and develop skills for post high school academic and career readiness.

THE ROOT.

EMERGE

EMERGE Scholars thrive through the hands-on development of life skills and learning how to build social capital through mentorship and network building.

THE RISE.

NEXT BLACK WORKFORCE

The Next Black Workforce is a cohort based community that provides space and place for young professionals across industries to navigate the early career experience.

THE RETURN



ROOT.
RISE.
RETURN.

BY 2029,

PROJECT SANKOFA will run one consistent, measured ecosystem across California.

The yearly goals are anchored in intentional focus on the organization's

- Governance and People
- Deepened Impact
- Brand Identity and Awareness
- Financial Stewardship

PROJECT SANKOFA

YEAR ONE

OCTOBER 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 2027

In this **FOUNDATIONAL** year of the strategic plan, provides the framework for strong growth in the years to come. Priorities include:

- Completing & Approving The Strategic Plan
- Refreshing organzational logisitics, digital platforms, and communications systems
- Launching a uniform curriculum for the **African American Scholars Project**
- Defining program models for **EMERGE** and **Next Black Workforce**
- Promoting the impact of Project Sankofa as a thought leader and innovative program partner.
- Securing the financial floor through grant and foundation relationships, building a fundraising plan that includes financial reserves.



YEAR TWO

OCTOBER 2027 TO SEPTEMBER 2028

In this **GROWTH** year of the strategic plan, Project Sankofa will deliver all programs to a research based and data-focused standard.

- By the end of year two cohorts of AASP Scholars, EMERGE Scholars, and the Next Black Workfoce will have completed a full programmatic cycle.



YEAR THREE

OCTOBER 2028 TO SEPTEMBER 2029

In this **SUSTAINABILITY** year of the strategic plan, Project Sankofa will have secured funding and staffing allowing the organization to expand into new regions.





THE BRIGHTER FUTURES FUND



Every Black student deserves someone who sees them.

Your donations sustain this work.

Scan the QR Code or Visit :
givebutter.com/brighter-futures-fund



This board edition summarizes the Project Sankofa Strategic Plan 2026–2029. The full plan, Appendix A, and Financing the Plan are available from the Executive Director.

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