

Citizen Planning School: Champions for Change

Application Guide for 2022 Community Champions



UB School of Architecture and Planning
University at Buffalo *The State University of New York*



**Spring 2022
Champions for Change Program**

**Become a Champion for Change
Apply Today!**

Applications close January 28, 2022

For more information visit:

One Region Forward,

<https://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/work/citizen-planning-school/>

Contact: Libertad Figuerero, Libertad@buffalo.edu

Champions for Change

Application Guide

Overview

Are you ready to plan a change for your community? Are you ready to join thousands of citizens and hundreds of organizations working to create an equitable, healthy and ecologically thriving region? If so, please apply today to become a Champion for Change with One Region Forward's Citizens Planning School!

Through a series of six workshops and technical support through faculty mentors in collaboration with UB's School of Architecture and Planning, over three months Champions for Change learn how to turn ideas into action with practical tools, knowledge, and leadership skills. Based on a match of talents and passions, Champions and University at Buffalo students will be placed in action planning teams.

Selection Considerations

We aim to create a diverse fellowship of Champions from across our region, including urban, rural, and suburban communities. We aim to support Champions with a diversity of intentions and ideas for change. We particularly welcome initiatives that would advance the "Five Big Ideas" of the One Region Forward Plan (<https://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/work/one-region-forward/>):

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Create Great Places and a Thriving Economy through Efficient Land Use 2) Connect Our Places by Expanding and Diversifying Our Transportation Options 3) Provide Housing Choices in Neighborhoods that are Great Places to Live | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Strengthen Our Food Systems for a Healthier Population and Economy 5) Conserve Our Energy Promote Renewables and Prepare for the Impacts of Climate Change |
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Traditionally, Champions have applied individually, but teams with a common concern are welcome to apply together (however, each team member will need to apply separately).

Timeline

Event/Deadline	Date & Time
Open Application Period <i>Applications are welcomed on a rolling basis. Special considerations are given to early applications. Feel free to reach out to Libertad Figuereo with any questions.</i>	Open from 1/5/22 to 1/28/22, 11:59pm.
Rolling Admission Notices of admission will be given by 2/9/22.	1/28/22 through 2/9/22
6 Tuesday Evening Workshops <i>Starting 3/1/22, Champions meet every other week over 3 months. Through workshops & homework, they work in teams with UB student leaders and faculty mentors to transform their ideas into reality.</i>	Tuesday Evenings- Every other week, 6pm-8:40pm March 1, 15, 29 April 12, 26 May 10
Culminating Idea Summit Champions present their visions, plans for action, and invitations for collaboration to the larger regional community.	Saturday May 14th 9:30am-12pm

Application Process

All applications will be submitted online at <https://bit.ly/championsforchange2022>

In the first part of the application, you will be asked basic questions about:

- yourself (e.g., your name, contact information)
- your background (e.g., organizations you belong to, your contribution to diversity),
- your project idea (the basic overview, where it's located, who will benefit), and
- your availability to attend workshops and events.

For the second part, you will be asked to tell us more about the change you desire to lead. More specifically, **you will be asked to share a story about your project**, as if you are writing *from the future*, as if *you have already been successful*.

In order to move others, we need to build our capacity to clearly state what it is we want and where it is we want people to go with us. A powerful story is a great way to touch, move, and inspire people with a road map to the future our hearts desire. We can't wait to hear yours!

Here is the prompt for your story:

You are already an engaged member of your community. Today, you envision a change you want to see in the world. You want to become a leader who has made this change real in the world.

Now, imagine in the future years that you are tremendously successful in championing this change... What will the world look like when you and your partners are successful? How did you and your team make it all happen? What was the world like before you, your neighbors and allies took action?

Please share your vision with us, using a special storytelling framework developed by one of our best modern storytelling teams: Pixar Animation Studios. Every Pixar film shares the same narrative DNA – a deep structure of storytelling that involves six sequential sentences:

1. Once upon a time ...
2. Every day ...
3. One day ...
4. Because of that ...
5. Because of that ...
6. Until finally ...

To help you start your story, we've shared ours – at the end of this application packet, you can read a "Once Upon a Time " story of One Region Forward and the Champions for Change program. **When you have completed your story, please send it to Libertad Figueroo at Libertad@buffalo.edu.**

Please note: The only requirement for the story you create is that it addresses each of the 6 Pixar prompts to tell the story of the change your heart desires. It could be as short as 6 sentences! If you have any questions, or if you find writing this story difficult, please do not hesitate to contact Libertad Figueroo (Libertad@buffalo.edu).

Some questions about your story that you should reflect on throughout the program include:

- Looking back from the future success of your project, what helped you overcome the challenges along the way?
- Of the people who helped you, which ones are already working with you, and which ones do you hope to bring into your team?
- Of the resources you used, which ones do you already have, and which ones do you need help accessing?
- Where are you now in your story of change? What have you accomplished already, and what are your next steps?
- How would your participation in Champions for Change help you connect with the people and resources that are essential to your success? How do you think Champions for Change can help you make your story of change happen?

Champions for Change

A fairy tale of inspired leadership moving one region forward

Once Upon A Time... There was a region rich in natural resources and strong communities. Its people were stewards of the world's largest supply of fresh water, vast forests, rich agricultural land, and abundant wildlife. They also enjoyed historic buildings and park systems, the magnificent Niagara Falls, and hundreds of wonderful neighborhoods. Unfortunately, after over a century of industrial development, much of the region's natural heritage was either lost or threatened, and its job base was declining. As the 21st century began, people started noticing the social and ecological costs of urban sprawl and the risks of climate change. Past patterns of development hurt everyone, but hit people of color and those living in poverty the hardest.

Every Day...

People noticed these pervasive problems. Living in the sixth most racially segregated region in their nation, they realized that some had much greater access to opportunity than others. Many of them wanted to do something about the challenges, yet they felt that they were alone. The problems seemed greater than their ability to make change. The problems were too big, too messy, and too out of their control. Some of them had big ideas, but feared that if they shared them, they'd be judged as delusional. To solve these problems, they would need a lot of money, and there was no money to be found.

Every Day... The people looked around and saw business as usual. Nothing seemed to change. Individual people and individual villages, towns, cities, and counties focused on their own survival, even at the expense of others. How could it be any other way, in a rustbelt region that had experienced economic decline for decades? A fog of cynicism rolled into the region, blinding some communities from hope and leaving many with a lingering sense of resignation.

One Day... A curious, compassionate and committed crew of citizens began to look a little closer for the points of light and community strengths obscured by the fog. Although the future had looked bleak, they saw that thousands of citizens in Buffalo Niagara in a variety of organizations – governments, companies, advocacy groups, neighborhood associations and more – had been working on a number of key areas essential to the region's social and ecological well-being. To solve the big problems, no one needed to start from scratch – they just needed to bring those efforts into sharper focus and create opportunities for more people to become part of the movement for a thriving region.

Because of that... Citizens, organizations, and government agencies from across the region came together to create a shared vision and framework for regional development that would uplift the well-being of our people, place, and planet. They started writing a new story together – a story about how an old “rust belt” region is retooling itself to meet the challenge of living well in an era of economic instability, social inequity, and environmental change. Through the One Region Forward Plan for Buffalo Niagara, they assembled ideas and strategies to align their actions to their values, providing a basic framework for moving the region towards a

more resilient, prosperous, and opportunity-rich future for all of the region's inhabitants. The plan uplifted five big ideas:

1. Provide housing choices in safe, opportunity-rich neighborhoods,
2. Strengthen the food system for a healthier population and economy,
3. Diversify our transportation options and connect our places,
4. Create a thriving economy through efficient land use, and
5. Conserve our energy, air, and water and prepare for climate change.

No single government agency, civic organization, or individual had the power or authority to bring about these changes. However, united by their common vision and framework, each person, organization, and institution had the potential to do their part to contribute to shared regional prosperity. Cultivating an engaged and informed citizenry to become agents for change at the local level would be essential for the region's success.

Because of that... The region's citizens recognized that building the power of community leaders was one of the best investments they could make. They developed the Citizens Planning School and its Champions for Change program to ignite bright ideas and inspired leadership for a flourishing region. Each year, new community leaders joined this growing league of Champions, each bringing their unique gifts and ideas for change forward. Through six workshops and countless hours invested over 3 months, they worked to transform their bright ideas for change into reality with the support of university students, faculty, community partners, and one another in collaboration with the UB School of Architecture and Planning, Blackstone LaunchPad, and It Takes a Village Action Organization. They conducted research, formed partnerships, and identified necessary steps and actions to move their ideas forward. Not only did they develop strategic action plans, they also learned to mobilize assets and allies and recover from setbacks through generative listening, powerful conversations, and storytelling. At the end of each program, Champions for Change presented their visions and plans for action to the larger regional community in One Region Forward's annual Idea Summit. Those who attended were touched and moved by the Champions' bright ideas and inspired to make commitments of their own. As they went back to their communities with the good news of change underway, they inspired others to renew their own commitments to make their region a great place to live.

Until finally... Everyone in the region started to experience life in abundance, living out their dreams as individuals, in communities, and in thriving ecosystems. Instead of hiding their hearts' desires and their gifts, they shared them with an ever-widening circle of fellow leaders. The community invested in vital infrastructure to support a thriving, regenerative economy powered by healthy relationships. Every child grew up with a sense of belonging in neighborhoods with access to great opportunities. Everyone in the region enjoyed life-giving water, food, air, shelter, and energy. Life in its full biodiversity flourished once more. The region's citizens continued gathering together to celebrate – giving thanks for the people, earth, sun, waters, winds, plants, animals, teachers, and ancestors who have made their life bountiful in so many ways.