



Strategic Plan

2019 - 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

In March 2018, the Discovery Museum opened an expanded, modern, accessible building—the culmination of years of planning and fundraising by a dedicated staff and committed supporters. With this milestone, the museum successfully completed all of the goals outlined in its 2013-2017 Strategic Plan, which focused on creating facilities to meet the needs of our growing, diverse audience for years to come. Building on this achievement, the Discovery Museum’s Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 concentrates on the impact of our work and the people who together make the museum a vibrant and cherished community resource—visitors, staff, volunteers, students, teachers, board, advisors, partners, and donors. This plan—through which the museum aims to cultivate a sense of belonging for the community—will guide planning via the annual budgeting process and provide a standard for review at each year’s end.

Discovery Museum is a hands-on museum that blends science, nature, and play, inspiring children and adults to explore and learn together. The brand new, 16,000-square-foot museum and Discovery Woods outdoor nature playscape and treehouse—all accessible and developed based on Universal Design principles—blend the best of STEAM learning on a beautiful 4.5-acre campus in Acton, MA. Serving families and schools from more than 300 towns and cities in Massachusetts alone, the museum is committed to early learning and 21st century skills development through play. The museum provides more than 300 hands-on science, technology, engineering, art, math, and music programs each year, free with admission.

The on-site interactive exhibits are accessible and created to be both enjoyable and usable by the widest possible range of people, without regard to age or ability. All exhibits are hands-on, low-tech, open-ended, and interactive, to encourage play, exploration, and experimentation by all. In addition to its exhibits, the museum offers a myriad of educational programs, resources, and outreach activities—most prominently, the 25-year-old school outreach program, Traveling Science Workshops, which brings the museum’s brand of STEM experiences to more than 35,000 children a year in their classrooms.

This strategic plan will guide the museum’s annual planning and implementation of exhibits, programs, staffing, and outreach. The plan creates a framework and strategy for the annual budget setting process, identifying priorities for each year’s spending and development efforts. The plan’s performance metrics and annually established objectives will serve as benchmarks for judging the museum’s success on an annual basis. At the end of each year, the leadership team will report to the Board of Directors on the museum’s progress in meeting its performance benchmarks.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Discovery Museum was founded in 1982 by Don Verger, a math teacher from Lincoln and Acton resident. He envisioned a new children’s museum that would be more appropriately scaled for kids than city museums. His vision came to life in a three-story Victorian house, every room an immersive learning experience where children explored science-based concepts through play, supported initially entirely by volunteers. Five years later, a desire to create interactive experiences in math and science for school-aged children, coupled with a highly successful fundraising campaign, led to the construction of the award-winning Science Discovery Museum. There, museum staff and nationally recognized exhibit designers created a low-tech, hands-on exhibit style that has truly become the museum’s hallmark. In 2007, the Discovery Museums celebrated its 25th anniversary and purchased an adjacent residential property to round out its current 4.5-acre campus.

After 30 years, the facilities were no longer adequate to carry out the educational vision or meet the needs of a growing audience. The inaccessible buildings also limited capacity to accommodate all visitors’ diverse backgrounds and abilities, a commitment formalized in the Strategic Plan in 2009. In 2013, the museum initiated a \$7 million capital campaign, later expanded to \$8.4 million, to fund a complete renovation and expansion of the Science Discovery Museum and outdoor areas, with a plan to close the 130-year-old Children’s Discovery Museum building.

In 2016, the museum opened Discovery Woods, an outdoor nature playscape and 550-square-foot wheelchair-accessible treehouse. The Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded the museum the 2017 Commonwealth Award for its commitment to creating inclusive learning experiences.

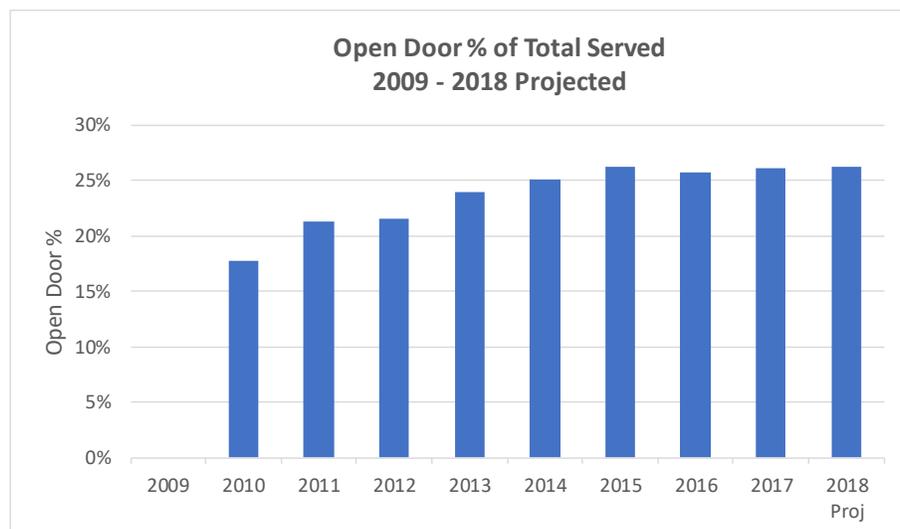
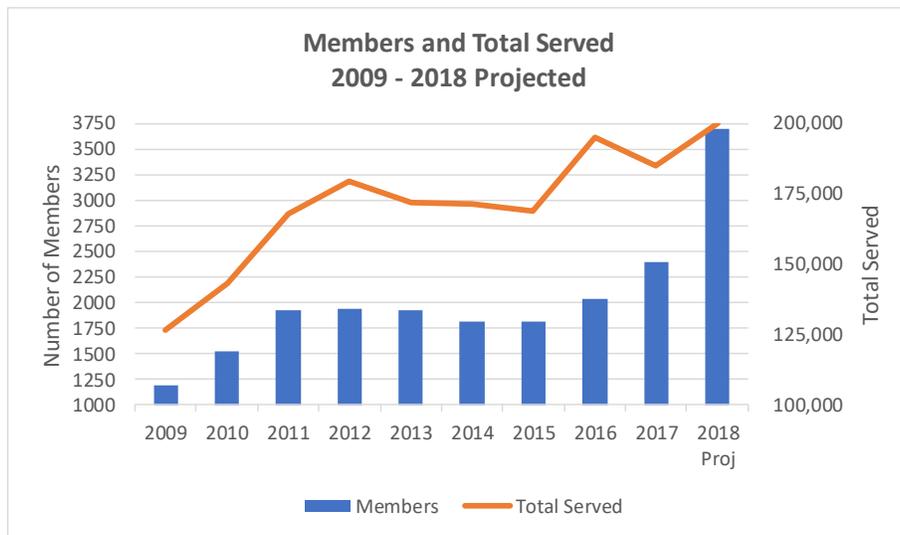
In 2017, the museum concluded the Campaign for the Discovery Museum by raising \$8.8 million. The all new Discovery Museum opened in March 2018. The 16,000-square-foot building doubled the museum’s indoor square footage and allowed all exhibits to be placed under one roof for the first time. This also brings all public areas of the campus, indoors and out, up to full ADA compliance. Favorite exhibits from the original two museums were re-imagined to improve accessibility and new exhibits were developed—all in accordance with Universal Design principles. In 2018, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts awarded the museum the LEAD Community Asset Award for its long-time commitment to accessibility.

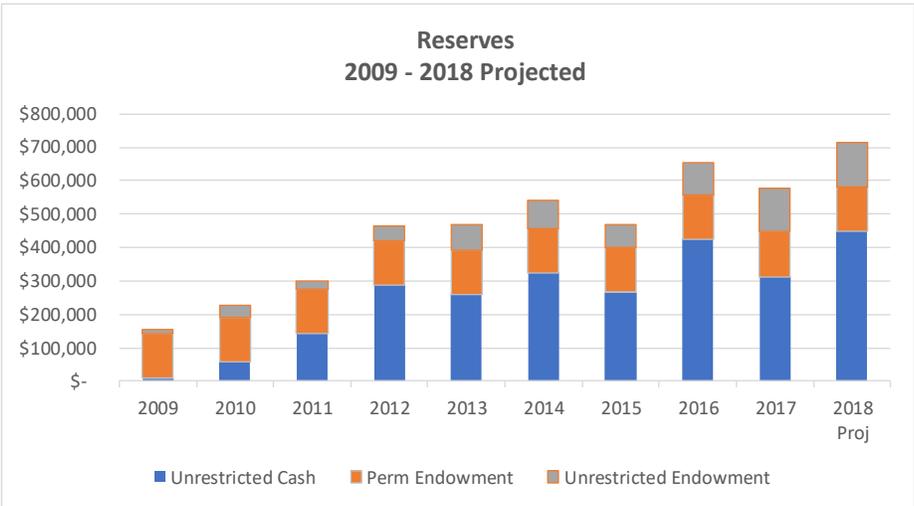
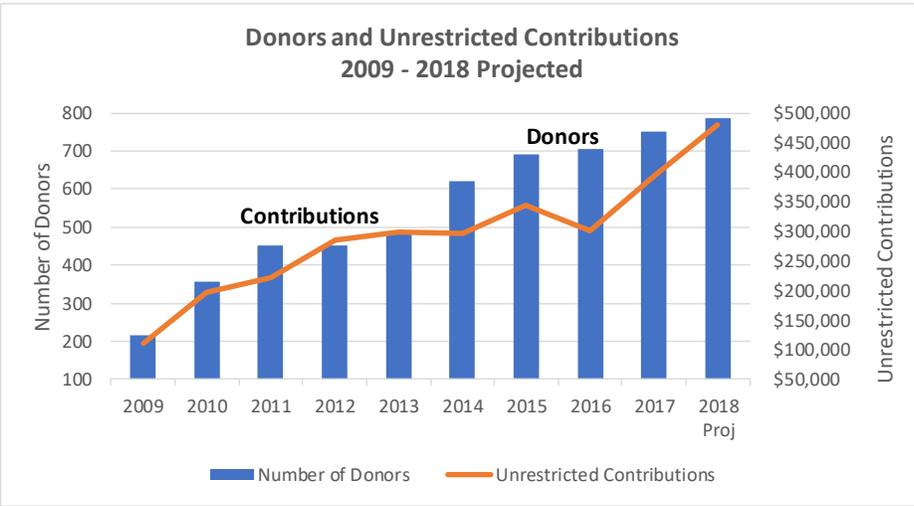
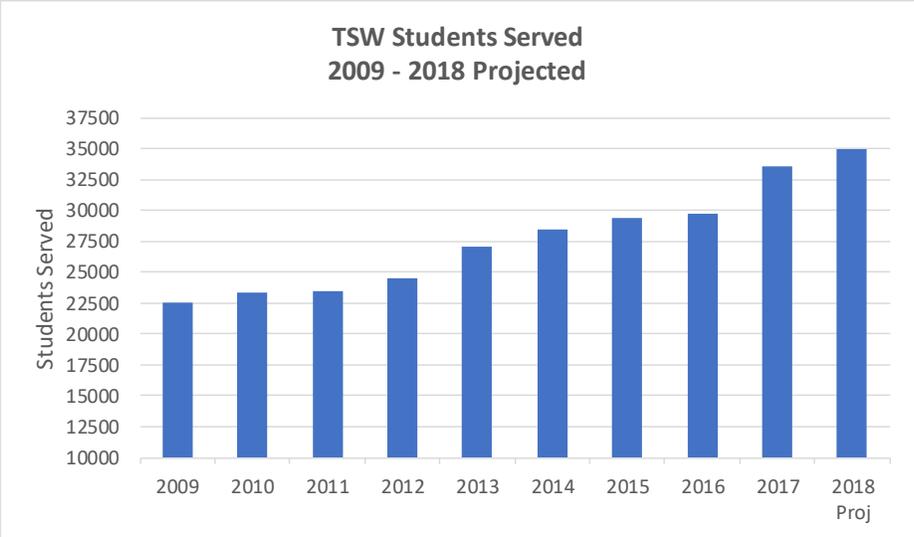
The new campus—and the attention it has garnered—has launched the museum to a new level of success. In its first month, the museum reached 18,075 people—compared to 9,615 for the same period in the previous year. By the end of 2018, the museum expects to have reached 200,000 people total. Membership grew to more than 2,400 families in

2017, a 9% increase over 2016, and now exceeds 3,600 families. As visitation increases, the museum remains committed to reaching an increasing proportion of its audience through its access programs. Discovery Museum currently serves 26% of its audience for free or nearly free through these programs and aims to subsidize the experiences of 30% of visitors annually in five years.

The organization is run by 18 full-time staff, more than 65 part-time staff, and a 19-member Board of Directors comprised of business, higher education, nonprofit, and community representatives (see appendix for the full Board and staff list).

The museum is proud to have met or exceeded all of the goals from the last strategic plan, written nine years ago. Now it is time to build on those results in a new strategic plan that will guide efforts over the next five years.





III. CRITICAL STRATEGIC ISSUES

The current issues facing children and families make the museum's approach to learning and exploration more relevant and important than ever. These challenges include: the pervasive digital landscape, an increasing emphasis on didactic learning and testing in schools, tendencies to over-schedule and over-program children, fear of children playing outdoors, the disparities in learning opportunities among children of different backgrounds, and skepticism about the value of science. These stresses come at a time when many families are seeking authentic ways to connect with and learn alongside their children while at the same time preparing them for school and equipping them with 21st century skills. This moment creates an opportunity to move forward in three critical ways.

From Stability to Sustainability

In 2009, when the last strategic plan was written, the Discovery Museums were in a slump. Visitation and membership were flat and the two museum buildings were badly in need of repairs and improvements. From 2009-2017, the museum focused on growth, on increasing visitation; membership; donor participation in the Annual Fund; outreach to schools; the number of public programs delivered; the museum's profile as an active member of the regional community; and the perception of the museum as a place that can grow while still honoring its essential educational philosophy. During this time, the museum's approach to operations was "more is better." This strategy paid off. In 2013, the museum committed to an ambitious campus improvement plan and launched a capital campaign that ultimately funded construction of the fully accessible Discovery Woods in 2016 and the brand-new Discovery Museum in 2018. Visitation, membership, and contributed revenue are now up dramatically and visitor enthusiasm and general "buzz" are at their highest point since the museum's founding in 1982.

For the next five years, the museum has an opportunity to move from stability to sustainability. It will do this by engaging participants and supporters more deeply. The museum will focus on defining and honing the *quality* of the experience in addition to increasing the *quantity* served. In the future, the museum wants to develop even more effective methods for understanding and explaining its impact. Measuring impact will be an important aspect of continued success. To do that, the museum needs to understand more clearly the difference it makes. What differentiates this museum experience from other museums? Does it have a lasting impact on children, families, and teachers after their visit ends? The Discovery Museum will deepen its impact by finding ways to increase participants' connection, relationship, responsibility, and sense of belonging to the museum. For example, a continued commitment to access requires a better understanding of and an ability to work with and pro-actively engage a broader audience, including underserved communities and learners of all abilities.

From One Culture to One Incredible Whole

For almost 30 years, the Discovery Museums had a dual culture—the Children’s Discovery Museum and the Science Discovery Museum. The two buildings offered separate experiences for different ages and for the staff working in each. The museum has now engineered a move to one culture—Discovery Museum, offering an **opportunity to make the physical move an operational and philosophical one, to merge many successful components into one incredible whole.** The Discovery Museum has an innovative, fully accessible campus and exhibits, leading-edge educational programs, a growing reputation among children’s museums, and more. Now is the time to coordinate initiatives, align efforts, and collectively affirm those values and principles that make this one extraordinary organization.

From Infrastructure to People

The last Strategic Plan focused on infrastructure needs, culminating in the beautiful new museum and an expanded outdoor campus. This success would have been impossible without the extraordinary professionalism, sacrifice, and teamwork of hard-working and talented staff. **Now it is time to invest in people.** The museum will turn its attention to the internal organizational and staff resources that are needed to support strategic growth. Thoughtful attention to compensation, appropriate staffing levels, and a supportive learning environment are crucial to meeting a key qualitative goal—creating a sense of belonging, an understanding by the entire community that the museum is not only a place to visit; it’s also a place where personal connections are made. These are grounded in internal practices that give rise to a fulfilling and productive staff culture, and take full advantage of the creativity and passion of the Museum’s employee team.

Planning for the Future

With attention turned for the last ten years to a new museum building, now accomplished, we may now look forward to those parts of our campus that remain untouched, as well as a plan for continued development of new exhibit ideas. **Facilities and exhibit plans will set the stage for the museum’s ongoing physical evolution,** and establish the best timelines for change.

Similarly, **business planning needs to continue to look at opportunities to reach more audiences while enhancing or creating new revenue streams.** Diversifying revenue sources, expanding donor support, and building financial reserves will support sustainable operations and allow appropriate risk-taking in support of innovation.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mission Statement

Discovery Museum sparks delight in learning by igniting curiosity and creativity in children and adults as they discover together the joys of science, nature, and play.

Vision

All children will feel inspired to explore their world and be confident in their natural abilities so they can fulfill their unique potential and embrace a dynamic future.

Values

All of our values are equally important and we strive to keep them in mind at all times.

- We place children at the center of all we do.
- We believe that play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.
- We believe that discovery and scientific inquiry are both a means and an end.
- We believe that connecting with the world around us makes us healthier and more engaged stewards of the earth.
- We share a commitment to an approach to learning as defined by our Learning Framework.
- We honor the roles adults play in children's learning and well-being.
- We believe it is essential to build a strong and broad foundation for growth and learning beginning at birth.
- We ensure all learners are welcome and able to engage fully in the experiences we provide.
- We stand up for kids and we stand up for science.
- We believe we are most effective when we work together toward common goals.
- We commit to governing with integrity and operating a highly professional and financially sustainable organization.

V. STRATEGIC GOALS

A. Strategic Goals Overview

The Strategic Planning Committee has identified five goals that are essential to our long-term success. They can be summed up simply with five words: Belonging, Impact, Advocacy, People, and Sustainability. *These goals are interdependent and connected.*

1. Belonging: Enhance meaningful relationships, connections and engagement.

We want our entire community—all who visit, work, volunteer here, participate in our programs, or donate to us—to experience a welcoming, supportive environment, where everyone feels comfortable following their curiosity and contributing in a way that suits their abilities and learning styles. Our entire community creates this learning environment together and feels more connected because of that involvement. Generations of families have this special synergistic connection with us. We believe that the more connected our community feels to us, the greater our impact will be on them and the more likely they will be to support us.

2. Impact: Increase and make a compelling case for our impact.

Now is the time to make a compelling case for the value of the museum's unique approach. The museum plans to develop even more effective methods for understanding and explaining its impact on children and caregivers. Staff need realistic and authentic ways to measure not just the *quantity* of interactions, but the *quality* as well. Paying close attention to indicators of impact, measuring it, and then clearly communicating that message are the keys to the museum's continued success. This focus on quality over quantity will also be a diagnostic tool to help improve operations.

3. Advocacy: Give voice to issues critical to children, based on our mission, values, and experience.

The museum has always been a leader in the areas of hands-on learning; the integration of children's museums with science; early access to STEM; accessibility and inclusion; and connecting with the outdoors. The museum feels compelled to articulate these values and approaches more publicly because children and caregivers face new challenges. This plan creates a structure and process for determining just how and when to take advantage of advocacy opportunities. By strategically speaking up for the museum's core values, we will reinforce the relevance of our mission, broaden our impact, and increase our value as a respected leader in the children's museum field and the community.

4. People: Invest in the people who implement our mission so they may do their best work.

Our continued success hinges on our talented and dedicated staff, volunteers, board, and advisors. We will pay renewed attention to the internal organizational and staff resources that are needed to support strategic growth. We will offer fair compensation as well as professional development opportunities. Staff should feel that they are part of our story; celebrating and supporting their contributions will be a priority. Board members, too, will benefit from structures and processes that

enhance communication and productivity. This renewed emphasis on a collaborative, fulfilling, respectful working environment for all will connect everyone in our organization more closely to our mission. Investing in people will not only deepen our impact on children, but will also deepen our impact on our staff, Board, and volunteers.

5. Sustainability: Ensure the Museum has the financial support and methods of operation that maintain its long-term health.

The plan charts a clear path forward to capitalize on the museum’s recent momentum, sustain current operations, and plan for manageable future growth. The museum will continue to cultivate diverse and loyal sources of revenue and support, including new earned and contributed income streams. The museum will complete exhibit and facilities master plans to maintain the campus, underscored by a commitment to environmental sustainability. Succession planning will guide staff and board promotion and recruiting efforts to ensure sustained organizational leadership. The strategic vision, with its emphasis on articulating impact and advocating for the institution’s values, will link the museum directly to new and newly engaged sources of support.

B. Strategic Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1: BELONGING

Enhance meaningful relationships, connections, and engagement.

Strategy 1: Engage participants in meaningful programming

Co-create opportunities for our participants to expand and deepen their interests with us.

Strategy 2: Seek feedback

Give a voice to our participants.

Strategy 3: Prioritize inclusivity, access, and ease of use

Prioritize our ongoing work to be inclusive in the broadest sense, including developing and maintaining an infrastructure that enables maximum participation.

Strategy 4: Support staff, board, and volunteers

Systematically support staff, board members, and volunteers to invest in and promote a culture of belonging.

Strategy 5: Engage those who support the museum

Engage donors and prospective donors with Museum activities.

Strategy 6: Cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships

Be intentional about cultivating partnerships and collaborations that are outcomes-oriented and mutually beneficial.

GOAL 2: IMPACT

Increase and make a compelling case for our impact.

Strategy 1: Clarify Intended Impact

Create our Learning Framework so we may integrate it into all areas of our work.

Strategy 2: Evaluate Impact

Engage in active evaluation of key elements of our work.

Strategy 3: Articulate Impact

Find additional authentic and effective ways to articulate our impact and make the learning we inspire visible.

Strategy 4: Strengthen Impact

Increase and sustain our ability to make an impact.

GOAL 3: ADVOCACY

Give voice to issues critical to children, based on our mission, values and experience.

Strategy 1: Create a Decision-making Process

Create a point of view process grounded in our values.

Strategy 2: Create an Advocacy Structure

Create a structure to articulate and communicate our point of view.

GOAL 4: PEOPLE

Invest in the people who implement our mission so they are able to do their best work.

Strategy 1: Ensure appropriate staffing

Create and continuously evaluate the best organizational structure to move us forward.

Strategy 2: Offer market-based compensation

Create a compensation plan that retains and attracts dedicated and skillful employees.

Strategy 3: Foster continuous learning

Foster a learning environment for staff and volunteers.

Strategy 4: Sustain a collaborative environment

Support and create a collaborative, respectful culture that empowers and energizes.

Strategy 5: Acknowledge contributions

Tell the story of our staff, volunteers, board, and advisors and their essential roles.

Strategy 6: Practice good governance

Develop a governance structure that best enables the Board and Council of Advocates to support the Museum

GOAL 5: SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the Museum has the financial support and methods of operation that maintain its long-term health and allow for strategic risk-taking.

Strategy 1: Articulate ambitious, achievable business plan

Cultivate a robust revenue mix including individual donors, visitation and membership, earned income from school programs and facility rentals, corporate sponsorships, grants, planned giving, and other types of support.

Strategy 2: Develop, fund and implement exhibit master plan

Develop a master plan that identifies priorities for new exhibits and maintenance timeline for current exhibits.

Strategy 3: Develop, fund and implement facilities master plan

Develop a master plan that identifies maintenance, renovation, and construction priorities for the new building, older buildings, Discovery Woods, parking, and open space.

Strategy 4: Practice environmental stewardship

Incorporate environmental sustainability in our facilities, exhibits and operations planning.

Strategy 5: Formalize succession plan

Formalize succession planning for staff and Board.

C. Measures of Success:

These metrics serve as indicators of organizational health. They provide a set of annual objectives for reporting on quantifiable measures of success as well as qualitative impacts. The museum will review these metrics annually to benchmark growth from one year to another and to identify areas needing improvement. Some of the qualitative metrics will require new measurement tools and evaluation processes.

Key Measures	2018 Baseline	2023 Target
Family Memberships	3,700 families	4,000 families
Total Served (Campus Visitors + TSW)	200,000	215,000
Total Served by TSW	35,000	43,000
Open Door Connections - % of total audience	26.3%	30%
Total Annual Contributed Income	\$480,000	\$650,000
Cash Reserves	\$710,000	\$1M or \$ equal to 6 months of operating expenses
Average Staff Salary Compensation Ratio	1.00	1.25
Net Promoter Scores - Visitor Satisfaction	N/A	75%
Net Promoter Scores - Staff Satisfaction & Engagement	N/A	75%
Average Length of Membership	N/A	2.9 years
Systems for Appropriate Data Collection & Analysis	Limited and decentralized data collection focused on quantity of impact	Centralized system for regularly collecting, analyzing, and reporting on data about quantity and quality of impact

VI. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Discovery Museum formed a planning committee of selected staff and board members. The planning committee met weekly over six months between spring and fall 2018. The planning committee also facilitated five meetings with the Discovery Museum staff. With support from The Middlesex Bank Charitable Foundation, Ann Budner of ABudner Strategy Consulting was hired to lead the process.

We are very grateful to the following committee members who donated their time, expertise, and insights to this process.

Staff Members:

Marie Beam, Chief Development Officer

Jill Foster, Director of School & Group Programs

Neil Gordon, Chief Executive Officer

Alli Leake, Early Childhood Education Director

Board Members:

Kerry Hawitt, Vice President of Quality Systems & Product Quality, Shire

Justin Kliger, Associate, Ropes & Gray, LLP

Carolyn Platt, Carlisle Public Schools (retired)

Lees Stuntz, Executive Director, Creative Learning Exchange

Consultant:

Ann Budner, Principal, ABudner Strategy Consulting

VII. APPENDIX

A. Learning Framework To Be Completed in 2019

B. Board of Directors

We are grateful to these Board members who shared valuable feedback on the plan during and after the Board retreat on April 28, 2018.

William Ryan, Chair	Harry Hollenberg
Jarod J. Bloom, CPA, CFP, Treasurer	Andrew Howard
Dr. Anthony Rao, Clerk	Justin Kliger
Cheryl Beaudoin	Xuan Kong
Paula Bentinck-Smith	Bruce Osterling
Helen Crary	Carolyn W. Platt
Robert Ferrara	Margaret A. Ramsey
Pamela Gannon, Ph.D.	Jose Rivera
Jeffrey Glidden	Lees Stuntz
Kerry Hawitt	

C. Staff Members

We are grateful to these staff members who shared valuable feedback on the plan during five meetings held from May through October.

Marie Beam	Denise LeBlanc
Molly Bloom	Cheryl Lombardo
Mark Cooper	Cara Lonardo-Roy
Rachel Danford	Sarah Mackie
Elizabeth Dorsey	Nick Malo
Jill Foster	Cindy Matchett
Neil Gordon	Ann Sgarzi
Jill Jacques	Zlati Shishkova
Karen Kerns	Natasha Venti
Elizabeth Leahey	Kathie Watt
Allison Leake	Becky Werner

D. Board Meeting Notes

Board Retreat 4.28.18

I. Grounded Visioning

1. What the Discovery Museum Means to Me

- Keeper of scientific method and process where knowledge is shared and protected
- Brings people together
- Community/community resource
- Fun, positive place for kids, a bonding experience for kids and adults
- Supports accessibility
- Promotes STEM education
- Excitement, growth, exploration, inspiration
- Family component - place to unplug and learn together, feel good about themselves
- Nurtures and educates with hands-on activities that are developmentally appropriate
- Value of play, hands-on experimentation
- Non-digital
- Counter-cultural
- How things work the way they do
- Safe
- High functioning, dedicated staff
- An opportunity to introduce, educate an appreciation/interest in science and nature to young children and their families (“traditional,” “old school”)
- A place where families can experience time together that is focused on joint exploration in play, science and nature
- A place where our children grew up exploring, discovering and spent quality family time together. Now it’s time for the next generation to do the same! Our children are bringing their children.
- DM means a place - a community of learning, excitement - where people (families) gather to play, relax, bond
- A creative environment focused on developing kids and family experience in the area of STEM
- Excitement, exploration, growth, inspiration leads to critical thinking. A healthy experience
- Fun, positive exploration.
- Discovery - opportunity to be with grandchildren and share an experience
- Hope for kids - to be themselves, to enjoy all the blessings of a childhood filled with wonder and awe, and to become empowered, strong, compassionate adults with a naturally broad and open-minded world view
- Organization with a staff that has an enormous dedication to the museum/children
- Way to promote STEM education and support families and children and support accessibility
- Knowledge protected, shared
- Keepers of scientific ideas, method and process

- Collaborative, inclusive, sharing of knowledge
- A local place where my family and I can go to learn, discover and have fun
- Grandchildren, people - Tony R, neat Board
- Hands-on learning, the value of play and experimentation, science and math is FUN, how and why things work
- Great community resource
- High functioning, well-motivated staff doing things they love
- Great place for kids and kid escorts
- An ongoing center/venue for the nurture and education of children in a hands-on, counter-cultural way that is developmentally and cognitively appropriate

2. When has the Discovery Museum Been at its Best?

- NOW!
- New building, great staff, good leaders, good board, Discovery Woods
- It was also fun when it started with Don Verger, but that was a much smaller scale
- Combination of inside and outside, open doors/access
- When child leaves saying, "I want to do that at home too," and now CAN
- When see wonder and excitement in child's eye
- When you see parents playing and exploring too
- When there is always something more to explore
- Collective effort to minimize disruption during construction
- Whole planning process for construction
- Impact on visitors of all abilities
- Response to specific child needs, kids can be fully themselves
- Question and answer periods during speaker events
- Brand new experiences
- Different uses of exhibits
- A wonderful destination that provided healthy family bonding times - sitting at the cafe table with my daughter
- Especially for Me events, Free Friday Nights, ACRE family visits, speaker events Q & A
- The combination of an outside space, new museum space providing opportunities to explore in both venues. Also, incorporating the values and vision of the past.
- Personally, when my children and grandchildren were at the age of loving it!
- When new things happened - openings, new exhibits and old favorites loved, conservation doors opened
- Exhibits that really engage young people to explore and discover
- Planning for new facility - inclusive and thoughtful
- When inclusiveness increased, when took risks to better itself/grow, courage to be itself & not follow herd
- A visit by Minute Man Arc clients (6) to Discovery Woods. Sean M. had never been in a treehouse before with his wheelchair)
- It is at its best now. Second best was when it was founded and at the forefront of hands-on exploratory educational experiences based in community

3. Hopes and Dreams

- Older kids feel it's for them too (middle school age)
- Making play accessible (post second grade)
- To continue to attract best staff/leadership/Board members
- Teacher training/professional development
- Parent series
- Parent and grandparent-geared visuals in exhibits
- Community feedback on how we can improve
- Green energy modeling - deal with climate change issues
- Develop Great Hill as a resource
- Link to Acton's "string of pearls" (NARA, Arboretum, Library) - a destination
- Foster appreciation of natural history, e.g. Native Americans
- Expand circle of influence geographically, digitally
- Continue to be a national and international beacon for the future path of discovery museums for kids - what's next?
- That the Museum will continue to model its current strengths and be in the forefront of the next initiative, a natural outgrowth of discovery education and accessibility.
- TSW - how grow and serve more, esp. underserved populations?
- To become a sustainable, widely recognized leader in developing an appreciation of science to young children
- Impact demonstrated, audience engages each other, parents learn
- Hope we will become financially situated to build a large endowment that could be a primary, sustaining source of revenue
- Continue to provide a fun, safe, educational program for ALL families regardless of needs & background to create their own family memories
- Be an example - a model for learning, respecting the environment, diversity
- That older kids don't blow it off as only for young kids
- To inspire and delight more people
- To influence a broader region (national?)
- To help children discover who they are and what they are interested in, i.e. influence what they do in their late education and careers
- To build a new generation of inquisitive, inspired parents
- Continue to have "great leadership" that promotes discovery and hands-on exploration for children
- That it becomes easier and more joyful for staff - letting everyone have big ideas vs. small worries
- Stand more fully in its place as a very special and powerful organization. Kids leading the way for kids
- Focus on staff satisfaction and gratitude
- Boston presence with TSW
- Improve 183 or staff offices, reimagine (?) Children's Museum
- Increase rental option
- Maintain mission to serve families and children - more access for marginalized groups (more partnerships), keep on leading edge of science education, teacher trainings/professional development

- Meet needs of science education for 21st century childhood
- Stay true to its analog, hands on, multisensory strengths
- A steady presence fostering knowledge and creativity
- To fully develop hands-on playful learning models (fun) for more kids and families
- To attract and develop great staff
- Foster deeper appreciation of regional ecosystems and history
- More all generation exhibits and events
- Even more early to mid-teen activities
- Might include even more dining for an extended stay

4. Reasons for Optimism

- Leadership
- Excellent staff
- Community involvement
- Fundraising
- Political support
- Amazing platform and reputation
- Committed colleagues
- Committed mission, vision, values - crystal clear
- Highly relevant, 21st century thinking
- Financially healthy, strong public support, dedicated staff, a widely supported objective
- Solid foundation, good people, energy, huge upside
- We continue to build support in the community, among donors and corporations. We have amazing leaders, staff and board
- Strong leadership/staff, strong board, a beautiful facility with the structure and future plans to grow and develop
- Fabulous staff and leadership, Board seeking diversity, financial stability, cutting edge and creative
- An amazing platform in place already (including reputation)
- Opportunities yet untapped, e.g. electronic
- Committed colleagues and talent
- Great CEO (now), strong Board, excellent staff, strong community support
- GOOD PEOPLE and the knowledge that what we are doing is something the world needs
- Increase of revenues to support goals with new building
- Strong leadership - Neil, staff and faculty, board
- Successful campaign and building
- Continued demand for STEM education, especially for younger children
- Leadership is superb
- Passion of staff
- The necessary tools to think critically, logically, discover are more in need now than ever before. Discovery Museum is so relevant!
- Strong on-site leadership and a well-positioned platform from which the Museum can reach many people
- People, action-oriented, fundraising

- Clear mission, vision and values
- Leadership - Board, CEO, CDO
- Outstanding programs and content
- Positive impacts on kids and families (learning and excitement)
- Ann is doing our strategic plan and great board, good leadership, good stuff
- Community responding well
- Good government connections
- People love kids and doing stuff for kids
- Good mission, value, vision
- Past success. A strong community involvement and connection, excellent staff, growing financial stability

Remember: Drive change, avoid complacency

II. Goals for the Strategic Plan

- Touch communities/kids multiple times - leads to more impact
- Geography goals - small or big? Wide or deep?
- Board and staff should be on the same page with the plan
- Emphasize measuring impact on kids and parents
- Big bold vision is wonderful but need staff and programs to support it
- We've created a unique, trusted community - need to build on it internally and externally
- Address unfinished business from last plan, including governance
- We are more discovery-oriented than most museums, use more common materials. We are on the brink of losing that
- Do we want to continue to be a beacon? A lighthouse? Will guide our goals
- We need to know who we are and stay the course

III. Ideas for Goals by Category

Eight Categories: Sustainable Financial Health, Audience/Impact/Reach, Building/Land/Facilities, Internal/Support/Organization, Alliances/Partnerships, Outreach, New Business, General Ideas

1. Sustainable Financial Health (9 responses)

- Endowment (4 responses)
 - Develop planned giving program to fund long-term endowment
 - Build endowment to support people and programs
 - Target endowment to \$2M in 5 years, \$5M in 10 years
 - Generate 4-6% free cash from endowment annually to fund people and programs (\$100-250K/year)
 - Build an endowment fund that will generate enough income to
 - Fund staff?
 - Fund operations?
 - Fund building and grounds?
- Corporate sponsors (2 responses)
 - Corporate partnerships that are responsive to new needs and partner in program direction
- Cadre of loyal individual donors giving \$10,000 annually for operations
- Good investments (right investment in people)
- Solid hiring, retention, succession and development of staff → reduce turnover
- Establish crisis management/contingency plan
- Buy land/buildings for investment that are contiguous to current property
- Building both security in finances and also consistent/steady funding sources for certain programs
- Become competitive for national funding
- To have the resources not to have to worry about the other categories where our priorities are
- Able to take risks and pursue big ideas with an appropriate financial buffer in place

2. Audience/Impact/Reach (12 responses)

- Geographies/Demographics
 - Audiences - Lowell, Chelsea, Revere, Everett, Fitchburg, etc.
 - Target surrounding urban communities - Marlborough, Fitchburg, Lowell, Dracut
 - Increased racial/ethnic/cultural diversity of audience
 - Holistic view of accessibility as it relates to more diverse audiences
- Partnerships
 - More partnerships - targeted and possibility of financial support
 - Partnership or exchange with Drumlin Farm or similar type of venue
- Parents
 - Parent series at Museum - educate parents on child learning & development, encouraging science mind (critical thinking, executive functioning, logic)

- Parental depth
- Help parents manage behavior
- Parents' visuals
 - [H₂?] get involved in exploration
- Educational for families
- (Grand)Parent-child programs
- Teachers/Schools
 - Double the size of TSW in 2 years, 4x in 5 years
 - More than a destination, but a leading provider of training for teachers, parents and other caregivers
 - Possibly offer classes for credit that could generate income for the Museum
- Be a model and catalyst for green sustainable action
 - Reuse/recycle and reduce) within Museum grounds and programs and in TSW
- Off-Peak and New Programming
 - Evening programs at the Museum, maybe music/art exhibits
 - Youth Club/Middle School Programs
 - Summer Camp
 - Senior citizen programs around education/science
- Digital platforms
 - Expand experience at home
 - Online interactive program/site for kids to engage with the Museum
- Reaching audience at multiple levels - great interactions at basic level, but options for people to engage more deeply as they choose, packaged in a manner requiring minimal effort
- Impact - capacity for evaluation

3. Building/Land/Facilities (14 responses)

- Outdoor Space
 - Explore use of Great Hill Conservation Land, program it, leverage and integrate land and trails (3 responses)
 - Create “markers” in the town forest adjacent to the Museum (similar to Thoreau Path in Concord)
 - Will we ever need/want more land??
 - A land/facilities plan which optimizes our resources and addresses:
 - Both older buildings=
 - Expansion of outdoor program
 - Create a water play exhibit with an Archimedes screw in the green sword between buildings (?)
 - Outside theater for concerts, etc.
 - Develop strategy for parking issues (3 responses)
 - Find permanent satellite parking
- Indoor Space
 - Keep exhibits evolving, think of ways to link exhibits to real-life applications
 - Make exhibits relevant to worlds of kids and parents
 - Treat exhibits like staff (need development)

- A clear plan around the evaluation of current exhibits and resource path for adaptation
- Maintaining exhibits and building
 - Avoiding wear and tear causing Museum to feel “old” or unappealing
- Create a flow in the Museum
- Responsible/sustainable signage on why we have no plastic bags in store, how saving energy, etc.
- Extend building
- Rental
 - Expand offerings/options/venues
 - Improve/develop oversight
 - More space for parties, multiple parties at one time
- Older Buildings
 - Develop plans to integrate three old buildings into campus
 - Rehab Children’s Museum Building and reuse (2 responses)
 - #183 and Children’s - Short-term/long-term needs
 - Make building ADA compliant
 - Make building clean and repaired
 - Use for classes, office, etc.
 - Demo #183 (demolish?)
 - Fix offices at Admin building
 - Possibly add apartment for interns/graduate students

4. Internal/Support/Organization (10 responses)

- Staff Salaries and Benefits
 - Hire and pay staff accordingly to %
 - Increase benefits/compensation
 - Re-assess salaries and find ways to retain/reward
 - Assessment of staff pay and benefits
 - Get staff salaries to 95-100% of the market
 - Implement retention program w/matching 401K retirement programs (403B)
- Staff Development and Leadership
 - Staff succession planning (3 responses)
 - Staff professional development
 - Support continuing education programs
 - Implement staff development ladders
 - Support leadership
 - Engagement survey for staff
 - Investing in and empowering staff - giving staff (more) opportunities to try out new outreach ideas
- Hiring Staff
 - Hiring strategy
 - Summer intern
 - Key hires - skills to add
 - Community organizing/partnering
 - National presence
- Organizational Structure

- Reorg/evaluate organization structure to fit new Museum
- Understanding of the appropriate levels of staffing across all departments to allow creativity, development of new ideas, execution
- Importance of strong Board
- Bring to a good level
- A strong enough internal community to support our goal

5. Alliances/Partnerships (7 responses)

- Criteria
 - A strong network of like-minded, cooperatively-oriented partners
 - Establish ongoing, stable partnerships with corporations and foundations that will guarantee funding for a specific number of years
 - Be discerning and targeted in identifying and pursuing new partnerships
 - Accountability on part of partners to support the Museum
- Expand accessibility
 - Continue to think about partnerships - Schools, Girl Scouts, children who lost a parent, Diabetes Camp
- Partnering further with local community, especially schools, and at all levels
 - In terms of grades
 - In terms of who is engaged - students, teachers, special education programs, etc.
 - Summer teacher training facility
 - Perhaps programs w/DeCordova Museum and Drumlin Farm
- Boston Club
 - Source of investors?
 - Diversity Champions

6. Outreach (8 responses)

- Geographies
 - Boston
 - Go “micro” - i.e., Fitchburg
 - Greater outreach to urban, economically challenged family/groups
 - Link with more communities
- TSW - (2 responses)
 - More places
 - Both in-class Traveling Science and actual visits to Museum campus
- Speaker Series - clarify goals and add parallel outreach strategies for specific audiences
 - Educators
 - Grandparents
 - Parents of infants/new parents
 - Members
- Audiences
 - Kid for a Night
 - Reaching more expecting parents (and grandparents)
 - Help working parents
 - Helping teachers gain confidence in science instruction

- Meet 12-14 age group - we have a great group of kids ready to be taken to the next stage
- For home - develop app to build on/follow up to visit at home
- See Audience/Impact/Reach ideas

7. New Business (4 responses)

- Scheduled workshops
- Rental of space
- Using the values/expertise/facilities of the Museum
 - Summer camp/experience (2 responses)
 - After-school “day care?”
 - Inner-city/metro “get-away” day?
 - Would need to partner with others to fill schedule (NARA, Walden Pond)
- Youth Club - 12-14
 - Wet Chemistry
 - IT Lab
 - Biology
- Expanding on “nature” concept
- Use Media
 - Podcasts
 - Local TV connections
 - Radio
 - New social media
 - TED Talks

8. General Ideas (3 responses)

- *In 5 years, I want to see the Museum become...*
 - Bigger, yet with the same feel
 - Better, in terms of more opportunity to explore
 - Broader, in terms of touching more people’s lives
 - Stronger, in our influence and impact
 - A regional/national leader in early childhood (science) education development via some combination of:
 - Education/Play R & D
 - Quantifiable outcomes measurement
 - Alliance(s) with respected higher ed institution
- We believe our approach with children/families is correct
 - Can we prove it?
 - Can we improve it?
 - Can we spread the message?
- To build a community both internally and externally that is a model for using our strengths and values in a broad-reaching way

E. Staff Meeting Notes

Staff Meeting 5.2.18

I. Grounded Visioning:

What the Discovery Museum Means to Me

- Family history, happy memories
- Strong community - internally/externally
- Kids can be themselves, grow at their own pace
- Relaxed place
- A unique place for families to spend time together without distractions
- A place where children come and discover with a sense of wonder, excitement and true happiness
- Play, family, relaxed - for visitors
- Friendly, relaxed, supportive - for staff
- An organization with a mission I believe in, filled with staff I admire and respect
- “Play” + “childhood” advocacy
- A part of my family and an important piece of my life
- A safe space (not just physically) for children and families (and staff) to grow and explore - curious and confident
- Fun for everyone
- Support for kids/families
- Good community member
- A place where kids can be themselves, that is advocating for an unadulterated childhood and letting kids follow their curiosity and grow at their own rate/pace
- A fun, meaningful place to work that allows interaction with a variety of people. Allows a flexible schedule, great people to work with and a getaway from family and home
- Strong reputation, great staff
- Community. Safe space for family engagement. Fun and internal respect amongst staff
- Mission-based finish to my career
- TDM is a place where visitors can make discoveries and have memorable experiences together
- Exploration and discovery, hands-on, providing a place for all to learn
- An organization fully committed to children, families and lifelong, holistic learning

When Has the Museum Been at Its Best?

- Now! - the number of visitors, everything is new and exciting, accessible to all
- School Vacation Week, other peak times
- Positive problem-solving approach
- Mission-focused
- When come together as a staff
- Discovery Woods opening
- Focus on positive visitor experience

- When we were open just for field trips (a different visitor experience than it is now)
- When help child glimpse his/her potential
- 2013 Speaker Series/when we reach beyond our walls, reaching community members who are no longer visitors
- Now - clean and exhibits are working
- Simple materials, slow interactions, busy but not too busy
- Every time we help a child experience - even get a glimpse of their potential
- 2016 felt like the most optimistic time. Museum opening was a big boon. This year is good but feels more stressful.
- Getting to this point was a true growing process (Museum opening too)
- Family Nights and Free Friday Nights
- When a kid who may feel unique or out of place elsewhere finds a home here
- A place that inspires parents, children and staff to better interact with children
- A place that instills new ways of thinking and is a place of learning without anyone knowing(?)
- Right after we opened Discovery Woods. It was a positive experience with a lot of troubleshooting and staff collaboration that helped to better the Museum as a whole
- When we all come together for a single goal, e.g. opening building, a successful visitor experience from start to finish
- When it presents opportunities for visitors to actively engage in experiences that might be unique (sometimes simple, but unique) from Dirtopia to the Girls in Engineering program
- When we share a tangible goal and all contribute our strengths and energy in synergy

Our Hopes and Dreams for the Museum

- Parking
- Get funding we need and deserve
- Make operations more sustainable, predictable - \$, time, energy - so that staff can feel free to experiment, take risks, be as creative as possible without having to worry about resources, bandwidth and the like
- Recognizing the full potential of the current space
- Serving families/communities who might not typically come
- Diversity to reflect our audience
- Value employees to retain and attract
- Staff development
- Reach more people
- Lessen the budget constraints, get the attention and funding we need and deserve
- Stay true to who we are
- To continue its growth and provide membership and an opportunity to visit for those who cannot afford to do so
- Maintenance! Parking solutions. Trash barrels always empty and no litter. I am afraid of the new building looking shabby.
- That the staff who have given so much of themselves - literally - can enjoy the fruits of their labors and love
- People still love it, happy with it, recommending it

- Continue with all the great programming
- Staff is nourished, supported, happy and proud
- To value employees. Pay a competitive rate to get and KEEP good people who feel valued
- We can settle into space and continue to be a place that visitors know and love, while recognizing where we can grow
- Free admission all the time
- Staff and Board reflect audience, audience reflects community
- Leadership
- That it can be a destination known by many more people, accessed by more people
- It becomes a sustainable place to build a career and we can focus on staff development and retention
- Growth, exposure, profit, parking
- Stronger organization support/structure. Reorganization. Pay staff what they deserve and better retention
- The Museum can serve families and communities that may not otherwise have museum experiences - and to make them welcome and comfortable - and to incorporate elements of their culture or values into the experiences
- Continue to introduce new exhibits but also keep some of the old (as was done with new building)
- Continue its tradition of being a personal place that inspires and challenges individuals

Reasons for Optimism

- The kind of people here
- No drop in attendance despite construction
- Visitors love it
- Generational goodwill
- Positive reputation, consistently
- Members from further away
- We have an amazing reputation, motivated and talented staff, community who believes in us, continuous supply of kids and families to serve
- “Hands-on” - hard to find an opportunity for kids to touch
- People care about this place. The community wants the Museum to be successful, to be a resource. We want to support the ideas included in “Open Door” access, without giving up Acton’s privilege.
- We’ve built something that is attractive to parents - many more than the ones who “got” us before - so, they will bring their children and spread the word such that the organization can become more self-sustaining
- Staff is AMAZING. Strong leadership with vision
- The people who are showing up every day to enjoy and appreciate what we are offering
- Response of our core visitors so far. Staff commitment to the Museum.
- Good momentum, good people on the bus
- This is an incredible place with a lot of SOUL, clear identity, that has attracted staff and a community of friends who are deeply like-minded. Also, the world needs “what we do” now more than ever

- Larger building, better marketing, more staff and money can help make more people aware
- People have expressed that an investment in staff would be a goal after the new facility
- The staff, care, attention to detail, the facility
- We set up a good space and structure for growth. Great visitor and community engagement. Lots of enthusiasm and excitement. Making plan focused on staff for future
- Dedicated, caring and talented staff who are given time and resources could do the community outreach that would be needed to have the best merging of goals and ways to work together
- Supportive community (who make it possible to expand/improve) and supportive staff who have been flexible throughout process. Staff working to support one another
- We have created a unique environment well suited for this, and we share common goals

II. Ideas for Goals by Category

Seven Categories: Sustainable Financial Health, Audience/Impact/Reach, Building/Land/Facilities, Internal/Support/Organization, Alliances/Partnerships, Outreach, New Business

1. Sustainable Financial Health

- Less reliance on annual fundraising
- \$2-5M endowment
- Multi-year budget
- National scale projects
- Significant cadre of loyal donors giving \$10K annually
- Robust and growing corporate partnership program
- Contributed revenue as a larger percentage of total operating revenue
- Have the strong “rainy day fund” (6 months)
- Engage members to become volunteers and donors

2. Audience/Impact/Reach

- A creative way to measure impact that is centered on a holistic view of individual people and families
- Commitment to ongoing exhibit planning, R&D, and maintenance
- Ability to develop and create our own ideas, flexibility to prototype, test, fail, work with our visitors
 - Requires staff resources and budget
- Become a de facto “must visit” for suburban families
- Very broad name recognition
- All “types” of families feel welcome
- Create “belonging” instead of “visiting”
- Better measures of impact and better telling the story
- New ways to measure visitor satisfaction

- Establish and recognize thought leadership position
- Stronger birthday party program and better birthday party space to serve visitors
- New ways to respond to visitor/staff feedback
- Reaching audiences outside of current demographics
- Cozy, slow experiences
- Pick a community and go deep
- Transportation to museum to create greater access to low-income and diverse backgrounds
- Afterschool audience - go to them more?
- Diversity in audience
 - Urban, suburban, greater ethnic/cultural diversity
 - Broader view of accessibility to make this a destination for families with diverse backgrounds
- Being recognized by visitors as a place for very young, kids and teens, and adults
- Extended hours to accommodate more families, but NOT free
- Increase in Traveling Science programs
- Continued support - lots - for public programs
- Continued support for “signature” programs

3. Building/Land/Facilities

- No litter, no overflowing trash barrels
- Investment in exhibit/maintenance needs
- Parking
- Reduced # of buildings on campus - #183 or CDM
- Better street visibility
- Bring the entire property (campus? grounds? facility?) to the same level of care(?) as show in Discovery Woods, Discovery Museum (3 buildings/1/2 acreage)
- Keeping the exhibits/offerings fresh and current while honoring roots
- Classroom updated
- Added parking
- Maintenance!
- A way to connect Bessie back to our museum experience (and a refreshed wardrobe for her)
- Settle into our new building and have the time and space to try out all the great ideas we planned
- Café or eating area inside
- Additional space available to eat. Providing a café-setting
- Will we need more land?
- Office space - enough, well-equipped for all
- Renovate Children’s Museum

4. Internal/Support/Organization

- Efficient methods for resolving visitor concerns
- Investment in staff
- Staff development/support opportunities
- Invest in technology infrastructure so staff have tools to better do their jobs and collaborate with each other and with partners
- Better staff compensation
- Deeper staff resources
- Volunteer program that maximizes potential of individuals and partner organizations
- Get salaries to 95-100% of market
- Create R&D capacity (people and/or time) within staff
- Evaluate org structure
- Deal with succession issue
- Staff compensation (part-time to full)
- Institutional equality
- Institutional recognition of the importance of staff retention
- Figure out how to be successful in this building before new business - maybe reorganize or restructure people/departments
- Strategic plan goals should not outpace the capacity of staff
- Staff roles, responsibilities - is org chart still appropriate?
- Compensation, staff development, professional development
- Better benefits
- Pay equity within organization and within industry
- Office staff more visible and more experience in museum and front desk
- Staff feels supported and has access to plenty of resources
- Look at staff benefits (mainly health insurance)
- Each department has help/support necessary before drowning
- Institutional recognition of the importance of staff retention

5. Alliances/Partnerships

- Explore new opportunities
- Afterschool (also in #2)
- Seen as important “thought leaders” in play/childhood field
- Outline DM goals and a process to decide on opportunities to pursue and/or when to abandon what might seem right on paper, but what might not be a good match
- Have criteria to decide
- Strategic reciprocal partnerships with agencies with shared accountability for outcomes/mutual benefit
- More targeted opportunities for educator professional development

6. Outreach

- Demonstrate our generosity and willingness to be inclusive and diverse by visiting new communities
- Increased staff capacity to allow us to participate in more off-site events
- DM as a place for ALL even if you don't have kids or your kids are grown
 - Engage more than target demographic
- Redesign "Fair Kit" to something more focused and better planned. Fee structure? Activities? Dedicated staff?
- Measure scale and impact of outreach - # of people, # of opportunities.
- Have a goal. Is it marketing or mission?
- Outreach training for teachers

7. New Business

- Rental/event management and support
- TSW - satellite location
 - Open Door - Everett
 - Not Open Door - Quincy
- Create a nature-based pre-school (or model STEM preschool)
- Develop "educational opportunities" for older kids, e.g. 10-14, 14+, 21+
- "Adult evenings" of play with exhibits
- Leverage our intellectual/physical assets in new products
- Technological infrastructure

Staff Meeting - 6.20.18

MISSION

Group #1:

- Everyone liked it
- Hands-on and STEAM not there but may be OK since it's in marketing message
- Igniting curiosity and creativity IN, not FOR
- Drop "the" before Discovery Museum
- Should adults be more included?

Group #2:

- Like it!
- Feels like it captures us
- Provides an accurate and positive visual

Group #3:

- "Delight" too soft
- Thumbs up for incorporating adults

VISION

Group #1:

- Does PLAY = HANDS-ON?
- STEAM - exists in marketing materials
- Externally, adults don't see themselves in the vision
- Uncomfortable with "all" = 100%. Related to diversity and inclusion, should be stronger.
- "Potential" too lofty. Maybe "natural abilities?"

Group #2:

- Full potential - has a negative feeling, maybe state differently, e.g. "Navigate your own journey"
- Make it clearer that we are talking about each child's unique potential
- Like use of "environment" so prefer option #2

Group #3:

- Rewrote #3 vision
- *All children feel inspired to explore their world and are confident in their natural abilities to experiment and solve problems, so they can fulfill their potential and embrace a dynamic future*

VALUES

Group #1:

- Diversity and inclusion together
- Separate science from outdoors
- Trust and collaboration has two components - 1) communities and partners and 2) internal staff

Group #2:

- Learning - We believe in a shared approach to learning. See below
- Engagement - We believe learning is a social experience. We foster relationships between staff & visitor, child & adult, adult & adult, child & child
- Diversity
- Access - All children should have access to science and the outdoors
- Community - We are part of a community of collaborators (staff, partnerships, funders)

Group #3:

- Inclusivity vs. Diversity
- Interdisciplinary learning, opening minds, encouraging risk-taking vs. Science and the Environment
- The Environment = ethos/gestalt vs. Science and the Outdoors
- Culture
 - Internal collaboration contributes to the culture
 - External collaboration with our partners