



GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN and STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Approved by the Board of Trustees, March 26, 2014

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Introduction

It is with great excitement that the Grand Rapids Art Museum releases our *Statement of Purpose and Strategic Plan 2014*. With a prime downtown location, our home is an acclaimed architectural landmark, with a growing audience, powerful exhibitions, and a solidifying financial base, and this 104-year old institution is stronger than ever.

The past decade has been one of great change. The Museum has undergone a successful \$83 million capital campaign, the completion of our LEED Gold certified building in 2007 feted with a dramatic community launch, the celebration of our 100th anniversary, and the blockbuster Diana exhibition, which drew attention to the power of “the new GRAM,” selling over 95,000 tickets and over 2500 new memberships, and increasing national visibility for the museum. The decade was marked by leadership transition, with increased involvement of a more diverse board, including younger civic leaders, and most notably, the 2009 departure of Celeste Adams, GRAM’s Director of 13 years. During her tenure, Adams led the institution through an extraordinary era of growth and transformation; achieving major goals for the institution including landmark exhibitions, important acquisitions of art, and a successful \$83 million capital campaign that produced the nationally recognized new Art Museum facility with expanded endowment.

The 2010-2013 Strategic Plan was developed by a staff transition team led by Randy Van Antwerp, then serving as Interim Director, consultant William Johnson of the Berean Group, and the Board’s Executive/Finance Committee. With a vision to “build community strength and enhance the quality of life through art”, this plan focused on financial stability, enhancing the collection and exhibition program, board engagement, guest-centered museum practices, a culture of leadership, respect, collaboration, and communication, and knowing and growing the Museum’s audience. The detailed roadmap provided internal structure and direction as well as increased responsibility and authority for staff, and an increasingly external focus on customer service and community engagement, including important partnerships with the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS), Kendall College of Art and Design, LaughFest, and ArtPrize.

A new Director and CEO, Dana Friis-Hansen, was appointed in July 2011, with a mandate to carry out the goals set in the 2010 Strategic Plan. Early on, an important three-year, three-exhibition exchange collaboration was forged with the Whitney Museum of American Art, raising the level and visibility of exhibitions. A new emphasis was being placed on making GRAM a community convener, bringing to the Museum gatherings of Michigan and Midwestern Museum Directors and Curators, experts on urban strength from Detroit, younger crowds for the colorful and cool After Parties that extended openings until midnight, and TEDxGR participants, among other events. In 2012, the local cultural and creative community was invited to collaborate with GRAM as part of Robert Rauschenberg’s monumental art arrangement game, *Synopsis Shuffle*, with 12 teams formed from representatives from the Ballet, Symphony, Meijer Gardens, UICA, Grid70, MSU College of Human Medicine, WMCAT, and others encompassing fashion, furniture, and shoe designers, teachers, and even a third grader.

In this period GRAM seized the many opportunities offered by the annual open-sourced competition ArtPrize, thoughtfully building systems to support positive guest experiences while accommodating overflow crowds, and curating thought-provoking thematic exhibitions to engage and inspire an audience comprised of many first-time or infrequent museumgoers. Added content such as digital and printed scholarly catalogues with filmed artist interviews, photographic

documentation, and a contextual essay expands the impact of the art and sets a historical record. In 2013, GRAM invited four internationally recognized “anchor artists,” whose work aligned with the theme, to show their work during ArtPrize, enhancing the exhibition. In 2012, *GRAM Selects ArtPrize: Encore!* was added to our annual programming. A yearlong rotating integration of 12-15 ArtPrize works selected from different venues, which are integrated on all three floors of the Museum, this exhibition underscores the significance of ArtPrize and the strength of the art.

Numerous learning initiatives from the past five years have set the stage for the strategic objectives we will pursue for the next five years. *Language Artists*, a specially designed curriculum created in collaboration with GRPS and Kendall College of Art and Design, integrates literacy and the visual arts. Service to educators has been amplified through expanded professional development offerings, collaborative curricula, and the creation of a custom-built online community, GRAM Educator Home. An expanded *GRAMStudio* program was initiated to take advantage of the Education Center’s delightful hands-on spaces, and an Education Gallery adjacent to the lobby was created to highlight art created in our varied programs. To celebrate the landmark collection exhibition, *The Jansma Print Collection: Five Centuries of Masterpieces*, a multimedia iPad app and enhanced website offers scholarship, high-resolution images, music, and a Tumblr interactive portal. Through this resource, global audiences in over thirty countries have explored GRAM’s collection and scholarship.

The Museum has also been building momentum towards greater institutional strength. Through the efforts of the Executive/Finance Committee and Governance and Nominating Committee, the Board has increased in size, skill sets, and diversity, adopting best practices in roles and responsibilities, accountability, and engagement. The Facility Management Team has worked to increase efficiency and reduce operational costs of our green building. Philanthropic programs focused on Major Donors, Business Partners, Membership expansion and upgrades, and Annual Fund are growing. Careful financial management and focused fundraising efforts have produced several strong years, including a surplus of \$247,947, allowing for a \$125,000 transfer into a Building Reserve Fund.

This *2014 Statement of Purpose and Strategic Plan* sets a new, expanded vision for the Grand Rapids Art Museum as “a cultural beacon and a civic anchor.” As we set our sites on raising our impact locally, regionally, and nationally after seven years in our new building at the center of Downtown Grand Rapids, we focus on innovative museum practices and enhanced, engaging guest experiences. While traditionally art museums have focused on the history of art, we are widening GRAM’s territory to include art, design and creativity, which we’ll explore through diverse platforms including exhibitions, collections, learning initiatives, and community collaborations. Our objectives continue to increase the ways in which we are a guest-centered institution while adding structures to connect more efficiently and effectively with the community. Another set of initiatives will strengthen the institution through financial and resource planning, capacity building, philanthropic growth, and staff and board enrichment. As the lead Capital Campaign donor, Peter Wege, declared, “There’s no reason we cannot be one of the best museums of our size in the world!” This new Statement of Purpose and Strategic Plan charts a course of significant and innovative contributions to our community and to the museum field.

Our revised Statement of Purpose is the result of eighteen months of work by staff, board, and community members led by Seth Starnier, at the time Manager, Business Innovation, Amway. Our first major output was a Stakeholder Map that focused our thinking and questions around those we serve. In multiple sessions, we explored art museum orthodoxies as well as trends in the field, which fueled a two-day summit meeting to dig deeply into defining a vision for the Museum as

“one of the best in the world” that truly connected to our stakeholder community. After numerous brainstorming exercises we converged on a list of core principles and concepts that was drafted into a Statement of Purpose and five objectives that, after much polishing and tweaking, led to those adopted by the Board of Trustees on December 11, 2013.

With the completion of the Statement of Purpose and definition of five Objectives, GRAM engaged Visualhero, a local design and planning office, to lead and document a series of day-long working sessions with Board and Staff focused on each of the objectives, in order to expand the field of ideas before distilling the key components of each. Working with data from these activities, the GRAM Management team crafted the detailed Initiatives that are presented here, and were ratified by the Board of Trustees on March 26, 2014.

With the plan complete, the staff and Board are excited for the real work to begin! The staff has already drafted Operational Plans for each department that will serve as roadmaps with milestones and dashboards for our journey forward. Regular reviews and evaluations are planned as part of staff and board regimen, to embed strategic thinking and reflective practice into the core of our activities.

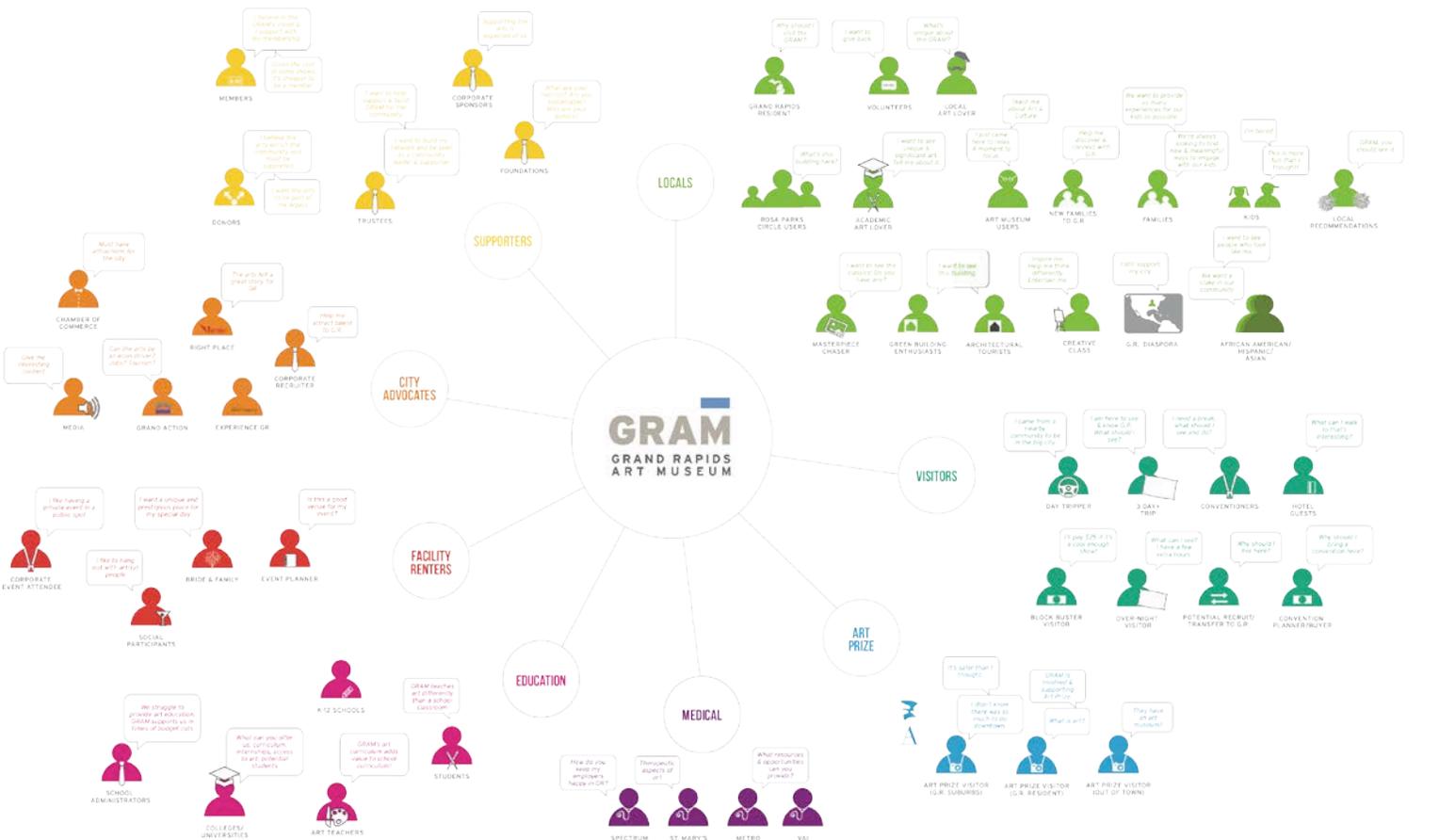
These are exciting times for the Grand Rapids Art Museum. The process behind the creation of these documents—the Stakeholder Map, Statement of Purpose, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Plans—has sparked a renewed energy in the exciting possibilities of art, design and creativity as the springboard for GRAM to thrive as a cultural beacon and a civic anchor well into the twenty-first century.

Dana Friis-Hansen
Director and CEO
April 2014

Staff and Trustees, Framing the Future of GRAM



Stakeholder Map



Statement of Purpose

Focusing on art, design, and creativity, GRAM will provide diverse platforms for experiences, ideas, and dialogue that enrich the human spirit and build practical learning skills. Through dynamic exhibitions, collections, learning initiatives, and community collaborations, GRAM will increasingly serve as a cultural beacon and civic anchor.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Grand Rapids Art Museum are to:

- 1. Expand the Impact of Art**
Enhance and innovate exhibitions, collections, learning, and content creation.
- 2. Activate the Museum Experience**
Design experiences that promote audience engagement, diversity, and participation.
- 3. Integrate Innovation Skills**
Practice and advance human-centered design and 21st-century learning skills.
- 4. Advance Civic and Cultural Leadership**
Increase cultural and civic impact locally, regionally, and beyond.
- 5. Build Institutional Strength**
Fortify institutional stability through earned and philanthropic financial growth, and by managing and leveraging assets.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective A: Expand the Impact of Art

Enhance and innovate exhibitions, collections, learning, and content creation.

Strategic Initiative 1: Develop and support a dynamic and balanced program of GRAM-generated and traveling exhibitions.

Initiative Leader: Chief Curator

Actions

- a. Implement a long-term internal exhibition incubation, planning, and implementation structure that includes cross-functional representation.
Action Leader: Chief Curator
- b. Explore creating an endowment and multi-year sponsorship commitments for funding exhibitions to enable more ambitious and innovative projects.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement
- c. Foster relationships with a local, regional, and national network of curators, scholars, educators, and artists whose interests and artistic goals are aligned with those of GRAM for collaboration and exchange of ideas around exhibitions.
Action Leader: Chief Curator

Strategic Initiative 2: Develop and support a diverse and balanced menu of exhibition- and collection-focused programming that enhances learning and content.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

- a. Evaluate current programs and research the state of the field.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- b. Survey stakeholders to identify markets and areas of opportunity for GRAM.
Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager
- c. Develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate programming.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- d. Explore creating multi-year sponsorship commitments for programming.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement

Strategic Initiative 3: Enhance the Collection and its impact.

Initiative Leader: Chief Curator

Actions

- a. Commit time, research, and resources to building the collection, as outlined in the Collections Plan.
Action Leader: Chief Curator
- b. Add increased and existing content about the Collection to the website, and research moving Collection Database online.
Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

c. Commit time and resources to caring for the collection, as outlined in the Collections Management Policy.

Action Leader: Registrar

Strategic Initiative 4: Create interpretive content strategies that enhance exhibitions, collections, and learning to harness opportunities inside the galleries, and off-site, before, during, and after a visit.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

- a. Evaluate current interpretive strategies and research the state of the field.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- b. Survey stakeholders to identify markets and areas of opportunity for GRAM.
Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager
- c. Develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate interpretive content.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- d. Explore creating multi-year sponsorship commitments for interpretive digital programs.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement

Strategic Initiative 5: Develop a phased plan for innovative approaches for installing exhibitions, collections, and learning activities in and around the building.

Initiative Leader: Chief Curator

Actions

- a. Survey guests regarding how they are currently experiencing GRAM's exhibitions and collections on-site and off and develop a plan for improvements.
Action Leader: Associate Curator, Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- b. Explore ways to create a dramatic art experience at the entrance.
Action Leader: Chief Curator
- c. Explore the feasibility and advantages of transforming the Design and Modern Craft Gallery on the first floor into an introductory gallery, which sets the stage for the GRAM experience.
Action Leader: Chief Curator
- d. Consider feasibility of art installed outside.
Action Leader: Registrar, Lead Preparator
- e. Explore using the Michigan Artist Series exhibitions to commission site-specific work.
Action Leader: Associate Curator

Strategic Objective B: Activate the Museum Experience

Design experiences that promote audience engagement, diversity, and participation.

Strategic Initiative 1: Become a “must-see and often” destination through the strengthening of the GRAM brand experience.

Initiative Leader: Senior Communications Manager

Actions

a. Development of brand guidelines for copy writing and visual communication.

Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

b. Develop a process to ensure consistency, relevance, and integrity of the GRAM brand.

Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

Strategic Initiative 2: Seek opportunities to optimize the museum experience through technology.

Initiative Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Actions

a. Conduct an analysis of digital and information technology infrastructure, seeking opportunities to optimize the museum experience through technology.

Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer

b. Strategically redesign and align digital communications across digital touch points such as targeted emails, social media, website, and blog.

Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

Strategic Initiative 3: Create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive to all guests by exploring ways to reduce any physical and emotional barriers for new and existing audiences.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

a. Conduct a customer journey assessment for the brick and mortar experience.

Action Leader: Guest Services Manager

b. Prototype and observe the impact of cost effective solutions for quick wins towards an improved visitor experience and explore long-term changes.

Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

c. Conduct a study of signage and way finding throughout the building and implement solutions to improve the onsite experience.

Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Strategic Initiative 4: Attract, engage, and retain culturally diverse audiences by designing exhibitions, collections, and learning initiatives that reflect our culturally diverse community.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

a. Continue to involve stakeholders in processes of co-creation during the development of exhibitions, collections, and programming.

Action Leader: Chief Curator

b. Nurture and sustain existing initiatives that have successfully engaged diverse audiences.

Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

c. Identify target groups and communities for strategic growth.

Action Leader: Director and CEO

Strategic Objective C: Integrate Innovation Skills

Practice and advance human-centered design and 21st century learning skills.

Strategic Initiative 1: Operationalize a workplace culture characterized by 21st century skills such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-directed learning.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

- a. Assess and identify core values.
Action Leader: Director of Human Resources
- b. Create a program and implementation strategy to train staff, volunteers, and board on empathy, collaboration, and communication skills.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement, Director of Human Resources
- c. Establish systems and support to improve employee orientation, continuous improvement, and reflective practice.
Action Leader: Director of Human Resources
- d. Provide staff with technological tools, skills, and training that enable the museum to thrive.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Initiative 2: Plan and build a framework for enhancing internal information technology platforms and develop media literacy at all levels of the organization.

Initiative Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Actions

- a. Assess how technology can support efficiencies in project and task management and collaboration across the institution.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer
- b. Conduct a systems assessment of hardware and software.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer
- c. Begin to plan ways in which GRAM can participate in and own technological skills and media literacy through art and creativity.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Initiative 3: Teach and deploy human-centered design.

Initiative Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Actions

- a. Lead the integration of human-centered design methodologies in cross-departmental capacities.
Action Leader: Director and CEO
- b. Identify curricula for human-centered design.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- c. Launch training sessions and programming on human-centered design for internal audiences.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement
- d. Scale training sessions and programming on human-centered design to reach external audiences.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Definitions:

21st Century Skills

For the purposes of this plan, we define 21st century skills as well-developed strategies for success in work and life, such as the ability to think critically and solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and engage self-directed learning (e.g. learn how to learn), accompanied by mastery of core content knowledge in a given field.

Human-Centered Design

Human-Centered Design is the discipline of generating solutions to problems and opportunities through the act of making “something” new, where the activity is driven by the needs, desires, and context of the people for whom we design. (Luma Institute)

Strategic Objective D: Advance Civic and Cultural Leadership

Increase cultural and civic impact locally, regionally, and beyond.

Strategic Initiative 1: Develop and launch the GRAM GoSite, its collaborative programming, and physical transformation to become a 21st century visitor's center and portal to the city and the Museum.

Initiative Leader: GoSite Project Director

Actions

- a. Utilize the GoSite's Business Plan and Inclusivity Plan in making corporate and foundation requests for the capital support of physical changes to the Museum

Action Leader: GoSite Project Director

- b. Plan and execute structural changes to the GoSite and surrounding areas.

Action Leader: Facility Manager

- c. Continue to work with partners to develop, implement, and evaluate content, strategy, and outreach for the GoSite project.

Action Leader: GoSite Project Director

Strategic Initiative 2: Increase platforms, visibility, and impact for the staff and board to serve as thought leaders and changers in the fields of art, design, and creativity.

Initiative Leader: Director and CEO

Actions

- a. Through programming, learning initiatives, and community collaborations, incorporate opportunities to position GRAM as a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding art, design, and creativity that broaden community dialogue.

Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

- b. Support staff opportunities for high-level interaction with professional peers, the media, and the community—locally, regionally, and beyond—including presenting scholarship, participating in conferences, representing GRAM at other cultural institutions and events, and research travel.

Action Leader: Director of Human Resources

- c. Connect our LEED® Gold Certified building design with sustainability-focused operational activities, exhibitions, collections, learning initiatives, community collaborations, and values.

Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Initiative 3: Build GRAM's status as a community connector and inclusive destination at the heart of the city, bringing art, design, and creativity to an expanding range of stakeholders.

Initiative Leader: Senior Communications Manager

Actions

- a. Create an Outreach Impact Plan through the Community Outreach Task Force to increase meaningful exchange with culturally, economically, and professionally diverse communities, both outside of, and within the Museum.

Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

- b. Develop strategic partnerships with several community organizations each year, to serve as gateways to diverse communities. Explore the establishment of a Community Events Fund to support these efforts.

Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Strategic Objective E: Build Institutional Strength

Fortify institutional stability through earned and philanthropic financial growth, and by managing and leveraging assets.

Strategic Initiative 1: Build philanthropic financial growth.

Initiative Leader: Director of Advancement

Actions

- a. Strengthen and expand membership through development of a new structure and effective campaigns.
Action Leader: Membership Manager
- b. Continually strengthen the skill sets and expand the activities of the Donor Development Committee, to enhance cultivation strategies, maximize existing donor relationships, and better engage prospective donors.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement
- c. Restructure the corporate sponsorship and membership program and implement enhanced strategies for growing this base of support.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement
- d. Develop and implement a strategic major gifts program to grow and enhance donor relationships and implement refined strategies for growing base of support.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement
- e. Plan and implement a comprehensive endowment campaign.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement

Strategic Initiative 2: Build institutional strength and expand the impact of GRAM's mission through fee-based initiatives and programs.

Initiative Leader: Chief Financial Officer

Actions

- a. Evaluate current programs and research best practices and innovations for hospitality and facility use, and then develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate improved or new programs and approaches.
Action Leader: Special Events Manager, Beverage and Catering Manager
- b. Evaluate current programs and research best practices and innovations for museum stores, retail, and products, and then develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate improved or new programs and approaches.
Action Leader: Store Manager
- c. Evaluate current programs and research best practices and innovations for studio-based classes and activities, and then develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate improved or new programs and approaches.
Action Leader: Director of Learning and Audience Engagement

Strategic Initiative 3: Manage and leverage the Museum building, its surrounding property, and anchor location as the civic and cultural hub of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area.

Initiative Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Actions

- a. Evaluate the current state of the building and property, research the state of the field for short- and long-term maintenance, and then develop goals, budgets, and implementation plans.
Action Leader: Facility Manager
- b. Optimize the function, experience, and impact of the building and property, with special attention paid to the Education Center, administrative offices, and lobby areas of the Museum, for current and long-term opportunities.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer
- c. Seek input from stakeholders, research ways to leverage the urban core as a cultural destination, and then develop, prototype, implement, and evaluate improved or new programs and approaches.
Action Leader: Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Initiative 4: Establish new, and grow existing, relationships with and through trustees.

Initiative Leader: Director and CEO

Actions

- a. Strengthen board orientation, training, and communication to provide trustees with the resources to be successful GRAM ambassadors.
Action Leader: Director and CEO and Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee
- b. Enhance and implement resources and strategies to support trustee fundraising activities.
Action Leader: Director of Advancement
- c. Develop charters for all standing committees, which reflect the objectives and strategic initiatives of the Strategic Plan.
Action Leader: Director and CEO and Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee
- d. Maintain and nurture stronger relationships with former trustees.
Action Leader: Director and CEO
- e. Explore ways to attract future trustees of diverse backgrounds, by building a stronger outreach and recruitment process.
Action Leader: Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee

Strategic Initiative 5: Attract, train, nurture and retain an engaged and mission-focused staff.

Initiative Leader: Director of Human Resources

Actions

- a. Clarify structure, roles, responsibilities, and processes to align with organizational values, mission, and goals.

Action Leader: Director of Human Resources

- b. Explore ways to offer to staff increased opportunities for professional development.

Action Leader: Director of Human Resources

- c. Enhance communication platforms to share information, improve internal collaboration, and build a "Culture of Ideas."

Action Leader: Senior Communications Manager

Strategic Initiative 6: Commit to a strategic focus for institutional decision-making.

Initiative Leader: Director and CEO

Actions

- a. Train staff about the strategic focus of the institution for the next three years.

Action Leader: Director of Human Resources

- b. Regularly discuss progress and create a system to identify new strategic areas for the ongoing planning cycle.

Action Leader: Director and CEO

- c. Establish the use and periodic enhancement of the Stakeholder Map to guide institutional decision-making.

Action Leader: Director and CEO

Acknowledgements

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