



## **eXperiences:** the Strategic Plan 2012:2017 121031

### **Background:**

This blueprint for the next five years emerged from a partnership among trustees, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. The plan for 2012 through 2017 builds upon five previous years of success in audience growth, exhibit upgrades, expansion of programming, and financial stability. Furthermore it renews our overarching philosophy of community ownership and engagement, it brings the statement of goals up to date, and it establishes practical measures for improved performance.

Central to this strategic plan is the experience of visitors, primarily at the Museum, but also offsite through outreach, distance learning, and social learning activities. Staff members are using techniques, exhibits, custom programming, technologies and collaborative partnerships to engage hands, body and mind. The core focus is on delivering Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math experiences, all of which are infused with art (extending STEM to STEaM), to children ages zero through ten and their families. This plan will renew the building, exhibits, and programming to include an arts aesthetic. It will extend our community presence to reflect the lifelong learning ideas of those in the Ann Arbor area by convening highly targeted, focused and collaborative learning experiences for tweens, teens, young adults, and adults.

We strive to be recognized as a community-centered, community-focused, and community-minded organization delivering exceptional experiences in downtown Ann Arbor. At the same time, and without any diminution in our Ann Arbor programs, we seek to partner externally to bring to other communities the experiences that only we can offer due to the unique resources of Ann Arbor.

For some time we have been considering our place within our long-term developing vision of an Ann Arbor Imagination Corridor (A2iC). It is now clear that a campus of science, technology and engineering, partnered with academia, businesses, museums and non-profit organizations, could result as part of this strategic plan during the next five to seven years.

The creation of the iCenter, as part of a regional learning, working and living destination, is the "Big Idea" of this strategic plan. Creating a combined lab space, theater, co-created exhibit gallery and collaborative science learning incubator builds upon our core experiences and institutional history. We already know how to provide enriching experiences for all ages, and will use the appeal of the iCenter (whether real or virtual) to draw in tween, teen, college and adult participants. We see that the iCenter can be operated in partnership with businesses, non-profit organizations, and the academic community. The Hands-On Museum is in the right place at the right time to bring a 21<sup>st</sup> Century informal learning model to our community.

## **About us:**

Our **Mission** is to inspire people to discover the wonder of science, technology, math, art and engineering. Our **Vision** is to be the leader in imaginative and interactive learning experiences. Our **Aspiration** is to reveal how scientists, engineers, and artists look at natural phenomenon through a lens that celebrates our “hands-on” DNA, transcends age yet captures the unity of the aesthetics and analytic impulses that coexist in everyone.

## **Experience Environment**

Increasingly, the unexpected will greet visitors in a playful, imaginative, STEM-based and art-infused informal learning environment. This will elevate the Museum into a regional destination where exhibits, programs and galleries reflect a quirky, “chutes and ladders” arts-aesthetic, yet are grounded in accurate, relevant science. We will blend in everyday, real-world objects, add iconic experiences and encourage open-ended, co-created exploration and discovery.

We will focus on growing three operational areas: 1) strengthen our reputation as a premier children’s museum and science center; 2) increase our offsite programming; and 3) prototype and deploy the iCenter concept. We label these:

- **Hands-On:** The core Museum Experience: Children’s Museum, Science Center
- **Minds-On:** Offsite Learning Environments, Partnerships, Outreach (short and long-term)
- **iCenter:** Science Incubator, Collaboration, Co-created Exhibits, Convened Learning

## **Guiding Principles**

**Content:** *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics* – the “WHAT”

**Delivery:** *Imagination, Co-creation, Art, Experimentation* – the “HOW”

## **Core Values**

### **Integrity:**

Our decisions are ethical, honest and in the best interests of the Museum, our visitors, collaborators and each other. We take pride in doing what is right, purposeful, relevant and meaningful. We operate in an environment of trust, respect, accountability and support.

### **Passion:**

We enjoy what we do, are energized by our work, and inspire others to share in our excitement, interests and discoveries.

### **Collaboration:**

We respect and foster relationships internally and with those touched by our actions to promote learning, problem solving, teamwork and experience excellence.

### **Achievement:**

Our commitment is to extend beyond the ordinary, deliver with a sense of focus and urgency, promote growth and to enjoy the journey.

## **Plan Measurement and Metrics**

One of the notable enhancements to this plan is the inclusion of multiple performance metrics that can be monitored by staff, trustees and close stakeholders. As companion documents to this plan, the yearly operations plan and development plan provide key yearly goals and measures in alignment with this strategic plan.

## **Strategic Outcomes:**

### **Outcome 1: Experience Excellence**

We create unique informal STEM learning experiences where imagination, experimentation and exploration lead to discovery.

#### **Overarching indicator of Success:**

*Our experience is a turning point where one starts to engage in science as a lifelong passion.*

**Goal 1.1:** Create and enhance exhibits, programs, operations and facilities to target children (0 –10) and their families.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- The exhibits and programs experienced by visitors show clear indication of a STEM focused social learning environment, are timely/timeless and developed in partnership with academia, other organizations and our community.
- Numbers for attendance and membership increase as a result of changes in exhibits, programs and operations; the Museum is increasingly described as a must-see regional destination for visitors of all ages.
- Reports by visitors of ever-improving experiences can be attributed in part to investments in the physical plant and amenities that have improved the experience, updated or expanded exhibits and increased connections between our science and arts-aesthetic.

**Goal 1.2:** Specialty experiences for tweens, teens, young adults and adults expand our brand to lifelong learning through a contemplative science center context.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- Unique after-hours experiences actively engage young adults and adults in community-centered, community-driven enrichment experiences unique to us.
- Tweens, teens and adults participate, co-create and partner with the Museum in activities developed and delivered through the iCenter branding.
- Unique retreat-style training programs provide enriching after-hours experiences for business, non-profit, school and community audiences.

**Goal 1.3:** Offsite experiences further expand to local, regional, state and national educators, schools, communities, museums and libraries.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- Outreach is regional leader, reaching students and teachers in Michigan and beyond through programs, distance learning and professional development.
- Exhibit engagement through rentals, loans and permanent installations place our exhibits in offsite locations, resulting in extended reach, expanded marketing and an enhanced revenue stream.
- Government, schools, communities, businesses, individuals and foundations partner to reach children, families and adults through enrichment programs.

## **Outcome 2: Financial Sustainability & Organizational Growth**

We operate within a balanced budget, maintain an operational reserve, grow earned revenue, enjoy development success and grow strategically.

### **Overarching Indicator of Success:**

*We collectively take bold steps without fear of failure in the delivery of transformational informal learning experiences.*

**Goal 2.1:** Earned revenue sustains the core experience.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- The Museum has experienced consistent attendance growth and has reached an annual onsite attendance of 200,000 people per year.
- Our offsite attendance has grown through our outreach activities to 100,000 per year.
- Museum Membership has continued to grow and averages 7,000 families.

**Goal 2.2:** Organizational-wide fundraising focus sustains capital projects, experience, endowment, planned giving and scholarships.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- The Financial Development Plan, a trustee and staff driven development process, has succeeded in providing the Museum with the philanthropic resources necessary for growth, sustainability and capital projects.
- Partnerships created with government, academia, foundations, non-profits and businesses have resulted in programmatic growth, extended reach and sustainable funding.
- The Discover Science Assistance Fund has grown to the point where scholarships provide regional schools with an opportunity for at least one onsite or offsite visit yearly

**Goal 2.3:** Effective communication and interaction with stakeholders drives attendance, membership, revenue and support.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- The Museum, through a proactive sales and marketing approach driven by staff, exhibits and program, has increased awareness, participation, membership and donations to stated goals.
- Website, social media, Outreach, Professional Development and community-based exhibits are primary marketing and communication tools.
- Consistent and predictable communications between the board, collaborators, donors and emeritus trustees has enhanced our connectivity and reinforced community engagement.

## **Outcome 3: Dedicated & Empowered People**

We attract, support, empower and reward employees, volunteers and trustees who take a can-do, me-too, team approach to serving our visitors.

### **Overarching Indicator of Success:**

*We are an empowered and inspired team reaching well beyond stated expectations.*

**Goal 3.1:** Employees work in support of, are empowered by, and are evaluated against our strategic plan outcomes, guiding principles, core values and experience metrics.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- Employees are supported and empowered to perform their duties with clear expectations and defined responsibilities.
- Employees grow through practice, resources, professional development, conference participation and community involvement.
- New initiatives are deployed with appropriate staff, resources and support.

**Goal 3.2:** Volunteers are valued, welcomed and integral to our experience.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- A trained volunteer coordinator has established a sustainable program.
- A strong volunteer base creates efficiencies that are utilized effectively and add significant value to the organization.
- Volunteers represent the community including students, lay people, and professionals from corporate, academia and technical workforces.

**Goal 3.3:** Trustees are involved with the community, provide/seek support, offer experience and intellectual resources, and represent local, regional and statewide leadership.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

- Trustees and 30% of former trustees serve on at least one committee.
- Trustees, through ambassadorship, stewardship and engagement, generate membership, increase attendance and create new partnerships.
- Trustees are donors and meet giving expectations personally or professionally