



# Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

Board approved November 20, 2019

## Introduction

How can the Milwaukee Public Museum leverage our strengths and unique assets, and how can we build an institution that is more vibrant, more relevant to our public, and sustainable? That simple set of queries has launched a multi-year process focusing on how MPM meets its mission, on the landscape in which the museum operates, and on defining a compelling vision for a sustainable future.

A renewed focus and a strong vision for the future, in turn, create additional requirements for success.

This strategic plan sets forth the **near-term** strategies and objectives for leveraging MPM's core strengths over the coming months and frames how the museum applies institutional resources and energy. Our ultimate goal is to ensure MPM continues to educate, entertain, surprise and delight Wisconsinites for generations to come.

## MPM's Goals

MPM leadership believes vision for the future can be realized with dedicated focus on **five long-term goals**. They are:

1. Achieve long-term financial health by building a new, world-class Museum for future generations of Wisconsinites that is right-sized for the community, fiscally sustainable, and able to continually reinvest in its core mission.
2. Meet or exceed the standards for an accredited museum – including in the care of collections—in order to fulfill our mission and bring the world to Wisconsin.
3. Strengthen the scientific stature and output of the Museum to advance scientific literacy in Wisconsin and participate in meaningful scientific research and discoveries world-wide.
4. Ensure MPM serves as a pillar of cultural and scientific life for the benefit of the community and a catalytic agent in Milwaukee's renaissance.
5. Achieve excellence at all levels as Wisconsin's Natural History Museum.

This plan for 2018-22 advances our effort to meet those long-term goals by articulating **six near-term museum goals**:

1. Achieve near-term financial stability using a clear, articulated action plan.
2. Advance both the future museum and collections storage projects.
3. Strengthen the scientific stature of the museum.
4. Grow organizational capacity to achieve excellence.
5. Increase awareness of the importance and relevance of MPM across Wisconsin.
6. Increase visitors' satisfaction with and affinity for MPM.

Before we describe those goals in more detail, it is important to review our Mission and Core Values, and review the overall landscape for Museums in the United States.

## Mission

The mission of the Milwaukee Public Museum is to inspire curiosity, excite minds and increase desire to preserve and protect our world's natural and cultural diversity through exhibitions, educational programs, collections and research.

## Vision

To strengthen the connections between people and nature by telling the intimate stories of how the planet began, how it works, and how our natural surroundings influence the way we develop as individuals, as cultures, and in turn, how people shape and influence the natural world.

## MPM's Core Values

We achieve excellence when we:

- Respect** the individual
- Serve** the community
- Operate with **Integrity**

## Strategic Plan Brief, 2018 – 2022

MPM is focusing on six strategies for the next four years with the goal of ensuring it can remain fiscally viable in the near term, while advancing the critical effort to build a new facility.

While the ultimate outcome of our efforts to build a new museum remains uncertain, what is certain is that nothing will happen unless we collectively work to create the ideal conditions for MPM's success. As stewards we must ensure we have strived at every step to carry forward the rich legacy of this museum, and deliver to our community the institution it both needs and deserves.

The six main strategic goals for the next four years are outlined in broad strokes below. A separate document that outlines the tactics, tasks, timelines and resources necessary to advance these strategies will be created and updated annually by each department as part of the regularized goal-setting process. These goals will be integrated into individual goal-setting for MPM's annual performance review process.

## **Goal 1: Achieve near-term financial stability using a clear, articulated action plan.**

Within the next two years MPM will achieve financial stability by changing its operational model to generate additional revenue and raise additional philanthropic dollars; the new model will reduce reliance on the Endowment Fund and working capital loans, while increasing unrestricted net assets.

### **Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:**

1. Develop and implement a financial transition plan with defined actions and goals for increased revenue and fundraising, coupled with rigorous cost controls, resulting in not less than \$500k annual improvement to the bottom line by the fiscal year 2019-20 budget year, with a stretch target of \$1mm by FY2020-21.
2. Utilize the insights provided by the fundraising feasibility report from Campbell & Company to increase annual fundraising and planned giving, while simultaneously positioning MPM for a future capital campaign.
3. Negotiate lease and banking agreements and work with donors to negotiate fewer restricted giving agreements, thereby establishing more operational flexibility for the museum.
4. Implement cost accounting measures to identify the source of operational losses, as well as recognizing missed opportunities for use of restricted funds.
5. Increase and diversify individual, foundation, government and corporate giving.
6. Grow endowment through a more rigorous spending policy, raising new contributions and the reinvestment of earnings.
7. Improve cost structures to be more in line with museum industry norms and comparable organizations.

## **Goal 2: Advance both the future Museum and collections storage projects.**

MPM will advance the new museum project by connecting with key stakeholders to secure funding from potential lead donors, as well as, securing direct funding and/or commensurate investment from the City, County and State of Wisconsin in support of a new building and offsite collections storage facility.

### **Strategies to achieve the goal include:**

1. Ready the Museum for the reaccreditation process, which will begin in 2019.
2. Achieve a County investment in offsite storage of at least half of the County's collections storage in order to demonstrate a credible path to re-accreditation.
3. Ready MPM and the community for a Capital Campaign.
4. Mount a public communication plan to bring awareness to the problems with MPM's current home to leverage political pressure for action and investment.
5. Engage outside industry expertise to inform our process and expectations.
6. Engage a lobbyist to advocate for MPM at the State and County level in support of a new museum.
7. Identify and vet partnership and support opportunities.
8. Engage expertise for fiscal modeling of a future MPM.
9. Engage expertise for campaign feasibility.

## **Goal 3: Strengthen the scientific stature of the Museum.**

As Wisconsin's Natural History Museum, MPM's public face (exhibits and programming) is reliant on current and accurate scientific information as a foundation for all we do. Over the next two years, MPM will continue to grow the reputation of the Museum as a scientific institution, both in the public's eye and within the scientific community.

### **Strategies to achieve this goal include:**

1. Raise increased funds to support research and collection care.
2. Pursue and be awarded at least one major national-level research grant from NSF, IMLS, NASA or a similar organization.
3. Increase research capacity by growing collaborations with other institutions and researchers.
4. Improve access to collections and collection data.
5. Demonstrate the relevance and impact of MPM collections and research to the City, County, and State of Wisconsin.

## **Goal 4: Grow MPM organizational capacity to achieve excellence.**

Align staffing, build resources, expertise and technology to support to ensure advancement of a new museum.

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

1. Assess staff structure and identify models and best practices in the field.
2. Use better data and technology to inform decision-making across the museum.
3. Commit to transparency in our operations.
4. Build and retain a highly talented, committed and engaged staff.
5. Grow the talent and engagement of the Board of Directors.
6. Harness the skills, creativity and innovation of our staff and Board to greater effect.

## **Goal 5: Increase awareness of the importance and relevance of MPM to all our audiences.**

Through its actions and strategic communications, the Museum will share a more compelling story of the museum's purpose, relevance, and work in ways that resonate statewide.

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

1. Use market research and in-house tools to gather additional, deeper data about our members, visitors and potential visitors.
2. Actively recruit board members from outside of Milwaukee to broaden our reach and statewide advocacy, awareness, and fundraising.
3. Increase visibility of MPM in the community and throughout Wisconsin.
4. Make MPM's behind-the-scenes activities and efforts public visible through strategic PR efforts.
5. Prioritize service and engagement to communities of color, Native American audiences, and traditionally underserved audiences.
6. Continue to tell the story of the challenges MPM's facility presents to fulfilling our mission, in targeted and controlled ways.

## **Goal 6: Increase visitor satisfaction with, and affinity for, MPM.**

Create the best possible experience for visitors of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, both in the current building and as we plan for the future.

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

1. Ensure that MPM is accessible and welcoming for all.
2. Continue to improve upon the exhibit experience for our visitors.
3. Offer outstanding customer service and products to our visitors.
4. Offer high-quality educational experiences and programming based on validated and clear visitor feedback/data.
5. Engage members in ways that increase their connection to MPM and our mission.