Building on our successful metamorphosis in 2022, the Delaware Museum of Nature and Science embarked on a strategic planning process in May 2023. Spanning eight months and four phases of work, this inclusive process involved as many voices as possible in an in-depth exploration of the Museum’s identity and ambitions. The final plan balances the Museum’s community education mission with our aspirations for growth and long-term financial sustainability through tangible strategic priorities and objectives.

In this endeavor, the project team embraced a philosophy of pushing boundaries and fostering innovative thinking. The planning was rooted in the Museum’s mission and identity but was also informed by business insights to ensure the formulation of an achievable and measurable plan.

Stakeholder engagement was an essential aspect of this work. The project team focused on bringing together diverse groups and uniting them behind a shared vision. This approach was comprehensive and participatory, soliciting feedback from a diverse group of staff, Board of Trustee, and external stakeholder representatives to ensure broad input and buy-in.
The outcome of this work is a strategic plan that provides a shared North Star for the Museum team. It clearly articulates our focus over the next five years, as we continue to grow into our new identity and promise. The theme of this plan is **Growing Connections**: pursuing collaboration that deepens our roots and expands our reach.

To do this, the Museum must first establish a strong foundation so that we can grow to our full potential. To that end, the work will occur over two phases:

- **Years 1-3**: Rooting down to strengthen our foundation
- **Years 3-5**: Branching out to build our impact

The task ahead of us is to bring this strategic plan to life. Through the development of a detailed action plan and Key Performance Indicators, we’re well on our way. We’re excited to begin this journey with each other and with you, our community.

Altogether, the following voices worked together to build this plan:

- 74 Board and staff survey respondents
- 19 all-staff session participants
- 7 community partners
- 19 Board and staff representatives on the project teams
- 12 staff listening session participants
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR MISSION

To ignite a life-long passion for exploring, discovering, and valuing nature and science.

OUR VISION

A caring, connected community that protects our living planet.

OUR VALUES

ACT WITH INTEGRITY
We prioritize accuracy, honesty, and accountability; we know our subject matter while respecting the limits of our knowledge.

STRIVE FOR INCLUSION
We honor each other’s differences in experience and perspective with empathy and an open mind.

NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS
We treat each other with respect, recognizing each other’s value.

BE INSPIRING
We foster passion, curiosity, and the pursuit of knowledge in ourselves and others.
This strategic plan depends on establishing a strong foundation so the Museum can flourish.

To that end, the work will occur over two phases:

YEARS 3 - 5
BRANCHING OUT
Use our strong base to extend our reach farther into new markets and new content.

YEARS 1 - 2
ROOTING DOWN
Focus on fortifying our team, enhancing our core offerings, and deepening our community ties.

This phased approach allows us to reach for ambitious goals with confidence that we have the resources in place to accomplish great things.
WITHIN 5 YEARS WE WILL...

DELIVER IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCES
Connect our community to nature and science by creating captivating, informative, and engaging experiences.

IMPROVE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Build the resources and practices that allow the museum to grow and thrive.

STRENGTHEN THE SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS
Expand the use, appreciation, and stewardship of our collections.

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY
Expand our audience and build partnerships that extend the reach of our mission.

INVEST IN OURSELVES
Use our core values as a guide to create and nurture a culture that promotes individual growth and positions the museum as a leader.
Within five years, we will build the resources and practices that allow the museum to grow and thrive.

A. Develop and adopt a business model including resource allocation and organizational structure to achieve financial sustainability by 2027.

B. Investigate alternative energy sources to reduce expenses and reliance on fossil fuels.
DELIVER IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCES

Within five years, we will connect our community to nature and science by creating captivating, informative, and engaging experiences.

A. Provide meaningful remote experiences to targeted demographic audiences in our region using a combination of offsite, mobile museum and digital efforts.

B. Expand outdoor experiences on our campus through new programming and exhibits that provide unique connections to nature.

C. Continuously improve quality of guest experience through impactful programs and exhibits relevant to new and existing audiences that inspire them to take action.
Within five years, we will expand the use, appreciation, and stewardship of our collections.

A. Enhance support for collections stewardship and research initiatives by expanding collections-centric content and educational use.

B. Become a major mid-Atlantic repository for the long-term storage and stewardship of scientific specimens in support of NSF Data Management Plans.

C. Identify and acquire resources to sustainably improve the quality of lab and collections spaces to increase partner usage and stewardship.
Within five years, we will expand our audience and build partnerships that extend the reach of our mission.

A. Develop strategies, including targeted markets, benchmarking, and programs, to engage adult audiences.

B. Collaborate with other cultural organizations and educational institutions to provide hands-on career exposure for postsecondary students.

C. Lead a coalition of regional organizations to develop a STEAM-centered, K-12, career development pipeline focused on underserved communities.
Within five years, we will use our core values as a guide to create and nurture a culture that promotes individual growth and positions the museum as a leader.

A. Through routinely examining ourselves and our systems, become a best-in-class, AAM accredited museum.

B. Provide opportunities for professional development that prepare all team members to be museum and science ambassadors.
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The Delaware Museum of Nature and Science is grateful to everyone who contributed to this strategic plan, including our staff, volunteers, Board of Trustees, and community partners.

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