



Expanding Our Universe

National Air and Space Museum FY 2020-2025 Strategic Plan



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

National Air and Space Museum 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

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Message from the Director



Looking down at her boots in the red Martian dust, the first human on the Red Planet will be standing where no one has before. And yet, she'll know her epic journey was built upon the history of innovators and explorers who defied expectations, boundaries, and barriers to drive humanity forward. They inspired her own path and she may have learned about them first from our museum.

To continue to inspire and transform the lives of everyone who enters our museum, in-person or virtually, we must transform our storytelling to reach 21st century audiences by being a 21st century museum. That is what Expanding Our Universe is about. Telling more stories to more people in more ways and sharing new discoveries and deeper understanding. That includes leading sometimes difficult conversations to address the major challenges we face both globally and at home.

One of those challenges is addressing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in every aspect of how we operate as an institution. Our DEAI strategy, which is a companion to this document, is our guide for those efforts. Being more inclusive in all we do ensures that every child will recognize their capacity to make the best use of their talents and imagination. Tapping those skills and ambitions is the only way we can build the brighter future we all hope to achieve.

We understand it's true that only by fully exploring the history we steward, and deeply engaging our audience on all aspects of that history, can we truly help move humanity forward. We also know that the trajectory of innovation is not a straight line. It's a process of setbacks and breakthroughs and perseverance, and our institution has always played a key role in that pathway to making the impossible possible. As Wilbur Wright wrote to the Smithsonian in 1899, four years before his flight at Kitty Hawk, "I wish to avail myself of all that is already known and then if possible add my mite to help on the future workers who will attain final success."

The ideas that defy the odds become the inventions that define our world. And as long as curious minds are drawn to thorny problems, we'll keep moving forward. At the Museum, we seek to "add our mite" to sparking the curiosity and igniting action in the next generation of innovators and explorers, including that first human on Mars.

Ellen R. Stofan, PhD

John and Adrienne Mars Director

Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission. Commemorate, Educate, and Inspire

We **commemorate** the amazing stories of aviation and space exploration by studying and sharing all of their facets, whether recognizing remarkable achievements and discoveries or delving into difficult and troubling history.

We **educate** a global 21st century audience using our one-of-a-kind collection, and deep and broad knowledge, to ground and elevate learning that will help develop the innovators and workforce that will build our future.

We **inspire** everyone who visits to dream their Ideas That Defy, break down barriers, and imagine and realize the innovations that will change our world.

Vision. Helping Build a Nation of Innovators and Explorers

Smithsonian Institution Values.

The values stated below are the values of the Smithsonian Institution. As the National Air and Space Museum and a proud member of the Smithsonian Institution, we support these values.

We seek **Excellence** in all that we do. We will develop deeper **Engagement** with our visitors, virtual and in person, with our partners, and with all staff. We will always work with **Integrity**, with respect for all and brave truth-telling to our visitors. We will drive a culture of **Creativity and Innovation**, engaging audiences in new ways, and operating in a way to lead museums. We reaffirm our **Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion** throughout all facets of our institutional practice, including making sure our audiences see themselves in everything we do.

Revitalization and Transformation

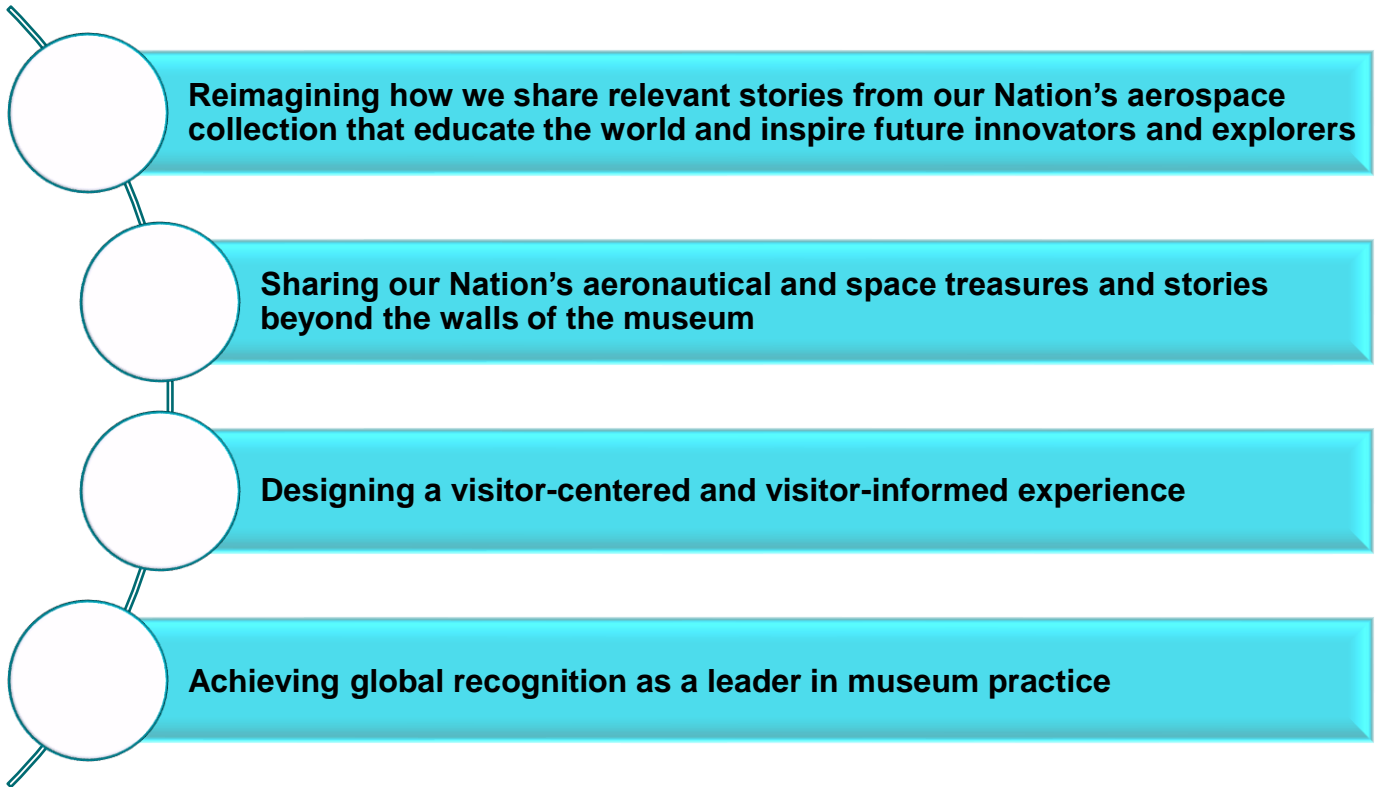
The complete renovation of the Museum's location in Washington, DC is allowing us to reimagine what it means to be a museum:

- We're transforming all 23 galleries and public spaces in the DC location
- We've moved and treated thousands of artifacts – some returning and some new to the collection
- We're creating new kinds of programming to deliver locally on-site and globally online
- We're transforming our operations, tools, and processes
- We're incredibly grateful for the private support that makes our transformation possible

Our Priorities

As the National Air and Space Museum creates our next era of growth, we continue to be committed to educating learners of all ages; making our collection accessible to people around the world, including those who may never be able to visit one of our two museums in person; creating an inclusive visitor experience; and remaining a global leader in museum practices.

Specifically, we are committed to:



Priority 1

Reimagining how we share relevant stories from our Nation's aerospace collection that educate the world and inspire future innovators and explorers

Goal

- **1.1: Increase and diffuse knowledge in space history, aeronautics, and planetary science**

Objectives

- 1.1.1 Perform original research in history and science to expand our understanding of our planet, our solar system, and the historical development, context, and culture of aviation and space exploration
- 1.1.2 Create and share high-quality education content aligned with nationally recognized education priorities
- 1.1.3 Build capacity in educators to engage students in learning through the museum's collections
- 1.1.4 Organize and participate in public symposia and other venues to stimulate public and professional discourse on critical issues and challenging ideas

Goal

- **1.2 Become the standard bearer in experiential learning through both an exhibition program that meets visitors where they are and encounters that invite learners to experiment**

Objectives

- 1.2.1 Work collaboratively to present content in a variety of ways and locations to meet visitors' multiple learning styles
- 1.2.2 Expand and evolve opportunities for visitors to interact with and immerse themselves in exhibitions, collections, and content
- 1.2.3: Explore new ways to use technology to enhance visitor interactive experience

Goal

- **1.3: Use research and diverse modes of storytelling to amplify visitors' connections with artifacts to expand interest and engagement with history, space exploration, aviation, and our global society**

Objectives

- 1.3.1 Pursue avenues of research to bring greater breadth and depth to interpreting our collections for the public
- 1.3.2 Evaluate and refine the Museum's docent training program to align with our storytelling and curation
- 1.3.3 Share the science and stories of artifacts and the diverse people behind them with Museum staff to make them all ambassadors and storytellers

Goal

- **1.4: Develop and implement a robust media/audiovisual support program providing best in class support to in-person and online learning events**

Objectives

- 1.4.1 Implement a full-service media support group to seamlessly support all activities, interactives, and mechanicals within the Museum
- 1.4.2 Redesign, utilize, update, and maintain our website to highlight relevance and tell diverse stories



Priority 2

Share our Nation's aeronautical and space treasures and stories beyond the walls of the museum

Goal

- **2.1 Enable digital transformation by using or creating high quality digital assets with descriptive content**

Objectives

- 2.1.1 Ensure the Museum's collection and archival records are clearly and accurately prepared to optimize public access
- 2.1.2 Ensure collaboration between those developing digital content and those responsible for providing the infrastructure to support the content

Goal

- **2.2 Increase access to the collections and archives for researchers and the public**

Objectives

- 2.2.1 Broaden audience interest and engagement with aerospace topics and history to the widest community possible, especially audiences unfamiliar with these subjects
- 2.2.2 Expand and improve the Museum's artifact loan program while still maintaining the highest museum standards for object care and interpretation

Goal

- **2.3 Expand the Museum's partnerships and deepen engagement with them, offering the Museum as a resource in the expansion of digital outreach**

Objectives

- 2.3.1 Engage the Museum's Board and leaders in industry and government to help us accomplish our digital strategy
- 2.3.2 Lead collaboration and research initiatives between the Smithsonian Institution and partner organizations
- 2.3.3 Facilitate collaboration within the Museum and with national and international entities
- 2.3.4 Pursue creative opportunities to promote the Museum, its scholarship, and its educational programs

Goal

- **2.4 Collaborate to develop authentic and meaningful digital learning experiences rooted in our one-of-a-kind collections for PreK-12 and adult audiences**

Objectives

- 2.4.1 Leverage the Museum's research and collections as the foundational elements in accessible, engaging, and inspiring on-site and digital experiences
- 2.4.2 Use the transformative power of accurate and inclusive storytelling to ignite challenging educational discussions



Priority 3

Design a visitor-centered and visitor-informed experience

Goal

- **3.1 Invite all audiences into the science and history conversation so they see themselves as both essential participants as well as problem solvers**

Objectives

- 3.1.1 Position the Museum as a facilitator of and the place for challenging conversations focused on aviation, space exploration, and innovation related issues
- 3.1.2 Create a foundation for accurate and inclusive storytelling to ignite opportunities for educational dialogue and visitor participation
- 3.1.3 Engage highly motivated PreK-12 learners in unique, cooperative initiatives focused on air and space
- 3.1.4 Meaningfully engage diverse audiences throughout all presentations of Museum content

Goal

- **3.2: Engage in iterative design with our visitors to meet them where they are**

Objectives

- 3.2.1 Establish ongoing evaluation programs of visitor experience and feedback for future planning
- 3.2.2 Incorporate feedback from evaluation programs to influence future or ongoing design process



Priority 4

Achieve global recognition as a leader in museum practice

Goal

- **4.1 Provide world-class facilities and physical infrastructure necessary for the Museum to support its mission, vision, collection, workforce, and visitors**

Objectives

- 4.1.1 Continue implementation of renovation initiatives
- 4.1.2 Address collection storage requirements and facility deficiencies
- 4.1.3 Promote revenue generating activities that support the Museum's collections care and educational programming
- 4.1.4 Develop and support plans for the long-term expansion of the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center and Dulles Collection Center
- 4.1.5 Complete the transition of collection activities and artifacts from the Paul E. Garber Facility to the Udvar-Hazy Center/Dulles Collection Center

Goal

- **4.2: Use best practices to expand and make widely accessible the Museum's world-class collection**

Objectives

- 4.2.1 Develop long-term plans and rationales that define and justify future acquisitions based on expert knowledge of history, aerospace technology, and related curated material
- 4.2.2 Assess and mitigate risks to the Museum's premier collection
- 4.2.3 Develop and share innovative preservation and conservation techniques with the museum community

Goal

- **4.3: Attract and retain diverse museum professionals, educators, scientists, and curators who can contribute to a culture of continuous innovation and excellence**

Objectives

- 4.3.1 Institute best practices for diverse hiring to include amplified outreach and recruitment and using diversified hiring panels
- 4.3.2 Attract, develop, and retain skilled personnel with notable expertise and accomplishments and a broad range of viewpoints
- 4.3.3 Recruit and maintain a diverse and knowledgeable volunteer corps who demonstrate the highest standards of customer service

Goal

- **4.4: Be a leader in Human Capital Management, instituting inclusive programs that make the Museum and the Smithsonian Institution the best place to work**

Objectives

- 4.4.1 Develop and implement robust employee onboarding programs and employee management initiatives such as training plans, succession plans, and other initiatives to motivate employee retention and success
- 4.4.2 Engage staff and volunteers through open and regular communication
- 4.4.3 Achieve and expand subject matter expertise in core areas and evolving areas of subject matter knowledge and skill

Goal

- **4.5: Refresh and utilize “best in class” tools, processes, and oversight to improve our operating platforms**

Objectives

- 4.5.1 Implement a consistent and robust audit and controls program to protect Museum assets and identify early areas for improvement
- 4.5.2 Develop and/or update policies, guidance, and standard operating procedures to be nimble and flexible
- 4.5.3 Develop and implement best practices and tools to account for, track, and visualize the full scope of financial resources within the Museum
- 4.5.4 Use metrics and assessments to evaluate the impact and success of key Museum decisions
- 4.5.5 Create easy to use, best in class automated tools to facilitate requesting, tracking, and awarding purchasing actions in a quick and efficient manner
- 4.5.6 Develop new and innovative ways to support information technology needs

Goal

- **4.6: Lead the Smithsonian Institution in fundraising and revenue generation**

Objectives

- 4.6.1 Identify compelling funding opportunities that support access to our collections, collection care, and education initiatives
- 4.6.2 Work with Central Advancement to incorporate the Museum’s strategic priorities into pan-institutional transformational gift opportunities
- 4.6.3 Engage the Museum’s Board to advance the Museum’s fundraising and revenue generation efforts
- 4.6.4 Identify opportunities to increase the Museum’s endowment which may support attracting and recruitment of diverse scholars
- 4.6.5 Expand support for donor cultivation to all areas of the Museum
- 4.6.6 Generate increased revenue to support museum activities
- 4.6.7 Expand revenue generation efforts in partnership with the Smithsonian Channel and Smithsonian Enterprises

Methodology

To inform this strategic plan, we sought input from our workforce, volunteers, and broader community including funders, supporters and visitors. Working with The Raben Group, we designed an engagement process that included, but was not limited to:

- Interviews and feedback sessions with the National Air and Space Museum’s Leadership Team including the Director and Deputy Director;
- Feedback from the Museum’s Board Members;
- Staff listening sessions at the National Mall building, 901 D Street site, Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, and Paul E. Garber Facility with our workforce at all levels and across all departments within the Museum;
- Listening session with docent volunteers;
- Individual interviews with Smithsonian leaders and air and space industry leaders
- Individual interviews with key stakeholders including other Smithsonian Museum Directors, Smithsonian Institution leadership team members, National Air and Space Museum strategic partners and a sample of National Air and Space Museum Board Members; and,
- A Museum-wide survey for specific feedback about proposed language that was sent to staff, Board, docents and volunteers.

This strategic plan is a commitment to building on our history as we look forward to our next era.

