

BUILDING CAPACITY TOWARD LONG-TERM GROWTH



STRATEGIC PLAN
FY 2015 – 2016 - 2017

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A comprehensive strategic plan for fiscal years 2015, 2016, and 2017

PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2014, the League committed to launching a strategic planning process to engage and listen to stakeholders, develop a tool (strategic plan) for growing the League in a strategic fashion, and leverage and celebrate the League's 82 year history as one of the nation's most successful arts organizations. Additionally, the planning process afforded other opportunities:

- Examined and **make informed projections** about what's happening in the arts and philanthropy world
- Help the League **anticipate** and **respond to** change
- Arrive at a clear and comprehensive assessment of **our strengths and limitations**, and develop plans to deal with them
- **Clarify our goals** and bring everybody on the same page during this important time in our history
- Identify potential **new partnerships**, and plant seeds for possible future partnerships
- **Align** our targeted spending with our operational tactics
- **Shape our programs** so that they are more market-driven and still adhere to our standards
- Develop **sustainable philanthropic relationships** and continue to leverage the incredible support that came from our recent successful capital campaign
- **Foster an inclusive approach** to achieving our vision, through the adoption of our strategic plan

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

During a 60 day input/feedback period, the Strategic Planning Taskforce engaged in open dialogue with more than 100 highly diverse people throughout the state, internal and external to the organization. These engagements occurred one-on-one, in facilitated group sessions, via small strategic input sessions, and through written surveys.

Participants included craftsmen, trustees, volunteers, Fine Craft Gallery managers, state arts leaders, public officials and policy makers, donors, arts advocates, corporate partners, nonprofit collaborators, committee members, Fair-goers, Gallery and Museum docents, community development stakeholders, collectors, educators, and economic development leaders.

WHAT WE LEARNED & WERE REMINDED OF

- The League is a resilient, forward-thinking organization. The League has experienced “bumps in the road” immediately after it moved into its new headquarters. Combined with fiscal uncertainty resulting from the aftermath of the recent recession, the League faces economic challenges requiring an holistic approach as it navigates new business models and builds long-term sustainability.
- People value the League’s historic role in advocating for the arts. Articulating the “value of fine craft” message through stories, testimonials, and personal narrative is a never-ending job and vital to the sustainability of the League’s brand.
- The League has experienced more than eight decades of changes in the art world. The impact of the changing and aging demographics throughout New Hampshire, and the need to attract a younger demographic to the world of fine craft, provide both challenges and opportunities for market growth.
- Volunteers and staff serve as the backbone of the League. The need for greater leadership capacity from both professional staff and volunteer leadership, in a shrinking and more competitive marketplace requires reinvestment in identifying, recruiting, training, and acknowledging staff and volunteers.
- The impact of technology on craft production, issues of intellectual property, and concern about maintaining the integrity of the League’s standards are important topics that must be prioritized.
- Education is a core component of the League’s mission and plays a primary role in developing new artistic and creative talent. Making the case for the productive link between creativity and arts-based education, and the role the League plays in positively impacting New Hampshire’s creative economy, remains a top priority on a micro-level (the League) and macro-level (the State of New Hampshire).
- The League has a strong reputation for serving as a “gateway” to the fine craft world. In order to grow and prosper, the League must expand its service as a curator for the general public—especially those new to the world of fine craft—so that new generations of craft advocates, appreciators, and collectors better understand how fine craft fits into their lifestyles.
- The League is comprised of innovative, risk-taking people. Proactively managing the changing mix and composition of financial support, along with demands for measurable outcomes, must become a stronger part of the League’s culture moving forward.
- People look to the League as the main New Hampshire nonprofit that contributes to community vitality as cities and places compete to attract a “creative class” and build small, arts-based businesses.

- The League must reconsider its traditional nonprofit arts organization business model and entertain innovative and hybrid models that better meet the changing market demands, and take advantage of new revenue opportunities.
- Providing craftsmen support for the creation of new work, the use of new technologies, and the changing consumer lifestyle are critical elements that must be addressed.
- Making a competitive case for the value of art, during a time where many contributed dollars are going to basic human needs, is a challenge that the League is well prepared to address.
- It is critical to develop strategic alliances, connections, and collaborations within and beyond the arts sectors to maximize impact, leverage support, and implement the League's strategic goals.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the League of NH Craftsmen is to encourage, nurture, and promote the creation, use, and preservation of fine contemporary and traditional craft through the inspiration and education of artists and the broader community.

VISION STATEMENT

The League of NH Craftsmen will be recognized as a steward of fine craft while sustaining its conviction that handmade objects improve the quality of life.

Nothing can replace the experience of viewing, using, or owning an object that has been made by hand. Thus, all benefit from living in a community that includes men and women who make fine craft, and that supports their work.

LEVERAGING MORE THAN EIGHT DECADES OF SUCCESS

Celebrating 82 years of promoting NH's creative economy and engaging the public with diverse and excellent handmade craft, the League of NH Craftsmen is New England's premier fine craft advocate, its leader in teaching craft and art-based business skills at The Craft Center, and its curator of one of the nation's most cherished permanent craft collections at its Grodin Permanent Collection Museum. Born from the Great Depression, our track record of success and role in being the catalyst for New Hampshire's fine craft culture has been celebrated.

TIMELINESS

This is an exciting transformational time in the history of the League. On the heels of a successful capital campaign and move to new location, the League finds itself facing rare opportunities, many of which demand the creation of new programs, business models, partnerships, messages, markets, and relationships. These opportunities greatly informed the

goal-setting process, along with the realization that it is natural for organizations like the League to experience “bumps in the road” right after significant organizational changes.

This plan sends the message to all stakeholders that the League is leveraging this rare opportunity of introspection and creative innovation to create a bright and prosperous future.

These strategic goals and initiatives were carefully developed to accomplish many objectives: meet near-term goals, stay ahead of market changes, remain true to the League’s mission and values, build the brand, and lay the foundation for long-term sustainability.

BRANDING & ECONOMIC IMPACT

This plan focuses on continually building the League’s brand to develop sustainable approaches to create greater social impact, operational capacity, and tighter organizational cohesion. The League’s brand is more than its visual identity; it is a psychological construct held in the minds of all those aware of fine craft, juried craftsmen, and the role the organization has played and continues to play in celebrating and championing the value of fine craft.

Art and culture is a significant part of the NH economy, not just its contributions of ideas and creativity to the innovation economy, but also as an important part of the labor force and tax base. Additionally, the League’s Annual Craftsmen’s Fair is a major contributor to the state’s tourism revenue each summer. The League’s leadership role in contributing to NH’s creative economy is an important factor in future growth and sustainability.

STRATEGIC GOALS & INITIATIVES

GOAL: Expand Education & Community Engagement

Grow the League’s education programs, widen community-based partnerships, and forge strong collaborations that will expand the League’s market reach, celebrate New Hampshire’s fine craft traditions, and enhance the creative economy.

- Expand the League’s educational programs in selected New Hampshire communities, and attract new constituents through The Craft Center and Fine Craft Galleries’ educational programs.
- Implement student and teacher outcome measures and invest in arts-based teaching skills. Develop and launch plan by FY 2016.
- Develop and expand League partnerships statewide, focusing on building collaborative relationships that will further expand our educational offerings.
- Create capacity to better curate¹ fine craft for the general public, attract younger audiences to the world of fine craft, and grow collector-level engagement. Develop and launch a plan by FY 2015.

Curate¹: By “curate” we do not mean the collection, conservation, and display of specific objects of fine craft. Rather, we refer to the intellectual process of teaching people about the historical, cultural, aesthetic, and technological contexts of fine crafts in the lives of those who make and appreciate them, and their communities.

GOAL: Promote the Value Proposition of Living with Fine Craft

Build awareness and appreciation through a comprehensive campaign focusing on the value of fine contemporary and traditional craft among existing, new, and emerging markets.

- Make storytelling, testimonials, and first-person narratives the centerpiece of the League's marketing, promotion, and advertising treatments.
- Clarify and enhance the League's brand image using messages that focus on the League's historical role in forging New Hampshire's creative economy, advocating for the arts, establishing standards, and developing a lifestyle infused with traditional and contemporary fine craft.
- Build the general public's recognition of the arts as a critical component in lifelong creative education, lifestyle, and local culture so that more people visit the Gallery and Permanent Collection Museum, attend the Annual Craftsmen's Fair and other League events, take educational classes, visit the Fine Craft Galleries, and support the League through philanthropy, membership, and volunteerism.
- Broaden our demographics by developing our ability to promote the value of fine crafts with young adults and New Hampshire's growing immigrant communities, and deepen what we are able to provide for our long-time constituents.

GOAL: Increase Resources and Build Sustainability

Forge relationships and develop innovative revenue-generation approaches that will ensure current and long-term resources.

- Increase and broaden earned, contributed, and "hybrid" revenue so that the League has a balanced and sustainable operational budget forecast for FY 2017.
- Review and invest in the League's internal relationships (staff, volunteers, and trustees) through assessment/evaluation, job-matching, leadership development, compensation, and ongoing training. Begin by FY 2015.
- Continue investing in the physical plant of the League headquarters and League-owned facilities, based on a comprehensive, multi-year plan.
- Actively identify, cultivate, and broaden a diversified base of funders, members, partners, collectors, craft-enthusiasts/consumers, craft students, and community leaders across the League based on specific and targeted objectives.
- Review the existing League fine craft gallery business model, including the council system and franchises, and develop a plan of action, including specific recommendations to the board of trustees, by March 31, 2016.

GOAL: Enhance Service to and Support of Craftsmen

Strengthen partnerships with craftsmen that will contribute to more vibrant, supportive, and economically-lucrative creative communities.

- Strengthen relationships among juried craftsmen, supporting members, elected leadership, and League staff members.
- Engage juried craftsmen in new ways that help them increase their sales and enhance their participation in League decisions.
- Facilitate the expansion of markets, development of diversified lines, and establishment of sustainable business approaches for our juried craftsmen.
- Develop and institute a mentoring/journeyman program for those in the early stages of their fine craft businesses. Begin by FY 2016.

- Launch a thorough review and assessment of the League’s standards and the Juried Members Forum, and arrive at a plan to update and enhance both by end of FY 2015.

GOAL: Embrace Use of Technology

Explore and adopt the appropriate technology in all areas of the League, with the objective of becoming more creative, efficient, effective, and sustainable.

- Engage craftsmen and host comprehensive discussion about the use of new technologies in the fine craft process; develop new standards that acknowledge technological advances in the creation of fine craft. Review the League philosophy/policy about use of technology in the creation of fine craft by FY 2016, and revise as appropriate.
- Adopt new and expand existing uses of diverse digital platforms for communicating with and engaging League stakeholders.
- Infuse the League’s education program with appropriate technological advances that will expand educational access, broaden educational communications, and use technological advances to create, market, and sell fine craft.
- Invest in system(s) that help the League deliver its messages, become more efficient in business practices, better manage data and information, build member and donor relationships, interact with Fine Craft Galleries, and enhance online sales.

CONCLUSION & TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION

The Strategic Planning Task Force, comprised of Beverly Wolf, Adele Sanborn, Deborah Coffin, Alice Veenstra, Susie Lowe-Stockwell, and Mario Capozzoli, appreciates all stakeholder involvement, engagement, and feedback. The Task Force will be responsible for clarifying strategic planning content, answering questions, and helping staff and committee volunteers interpret and begin the process of developing annual operational tactics.

This plan begins on the date of board approval and adoption, as noted below. It is based on the League’s fiscal year, running from April 1st of one year to March 31st of the next. In certain cases, specific timelines have been prescribed; where no certain date is noted, the expectation is that all initiatives will be completed by the March 31, 2017.

FORMALLY ADOPTED

This strategic plan has been formally approved and adopted on 16 July 2014 by the full Board of Trustees of the League of NH Craftsmen, Inc.

Additional initiative voted and approved by Board of Trustees on 17 September 2014.