

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2018-2022

The Strategic Plan for the National Gallery of Art consists of three elements:

- a comprehensive mission statement,
- goals and strategies, and
- proposed performance measures.

This plan is based on the assumption that funding will include pay increases and monies to provide adequate funding for the Gallery's programs and to make the necessary replacements and repairs to existing buildings and equipment under the Master Facilities Plan.

The National Gallery's mission and goals were set in place with the initial correspondence between Andrew W. Mellon and President Franklin D. Roosevelt and in the subsequent Joint Resolution of Congress signed in 1937 establishing the Gallery. This vision remains as vital and vibrant today as then and bears repeating herein as it is the bedrock upon which the mission and goals of the National Gallery of Art have been built over the years.

The concept of mutual public and private support for a future National Gallery is contained in early correspondence between Andrew Mellon and President Roosevelt. In his letter of December 22, 1936 to the President, Mr. Mellon states:

"...In addition to the gift of the art collection and a building in which it and similar collections may be housed and displayed, I plan also to establish an endowment fund for the proposed gallery, the income from which shall be used to pay the annual salaries of a director, assistant director, secretary and curators\* of the gallery, and for possible art acquisitions. The upkeep of the building and other administrative expenses and cost of operation would be provided in appropriations made by Congress..."

\*In the subsequent agreement with Congress, codified in Title 20 U.S.C. 74c, the compensation of the 'curators' was changed to 'a chief curator.'

Acceptance of this premise is contained in Section 4(a) of the Joint Resolution of Congress of March 24, 1937 (20 U.S.C. 71-75), which established the National Gallery, and states in part:

"The faith of the United States is pledged that...the United States will provide such funds as may be necessary for the upkeep of the National Gallery of Art and the administrative expenses and costs of operation thereof, including the protection and care of works of art acquired by the Board, so that the National Gallery of Art shall be at all times properly maintained and the works of art contained therein shall be exhibited regularly to the general public free of charge. For these purposes there are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary."

In accordance with its enabling legislation, the Gallery is under the direction of a Board of Trustees comprised of five private members and four ex-officio members: the Chief Justice of the United States, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

The West Building of the National Gallery of Art, designed by John Russell Pope, with 530,000 square feet of interior space, was opened to the general public on March 17, 1941. President Roosevelt and Paul Mellon, who presented his father Andrew W. Mellon's gift to the nation, presided at the building dedication.

The East building was accepted on behalf of the people of the United States on June 1, 1978 at a ceremony presided over by President Carter and Paul Mellon, President of the Gallery. This building designed by I. M. Pei includes 340,000 square feet of interior space and a 212,000 square foot connecting link with the West Building. It provides space for exhibition of art, for visitor services and amenities, and also makes possible the efficient arrangement of many of the Gallery's administrative functions.

On May 23, 1999 the National Gallery opened an outdoor Sculpture Garden given to the nation by The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. The landscaping of the 6.1-acre space, located at Seventh Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., in the block adjacent to the West Building, provides a distinctive setting for major works of art. Visitors are able to enjoy a reflecting pool and fountain in the center of the Sculpture Garden during the summer months that becomes an ice skating rink in winter.

## THE MISSION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The mission of the National Gallery of Art is to serve the country by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, interpreting and encouraging the understanding by the American public of original, great works of art.

The Gallery's challenge is fourfold:

- (1) to protect the valuable collections and national/international loans entrusted to the Gallery's care for the edification and enjoyment of the American public;
- (2) to maintain the two landmark structures built for the Gallery with funds donated for this purpose by the Mellon family; the Sculpture Garden given to the nation by The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation; and all grounds now or hereafter appurtenant thereto.
- (3) to educate the public using established teaching methods as well as the newest technological advances; and
- (4) to provide the public with increased and continuing access to the Gallery's collection and educational materials.

## GENERAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Gallery will continue to seek out the finest works of art available for donation or for purchase with private funds to strengthen the core collection donated by Andrew W. Mellon.

In order to maintain the very highest standards, the Gallery will consistently hire and retain the best available curatorial, conservation, educational, and management staffs.

Day-to-day operations will support the Gallery's mission by providing the necessary care, maintenance and security to exhibit and protect of the works of art, facilities and other Gallery assets at optimum levels to ensure their availability for public enjoyment.

The Gallery will serve as a model for other museums from coast to coast, offering its extraordinary expertise and educational resources, including loans of works of art and special exhibitions from the collection.

## SPECIFIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES

These goals and strategies assume basic and ongoing support for existing programs.

### CARE AND UTILIZATION OF ART COLLECTIONS

#### I. Display and Interpretation of Works of Art Belonging or on Loan to the Gallery

- The Gallery will present its collections to the best advantage using the latest techniques of display and lighting.
- Signage in individual galleries will be scholastically accurate and easily readable. While English will be the language of choice, Gallery guides are being provided in alternative, commonly requested languages.
- The Gallery will continue its active program of media coverage, outside signage, interaction with the travel industry and educational efforts to encourage visitation by the widest audience.

#### II. Conservation

##### Specific Goal:

- Maintain an active program of conservation and protection of the Gallery's permanent collection including art displayed in the Sculpture Garden.

##### Strategies:

- Optimize the amount of time spent working on the permanent collection by existing staff and contractors.
- Meet a projected schedule of replacement needs for primary conservation equipment.

### III. Special Exhibitions

#### Specific Goal:

- Offer visitors the widest range of visual experience through a schedule of changing exhibitions that either augment existing strengths in the collection or provide the opportunity to focus on material of exceptional merit not found in the collection.

#### Strategies:

- Subsidize and leverage staff travel and study opportunities to access works of art around the world.
- Encourage collaboration with other institutions both in the United States and abroad in an exchange of scholarship and visual materials.
- Balance the number of exhibitions per year and the viewing time to align with available staff and resources.

### IV. Education Programs

#### Specific Goals:

- Provide increased and ongoing access to the Gallery's collections and educational materials to museum visitors including school groups.
- Enhance the Gallery's program of teacher training.
- Expand the Gallery's Extension Program providing educational materials and resources to teachers, schools, and libraries throughout the country.
- Continue to expand the Gallery's Internship Program to provide important museum training for the next generation of scholars, educators, conservators, and museum administrators, encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds.
- Utilize the Internet as a dynamic expansion of the Extension Program, strengthening the Gallery's relationship with schools and teachers.

Strategies:

- Provide support for the evaluation and enhancement of the educational resources and interactive programs of the Extension Program.
- Develop an ongoing series of multimedia materials for national distribution through the Gallery's Extension Program and as part of the Gallery's website.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,  
INCLUDING REPAIR, RESTORATION AND RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS

Specific Goals:

- Maintain buildings and building systems to achieve compliance with codes and accepted standards.
- Implement modifications and alterations necessary to public spaces in the West and East Buildings for enhanced access and better utilization.
- Sustain a program of preventative maintenance for equipment and interior spaces of both buildings.
- Ensure ongoing grounds maintenance in the Sculpture Garden to assure its safe and effective operation.
- Successfully complete ongoing programs for renovation of the buildings, including access, safety and building repairs, environmental compliance, and alteration/renovation of office space.

Strategies:

- Following a Master Facilities Plan completed in FY 1999 and updated in FY 2012, ensure that the Gallery's buildings and engineered systems are replaced on a cycle that provides optimum operational effectiveness and efficiency.



## PROTECTION OF BUILDINGS, GROUNDS AND CONTENTS

### Specific Goals:

- Protect works of art, employees and visitors.
- Secure the Sculpture Garden to properly protect the sculpture, the grounds and the visitors.
- Maintain electronic protection systems and upgrade, as needed.
- As part of an effective Fire and Safety Program, keep emergency preparedness procedures current and provide ongoing regular training for staff.
- Maintain continuity of security staff, reducing the annual rate of turnover.

### Strategies:

- Provide additional programs and opportunities for security staff training.
- Develop timetable for replacement of major systems and equipment.
- Reorganize guard structure, establishing entry level hiring with rapid advancement program.

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION INCLUDING INFORMATION SYSTEMS

### Specific Goals:

- Strive for the most efficient and effective administrative support structure possible while promoting an efficient, collegial and cooperative work atmosphere.
- Provide a safe and secure work environment meeting all codes and standards.
- Maintain functional and secure information systems to handle collection management, financial data and personnel systems, Internet and e-mail.
- Support public information and communication technology requirements of the Gallery including the website and social media platforms.

### Strategies:

- Provide modern and reliable equipment and technological advances to staff as they become available.
- Outsource on a selective basis where technology, service and pricing make this the best alternative.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The National Gallery is accredited by the American Association of Museums. Accreditation is awarded to individual museums comprising an august body of institutions after exhaustive review of every aspect of their operations by a committee of staff members from peer institutions.

The National Gallery's ongoing quantitative performance measurements include:

- daily West and East Building and Sculpture Garden visitor counts;
- daily visitor counts for each special exhibition;
- comment cards from visitors;
- usage and collection statistics for library acquisitions and services, the slide library, and photographic archives; and art information desk requests;
- requests for educational resources and user responses upon return;
- summary statistics on conservation treatments;
- viewer statistics for television and media programs; and
- requests to borrow works of art from the Gallery's collection or to collaborate on special exhibitions.

By far, the most public of performance measurements is the press review that follows the opening of a special exhibition. Art critics are, for the most part, knowledgeable connoisseurs. What they have to say about an exhibition immediately helps the Gallery know how well it has translated its mission to the public. The Gallery "puts itself on the line" every time an exhibition opens and a press preview is scheduled.

In addition, on a qualitative basis, the Gallery hires independent evaluators for many of its educational activities. These professionals critique programming and, in combination with user questionnaires, provide valuable insights into public responses to the Gallery's activities. In 2017, for example, the Gallery conducted a large-scale exhibition study to determine the extent to which visitors use materials accompanying special exhibitions and in-depth participant interviews for the pilot program for new programs for visitors with memory loss.

Over the last several years, the Gallery has been performing systematic reviews of its operations, accounting and finance, and security systems using outside experts. These studies have reaffirmed the general good health of the Gallery and made specific recommendations that have been routinely implemented.

## KEY FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT OF GENERAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The two most significant factors affecting the Gallery are the Federal budget and the national economic climate. The federal responsibility to provide funds necessary to operate the Gallery and care for the collections is subject to changing priorities within the overall federal budget and has not kept pace with rising costs or changing public expectations for access to collections. Likewise fundraising from private donors is affected by the economy at large and increased competition for donations from numerous cultural organizations.

On the public side, inflationary costs not supported by federal funding in line with the CPI will severely impact the Gallery's operations and impede achievement of its goals and objectives. If federally-mandated salary increases are not covered within appropriated funds, staffing must be reduced to generate the required funds, thus reducing critical staff for guardianship and maintenance essential to a 363-day museum operation. Without inflationary adjustments for services, the Gallery's educational outreach programs, for example, which circulate printed and audio visual materials on all Gallery programs including special exhibitions, may have to be significantly curtailed if the Gallery cannot cover increased reproduction costs.

On the private side, financial support from the private sector historically has matched the federal appropriation for special exhibitions dollar for dollar. A decrease in corporate, foundation and individual contributions as a result of an austere economic climate can impede the Gallery's ability to host one or more of its planned exhibitions as well as significantly diminish the quality of the privately-funded programs including activities of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts; the Sunday evening concerts; experimental education programs; and our publishing efforts.

The public image of Washington, D.C. as portrayed in the press can also have a significant impact on achievement of the Gallery's goals and objectives by reducing tourist traffic, thereby decreasing our annual visitor attendance/audience.

## PROGRAM EVALUATIONS USED IN FORMULATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Each year the executive officers of the National Gallery hold extensive discussions with staff and the Board of Trustees to identify priorities and to formulate strategic planning. Over the course of the year, most areas of the Gallery's operations and its programs are discussed and evaluated.

Specific topics include: protection services and operations; major capital projects; facilities master planning, management, building care and renovation; conservation and care of art; educational programs, the National Lending Service and distribution of extension materials; Internet programming and outreach; information systems and technology; special exhibition programs, scheduling and planning; design and installation; editorial resources and use; curatorial records and the handling of works of art; and administrative services.

Options for consolidating services and operations are explored as well as identification of areas where contractual services would be appropriate, effective and cost efficient. The results of these discussions have already impacted proposed funding allocations in past Federal Budget submissions.

A program of discussion and evaluation will continue over the next six-year period as independent assessments are undertaken in specific areas to measure results. This program will serve as a means for ongoing evaluation of the Gallery's achievement of its mission and goals.