

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

2022-2026 Strategic Plan

PLEDGE OF EXCELLENCE

The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs pledges that, in fulfillment of our educational mission, we will strive to operate according to national standards and best practices to the best of our abilities and in accordance with our resources.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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FOREWORD

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is pleased to present our Strategic Plan for the years 2022-2026.

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs remains dedicated to our mission, our vision, and our core values as stated in this plan. This includes maintaining our roles as stewards of public funding and public lands; collecting, interpreting, and preserving Delaware's history; and our renewed commitment to Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) in everything we do.

This plan is the result a year-long process which included interviews, focus groups, small working groups, an on-line survey, and two (2) on-line town hall meetings. This work was guided by my colleagues at the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs and facilitated by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA).

This process was unlike any other strategic planning we had been involved in previously. Rising to the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, my HCA colleagues and our friends at DANA created new methods, relied on new(er) technology to collaborate and delivered a document which provides clear direction and maximum flexibility to respond to our changing environment.

The input of hundreds of people gave voice to the content of this plan. We remain grateful for your contributions, interest, and support.



Timothy A. Slavin
Division Director

PLAN ADOPTION DATE

January 1, 2022

BACKGROUND

The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (HCA) is an agency of the Delaware Department of State dedicated to identifying, preserving and interpreting Delaware's history. With the responsibility of managing over forty properties within the State of Delaware, the work of HCA reaches from Claymont in the north, to Fenwick Island in the south.

From technical assistance on historic preservation matters, assisting property owners with nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, applications for the Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, to partnerships with community organizations, to collections development, tours and programs at six museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the division seeks to serve the citizens of Delaware and preserve our community's history in a variety of programs.

Since the last plan's development there has been great achievement and change. Internally, the Division added new staff while many of those long tenured have transitioned. The Delaware Center for Material Culture, a new collections and research facility, was built and accessions to the collection have grown. The Division achieved accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. In addition, the Division acquired several new properties including the Weldon House and Cooch Homestead parcel.

The climate also has changed. There is a rise in awareness for the need to call out and overturn structural racism. A global pandemic diminished the community's ability to visit and experience the Division's historical properties and the Division responded with novel use of technology to continue educating and engaging the public.

To provide guidance in meeting HCA's mission the Division conducts a strategic plan every five years. 2021 provided the year of planning for the next strategic plan, which coincided with the continued impact of the COVIC-19 pandemic.

To facilitate the process of developing the next strategic plan, leadership engaged the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA). Recognizing the need for flexibility, DANA and HCA agreed that developing a framework that permits continuous planning would serve the Division well. The resulting plan includes a refresh of the Mission and Vision and affirmation of the Division's Values, five Division Goals and 20 Objectives, each of which serves several Goals.

PROCESS

The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs formed a Strategic Planning Committee in January 2021, comprised of Division leadership and staff representing different disciplines within the division. Beginning mid-January 2021, consultants from the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement met frequently with the Committee. The initial part of the planning process gathered input from more than 225 staff, partners, educators, history professionals, history organizations, and members of the general public through qualitative and quantitative methods. This included:

- 30 individual interviews, including with eight HCA staff members
- 10 focus groups in which 95 people participated, including 39 HCA staff members
- One public town hall composed of 25 participants
- Three online surveys: an HCA staff survey with 61 responses, a survey for history professionals and partner organizations (HPHP) with 82 responses, and a survey for the general public with 79 responses

The extensive research was intended to capture the various ways different teams within HCA interact with each other, government, peer institutions, and community. The HCA Committee heard the results of the research and used that information to review and update the Vision, Mission and Values of the Division and develop the initial concepts of the Goals for the coming years.

It was important to Division leadership that the entire staff of HCA participate in the process. All staff members were invited to comment on the proposed Goals and Objectives and participate in identifying the initial steps HCA could take toward accomplishing the Objectives, as well as proposing the metrics for measuring progress toward their accomplishment.

The complete proposed plan was presented to staff for comment; the Committee then revised the plan as appropriate. The proposed plan was subsequently presented to the public in a virtual Town Hall setting.

VISION, MISSION, VALUES, AND RACE & EQUITY

VISION

- We actively engage individuals to share how Delaware History is meaningful in their lives. We provide opportunities for communities to explore a diversity of historical and cultural perspectives that inform and inspire decisions about the future.
- We create an environment where all people feel welcome, valued, and encouraged to question, explore, and share.
- We collect and preserve, for future generations, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of all Delawareans, and the material culture of Delaware history.
- The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is a trustworthy, ethical, and reliable partner with organizations, agencies, and individuals with whom we have common goals. All division staff and volunteers will consistently make use of each other's knowledge and skills, building professional relationships across teams.

MISSION

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs serves the public by identifying, collecting, preserving, and interpreting inclusive Delaware history and engaging diverse cultures. Our activities foster strong communities, engaged citizens, economic vitality, and a deeper understanding of Delaware's role in world history. We do this for current and future generations.

VALUES

- **Communication:** We are committed to an open, proactive, and thoughtful exchange of information and ideas that promotes trust and understanding in our internal and external relationships.
- **Professionalism:** We are committed to conducting ourselves in a professional manner to co-workers, partners, and the public in order to be recognized as a reputable and reliable resource.
- **Creativity:** We are committed to supporting innovative thinking and nurturing a creative environment. Our passion for history inspires us to risk taking new approaches.
- **Knowledge:** We are committed to the growth and professional development of staff and volunteers in order to ensure that all of our activities are strongly grounded in scholarly research, current and reliable best practices, and relevant laws, rules, and regulations.
- **Discourse/Dialog:** We are committed to open debate and discourse on subjects relevant to the past, present, and future of Delaware.
- **Community Involvement:** We are committed to actively listening to, and communicating, collaborating, and partnering with, the community in the development of our programs and services.
- **Stewardship:** We are committed to the responsible management of the division's assets, seeking to exceed best practices.
- **Cooperation:** We are committed to developing and maintaining trust and respect amongst co-workers, partners, and our audiences to provide a positive and collaborative atmosphere to achieve common goals

Race and Equity

We support the elimination of racial injustice, racism, discrimination, and exclusionary history. We believe that Black lives matter.

We strive to practice inclusive history. History is not a series of clean, happy stories. It is a combination of uncomfortable truths, differing views, and difficult narratives. At the John Dickinson Plantation in Dover, for example, we tell the story of the enslaved, indentured, and free Black men, women, and children who worked, and died on the plantation. We welcome the difficult conversations that come from interpreting the land of a founding father who wrote of freedom and liberty for all while holding human beings in bondage.

We struggle with how to tell Delaware's more troubling history. We are stewards of Delaware's history. This history includes stories of pain, courage, and defeat. We will not shrink from the pain of our shared history.

We are listening. We want people to be heard and to know that we are listening. Your voices will give shape to how we collect, interpret, preserve, and present history to the public.

We need your help. We can't do this on our own. We want to be an active participant in the force for change in our communities.

We are here. We will be undeterred in bringing forth diversity in our stories and we want all voices to be heard. We strive to be a safe place for difficult conversations and uncomfortable truths.

We promise to preserve and share Delaware history, commit to expanding the parameters of that history, and preserve the history of this movement for current and future generations.

Delaware Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

June 10, 2020

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Engagement and Outreach

Cultivate an inclusive environment that supports educational and collaborative opportunities for the public and professionals alike to broaden understanding of Delaware's history and cultural resources.

- **O1: Objective:** Tell more diverse stories in diverse ways
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O2: Objective:** See more engagement with educators across all grade levels
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O3: Objective:** Increase participation and engagement with younger demographics
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Visibility, DEAI
- **O4: Objective:** Capitalize on new and existing partnerships to increase outreach and direct public interaction
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship, Staff

Goal 2: Visibility and Awareness

Promote HCA's resources and programs to the public, scholars, and potential partnering entities.

- **O1: Objective:** Comprehensive Communications Plan for HCA that includes plans for individual teams, sites, and programs
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, DEAI, Stewardship, Staff
- **O2: Objective:** Create cross-team public programs to promote multiple functions of HCA
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, DEAI, Stewardship, Staff

Goal 3: Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion (DEAI)

Ensure all feel welcome and heard and can see themselves and their culture's history represented in our work.

- **O1: Objective:** HCA assets will be welcoming both physically and digitally
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, Stewardship
- **O2: Objective:** HCA is culturally welcoming across all potential diversities (e.g., LGBTQIA+, disabilities, gender, neurodiversity, religion, socioeconomic status, race, etc.)
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, Stewardship, Staff
- **O3: Objective:** Increase cultural competency of HCA staff and volunteers
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, Stewardship, Staff
- **O4: Objective:** HCA content is inclusive of different cultures
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, Stewardship, Staff

Goal 4: Stewardship

Foster a more complete understanding of humanity through the lens of all of Delaware history and the collection and preservation of our shared cultural assets.

- **O1: Objective:** Develop an acquisition, collection and preservation strategy that recognizes the breadth of Delaware history, including sites, artifacts, stories, and other tangible and intangible assets, and provides one or more mechanisms for community members to share knowledge and/or provide input on the interpretation and use of HCA's holdings and potential acquisitions
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI
- **O2: Objective:** Develop a communications strategy that encourages contribution of historical knowledge and stories, and identifying potential sites for future preservation
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI
- **O3: Objective:** Develop or update HCA plans and programs to address climate change impact and adaptation in keeping with the Governor's Climate Action Plan – Nov. 2021
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI

Goal 5: Strengthening Staff

Enhance our professional capacity to meet the increasing demand on HCA's resources.

- **O1: Objective:** Review and Update Staff Recognition and Compensation Policies
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O2: Objective:** Encourage Professional Development
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O3: Objective:** Create a Collaborative Culture
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O4: Objective:** All HCA staff are aware of all HCA does, including current work and interests of teams and staff across the division
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O5: Objective:** There is a way to capture and make internally available historical institutional knowledge
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O6: Objective:** Increase HCA capacity for grant writing to secure additional funds
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship
- **O7: Objective:** Assess and adjust staffing levels for strategic plan years (2022-2026) aligned with existing and anticipated positions needed; Submit as part of annual operating budget request.
 - ◊ Also supports Goals: Engagement, Visibility, DEAI, Stewardship

MEASURING SUCCESS

Measuring success will take many forms, both quantitative and qualitative

Quantitative

- Attendance
- Return attendees
- Use of tax credits
- New partnerships

Qualitative

- Reaching unengaged
- Inclusiveness
- Resource for other states / organizations
- Increasing knowledge base
- Increasing visibility

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Below are highlights that represent what the consultants uncovered and explored in their research

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In the surveys, people ranked the highest priorities for the HCA strategic plan. Chart illustrates overlap among staff, history professionals & partners, and general public.

Top Five High-Priority Areas (% rated 4 or 5)		
Staff	History Professionals/Partners	General Public
Becoming more visible and well-known in the state - 91%	Becoming more visible and well-known in the state - 95%	Improving awareness of HCA collections - 90%
Expanding educational programs beyond 4th grade - 90%	Advocating for increased funding for historic preservation - 90%	Becoming more visible and well-known in the state - 87%
Improving awareness of HCA collections - 84%	Engaging with diverse publics to expand interpretation of historical sites and collections - 85%	Expanding educational programs beyond 4th grade - 77%
Advocating for increased funding for historic preservation - 83%	Improving awareness of HCA collections - 65%	Advocating for increased funding for historic preservation - 77%
Focusing on telling stories more inclusive of the state's diverse populations - 83%	Finding ways to raise more funding to support HCA efforts - 84%	Focusing on telling stories more inclusive of the state's diverse populations - 77%

Note: "Providing ways for the history community to convene" and "Providing technical assistance to private historical organizations" was more important to the stakeholders than to staff.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Open-Ended Input for HCA Strategic Planning		
Staff	History Professionals/Partners	General Public
Serve as a leader in telling more diverse and inclusive stories – and not just the happy ones	Outreach to minority populations and telling diverse histories	Increase outreach to minority populations, include diverse histories
Experiment more, and bring innovative methods for exhibition experiences to increase public engagement	HCA visibility and awareness of DE public on value of history	HCA community engagement and increased understanding of DE history
Improve coordination among HCA staff, and listen to staff suggestions for site experience improvements	Site preservation, exhibition enhancements, increased accessibility	Expand - create a central site (could be online), increase preservation and restoration initiatives
Invest in technology – new systems, social media, digitized collection	Invest in technology – exhibition enhancements, digitize collection	Digitize the collection, invest in volunteer database
Increase staff capacity – more, better trained, internal process improvements	Provide technical assistance and convene professionals	Increase staff - provide education and technical assistance for towns and partner groups

PRIORITIES FOR SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS

Historical Interpretation:

- Tell historical stories with different perspectives

Historic Preservation:

- Diversify sites to reflect other cultures and time periods
- Increase public awareness of preservation opportunities
- Develop a strategic plan for preservation

Collections:

- Diversify and expand collections to reflect other cultures and time periods
- Increase public awareness of state's collection holdings
- Increase online access to collections

Site and Museum Management:

- Develop strategies to increase audience engagement
- Advocate for funding for restoration and maintenance

Partnerships:

- Engage the public in identifying preservation opportunities and/or collecting of oral histories, historic artifacts, and objects
- Enhance relationships with private nonprofit organizations and state agencies to coordinate historic interpretation and programming

Convening and Capacity-Building:

- Develop strategies to increase audience engagement
- Advocate for funding for restoration and maintenance

PLANNING GROUP

HCA Strategic Plan Committee

Jenifer Anderson-Reno, *Historic Property Research Center Manager*
Daniel Citron, *Historic Sites Team Manager*
Sara Clendaniel, *Buena Vista Site Supervisor*
Elizabeth Coulter, *Curator of Collections*
Gwenyth Davis, *Deputy Director, State Historic Preservation Officer*
Elizabeth Gant, *Horticulture Manager*
Megan Hutchins, *Engagement and Collections Manager*
Vertie Lee, *Curator of Education*
Gavin Malone, *Interpreter, Old State House*
Suzanne Savery, *Deputy Director*
James Scott, *Chief of Maintenance Operations*
Timothy Slavin, *Director*
Amanda Skowronski, *Business Services Manager*
Sharon Trotman, *Administrative Specialist*

HCA Staff: Thanks to all eighty-plus employees of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs who participated in the research and development of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

DANA Consultants

Susan Detwiler, *Project Leader*
Sheila Bravo
David Fleming
Wil Sherk
Richard Haviland
Mel Carney and Stephanie Sullivan – *Project Administration*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Newsletter: *Saving Delaware History* – a monthly newsletter featuring activities, programs and services offered by the division and other interested in the value of history and historic preservation in Delaware.

<https://history.delaware.gov/subscribe/>

Visit and follow us on social media

HCA on Facebook

Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs [@savingdelawarehistory](#)

Zwaanendael Museum [@zwaanendael](#)

John Dickinson Plantation [@johndickinsonplantation](#)

Johnson Victrola Museum [@johnsonvictrolamuseum](#)

The Old State House [@theoldstatehouse](#)

New Castle Court House Museum [@newcastlecourthouse](#)

Buena Vista [@BuenaVistaConferenceCenter](#)

HCA on Instagram

Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs [@savingdelawarehistory](#)

Collections, Access, Research and Exhibits Team [@delawarehistory](#)

New Castle Court House Museum [@newcastlecourthousemuseum](#)

Johnson Victrola Museum [@johnsonvictrolamuseum](#)

Zwaanendael Museum [@zwaanendaelmuseum](#)

Buena Vista [@buenavistade](#)

HCA on Twitter

Twitter [@SavingDEHistory](#)

HCA on Tik Tok

Johnson Victrola Museum [@johnsonvictrolamuseum](#)

HCA Podcast

[DelawareHistory - YouTube](#)

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Saving Delaware History

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs Strategic Plan 2022-2026 has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.