

PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM STRATEGIC PLAN



OVERVIEW

Penobscot Marine Museum explores the relationships over time of the people on the Maine coast with various maritime endeavors. We focus on the life and work of people engaged in fishing; the transportation of people and goods on the sea; recreation and tourism; and the supporting shoreside industries, from Wiscasset to Eastport, with an emphasis on Penobscot Bay communities. We consider the wider implications of those activities, locally and around the world. Our work is relevant and timely as we provide historical context to current issues from complex debates about resource management to a visitor's simple question: how did the lobster go from the ocean to my lobster roll?

To capture this focus and direction, the planning process included a review and revision of the mission statement. The new mission statement reads:

Penobscot Marine Museum inspires curiosity and fosters understanding about life and work on the Maine coast to encourage stewardship of our communities and the sea.

This plan articulates a significant commitment to investment in the Museum's campus in Searsport and, by extension, to Searsport and mid-coast Maine. Technology will allow us to reach audiences and constituents who may never come to Maine, sharing our collections, programs, and resources internationally.

The seven goals and accompanying objectives form the framework of the plan. Action steps have also been created internally that sequence out year by year with assignment of responsibilities and identification of needed resources and metrics of success. High priority objectives and actions are marked with a star (*). It is anticipated that these will be the primary focus of the first year of the plan. Some initiatives, including implementing the master plan for the campus and raising the funds needed to realize those plans, will undoubtedly extend beyond the life of this plan.

GOAL ONE: EXPERIENCE

Create a visitor experience that is appealing and lively, conveying how people lived and worked along the Maine coast and the grit and determination demanded of maritime life.

Objective One: Develop interpretive strategies and programming appropriate to three core audiences: seasonal tourists to the region, residents, and, within both groups, families

- Improve interactive experiences throughout campus for families and school groups*
- Develop multi-sensory and layered approaches to interpretation, complementing exhibits and programs
- Provide context to local current maritime culture and natural resource issues and show their relation to broader global issues
- Use local economic history as case study for global maritime economic history

Objective Two: Increase involvement with schools including in-person and remote field trips and content-rich collaborative projects.*

- Refine and adapt a catalog of field trip programs that meet teacher learning goals
- Grow both in-person and online field trip attendance throughout the year, particularly before reopening in spring
- Train additional staff members to lead field trips
- Work with teachers on content-rich collaborations with a focus on repeatable, sustainable projects

Objective Three: Refine and complete implementation and funding of a multiyear exhibition plan and related programming that incorporates diverse and recent stories, including upgrades to current installations of the permanent collections and new exhibitions.*

- Broaden and diversify the perspectives, expertise and resources reflected in programs and exhibitions (including but not limited to the two examples detailed below)
- Determine how to tell the stories of coastal Maine's role in the Atlantic slave trade and the transport of goods dependent on the labor of enslaved individuals, working with appropriate scholars and guest curators
- Collaborate with Wabanaki consultants or guest curators for exhibit conception, design, and scholarship of new canoe exhibition
- Incorporate photo exhibits, traveling exhibits, and education standalone interactives, as well as permanent thematic exhibits, into plan
- Hire exhibit designers and fabricators to work with curatorial department for more professional polish to long-term thematic exhibits
- Secure philanthropic and sponsorship funds to support exhibitions

GOAL TWO: VISIBILITY

Raise the Museum's visibility locally, regionally, and nationally.

Objective One: Complete a comprehensive assessment and re-launch of the Museum's messaging and brand.*

- Pursue the recommendation of a name change to better express the Museum's mission and activities
- Rebrand, with new logo, tagline, and style guidelines, to fit our new mission and focus
- Improve and expand the Museum's website, creating a more user-friendly, content-rich destination for people interested in Maine's maritime history, integrating siloed resources

Objective Two: Improve the visibility and curb appeal of the Museum.

- Make better use of the crescent
- Improve signage, using new branding

Objective Three: Participate in efforts to promote and manage tourism to the region.

- Work with cultural and historical organizations in the region to cross-promote destinations and share resources
- Increase promotion through the hospitality industry: lodging, restaurants, tour companies, etc.

GOAL THREE: MASTER PLAN

Assess the use of all spaces on the Museum’s campus – buildings and outdoor spaces – and develop a comprehensive master plan to better accommodate all functions.

Objective One: Develop and raise funds for completing a comprehensive master planning process for the campus that considers the use of all current buildings and potentially new construction.*

- Develop scope of work and request for proposals from planners
- Hire planner and complete planning
- Develop sequence of projects, budgets, and funding strategies

Objective Two: Improve visitor services and access.

- Develop and execute plans to use the entirety of the Whitcomb/Pendleton Block building year-round*
- Create more, larger, and accessible year-round indoor program spaces
- Achieve accessibility to the first floor of all historic structures
- Improve parking
- Clarify wayfinding and explore periodic closing of streets through the Museum

Objective Three: Reorganize and upgrade storage of all collections.

- Relocate and consolidate collections where appropriate

Objective Four: Determine the best use(s) of the Hamilton Learning Center Property and develop and implement decisions.

- Explore potential partnerships with the Searsport community and surrounding maritime communities that would make appropriate use of the property and further the Museum’s mission
- Include the property in the overall assessment of the Museum’s campus and define what role(s) it will play in the comprehensive master plan

GOAL FOUR: STEWARDSHIP

Exercise thoughtful and responsible stewardship of all the historical assets entrusted to the Museum

Objective One: Upgrade collections management software.*

- Articulate goals and requirements for new software platform that accommodates all collections records and facilitates online access for researchers

- Investigate and assess options, hiring consultants as required
- Make selection and undertake migration of data, staff training, etc.

Objective Two: Sharpen collections parameters and priorities, aligning collections priorities to the mission and plan.

- Build the collections to be able to tell more inclusive and diverse stories, filling in significant omissions in the historical record
- Strengthen the most significant and important object, photographic, archival, and library collections, particularly those that support the key stories told in the Museum
- Identify objects and other materials outside of the scope of collections and develop strategies for deaccessioning and disposal*

Objective Three: Invest in upgrading and improving buildings on the Museum campus.

- Prioritize funding and addressing deferred maintenance of historic structures and conditions that threaten collections*
- Pursue additional grant funding for increasing energy efficiency in historic properties

Objective Four: Address critical conservation and preservation needs.

- Raise funds for acquisitions and conservation treatment
- Include upgrades and improvements to buildings required for responsible collections conservation in comprehensive master planning

GOAL FIVE: COMMUNITY

Continually demonstrate a commitment to Searsport and the surrounding maritime communities.

Objective One: Nurture strong relationships throughout Searsport and the region.*

- Strengthen relationships with Searsport public officials
- Create strong partnerships with organizations, businesses, and individuals in the region

Objective Two: Support local businesses and the sustainability of Searsport's economy.

- Work with our neighbors on Main Street/Route One to create a welcoming experience for visitors
- Support the preservation and adaptive reuse of Searsport's historic Main Street buildings
- Work to ensure access to the Museum, Hamilton Learning Center Property, and other businesses throughout reconstruction of Route One

Objective Three: Nurture strong relationships with Maine's maritime communities.

- Collaborate with maritime communities to document their cultural shifts and evolving relationship with the sea to understand current events
- Partner with traditional small craft organizations on preservation and recreational opportunities

Objective Four: Nurture strong relationships with maritime industry stakeholders.

- Assist maritime skill training programs and employers upholding traditional techniques and natural resource stewardship
- Work with industry, policymakers, and scholars to provide context to current issues affecting local livelihoods and the stewardship of natural resources

GOAL SIX: SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the Museum's sustainability by diversifying and increasing sources of support and revenue.

Objective One: Plan and begin implementation of a comprehensive capital campaign.*

- Set goals that include funding to implement the comprehensive master plan and additions to the endowment in the campaign
- Create case statement that includes opportunities for named and designated funds
- Communicate and encourage planned gifts and bequests

Objective Two: Increase visitation and revenue from admissions.

- Use targeted digital marketing to increase visitation by tourists to the region
- Expand use of more traditional marketing strategies to increase visitation
- Extend schedule into the off season to build local constituency, including school groups

Objective Three: Develop new and expanded earned income streams.

- Explore the feasibility of various models for producing and selling (retail and wholesale) reproductions and other materials from the collections
- Work on increasing earned income through store sales of mission-related merchandise
- Explore the feasibility of leveraging expertise and networks to develop fee-based live and virtual programs for adults, particularly maritime enthusiasts and scholars

Objective Four: Build the base of members, donors, and sponsors.

- Transition local visitors onto a ladder of membership and philanthropic support
- Cultivate the support of maritime businesses as donors and sponsors

GOAL SEVEN: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Strengthen the Museum's capacity to accomplish this plan.

Objective One: Expand and diversify the board of trustees.

- Include in the nominating process and committee individuals from beyond the board
- Identify and recruit members from a more diverse range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experience

Objective Two: Build the capacity of the board to undertake a capital campaign.

- Identify and recruit members who have the experience, capacity, and skills to lead and support a capital campaign
- Provide ongoing training and support for board members' fundraising roles

Objective Three: Ensure that the staff is adequately compensated and prepared to do its work.

- Undertake an assessment of salary and other compensation against peer institutions in New England and budget for adjustments/changes to salary and benefits
- Take steps to improve retention and job satisfaction of hourly and seasonal workers, paid and unpaid

- Increase professional development opportunities
- Create better working conditions for staff and volunteers including offices, workshops, and break room(s)
- Revise internship program to integrate with strategic plan

Objective Four: Develop a mechanism for regular review of this plan and progress towards goals.

- Assign responsibility for review of the plan to a board committee or ad hoc group
- Monitor key metrics quarterly, reviewing progress and updating actions as required
- Report overall progress on the plan at least annually and revise the plan as required