



# Strategic Plan

2021-2026



# Introduction

# We believe that the museum of the 21st century still needs definition, and the Toledo Museum of Art is uniquely suited to define it.

## □ Introduction

The Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) is known for its exceptional art collection, one of the finest in this country, and its wide-ranging educational offerings and outreach programs. Over its 120-year history, the Museum has organized major shows that have drawn national and international acclaim. Our campus of 37 acres, housing two buildings by Pritzker Prize winners (Frank Gehry and SANAA) alongside our distinguished Edward B. Green Beaux-Arts building, is operated by a relatively modest 100 full-time employees. TMA boasts scale and reach but remains small enough to move quickly and nimbly.

What's more, Toledo is, in many ways, more representative of the United States than its larger-city peers. Toledo's demographics, politics, and economy engage a different and perhaps truer reality of this country—one seen from a vibrant Midwestern city in the midst of reinvention. It stands to reason that the model museum in this country would emerge from a place that reflects the everyday life of a large share of our nation's population.

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# So, what would the model museum look like?

The answer, we believe, has been conveniently provided by an excellent and rigorous study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation. In *The Alchemy of High-Performing Arts Organizations*, authors Zannie Voss and Glenn Voss explain →

“

The cornerstones of high performance appear to lie in the alchemy of **high standards** in the creation of work that **is meaningful to the local community.**”

# High standards and community are in the Toledo Museum of Art's DNA.

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The Toledo Museum of Art is differentiated in that it was founded with an express focus on collecting only the highest quality artworks. The Museum was incorporated in 1901 without a foundational gifted collection. Its permanent home opened in 1912, the same year that Edward Drummond Libbey, chair of the board, articulated TMA's distinctive approach to collecting in his director's report at the trustees' annual meeting →

“

Let us not aim to crowd our Museum with inferior works of Art. Let nothing be done but what is of the best thought, deed or example. Let the multitudinous array of the mediocre be relegated to the past and in its place be found the highest quality, the best examples and the recognition of only those thoughts which will stand for all time.”

Quality, as the Wallace Foundation report makes clear, is on its own not enough to create a high-performing arts organization. A Museum is more than a collection. Here too, TMA is distinguished relative to its peers. In its founding charter, which still is read aloud at each annual meeting of the trustees, the purpose of this institution is made clear ↘

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“

This Museum has been fortunate in the knowledge, the wisdom, the ideals and the generosity of those that have sponsored it. They gave of themselves and of their wealth **for the benefit of all the people of Toledo.”**

## □ Introduction

This community orientation remains today.

Over the past decade the Museum has received, on average, 380,000 visits per year, which as a percentage of its 650,000-person metropolitan statistical area ranks it among the top five most visited art museums per capita, according to annual statistics from the Association of Art Museum Directors.

Though TMA can claim a history of executing on quality and community, this Museum, like so many others, has implemented its strategies in ways that have not been equally inclusive or equally accessible. Though TMA is known across the world for its outstanding collection, that collection reflects a Eurocentric view of the world. Likewise, the demographic attributes of those 380,000 annual visitors skew Caucasian, female, older, affluent, and highly educated.

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# Quality, however, does not discriminate.

Quality is fundamentally democratic and egalitarian. A collection that reflects beauty without bias will represent the audience it serves. Over its history, TMA has broadened its view and its reach, but the 21st-century demands greater and more fundamental changes.



The goal of the Toledo Museum of Art team is to embrace these changes and deliver on the promise to respond actively to and create meaningful content around our new shared realities. We will do so by expanding our view of quality to tell a truly global and inclusive art history, while also ensuring that our outreach, our visitor experience, our team and our suppliers reflect our Northwest Ohio community. This change will be systemic and structural. We will build change from the inside out, putting people and processes first and empowering our dedicated team to develop engaging and inclusive programming. ↓

## □ Introduction

In so doing, we will create a sense of comfort and openness—a culture of belonging—that will permeate everything we do.



# Values, Mission, and Vision

# This plan is driven by four values:

## □ Values, Mission, and Vision

### Diversity

Diverse ideas emerge from a diverse team and engage diverse audiences. We create space for different voices and are accountable to listening, learning, and acting.

### Community

We strive to reflect our community at all levels of the organization, to treat our community as a partner in our programming and to serve our audiences broadly and intentionally through the highest quality art.

### Innovation

We seek to innovate for our community and for our field. Museums need big solutions for 21st century problems, and we will not be afraid to take calculated risks or to leverage paradigm shifts.

### Trust

We steward our collection in the public trust and must guard the confidence placed in us. We also trust each other and commit to empowering our teammates.

These values are our true north. While tactics and strategies may be debatable, we are accountable to ourselves and to our community that each action TMA takes reflects these four values.

We believe our mission, **to integrate art into the lives of people**, undertaken holistically, refracted through these four values, will help us achieve our vision ↓

## □ Values, Mission, and Vision

The Toledo Museum of Art  
will become the model art  
museum in the United States  
for its commitment to quality  
and its culture of belonging.

By authentically connecting quality with belonging, TMA can become one of the museums in this country from which others learn.



# Measuring Success

## □ Measuring Success

Measuring TMA's success in achieving its vision can be thought of in two parts. Becoming the model art museum is a “lagging indicator”—it is an emergent characteristic that follows from a commitment to quality and a culture of belonging. Though becoming the model can be measured numerous ways (earned media, requests to benchmark from other institutions, invited talks, etc.), this outcome is not expressly measured by this plan. Rather, metrics around quality

and belonging are the “leading indicators” focused on by this plan.

A commitment to quality and a culture of belonging that permeates the institution will create an irresistible experience, one that is as welcoming as the content is astounding. Together, these two characteristics create more than a great experience—they create a museum people want to return to again and again.

**For this reason, the key performance indicator (KPI) that the Toledo Museum of Art will use to determine the success of this plan is the number of repeat visitors to the collection each year.**

## □ Measuring Success

This KPI requires two points of clarification. First, an increase in repeat visitation will result in a more diverse visitation. Data from a recent study by Randi Korn & Associates demonstrates that the Museum's roughly 380,000 annual visits is comprised of approximately 125,000 unique visitors, who are exactly representative of the Toledo metropolitan statistical area. Data from that same study demonstrates that museum-going is social: More than 90% of TMA visitors bring at least one companion. The model of

change imagined in this plan is to develop *frequent* visitation among all current visitors. Since unique visitation is as diverse as the community we serve, increasing the frequency of visitation among our existing, infrequent visitors will create more representative visitation. Moreover, because of the social nature of museum visitation, this more representative audience will introduce new networks to the Museum, expanding our reach in the community authentically and organically.

Second, though the Museum's programs, events, and exhibitions are key to introducing people to TMA, what makes an art museum what it is—both literally and in terms of the specific character of that institution—is its collection. The sense of belonging that a museum achieves through its programs, exhibitions, and auxiliary amenities must extend to its main galleries; at TMA, they will.



# Operationalizing the Vision



## □ Operationalizing the Vision

The Toledo Museum of Art's efforts to operationalize its commitment to quality and its culture of belonging will be supported by four strategic objectives, which themselves contain supporting programs and underlying projects. The objectives and programs are listed →

Programs will extend across each year of the plan and have annual projects with their own supporting metrics/outcomes. Projects are not listed in this version of the document since they will evolve over the course of the plan in response to progress and community feedback.

## Transition to Active Community Outreach and Engagement

**Broaden the Narrative of History**

**Become an Employer of Choice**

**Create a Platform for Operational Excellence**

## □ Operationalizing the Vision

### OBJECTIVE 1

## Transition to Active Community Outreach and Engagement

National surveys like LaPlaca Cohen's *CultureTrack* (2017) demonstrate that one of the primary reasons reported for lack of visitation to cultural institutions is that "it's not for someone like me." An earlier study (2011) indicated that "being invited" was equally influential in determining a potential visit. With these barriers in mind, it becomes clear that TMA's approach to outreach and engagement has been too passive—i.e., it has relied more on offering onsite programs rather than developing community relationships.

An "active" approach to community outreach not only increases the level of offsite programming, but in so doing, it allows TMA employees to create personal relationships and invite program participants individually to visit the Museum. This practice borrows from community organizing tactics. To mitigate the effects of other barriers (e.g., transportation) and to ensure these efforts drive impact, TMA will maintain a focus on the two-mile radius immediately around the Museum.

□ Operationalizing the Vision

OBJECTIVE 1

## Transition to Active Community Outreach and Engagement

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PROGRAM 1

**Invest in the Infrastructure  
for a Culture of Belonging**

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PROGRAM 2

**Develop and Execute Plans for  
Increased Offsite Programming**

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PROGRAM 3

**Engage Local Artists**

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PROGRAM 4

**Invite the Community to the Campus**

## □ Operationalizing the Vision

### OBJECTIVE 2

## Broaden the Narrative of History

Research, including the CultureTrack and Randi Korn & Associates surveys mentioned previously, demonstrate that visitors do not feel themselves equally reflected in museum collections. TMA's collection has expanded over its 120 years to span more than 5,000 years of artwork from six continents. But the Museum's 30,000 artworks and current gallery installation convey a narrative built around Enlightenment ideas that uncritically accept underlying Eurocentric biases. The Toledo Museum of Art seeks to broaden that narrative with and through the addition of exceptional works of art from cultures and makers that contribute to an inclusive and global art history. These efforts will be crystallized in a wholesale reinstallation of the Museum's galleries, the first in nearly 40 years.

□ Operationalizing the Vision

OBJECTIVE 2

## Broaden the Narrative of History

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PROGRAM 1

**Increase the Number, Coverage,  
and Diversity of Curators**

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PROGRAM 2

**Diversify the Collections through  
Targeted Acquisitions and Deaccessions**

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PROGRAM 3

**Expand the Ambition and Diversity of  
the Exhibitions Program**

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PROGRAM 4

**Reimagine Museum Interpretation**

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PROGRAM 5

**Activate Galleries in New Ways**

## □ Operationalizing the Vision

### OBJECTIVE 3

## Become an Employer of Choice

The Toledo Museum of Art aims to become an employer of choice within its region and its sector. TMA seeks to pioneer new approaches to employee support in the museum field. Total compensation is a necessary part of this objective, but the Museum also needs to change *how* it works and develop a culture that invests in and fully empowers its staff, at all levels. Trust, clear communication, and values-aligned decision making must sit alongside progressive benefits.

□ Operationalizing the Vision

OBJECTIVE 3

## Become an Employer of Choice

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PROGRAM 1

**Develop and Execute a  
Best-in-Class DEAI Plan**

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PROGRAM 2

**Develop Best In-Class  
Compensation and Benefits**

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PROGRAM 3

**Center Employee Engagement**

## □ Operationalizing the Vision

### OBJECTIVE 4

## Create a Platform for Operational Excellence

The Toledo Museum of Art has opportunities to upgrade its infrastructure to match its collection, to right-size its reliance on its revenue sources and to identify efficiencies across the organization. Delivering the programs in this objective will provide the resources for the plan and the platform for sustained operations at an elevated level.



□ Operationalizing the Vision

OBJECTIVE 4

## Create a Platform for Operational Excellence

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PROGRAM 1

**Invest in Best-in-Class  
Visitor Satisfaction**

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PROGRAM 2

**Grow Financial Base**

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PROGRAM 3

**Upgrade Facilities and Unwind  
Deferred Maintenance**

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PROGRAM 4

**Drive Operational Efficiency**



# Conclusion

## □ Conclusion

In five years' time, the Toledo Museum of Art will be reinstalled in a path-breaking way that tells a global and inclusive art history. A display that recognizes beauty without bias will fuse a commitment to quality with a culture of belonging in a way that, true to the Museum's founding charter, benefits "all the people of Toledo."

The Museum will become a core part of the lives of all Toledoans, and the visitors to the Museum will be as diverse as the collection on display. As visitors leave, they will continue to

engage with the rebranded TMA across refreshed and reinvented digital channels, excited for their next visit and eyeing the posted job opportunities, hoping for a chance to work for an institution known widely for treating its staff so well.

TMA's transformation will be heralded by the press and will set the bar for museum peers. World-class exhibitions that speak to 21st century issues will draw Northwest Ohioans and out-of-towners alike, with tourists shocked and delighted to be welcomed by a diverse and

empowered staff so clearly loving what they do and the institution they serve. TMA's exhibitions will depart Toledo to traverse the globe, providing the Museum and its hometown the visibility it once enjoyed.

When the Museum turns its eyes to its next plan, it will do so on sound financial footing, with an updated physical plant and inroads with national and international philanthropists, who will help TMA achieve whatever its next dynamic chapter holds.

