

STRATEGIC PLAN

- 2015-2018 -



North House Folk School | Grand Marais, MN



Introduction

North House Folk School is a dynamic educational nonprofit committed to "enriching lives and building community through the teaching of traditional northern crafts." Envisioned and created by a dedicated group of community volunteers in 1997, North House has quickly emerged as a truly unique regional, national and even international resource.

North House's vibrant programs/robust momentum have become iconic elements in Grand Marais and on the North Shore. This plan gives shape and direction to the key strategic priorities initially voiced during the 2014 board retreat, and provides a purposeful framework/timeline for advancing North House's efforts on multiple fronts.

Our Mission

The Mission of the North House Folk School is to enrich lives and build community by teaching traditional northern crafts in a student-centered learning environment that inspires the hands, the heart and the mind.

Our Values

- **PEOPLE** - North House's mission is rooted in people. Our warm welcome, open-to-all programs, egalitarian engagement and multi-generational commitment seek to build a community of respect, individuality and appreciation. Our programs empower and affirm - celebrating curiosity, opening doors to the world and nurturing self-discovery.
- **PLACE** - North House vibrant efforts are directly connected to the northern landscape and the place we call home. Our programs, community and mission are at their best when accented by Lake Superior's horizons and affirmed by the seasons of the North. Each journey to campus is like a pilgrimage, filled with stories and experiences that rejuvenate the spirit.
- **CRAFT** - North House's commitment to traditional crafts provides a powerful linkage between people & resources and connects the past, the present and the future. Maintaining & perpetuating the future of craft, celebrating time-tested methods, exploring the world's need for sustainable solutions - each has and needs a place at North House.
- **CULTURE** – North House pursues integrity and quality at every level. From daily operations to long-term planning, we pursue our mission with pride and purpose. Our institutional lifestyle reflects our commitment to craft, to community and to the joy of hands-on learning.

The values that define the character and community that are North House are key organizational assets. Belief/investment in these dimensions of North House is universal. Our values have permeated the organization since its beginning and celebrating these features of the organization as it continues to move forward is essential.





Looking Forward

As North House's 20th Anniversary approaches, the institution and its stakeholders have much to celebrate. Our mission and programs are vibrant; steady and sustained growth on many fronts define our reality. Reflecting on this key institutional moment encourages us to pause, not only to reflect on how far we have come but also to strategize how best to sustain and strengthen our mission in years to come. Recent successes underscore that this vibrancy has many dimensions, and that it is the result of both our compelling efforts and our strategic choices. New staff positions have generated growth in programs and giving. Campus improvements have increased student capacity and enhanced course quality. New thematic weekends/enhanced events have generated shared excitement with local businesses and regional/national partners. North House is now truly a year-round institution, both with new capacities and also with new challenges.

North House's dynamic efforts are set within a world becoming ever-more digitized. It is now possible to take a virtual journey to any and every corner of planet earth, 24/7. And yet, in spite of this apparent convenience, many feel there is something missing. Within this high tech/low touch world, North House brings to life a compelling and meaning-filled counter point - high touch/low tech. The beauty of utility. The value of community. The joy of learning. We can find them in the work of our hands.

Strategic Priorities

- 1 PROGRAMS IN EVERY SEASON:** North House aspires for its programs to be vibrant and thriving in every season of the year, serving people, celebrating community and affirming the importance of lifelong learning.
- 2 INVEST IN CRAFT:** Investing in the future of crafts and strengthening our partnership with our community of artisan instructors is of strategic importance to the long-term vibrancy of our mission.
- 3 BUILD OUR HOME:** To maintain and advance our programmatic and operational success we must define and execute the next stage of strategic campus and capital resource improvements. .
- 4 TELL OUR STORY:** The vibrancy of North House's mission and vision underscores the importance of our efforts both programmatically and philosophically.
- 5 WIDEN OUR CIRCLE:** North House's strong circle of community and support is an essential asset that defines and empowers our efforts.
- 6 TOOLS THAT WORK:** North House understands that its inspiring mission and diverse programmatic offerings can only reach their full potential if supported by an organization with strong operational and administrative capacities.





1 Programs in Every Season

North House aspires for its programs to be vibrant and thriving in every season of the year, serving people, celebrating community and affirming the importance of lifelong learning. We believe our mission is best served by positioning compelling and effective coursework at the core of our programmatic efforts.

1. Sustainable and aspirational growth in catalog coursework
 - Average class size will increase by .25 annually and stabilize at 7.5 students
 - "Make rate" for classes will increase by 4% annually reaching 90% by close of 2018
 - Student days/week will grow 5% annually, more than half from weekday enrollment
2. Improving internal systems will help us measure, illuminate and understand key enrollment trends and their connection to program quality and vitality.
 - By May 2016 build a new online course management system
 - By July 2016 integrate a new enrollment tracking system into North House operating systems providing real-time data on key areas of interest.
3. To fully understand the best strategies for supporting and advancing the quality of our programs, North House needs to be capable of projecting, anticipating and managing the evolution of year-round coursework
 - By March 2016 complete an in-depth study and analysis of our program offerings that projects out for a full decade, integrating enrollment trends, revenue generating, facility, staffing, etc
4. As a leading institution in a small, rural environment, North House aspires to be utilized as an educational-asset by the community (and not just an economic driver). We recognize that serving our local community will require different strategies and targeted efforts.
 - Study and build a new local engagement plan in collaboration with numerous community contacts Local youth (via school-based and family-driven connections) are an area of special interest. Process led by Program Committee and completed by May 2016.
5. Recognizing the rich "folk school" culture/philosophy upon which North House's mission is based, North House will continue to nurture and expand public outreach, committee engagement and non-traditional program offerings that speak to the heart of our purpose.
 - Report annually to the program committee/board starting in January 2016.





2 Invest in Craft

Investing in the future of crafts and strengthening our partnership with our community of artisan instructors is of strategic importance to the long-term vibrancy of our mission. As a national leader in the traditional craft world, we must engage craft with purpose while also deepening connections within the craft world.

1. Collaborate with North House instructors to maximize the vitality of our partnership
 - Continue to advance depth and quality of our annual Instructor Retreat, providing professional development and a strong community, attract 50+ annually 2016-2018.
 - Expand our commitment to our resident instructor program, maintaining 12+ one-week engagements July-Sept in 2016-2018, develop alternative format for non-summer residencies totaling 12+ weeks by 2018
 - Study and identify ideal arenas for engaging key "lead instructors" to advance North House programming, craft preservation, and emerging artisan/apprenticeship efforts, reporting to board in May 2016 and May 2017.
2. Expand the intern program in 2015 and beyond, enhancing the quality of the entire internship and deepening their impact/contribution to campus operations.
 - Increase intern program from three to four participants in 2015 and sustain this level of involvement throughout 2016-2018.
 - Invest with greater purpose in the depth of their craft education and the scope of their experience as craft educators, integrating new field study and evolving their fall sloyd projects to accentuate community outreach emphasis.
 - Insure that we attract the most qualified intern candidates by increasing the visibility of the internship program across the nation, generating increased inquiries for application resources (100+ for 2016 and 2017, 125+ for 2018)
3. Study and advance options for developing a new "craft fellowship/residency/ apprenticeship program" that builds upon North House's existing internship program.
 - Envision and shape a new fellowship/residence/apprenticeship program by May 2016. Pursue collaborative first efforts in 2016. Pursue full program grant funding launch first full year in 2017.
 - Advance towards four total positions each engaged for two years with staggered hiring (two hired for 2017-2018, two hired for 2018-2019...).
4. Research and engage other key folk school and craft organizations as peer institutions, with a goal of advancing our understanding of the role of craft in today's world.
 - Utilize existing events/thematic weekends (i.e. Timber Frame Gathering, Unplugged) and off-campus opportunities (i.e. Twin Cities Spring Gathering) to build collaborative relationships - four in 2016, five in 2017 and six in 2018.
 - Twentieth Anniversary Book Project: Integrate the voices of other traditional craft/hand craft voices to accentuate the fabric of connection to the world.





3 Build Our Home

North House's campus is at once an inspiring destination, a strong & functional resource and a facility still in need of improvement. To maintain and advance our programmatic and operational success we must define and execute the next stage of strategic campus and capital resource improvements.

1. Develop strategies for addressing key short-term facility issues and solutions for engaging in the coming year. Areas of concern include administrative space, maintenance/operations, large-format classroom space.
 - Investigate on and off campus alternatives and report to the board by March 2016
2. Study enrollment trends and facility/classroom use to understand the connection between enrollment, classroom availability, campus capacity, etc
 - Fully update 2014 Facility Needs Study and present to the board by March 2016.
3. Launch planning for the next phase of key North House campus/capital improvements. A central feature of this plan may include a new "student center & school store" that will serve as the campus' front door and operational hub for North House.
 - Complete in-depth study and planning. Initial report to board in May 2016. Final proposal no later than May 2017.
4. Investigate and assess off-campus options that can meet long-term needs for North House. Assess what tasks can most appropriately be "exported" of campus (i.e. instructor housing, long-term storage).
 - Consider options for when a more robust off-campus presence/additional off-campus property may become critical and integrate into capital plan presented to board in May 2017.
5. North House partnership with the City of Grand Marais has remained strong and positive throughout our history. Signing a 25-year lease played a central role launching our first capital campaign. Studying options for key next steps forward is central our continued investment.
 - Convene a North House board/City Council work group February-August 2016.





4 Tell Our Story

The vibrancy of North House's mission and vision underscores the importance of our efforts both programmatically and philosophically. Growing our visibility and recognition as an iconic destination for lifelong learning and for traditional northern crafts, we can at once enhance year-round program momentum while also offering inspiration to individuals and communities.

1. Advance the work of our new communications & marketing committee and create the tools North House needs to tell its story with focus and purpose.
 - Designate \$10,000+ annually 2015-2018 in targeting marketing initiatives, generate measurable results that can inform/advance future marketing efforts
 - Create a comprehensive annual marketing plan by May 2016.
2. Advance North House's web site into the next generation.
 - Pursue grant funding for re-building the North House web site in fall 2015
 - Shape RFP and actively recruit, identify and hire project partners by Oct 2015
 - Launch the new web site following spring enrollment kickoff, launch date May 1st
 - Create clear and distinct portals for students to engage and share content.
3. Utilize North House's 20th Anniversary as a fulcrum for national visibility and community celebration, creating both educational momentum and a strong sense of future direction.
 - Publish a Twentieth Anniversary Festschrift Book to be released for sale in fall 2017
 - pursue grant funding for a lead editor in fall 2015
 - recruit a leadership circle of key instructors by Nov 2015
 - negotiate and sign a contract with publisher by April 2017
 - release book in Sept 2017, generate \$20,000+ of revenue in first year of sales





5 Widen Our Circle

North House's strong circle of community and support is an essential asset that defines and empowers our efforts. Expanding this community and the support/involvement it generates is essential to our long-term vitality and fiscal strength.

1. Continue to sustain and grow a broad base of support by building strong relationships with students, business partners, volunteers, enthusiasts, etc.
 - Membership support and number of donors increase by at least 5% annually
2. Enhance North House's long-term vitality by building the momentum and visibility of our new Legacy Circle and our growing endowment fund.
 - Host an annual Legacy Circle gathering 2016-2018, for current and potential members
 - Use 20th anniversary as a landmark and secure pledges for \$3.5 million by June 2017
3. Expand, shape and build a major donor (\$2500+) engagement plan that underscores their leadership role opening the doors to North House's future
 - Create and manage an ongoing list of new major donor candidates by Jan 2016.
 - Develop print and online resources that articulate the major donor program by May 2016.
 - Increase major donor support 5%, 7.5% and 10% respectively in 2016, 2017 and 2018.
4. Study and prepare to launch a major Capital Campaign in alignment with the facility committee planning efforts.
 - Study and build our capacity to engage such a campaign. Report to board by August 2016.
 - Recruit capital campaign leadership Jan-Sept 2017 and launch public campaign Sept 2017.
5. Recognizing North House's unique mission and role in the world of craft, develop and pursue new funding partnerships with key regional and national foundations.
 - Submit at least one new major regional/national grant annually 2015-2017.
 - Build strong sense of collaboration with existing funders, creating an annual plan for regular engagement and appropriate updates by May 2016.





6 Tools That Work

North House understands that its inspiring mission and diverse programmatic offerings can only reach their full potential if supported by an organization with strong operational and administrative capacities. We must advance and improve our operating resources/ systems to insure that our many strengths are supported as effectively and efficiently as possible.

1. Enhance, build and refine North House's investment in human resources/employees, strengthening its base of core benefits and acknowledging the key role they play within the institution
 - Launch a new Human Resource Study Group in 2015.
 - Present an initial report and recommendations to board of directors by May 2016.
 - Anticipate the addition of new full-time staff and contracted collaborators in both 2016 and 2017.
2. Build an Annual Operating Plan and a Weekly Hosting Flowchart for campus, integrating weekly operations, annual needs with strategic opportunities (i.e. service learning classes, volunteer events)
 - Developed by staff and presented to facility/program committees by March 2016.
3. Invest in on-line systems to link web-based enrollment and giving with online database systems, moving towards a fully operational by March 2016
 - Continue to invest in our online database (Sumac) and move towards an online confirmation system by May 2016.
 - Advance efforts to move our course management system online to simplify/enhance course management and web-based planning. Operational by May 2016
4. Keeping North House programs accessible plays a central role in nurturing the vitality and character of campus. Continue these efforts by building our Work/Study program.
 - Increase the number of Work/Study sessions annually 2015-2018 by at least 25%. Focus much of this growth in the warm season, also experiment with cool season solutions.
5. Our campus, staff, program year and finances are all finite resources that need to be invested both wisely and efficiently.
 - Expand board-designated cash reserve/capital reserve fund from 8% to 15% of operating budget by 2018.
 - Study endowment fund and trust agreements to shape strategies for future investment. Report to board by Nov 2016.





Fiscal Overview

Final section will include a financial summary of how all of these efforts integrate and progress over the coming 5 years. In final stage of development by finance committee.

- attached as addendum

