

AUTRY

Strategic Plan 2018–2022





Photo by Danielle Klebanow Photography

**LETTER FROM THE AUTRY’S BOARD CHAIR DAVID CARTWRIGHT AND
PRESIDENT AND CEO RICK WEST**

On behalf of our staff and board of trustees, we are pleased to present the Autry Museum of the American West’s new Strategic Plan. This plan articulates the values, goals, objectives, and evaluation measures that will guide the museum’s progress for the next five years, 2018 to 2022.

Our vision for the future builds on 30 years of experience and experimentation. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Autry, which opened in Griffith Park in 1988. During the past three decades, we have served hundreds of thousands of students and visitors; presented a broad slate of exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives; expanded the collection to include more than 600,000 objects and cultural materials; and began developing a new Resources Center in Burbank, where our collections will be preserved and accessed for generations to come. Through these efforts, the Autry has contributed to a greater understanding of the American West by revealing the complex, nuanced, and often untold histories of the region.

This plan capitalizes on the Autry’s strengths and its unique position in the cultural landscape of Los Angeles. As we created this plan, we asked ourselves the following questions, among others: Why does the American West matter? What differentiates the Autry from its peers? How can we evolve, take risks, and embrace innovative approaches to sharing art and history? How do we support, develop, and retain our talented staff? Where does the best balance between current resources and future aspirations lie as we guide the Autry into tomorrow?

In thinking through these questions and associated topics, we chart a deliberate path forward. This plan is the result of more than a year of research and discussions among the museum’s staff, board of trustees, supporters, and partners. We thank the museum’s senior staff and strategic plan task force for their valuable input, as well as the following trustees for their active participation as part of the plan’s working group: Marian Craver, Jodie Rea, Lois Rice, Brenda Ruttenberg, Lora Sandroni, and Grant Withers.

Finally, we express our great appreciation to our visitors, members, volunteers, staff, sponsors, Native community partners, and other benefactors and stakeholders, all of whom contribute immeasurably to the vitality of our beloved institution. Thank you for your important role in furthering the mission of the Autry.

Sincerely yours,

David M. Cartwright

David Cartwright, Chair, Board of Trustees

W. Richard West, Jr.

W. Richard West, Jr., President and CEO



MISSION STATEMENT

The Autry brings together the stories of all peoples of the American West, connecting the past with the present to inspire our shared future.

Photos by Danielle Klebanow Photography

Autry Museum of the American West

STATEMENT OF VALUES

The following values guide and support the work of Autry staff, trustees, and volunteers:

Inclusion

Multiple perspectives inform and enrich the Autry's exploration of the human experience in the American West.

Education

Inspired learning has the power to expand thinking, improve lives, and shape the future.

Respect

A thriving society depends on civil discourse; the Autry encourages respectful dialogue about critical topics.

Collaboration

Partnerships are essential; the Autry's best work results from collaboration across the museum and with the broader community.

Connection

The most meaningful and memorable experiences have a personal dimension.

Innovation

By embracing and leveraging new technologies and approaches to history, the Autry will continue to strengthen its programming and operations.



GOAL

1

Connect the Autry's mission to audiences with an emphasis on cultural history.

Through the Autry's focus on the American West—a place where multiple cultures, traditions, and ideas converge—the museum will continue to inspire students, scholars, and the public to dive deeper into the region's most compelling stories. This connection will be made through groundbreaking exhibitions, engaging programs, original scholarship, and opportunities to experience and participate beyond the museum walls. The Autry's exhibitions, programs, digital content, and off-campus experiences will draw on the strengths of the Autry's collections and the cultural diversity of the region.

GOAL 1 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Connect the American West to individuals' own histories, families, and experiences.** The Autry's continued dedication to diverse stories generates possibilities for visitors to make personal connections to the museum and to each other.
- 2 Attract and inspire visitors through a slate of exhibitions and programs that combine scholarly progress, public appeal, and community involvement.** The Autry will implement an interpretive plan, exhibition policy, and five-year exhibition calendar that capitalize on the Autry's blend of history, art, and popular culture.
- 3 Foster intercultural understanding and historical literacy through creative combinations of perspectives, materials, and media.** Innovative approaches to linking stories and collections can provide unexpected and memorable experiences. New technologies and design methods will be evaluated for their potential to enhance exhibitions and related storytelling efforts.
- 4 Maximize opportunities for shared curatorial, collections, and programming initiatives with mission-aligned institutions, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).** In 2017 the Autry established a memorandum of understanding with LACMA to facilitate collections sharing and staff collaboration. This partnership and future opportunities will allow the Autry to combine resources to enrich programming and broaden audiences.
- 5 Deepen relationships with Native communities.** To ensure an inclusive approach to sharing the stories of the American West, the Autry will continue to engage Native artists, scholars, curators, cultural educators, and tribal representatives in programming and collections development. This approach can serve as a model for building relationships with other communities in the region.
- 6 Encourage connection through volunteer opportunities.** The Autry can reach and serve a wider audience through docent positions and other volunteer opportunities that draw on Angelenos' diversity, experience, interests, and sense of community.
- 7 Share knowledge of the Autry's collections of more than 600,000 objects and research material.** Increased collaboration among curatorial, collections management, and library staff—as well as with visiting scholars, research fellows, and online researchers—can reveal and encourage scholarship relative to potential exhibitions.

EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- **Continued growth in public engagement (numbers of researchers, students, and community groups accessing the Autry's resources)**
- **Development of experimental exhibitions and experiences, including efforts to develop exhibitions with other museums and in collaboration with local communities**
- **New projects and publications inspired by Autry exhibitions, programs, and collections**
- **Increase in critical attention (press reviews, academic journals, peer reviews, and scholarly publications)**
- **New volunteers increasingly reflective of the diversity of the region**



Opposite: Jason Grasl (Blackfeet), and Kyla Garcia (Taino) in the Native Voices staged production of *Fairly Traceable* by Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee). Craig Schwartz Photography

Above: Rendering of the Resources Center by Chu+Gooding.



Make every
Autry visitor
feel welcome
and valued.

In a city of countless options for entertainment, recreation, and education, the Autry will stand out for its top-notch visitor experience.

GOAL 2 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Provide a more inviting introduction to the museum.** To improve the onsite experience from the moment visitors arrive, the Autry will enhance the museum's facilities and increase training for visitor-facing staff and volunteer docents across the museum's campus.
- 2 Improve onsite accessibility.** By making onsite experiences accessible to people with hearing, sight, and mobility challenges, the Autry will make the museum more available and meaningful to visitors of all ages and abilities.
- 3 Develop dedicated spaces for children and families.** New spaces will meet the demand among local audiences for family outings that offer self-guided activities, autonomous play areas, and social gathering spaces.
- 4 Deepen the Autry's commitment to serving as a place for community gathering and dialogue.** The Autry can help fill society's need for civil discourse around the West's most critical topics—a key element of a thriving democracy.
- 5 Continue to build and sustain relationships with Native communities.** Located on Gabrielino/Tongva ancestral lands and holding extensive collections of Native cultural materials, the Autry is committed to serving as a resource and community space for Native communities.
- 6 Involve visitors in exhibition and program development.** The Autry's collaborative approach to content development extends to museum visitors. Through prototyping, surveys, interviews, and other participatory activities, the Autry will involve audiences in developing new experiences.
- 7 Nurture partnerships with educators to continue meeting the needs of students.** Through a collaborative approach with local teachers, the Autry's educators and volunteers supplement the work of classroom teachers in history, social studies, art, and related fields. In the coming years, the museum seeks to expand learning opportunities through web-based outreach and the use of other developing technologies.



EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- **On-site survey responses that demonstrate improvements in visitor satisfaction**
- **Maintain or exceed ratings on peer review sites—Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Google**
- **Expanded training program implemented for visitor-facing staff and volunteers**
- **Increased number of visitors participating in content and experience development**
- **Expanded opportunities for students and teachers to access Autry resources**



Maximize the potential of the Autry's collections through care and access.

GOAL

3

Above: Chief Conservator Richard Moll. Photo by Jerry Melton

Opposite: Danielle Klebanow Photography

Coupled with its commitment to providing access to artifacts, material culture, and expressions of the human experience, preserving the Autry's collections for future generations is one of the museum's greatest responsibilities. The Autry's Resources Center supports this combined purpose, serving as a vital facility for holding and caring for the museum's vast collections while creating space for meaningful research, study, and collaboration.

GOAL 3 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Raise awareness of and access to the Resources Center.**
Through a thoughtful media and communications strategy, the Autry will promote the strength and accessibility of the collections to a wide-ranging audience including, but not limited to, Native communities, scholars, and students.
- 2 Maintain building systems that have the greatest impact on collections care, such as building infrastructure, HVAC, and security.** The Autry's museum campus and Resources Center require maintenance, repairs, and ongoing updates to guarantee the long-term preservation of its collections and objects on loan.
- 3 Continue the application of best practices for collections care.**
The Autry's collections management and library policies will be routinely reviewed and updated to reflect current philosophies, practices, and conversations within the fields as applied to collections stewardship, as well as formal processes for incorporating Native protocols and perspectives toward culturally sensitive collections.
- 4 Increase exposure and access to the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection.** Building on the success of the preservation project and collections move to the Resources Center, the Autry will increase the presence of material from the collection in research, exhibitions, publications, digital offerings, and loans to other museums.
- 5 Identify content and staffing areas in need of further development.**
Continued collaboration among staff, researchers, and community stakeholders will help the museum develop and present its collections in ways that support its mission and values. Increased collecting of twentieth- and twenty-first-century materials supports contemporary representation and relevance. Museum resources will be allocated and utilized to support and strengthen the diversity of collections.
- 6 Ensure compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).** In accordance with NAGPRA—which addresses human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, objects of cultural patrimony, and sacred material—the Autry will continue to collaborate with Native communities in the repatriation process.
- 7 Expand access to the collections through digital platforms.**
By leveraging its website, social media, and related tools, the Autry will make the museum's collections more visible and available to global audiences.



EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- **Measurable increases in physical and virtual access to the collections**
- **Meet operational and programmatic needs of Resource Center staff, volunteers, researchers, and Native communities**
- **Adoption of updated collections management policy and schedule for periodic review and revision**
- **Building systems performance that accords with standards and best practices for museum collections care**
- **Documented progress toward overall NAGPRA compliance**
- **New acquisitions that represent underdeveloped areas of the collections, including materials that connect to twentieth- and twenty-first-century experiences**
- **Increased exposure of Autry collections through physical loans and digital discovery via the museum's website and social media**



GOAL

4

Strengthen the Autry's brand reputation and positioning as a vibrant community resource.

Activate new communications strategies to expand the Autry's base of visitors, members, researchers, and volunteers while placing the museum "top of mind" for Angelenos.

GOAL 4 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Launch a brand awareness campaign with an emphasis on local audiences and regional tourism promotion.** To increase general awareness of the Autry, the campaign will focus on strategic digital marketing and outdoor placements to reach residents and tourists in locations with a high propensity for visitorship.
- 2 Expand the use of social and digital tools to reach audiences with compelling content.** Using social and digital platforms, and responding to innovations in technology, the Autry can increase audience engagement on campus, online, and in the community.
- 3 Continue innovating to reach new audiences.** The Autry will dedicate a portion of programming resources to presenting and evaluating experimental activities designed to appeal to new audiences. Ongoing series and events, such as *Masters of the American West* and others, will continue to be assessed and strengthened to distinguish the Autry's unique position in the cultural landscape of Los Angeles.
- 4 Connect the Autry to Griffith Park.** By deepening the Autry's connections to Griffith Park and the many organizations located within its 4,300 acres, the Autry can become a top destination for park visitors locally and from around the world; lead collaborative initiatives; and expand the public's understanding of the park's history as Griffith Park approaches its 125th anniversary in 2021.
- 5 Expand partnerships with media outlets to reach larger audiences.** Through multiplatform storytelling—via onsite digital productions, events, television broadcasts, social media, and website features—the Autry will reach national audiences with mission-related content. This initiative builds on a successful partnership with KCETLink for the Autry's *California Continued* galleries.
- 6 Develop new types of membership that suit a variety of needs and interests.** Recognizing consumer interest in greater personalization and the possibilities emerging through innovations in data collection and analysis, the Autry will launch and evaluate more flexible museum membership options.

EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- Increase in number of annual visitors onsite and online
- Increase in advertising recall and brand reach on social media
- Increase in overall awareness of the Autry among cultural consumers
- New communications initiatives developed in partnership with Griffith Park organizations
- Media productions developed and released
- Launch and evaluation of customized membership options





GOAL

5

Maintain the financial growth and stability necessary to secure the Autry's enduring value and relevance.

The Autry's success depends on thoughtful and strategic financial planning. Long-range budget forecasting will be implemented to adequately allocate resources for mission-related projects, staff development, and facility maintenance and improvements.

GOAL 5 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Align the strategic plan with multiyear budget forecasts and annual work plans.** Advance planning—including defining key ratios and measurement goals for budgeting—will enable the Autry to achieve its mission-aligned objectives. As part of this planning, the Autry must allocate appropriate budgets and staffing levels for expanding activities, including operation of the new Resources Center.
- 2 Realize wage parity adjustments and annual compensation increases.** In a competitive employment market, ongoing increases are necessary for encouraging morale and retaining and attracting staff.
- 3 Maintain and improve museum campus infrastructure and amenities with environmentally sustainable solutions.** Many spaces and systems across the campus have been in place since the museum's 1988 opening; ongoing infrastructure improvements are critical to ensuring the protection of collections and providing a high-quality experience for museum visitors.
- 4 Begin planning processes for museum campus enhancements and renovations.** As audience needs and expectations continue to evolve, the Autry must undertake vigorous research and planning processes to make the best possible long-term decisions for campus upgrades.
- 5 Determine a vibrant and sustainable future for the historic Southwest Museum site.** Following the 2003 merger with the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, the Autry embarked on a critical preservation project to clean, rehouse, and relocate all of the material in the Southwest Museum Collection. The Autry is now working with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the City of Los Angeles to identify appropriate, financially sustainable, long-term uses for the historic Southwest Museum site—an important landmark in Los Angeles.



EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- **Operating budgets and staffing align with strategic goals; ratios and measurement goals for budgeting and multiyear forecasting are met or exceeded**
- **Staff salary and wage levels consistent with market rates; goals for staff retention rates are met**
- **Full functionality of Resources Center for staff and visiting researchers**
- **Museum maintenance projects prioritized, funded, and implemented**
- **Plans for museum campus enhancements and Imagination Gallery renovations finalized, with implementation underway**
- **Future plan determined and implemented for the historic Southwest Museum site**



GOAL

6

Build a sustainable and growing program of philanthropy to support the Autry's mission and goals.

The Autry has made significant investments in its fundraising infrastructure to successfully compete for donor attention in the Los Angeles philanthropic market. Through a concerted effort of staff and trustees, the Autry continues to cultivate a culture of philanthropy that extends beyond the capital campaign cycle

GOAL 6 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Successfully complete the current capital campaign by 2020.** Achieving the goals of this campaign ensures the museum can fund its core initiatives to open and operate the Resources Center, update its museum campus, and support operations through expanded annual support.
- 2 Cultivate a culture of philanthropy and support.** With greater understanding across the museum, staff, trustees, and volunteers can serve as advocates for the museum and know where to direct someone who expresses a willingness to help.
- 3 Support board recruitment efforts that expand its base of philanthropic knowledge and connections.** Continued success depends on the recruitment of individuals who have demonstrated an understanding of and commitment to philanthropy.
- 4 Encourage and expand the board's participation in fundraising, community engagement and outreach, and recruitment of new trustees.** Trustees serve as important ambassadors and connectors for the museum.
- 5 Continue the development and refinement of ongoing cultivation efforts.** Successful fundraising depends on a strategic blend of initiatives, including planned giving, corporate partnerships, annual giving (including digital/social media campaigns), foundation giving, government support, recognition efforts, stewardship/cultivation events, and publications.
- 6 By 2021, begin preparations, feasibility studies, and campaign volunteer recruitment for the next fundraising campaign.** Launching a campaign requires significant planning and analysis.



EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- **2020 capital campaign successfully completed**
- **Base of donor support expanded**
- **Total annual giving materially increased**
- **Trustees meet or exceed their annual fundraising goals and make introductions to prospective donors and trustees**
- **Feasibility study completed for next campaign**
- **Volunteer campaign leadership secured**

GOAL

7

Apply sound business principles and best practices in all aspects of museum governance and operations.

The Autry is highly respected in the museum and arts community for the caliber of its staff and volunteers, collections, exhibitions, programs, and associated activities. Application of best practices in governance and management ensures that the Autry is able to fulfill its enduring mission while facilitating important discussion in an ever-changing social, political, and economic climate.

GOAL 7 OBJECTIVES

- 1 Develop operational work plans in conjunction with annual budgets.**
Through this coordinated process, the Autry will effectively commit organizational resources in areas consistent with the strategic plan.
- 2 Conduct quarterly review of progress against the strategic plan.**
Written updates will be distributed to trustees and staff on a quarterly basis and discussed at board meetings. Board meeting agendas will be developed to encourage critical and meaningful conversations about key issues. Consistent assessment of progress will allow for nimble redirection of resources, as appropriate.
- 3 Increase organizational productivity and effectiveness.**
Key initiatives and investments in data collection and analysis, financial planning, and information technology are critical priorities for the future of the museum.
- 4 Cultivate a mutually supportive relationship between staff and trustee leadership.** Continuing implementation of governance review recommendations adopted by the board in 2015 serves to a) strengthen the work of the board and its committees, b) streamline board communications and operations, and c) nurture a coordinated leadership approach by trustees and senior staff.
- 5 Senior staff and trustees will rejuvenate the committee structure to encourage active participation and communication.** Committees will be shaped to strengthen dialogue and productivity.
- 6 Involve Autry staff, trustees, and volunteers in periodic forums to discuss needs, opportunities for improvement, and related matters.** Museum staff and volunteers bring a range of expertise and perspectives; continued dialogue supports excellence across the institution.
- 7 Enhance the professional culture with initiatives designed to encourage, develop, and retain staff.** The Autry and its staff are most successful when work is meaningful, supported, and recognized. Specific initiatives will be developed to support staff across Autry departments and worksites.
- 8 Achieve greater diversity among trustees and staff.** Such efforts will make the Autry more representative of Los Angeles and incorporate a broader range of perspectives among staff, trustees, and museum audiences.

EVALUATION MEASURES AND MILESTONES

- Quarterly reports developed to track progress toward strategic goals
- New systems and workflows implemented to improve efficiency
- Continued adoption and implementation of recommendations from the board's governance review initiative; limited-term task forces and working groups of staff and trustees undertake special initiatives critical to the Autry's success
- Increase in trustee participation, as indicated by attendance at committee and full board meetings, participation in Autry events, and trustees' representation of the Autry in the community
- Goals are identified and met or exceeded for staff development, recognition, and retention
- Trustees reflect a broader range of demographics and professional sectors not currently reflected on the board
- Staff reflects a broader range of demographics and is more representative of the Greater Los Angeles area



AUTRY MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN WEST

4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles, CA 90027-1462
TheAutry.org · 323.667.2000