

Idaho Museum of Natural History

Strategic Plan Revision

FY2017-2021

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Introduction

The Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH) is the state's premier institution of its kind for discovering, interpreting, preserving and disseminating knowledge in the core disciplines of Natural History. These include:

Earth Sciences and Ancient Environments

- paleontology
- rocks and minerals
- earth history

Life Sciences and Ecosystems

- botany
- mammals, birds, fish and reptiles
- ecosystems and adaptations

Peoples, Cultures, and Ancient Lifeways

- anthropology
- archaeology
- human ecology

Accredited by the American Association of Museums, IMNH operates under the auspices of the State Board of Education from the campus of Idaho State University, a doctoral-level university in Pocatello. The university provides substantial support, advocacy and supervision. This is a mutually beneficial and supportive relationship that facilitates museum engagement with students, faculty, K-12 educators and other important constituents locally, statewide and around the world.

Our four divisions -- anthropology, earth sciences, life sciences and education -- operate in facilities that include classrooms, research laboratories, artifact and fossil preparation laboratories, storage for permanent collections, and an exhibition fabrication shop. The museum houses an exhibition gallery, the Idaho Virtualization Laboratory, curator offices, and research areas for students and visiting scientists. There also are administrative offices, the Education Resource Center, Discovery Room and the Museum Store.

Through a range of opportunities for learning and enrichment, we reach out continually to diverse constituencies, from K-12 and graduate students to higher-education faculties and field researchers.

Our roots

The museum is rooted in Idaho's higher-education system. A group of forward-looking professors and community leaders founded it in 1934 as the Historical Museum at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho — today's Idaho State University. In 1977, Gov. John Evans signed a proclamation designating IMNH as Idaho's museum of natural history; in 1986 the Legislature made the proclamation law.

Our mission

The mission of the Idaho Museum of Natural History is to acquire, preserve, study, interpret, and display objects relating to the natural history of Idaho and the Northern Intermountain West for research and education. The Museum seeks to enhance in the citizens of Idaho and visitors an understanding of and delight in Idaho's natural and cultural heritage. Specific areas of interest encompass the anthropology, botany, geology, paleontology, and zoology of Idaho and the Northern Intermountain West. Audiences served include citizens of Idaho, visitors, and the national and international community of students and scholars. Information is disseminated through exhibitions, public and professional presentations, publications, formal and informal education, telecommunications, and other interpretative programs.

Our vision

The Idaho Museum of Natural History strives to make science and cultural history accessible, relevant and meaningful. We aspire to make our research and knowledge portfolios more broadly accessible through measures that will mitigate the limitations of brick-and-mortar facilities.

We see existing and emerging information technologies as tools that will enable us to overcome logistical, geographic and financial barriers to learning. There is no substitute for a leisurely afternoon spent among our exhibits. Yet there is a new frontier: bringing Idaho's museum to the people wherever they live, work and learn.

In this spirit, our staff is eager to augment our physical facilities in Pocatello with Internet-driven tools that will help us deliver the scientific, educational, cultural and economic benefits of this institution to its stakeholders wherever they are.

We work each day at IMNH to expand our contribution to Idaho as a productive research and education resource for the State and region. We are committed to being efficient and innovative in work that fulfills our mandate. So over the next five years IMNH will focus on making the benefits of our work known and available to all.

We will accomplish this through the following means:

- scholarship, exhibitions and educational programs
- partnerships and fundraising
- outreach, lectures and symposiums
- information technologies

IMNH Today

Organizational Chart

- Dr. Leif Tapanila, Director & Earth Science and John White Paleontological Repository Curator
 - Dr. Andy Speer, Anthropology & Earl Swanson Archaeological Repository Curator
 - Amber Tews, Anthropology Collections Manager
 - Amy Commendador-Dudgeon, Earl Swanson Archaeological Repository Collections Manager
 - Dr. Rick Williams, Life Science & Ray J. Davis Herbarium Curator
 - Janet Bala, Life Science & Ray J. Davis Herbarium Collections Manager
 - Dr. Mary Thompson, Earth Science & John White Paleontological Repository Senior Collections Manager
 - Education Resource Coordinator
 - Curt Schmitz, Registrar
 - Robert Schlader, Idaho Virtualization Laboratory (IVL) Manager
 - Nicholas Clement, IVL Tech Specialist
 - Jesse Pruitt, IVL Tech Specialist
 - Brandon Jacobia, IVL Tech Specialist
 - Faith Tan, Administrative Assistant & Store and Gallery Manager
 - Lindy Warden, Financial Technician

We are currently enhancing the museum’s professional and scientific stature by expanding the museum’s collections and research activity in three key areas:

The **John A. White Paleontological Repository** houses the largest paleontological collections in Idaho. We are expanding these collections through extensive field research, and using these collections to assist the State of Idaho in meeting new US Government regulations concerning the discovery of paleontological resources on State and Federal lands.

The **Swanson Archaeological Repository** at the IMNH currently houses and preserves archaeological collections from southern and eastern Idaho that belong to state and federal agencies. This includes hundreds of boxes containing over 300,000 archaeological specimens. These collections are growing through active field research and contractual arrangement with a number of agencies. We are further expanding the existing Swanson Archaeological Repository to store collections for federal and state agencies outside of Idaho as well.

The **Ray J. Davis Herbarium**, with a collection of nearly 80,000 plants, is expanding through a consortium of regional herbaria through grants and cooperative agreements. Students and staff are actively collecting and processing plant specimens expanding our holdings, and making possible new studies of biodiversity and range management.

Collection efforts are substantial in all other areas of the museum as well. Active expansion in ethnography, mammalogy, herpetology, and geology are making the museum a stronger research and education institution, and enhancing our National and International reputation.

Guiding IMNH's future

Stakeholder groups will be central to our success over the next five years. The new **Executive Committee**, comprised of IMNH curators, is tasked with long-range planning, seeking consensus in key areas of management, and building a team approach to solving important management priorities, including budgets. **Friends of the Museum** is a community auxiliary to the museum with broad subscription membership from southern Idaho. The Friends will provide an organizing network, sponsor lectures, field trips and community events. The 16-member **Museum Advisory Committee** includes state legislators, bankers, philanthropists, mayors, and business and community leaders; it is our organizational and advisory leadership unit, providing opportunities to reach out across Idaho and the Nation.

Goals and objectives

FY 2017-2021

Goal 1

Engage the Community.

The public face of the Museum is defined by its exhibits, programs and events. Over the decades our Museum has varied its level of intensity in delivering content to the public. We recognize the fundamental mission of the Museum is to inform the citizens of Idaho about their past culture and natural history. Our goal is to reinvest in our front-end experience to broaden the engagement with our community and region. As part of this effort the museum recognizes it needs to be more proactive at marketing itself and its activities and shaping the local perception of the museum as being a vibrant place to be entertained and enlightened, to visit regularly, and to be supported as an integral member of Pocatello's community.

Objective 1.1 Increase museum attendance by 10% per year

Performance Measure 1: Develop an exhibit rotation 2 years in advance

Benchmark: Sustain exhibit rotation 2 years in advance¹

Performance Measure 2: Develop and revise a marketing strategy

Benchmarks: In this coming FY2017, create and complete 2-yr plan; In

FY2018, create and complete 5-yr plan; Update 5-yr plan every 2 years²

Performance Measure 3: Diversify funding sources to provide budgets for exhibits and marketing; Beginning in FY2017, reestablish previous donors to the museum

Benchmark: Increase funding by 5% per year³

Goal 2

Synergize with ISU

The Idaho Museum of Natural History began as an outgrowth of collections made by university professors in 1934. The long association of our museum with Idaho State University and our location on campus is a great asset to both institutions and for the state of Idaho. As a goal we would like to build stronger bridges between the stakeholders at ISU and the Museum to find areas of mutual benefit that can provide services for ISU students facilitate ISU research while serving a mission of the museum. We recognize five new objectives:

Objective 2.1 Programming and events for students: Nearly 12,000 ISU students are on the Pocatello campus annually, yet, historically their participation and attendance has been low at the Museum. We intend on reversing trend by specifically creating programs events and exhibits that will appeal to ISU students and occur at times when they are more likely able to participate. Marketing efforts will also focus on student body.

Performance Measures: Establish specific programs for students; Seek funding through student activity fee

Benchmarks: Student participation in programs up 10%; Activity fee funded⁴

Objective 2.2 Afterschool programs: For years the Museum has offered K-12 programming in collaboration with regional school districts. We intend to work with the on campus daycare facility, the Early Learning Center, to provide a new venue for afterschool programming to take place at the Museum. At our venue we will be able to offer a science oriented activities, giving parents a new option in Pocatello for afterschool care. The addition of afterschool programs at the Museum will directly and positively impact the many ISU student and faculty families who rely on ELC services.

¹ This benchmark is set based on available resources, the number of exhibits available, and established best practices.

² These benchmarks are based on current resources and projected available resources for implementing the new marketing plan.

³ This benchmark is based on the critical need to diversify funding for the museum to sustain and expand high quality exhibits.

⁴ This benchmark is based on the critical need to diversify existing funding, increase relevance to the ISU student population, and the expected impact from the new marketing plan.

Performance Measures: Renovate museum classroom/Discover Room in preparation for afterschool program; Develop a financial strategy with ELC
Benchmarks: Our first after school class will begin in FY2018; By FY2019 we have 2 concurrent afterschool programs running annually ⁵

Objective 2.3 Affiliate curators: Each major division of the Museum including the Life sciences, Earth Sciences and Anthropology has a curator who oversees the collections in each area. The museum is interested in reinvigorating the affiliate curator program by enlisting research active faculty at ISU who are engaged in specimens based research and who complement existing strengths at the Museum.

Performance Measure: Engage ISU departments in science fields to become participants with the museum

Benchmark: Recruit 2 ISU faculty for affiliate curator positions for each division by FY2018⁵

Objective 2.4 Broader impacts: The primary federal funding agencies for research including NSF NIH and NEH have prioritized the inclusion of broader impacts in the evaluation of research proposals. Broader impacts often include ways of leveraging research products for education and outreach. The Museum proposes to serve a university function as a broader impacts department which will work with principal investigators from ISU to plan and fulfill the broader impact needs on funded grants. The Museum has served this role informally on an ad hoc basis, however we see an advantage to offering a formalized role for the Museum as the broader impacts department that can be included in any federal grant proposed at ISU. Museum staff includes expertise in formal and informal education for teachers and students, and generation of digital media.

Performance Measure: Formalize museum relationship with Office for Research as a dedicated provider for broader impact services

Benchmark: In FY2017 service 2 broader impacts and increase by 2 per year in the first 3 years⁶

Objective 2.5 Expanding to nontraditional units: Natural history traditionally includes the life sciences earth sciences and anthropology, but these historical sciences are relevant to a broad range of modern fields. The development of the Idaho virtualization lab provides a leading venue for generating analyzing and making accessible Digital Products for our region. We will explore how hard digital capabilities can interface with nontraditional fields for the Museum including medicine, the fine arts, and the college of technology.

Performance Measure: Engage ISU departments in Division of Health Sciences, College of Technology, and College of Arts and Letters to become participants with the museum

Benchmark: In FY2017, establish 2 new partnerships with faculty in one of these nontraditional fields and increase by 1 per year for the next 3 years⁷

⁵ This benchmark is based on currently available and projected resources.

⁶ This benchmark is based on currently available resources, projected increases and the projected needs of the Office for Research.

⁷ This benchmark is based on currently available resources, projected increases and the ability to develop partnership with faculty in nontraditional fields.

Goal 3

Be a Leader in Idaho's K-12 STEM education.

The Museum has a long history in providing K-12 programming for our region, both in urban and rural settings. This is a central mission for the museum and we plan on investing more effort to this cost. Southeast Idaho in particular needs our help. Current statistics demonstrate that our region ranks nationally at the bottom of Go-on rates, the number of students that go on to postsecondary education. This new reality significantly impacts ISU, but more importantly predicts a shortfall of highly trained competitive workforce in the future. The museum can contribute to changing this trend by working more closely with school districts and private funders to facilitate museum and campus visitation to encourage patterns of lifelong learning.

Objective 3.1 Hire Education Resources Coordinator

Performance Measure: Secure position in the museum

Benchmark: Hire dedicated Education Resources Coordinator by FY2018⁸

Objective 3.2 Seek travel funding for K-12 student visitation to museum

Performance Measure: Identify local businesses to fund travel

Benchmark: Generate \$2000 in FY2017 and increase by 10% per year⁹

Goal 4

Museum Development

Programming, exhibits and events are not currently supported through perennial funds. In order to meet our goals and to advance the impact of the Museum, we must develop an internal culture and process for fundraising.

Objective 4.1 Increase private and corporate funding

Performance Measure 1: Recruit senior development officer

Benchmark: Hire development officer in FY2017¹⁰

Performance Measure 2: Fundraisers and benefits

Benchmark: Host 2 annual fundraisers²

Performance Measure 3: Engage museum alumni

Benchmark: In FY2017, create a list of past students of museum curators²

⁸ This benchmark is based on new resources available in FY18 and ability to fill the position.

⁹ This benchmark is based on projections of local businesses resources and historical trend in giving for these types of programs.

¹⁰ This benchmark is based on new resources available in FY17 and the ability to find qualified candidates.

Performance Measure 4: Reconstitute newsletter

Benchmark: In FY2017, increase subscribers to e-newsletter²

Performance Measure 5: Rebuild the Friends of the Museum organization

Benchmark: In FY2018, host first meeting of 10 members²

Goal 5

Invest in new collections-based research.

Our collections define the Museum's identity and distinguish us from other regional museums and exhibit houses. The rate of new collections has waned in recent decades compared to the early days of our museum's foundation. We establish as a goal a renewed excitement for field expeditions that will uncover specimens from across the state of Idaho, grow our capacity for research, and create materials to exhibit to the public.

Objective 5.1 Increase number of new Idaho collections held by the museum

Performance Measure 1: Encourage researchers from ISU and beyond to conduct Idaho studies

Benchmark: Increase collections in life science, earth science, and anthropology¹¹

Performance Measure 2: Build new digital collections in partnership with other Idaho institutions

Benchmark: Increase the number of digital resources for Idaho collections, buildings, and landscapes as part of a virtual Idaho project²

Goal 6

A new museum building

We have maximized what can be done with the former library building we occupy on the Idaho State University campus. We cannot grow and expand our services to Idaho for the long term and remain in our current building.

Our operations are confined to 35,786 square feet as follows:

Basement: 15,337 sq. ft.

¹¹ This benchmark is based on the assumption that efforts to diversify funding will be successful and the variable resources that may be needed to increase collections therefore a more specific benchmark has not been set.

Main floor: 15,693 sq. ft.
Warehouse: 3,606 sq. ft.
Garden: 1,150 sq. ft.

Participation in one of our most popular and effective programs for children, the Science Trek sleepover program, provides an example of the impact our building is having on service to our constituents. Necessary remodeling has imposed space limitations that, in turn, hold participation to 120 children. Science Trek previously accommodated up to 150 children.

Meeting spaces also have been reduced so that classroom and auditorium capacity no longer permits comfortable seating for lectures and programs with more than approximately 25 people.

We have been resourceful and adaptable in making the best of our building, yet it has never been adequate for the work of a research- and exhibit-oriented public museum that must meet the expectations of constituents and stakeholders in the 21st century.

Obstacles the current building presents include the following:

- little or no room for expansion
- overcrowded collections areas
- security, environmental, pest-management and parking issues posed by sharing facilities with other campus operations
- lack of adequate storage for exhibits and educational materials

If the museum is to maximize its benefits to Idaho and focus increasingly on well-funded research, education and public engagement, a new building — constructed specifically for museum uses — is a necessary investment.

Objective 6.1 : Plan a capital campaign for a new building

In partnership with our advisory and stakeholder groups, we will plan the launch of a multi-year capital campaign. The campaign would raise major financial gifts for construction, maintenance and operation of a museum-centered U.S. Green Building Council LEED-certified building to be located on the ISU campus.

Performance Measures: Identify stakeholders and develop fundraising plan by FY2019

Benchmark: Will have identified majority sponsors by FY2020¹²

¹² This benchmark is based on the requirement that donors be identified prior receiving approval to move forward with a new building project.

Cases Managed and/or Key Services Provided

In the following areas of museum operations, we shall target 10 percent increases per year in each year of this plan:

- philanthropic financial gifts
- research grants and other grants
- scientific publication
- public visitation
- enrollment in public programs

Cases Managed and/or Key Services Provided	FY 2012	FY 2013*	FY 2014*	FY 2015
Number of General Public Visitors	7,469	6,030	9,147	6,448
Number of Educational Programs for Public Audiences	45	64	45	47
Number of K12 Students on Class Tours	2,836	581*	770*	1,765
Number of Outreach Visits to Idaho Schools	**	86	11*	69
Number of K12 Students Visited for Outreach Visits to Idaho Schools	3,060	3,523	606*	2,336
Number of K12 and Adult Tours	97	19	35*	65
Number of Community Events	**	**	**	6
Number of General Public Visitors at Community Events	**	**	**	12,323
Cases Managed and/or Key Services Provided	FY 2012	FY 2013*	FY 2014*	FY 2015
Digital Outreach Audience (Social Media and Web Resources)	**	**	**	179,058
Exhibitions Mounted	9	16	3	3
Loans from Collections	28	32	16	18
Visiting Scientists	34	16	38	24
Volunteer Hours	2045.75	1926	1737.75	906.5

*Some Performance Measures were impacted by the long-term emergency medical leave of the museum education coordinator.

** No data to record.

External Factors

Success of many performance measures will be contingent on the museums ability to diversify funding streams in fee for service areas as well as private and corporate donations.

Partnerships are also impacted on the availability of staff time to develop new and innovative programs and educate public school and postsecondary educators on the resources available.