

Koochiching Museums

A Portage to the Past, Preservation for the Future

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2024

JWC

JW Croft Consulting Group
Providing Solutions for Nonprofits

INTRODUCTION

The Koochiching County Historical Society in International Falls, Minnesota, is a non-profit organization that works to collect, preserve, and share the history of Koochiching County. It was officially founded in 1958 (unofficially 1909) and is dedicated to preserving the area's rich history for future generations.

The Koochiching County Historical Society provides educational programs, hosts lectures and workshops, and organizes field trips to local historical sites. It also provides research assistance and collects artifacts, photographs, and documents related to the county's history. In addition, the society supports a library with an extensive collection of books, manuscripts, and photographs, as well as an archive with a variety of local newspapers, public records, and other materials.

The Koochiching County Historical Society is committed to preserving and promoting the history of the county and providing educational opportunities for the community. It is open to the public, and members of the society are actively involved in various projects, events, and activities.

KOOCHICHING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY is classed as HSC (Historical Societies, Historic Preservation). It is included within the following region of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM): Midwest (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin).

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is fundamental to organizational excellence. It is the means by which the most effective organizations establish priorities and goals and coordinate their efforts to anticipate, direct, and manage change (Tromp & Ruben, 2004).

Hence, the Koochiching County Historical Society (KCHS) has retained the JW Croft Consulting Group (JWCCG) to guide a team of KCHS leaders and board members through a **planning process** that will advance the mission of and create a long-term vision for KCHS. The goal of the planning process is to identify and address a set of opportunities and potential threats to the successful pursuit of KCHS's long-term mission and vision.

Because establishing good communication among all participants is important to the successful completion of this type of planning project, JWCCG will use the **Strategic Planning in Higher Education Framework (SPHE)** to guide the process from plan development to successful implementation.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

Four fundamental assumptions are central to the framework:

1. The planning process is as important, if not more so, than the plan itself.
2. Successful planning depends on leadership, communication, and assessment.
3. The goal of strategic planning is organizational improvement and change.
4. To be maximally effective, strategic planning should take account of resource considerations.

Three of the most critical determinants of the framework are leadership, communication, and assessment. In this context, *leadership* has to do with beginning-to-end guidance of plan development and implementation. *Communication* relates to all activities associated with acquiring and sharing information, and with messages related to plan development, promotion, and implementation. *Assessment* refers to the analysis and evaluation of plan development and implementation activities.

The Strategic Planning Activities

- The KCHS strategic planning began with a **high-level review** of the organization's mission and vision, as well as an analysis of the needs and expectations of those served by the organization.
- The **mission statement** and the **vision statement** developed in the first phase of the planning process were shared with members of **two focus groups** comprised of governing board members and interested community members.
- Further attention was devoted to an **assessment of assumptions, challenges, and opportunities**; and to defining the **objectives and strategies** that will drive change and resultant outcomes and achievements.

MISSION STATEMENT

“The Koochiching County Historical Society collects, preserves, and exhibits the natural history and the material and social culture of Koochiching County, as well as north central Minnesota and the southern border region of Northwestern Ontario. The collections are used to educate and advance the understanding of the customs, traditions, attitudes, and lifestyle of the people of this county and geographical region from pre-settlement up to the present.

Under the auspices of the Koochiching County Historical Society/Koochiching Museums, the Bronko Museum will collect, preserve, and exhibit the sports memorabilia of All-American legend Bronko Nagurski.”

VISION STATEMENT

Strengthen the museum's organizational and financial capacities in order to preserve and promote Koochiching County's rich history and collections—and ensure through these efforts that the museum is accessible to all members of the community, today and into the future.

OBJECTIVES AND STRAGETIES

KCHS has identified four priority areas that will guide its work.

1. Achieve financial stability
2. Strengthen the museum's permanent collection
3. Connect with the museum's audiences
4. Foster staff growth and diversity

These priorities are equally important, and must be viewed as independent areas of focus. Within each priority area, KCHS has identified objectives and strategies for achieving those objectives. The **objectives** are targets that the staff and the governing board of KCHS can work toward and against which they can regularly measure their progress. The outcome of this planning effort will help KCHS achieve its mission to collect, preserve, and exhibit the natural history and social culture of Koochiching County, north central Minnesota, and the southern border region of Northwestern Ontario.

PRIORITY 1: Achieve Financial Stability

Objective	Strategy
Foster/improve relationships with county board/city council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish greater presence at city and county board meetings.• Create more personal relationships with elected/hired public officials and give personal invitations to events/exhibition openings instead of generic emails.• Reach out for first contact with any newly elected or appointed officials.• Host an annual private tour for all community officials and their administrative staff.
Foster/improve relationships with donors and members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute seasonal greeting cards for high-level donors/members.• Host more frequent member social experiences, allowing members to meet each other and enjoy greater one-on-one time with staff and collections.
Build endowments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach local businesses for a store checkout campaign.• Continue contributions through our summer History on Tap Encore.• Develop a planned giving program targeted at long-term/active museum members and volunteers.

PRIORITY 2: Strengthen the Museum's Permanent Collection

Objective	Strategy
Continue to assess collections and deaccession/discard items that do not align with our mission statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and update processes for accessing objects into the collection and for identifying conservation needs.• Train and guide volunteers on processes of sorting and discarding items.• Maintain spring collections schedule to process large volumes of items in a set time frame.• Maintain a set schedule of appointments for discarded/deaccessioned items with local re-store.
Identify the stories we wish to tell through our collections and archives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect pertinent historical material that explores history relevant to our mission, including objects from a more recent time period.• Collect relevant historical objects that engage with current events and discourses that will inform historical thinking for future generations.• Collect relevant historical objects and materials that connect our community through multiple perspectives that 1) work toward thoughtful dialogue on historical conflict, and 2) incorporate narratives reflecting the histories, cultures, and experiences of our community.

PRIORITY 2: Strengthen the Museum's Permanent Collection, cont'd

Objective	Strategy
Establish a board accession/deaccession committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Propose to the board the creation of an accession/deaccession committee. The committee will consist of board members and nonmembers, from the community, with knowledge of local history and antiques.• The committee will meet at least once per month to consider accession/deaccession issues including making accession/deaccession recommendations to the board. Members should also be available during our collections inventory months.

PRIORITY 3: Connect with Our Audiences

Objective	Strategy
Understand audiences' interests, backgrounds, hopes, and concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey/poll community members and their museum membership interests.• Provide opportunity to give feedback on existing exhibitions and programs.
Meet them where they are! Provide off-site programming and online accessibility to our collections or programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach area businesses that may be agreeable to temporary exhibits within their space.• Apply for grants to subtitle audio/video content for visitors.• Dedicate a group of volunteers to digitizing newspapers to create a new accessible archive.

PRIORITY 3: Connect with Our Audiences, cont'd

Objective	Strategy
Improve the museum's entrance experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upgrade the museum's entrance by providing new, comfortable seating for visitors.• All entrance improvement must consider visitor accessibility needs.• Brighten the entrance with new light fixtures and a new coat of paint.• Rotate collections objects in entrance exhibit case to enhance visitor experience.

PRIORITY 4: Foster Staff Growth and Diversity

Objective	Strategy
Add new museum staff positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Propose to the board the addition of a third museum staff position.• Propose to the county board and city council that they provide long-term funding for the proposed third staff position.• Add volunteer management duties, over time, to the proposed third staff position.
Provide training for volunteers/interns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a training curriculum for volunteers/interns so all processes are consistent and everyone is on the same page.• Provide webinars and hands-on learning opportunities.• Develop training kits.

