



BRUCE COUNTY
museum & cultural centre

Strategic Plan

2027-2030

Land Acknowledgement



Aki Ogichidaa –
Protectors of the
Land by Kennedy
Cameron-Nashkewa,
Saugeen First Nation

We acknowledge the Traditional Territory of the Anishinaabek Nation:

The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. And further give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Nawash, now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, as the traditional keepers of this land.

For more information about Bruce County's commitment to reconciliation, visit www.brucecounty.on.ca/reconciliation.

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Executive Summary



Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this project was to update the previous 2021-2026 Strategic Plan of the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre (BCM&CC) for the **4-year period, 2027-2030**. Following a tender process, TCI Management Consultants together with The Information Management Specialists, were selected to undertake the work. The project began in February 2026 and concluded in August of that year.

Statements of Mandate, Vision and Mission for the BCM&CC:

Mandate: To preserve, steward, and share the stories, history, arts, and cultures of Bruce County through inclusive and engaging experiences.

Mission: The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre collects, preserves, stewards, and shares the histories, stories, archives, arts, and cultures of Bruce County through engaging exhibits, programs, partnerships, and learning experiences. Engaging with communities, the Museum provides welcoming, accessible, and inclusive spaces that encourage discovery, dialogue, reflection, and connection.

Vision: The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre will be a dynamic and adaptable cultural leader that connects people, ideas, and experiences across generations. By embracing innovation, expanding access to knowledge, fostering civic engagement, and responding to the evolving needs of our communities, the Museum will inspire curiosity, strengthen belonging, and enrich the cultural life of Bruce County for generations to come.

Strategic Priorities

6 interrelated and mutually supporting Strategic Priorities were identified:





How We Prepared This Plan

The Strategic Plan development process was a comprehensive approach aligning with evolving community needs and long-term sustainability in a changing world. It ensures the Museum continues to serve the public as a social and natural history museum, public archive and community cultural centre.



Activities Undertaken

Through a tender process, TCI Management Consultants, in association with The Information Management Specialists, was retained to undertake the work. The work started in February of 2026 and ended in August of that year.

A comprehensive and collaborative **10-step process** combined research, engagement, consultation, analysis, and reporting to inform the Strategic Plan.



Review

Reviewed relevant background documents, previous plans, County priorities, and policies.



Facility Tour

Reviewed the Museum's spaces, operations, exhibitions, collections, and visitor experience.



Internal Stakeholder Engagement

Interviews with key staff and a collaborative staff workshop.



External Stakeholder Engagement

Interviews with municipal and community representatives, interest groups, cultural partners, and Indigenous representatives.



Councillor Interviews

Gathered Councillors' perspectives on the Museum's role and future direction.



Staff & Volunteer Survey

Confidential survey with 35 responses.



Public Survey

Community survey with almost 400 responses.



Focus Groups

Sessions with educators, historical groups, facility users, members, and local municipal representatives.



Benchmarking

Reviewed best practices and comparable community and County museums in Ontario.



Report Preparation

Research and engagement findings were synthesized into the draft and final Strategic Plan.



Environmental Scan

This section covers key information collected in the development of this Plan, including:

- The overall policy context of Bruce County in terms of corporate, economic development and cultural plan policies;
- A general survey of trends in community museums across North America;
- Results of a benchmarking and best practices analysis of other museums in Ontario that have recently undergone strategic planning initiatives, in order to determine how they approached their own plans; and
- A review of current anticipated growth and demographic trends in the County.

Policy Context of Bruce County

Bruce County has a number of key policy documents that help provide context for the development of the Museum's Strategic Plan.

➤ Bruce County Strategic Plan (2023–2026)

Bruce County's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan sets the county-wide corporate direction through four strategic pillars: Community & Partnerships, Growth & Innovation, Culture & Capacity, and Environment & Climate Change. These pillars are underpinned by core values of service excellence, welcoming community, good governance, environmental stewardship, and financial sustainability, which guide all decisions and services across the organization. The plan is explicitly framed as a response to evolving community needs and emerging trends, emphasizing collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and fiscal responsibility.

Implications for BCM&CC

- Positions BCM&CC as a key vehicle for advancing community and partnerships through learning, heritage preservation, and cultural participation, reinforcing expectations for inclusive, accessible, and community-driven programming.
- Underscores the importance of partnerships with municipalities, schools, Indigenous communities, cultural groups, and tourism operators to contribute to the County's partnership and community well-being objectives.
- Signals a need for strong internal capacity, performance measurement, and prudent financial management at BCM&CC to align with the County's focus on service excellence, good governance, and financial sustainability.

➤ Bruce County Official Plan and “Plan the Bruce”

The Bruce County Official Plan provides the overarching land use policy framework guiding the County’s physical, social, and economic development, including support for social, cultural, and educational facilities and services. A new Official Plan was approved by Council in 2026, lasting until 2046, built around eight guiding themes: agriculture, business, connections, communities, good growth, heritage, homes, and natural legacy. Within this framework, heritage and cultural resources are explicitly identified as assets to be recognized, protected, and promoted, with policies to identify and manage cultural heritage resources and integrate them into broader community building and tourism strategies.

Implications for BCM&CC

- Reinforces BCM&CC’s role as a County-level cultural and heritage anchor that both benefits from and helps implement Official Plan directions on heritage, tourism, and complete communities.
- Suggests continued and potentially expanded involvement of BCM&CC in heritage identification, interpretation, and public education as the County implements new heritage and cultural resource policies.
- Highlights opportunities for BCM&CC to align capital planning, site development, and access (e.g., transportation connections, wayfinding, integration with trails and downtowns) with the “good growth,” “connections,” and “communities” objectives in the new Official Plan.

➤ Bruce County Cultural Action Plan

Bruce County’s Cultural Action Plan (CAP), endorsed by Council in 2021, is the County’s strategic cultural planning tool. The CAP aims to identify and leverage the County’s cultural resources, strengthen their management, and integrate culture across all facets of County planning and decision-making, grounded in the four pillars of sustainability: economic prosperity, social equity, environmental responsibility, and cultural vitality. Recent community updates emphasize the CAP’s focus on building cultural capacity, developing and maintaining cultural assets, enhancing cultural communication, and coordinating cultural planning through mechanisms such as a county-wide Cultural Roundtable.

Implications for BCM&CC

- Confirms BCM&CC as a central cultural asset and partner within the County’s cultural ecosystem, with expectations to contribute to sector-wide capacity building and shared initiatives.
- Encourages BCM&CC to align its programming, collections, and interpretive work with CAP priorities around recognizing, celebrating, and preserving Bruce County’s diverse cultural heritage, including Indigenous histories and contemporary expressions.
- Creates opportunities for BCM&CC to play leadership and convening roles (e.g., participating in or hosting the Cultural Roundtable, supporting joint marketing and communication, contributing data and insights to cultural planning).



Previous Strategic Planning Foundations

- In 2020, the Museum initiated an updated organizational strategic planning process to guide operations and development over a five-year period, resulting in a Strategic Plan and Implementation Roadmap covering 2021–2026.
- That planning process included background research, analysis of the Museum’s digital environment, and internal and external stakeholder engagement, complemented by a public survey.
- The 2021–2026 plan positioned the Museum as a key cultural, educational, and tourism hub for Bruce County, with priorities around visitor experience, digital engagement, partnerships, and organizational sustainability.

Related Digital and Program Strategies

- In 2021, the Museum developed a dedicated Digital Content Strategy to guide how it creates and shares online content, based on an in-depth review of its digital presence and further stakeholder and public engagement.
- The Digital Content Strategy provides an actionable framework for delivering relevant, compelling, and valuable digital content and has informed subsequent online and virtual initiatives. The Digital Content Strategy was updated in 2026 to cover the period up to 2030.
- The Museum completed a Communications and Marketing Strategic Plan, 2025–2027 that contained several recommendations to optimize programming promotion, digital marketing, content marketing, advertising ROI and alignment with key stakeholders.
- In early 2023, the Museum completed a comprehensive review of its volunteer program to strengthen volunteer engagement and support core programs and services.

County-Wide Cultural and Corporate Context

- At the County level, the Bruce County Cultural Action Plan, endorsed in October 2021 as the County’s strategic cultural planning tool and the County’s 2023–2026 Corporate Strategic Plan both provide important context.
- In 2024, Bruce County developed an Indigenous Reconciliation Framework as well as its Saugeen Anishnaabek Reconciliation Pathway and Action Plan. These documents recognized the critical role of the Museum in promoting reconciliation through truth-telling about the County’s historical relationship with the Saugeen Anishnaabek.
- These County-wide plans position the Museum as part of a broader cultural and tourism ecosystem, with expectations around partnerships, heritage preservation, and alignment with land-use, heritage, and tourism planning initiatives.

Demand and Supply Trends in Community Museums Across North America

Demand Side: What Visitors Want

Current and prospective community museum audiences are looking for the following from their experience:

- 1 Community relevance, not just good exhibitions:** Visitors increasingly expect museums to connect with the issues, identities, histories, and relationships that shape local life. According to research undertaken by the American Alliance of Museums in 2024, perceptions that museums connect people to community were linked to stronger engagement and visitation. For a community museum, this means audiences are not only asking, “Is this interesting?” but also, “Does this matter?”
- 2 Nonpartisan spaces for interpretation and learning:** Museums continue to hold unusually strong trust compared with many other institutions. That trust is now part of the value proposition. Visitors want places that can help them make sense of history, place, culture, and contested issues without feeling manipulated. In a polarized environment, community museums benefit when they are seen as credible, calm, and educative rather than performative.
- 3 Social connection and memory-making:** Repeat visitation is tied to opportunities for learning, relaxation, enjoyment, and time with family or friends, and not strictly exhibition programming. For community museums, the implication is that audiences are not just consuming content. They are looking for shared experiences and reasons to come back.
- 4 Affordability and lower barriers to entry:** Cost remains an important issue. In an inflationary environment, audiences are more price-sensitive, and families are comparing museum visits with other leisure and educational choices. Community museums that ignore pricing, free access days, transportation barriers, or membership design risk narrowing their audience without meaning to.
- 5 Accessibility must be built in, not “bolted on”:** Accessibility now extends beyond physical access. Visitors increasingly expect accessible language, inclusive tours, multilingual interpretation, sensory accommodations, digital accessibility, and programming that works for different ages, abilities, and learning styles. The standard has shifted from minimum compliance to active welcome.
- 6 Inclusion that feels authentic, not symbolic:** Museums are expected to reflect a broad range of identities, stories, and lived experiences. Audiences are increasingly alert to whose stories are told, who speaks with authority, and whether the museum’s commitment to inclusion is visible in practice.
- 7 Flexible educational value:** Schools, homeschoolers, families, and lifelong learners are using museums in more varied ways than ever before. Museums are being asked to fill curricular gaps, support informal learning, and provide intergenerational educational experiences. For community museums, the demand is less for one standard fieldtrip offering and more for flexible learning pathways.
- 8 Digital access:** The pandemic normalized the idea that museums can be encountered online as well as on site. Audiences now expect at least some combination of digital collections, virtual storytelling, online educational resources, or hybrid programming. Digital is no longer a side project. For many audiences, it is part of basic service.



- 9 **Engage with repair, reconciliation, and representation:** In Canada especially, and increasingly across North America, audiences expect museums to address Indigenous rights, repatriation, and the legacy of colonial authority more directly. More broadly, there is rising demand for institutions that can acknowledge harm, share authority, and handle contested heritage with seriousness.
- 10 **Contribute to community well-being:** There is growing interest in museums as contributors to social connection, civic life, well-being, and local resilience. This does not mean every museum has to become a social service agency. It does mean that audiences are more likely to value museums that can demonstrate public benefit beyond attendance counts.

Supply Side: How Community Museums Are Responding

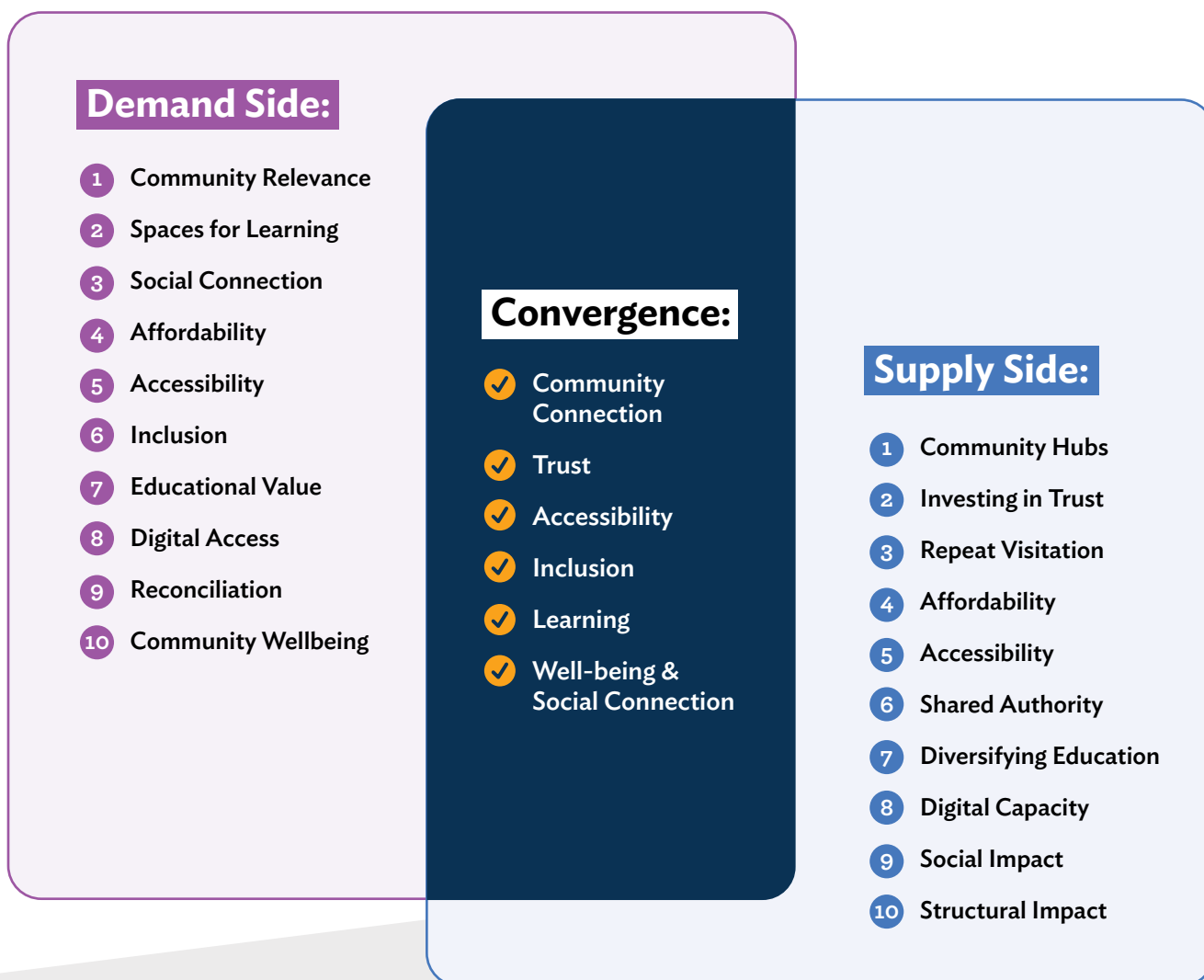
Community museums are responding to the needs and expectation of the marketplace by implementing the following strategies:

- 1 **Repositioning themselves as community hubs and anchors:** Community museums are broadening their role from collections stewards to active community hubs. That shows up in local partnerships, community-curated projects, neighbourhood programming, and a stronger emphasis on the museum as a place of gathering and connection rather than only display.
- 2 **Investing in trust, dialogue, and interpretation capacity:** Because trust is a strategic asset, community museums are paying more attention to tone, framing, and interpretive method. This includes facilitated conversations, historically grounded public programming, transparent curatorial practice, and efforts to remain credible while addressing difficult subjects.
- 3 **Prioritizing repeat visitation and relationship-building:** Community museums are working on reasons to return by developing rotating community-based exhibits, recurring family programs, seasonal events, participatory activities, membership redesign, and visitor journeys that reward familiarity.
- 4 **Experimenting with affordability models:** Free admission, targeted free-access programs, discounted family offers, community passes, sponsored access, and more flexible pricing are becoming more common tools. The basic shift is from treating admission policy as purely a revenue decision to treating it as an access and audience-development strategy.
- 5 **Embedding accessibility and belonging in experience design:** The stronger institutions are moving away from seeing accessibility as a compliance function and toward universal design across exhibits, programs, tours, websites, and visitor services. This includes language access, sensory supports, clearer interpretation, staff training, and digital accessibility standards.
- 6 **Shifting from representation to shared authority:** Many museums are responding to demands for inclusion and reconciliation by changing who shapes content, not just what content gets shown. Co-curation, advisory circles, Indigenous guidance, community authorship, and revised collections practices are all part of this shift.
- 7 **Diversifying education formats and audience segments:** Museums are developing more tailored offers for homeschool families, adult learners, newcomers, elders, and multi-generational groups. They are also creating modular educational resources that can work in classrooms, online, on site, and in community settings.
- 8 **Building digital capacity:** Across North America, museum support programs continue to invest in digital tools, staff capability, and online storytelling. The notable change is that digital work is increasingly framed as audience access, organizational capacity, and public service rather than emergency improvisation.
- 9 **Adopting social-impact language and measurement:** Museums are under pressure to show that they create value beyond attendance, admissions, and tourism multipliers. In response, the field is putting more effort into measuring social connection, well-being, educational engagement, awareness of diverse cultures, and community benefit.

- 10 **Attempting to respond while carrying structural strain:** Research and consultation with peer museums identified several common challenges across the sector. Many museums are responding to evolving audience expectations, growing digital demands, and changing programming needs while also navigating all the additional pressures. Funding fluctuations and changing broader government priorities can further impact operational stability. As a result, museums are adopting new approaches and practices, although the pace of change is often shaped by available resources and organizational capacity.

Convergence of Supply and Demand Factors

Community museums are responding to changing audience expectations by aligning specific organizational responses with the needs and priorities expressed by visitors.



Overall, the relationships illustrate that audience expectations cannot be met through a single organizational action. Several demand factors are linked to multiple supply responses, reflecting the interconnected nature of community museum practice, where trust, accessibility, inclusion, education, digital engagement, sustainability and social impact reinforce one another to meet evolving public expectations.

Benchmarking

Five other community and County-level museums that had recently undertaken strategic planning processes were reviewed in order to determine what they had considered in their own Strategic Plans, and whether there were useful “lessons learned” that could be applied to the Bruce County context. With input from BCM&CC staff, five institutions were selected for review:

- Great Lakes Museum in Kingston, Ontario
- Kawartha Lakes Museum and Archives in Lindsay, Ontario (City of Kawartha Lakes)
- Grey Roots Museum and Archives, outside Owen Sound, Ontario (Grey County)
- Museum of Dufferin, outside Rosemont, Ontario (Dufferin County)
- Lincoln Museum and Cultural Centre in Lincoln, Ontario (Town of Lincoln)



In reviewing these plans and related policies, as well as website materials, it became apparent that there were several common themes and emphases in the strategies being pursued. These were:

Community engagement and participation:

An emphasis upon encouraging community participation in the programs and activities provided, and in using metrics of participation in overall evaluations.

Partnerships and collaboration: An emphasis upon forging community partnerships and relationships, recognizing benefits in several ways: bringing more resources to the table; expanding the audiences; and creating enhanced legitimacy for the museum through association with other credible organizations.

Collections stewardship and development:

This is a core mission of any community or regional museum, and so it is not at all surprising to see it as a key strategic element.

Expanded programming and interpretation:

Again, this is a core activity area for a museum, so it deservedly merits a prominent place in a strategic plan.

Digital access and technology: Ever since COVID, which cemented the importance of having a digital offering for museums (and other cultural institutions such as libraries), this has been an

important element of strategy. Digital access is widely recognized across the plans. Four of the five of them include digitization of collections, online interpretation and digital engagement with audiences.

Regional storytelling / place-based heritage

interpretation: Several of the plans emphasized that museums need to tell stories of significance to local and regional residents, and that those residents need to see themselves and their cultures reflected in the stories told in those museums.

Audience development and visitation

growth: Audience growth is desirable, with visitor numbers acting as a key success measure across all plans. Museums are also interested in developing audiences to include different cultures, underserved and disadvantaged populations, new residents in the community etc.

Organizational sustainability and governance:

An emphasis on resilience and operational stability was another common element of most plans. Most museums emphasize financial resilience, governance and staffing capacity and organizational sustainability. This is particularly explicit in the Great Lakes Museum, Museum of Dufferin and Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre.

Facilities development or capital improvements:

Often museums tend to neglect capital and repair upgrades, and this can get them into trouble over the long haul when deferred maintenance issues can catch up. Accordingly, this is an element of some plans. Four plans reference expansion of museum space, modernization of facilities and improved visitor experience. Examples include the Kingston Dry Dock campus development and the Lincoln Museum relocation to a new facility.

Equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation:

Related to the previous point about audience development and growth, several strategies focused upon the importance of EDI as well as appropriate Indigenous involvement. Equity and inclusion themes are emerging but not universal. Three plans explicitly reference EDI principles, decolonization and reconciliation with Indigenous communities. These are strongest in the Museum of Dufferin, Lincoln Museum and Kawartha Lakes Museum plans.



The chart below shows which of these themes was represented strongly in each of the Strategic Plans and policy approaches of the benchmark institutions examined:

Strategic Theme / Direction	Great Lakes Museum (Kingston)	Kawartha Lakes Museum & Archives (Lindsay)	Grey Roots Museum & Archives (Grey County)	Museum of Dufferin (Dufferin County)	Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre (Lincoln)
Community engagement and participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Partnerships and collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collections stewardship and development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expanded programming and interpretation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital access and technology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional storytelling / place-based heritage interpretation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Audience development and visitation growth	✓	✓		✓	✓
Organizational sustainability and governance	✓	✓		✓	✓
Facilities development or capital improvements	✓	✓		✓	✓
Equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation		✓		✓	✓

Summary Observations

Across the five museums, the most consistently shared strategic priorities are:

- 1 Community engagement
- 2 Partnerships
- 3 Collections stewardship
- 4 Programming and interpretation
- 5 Digital access
- 6 Regional storytelling

These **6** themes reflect standard planning priorities for mid-sized regional museums in Ontario.



Demographic Analysis and Growth Prospects

Current Demographic Structure of the County

Purpose: The following table provides data and comparisons for the Town of Saugeen Shores, Bruce County, Grey County and Ontario using 2021 Census Profile data and profile-derived public health/regional sources. Yellow highlighting marks Saugeen Shores or Bruce County values that differ from Ontario by more than 5 percentage points.

 Saugeen Shores or Bruce County differs from Ontario by more than 5 percentage points.

Data Parameter	Town of Saugeen Shores	Bruce County	Grey County	Province of Ontario
Total Population (2021)	15,905	73,400	100,905	14,223,945
Population Growth (2016-2021)	16.0%	7.7%	7.5%	5.8%
Total Households*	8,548	42,592	50,183	5,929,250
Permanent Resident Households*	6,905	31,112	42,309	5,491,201
% age 0-14	15.9%	16.5%	15.3%	15.8%
% age 65+	26.1%	26.0%	26.4%	18.5%
% married/common-law couple families with children	37%	36%	35%	44%
Median total household income (2020)	\$103,000	\$87,000	\$78,000	\$91,000
% low income (after-tax)	7.6%	10.7%	12.1%	10.1%
% speaks English only**	92.4%	94.1%	93.7%	86.0%
Home language: English	97.7%	96.6%	96.5%	82.5%
% Indigenous identity	4.4%	4.8%	4.4%	2.9%



Data Parameter	Town of Saugeen Shores	Bruce County	Grey County	Province of Ontario
% owner households	80.3%	81.1%	78.0%	68.0%
% renter households	19.6%	18.3%	22.0%	32.0%
% immigrants	11.4%	7.7%	8.0%	30.0%
% first-generation (born outside Canada)	11.9%	8.0%	8.3%	31.0%
% visible minority	7.6%	3.8%	4.2%	34.3%
Mobility (% moved in last 5 yrs)	40.0%	36.8%	39.0%	36.6%
% post-secondary education	74.9%	63.4%	57.2%	67.8%
% labour force full-time	51.6%	53.1%	52.2%	55.1%
% commuting >=60 min	6%	5%	10%	9%

* For dwelling rows, total private dwellings and private dwellings occupied by usual residents are the directly comparable Census Profile concepts. They are useful here because seasonal/vacation dwellings are strategically important in Grey-Bruce.

** “Speaks English only” is interpreted as knowledge of official languages: English only. “Home language: English” means English spoken most often at home.

Strategic plan inferences for the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre

- 1 Older audiences are a core market, not a niche. Both Saugeen Shores and Bruce County have a 65+ share about 7.5 percentage points above Ontario.** Accessibility, seating, acoustics, washroom access, parking, daytime programming and slower-paced interpretive formats should be treated as baseline service design.
- 2 Seasonal and part-time residents are strategically important. Only 73% of Bruce County private dwellings and 81% of Saugeen Shores dwellings are occupied by usual residents, compared with 93% in Ontario.** The Museum should plan membership, marketing, exhibitions and events around a larger seasonal audience than permanent-resident counts alone suggest.
- 3 Saugeen Shores is a growth market, particularly for new residents. Saugeen Shores grew 16.0% from 2016 to 2021, far above Ontario's 5.8%.** New-resident orientation, "local history 101," walking tours and welcome partnerships could convert population growth into museum engagement.
- 4 Family programming should be balanced with adult and older-adult programming. Bruce and Grey have lower shares of couple families with children than Ontario and much higher older-adult shares.** Children's programming remains important, but the demographic evidence supports equal or greater investment in adult learning, seniors, lifelong learning and intergenerational formats.
- 5 High home ownership supports membership, philanthropy and legacy-giving strategies. Owner households are about 80%-81% in Saugeen Shores and Bruce County, compared with 68% provincially.** This suggests a comparatively stable base for memberships, annual giving, planned giving and local-history donor cultivation.
- 6 Affordability should still remain visible in access policy.** Although renter households are a smaller share locally than provincially, renters and lower-income residents remain present. Free/low-cost admission days, library passes and community partnerships can prevent the Museum from becoming oriented only to homeowners and seasonal residents.
- 7 English-first interpretation is appropriate, but not English-only community engagement.** English-only and English-at-home rates are much higher than Ontario, so English will serve most users. However, immigration and visible-minority populations are growing locally, especially in Saugeen Shores, so inclusive collecting and targeted outreach are still needed.
- 8 Indigenous partnership should be central to interpretation, not a demographic add-on.** BCM&CC has worked extensively with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation on Truth and Reconciliation initiatives. Local Indigenous identity shares are above Ontario, and the Museum operates in a region shaped by Saugeen Ojibway Nation history, treaties and continuing presence. BCM&CC has worked extensively with the Indigenous community to ensure Indigenous co-curation and cultural authority are built into exhibition and collections planning.
- 9 Saugeen Shores can support deeper learning products.** The post-secondary attainment rate in Saugeen Shores is notably above Ontario. BCM&CC has developed lectures, research nights, archival workshops, expert-led tours and publication/digital-history products to serve this well-educated segment.
- 10 Commuting patterns support local and daytime programming in Bruce County. Bruce County has a lower share of commutes of 60 minutes or more than Ontario.** This supports daytime/weekday offers for retirees, remote workers, local workers and visitors, alongside conventional weekend tourism programming.

Population Growth Forecasts

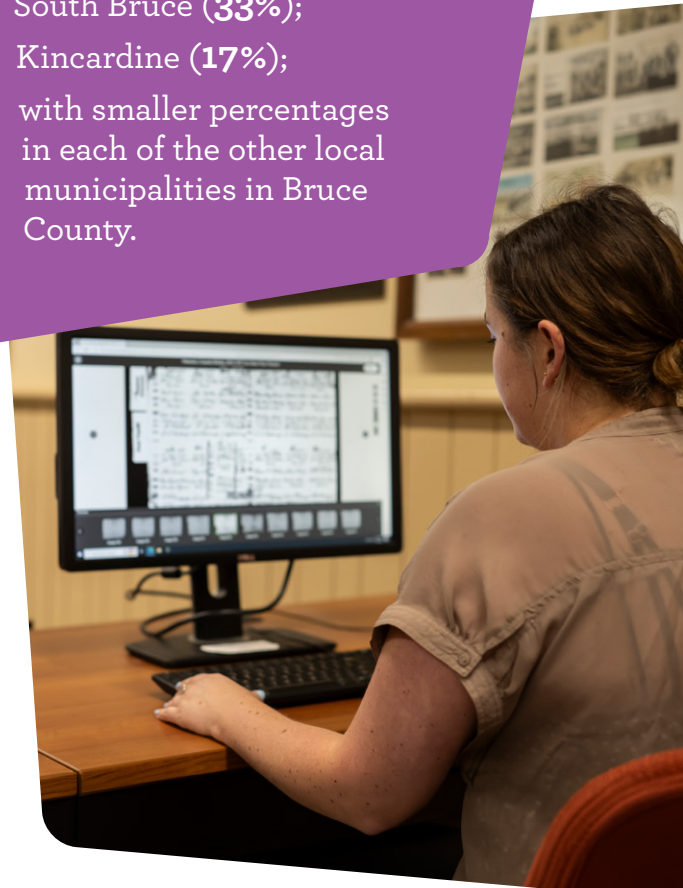
A key contextual element to consider looking at the Strategic Plan is the considerable population growth expected in the County between now and the middle of the century. While this is considerably beyond the four-year timeframe of this Strategic Plan, it does present a longer-term context that should be considered.

In 2022 the County prepared its **Good Growth** Discussion Paper, which set out the anticipated population growth projections for the County for the coming decades. Three scenarios were anticipated: “high”, “base” (most likely) and “low”, reflecting somewhat different assumptions of net in-migration. Population growth expectations to mid century are significant, with the County showing growth of another 21,000 persons (approximately) between 2021 and the base case scenario of nearly 94,000¹. Moreover, these projections are likely to be low if Bruce Power’s “Bruce C” development comes on-stream², as it would considerably increase the number of construction workers in the 2031 to 2046 period. Growth management studies are currently underway which will include revised projections.

As mentioned, while most of this growth will occur after the four-year forecast period for the current Strategic Plan for the BCM&CC, it does behoove the Museum to be aware of and plan for this wave of growth. It is likely that the new influx of residents to the County generally (and the municipalities immediately surrounding the Museum in particular) will have characteristics somewhat different from the current demographic composition of the County. In particular, they are likely to be younger households with children, well educated, and many may be new Canadians. Should the Bruce C development come on-stream, the workers there will likely share all those characteristics as well as be earning relatively high incomes. In the construction phase, there may be an influx of single men working on the plant. In this and future Strategic Plans, BCM&CC will plan for programs and services to cater to this changing population dynamic.

Most of the forecast growth projected from the *Good Growth* paper will be in:

- Saugeen Shores (38%);
- South Bruce (33%);
- Kincardine (17%);
- with smaller percentages in each of the other local municipalities in Bruce County.



1 Source: Plan the Bruce: Good Growth, Interim Report, March 2021, Appendix C.

2 Bruce C is a proposed expansion of the existing Bruce Power site in Kincardine that could add up to 4,800 MW of new nuclear power to Ontario's generating capacity, effectively making the Bruce site the largest nuclear generating station in the world. It would potentially create an estimated 12,000 construction jobs and 4,000–6,000 permanent operational employees and would likely come on-stream in the mid-2040s. It is important to note that Bruce C is not yet approved.



Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats Assessment



SCOT Assessment as the Basis for a Strategic Plan

This section discusses the benefits of a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) analysis as the basis for a Strategic Plan. Building on the results of the community engagement, it then presents the major SCOT elements that form the basis of this plan.

A Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) assessment framework can be used as the basis for a strategic planning approach. Strengths and Challenges typically relate to **current** factors that characterize the operation or organization while Opportunities and Threats tend to reflect **future** considerations. This is not a perfect framework – a current *challenge*, for example, can relate to a future *opportunity* to address or correct the challenge – but it is nonetheless a useful framework to begin to think of the various strategic actions under consideration. Different elements will logically imply different types of strategic actions, as shown in the chart below:

➤ SCOT Framework as Basis for Strategic Planning

SCOT Assessment	How Defined Strategically?	Strategic Actions
 Strengths	• Unique or very strong factors that provide current competitive advantage	• Protect an advantage • Further develop or capitalize upon an existing advantage
 Challenges	• Areas of current competitive disadvantage relative to competition	• Strengthen areas of challenge • Reposition to eliminate weakness (in reality, or through the creation of alternative perceptions)
 Opportunities	• Situations that present opportunities for future competitive advantage	• Feasibility testing • Implementation planning
 Threats	• Situations that present dangers of future competitive disadvantage	• Risk assessment • Contingency planning

The major themes resulting from the consultation process and the various analyses contained in this report according to the SCOT framework are outlined below:

Themes and Issues Identified

The Museum is well positioned to serve its community, with a number of established strengths that provide a solid foundation for future growth. It has earned a strong reputation throughout the region by consistently exceeding visitor expectations and has developed a destination-quality facility that attracts a diverse audience. Loyal visitors, high-quality programming, and engaging experiences have fostered long-term community support. These strengths are reinforced by trusted leadership, productive partnerships, and a committed volunteer base, creating a strong network of support for the Museum's ongoing work.



Strengths

- 1 Far exceeds expectations**
Strong reputation in the region
- 2 Destination-quality facility**
Attracts diverse visitors
- 3 Loyal audiences and strong programming**
Offers engaging experiences
- 4 Trusted leadership, partnerships, and volunteers**
Community support is strong



Challenges

- 1 Capacity is stretched**
Resources are limited
- 2 Access is uneven**
Barriers for some audiences
- 3 Awareness of full services is limited**
Not widely known
- 4 Younger audiences remain hard to reach**
Engagement is low



Opportunities

- 1 Expand county-wide outreach**
Engage more residents
- 2 Use library branches as delivery platforms**
Leverage existing networks
- 3 Grow digital and school partnerships**
Innovation programming ahead
- 4 Build innovative revenue and support**
Explore diverse funding sources



Threats

- 1 Funding pressure and uncertainty**
Financial stability at risk
- 2 Infrastructure and collections strain**
Need for upgrades
- 3 Talent and succession risk**
Leadership gaps emerging
- 4 Changing visitor expectations**
Need to adapt

At the same time, several operational challenges affect the Museum's ability to fully realize its potential. Organizational capacity is stretched, with limited resources placing pressure on staff and operations. Access to programs and services is not equally available to all audiences, and awareness of the Museum's full range of offerings remains limited. In addition, engaging younger audiences continues to be difficult, highlighting the need for new approaches to programming, communication, and outreach.

Looking ahead, there are significant opportunities to expand the Museum's impact. Increasing outreach across the County would enable the Museum to connect with more residents and strengthen its role as a community resource. Existing library branches provide an opportunity to extend programs and services beyond the Museum's physical location by leveraging established community networks. Continued investment in digital initiatives and partnerships with schools offers the potential to reach new audiences through innovative educational programming. At the same time, developing new revenue sources and strengthening community support can improve long-term financial resilience and reduce dependence on traditional funding.

The Museum also faces several external pressures that require careful planning and adaptation. Ongoing funding uncertainty presents risks to long-term financial sustainability, while aging facilities and growing collections create increasing infrastructure demands. Strengthening staff capacity and the recruitment and retention of future leaders represent an emerging organizational priority. Finally, visitor expectations continue to evolve, requiring the Museum to remain responsive, innovative, and adaptable in how it delivers programs, services, and experiences.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that the Museum is building from a position of considerable strength, supported by a respected reputation, strong community relationships, and high-quality programming. Future success will depend on addressing capacity constraints, broadening access and awareness, capitalizing on opportunities to extend community reach, and responding proactively to financial, organizational, and societal changes. By leveraging its existing assets while adapting to changing expectations, the Museum is well positioned to remain a valued and sustainable cultural institution.

Strategic Observation

The Museum's greatest strengths and greatest risks are closely connected. Its reputation, reconciliation work, programming excellence, volunteer culture, and community trust are relationship-based assets. These create significant opportunities for growth but also vulnerabilities if organizational capacity, strengthening staff capacity, funding, and institutional supports do not grow as population and community expectations increase. A major strategic priority should be aligning relationship-based strengths with sustainable organizational systems that endure beyond individual leaders, staff members, and volunteers.





Strategic Plan

Following the Data Analysis section is the Strategic Plan itself. This consists of the framework for the Plan, which is the Vision, Mission and the six Strategic Priorities and the actions within them.

> In total there are **27** actions recommended.

Mandate, Mission, Vision

The strategy is framed around a Mandate, Mission and Vision for the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre, which are:

Mandate:

To preserve, steward, and share the stories, history, arts, and cultures of Bruce County through inclusive and engaging experiences.

Mission:

The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre collects, preserves, stewards, and shares the histories, stories, archives, arts, and cultures of Bruce County through engaging exhibits, programs, partnerships, and learning experiences. Engaging with communities, the Museum provides welcoming, accessible, and inclusive spaces that encourage discovery, dialogue, reflection, and connection.

Vision:

The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre will be a dynamic and adaptable cultural leader that connects people, ideas, and experiences across generations. By embracing innovation, expanding access to knowledge, fostering civic engagement, and responding to the evolving needs of our communities, the Museum will inspire curiosity, strengthen belonging, and enrich the cultural life of Bruce County for generations to come.

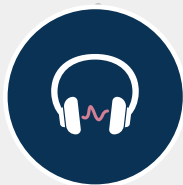
Strategic Priorities

This plan consists of six interrelated and mutually supporting priority areas:



01 **Steward** Heritage, Archives and Collections

Preserve, document, and care for Bruce County's heritage, archives, and collections to ensure they remain accessible, relevant, and well protected for future generations. This goal recognizes collections stewardship as the foundation of the Museum's role in safeguarding local history while making it meaningful and available to the public.



02 **Deliver** Exceptional Visitor, Learning and Cultural Experiences

Create engaging, inclusive, and memorable experiences that inspire curiosity, learning, and connection for people of all ages and backgrounds. The focus is on providing high-quality exhibitions, programs, and services that encourage repeat visitation and strengthen the Museum's value to residents and visitors alike.



03 **Extend** the Museum Across Bruce County

Expand the Museum's reach beyond its physical location by improving access to programs, collections, and services throughout Bruce County. Through outreach, partnerships, digital initiatives, and community-based programming, the Museum seeks to ensure that all residents can connect with their shared heritage.



04 **Advance** Reconciliation, Inclusion and Shared Storytelling

Ensure that the Museum reflects the full diversity of Bruce County by embracing inclusive practices, advancing reconciliation, and supporting multiple voices and perspectives. This goal emphasizes authentic collaboration with communities so that the stories being preserved and shared are representative, respectful, and meaningful.



05 **Strengthen** Community Leadership, Partnerships and Engagement

Build strong relationships with municipalities, cultural organizations, Indigenous communities, schools, volunteers, and other partners to advance shared goals. By serving as a county-wide cultural leader and collaborator, the Museum can amplify its impact and strengthen the cultural vitality of Bruce County.



06 **Grow** Audiences, Visibility and Organizational Sustainability

Strengthen the Museum's long-term capacity by increasing public awareness, expanding audiences, and securing the financial, human, and organizational resources needed for continued success. This goal supports sustainable growth by ensuring the Museum remains resilient, relevant, and well positioned to deliver lasting community benefit.

Strategic Actions

The recommended strategic actions fit within these six strategic priority areas. They are:



Steward Heritage, Archives and Collections

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 01

- 1 Activate and regularly assess long-term Museum and Archives Collecting Plans:** Collections and Archives are among the Museum's most valued assets, and sustainable stewardship requires a clear long-term approach to growth, storage needs, preservation, staffing, and access. Following the 2026 update, regular assessment and publicly sharing the Archives and Museum Collecting Plans (referred to in the Collections Management Policy), will continue to guide consistent decision-making, align collecting priorities with evolving community priorities, guide deaccessioning, address representation, and build public understanding and support for the Museum's role in preserving Bruce County's heritage. Regular assessment will also assist in forecasting collection growth and establishing storage priorities in light of current storage capacity challenges. (For example, the Expansion Needs Study (2024) identified that up to 12,000 sq. ft. of storage space would be required over the next 15 years.)
- 2 Secure long-term preservation for collections and archives:** The consultation findings identified space limitations as one of the Museum's most pressing operational challenges. Finding a long-term, sustainable solution for the preservation of physical collections and archives emerged as a key priority. Staff and interviewees viewed this as a county-wide investment in protecting Bruce County's cultural heritage. Improved storage capacity would strengthen preservation efforts, reduce risk to the collection, and support greater public access over time.
- 3 Increase awareness of collections and archives:** Many residents value the archives but have limited awareness of what is available or how to use them. (It should be noted in this regard that the Museum does already maintain three online databases³.) Activating the Communications and Marketing Strategic Plan would continue to promote access through exhibits, online databases, public programs, and research services, making these resources visible and relevant. This addresses concerns that archives and collections remain "back-of-house" functions that are psychologically and physically difficult for visitors to access.
- 4 Pursue additional digitization for collections and archives, increase online collections and virtual museum presence:** Digitization responds directly to the growing public demand for online access and aligns with broader museum trends across North America. Continued digitization will make collections accessible across Bruce County. It also supports schools, researchers, seasonal residents, and audiences unable to visit in person. The strategy builds on the Museum's existing digital strengths and virtual initiatives.



Deliver Exceptional Visitor, Learning and Cultural Experiences

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 02



5

Complete an exhibition assessment for permanent gallery spaces:

Survey respondents indicated a desire for more variety and more frequent exhibit change. A formal renewal schedule would provide predictable opportunities for repeat visitation while supporting audience development. Rotating exhibits can showcase more of the collection and introduce new community stories. This approach reflects best practices identified in benchmark museums. It is recognized that there are significant staffing and additional cost implications associated with this strategy, and so sponsorships and/or grants should also be more actively sought. A priority in the exhibition assessment should be to increase digital and interactive exhibit elements because visitors increasingly expect immersive and hands-on experiences rather than passive displays. Interactive exhibits can improve learning outcomes, attract families, and encourage repeat visits. They also respond directly to survey feedback that history should be engaging and experiential. The BCM&CC already has a reasonable number of interactives (not always working), but the number could be increased.

6

Develop awareness campaign for school programming: Educators emphasized the importance of programs that clearly connect to Ontario curriculum requirements and noted that expanding curriculum-linked offerings would strengthen the Museum's educational role and increase school participation. The school programs offered by the Museum are already linked to the Ontario school curriculum, but there appears to be an opportunity to create improved awareness of this.

7

Audit family and intergenerational programming to explore expansion: Families represent the largest visitor segment and are a key source of repeat visitation. Programs designed for grandparents, parents, and children together reflect local demographics and community interests. Intergenerational experiences also support social connection and memory-making. This aligns with demand trends identified across the museum sector. The Museum should continue to regard this as a priority area, especially in light of the significant population growth expected across the County (which will in large part consist of younger families.)

3 These are: **Bruce County Online Collections** – a searchable database of artifacts, archival records, photographs, books, diaries, letters, postcards, and museum objects from the museum and archives collections; **Bruce County Historic Newspapers** – a digitized newspaper database containing thousands of issues from historic Bruce County newspapers, allowing full-text and image-based research into local history; and **Bruce Remembers** – an online military history database documenting Bruce County residents' military service, military units, cemeteries, memorials, and related records.

- 8 **Implement Digital Content Strategy:** Virtual and digital resources extend access beyond Saugeen Shores and reduce geographic barriers. They are particularly valuable for educational purposes. This strategy rests on the Education Centre platform on the website, the Virtual Museum and the digital strengths of the Museum overall which are driven by the Digital Content Strategy.
- 9 **Audit lifelong-learning programs to explore expansion:** Bruce County has a large older-adult population and relatively high levels of educational attainment. Lectures, workshops, genealogy programs, and research-focused offerings can meet growing demand for adult learning. Such programs also encourage repeat visitation and deepen community engagement. They support the Museum's role as a trusted educational institution.
- 10 **Audit arts and cultural event offerings to explore expansion:** Residents increasingly view the Museum as a cultural gathering place, not simply a heritage institution. Expanding performances, exhibitions, lectures, festivals, and cultural events would strengthen this role. Such events can attract new audiences and increase facility utilization.
- 11 **Review gift shop operation:** Visitors to any museum or cultural institution often want to purchase some sort of souvenir of the visit or a gift for a friend or family member. There is also some evidence from the consultation process that the existing gift shop operation is acting as a gift store opportunity for local residents. The existing gift shop operation is well located in the museum and well stocked. However, whether the range and type of merchandise for sale could reflect more locally made items, and goods relevant to the history of the County, is an issue. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Museum undertake a review of its retail operation, looking at the items sold, the space ideally required (and any other locational aspects that might be relevant) and the additional revenue potential.



Extend the Museum Across Bruce County

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 03

- 12 **Develop county-wide outreach strategy:** A recurring theme heard throughout the consultation was that the Museum is highly valued but unevenly accessed across Bruce County, particularly in the areas further away from the Museum. A formal outreach strategy would establish priorities, target communities, and identify delivery partners such as Bruce County libraries. It would help ensure that residents beyond Southampton benefit from Museum services. This responds directly to consultation feedback.



Advance Reconciliation, Inclusion and Shared Storytelling

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 04

- 13 Grow Indigenous partnerships:** The Museum's Indigenous relationships are widely regarded as a defining strength. Continuing to build these relationships will help build trust, clarify expectations, and support continuity beyond individual staff members. This reflects the commitments in the County Reconciliation Plans and responds directly to concerns about succession and institutional resilience.
- 14 Feature Indigenous-led exhibits and programs:** Overwhelmingly, the consultation process highlighted the success of Indigenous-led initiatives and the trust that has been built with community partners. Continuing and, if resources permit, expanding these opportunities ensures that Indigenous voices shape how stories are told. This supports authenticity, shared authority, and reconciliation. It also aligns with public expectations for inclusive storytelling.
- 15 Show that reconciliation practices are embedded into policies:** The consultation process confirmed that reconciliation should extend beyond programming into collections, governance, partnerships, and operations. Embedding these principles in policy helps ensure consistency and long-term accountability. It reduces reliance on individual champions and institutionalizes progress. This was a recurring recommendation from interviews. The Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) policies developed by the Museum do this, but is maybe not widely understood by the public that this is the case. The Museum should consider creating better awareness of its role in this regard.
- 16 Develop engagement framework for the purpose of collecting stories reflecting emerging populations:** As shown in the previous section, Bruce County is expected to become larger and more diverse over time, with new residents, newcomers, and younger families increasingly shaping community identity. The Museum should continue to proactively document these stories rather than focusing primarily on traditional settlement narratives (which it does not do). Doing so supports inclusion, community relevance, and future historical understanding. It also aligns with public interest in broader representation. Developing an engagement framework will support relationship building and partnerships necessary for story collection.
- 17 Expand the accessibility plan to address unique visitor needs:** Representatives from long-term care and related sectors identified significant potential for memory-based and dementia-friendly initiatives. Others emphasized the need to continue to be responsive to the accessibility needs of other disabled communities. These programs contribute to well-being while making the Museum more inclusive and accessible. They also align with demographic realities, given the County's large senior population. This is an opportunity for leadership within the cultural sector.



Strengthen Community Leadership, Partnerships and Engagement

STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 05

- 18 Develop a framework for coordinating with the heritage and culture sector:** Partnerships can increase reach, leverage resources, and strengthen community impact. Heritage groups and cultural organizations have complimentary objectives to engage and educate the public. Formal collaboration can improve program delivery and audience development. Benchmark museums consistently emphasized partnerships with these organizations as a strategic priority. The Museum should continue these relationships and expand as possible to new partners.
- 19 Strengthen strategic collaboration and partnerships with local businesses:** The strategy here would be to deepen relationships through a more on-going form of partnership, rather than the ‘transactional’ nature of sponsorship efforts so far. This could take the form of, for example, an on-going presentation series, a STEM-club for youth, special evenings for employees and retirees, etc.
- 20 Explore additional strategic collaborations and partnerships with local municipalities and other public organizations:** Like the efforts to develop longer-term relationships with businesses and the commercial sector, this strategy would aim to deepen relationships with local municipalities, schools, and other public organizations across the County.
- 21 Develop a comprehensive volunteer recruitment plan:** Volunteers are one of the Museum’s greatest assets, yet attracting younger volunteers remains a challenge. Recruitment initiatives should target new demographics (particularly in light of new groups coming into the County with continuing population growth). Training and briefing for programs should be consistent. Recognition programs should continue to celebrate existing contributions. Strong volunteer engagement supports sustainability and community ownership. This issue emerged repeatedly in consultation.



Grow Audiences, Visibility and Organizational Sustainability

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 06

22

Develop and implement an annual community consultation plan: The strategic planning process demonstrated the value of community input. Ongoing consultation will help the Museum stay responsive to changing needs and expectations. Mechanisms could include advisory groups, surveys, and community forums. This supports relevance and accountability. The fact that mechanisms already exist but that some in the consultation program wanted to see them established suggests that community awareness of such programs may not be widespread. The Museum should clearly continue its outreach efforts in this regard but ensure more widespread awareness of these potential routes to provide input.

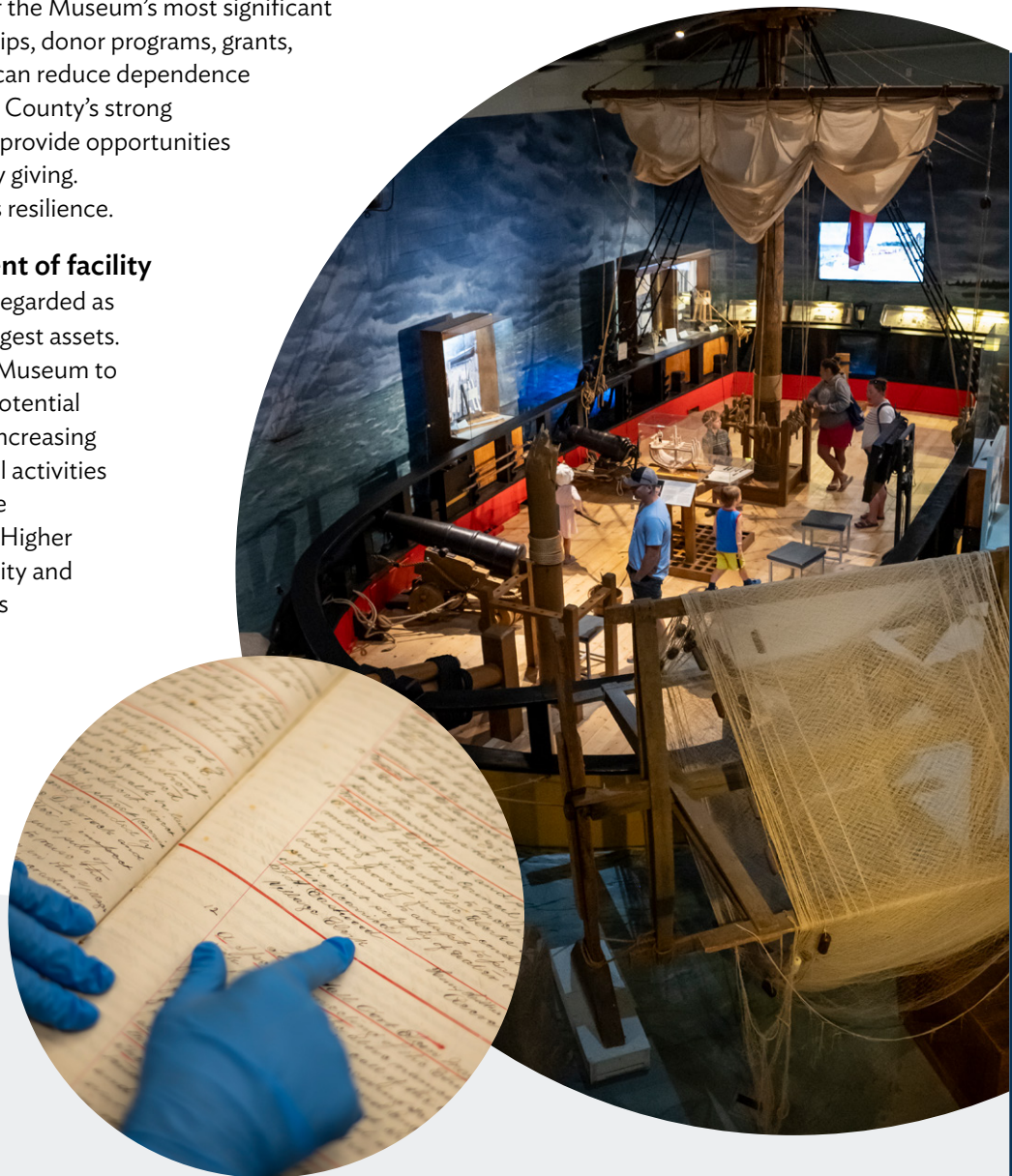
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Implement the Communications and Marketing Strategic Plan: Awareness and audience growth were among the most commonly identified opportunities. A formal strategy should identify target segments, participation barriers, and engagement tactics. Visitor journey mapping⁴ strategies for each major visitor segment would be a valuable part of this process. Particular attention should be given to younger adults, new residents, and underserved groups. This would support visitation and long-term sustainability. Improved CRM and audience analytics should also be part of this strategy: better audience data will enable more effective marketing, membership management, and program evaluation. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools can help the Museum understand visitor behaviour and build stronger relationships. This aligns with sector trends toward evidence-based decision-making. Improved analytics support organizational effectiveness.



- 24 Establish annual membership growth and renewal targets:** Membership programs can strengthen loyalty, advocacy, and financial sustainability. Growth opportunities exist among permanent residents, seasonal residents, retirees, and families. Enhanced benefits and engagement strategies can improve retention. This builds a stable base of support.
- 25 Create a system to strengthen relationship-based practices and knowledge continuity:** Staff at the Museum and within the County structure identified dependence on key individuals as a risk concerning the role of the Museum in the community. A system to ensure that there is some redundancy between job responsibilities as well as methods to ensure knowledge and legacy transfer between positions, will help preserve relationships, knowledge, and organizational culture. This is particularly important for reconciliation work and external partnerships.
- 26 Develop revenue generation target and policy:** Funding uncertainty remains one of the Museum's most significant risks. Expanding sponsorships, donor programs, grants, and fundraising initiatives can reduce dependence on traditional sources. The County's strong homeownership base may provide opportunities for philanthropy and legacy giving. Diversification strengthens resilience.
- 27 Complete an assessment of facility use:** The facility is widely regarded as one of the Museum's strongest assets. An assessment allows the Museum to understand capacity and potential opportunities for growth. Increasing rentals, events, and cultural activities can generate revenue while serving community needs. Higher utilization also raises visibility and audience engagement. This strategy supports financial sustainability.

4 See: <https://theaudienceagency.org/en/what-we-do/consulting-and-research/audience-development-and-participation/visitor-journey-mapping>





Implementation

The Strategic Plan will be implemented and monitored using the SMART framework. SMART provides a structured approach for defining implementation actions and performance measures that are specific; measurable; accountable and achievable; relevant; and time-bound, helping ensure that implementation is clear, accountable, and measurable. Strategic priorities will be incorporated into annual operational planning, with clear responsibilities, timelines, and performance measures assigned to each action. Progress will be reviewed and reported annually, and the Plan will be updated as needed to respond to changing organizational, community, and sector priorities.



Conclusion

The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre enters the 2027–2030 period from a position of considerable strength. It is a trusted steward of heritage and archives, a respected cultural and educational institution, a valued community gathering place, and a recognized leader in relationship-building and reconciliation. At the same time, Bruce County is experiencing significant demographic, social, and economic change. Population growth, increasing diversity, evolving visitor expectations, and new opportunities for partnership will require the Museum to continue adapting while remaining grounded in its core purpose. The strategic priorities and actions outlined in this plan provide a clear roadmap for responding to these changes, ensuring that the Museum remains relevant, accessible, and impactful for residents and visitors alike.

To promote responsibility and accountability for our commitments and actions set out in this Strategic Plan, measures of performance will be developed to provide clear measures of progress across strategic priorities. This aligns with County expectations around accountability and service excellence.

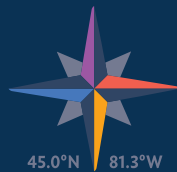
Success over the next four years will depend not only on the implementation of individual initiatives, but on a continued commitment to collaboration, innovation, and community leadership. By stewarding the stories, artifacts, and memories that define Bruce County; by extending its reach beyond its walls through partnerships, outreach, and digital engagement; and by creating welcoming spaces where people can learn, connect, and share their experiences, the Museum will continue to enrich the cultural life of the County. As it looks to the future, the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre is well positioned to serve as both a guardian of the past and a catalyst for community vitality, ensuring that the stories of Bruce County remain meaningful and accessible for generations to come.



BRUCE COUNTY
museum & cultural centre

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