

2025 Strategic Plan Progress Report Q1 - Q3

Number	Action Item	CHAM- PION	PARTICI- PANT(S)	2025 WORK PLANNED	2025 WORK COMPLETED
1.1.1	Analyze market for programs and collect user feedback to better understand community programming needs	ME	-	Apply to grant funded program evaluation Museum Assessment Program (MAP) Begin evaluation process Utilize MAP workbook Begin program evaluation using information and data already available from the comprehensive planning process	Applied to MAP; MAP was cancelled for 2025 due to loss of funding Met with Planning to strategize doing internal, self guided program evaluation and gather useful data
1.1.3	Create and implement a more consistent and standardized process for evaluating educational programs	ME	-	Create and implement standard feedback surveys	Feedback surveys in use for both Youth and Public programs
1.1.3	Optimize facility hours for ease of public attendance while balancing with operational efficiency	ME	-	Make adjustments to CSRA and Office Specialist scheduling and management to maximize use of budgeted staff hours Make adjustments to HLIC open hours	CSRA position renamed Visitor Service Associate, increased number of VSA staff, but staying within budgeted hours to more effectively staff current facility hours
1.2.1	Complete renovations and additions to Homer Lake Interpretive Center	ME	PLN	Complete A/E plans	A/E team contracted and design work has begun.
1.2.2	Secure funding through grants and fundraising to improve the nature education space	FIN	Foundation, PLN, ME	Complete naming opportunities document. Develop list of high-potential donors.	Completed naming opportunities document. Working on list of high-potential donors.
2.1.1	Ensure effective use of new financial system	FIN	-		Upload templates replaced manual keying for payroll and interest allocation documents. Budgeting no longer done with spreadsheets.
2.1.2	Leverage legislative support	ED	Strategy Team, Board	Host Legislative Breakfast Attend Legislative Reception/Conference Attend community events where legislators are expected Set up tour with legislator	Hosted Legislative Breakfast in February Attended Legislative Reception/Conference in May Applied for Congressionally-Directed Funding through U.S. Senator Durbin's office for Federal FY26 Plans in place to approach legislators to ask for assistance for KRT completion KRT remains on the list of priority projects with Champaign County First
2.1.3	More clearly and consistently communicate and update staff on organizational priorities and plans and their progress to ensure engagement and alignment	ED	DED	Share Strategic Plan Progress Reports with staff Discuss priorities and progress at all-staff events	Priorities and progress announced at June Connections event
2.1.4	Simplify, align, and improve processes, policies, and services	ED	DED, FIN, HR	Review efficiency suggestions gathered in 2023. Add suggestions offered during exit interviews to list of efficiency suggestions.	
2.1.5	Update Forest Preserves' vision to an aspirational statement describing specifically what the mission will achieve and mission statement to define how to achieve vision	DED	Strategy Team, Board	Review work done in 2025 Re-assess with Board and Strategy Team what, if any, changes are needed.	
2.2.2	Identify opportunities to offer services in languages other than English, such as through translated materials and using technology to assist with language differences	MKT	ME, OPS		Summer Splash flyer and Cardboard Boat Regatta flyer were translated into Spanish.
2.3.1	Expand opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration	ED	HR	Offer smaller, ongoing opportunities to staff to strengthen connections across departments and sites. Survey staff to prioritize ideas and guide next steps.	Survey sent to all staff to gather feedback on opportunities they would prefer. Survey results were shared with staff and planning is underway
2.3.2	Expand recruitment efforts to attract an engaged workforce with varied perspectives and experiences	HR	ED, MKT, ME	Participate in the Youth Employment Services (YES) program for summer 2025. (YES is a paid summer employment opportunity for youth in Champaign County designed to help students build essential job skills, gain professional experience, and explore potential career paths.)	HR Staff and department heads attended the YES job fairs at Champaign's Central and Centennial high schools, helping promote careers in conservation and raise awareness of employment opportunities at the Forest Preserves. Four students were hired to work in the Museum, Marketing/Planning and Golf Course departments. Their work focused on developing essential job skills while introducing them to the programs, services and mission of the Forest Preserves.

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2.3.3	Better attract and retain talent by evaluating the employee experience through balanced policies, growth opportunities, and work-life balance	HR	ED	Evaluate ways to reduce dependent care premium costs to help make medical insurance more accessible for affected employees. Research potential Paid Family Leave policy. Discuss the concept of transitioning to a 37.5-hour workweek and its potential operational impacts with department heads.	Employee premiums for dependent medical insurance coverage were reduced by 44%. The new Paid Family Leave policy was approved and implemented, enhancing work-life balance and supporting employees during major life events, contributing positively to employee retention and satisfaction. The concept of a 37.5-hour workweek was discussed with department heads. Issues raised will be discussed.
2.3.4	Promote staff development through expanded training programs	HR	ED	Identify training for leaders.	All members of the Strategy Team have completed the Leadership Training Series through Parkland College, which focused on enhancing communication and team development skills. The second cohort of Forest Preserve staff has been selected to begin the training series which runs from October through February 2026.
2.4.2	Promote capacity-building within the Foundation through member trainings and other professional development, updating the MOU to define expectations, revising bylaws, and succession planning	FIN	Foundation		Staff have attended both local and out-of-state fundraising trainings. Foundation Bylaw subcommittee currently doing review with December target date for approval.
3.1.1	Continue to develop new and/or enhance popular existing self-guided activities like trail challenge, snowflake search, etc.	ME	MKT	Continue the Trails Challenge	The Trails Challenge was enhanced to use the Goosechase app in 2025.
3.1.3	Develop wayfinding standards	PLN	DED, MKT, OPS	Complete wayfinding plan document as a chapter of the Masterplan. To include main entry, secondary entry, trailhead, trail directional signs.	Precedent wayfinding signs completed for main entry, secondary entry, trailhead, trail directional signs.
3.1.4	Improve trail information on website and existing recreation apps	PLN	DED, MKT, ME, OPS	Collect trail condition data in the field. Create web pages for each preserve with trail information (photos, conditions).	Website template completed. Workflow for field work developed. Data collection mostly complete.
4.1.2	Develop a maintenance plan for each preserve	DED	OPS, NR		Discussions on the goals of a maintenance plan for clarity have begun with Site Superintendents.
4.1.3	Develop site master plans	PLN	DED, OPS, NR, ME	Develop introductory chapters (Introduction, District wide standards)	Framework document developed
4.1.4	Establish a benchmark or target for the ratio of developed to natural lands managed by the Forest Preserves	PLN	DED, OPS, NR	Develop chapter as part of the Master Plan process.	
4.2.2	Improve grant administration processes and coordination	ED	FIN		Staff responsibilities were redistributed. Staff with grant reporting responsibilities are notified via email of upcoming due dates. The process was also improved by IDNR mandating the use of Amplifund, which includes a calendar that includes reporting deadlines for all their grants.
4.2.3	Increase administrative spending authority in line with inflation	FIN	-		Revised Purchasing Policy approved by the Board in May.
5.1.2	Develop communication plan detailing current and potential audiences, communication methods, key messages, goals, and tracking methods	MKT	Marketing Committee	Reorganize the Marketing Committee	
5.1.3	Review and codify branding visual elements, voice, and position	MKT	Marketing Committee	Start implementing standards set in the Brand & Style Guide	Completed Brand & Style Guide

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6.1.2	Continue to advance practices related to the Golf Course's Audubon Certification	GC	-	Upon yearly review by Audubon International for Golf Course, we will initiate practices to include the suggestions we are provided.	Established a Monarch butterfly habitat through a no-mow zone between 7 green and 12 fairway. Increased No-Mow areas to enhance the natural wildlife and habitat around the facility, specifically on holes 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 12. Installation of the Audubon certified golf course habitat sign near the road by #11 green and #12 tee box.
6.1.4	Identify known and potential impacts of changing climate conditions on natural areas, operations, programs, and the visitor experience and develop strategies to adapt	DED	OPS, NR, ME, PLN, GC, MKT (VOL)	Reorganize the Sustainability Committee	
6.1.5	Establish climate and conservation-related metrics and targets in order to better track and report on progress	DED	OPS, NR, GC, Sustainability Committee	Reorganize the Sustainability Committee	Met with University of Illinois students and shared with them previous sustainability and Climate Commitment progress so they can help advise us on potential new metrics and targets.
7.1.1	Compile current and newly established land acquisition guidelines into a formalized document	DED	PLN	Further refine a strategic land acquisition plan draft and present to the Board of Commissioners for feedback.	A research and review of agency strategic land acquisition plans has been completed. A draft document is in progress.
7.1.2	Create a process to evaluate land acquisition opportunities	DED	PLN	This process will be included within the strategic land acquisition document, which is currently being drafted.	
LEGEND: ED-Executive Director; DED-Deputy Executive Director; FIN-Finance; GC-Golf; HR-Human Resources; ME-Museum and Education; MKT-Marketing; OPS-Operations; NR-Natural Resources; VOL-Volunteer					