

2025 Strategic Plan Progress Report Final

Number	Action Item	CHAM- PION	PARTICI- PANT(S)	OVERALL PROGRESS	2025 WORK PLANNED	2025 WORK COMPLETED
1.1.1	Analyze market for programs and collect user feedback to better understand community programming needs	ME	-	Plans In Progress	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 Submitted application for paid MAP option Evaluations were distributed at Public Programs and Special Requests. Data is organized in SharePoint and utilized in future planning and development of programs
1.1.3	Create and implement a more consistent and standardized process for evaluating educational programs	ME	-	Plans In Progress	Create and implement standard feedback surveys	Feedback surveys in use for both Youth and Public programs
1.1.4	Optimize facility hours for ease of public attendance while balancing with operational efficiency	ME	-	Plans In Progress	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. Offered HLIC Fall Saturday hours
1.2.1	Complete renovations and additions to Homer Lake Interpretive Center	ME	PLN	Plans In Progress	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	Plans In Progress	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	-	Plans In Progress		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	Plans In Progress	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 Commissioner asked local legislators for assistance for KRT completion KRT remains on the list of priority projects with Champaign County First ED attended Champaign County First trip to Springfield
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	Plans In Progress	Share Strategic Plan Progress Reports with staff Discuss priorities and progress at all-staff events	Priorities and progress announced at June and December Connections events
2.1.4	Simplify, align, and improve processes, policies, and services	ED	DED, FIN, HR	Plans In Progress	Review efficiency suggestions gathered in 2023. Add suggestions offered during exit interviews to list of efficiency suggestions. Assessment and reorganization of Education Collection	Board approved restructured Museum Advisory Committee to Collections and Exhibits Consulting Group, an updated Collections policy, and revised financial structure policy. Completed Ed Collections reorganization and eliminated support collection designation. Converted boat rentals at LOW to cashless system. Implemented a digital waiver for boat rentals in English and Spanish which was then used as a basis to digitize the volunteer waiver for other uses. Implemented a restroom monitoring program at LOW with a QR code for patrons to report problems for expedited response.
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	Plans In Progress	Review work done in 2025 Re-assess with Board and Strategy Team what, if any, changes are needed.	

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2.2.1	Evaluate and implement technology where it can enhance service to the public and/or increase organizational efficiency (and provide accommodations when needed).	ME	MKT, PLN	Plans In Progress		M&E obtained three pocket translators that do real time translations in up to 130 different languages. M&E acquired portable voice amplification systems to enhance educators communication during programs and support accessibility for all participants. M&E secured grant funds and purchased assisted listening devices Negotiated contract and installed self-service kayak rentals at Homer Lake, providing a desired service without significant staffing or maintenance costs
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	Plans In Progress		Summer Splash flyer and Cardboard Boat Regatta flyer were translated into Spanish. Two cultural education program materials have been translated into Spanish Bilingual book on the StoryWalk Two public programs in partnership with the New American Welcome Center Hosted a program in partnership with Korean Language & Culture School Worked with U of I to connect with student volunteers to offer French and Spanish Translation services at public programs Boat rental waiver offered in both English and Spanish
2.3.1	Expand opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration	ED	HR	Plans In Progress	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 M&E working closely with NR and volunteer coordinator to align volunteer and programming efforts
2.3.2	Expand recruitment efforts to attract an engaged workforce with varied perspectives and experiences	HR	ED, MKT, ME	Plans In Progress	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. M&E staff spoke about history-based careers at EIU

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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	Plans In Progress	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. Vision premiums for 2026 were reduced overall by 18.72% while still maintaining the same network and level of coverage. Dental premiums for 2026 were reduced overall by 10.23%, providing a larger nationwide network at the same level of coverage.
2.3.4	Promote staff development through expanded training programs	HR	ED	Plans In Progress	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 begun the training series. Select M&E staff has completed the U of I Extension Master Naturalist program
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	Plans In Progress		Staff have attended both local and out-of-state fundraising trainings. Foundation Bylaw subcommittee has proposed bylaw revisions.
3.1.1	Continue to develop new and/or enhance popular existing self-guided activities like trail challenge, snowflake search, etc.	ME	MKT	Plans In Progress	Continue the Trails Challenge	The Trails Challenge was enhanced to use the Goosechase app in 2025. Snowflake search was enhanced to use the Goosechase app in 2025
3.1.3	Develop wayfinding standards	PLN	DED, MKT, OPS	Plans In Progress	Complete wayfinding plan document as a chapter of the Masterplan. To include main entry, secondary entry, facility, trailhead, trail directional signs.	Precedent wayfinding signs completed for main entry, secondary entry, trailhead, trail directional signs. Wayfinding plan partially complete.
3.1.4	Improve trail information on website and existing recreation apps	PLN	DED, MKT, ME, OPS	Plans In Progress	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	Plans In Progress		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	Plans In Progress	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	Plans Not Started	Develop chapter as part of the Master Plan process.	
4.2.2	Improve grant administration processes and coordination	ED	FIN	Plans Complete		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.

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4.2.3	Increase administrative spending authority in line with inflation	FIN	-	Plans Complete		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	Plans In Progress	Reorganize the Marketing Committee	Committee description drafted
5.1.3	Review and codify branding visual elements, voice, and position	MKT	Marketing Committee	Plans In Progress	Start implementing standards set in the Brand & Style Guide	Completed Brand & Style Guide
5.2.3	Collaborate with Museum & Education to promote programs and the Forest Preserves within programming	MKT	ME	Plans In Progress		M&E and Marketing meet each season to make a marketing plan Shared calendar developed to coordinate marketing plans and distribute work
6.1.1	Initiate conversations with the leaseholding farmer to better align farming practices on Forest Preserves' lands with the Climate Commitment	DED	NR, OPS (MF), FIN	Plans Not Started		Plans not started, however initial investigation into CRP was initiated. Pheasants Forever staff estimated crop yields/profitability for one crop field at MF. The model showed a net loss for both corn and soybean crops over a three year window.
6.1.2	Continue to advance practices related to the Golf Course's Audubon Certification	GC	-	Plans In Progress	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.
6.1.3	Enhance education and exhibits related to sustainability, conservation, and environmentalism	ME	-	Plans In Progress		Development of the Climate Action program series
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)	Plans Not Started	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	Plans In Progress	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	Plans In Progress	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	Plans In Progress	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					