“You can’t use up creativity. 
The more you use the more you have.”

— Maya Angelou
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PEM FORWARD
PEM will lead change as a human-centered museum of art and culture that challenges assumptions, encourages dialogue, and gives voice to many different perspectives.

PEM is the product of multiple cultural and civic organizations that evolved and recombined in Salem, Massachusetts since 1799. Generosity of spirit and civic mindedness are central to PEM's origin story, from the moment that Salem's global traders created a society of wonder and discovery for the Salem community. Then, now, and going forward, we are committed to elevating our community's quality of life and to providing an environment in which ideas, perspectives, and life experiences come together across time, place, and cultures.

Today, PEM is one of this country's leading museums of art and culture, recognized for our daring interpretive approach and our dedication to providing stimulating, life-enhancing experiences of creativity. We have a fascinating past and a record of achievement to build on, and our future lies in continuously asking how can we make a difference in people's lives.

To do this, we will build on our identity as an adventurous, multidisciplinary museum and draw inspiration from our DNA:

- PEM delights in and respects creativity as a way of communicating meaning and addressing challenges. Celebrating the many facets of creativity—from art to science—reflects our belief in the potential of the imagination and the multidisciplinary.

- PEM strives to understand the world around us and to motivate people to take that journey toward understanding. Curiosity and the spirit of learning and sharing fuel our drive to encourage people to question and understand who we are and who we can become, individually and together.

- PEM dares to range broadly and deeply across cultures, time, and ideas. Experimentation and the embrace of the unconsidered and unexpected are the hallmarks of our willingness to prioritize questioning rather than the certainty of tradition and categories.

- PEM's adaptive resilience encourages us to make the most of inventiveness and change in order to excel.
OUR MISSION

*PEM boldly honors creativity as a nourishing force in people’s lives.*

We offer thought-provoking experiences of the arts, humanities, and sciences to activate understanding of our shared humanity and to empower imagination and learning through experimentation. We steward, build, and make our collections accessible to encourage appreciation of the interconnected histories and creativity of people in our complex, always changing world.
OUR VISION

We will be a magnetic, human-centered gathering place—locally, globally, and virtually—where people are inspired to learn and connect as they experience wonder, joy, and comfort.

Being a human-centered museum means focusing on people as the source of creativity as well as encouraging people to embrace this powerful agent for change and connection. The local and global crosscurrents of creativity are central to PEM’s story. Our collection and exhibitions are a treasure trove of stories about the distinctiveness and universality of human achievements and struggles across time and place. We will lift up and share these stories through multiple entry points to engage broad audiences with each other and in the life of the museum.

We will achieve this vision through expanded innovation and openness in our exhibitions, programming, collections, publishing, and relationships with communities and partners near and far.

PEM will continue to grow as a leader in our community and among museums.
OUR CORE VALUES

Creativity is a tie that binds and unifies us.

Whether creativity expresses itself as art, culture, or the sciences, it embodies our drive to find ways to navigate the world, past, present, or future. People develop culture together through their commonalities and differences. People are story builders and storytellers. Taking inspiration from this,

We value:
• openness in recognizing the spectrum of human achievement that art, culture, and the sciences make possible,
• collaboration as a means to build connection and empathy, and
• the unexpected in inquiry and experimentation.

and

We are committed to:
• respect for humanity and the environment,
• the wellbeing of our staff and communities, and
• inclusive, equitable engagement that builds bridges and fosters a sense of belonging and excellence in providing authentic, meaningful experiences and credible knowledge.
OUR DEIA COMMITMENT

*PEM is committed to being an inclusive, equitable cultural organization.*

As a museum that celebrates creativity to advance our shared humanity, we strive to motivate and connect people through inquiry, empathy, and dialogue. We believe that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are distinct, interlinked, and critical values that support this work as individuals and communities experience the arts, humanities, and sciences at PEM.
OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

To achieve our goals and fulfill our vision, our work over the next five years will be guided by four mutually reinforcing goals:

EXPERIENCE

Infuse all PEM experiences with unexpected, inclusive perspectives and approaches that emphasize storytelling and the power of human creativity between cultures and across time periods.

LEARNING

Create innovative and accessible gateways to learning that empower audiences, community, and staff.

COLLECTIONS

Maximize the collections, including the Phillips Library and the historic properties and grounds, to tell compelling, unexpected, and human-centered stories.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Advance a sustainable infrastructure and secure resources to support our strategic goals, mission, and vision.
EXPERIENCE

INFUSE ALL PEM EXPERIENCES WITH UNEXPECTED, INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES THAT EMPHASIZE STORYTELLING AND THE POWER OF HUMAN CREATIVITY BETWEEN CULTURES AND ACROSS TIME PERIODS.

KEY STRATEGIES

**Strategy 1:**
Determine and focus on priority audiences.

**Strategy 2:**
Define and implement experience criteria and visitor engagement models to advance PEM as a magnetic meeting place that inspires a sense of belonging.

**Strategy 3:**
Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan encompassing branding, marketing, publishing, and digital outlets to encourage and empower the visitor experience.
LEARNING
CREATE INNOVATIVE AND ACCESSIBLE GATEWAYS TO LEARNING THAT EMPOWER AUDIENCES, COMMUNITY, AND STAFF.

KEY STRATEGIES

**Strategy 1:**
Develop cohesive models of learning, interpretation, and evaluation.

**Strategy 2:**
Set partnership criteria and forge a sustainable portfolio of collaborations to develop cultural and civic competency for audiences and staff.

**Strategy 3:**
Implement a Staff Leadership Development Initiative.

**Strategy 4:**
Establish a Research and Innovation Center that supports developing, exchanging, and disseminating fresh approaches to multidisciplinary research.
COLLECTIONS

MAXIMIZE THE COLLECTIONS, INCLUDING THE PHILLIPS LIBRARY AND THE HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND GROUNDS, TO TELL COMPELLING, UNEXPECTED, AND HUMAN-CENTERED STORIES.

KEY STRATEGIES

**Strategy 1:**
Integrate the James B. and Mary Lou Hawkes Collection Center into the PEM experience and work culture.

**Strategy 2:**
Implement a phased approach to increase physical and digital access to the object and library collections for staff and external parties.

**Strategy 3:**
Define the overall philosophy for collection growth and refinement over the next 5 years.

**Strategy 4:**
Integrate the historic properties and grounds into the PEM experience and work culture.
KEY STRATEGIES

**Strategy 1:**
Refine PEM’s financial model.

**Strategy 2:**
Secure talent to support the strategic plan’s implementation.

**Strategy 3:**
Develop a campus Master Plan to articulate needs and define clear roles for historic and non-historic properties and grounds.
“The single most important key to success is to be a good listener.”
— Kelly Wearstler
PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2023, PEM’s Executive Director and CEO initiated the strategic planning process that has yielded PEM FORWARD.

Drawn from all departments of the museum, a staff Working Group provided wide-ranging perspectives that helped the Executive Team Steering Committee shape the mission, vision, and values, as well as four principal goals, supported by strategies and tactics. The Steering Committee also identified and prioritized the staff and financial resources required for the plan’s success, and developed financial projections for the museum’s fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

Throughout this planning process, PEM conducted robust engagement processes. All staff were invited to offer feedback through departmental focus groups held in May and June. Simultaneously, a cross-functional staff DEIA Working Group drafted a DEIA Commitment Statement and three-year playbook, which helped shape aspects of PEM FORWARD.

Supported by planning consultant TDC, PEM also engaged constituents, community members, partners, stakeholders, and visitors through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Ultimately, the planning benefited from the input of approximately 350 external stakeholders.

PEM also engaged its Boards of Trustees and Advisors through individual interviews and presentation of the outreach research findings and the plan’s proposed direction at their annual meetings in June 2023. With the Board of Trustees’ approval of the June framework and input from the staff Working Group, the Steering Committee refined the goals and developed the strategies, tactics, and financial projections.

The Board of Trustees reviewed and approved PEM FORWARD at its September 2023 meeting. PEM then launched its communication efforts to share the plan with staff and external stakeholders.

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Photographers: Kathy Tarantola, Bob Packert, Mel Taing, Ken Sawyer, and Allison White.