

How to Be Intentional

In Starting Your Children's Museum



Don't know all the steps to starting a children's museum or where to begin?



Hi, I'm Peter, a museum consultant who is ready to help you take your planning to the next level.

As a specialist in the field of emerging children's museums, I understand the pain points of getting started with a new exhibit or new space, and I'm here to walk you through it.



And I'm Jeff, an exhibit designer and fabricator with experience designing for smaller budgets and smaller footprints.

When you're ready to create, my team works with yours to listen, brainstorm, and problem-solve our way from concept development all the way to exhibit fulfillment.

It's never too late to become more intentional in your planning!

Where are you in the starting-up process?

- An idea shared by the core founders
- Case statement or founding language is developed: vision, mission, audience, impacts, etc.
- Delivering "pop-up" programming
- Actively fundraising or have launched a capital campaign
- Reached our fundraising goal
- Location is secured
- Building construction is or renovations are underway
- Exhibits are being planned or fabricated
- Opening date is set

Key Concepts

Early steps that are key for emerging museum founders to maximize intentions from the start:

- 1. Team-up Intentionally (Recruitment & Meeting Outcomes)**
- 2. Structure to be Intentional (Organizational Structure)**
- 3. Working Intentionally (Strategic Action Planning)**
- 4. Establish Intentional Foundational Language (Strategic Master Planning)**
- 5. Develop an Intentional Visitor Experience (Interpretive Planning)**

Step 1: **Team-up Intentionally** **(Recruitment &** **Meeting Outcomes)**

**Intentionally recruit your Board for
the right stuff!**

**Insight: Recruit to fill around
your deficits**

Founding Board: Intentional Recruitment

Strategize precisely what you're looking for:

- Time availability
- Resilience & grit
- Interpersonal & emotional intelligence
- Communications skills
- Technology expertise & resources
- Financial accounting
- Legal counsel
- Board governance experience
- Position & connections
- Fund development
- Early childhood
- Representation



Founding Board: Intentional Board Meetings = Outcomes

- Regularly scheduled, standing meeting
- Agenda & minutes
- Tactics to get on the same page
- Shared vocabulary & messaging
- Prioritize strategic actions
- Assignments & accountability
- Leave meetings energized
- Have fun!

Region 5 Children's Museum and its partners envision a more vibrant and connected region because all children enjoy the supportive relationships, expanding opportunities, and wellbeing they need to thrive.

Date: March 10, 2021

Time: 1PM to 2:15PM

Location: Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5312938895>

Meeting ID: 531 293 8895

Present: Chuck Albrecht, Paul Drange, Dianne Heldman, Ellen Haglin, Cheryal Hills, Matt Kilian, Steve Northway, Peter Olson, Quinn Swanson, Shannon Wheeler

AGENDA

Region 5 Children's Museum March 10, 2020 Board Meeting

- I. Call to Order
- II. Welcome
- III. Consent Agenda Approval *Motion & Vote*
 - A. February 10, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes
 - B. March 10, 2021 Board Meeting Agenda
 - C. February 2021 Financial Report
- IV. Programming
 - A. Nature Play Institute Report Overview
- V. Building & Exhibits
 - A. Site & Building conceptual design updates
 - B. Building process milestones overview the ORB
 - C. Site option updates, strategy, next steps
- VI. Development
 - A. Strategic Fund-Development Plan
 1. Updates
- VII. Board Governance & Engagement
 - A. Level-5 Board Member recruitment
 1. Steve Clough, Just for Kix, Owner
 2. Mike Larson, Essentia, CFO
- VIII. Marketing & Communications
 - A. Museum name options
- IX. Other Business
- X. Adjournment

Enclosed

- February 10, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes
- March 10, 2021 Board Meeting Agenda
- February 2021 Financial Report

The mission of the Children's Museum is to bring together the region's children and families in shared experiences that are grounded locally and open onto the wider world. Dynamic, material-rich environments, exhibits, events, & programs engage children in the joy of play and the wonder of learning

Step 2: **Structure to be** **Intentional** **(Organizational** **Structure)**

Early activities and areas of work can be structured around what will become the museum's "departments:"

- Board Governance
- Administration
- Finance
- Development
- Building & Exhibits
- Learning Experience Platforms
- Operations
- Marketing & Communications

Insight: Organizing your work early on leads to an intentional museum

How to Be Intentional in Starting Your Children's Museum

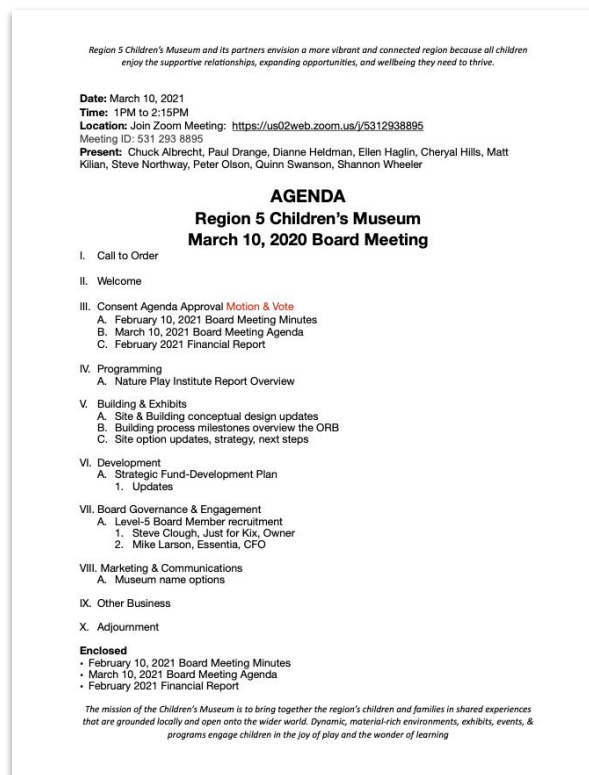
The Emerging Museum Time Table Snapshot The Likely Order of Activities and Areas of Work During Phase I-Founding, and Phase II-Starting-up July 5, 2018								
	Board Governance & Engagement	Administration	Finance	Development	Building & Exhibits*	Operations	Programmatic	Marketing & Communications
6 Months	Site Visits & Research Committee Recruitment 501(c)3 status Project Director Terms Secure Initial Office Location			Secure Seed Funding	Design Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Overview • Vision, Mission, Values • Community Context • Museum Goals • Target Audience Definition and Profile • Visitor Experience Framework 			
6 Months	Board Meeting Calendar Transition from Committee to Board Committee Structure	Tax exempt status By-laws Initial Office Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Office Site • Records Management • Office Manager Hire • IT, Technology, & Communications • Reception & Administration • Human Resources • Bookkeeping 	Bank & Credit Card Accounts Founding Finance Policy Financial Statements	Case Statement Donor Database Relationship Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • Development Authorities • Civic and Service organizations • Education, Early to Graduate • Industries • Granting Authorities 	Exhibit & Building Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predisign: Architecture and Museum Experience • Site Selection Committee • Site Selection Criteria • Lease or Ownership Agreement • Architect Selection • Architectural Scope and Program • Design Integration (building and museum experience) • Exhibit Designer Selection • Exhibit Predisign 			Communications Contact List Association Memberships Relationship Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Tourism Organizations
6-8 Months	Board Governance & Engagement Board Giving			Recognition Policy & Giving Levels Relationship Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • Development Authorities • Civic and Service organizations • Education, Early to Graduate • Industries 	Schematic Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Plan • Architectural Plan • Schematic Exhibit Plan • Preliminary Code Review • Cost Estimate • Collections Policy 			Founding Communications Plan Brand Identity and Brand Book
8-12 Months	Board Governance & Engagement		Business plan Audit Plan	Development Materials Government Relations Capital Campaign	Design Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit Design Development • Architectural Design Development • Updated Cost Estimate • Office Plan • FF&E Package • Technology Hardware & Software • Security System • A/V System • PA System • Architectural & Wayfinding Signage 			Social Media & Website Development Media Toolkit
8-12 Months	Board Governance & Engagement		Capital Expense Finance Plan	Government Relations Capital Campaign	Construction Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Documents • Prototyping • Engineering Review • Preparation of Bid List • Final Code Review 		Relationship Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists & Artisans • Educators • Industry • Cultural Attractions 	
12-18 Months	Board Governance & Engagement By-law Updates Committee Restructuring Board Giving Board Engagement & Development	Staffing Structure Hiring Plan Compensation Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary levels • Insurance • PTO • Paid Holidays Office Plan Technology & Equipment Plan Key Access Time Cards Employee Handbook	Payroll Bookkeeping Procedures	Government Relations Capital Campaign Family Campaign Access Fund Campaign	Construction and Installation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Permits • Building Construction • Exhibit Fabrication • Shop Drawing and Testing • Debugging and Shakedown • Building Construction • Exhibit Installation • Storage & Inventory Schematic 	Building Manual & Maintenance Plan Grounds Maintenance Plan Exhibits Manual & Maintenance Plan Custodial Waste Management Green/Sustainability Plan Operations Manual Point of Sale System Floor Staff Communications Systems Play Worker Handbook Manager on Duty Handbook Additional Signage Volunteer Program Volunteer Handbook	Learning Framework Training Guest Services Training Field Trip Calendar & Process Access & Inclusion Plan Evaluation Plan Teacher Trainings Paid Programs	Marketing Plan Social Media Plan Emergency Communication Plan Media Policy Communications Calendar Events Calendar Collateral Development Launch New Website Admission Rates Membership Packages Birthday Party Packages Field Trip Packages Rental Rates
12 Months	Founding Board Member Transitions By-law Updates Committee Restructuring Board Giving Board Engagement & Development	Training & Professional Development On-boarding Team Building Performance Evaluations Benefits Administration Reporting Employee Communications Board Reporting Board Communications	Daily Accounting and Deposits Expanded Financial Statements Cash-flow Projections Key Performance Indicator Dashboard Annual Audit Reporting Annual Report	Close Capital Campaign Annual Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving Circle • End of Year Campaign • Board Giving Access Fund Campaign Sponsorships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs • Events Government Relations Fundraiser Calendar Development Materials Annual Report Donor Stewardship Grants Management	Building & Exhibit Adjustments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Commissioning • Exhibit Remediation • Loose Parts Evaluation 	Play Worker Training Guest Services Training Adjustments for Demand Utilities Adjustments Building Maintenance Grounds Maintenance Exhibits Maintenance Storage & Inventory Process Volunteer Recognition Internship Program	Daily Programs Studio/Maker Spaces Teachers' Center Mobile Unit Special Event Programming Access & Inclusion Program Field Trips Camps	Grand Opening Execute Marketing & Social Media Plans Execute Communications Plan Merchandise & Concessions Evaluate All Pricing Special Events Update Brand Guide Membership Recognition & Retention Birthday Parties Rentals First Birthday
*Building and Exhibits activities and areas of work as defined by Vergeron, Museum Planning								

Activities & Areas of Work Chronological Snapshot

Structure to Be Intentional: Organize for Action

Structuring by department creates organizational alignment & efficiency

- Files & records
- Planning documents
- Budgets
- Meeting agendas
- Meeting minutes



Insight: put focus on actions by structuring Agendas by departments instead of by committee

Step 3: Working Intentionally (Strategic Action Plan)

Articulate and vet the founders' intentions in a working document to achieve what needs to get done over the next several months. Your Strategic Action Plan:

- Prioritizes objectives
- Assigns actions
- Projects timing over next six months
- Allocates resources & \$\$\$
- Is ongoing and in-use weekly/daily

Outcomes: The Strategic Action Plan gives you a realistic approach to achieve essential priorities

Strategic Action Plan Example: Down & Dirty Does the Trick

[illegible]

Insight: Increase Board Meeting productivity by centering on the Strategic Action Plan

Step 4:

Establish Intentional

Foundational

Language

(Strategic Master Plan)

Shared foundation language is essential to an intentional visitor experience:

- Vision
- Mission
- Values
- Commitment to community
- Audience
- Stakeholders
- Community assets
- Community challenges
- Sense of place/identity
- View of learning
- Who, what & why behind the effort

Pro-tip: start with the resources of the Association of Children's Museums!

Foundational Language: Mission, Vision, Values

The Four Dimensions of Children's Museums



As Local Destinations...

- Children's museums are experts in designing learning spaces that elevate naturalistic and child-centered learning that incorporate the latest evidence in positive child development and encourage positive adult-child interactions.
- Children's museums fulfill their role as responsive, audience-focused institutions by striving to reflect and address community needs in their exhibit content.
- Children's museum staff are trained in techniques for working with objects as teaching tools and in exhibits that communicate their meaning or message to visitors.



As Educational Laboratories...

- Children's museums generally operate outside of the strictures of formal education systems, allowing them to act as incubators and innovators, testing and developing child-centered and play-based pedagogies for engaging children in learning.
- Children's museums rely on staff with expertise in learning theories, child development, and pedagogy to develop impactful and cutting-edge programs and experiences for their visitors.
- Children's museums contribute new knowledge to educational and museum literature through their own research and assessment practices, documenting the impact and value of their programs, exhibits, and services.



As Community Resources...

- Children's museums act as cultural gateways, often serving as the first point of entry for building lifelong museum-going habits.
- Children's museums are an important part of the social service fabric of their communities, providing resources such as health information, parenting classes, and teacher trainings.
- Children's museums are a symbol of how a community treats and respects children. The presence of a children's museum helps create more child-friendly communities.
- Children's museums are often anchor institutions for community revitalization efforts.



As Advocates for Children...

- Children's museums are constantly responding to the current needs of the children and families in their communities, from health to academics to social issues, as seen in their exhibits, outreach, and programming.
- Children's museums cultivate deep and wide-ranging relationships with partners from all sectors to best serve all children and families in their communities, and address critical social issues affecting them.
- Children's museums share a commitment to equity and inclusion, with subsidized attendance programs, programs for children and families with special needs, multicultural programming, and more.

Learn more about children's museums at www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

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Foundational Language: Mission, Vision, Values

ACM Driving Principles prepared by Museum Planner Jeanne Vergeront:

- The vision is a compelling image of a realistic and attractive future for the museum that tells where it intends to go.
- The mission is a clear statement of the reason the museum exists - who it serves, what it contributes, how it delivers and why this is important.
- The values are the beliefs and behaviors that a museum must operationalize to fulfill its mission.

Insight: For stand-out foundational language, make it clearly rooted in your community

Foundational Language: Museum Experience Questionnaire

Vision, Mission, Values, and any other existing foundational language:					
Brief (2-3 sentence) description of overall exhibit concept:		How do you view learning at the children's museum?			
Primary target Audience:		How will your children's museum impact children, families, and your community and region?		Brief description of physical space, including dimensions:	
Secondary target Audience:		What are the attributes of your community and region that make it a great place to grow up?		List any built environments, structural components, artifacts, interactives, props, etc. that need to be incorporated:	
Tertiary target audience:		What are the greatest challenges facing the children of your community and region?		What types of programming takes place in the area & what spatial needs should we consider (i.e. camps, groups, annual events, etc.)?	Request Museum Experience Questionnaire at: Startingachildrensmuseum.com
New audiences you wish to reach:		What are the greatest challenges facing your community and region in general?		Are there any other existing assets that we should know about (i.e. artifacts, media, upcycled materials, etc.)?	
What are the specific ways you foresee adults interacting with children in the exhibits?		How will your children's museum improve the lives of children and families?		Are there stakeholders who should be included in the process and how so?	
What impacts do you aim to create?		How will your children's museum improve your community and region in general?		Any other pertinent information?	
What are your measures of success?					

Foundational Language: Give it a Dedicated Approach

Often determined through a broader planning processes

- Case Statement
- Strategic Plan
- Master Plan
- Learning Experience Framework
- Interpretive Plan

Insight: Make it as much about the journey as the destination

Master Planning: Learning Experience Framework

Values

Our enduring values work together to instill and nourish a sense of place and purpose for all children growing-up in Otter Tail County. Aligned with our Learning Objectives, through our values, we stand for the:

- **Possibility of life**, as an optimistic view of the present and future, in which all children grow up excited and equipped as life-long learners, inspired to seek-out what the world offers, with the compassion to help those in need, and grateful for the abundance of opportunity in life;
- **Joy of working together**, to get the job done, make things run, achieve a shared vision for our community, and leave the world better than we found it;
- **Shared responsibility**, to community and each other, understanding that each of us has an important role to play in making our community run, and that taking care of each other, especially in challenging times, is a defining characteristic of our part of the world;
- **Appreciation for growing up in such a special place**, with uniquely abundant nature and beautiful landscapes, where we share the responsibility for protecting the natural world, where we work together in making our community run, and we're grateful for the opportunities in life and the growing up in Otter Tail County.

Audience

According to museum planner Jeanne Vergeront, "a museum exists to serve its audience, defining audience is a critical foundational decision. The process begins with understanding who the museum must serve in order to advance its vision and mission." We define our audience as:

- **Primary Audience:** Children two to ten years old who live in Otter Tail, Clay, Becker, Douglas, Grant, Todd, Traverse, Wadena and Wilkin Counties
- **Secondary Audience:** Children birth to two and children ten to twelve years old, their older siblings, all children visiting the lakes region, and all accompanying care-givers
- **Audience of Particular Attention:** Children with special needs, immigrant families, and families experiencing financial barriers

Organizational Goals

To advance our mission in reach of our vision, Otter Cove operates under a set of intentional goals consistent with our values and learning objectives. These goals provide metrics for success and the required behaviors for staff and volunteers. Our organizational goals are:

- **Intentionally create the optimal conditions to support children's development** of 21st Century Skills and consistently nourish growing-up with a sense of place and purpose;
- **Commitment to new offerings** with changing programs, special events and initiatives, and exhibits and environments that are adaptable, ensuring visitors can expect something new;
- **Model what it looks like to always be children's champions** in all aspects of community-life.

- **Welcome museum visitors and supporters from all walks of life** with the highest level of customer service, respectful of differences, valuing strength in diversity, inviting all to participate, and meeting all visitors where they are;
- **Partner, collaborate, and share resources and ideas** with organizations and individuals with similar visions for our community and missions to help children;
- **Earn the community's trust** through impeccable stewardship of financial resources, intentionally representing our values and mission, and consistent dedication to our audience;
- **Exemplify a realistic, optimistic attitude** and outlook while in pursuit of our vision, even in the face of an outspoken minority of defeatist voices.

Learning Objectives

We are successful in reaching our Learning Objectives because everything at Otter Cove is about meeting children where they are in development, learning, and understanding of themselves and the world. We believe play is the primary driver of learning, and as such, is self-directed, ultimately setting the disposition for learning throughout life. We empower children, from the beginning of life, to direct their own learning by letting their imaginations lead the way.

As caring grown-ups, it is our role to ensure the conditions for play. This includes modifying the conditions as we learn from children and how they play, along with keeping children safe, knowing there is learning in risk. We strive for all learning at Otter Cove to support and complement the learning goals and objectives of formal education systems.

At Otter Cove, all experiences support the combination of developing 21st century skills and nourishing a sense of place and purpose. Our immersive exhibits and innovative programs are created to maximize the power of play in developing skills and a sense of place and purpose.

- All experiences at Otter Cove are designed to support development of 21 Century Skills, the "4 C's":
 - **Critical Thinking:** Ask questions, gather more precise information, reason, link actions and effects, work possible solutions, draw conclusions;
 - **Collaboration:** Assume roles, seek and share resources, take turns, agree to a goal, use others' suggestions, help others;
 - **Communication:** Listen, share ideas, give feedback, discuss, make a suggestion, tell a story, explain how something works;
 - **Creativity:** Imagine, generate ideas, try another approach, make unusual connections, use materials in new ways, apply information to new situations;
- Along with nourishing a sense place and purpose comprised of:
 - **Possibility of life**, as an optimistic view of the present and future, in which all children grow up excited and equipped as life-long learners, inspired to seek-out what the world offers, with the compassion to help those in need, and grateful for the abundance of opportunity in life;

Step 5: Develop an Intentional Visitor Experience (Interpretive Planning)

A robust Interpretive Plan sets the stage for your intentional visitor experience by consolidating early planning:

- Founding Board hopes & dreams
- Organization structure
- Foundational language
- Engaged stakeholders & community
- Strategic Action Plan

Outcomes: An intentional visitor experience that keeps families coming back for more

Intentional Visitor Experience: Study the Market

Studying market conditions can be important and telling in learning what your community wants, needs, and has capacity for:

- Fundraising potential
- Market competition
- Audience drive-times
- Demographics

Insight: Studying market conditions can confirm or contradict early assumptions that formed your intentions

Visitor Experience: Exhibit Experience Conceptual Plan

Otter Cove Children's Museum

Interpretative Plan

Otter Cove Overview

Welcome to Otter Cove, where children's imaginations are transported to a special place that's just for them, the critters they love, and the care-givers who love them. At Otter Cove, children and critters have fun working together to make things run and get things done, it's where the animals provide modeling and children take the lead in playing-out roles of community-life, all the while developing important 21st century life-skills. Grown-ups may see a resemblance to landscapes and businesses of Otter Tail County and Fergus Falls, but make no mistake, Otter Cove exists for children and can only exist because they make it run. At the end of the day, the children of Otter Cove, are growing up with a clear sense of life's possibilities, the joy in working together to make things run, their responsibility for community and environment, and a life-long appreciation for growing up in such a special place.

Otter Cove Critters

1. Otters
2. Mice
3. Beaver
4. Racoon
5. Skunk
6. Fox
7. Swan
8. Farm animals



6



Otter Cove Components

1. Bookstore
 - 1.1. Welcome sign announces Victor Lundeens Book Store
 - 1.1.1. The custom Bookstore mailbox is mounted nearby
 - 1.2. The Bookstore is full of activity around browsing, buying, and borrowing books
 - 1.2.1. Books range from baby books to picture books to first chapter books and are displayed shelves with covers visible
 - 1.2.2. A comfortable bench line the wall just right for child and care-giver to read books together
 - 1.3. Checking-out at the cash register, visitors choose to buy or borrow books
 - 1.3.1. A mounted dry erase board or chalkboard is within arms-reach for recording book sales and book lending
 - 1.3.2. Otter Cove currency and bookmarks are stored in a wooden cash register on the check-out counter
 - 1.4. Curious visitors discover a "hidden" Mouse House Peak-hole located under the bench
 - 1.4.1. Living in the wall of the Bookstore is a happy family of book loving mice, who can be discovered through a peephole in various stages of repose enjoying reading books around their living room; curious children who discover the peak-hole push a button to light up the mouse house
2. Prairie Edge Dental Office
 - 2.1. A welcome sign announces Prairie's Edge Dentist Office
 - 2.1.1. The custom Dentist mailbox is mounted nearby
 - 2.1.2. Alongside the mailbox, visitors find the resident plush beaver who lives in a comfy beaver "bed" near the mailbox
 - 2.1.3. A painted relief beaver showing off his marvelous beaver-teeth, wearing a dentist's frock, is mounted as a part of the mural near the mailbox and plush beaver

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Sample Interpretative Plan Section

Wrap-up: Lessons Learned

- **Allow the process the time it needs**
- **One size does not fit all, but intention is universal**
- **Intention creates a destination rather than a location**

startingachildrensmuseum.com

a joint venture between

Peter Olson Museum Planning, LLC and BrownKnows Design, LLC