Fargo-Moorhead Science Museum – 2026 Strategic Plan

The Fargo-Moorhead Science Museum (FMSM) is a community project to establish a destination science museum that reflects regional identity and expands access to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) learning. This strategic plan serves as a blueprint for launching and sustaining a museum that inspires curiosity and highlights the role of STEMM in everyday life. It is grounded in community values, regional opportunity, and a commitment to public trust. With collaborative leadership, regional momentum, and inclusive planning, FMSM will stand as a landmark of science, belonging, and discovery, and a catalyst for developing a future-ready STEMM workforce for generations to come.

Mission: Breaking barriers to ignite the curiosity in all of us!

Vision: We envision a future where anyone can be a scientist.

Values:

Community: We believe in the power of local voices and partnerships. We co-create a museum that reflects and uplifts our community through collaboration with individuals, industries, and institutions.

Learning: We champion lifelong learning sparked by the wonder of science. We believe scientific literacy and critical thinking are essential skills that empower individuals and strengthen communities.

Innovation: We embrace new ideas, technologies, and approaches to make science more relevant, inspiring, and engaging. We evolve to meet the needs of our visitors and the world around us.

Equity: We remove barriers and celebrate diverse perspectives, ensuring access, representation, and inclusion so everyone feels empowered to explore and engage with science.

Sustainability: We commit to environmentally and operationally sustainable practices that support a resilient future for our organization, region, and planet.

Strategic Priorities

FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Financial Goal: Establish a Resilient, Sustainable Financial Framework That Supports Growth, Ensures Long-Term Impact, and Positions the Museum as a Vital Regional Institution.

Objectives:

1. **Execute a successful capital campaign** for the construction of the facility, securing broad-based financial support from individual donors, foundations, corporations, and public-sector partners.
2. **Implement data-driven financial management** practices, including long-range forecasting, budgeting, and strategic alignment of staffing, programming, and capital development.
3. **Diversify and grow revenue streams** through admissions, memberships, grants, sponsorships, public funding, and philanthropic support.
4. **Develop earned income strategies** using flexible museum spaces for year-round programs including camps, classes, weddings, corporate events, before and after-school programs, field trips, and rentals.

Operational Goal: Build a scalable and adaptive operational structure that enables growth, deepens impact, and ensures long-term sustainability.

Objectives:

1. **Build institutional capacity** by expanding staff, recruiting expert advisors, and forming strategic partnerships with universities, cultural institutions, and industry leaders to shape content and strengthen sustainability.
2. **Execute targeted media and outreach campaigns** to activate the museum's regional audience—including 188,000 children within 120 minutes of FM—building sustained engagement and visitation.
3. **Ensure that board members, staff, and volunteers operate in alignment with museum and nonprofit best practices** by establishing and maintaining clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures.

Staffing Goal: Stand as an employer of choice that retains an engaged and diverse team of staff and volunteers to support the museum's mission and growth.

Objectives:

1. **Establish a healthy workplace culture** that attracts, supports, and retains a talented, mission-aligned team by prioritizing organizational values, professional growth, and meaningful engagement.
2. **Leverage community talent to support operations** by engaging retirees, students, future educators, and other community members through robust volunteer and internship programs.
3. **Create a dynamic and rewarding volunteer experience** that inspires pride, fosters community connection, and makes FMSM a sought-after place to contribute time and talent.
4. **Develop a phased staffing and volunteer plan** that scales with attendance and programming.

MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

Architecture Goal: Create an iconic museum that stands as a landmark of science, sustainability, and inclusion, brought to life through bold design.

Objectives:

1. **Establish the building as a regional landmark** which integrates the area's unique natural history into its architectural design, honoring the region's heritage.
2. **Implement Universal Design principles**, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully engage with and participate in the space and experience.
3. **Prioritize sustainable design** by incorporating science-based solutions to enhance energy efficiency and support decarbonization efforts.
4. **Design flexible spaces** which support diverse programs and events, ensuring long-term operational stability while keeping the museum accessible and community focused.
5. **Create an interactive architectural experience** using innovative technologies to project media on building surfaces and illuminate features such as the glacier base.
6. **Serve as a year-round science destination** for immersive STEM experiences and weatherproof refuge for visitors from across the region.

Exhibits Goal: Develop a dynamic exhibit portfolio that delivers hands-on, curiosity-driven STEMM exploration and evolves with community needs and scientific discovery.

Objectives:

1. **Develop a long-term exhibit master plan** which guides permanent, rotating, and traveling exhibit development which is financially sustainable for the next decade.
2. **Design and build signature permanent exhibits** which are globally relevant and reflect regional science, identity, and innovation through high-quality, durable, interactive experiences.
3. **Establish a rotating exhibit pipeline** which follows a planned refresh schedule, ensuring new or updated experiences are consistently added to support repeat visitation and evolving community interest.
4. **Feature traveling exhibits** which align with the museum's mission, broaden access to emerging science topics, and provide fresh, high-quality experiences that complement the museum's permanent exhibit portfolio.
5. **Co-create exhibit content with partners** across academia, industry, tribes, creative sectors, and the community to ensure authentic and diverse representation.
6. **Ensure exhibit content incorporates current scientific research and regional innovations** into exhibit storylines to connect visitors with contemporary discovery.
7. **Apply Universal Design and evidence-based exhibit practices** which promote accessibility, inclusion, and equitable engagement for all learners.
8. **Develop visitor-study and exhibit-evaluation processes** which support continuous improvement and long-term learning impact.

Visitor Experience Goal: Create inspiring science experiences that ignite curiosity, promote belonging, and empower all visitors to see themselves in STEMM.

Objectives:

1. **Design hands-on exhibits and programs** with layers of interactive STEMM experiences that engage visitors of all ages in ways that ignite curiosity and foster lifelong learning.
2. **Create inclusive, accessible, immersive environments** where all visitors feel empowered to explore STEMM and confident that they belong.
3. **Demonstrate how science connects to everyday life** and enhances quality of life, while empowering visitors to see their potential role in using science to shape the future.
4. **Showcase regional STEMM innovation** to foster community pride and demonstrate how these achievements contribute to scientific progress which is globally relevant.
5. **Inspire visitors to see themselves in STEMM careers** by providing empowering experiences that reflect diverse paths, possibilities, and identities—reinforcing the message that anyone can pursue a career in a STEMM field.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Education Goal: Position FMSM as a leader in science communication and informal STEMM education through engaging, hands-on experiences that ignite curiosity and connect science to everyday life.

Objectives:

1. **Deliver experiential learning** by creating interactive exhibits and programs that encourage exploration, discovery, and hands-on engagement for all ages.
2. **Advance equity in STEMM** by ensuring inclusive, accessible learning environments and actively engaging underrepresented communities in STEMM education.
3. **Serve diverse audiences** by providing educational opportunities for early learners, K–12 and college students, adults, families, and lifelong learners of all backgrounds.
4. **Align with educational standards** by designing school programs that complement STEMM curricula and support classroom instruction through mobile outreach and museum-based programs.
5. **Support educators** by partnering with teachers and schools to offer professional development, teaching resources, and curriculum-aligned programming.
6. **Incorporate current science and research into exhibits and activities** to maintain relevance and credibility while engaging visitors.

CONNECTING SCIENCE, RESEARCH & WORKFORCE

Science & Research Goal: Serve as a Trusted Source of Scientific Information and a Platform for Connecting Science and Research to Everyday Life.

Objectives

1. **Promote scientific literacy** by advancing public understanding of core concepts and encouraging critical thinking, while fostering appreciation for evidence-based thinking and the scientific process.
2. **Bridge science and society** by highlighting how science impacts health, the environment, technology, and daily life.
3. **Collaborate with scientists, entrepreneurs, educators, and industry** to conduct, support, and publicly present regional STEMM research—showcasing local innovation and connecting community discoveries to global impact.
4. **Inspire future innovators** by cultivating interest in STEMM careers through hands-on experiences with real tools, data, and scientists.
5. **Engage a diverse panel of science advisors** to support FMSM's role as a trusted source of scientific information—drawing on expertise from across the region's STEMM sectors, including industry, education, academia, government, healthcare, and research institutions.
6. **Steward highly selective, minimal collections** that begin with teaching resources and expand over time to include research and interpretive collections guided by the museum's gift acceptance and collections policies.

STEMM Workforce Goal: Strengthen the Regional STEMM Talent Pipeline by Connecting Learning, Careers, and Community Innovation.

Objectives

1. **Increase awareness of STEMM career pathways** by showcasing diverse local role models, industries, and real-world job opportunities for teens, post-secondary students, and career-switchers.
2. **Expand access to career-connected learning** by offering skill-building programs, internships, and career-connected experiences for learners of all ages.

3. **Foster partnerships between industry and education** to align museum programs with regional workforce needs and emerging innovation priorities.
4. **Highlight the role of STEMM careers in solving global challenge,** demonstrating how local innovations lead to measurable impact and job creation.
5. **Support underrepresented groups in accessing and succeeding in STEMM pathways** by reducing barriers and cultivating inclusive, supportive environments.
6. **Engage employers, workforce boards, educators, and civic leaders** as co-creators of a resilient, future-ready STEMM workforce infrastructure.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement Goal: Cultivate Strong Community Partnerships Which Deepen Regional Impact.

Objectives:

1. **Cultivate a sense of community ownership** by actively involving local voices in the museum's development and programming.
2. **Collaborate with diverse regional partners** to expand access to resources, expertise, and opportunities in STEMM.
3. **Deliver engaging outreach and educational programming** that brings STEMM experiences into neighborhoods, schools, and community spaces.
4. **Create a welcoming, inclusive community gathering place** where people of all backgrounds can connect, learn, and celebrate science together.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Goal: Embed DEAI into FMSM's Mission, Operations, Culture, and Experience—Including its Conceptual Framework, Design, and Learning Opportunities.

Objectives:

1. **Embed inclusive policies and practices into all museum operations**—governance, staffing, programming, communications, and partnerships—to reflect and serve a diverse community.
2. **Integrate Universal Design and culturally responsive approaches** to ensure all visitors—regardless of background or ability—can engage fully with museum spaces, exhibits, and programs.
3. **Elevate community voices and center underrepresented groups** by co-creating exhibits and programs to highlight diverse stories, promote belonging, and ensure authentic regional representation.
4. **Advance ongoing learning, evaluation, and institutional alignment** by providing DEAI training and guidance for staff, board, and volunteers; and regularly reviewing exhibits, programs, and practices for alignment with FMSM's commitment to DEAI.