

Promoting Cultural Democracy

SMITHSONIAN CENTER FOR FOLKLIFE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

STRATEGIC PLAN – 2014-2018

Culture of, by, and for the people

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We are a cultural force.

Today, people around the world connect, collect, and disseminate ideas at remarkable speed. Voices from all corners seek amplification, and occasions to engage abound. In the midst of increased global activity, we at the Center seek to **intensify our work**. We meet this increasingly interconnected world with a more strategic outlook on our organization's place and purpose. Join us as we look forward to the next five years of growth and enhance the Center's ability to be a cultural force engaging publics, partners, and professionals in our bold mission.

With five decades of momentum and the Smithsonian as our platform, **we are a cultural force**, working for the idea of culture of, by, and for the people to fulfill its potential. Today, we drive toward our vision while embracing the foundations of our practice. We center the interactions of a broad audience, facilitating performance, participation, conversation, and lifelong learning. Through these programs, high school students have collaborated with seasoned scholars on ethnographic research; a Palestinian singer has performed with a backing ensemble of Israeli musicians; a banjo player from Appalachia and a *ngoni* player from Mali have discovered the shared lineage of their instruments in a jam session; over a dozen Ugandan students have attended college on scholarships funded by proceeds from the sale of a CD featuring the music of that country's Jewish community; and a tourist from Montana visiting the 2008 Bhutanese Festival program remarked to one of the artists, "Thank you for bringing your beautiful country to us. We'd never have known about you."

Cultural diversity is key to the survival of humanity, and we are dedicated to increasing **cultural democracy** by supporting and promoting the value of diverse traditions and knowledge. Toward this vision, we will widen access to our resources and expand public engagement with our work, paying particular attention to increasing the use of new and emerging media. Increasing access to our resources and programming on multiple platforms, we will expand collaborations with individuals and organizations to maximize our impact on cultural heritage practices, policies, and studies in ways that are constructive, critical, and relevant. We commit to this expansion because broad engagement supports cultural heritage policy at its core.

For decades the Center has approached difficult questions and challenging engagements with creative spirit. This commitment is one of our strengths. While we design our efforts to inspire public curiosity and learning, we also strive to stimulate deep, lasting, generative impact. Inspired by the creativity of artists, musicians, and tradition-bearers, and fueled by our collaborations with them, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage is charting out the steps toward positioning itself as a major **catalyst** for cultural participation.

Mission

Rooted in principles of cultural democracy, we support the sustainability of cultural heritage and diversity in communities across the United States and around the world. We work with a broad spectrum of individuals and groups to promote cultural scholarship, traditional artistry, and participation as forms of civic engagement.

Cultural democracy is the exercise of the right of free expression by diverse individuals and communities as they document, preserve, and share the music and culture that matters most to them.

Vision

We envision a world that values not only traditional culture, knowledge, and artistic expression, but also diversity and cultural participation as critical to the future of humanity, their vitality powered by vast public commitment.

Strategic Goals

We at the Center are researchers, educators, producers, and partners—scholarly thinkers, cultural actors, and members of multiple communities. As we envision the steps that will best support the Center's growth in these roles, we both acknowledge our strengths as an organization and identify essential areas for increased attention.

In service of our vision and guided by strong foundational principles, we will achieve five broad strategic goals by 2018:

- I. Expand **understanding** of the world's diverse living cultures.
- II. Promote **public engagement** in cultural practice and exchange.
- III. Support **cultural sustainability** and vitality.
- IV. Focus **research and access** efforts on four priority initiatives.
- V. Enhance effective **management** and **partnerships**.

I. Expand understanding of the world's diverse living cultures.

The Center is intellectually rigorous. The quality of our work and the strength of our impact depend on crafting a deep understanding of histories, communities, and contexts. As a place where significant cultural heritage research attracts broad public access and catalyzes important scholarship, we will:

Address scholarly questions that enrich knowledge of cultural heritage, creativity, and diversity.

- Increase the Center's original research by producing 100 scholarly books, articles, and media pieces that expand cultural understanding and disseminate our reflective cultural heritage practice.
- Enhance the Center's research capacity by increasing the number of dedicated research staff and facilitating research by current staff.
- Initiate and sustain a regular series of research-related events and programs.

Train the next generation of cultural heritage professionals.

- Establish an endowed fellowship program to train the next generation of cultural heritage professionals.
- Host 20 fellows and 600 interns whose diversity reflects the demographics of the United States.
- Initiate and sustain a regular series of learning opportunities of fellows and interns, including opportunities for them to present their research and collaborate on Center projects.

Strengthen the stewardship, accessibility, and impact of collections.

- Build a new digital platform and social learning community to share our research and collections and facilitate public additions to our collections.
- Build archival collections by accessioning strategically important acquisitions and Center-generated research and production materials.
- Expand capacity to arrange, preserve, catalog, describe, and digitize collections.

Priority Initiative: Immigration and Migration

How are immigration and migration transforming cultural and social life in an increasingly globalized world?

Immigration, migration, and transnationalism are transforming contemporary communities around the world. Population movement sparks discussion, debate, and even direct conflict concerning politics, economics, culture, and national identity. If current migration trends continue over the coming decades in the United States, the country's demographic profile is expected to change dramatically. This will impact not just daily social interactions; change also has implications for the nation's political and economic life, and how "American" culture is considered in the United States and conceptualized by communities across the globe.

The Center's inquiry around immigration and migration—and its impact on cultural heritage practices and policies more broadly—is built upon a recognition that these movements are both voluntary and involuntary; involve displacement; engender cultural complexity; and have significant human rights implications. With our diversity of staff expertise and depth of international experience, the Center is particularly well positioned to lead timely programs that connect

migration processes with peoples' everyday practices, and account for the transnational dimensions of culture and community life.

For decades, the Center has engaged in ongoing national dialogue about the impact of immigration and migration on culture and communities in the United States. We have also been on the vanguard of the Smithsonian's effort to highlight the significance of migration to this country's history and culture. Over the next five years, we will directly engage this core commitment, deepening our scholarship and expanding access to our resources.

To expand understanding of the relationship between immigration and migration and cultural practice, and to encourage public engagement with this topic, we will:

- Produce at least one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program focusing on immigration and migration in American communities.
- Produce at least five discussion sessions and/or workshops within or concurrent with international Folklife Festival programs to explore, compare, and connect issues of North American immigration and migration with similar issues impacting communities in other regions.
- Expand Smithsonian Folkways Latino and Asian-American music recordings by three per year to include content that is ever more relevant to U.S. based migrant communities.
- Provide intellectual and institutional leadership in *Our American Journey: The Smithsonian Immigration/ Migration Initiative* through continued participation on the executive team and deepened contribution to priority projects, including the development of at least two exhibitions and educational programs in other Smithsonian units.
- Increase visibility and accessibility of Center assets specifically related to immigration and migration through the production of web pages, web features, new media productions, and classroom resources.

II. Promote public engagement in cultural practice and exchange.

The Center leverages its convening power and diverse staff experience to expand cultural participation. We facilitate opportunities for meaningful experiences that model not only how to live in this complex world, but how to live together. To increase global awareness and support broad cultural competency, we will:

Use multiple methods to inspire curiosity, support sharing, and deepen knowledge about cultural life.

- Host nine million visitors at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and through related programming, reach 25 million through new and emerging media, and serve 175 million as consumers through Folkways.
- Develop robust year-round local and national programming for the public.
- Develop and implement a digital strategy to engage our publics and expand our audiences, complementing the Center's longstanding commitment to face-to-face cultural exchange.

Build our audiences.

- Develop and implement an audience development plan to diversify our audiences to reflect the demographics of the United States.
- Conduct rigorous visitor studies every year to define our audience in order to understand and better serve them.

Significantly advance our capacity to provide dynamic educational resources in formal educational settings.

- Reach 25 million teachers and students through social learning networks and teachers' associations with educational resources based on the Center's research, collections, and programs.

- Develop an advisory group of educators to evaluate our materials and services in order to more effectively reach target audiences of educators and students.

Priority Initiative: Music and Sound

In what ways is music a vehicle of meaning in our lives—and what is the social relevance of music?

As humans, we have long devoted ourselves to organizing sound, crafting it into forms of group and individual expression, and imbuing it with a yet-to-be-comprehended range of meaning. The product of this devotion, music is a powerful communicator of social and cultural values and an invitation to public engagement. Music both bonds and bridges. It strengthens ties within cultures and builds understanding, mutuality, and empathy across cultural differences. The product of these bonds and bridges is “social capital”—shared values and ties which enable and encourage mutually advantageous cooperation. Guided by the vision and principles of the Center, we will explore the nature, creation, value, and application of the social capital shaped through music and other organized sound. Inspired by Pete Seeger’s statement, “If humanity survives another century, it will be because of music,” we will better understand how music is critical to the future well-being of humankind.

With its combined strengths as a premier collection of sound, a scholarly and popularly renowned independent record label, and a major international venue for the live presentation of music and dance, the Center is unique in the Smithsonian and in the world. Over the next five years, we will parlay these extraordinary assets into bringing greater focus

to the thematic prisms of music and recorded sound as means for understanding and building social capital.

To explore the nature, creation, and value of music and sound and inspire similar exploration among others, we will:

- Produce at least one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program exploring the social relevance of music and showcasing how the work of Folkways intersects our other research and outreach initiatives, and address similar issues in at least two other Festival programs.
- Produce at least 50 multidimensional documentation projects (e.g., video, radio, podcasts) that demonstrate the value and depth of our research and publications on music, its meaning, and its social relevance.
- Acquire new, strategically important collections of recorded sound by 6,500 tracks, vet intellectual property rights for these tracks, and make them publicly accessible.
- Identify and fill at least 20 significant lacunae in the Folkways collection to offer a more complete vision of humanity through recorded sound.
- Publish 25 original recordings of music with cultural and social significance.
- Create 15 Smithsonian Folkways productions drawn from our archival collections.
- Generate new knowledge deriving from our recorded sound collections through at least four collaborative research projects with research partners and with the public via social media.
- Produce at least fifteen research proposals that employ the thematic prism of music to enhance the other Center initiatives focusing on immigration and migration, cultural sustainability, and bridging difference.
- Expand audiences by making the delivery of Folkways music content compatible with mobile devices around the world and producing an ongoing radio series exploring the Center's audio collections.
- Work with partners to add 50 new multimedia lesson plans to our website and produce 20 new World Music Teacher Certification workshops to extend our impact among students and educators.

Priority Initiative: Bridging Difference

How can cultural conversation and exchange around contentious issues contribute to mutual understanding and transformative engagement?

Difference is an inescapable component of social life. As communities compete for political and ideological rights, as “global” movements are reinterpreted in “local” spaces, and as broadly dispersed publics constantly negotiate the meaning of cultural practices, the power of difference proves undeniable.

Friction offers a metaphor for the conflicting interactions that make up the contemporary world—a metaphor that acknowledges the messiness of misunderstanding, but also the fresh insights that can arise from meaningful interactions. Friction also creates traction. Points of contention offer dynamic opportunities for conversation. At the Center, we recognize the value of debate, acknowledging discomfort and negotiating difference. We deliberately address our work to salient social issues and approach conflict analysis with an eye to resolution. Over the next five years, we will deeply engage two questions: how can convening difficult conversations improve our practice, and how can confronting contentious issues bridge social and cultural difference in the United States and abroad?

To deliberately address issues of cultural conflict and invite others to participate in productive exchange about bias, difference, and disagreement, we will:

- Produce at least one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program addressing contentious social and political questions, and address similar issues in at least two other Festival programs.
- Facilitate at least 15 programs where participants debate these issues.

- Develop a research team dedicated to organizing scholarly efforts, public outreach, and educational programming to advance knowledge and dialogue about contentious issues in cultural heritage practice.
- Develop and sustain public programming and digital initiatives to engage audiences around contentious issues.
- Develop and implement regular, collaborative programming that brings culture-bearers from communities-in-conflict together to honestly engage differences and explore common ground.
- Develop digital storytelling and social media platforms as new means for productive cross-cultural engagement.
- Articulate, pilot, refine, and disseminate a set of best practices to facilitate cross-cultural exchange and conflict resolution.

III. Support cultural sustainability and vitality.

The Center's purpose transcends documentation and affirmation. We work to increase the visibility and vitality of culture-bearers, artists, and traditions, as well as to promote cultural expression as critical to human well-being and community health. Through sustained collaborative work with individuals and groups in the United States and across the globe, we will:

Promote widespread recognition of the value of traditions, support their preservation, and showcase their creativity.

- Synthesize and share best practices for strategically identifying, preserving, presenting, and enhancing traditions around the world.
- Support the agency of local communities through the preservation, innovation, and presentation of cultural life and strategic partnerships.

Support economic development in the context of cultural and environmental sustainability.

- Assist local communities with the structure and support to strengthen self-representation and revitalization efforts.
- Help develop strong community leadership that makes the most of available means to undertake sustainable local initiatives.
- Create opportunities for individuals to identify and share best practices across cultural communities.
- Become a recognized leader in cultural sustainability practices and audiovisual collections management.

Draw attention to cultural heritage policy in local, national, and international forums, paying particular attention to the convening power of the digital sphere.

- Articulate consistently how cultural heritage policy informs virtually every Center initiative, and increase opportunities for publics to participate.
- Foreground community engagement and perspectives in the development of cultural heritage policy in local, national, and international fora.

Priority Initiative: Cultural Sustainability

How can cultural sustainability contribute to human well-being on local and global scales?

As global communication, movement, and migration thrust us closer together, and as population growth intensifies competition for limited resources, it is essential that people feel secure in their ways of life. Cultural practices contribute to sustaining local histories, languages, health, and environments. Through concerted efforts to document, protect, and present cultural vitality, we strengthen human relationships that simultaneously center in local communities and connect to global needs.

The Center can be an agent of positive change, responding to the urgency of endangered cultural expressions and the associated loss of their meaning, beauty, values, and knowledge. In partnership with the Smithsonian *Recovering Voices* initiative, we have already made great strides to accelerate research and public understanding about cultural sustainability. But we are capable of deeper scholarship and increased outreach. Over the next five years we recommit to this mission, recognizing the importance of cultural sustainability for human vitality worldwide.

To advance and apply knowledge about cultural sustainability, and to inspire publics, participants, and professionals to support cultural vitality, we will:

- Produce at least one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program focused on the revitalization of endangered cultural traditions, and address similar issues in at least four other Festival programs.
- Convene scholars annually from diverse disciplines to collaboratively address the connection between cultural and human well-being; participate more fully in convenings held by others that address these themes.
- Recruit and train emerging scholars devoted to understanding and preserving cultural systems, giving special attention to scholars from communities whose traditions are endangered.
- Recognize and train community scholars in researching and presenting their own traditions.
- Provide intellectual and institutional leadership in the *Recovering Voices* initiative.
- Cultivate partnerships with like-minded organizations to create a research hub of cultural sustainability at the Center.
- Collaborate with at least forty communities to document and sustain their most cherished cultural heritage by training community members in cultural documentation and organizing cultural sustainability field projects.
- Build capacity in partner communities through ongoing training that supports their curation of cultural assets and self-presentation to wider audiences.
- Ensure the effective return of research findings through culturally appropriate means so that collaborations benefit all partners.
- Increase public understanding of endangered languages and cultural traditions through collections digitization, social media, and enhanced programming at home and abroad.

V. Enhance effective management and partnerships.

The Center strengthens its potential to accomplish its mission through management excellence, meaningful partnerships, and financial stability. To streamline our internal functioning and enhance our leadership role, we will:

Foster understanding, respect, and increased efficiency among Center staff by working toward shared outcomes.

- Build a more motivated and diverse staff across the Center.
- Strengthen the production capacity of research, digital media, education, collections management, and administration teams.
- Link performance appraisals to this document and the Smithsonian's Strategic Plan.
- Improve communication within the Center and with external supporters and collaborators.
- Increase and leverage diversity in all aspects of the Center's work.
- Implement a training program to continually strengthen staff skills, especially in team building, civility, conflict resolution, and specialized technical skills.
- Provide the resources necessary to rationalize procurement, storage, and sharing of our archives and collections.
- Establish clear internal processes and policies to guide the management of assets—intellectual, physical, financial, archival, and otherwise—throughout the Center.

Build and expand durable partnerships.

- Create and sustain five long-term, mission-aligned partnerships to extend the impact of the Center's work.
- Strengthen collaboration with other Smithsonian museums, centers, and programs, with a particular focus on both Center- and Institution-wide priority initiatives.

Leverage and diversify funding sources.

- Raise at least six million dollars in private gifts, grants, and contracts for priority initiatives.
- Build an endowment of three million dollars in gifts and earned revenue to support the Center in perpetuity.
- Increase revenue by thirty percent through a variety of entrepreneurial undertakings.

Resourcing the Plan

Realizing this plan means creating a stronger Center. It means **crafting a catalytic enterprise** whose impacts extend far beyond organizational bounds. It requires a **recalibration of Center resources** toward the intentions and initiatives outlined above. Moving forward, we will bring more funding into the Center, and we will also operate more effectively with our existing assets. We will meet the goals set forth with the nimbleness, intelligence, and entrepreneurial spirit that have for decades been the hallmarks of our research and productions.

Over the next five years, our internal emphases will include strengthening our staffing in research, new and emerging media, and collections management; establishing an endowed fellowship program to attract new talent to the Center that can grow with its initiatives; and streamlining budgetary processes to make better use of existing funds. These goals require the strategic use of human resources, a culture of learning and innovation, and more transparent operational guidelines.

We will also strengthen relationships with other parts of the Smithsonian and with key external collaborators—from individuals to foundations to federal partners. More ambitious goals, after all, demand additional resources. We challenge ourselves to **raise at least six million dollars** because investing others in the Center's work is essential. In this endeavor, the mission, vision, and intentions in this plan offer vital tools.

Building Momentum

We are growing with the times. We are prepared to harness fresh potential, to redirect energies, to progress—move forward—and steepen the slope of organizational change. Nearly fifty years ago, the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in its earlier incarnation initiated a movement embracing cultural participation as a form of civic engagement. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to this movement, recognizing its increased relevance in today's interconnected age.

The Center must be catalytic in its impact. We will measure our success by the significance of projects that eclipse our organizational boundaries, our value by the number of partners we engage and the number of people we serve, and our accomplishments by the opportunities for growth and exploration that we provide to our staff, interns, and volunteers. The Center offers cultural communities venue and vantage for self-expression, amplifying their voices in national and global cultural dialogues. The Center leverages strategic collaboration and entrepreneurial energy to build capacity, rather than merely consume it.

We are a nexus, a nucleus, a convening space.

We are sustainable. We are strategic. We are spirited.

Milestones 2014-2018

- Publish 100 scholarly books, articles, and media pieces that expand cultural understanding and disseminate our reflective cultural heritage practice.
- Establish an endowed fellowship program to train the next generation of cultural heritage professionals.
- Host nine million visitors at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and through related programming; reach 25 million through new and emerging media; and serve 175 million as consumers through Folkways.
- Develop and implement a digital strategy to engage our publics and expand our audiences.
- Raise six million dollars to support the growth outlined here.
- Become a recognized leader in cultural sustainability practices and audiovisual collections management.
- Make 6,500 new tracks of music in our collection available to the public.
- Build a more motivated and diverse staff, strengthening the production capacity of research, digital media, education and evaluation, and collection management teams.

Captions and Credits

For images, etc.