

# STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2021-2025



**HAYSTACK**  
MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF CRAFTS

—  
Adopted on December 21, 2020  
Prepared By TDC

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CORE COMMITMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
Mission	
Values	
Ten-Year Vision	
Five-Year Goals	
<b>PLANNING PROCESS SUMMARY</b>	<b>7</b>
Key Findings and Reflections	
<b>PLAN DETAIL</b>	<b>8</b>
I. Develop Flexible and Critical Frameworks for Evaluating and Advancing Programming, the Campus, and Engagement with the Communities We Serve.	
Programming and Experience	
Campus Infrastructure and Facilities	
Community and Public Engagement	
II. Reimagine the Way We Cocreate and Foster Supportive Communities on the Haystack Campus.	
Reducing Barriers to Access	
Constructing a Welcoming, Supportive Community	
III. Build on the Strength of Current Operational Structures and Increase the School’s Fiscal Capacity to Accomplish Ambitious Goals and Ensure Long-Term Sustainability.	
Communications	
Fundraising	
<b>OPERATIONAL DETAIL</b>	<b>14</b>
Timeline	
Financial Investment	
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS</b>	<b>17</b>



Founded in 1950 as an experiment in education and community, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts has convened generations of craftspeople, artists, designers, teachers, makers, and thinkers. Today, from our award-winning campus on Deer Isle, the School offers studio workshops to participants of all skill levels; provides space for creation and exploration for makers, artists, and scholars from a variety of fields; and functions as a “think tank” in looking at craft in broader contexts. Though most people spend short periods of time at Haystack, the experience of being at the School has influenced generations of artists well beyond the physical boundaries of our campus in Deer Isle and helped to define a broader field.

Haystack recently completed an eighteen month strategic planning process that sought to build on the School’s solid foundation, honoring our values and history while charting the course for our next chapter. We are pleased to share the results of that process in this Strategic Plan, which begins with a statement of our core commitments: our mission, values, ten-year vision, and five-year goals. Next, the document reviews the process we undertook to arrive at this strategic direction, including key reflections and findings that helped inform the plan. It then provides a detailed description of the strategies and tactics Haystack will undertake to achieve its five-year goals. Last, the document includes a summary of key operational and financial implications of the plan; a description of the governance structures that will support the plan’s execution; and an analysis of key conditions that will impact the success of the plan.

# CORE COMMITMENTS

## MISSION

Haystack connects people through craft. Located on the coast of Maine, Haystack provides the freedom to engage with materials and develop new ideas in a supportive and inclusive community. Serving an ever-changing group of makers and thinkers, we are dedicated to working and learning alongside one another, while exploring the intersections of craft, art, and design in broad and expansive ways.

## TAGLINE

*“Connecting people through craft”*

## VALUES

1. We believe in the power of craft to connect people and cultures.
2. We believe in fostering a culture of generosity, exploration, and exchange through all of our work.
3. We believe in a community rooted in the safety, health, mutual respect, and well-being of each of its members.
4. We believe in cultural equity and the imperative to develop new partnerships to expand the audiences with whom we collaborate.
5. We believe in the need to actively address systemic and institutional racism by committing to the ongoing work required to become an antiracist organization.
6. We believe in an intersectional approach to combating oppression, and commit to addressing these injustices.
7. We believe in the importance of the land on which Haystack is located and the responsibility we have to care for it.
8. We believe in maintaining a modesty of scale and a purposeful approach to the historic preservation and renovation of our campus.
9. We believe in our responsibility to promote the arts and contribute to the creative lives of our community through local, regional, and statewide programming.

## TEN-YEAR VISION

Over the next ten years, Haystack will expand the ways we define and represent the field of craft while deepening our commitment to sustainability and resilience. This work marks the next chapter in Haystack's seventy-year history as a leader in craft and studio-based education.

For us, leadership on this front means we will:

- Build on our past successes while acknowledging that the changes we need to make as an organization help change the future of the field
- Address the historic omission of diversity within the field of craft, which has led to a narrow, self-reinforcing definition of the field
- Foster a spirit of exchange and actively develop new partnerships that expand the audiences with whom we collaborate
- Expand access to the practice of craft, both on our campus and beyond, to a diverse group of individuals from around the world, across the country, throughout the state, and on Deer Isle
- Deepen our commitment to the sustainability of the School, thereby allowing us to responsibly achieve our goals and endure over time

Underscoring the vision and the goals of this plan is a commitment to antiracism, equity, inclusion, and diversity across Haystack's programming, operations, and governance. If our work over the next ten years is successful, we will have helped broaden representation in the field and further positioned the School as relevant, responsive, and ready to help shape the future.

## FIVE-YEAR GOALS

To achieve this vision, over the next five years Haystack will pursue three overarching goals:

- Develop flexible and critical frameworks for evaluating and advancing programming, the campus, and engagement with the communities we serve.
- Reimagine the way we cocreate and foster communities on the Haystack campus.
- Build on the strength of current operational structures and increase the School's fiscal capacity to accomplish ambitious goals and ensure long-term sustainability.

The strategies and tactics Haystack will use to achieve these goals, and the rationale behind the strategies, are outlined in the Plan Detail section of this document.

# DEFINING TERMS:

*The success of this work hinges on placing equity, inclusion, diversity, and sustainability at the core of our decision-making. We believe this cannot happen without a shared understanding of what these concepts mean for Haystack. Therefore, we define these key concepts as follows:*

## EQUITY

- Haystack recognizes that many existing systems of power grant privilege and access unequally, and is committed to championing cultural equity in support of a fair and just society.
- Haystack defines cultural equity as the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of our programs, supported by the policies of the organization, and provided access to a supportive and inclusive creative community.
- Haystack believes that cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the field of craft and that we must hold ourselves accountable for removing inequities and working in partnership to make lasting change.

## INCLUSION

- Haystack defines inclusion as that which encourages the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, class, gender, age, and other forms of human difference.
- Haystack believes that inclusion requires acknowledging existing positions of privilege; creating opportunities for those who have been historically marginalized; and intentionally reflecting on and eliminating biases, barriers, and power dynamics—whether overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional—in our programs and policies.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

- Haystack defines intersectionality as the complex, cumulative combination of aspects of a person's identities, to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.
- Haystack believes it is critical to understand, acknowledge, and address the ways in which multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.
- Haystack believes that an intersectional approach to combating oppression will help create and support a community composed of individuals with a broad variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and ways of approaching craft.

## DIVERSITY

- Haystack defines diversity as the representation of a variety of factors that can identify an individual or group, including:

Age	Geography
Class difference	Race/ethnicity
Culture	Range of physical or cognitive ability
Experience and career stages	Religion
Gender identity	Sexual orientation

- Haystack recognizes that naming, acknowledging, and celebrating diverse cultures is not enough to dismantle inequitable systems and that recognition of difference alone is not the same as cultural equity. Haystack is committed to diversity as an outcome of intentional efforts to acknowledge positions of privilege and to create opportunities for those who have been historically marginalized from the School and the larger field of craft.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Haystack defines sustainability as a series of practices that influence social, cultural, programmatic, environmental, and economic factors.
- Haystack believes sustainability determines the well-being of the organization and communities we serve, allowing us to best achieve our goals and to endure over time.
- Haystack views sustainability as a principle that should guide us in decision-making, whether operational, programmatic, environmental, or fiscal.
- Haystack recognizes that we are part of a larger system and that creative impulses can serve as a catalyst for larger social, environmental, and community change.

# PLANNING PROCESS SUMMARY

Haystack entered the strategic planning process with the goal of creating a plan for the next five years that builds from the School's position of strength and honors its shared values. The process began in March 2019 and was guided by a planning committee composed of trustees, life trustees, and staff. TDC, a Boston-based nonprofit research and consulting firm, was engaged to facilitate planning. The planning process had four phases:

- 1. Launch:** Articulating the organizational values that should guide the planning and decision-making process, surfacing key questions to be explored in the process, and identifying research that could help answer those key questions.
- 2. Research and Analysis:** Gathering and analyzing internal and external research and data in response to the key questions, and exploring the implications of that research for strategy.
- 3. Strategy Development:** Leveraging research and conversations to date to articulate goals and strategies for the organization to pursue, and surfacing the operational and financial implications of those strategies
- 4. Plan Creation:** Drafting and refining the final plan document.

At critical points throughout the planning process, the planning committee engaged Haystack's trustees, life trustees, and staff.

## KEY FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Findings from research and analysis, along with discussion and reflection among the board and the planning committee, led to the development of Haystack's ten-year vision and five-year goals. In particular, three overarching findings informed the ten-year vision set forth in this plan:

- **Haystack is operating from a position of strength and leadership in the field.** Conversations throughout the process with trustees, life trustees, and staff surfaced a common set of organizational values—ones that have carried forward from the School's founding to the present day. In addition to this strong organizational compass, Haystack benefits from a strong reputation. Conversations with peer institutions, as well as others in the broader fields of art and craft, affirmed Haystack's reputation for quality and its rich history and impact on the field of craft. Surveys of past participants and faculty members alike showed high satisfaction in their experience at the School, as well as high levels of interest in returning in the future. Financially, Haystack is similarly well positioned, with a healthy programmatic and operating model supported by a strong balance sheet.
- **There is momentum around addressing issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the field of craft.** Conversations at the board and planning committee level revealed the deeply interconnected nature of two questions that surfaced at the start of the planning process: *Who are the people Haystack wishes to engage, and in what ways?*; and *How will Haystack's commitment to diversity and accessibility manifest itself?* Survey responses suggested that Haystack's recent strides in addressing these issues were recognized by some, but not yet uniformly seen as priorities for the School or hallmarks of its approach. Conversations with leaders of peer institutions confirmed that these issues are top of mind in the field of craft. While many have made efforts to address these issues in their individual contexts, several raised the question of whether the current definition of the field of craft might inhibit progress on these fronts.
- **Haystack must address a set of unique factors and barriers.** In particular, conversations with stakeholders, survey responses, and peer conversations all noted the challenges inherent in Haystack's location, from its remoteness, to the whiteness of the state of Maine, to the fragile island ecosystem of the campus and its surroundings. The School's location impacts not only conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, but also about sustainability: the way in which Haystack can exist and thrive into the future.

Taken together, these findings suggest an opportunity for Haystack to play a leading role in the field, building from its strength, and leading by example to strengthen the School and help transform the field of craft.

Key reflections from board and planning committee conversations that informed the goals, strategies, and tactics of this plan are outlined in the Plan Detail section that follows.

# PLAN DETAIL

## GOAL I Develop flexible and critical frameworks for evaluating and advancing programming, the campus, and engagement with the communities we serve.

The unique intersection of programming, people, and place is central to the Haystack experience and underscores our success over the past seventy years. Achieving our vision for the future will require continued commitment in each of these areas, alongside a deliberate and thoughtful evolution not of what Haystack does as much as how the School does it.

To achieve this work, Haystack will concentrate in three focus areas:

- **Programming and Experience:** Building practices that ensure our programming is collaborative with new audiences and responsive to expanding practices in the field of craft, and enhancing the on-campus experience of workshop participants.
- **Campus Infrastructure and Facilities:** Updating the campus to better support our current operations while remaining flexible and responsive to future goals and aspirations.
- **Community and Public Engagement:** Exploring and testing ways to respond to communities beyond the confines of our campus on Deer Isle.

## PROGRAMMING AND EXPERIENCE

### CONTEXT

Haystack was created as an experiment in education and community, and the experimental approach that grounded the foundation of the School has continued to inform our programming for the past seventy years. In the coming five years, we will build practices that support our ability to experiment and explore craft and studio-based education through innovative programming, new partnerships, and collaborations. We will focus on ensuring the programming we offer and the faculty we work with are actively expanding the field of craft and responding to voices across the field. We see this work as reinterpreting and reinvesting in the founding principles of the School.

We also have an opportunity to deepen the impact of Haystack's unique location and the value we place on the intersection of people and place within a safe and supportive community.

### STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

#### 1. Refine the School's summer workshop programs.

- a. Collaborate with organizations and artists outside of the groups we have traditionally worked with to curate workshops that support Haystack's goal of serving broader audiences.
- b. Develop strategic partnerships that allow us to learn from other organizations.
- c. Set up end-of-season online surveys for faculty and students to track outcomes.

#### 2. Add elements to each session, outside of dedicated workshops, that represent and communicate Haystack's core commitments and enhance the participant experience.

- a. Develop optional offerings that emphasize the intersections of craft, art, and design.
- b. Underscore Haystack's commitment and stewardship to its natural and built environment.
- c. Update written and programmatic offerings that celebrate the architectural significance of the Barnes campus and Haystack's seminal role in the field of craft.



### 3. Increase the School's ability to attract, support, and retain diverse teaching faculty.

- a. Increase faculty compensation.
- b. Identify and address nonfinancial barriers to faculty engagement.
- c. Reshape organizational structures to better support faculty from broad backgrounds.
- d. Develop clear goals for increasing the diversity of faculty through establishing new collaborations and partnerships.

## CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

### CONTEXT

Haystack's award-winning campus, designed by noted American architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, opened in 1961 when the School relocated to Deer Isle. The campus was recognized by the American Institute of Architects with the Twenty-five Year Award, one of the highest honors bestowed on a work of architecture in the United States. The campus is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an historic landmark, reflecting its remarkable modernist design and exquisite integration with the natural landscape. Ultimately, the Haystack campus is a metaphor for the mission and values of the organization.

Today the School's campus must be updated so it continues to reflect and convey the ethos of the School. Many of the studios and cabins need to be modernized, and there is the need for a number of additional residential, administrative, and visitor facilities, together with carefully considered infrastructure improvements. This work will mean reconfirming and deepening our commitment to sustainability in order to address a range of goals and objectives that have significant implications for the campus environment—namely, those of accessibility, diversity, sustainability, and resilience.

Haystack is acutely aware of its role in the evolution of craft education in the mid-twentieth century, and the significance of this heritage must be an integral component of our work in planning for the physical improvement and stewardship of our campus going forward.

### STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

#### 1. Update and renovate Haystack's campus, preserving its historic character and modesty of scale, while renewing the School's commitment to sustainability and supporting current and future programming.

- a. Engage the services of an experienced and qualified consultant team in the creation of a Master Plan to guide Haystack's rehabilitation and physical improvement over twenty-five to fifty years. The Master Plan will address:
  - Accessibility
  - Existing studio evaluation, renovation, and potential enlargement
  - Improving the residential experience
  - Evaluation of the store and library
  - Infrastructure and support functions
  - New campus elements including a welcome center, rebuilt administrative offices, and residential accommodations for seasonal staff and visitors
  - Historic appropriateness
  - Sustainability, resilience, and land stewardship
  - Off-campus facilities

## COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### CONTEXT

While Haystack has a unique ability to deliver its mission at the intersection of people and place on our Deer Isle campus, we also have an opportunity and responsibility to engage with communities, and support the field of craft beyond our core season. In particular, we believe the values we hold around the School's sense of place and connection to Deer Isle and Maine mean we have an obligation to deepen our engagement and build a more inclusive exchange with local, regional, and statewide communities. Acknowledging that aspects of this work are new for us, we will move thoughtfully and critically to ensure we are responding to our communities in a way that reflects our values. Over the next five years, we will build mechanisms for more intentionally engaging with community members, and test programs that respond to community needs.

We also believe Haystack can strengthen its contribution to the field of craft by expanding beyond the core season on campus. This work must be undertaken with similar thought and care, to ensure that we are supporting the field in a way that also ensures organizational health and sustainability.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

1. **Through state, regional, and local programming, promote the arts and contribute to the creative lives of Maine residents.**
  - a. Evaluate Haystack’s current role in the community and the roles it could play to respond to changing community needs.
  - b. Institute practices that build ongoing, continuous engagement with community members outside of programming.
2. **Expand Haystack’s aim of exploring the intersections of craft, art, and design beyond the seasonal constraints of the campus and into Deer Isle.**
  - a. Explore the feasibility of opening year-round spaces in Deer Isle or Stonington to promote the arts and contribute to the creative lives of area residents.
  - b. Explore the feasibility of developing a Haystack Study Center to house archival materials and collections to support research into the history of the School and its impact on the field of craft.
3. **Explore opportunities for public engagement beyond Haystack’s physical presence in Maine.**
  - a. Identify and create partnerships that present opportunities for Haystack to extend its reach.
  - b. Explore virtual platforms, and develop options and approaches for virtual programming, as a way of reaching new audiences.

## GOAL II Reimagine the way we cocreate and foster supportive communities on the Haystack campus.

Each season, the people assembled on Haystack’s Deer Isle campus create a dynamic community based on generosity and exchange, which is foundational to the practice of craft. We thrive when this ever-changing community comprises individuals with a broad variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and ways of approaching craft, and when all members of this community feel safe, supported, and welcomed.

Understanding this as key to success, we do not believe we have fully succeeded in either of these regards, however. Over our seventy-year history, we have assembled communities that do not fully represent the breadth and scope of contemporary practices or the rich and diverse spectrum of people in the field of craft. In particular, we believe we do not adequately engage individuals who identify as BIPOC and LGBTQIA in all of our work. Not only has this limited the scope of the field of craft represented on our campus, thus limiting the potential for creative and expansive exchange, but, given the impact of Haystack on generations of makers and thinkers, it has also reinforced an overly narrow definition of the field at large.

We must consider building community on the Haystack campus as a deliberate act that must be informed by, and in collaboration with, the people who make up those communities. We hope programming that more fully represents the breadth and scope of the field of craft will shift the community gathered on our campus, while at the same time acknowledging this change on its own is not sufficient.

Over the next five years, we will focus on two major efforts:

- **Reducing barriers to access** that by their nature narrow the scope of students who join the Haystack community.
- **Constructing a welcoming, supportive community** with and for our students, faculty, staff, and trustees.

## REDUCING BARRIERS TO ACCESS

### CONTEXT

Increasing access to Haystack amplifies the spirit of reciprocity—of learning alongside others—that underscores our educational approach and reinvests in the spirit of generosity on which the School was founded. Achieving this goal means changing the ways we build partnerships and collaborations, and increasing our scholarship support. Over the next five years, Haystack will focus on aspects of our earned revenue model that may either prevent participants from attending Haystack or change the way participants experience Haystack, while addressing elements of our infrastructure that limit equitable access for broad groups of people.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

### 1. Reimagine Haystack’s tuition and scholarship programs.

- a. Evaluate and redesign the work-study program.
- b. Reconsider potential types and nature of scholarship awards.
- c. Increase the proportion of students receiving scholarships from twenty-five to fifty percent.
- d. Reset tuition increases to ensure Haystack remains financially accessible.
- e. Refine the processes for selecting fellowships and scholarship recipients.

### 2. Ensure that all participants have equitable access to the Haystack experience.

- a. Identify accessibility upgrades as a part of the master planning process.
- b. Identify more equitable housing options as a part of the master planning process.
- c. Create a dedicated option for transportation to the Haystack campus to provide greater control over the arrival and departure experience.

## CONSTRUCTING A WELCOMING, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

### CONTEXT

In addition to being a critical step in achieving Haystack’s vision of broadening the community on campus, a truly inclusive, welcoming experience is a critical component of Haystack’s vision for a field infused with a spirit of generosity and exchange. We recognize that we have not adequately cultivated support systems that would promote an inclusive experience for all participants, particularly those who are underrepresented in the field and who have been historically marginalized from craft Schools or are less comfortable in rural settings.

Over the next five years, we seek to learn more from participants about how we can support and make them feel welcome on campus. In tandem, we must also actively progress in our role of dismantling structural forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, and oppression in all aspects of the organization. We recognize that an inclusive, welcoming experience must combat broader contextual forces—namely, that Maine has the highest percentage of white residents of any state in the country and a documented history of white supremacy, racism, and homophobia. Part of building an inclusive community also involves honoring the lived experiences of participants and the way that informs someone’s experience within this remote location. In particular, we recognize that a specific narrative has existed at Haystack that relies on the transformative power of nature and the ability for a remote location to foster innovation, creativity, and self-discovery. While this may be true for some, it is not the experience of everyone who comes to the School.

### STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

#### 1. Reimagine the experience of first-time participants at Haystack.

- a. Conduct surveys, interviews, or focus groups with recent, first-time participants to understand their experience, surface shared issues or questions, and identify steps we can take to improve experiences for future participants.
- b. Work from this research to develop:
  - New, comprehensive orientation documents for faculty and participants
  - New, comprehensive in-person orientation program
  - Other programs for first-time attendees during the session
- c. Pilot an ambassador program for new participants.

#### 2. Build a sense of safety, welcoming, and belonging for students and faculty, particularly those in underrepresented groups.

- a. Provide clear guidelines and expectations for the School’s commitment to the safety, health, mutual respect, and well-being of our community.
- b. Rethink Haystack’s approach to the participant arrival experience and orientation, both through documents and in-person engagement.
- c. On an ongoing basis, identify conditions that may cause discomfort or alienate students and faculty from Haystack’s stated aim of providing access to a supportive and inclusive creative community.

- d. As part of the pilot ambassador program, designate former scholarship recipients to serve as ambassadors for current recipients.
- e. Continue to build administrative practices and structures that foster a supportive community.

### 3. Expand organizational partnerships to center voices of those underrepresented in craft.

- a. Continue to cocreate programs with organizations led by and devoted to serving populations who have been historically underrepresented at Haystack.

### 4. Establish formal practices for feedback and dialogue with participants and faculty before, during, and after each session.

- a. Create opportunities for pre-session dialogue with participants and faculty.
- b. Institute confidential, annual surveys to collect perspectives of participants and faculty.
- c. Conduct annual post-session interviews and surveys with scholarship recipients.

## GOAL III Build on the strength of current operational structures and increase the School's fiscal capacity to accomplish ambitious goals and ensure long-term sustainability.

The structures that support Haystack's core must remain nimble and responsive to support our continued evolution in pursuit of our long-term vision. We are fortunate to be building from a strong platform, including recent work in fundraising and governance that have positioned the School for further success. Over the course of this Strategic Plan, we will make intentional, targeted efforts to bolster our supporting structures, in two areas:

**Communications:** Creating a comprehensive strategy that shares the story of Haystack and its community members, as well as our leadership and legacy.

**Fundraising:** Expanding our development efforts to increase contributed revenue and prepare for a capital campaign.

This work, if successful, will prepare us to launch an ambitious capital campaign to build the financial and physical structures that will support the achievement of our long-term vision. It will also increase the School's stability and sustainability, positioning us for success during the period of this plan and beyond.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### CONTEXT

Haystack's current communications approach does not fully reflect the leadership role Haystack has played and wishes to play in the field, and we have both an opportunity and an obligation to do so. Over the next five years, we will work toward building a comprehensive communications strategy—one that increases Haystack's presence nationally and internationally while working toward our vision of expanding the field of craft. While we share the story of Haystack's present and future, we will also invest in documenting the School's history, continuing to share the story of the institution and building an understanding of its legacy.

### STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

#### 1. Develop a comprehensive print and social media communications strategy to more effectively communicate our values, stories of the School, and the experiences of its participants with stakeholders and the broader public.

- a. Create a suite of print materials that focuses on different elements of Haystack, including fellowships; the Barnes campus and its significance; the School's programming; and the School's impact.
- b. Engage a consultant to strengthen Haystack's digital and social media presence.
- c. Refine the School's approach to communicating with key stakeholders.

- 2. Continue to develop publications and oral history initiatives that share the history of Haystack and its contributions to the field.**
  - a. Leverage Haystack’s archives to share the history of the School.
  - b. Launch oral history initiatives to expand Haystack’s archives.

## FUNDRAISING

### CONTEXT

Haystack has long had a strong track record of raising endowment funds, particularly scholarships, to support the work of the School. Currently, most major gifts are directed to scholarships, and the School has made a deliberate effort to promote giving in this area. Beyond this, however, the rest of our fundraising has been more passive in nature. Recent efforts to more proactively fundraise have generated immediate returns, leading to four years of record-breaking fundraising.

We see an opportunity to build from this success and proactively broaden avenues of giving—in particular, building opportunities for major donors beyond scholarships, and in growing our donor base and increasing annual contributed revenue from across that base. Working to build such a robust, diversified fundraising strategy over the next five years will support the School’s goal of decreasing reliance on earned income while laying the groundwork for a successful capital campaign.

### STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- 1. Build a greater understanding of the capacity and motivation of Haystack’s donors.**
  - a. Conduct research to understand why current donors give to Haystack.
  - b. Conduct research to understand the capacity of Haystack’s donor base.
  - c. Use research to develop tailored donor cultivation and stewardship plans.
  
- 2. Develop a holistic fundraising approach to complement scholarship giving and build the School’s capacity for a capital campaign.**
  - a. Strengthen Haystack’s planned giving program.
  - b. Invest in cultivation of current and prospective major donors.
  - c. Invest in relationship building with donors at all levels.
  - d. Use the Annual Appeal to broaden Haystack’s donor base and cultivate sustained relationships with donors.
  - e. Deepen and broaden relationships with foundation and institutional donors.
  
- 3. Continue building Haystack’s endowed scholarship funds.**
  - a. Align the corpus of endowed scholarship funds with current scholarship structure and goals.
  - b. Build the endowment to support an increased number of students on scholarship.
  
- 4. Prepare for and launch a capital campaign to support facility upgrades, broaden access to Haystack, and support the School’s future.**
  - a. Set the parameters for the campaign, and use donor research to explore its feasibility.
  - b. Launch the campaign’s silent phase.
  - c. Launch the campaign’s public phase.

# OPERATIONAL DETAIL

As a part of the strategic planning process, Haystack developed a detailed operational plan that outlines the steps the School might take to enact each of the strategies and tactics outlined above. This work was intended to provide staff with an initial hypothesis of how the Strategic Plan might be implemented; we expect that, as we embark on this plan's strategies, we will gain valuable information that can be used to refine our tactical approach. Alongside the operational plan, a financial model was developed to identify the scale of investment implied in this plan's strategies and tactics. As we refine our tactical approach to the plan, we will also develop a more precise understanding of the financial implications of each step, which will inform our ongoing decision-making about financial investment. As such, we view the ideas in both the operational plan and financial model as living hypotheses that will be updated and refined over the next five years. Complete financial implications and detailed appendices are included in the unabridged version of Haystack's Strategic Plan.

This section summarizes the key outcomes of this work—the potential timeline for implementing the major components of the plan and the scale of financial investments implied.

## TIMELINE

### YEAR ONE • 2021

In the first year of implementing the Strategic Plan, Haystack will prioritize work in four focus areas, as follows:

- **Campus Infrastructure and Facilities:** Haystack will begin a contract with a master planning firm, the selection process for which has already begun. The Master Plan will guide the next decade in updating and rehabilitating Haystack's campus as well as be a driver of an upcoming capital campaign.
- **Reducing Barriers to Access:** The School will begin its work to expand access, specifically by eliminating the work-study program and transitioning all scholarship recipients to fellowships.
- **Communications:** Haystack will move forward with its communications strategy in year one, specifically by increasing the communications budget, investing in new printed materials, and begin engaging a social media consultant.
- **Fundraising:** Haystack will enter into a relationship with a development consultant to help gather information about Haystack's donors, craft fundraising strategies, and begin laying the groundwork for capital campaign planning, including refining the timeline for the campaign. This relationship will continue over the course of the plan.

Additionally, in the first year of the plan Haystack will gather information to help refine its approaches to programming, engaging with local communities and reimagining ways to cocreate and foster supportive communities. This work will involve research and conversations with community members, and begins to build the practice of feedback and dialogue that will continue throughout the plan.

### YEAR TWO • 2022

Year two will build off of the foundation laid in year one. New areas of focus include:

- **Programming:** Haystack will begin implementing programming strategies laid out in this plan and refined through research and dialogue. Additionally, the efforts started in year one to increase the School's ability to attract and retain diverse faculty will continue into year two and remain ongoing over the course of the plan.
- **Community and Public Engagement:** Based on findings from listening sessions with community members in year one, Haystack will move forward with designing programmatic offerings and other methods of engagement with local communities. In addition, Haystack will undertake a study of its archives to understand their current state and potential for future use.
- **Reducing Barriers to Access:** Starting in year two, Haystack will consider ways of increasing support to technical assistants and Open Studio Residency participants. In addition, to support equitable access to the campus, Haystack plans to introduce its own dedicated transportation option to and from the campus.

- **Constructing a Welcoming, Supportive Community:** Haystack will begin work to reimagine the on-campus experience. This work includes gathering feedback from past participants, identifying potential supports Haystack should provide to first-time participants, and continuing to cocreate programs led by and for populations who have been historically underrepresented at Haystack. In addition, Haystack will implement formal practices of gathering annual feedback from both students and faculty.
- **Fundraising:** Haystack will begin implementing donor outreach strategies that build from donor research conducted in year one. Pending the timeline of the campaign, the School may also begin developing campaign materials and quiet phase outreach strategies.

### YEARS THREE THROUGH FIVE • 2023, 2024, 2025

In the third year of the Strategic Plan, Haystack will begin increasing the number of students who receive scholarships from the School. Increases will occur over a three-year period, with the goal of a participant population that is about fifty percent supported by scholarships in year five. Beyond this, in the final years of the Strategic Plan, Haystack will build from the work begun in years one and two. In particular, Haystack will make an investment in a dedicated communications position to ensure that the groundwork laid in years one and two is leveraged strategically and successfully. Haystack will also invest in fundraising by increasing its donor cultivation.

The operational plan also anticipates Haystack will take on a few one-time, short-term initiatives in the latter years of the plan:

- **Community and Public Engagement:** Pending the results of research conducted in the first two years of the plan, and findings from the master planning process, the School will begin planning for and executing one or more of the following:
  - A pilot of new, year-round community programs, possibly in conjunction with opening a year-round space for community in Deer Isle / Stonington
  - A three-year project to organize, expand, and leverage Haystack's archives, possibly in conjunction with the creation of a study center in Deer Isle
- **Communications:** Creating a publication to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the School.

## FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

Given the steps laid out in the operational plan, Haystack staff identified the incremental investments that would be necessary to support the work of the plan. These fell into three categories: campus infrastructure and facilities, community and public engagement, and communications. The financial detail in the unabridged plan identifies major investments, ongoing expenses, short term initiatives, and the related scale of each investment.

### SHORT-TERM INITIATIVES

Short-term initiatives are time-delimited initiatives, which would start and end during the time period of the Strategic Plan; most are either one-time expenses or two-year projects. While these initiatives are discrete, some have implications for other parts of the financial model—either through related incremental operating expenses projected in later years of the plan, or because they would generate capital investments to be funded in a capital campaign. These related expenses would be contingent on the outcome of the short-term initiative.

### ONGOING EXPENSES

Ongoing expenses support tactics that, if successful, would become a part of Haystack's normal operations beyond the duration of this plan.

Over the five years of the plan, it is expected that the School will support these expenses through increased annual contributed revenue—either via dedicated gifts or unrestricted contributions. Haystack will only undertake a scale of investment commensurate with its projected contributed revenue each year, in order to ensure the School continues to operate from a position of financial health. Therefore, as a part of the annual budgeting process, Haystack staff would examine recent trends in contributed revenue in order to determine the appropriate projection for the next year; this would then inform the scale of plan investment that could be supported by operating revenue.

Unlike short-term initiatives, it is expected that ongoing expenses continue beyond the five years of the plan. The School expects to use a combination of ongoing revenue and increased endowment draw to support these ongoing expenses; the balance between these two revenue sources would be determined by the success of the fundraising strategy outlined in this plan and the School's approach to a capital campaign.

# GOVERNANCE

Haystack's board of trustees provides strategic and fiduciary guidance and oversight, and supports the School's Executive Director. In recent years, governance work has focused on diversifying the board to include representatives from across the Haystack experience, particularly BIPOC individuals. Simultaneously, the board has developed methods to enhance its functioning, including tracking the profile of trustees and building annual opportunities for self-reflection from board members. This work will serve the School well as we now shift the board's attention to oversight of the Strategic Plan and support for an upcoming capital campaign.

Over the next five years, governance work will focus in two areas:

- **Continuing to strengthen the board's functioning as the School's strategic leadership body. This will involve:**

- In the first year of the plan, updating the board committee structure to support a better coordinated, more impactful governance function.

- Engaging in ongoing discussions and trainings around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Actively building the board of trustees so it has the skill sets, knowledge, and experience to undertake and support an ambitious capital campaign.

- Continuing the work already under way to build a board of trustees with the identities, experiences, and skills that represent the communities Haystack wishes to engage.

- Continuing to clarify board-staff relationships.

- Continuing to explore how the structure and function of the board reflects the organization's commitment to equity and transparency.

- **Establishing regular formal practices for the board to reflect on the progress of the Strategic Plan.**

- We recognize the importance of the board in both reflecting on this plan's execution and its results and in supporting the execution of some of the strategies and tactics outlined above. To support board participation and ensure effective oversight, Haystack has developed the following approach:

- Annual discussions between the board and Executive Director to identify the initiatives that require board participation and develop a theory of the structure and nature of that participation. For example, some initiatives could require a joint board-staff task force, while others might be supported by a standing board committee.

- Biannual Strategic Plan discussions with the full board. These discussions will include reflecting on the results of the plan—both for the past year and overall to date—as well as looking forward to the implementation of the plan for the coming year. These forward-looking discussions will align with Haystack's annual budgeting process, so that the plan's initiatives are naturally integrated into conversations about the School's overall operations.

- More detailed, in-depth reflection and oversight spearheaded by a strategy committee, who will work with the Board President and Executive Director to shape the discussions at the full board level.



# CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Conversations throughout the planning process highlighted conditions that could impact the success of this Strategic Plan. Conditions were defined as either organizational or environmental:

- **Organizational conditions** relate to the execution of the strategies and tactics set forth in this document.
- **Environmental conditions** relate to the reception of this plan's activities by audiences, donors, and other stakeholders, as well as environmental factors outside Haystack's control, which often result from larger market forces that organizations cannot overcome despite their best efforts.

As part of the implementation of this planning process, Haystack will monitor these conditions and adjust its strategy as needed.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS

### CONTINUED STRENGTH OF STAFF

Haystack has long been supported by a small, dedicated staff team, both year-round and seasonal. Leadership has high degrees of confidence in the dedication and skills of the current staff team to support the School's day-to-day operations and, with the addition of targeted staff capacity outlined above, execute this plan. Retention of the current staff group will be critical to the success of the plan; Haystack has identified increased opportunities for professional development as two important ways to support retention.

Nevertheless, we anticipate some inevitable transitions to new staff due to potential retirements of staff over the course of the next five years. Since these long-tenured staff members hold deep connections and institutional knowledge, the School's work in succession planning will be critical to ensure a smooth transition to new staff members with limited loss of institutional memory. We also understand that these transitions present an opportunity to broaden our recruiting networks and actively seek to build a staff that represents the multiple dimensions of diversity we want to embody as an institution. This, in turn, will further strengthen our staff for the future.

### STAFF TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

In recent years, leadership has focused on developing practices and structures that encourage greater transparency, communication, and participation among staff in decision-making. Continuing to work on these practices will support the cohesion of the staff team, in turn enhancing their ability to execute the strategies and tactics of this plan. This work is also essential, as our internal practices should reflect and model the equity and transparency we seek to establish with our participants, faculty, and other stakeholders.

### CONTINUED LEARNING AND REFLECTION ON ISSUES OF EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND DIVERSITY

As previously stated, underscoring Haystack's vision and the goals of this plan is a commitment to addressing antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion across Haystack's programming, operations, and governance. Conversations in the planning process have surfaced our rationale for engaging in this work, as well as a sense of what these ideas mean to Haystack. At the same time, we must continue to strengthen our organizational understanding of and commitment to these ideas. Doing so in parallel to our work to actively address these issues will allow us to more thoughtfully reflect on our successes and shortcomings, and become an actively antiracist organization.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

### DONOR RESPONSE

A key assumption of this Strategic Plan is that Haystack has the opportunity to increase its contributed revenue. Capitalizing on these opportunities to generate both incremental earned revenue and new endowment gifts will be critical to support the plan and the organization's overall financial health. In addition, positive donor response in the early years of the plan will be a leading key indicator of the potential for a successful capital campaign.

## ECONOMIC TRENDS AND FINANCIAL MARKETS

As Haystack looks to a capital campaign that is key to this strategic plan, the national economy and state of our financial markets will likely play a role in donors' assessment of their financial position, capacity to support a capital campaign, and scale of donations. It remains to be seen how today's uncertain political climate, and widespread economic volatility due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will translate into economic performance in the coming years. In the case of an economic downturn, Haystack might see decreased capacity or willingness to support a capital campaign. In addition, an economic downturn might impact Haystack's endowment; this would in turn impact the organization's ability to leverage that critical source of support.

## PUBLIC HEALTH CONDITIONS AND AUDIENCE DEMAND

At the time of this plan's creation, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to limit the way we gather in public—let alone travel from our homes. Continued uncertainty around the trajectory of the pandemic makes it difficult to plan for the future, as well as to estimate how constituents—from participants to faculty members—will behave in coming years. While the current picture suggests that the public health restrictions related to Covid-19 will impact the first year of the plan, its impact on Haystack's communities may last longer. A change in the number of participants coming to Haystack would shift the School's earned revenue model; another delayed or canceled season would impact the timeline of the plan's programmatic initiatives. Should the pandemic have an extended impact, Haystack will likely need to revisit its programmatic strategy in response to this new environment.

# PLANNING PROCESS PARTICIPANTS

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

### BOARD

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### STAFF

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Alison Dennis  
Sitka Center for Art and Ecology  
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A Blade of Grass  
Deanna Haggag  
United States Artists  
Mia Hall  
Penland School of Craft  
Jerry Jackson  
John C. Campbell Folk School  
Jennifer Martin  
The Clay Studio  
Bill May  
Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts  
Kristin Muller  
Peters Valley School of Craft  
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