

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Introduction

The implementation of our 2018-2022 strategic plan has been a great success, despite the pandemic. We are proud to announce that we have completed the majority of the 58 proposed actions. Very few items have not been completed and it is with a view to continuing this trend that this 2022-2025 plan has been written. Indeed, thanks to the past efforts at the development level, the Committee had a lot of material from which to prepare a strategic plan that is realistic, achievable and engaging for our staff.

We are conducting a strategic planning exercise to:

- Increase the performance of the organization.
- Provide us with a tool to better qualify for financing.
- Obtain or maintain our accreditations from recognized organizations: Exporail is a museum accredited by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec and its private archive centre is accredited by the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. These two accreditations provide recurrent funding for operations.
- Prepare for a major expansion or implement new initiatives: for example, the "Exporail 2.0" project described below.
- Engage staff and board of directors.
- Addressing changes in the internal and external environment.

The individuals who make up the Committee have a solid expertise in strategic planning in a major corporation, have a deep knowledge of the CRHA and Exporail thanks to a long-standing commitment to the organization, or were involved in the realization of the previous plan. To work on this new plan, the Board of Directors has entrusted Director François Hébert to chair the committee. Also on the committee are Nadine Cloutier, Executive Director, François Gaudette, now a Director, and Fiona Murray, Director.

The plan retains the structure that was used in the previous plan. We will present:

- **The vision:** expresses the purpose of the organization.
- **The mission:** expresses the impact the organization hopes to have.
- **Critical success factors:** what we must do to achieve our mission.
- **Strategies:** what we will do to accomplish the critical success factors.
- **The action plan:** what will allow us to achieve the strategy?

Our strategic plan focusses on our human and material resources, our facilities and our culture. However, it also draws heavily on the proposed expansion project entitled "Exporail 2.0", for which a feasibility study was conducted in 2021-2022. This project is planned as one of the major development achievements for Exporail and will involve several areas of the museum. This comprehensive, all-encompassing project will have a significant impact on facilities, archives and collections, exhibits, space rental, public and customer service areas, operations and volunteer work.



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The Vision:

The Canadian Railroad Historical Association (CRHA) is recognized as the pre-eminent source of knowledge and interpretation of Canada's railway heritage. As Canada's premier railway museum, it aims to be among the best in the world.

The Mission:

Exporail delights its audiences by operating a living railway museum that informs and engages through the excellence of its museology and all its research, conservation, museological, educational, archival and publishing activities.

The 6 critical success factors put forward:

The order in which the critical success factors are presented is not an indicator of prioritization. They are all equally important.

- Our staff
- Infrastructure development
- Market development
- Customer experiences
- Collections and Archives
- Revenues

Each critical success factor will be linked to strategies and actions to ensure its achievement.

Our Staff - We must strengthen all of our staff, including paid staff and volunteers.

The initial development of the CRHA was accomplished by volunteers, and although a team of paid professionals has now been established, volunteers continue to play a vital role in the organization.

Volunteers not only perform many day-to-day tasks, but they are also responsible for the management of certain deliverables. This highlights a growing challenge: a team of volunteers whose varied expertise disappears. We will need to replace this expertise as volunteers are no longer able to contribute.

Also, the current labour conditions has meant that the hiring and retention of staff for permanent and casual positions has been increasingly difficult in recent years. This has been accelerated by the recent pandemic. It is therefore important that the CRHA not become a last choice in the career path of individuals, but rather, both a career and development opportunity for them.

Here are the steps that we will take to strengthen our staff community:

Strategy 1:

We will be an employer of choice in the museum world for all staff.

Actions:

1. Develop a value system to create a sense of belonging and mobilize human resources.
2. Build a succession plan for key positions through a Board of Directors Staff committee.

Strategy 2:

We will strengthen recruitment, attractiveness and retention of **employees**.

Actions:

1. Review conditions and compensation in light of the current job market to maintain attractiveness as an employer of choice.
2. Implementing a recruitment strategy through job marketing.

Strategy 3:

We will actively recruit **volunteers** to meet the specific needs we have set to achieve the plan's goals and be an employer of choice.

Actions:

1. Actively recruit volunteers to increase our capacity.
2. Conduct targeted outreach recruitment to meet plan objectives.
3. Develop procedures and publish a welcome package for new volunteers.
4. Develop formal recognition and support programs.
5. Involve all staff in defining roles and managing volunteers in their area.



Infrastructure Development - *We must build our future development.*

The CRHA we know today is the result of over ninety years of dreaming, planning, execution and effort by a team of enthusiastic volunteers and professionals. That they were able to create Exporail, one of the world's finest railway museums from scratch is a testament to the value of bold thinking and hard work over a long period of time. Those who built Exporail have much to be proud of.

In keeping with the spirit of the builders, we are moving forward with the development plan for Exporail 2.0 while ensuring that the new facilities are financially viable.

Here are the new steps that we will take on the road to Exporail 2.0:

Strategy 1:

We will finalize the detailed development plan for Exporail 2.0 through the Development Committee.

Actions:

1. Evaluate the recommendations of the feasibility study: Development Committee.
2. Conduct focus groups with visitors to validate the project and survey their needs.
3. Develop alternative scenarios to what Exporail 2.0 could be.
4. Start the implementation of Exporail 2.0.

Strategy 2:

We will produce an action plan for our operations for the transition to Exporail 2.0, via the Development Committee.

Actions:

1. Allocate the necessary resources to implement and support a business plan.
2. Put the business plan into action.

Strategy 3:

We will start at least one major project during this 3-year strategic plan period.

Actions:

1. Select projects for detailed evaluation based on criteria objectives.
2. Develop plans, budgets and schedules for these.
3. Select at least one, allocate resources and start it.

Market Development - *We must grow our customer base.*

Following a recommendation in the 2018-2021 CRHA Strategic Plan, Exporail created a permanent marketing and sales position and prepared the first Marketing Plan in its history.

This blueprint addresses the four key "P" aspects of marketing: positioning and promotion, which are developed under the critical success factor "Market Development", and product and price, which are part of the critical success factor "Customer Experiences".

The positioning strategies identify the actions to be taken to diversify and increase the types of clientele that will be targeted, while promoting our main, more traditional markets of families and school groups.

Promotional strategies address the limited public awareness of Exporail by developing a customer campaign that focuses on the museum's geographic, social and core proximities, and by making greater use of digital technologies.

Here are the strategies and actions that we will adopt in order to develop our markets and increase our client base:

Strategy 1:

We will target and develop new customers, according to the Marketing Plan.

Actions:

1. Implement the strategies identified to reach new target markets.
2. Maintain and increase our acquired markets.
3. Develop events, programs, tours and temporary exhibitions for targeted market segments.
4. Update annually based on results.

Strategy 2:

We will increase the awareness of Exporail.

Actions:

1. Prepare and launch campaigns of geographical and social proximity.
2. Increase and diversify our promotional tools.
3. Use several distribution channels: associations, ambassadors, media, influencers.
4. Increase our interactivity with our clients via the various social media.

Strategy 3:

We will expand our use of digital technologies.

Actions:

1. Review business processes to accommodate the arrival of Eudonet software.
2. Develop self-guided tours.
3. Create a database of visitors and contacts from other interest groups.
4. Develop online and print news for non-visitors and CRHA members.

Customer Experiences - *We must provide our customers with exceptional experiences.*

The main reason people visit Exporail is to have fun through a social, lively and interactive experience, while discovering historical and educational aspects. In fact, Exporail's mission is to delight its audiences.

Given the growing diversity of our clientele, we must offer varied and exceptional experiences that are renewed on a regular basis. Our promotional campaign aims to trigger emotions of pride in our historical heritage and nostalgia for our railway past. Our facilities must reflect an immersive and safe experience, while highlighting the architectural and landscape appeal of the railway world.

We operate in a competitive market, and our pricing must be well aligned with our museum offer. Our strategies and actions propose to offer dynamic and seasonal pricing as well as attractive subscription offers in partnership with other players in the tourism industry.

Here are the strategies and actions that we will adopt in order to offer our clients exceptional experiences:

Strategy 1:

We will develop and deliver new experiences aligned to target markets.

Actions:

1. Develop and deliver interactive experiences.
2. Create a room dedicated to the visual arts from our vast collection of artifacts.
3. Increase the use of our projection room.
4. Develop a major new product.
5. Upgrade the model railroad exhibit.

Strategy 2:

We will improve the site's facilities to enhance the visitor experience.

Actions:

1. Build the new bridge that provides the main access to the site.
2. Install a railroad-themed area for children and parents.
3. Enhance the garden train experience.
4. Renew the site's signage and paths.
5. Expand and pave the public parking lot.

Strategy 3:

We will review the structure of the tariff offers.

Actions:

1. Develop packages with regional partners and tourist groups.
2. Review subscription offers.
3. Add the notion of seasonality in our pricing.
4. Introduce the concept of variable duration visits for group clients.

Collections and Archives - *We must increase the quality of our collections and archives.*

The CRHA began collecting railway-related objects and archival material shortly after its founding. The first vehicle was acquired in 1950 and the number of pieces of rolling stock in the collection has now grown to over 180. The result is the largest and most comprehensive collection of railway vehicles in Canada.

Over the past few years, efforts have been made to assess the overall collection of small objects, vehicles and archival documents. It was found that some of the collection areas were either redundant or lacked essential artifacts or archival material to complete Exporail's mission.

In addition, a study of the relevance and/or degree of restoration required for the vehicles was carried out, which resulted in the positioning of each vehicle in the collections. In the same vein, such a study must be carried out for all archival funds.

Here are the steps that we will take to increase the quality of our collections and archives:

Strategy 1:

We will take steps to acquire, preserve and disseminate our collections and archives.

Actions:

1. Plan and continue restoration work on prioritized artifacts in an organized manner.
2. Continue the dissemination of our collections and archives.
3. Update collection targets for vehicles, artifacts and archives.

Strategy 2:

We will finalize the rationalization of our rolling stock collection based on our ability to maintain it properly.

Actions

1. Determine which items to remove from collections.
2. Prepare and implement a disposal plan.

Strategy 3:

We will continue the treatment and care of archives and documentation centre.

Actions:

1. Select and implement new archival software.
2. Identify and dispose of items to be removed from the archives and documentation centre.

Revenues - *We must increase our revenues in a sustainable way.*

Reliable and diversified sources of income are a fundamental pillar of any healthy organization. As with all non-profit organizations, revenue sources can be precarious, even under the best of circumstances. We must continue to move towards greater self-sufficiency in the face of declining government support.

Building on our 2018-2021 strategic plan, we must continue to pursue predictable and sustainable revenue streams for the organization to grow and thrive. This is necessary not only to meet the rising costs of operations, but also to deliver on our vision of a world-class organization with top-level experts and world-class services and customer experiences.

We will develop multiple sources of revenue that we can rely on year after year, and we will make fundraising the responsibility of every board member, not just the Fundraising Committee. We are fully capable of succeeding, as the results of the past decade have proven; however, achieving this level of autonomy will require greater administrative and technical resources.

Here are the strategies that we will take for implementing this essential success factor:

Strategy 1:

We will make revenue generation a key responsibility of the Board of Directors.

Actions:

1. Build a fundraising strategy and put it into action with sufficient resources.
2. Define the role and processes surrounding fundraising administration within the team.
3. Obtain the expertise and resources to organize and support the fundraising.

Strategy 2:

We will diversify the sources and increase the numbers of donations.

Actions:

1. Target major donors in the executive ranks of railway companies.
2. Develop donation campaigns targeting employees, retirees and rail suppliers.
3. Create opportunities to nominate sponsors.
4. Approach and secure commitments from governments, corporations, foundations and individuals for ongoing support of operations and special campaigns.



Objectives

In order to align the efforts of all participants in the accomplishment of this strategic plan over the next three years, the quantitative objectives are the following:

Budget Forecast

(000\$)	2019-2020 Actual	2020-2021 Actual	2021-2022 Actual	2022-2023 Projected	2023-2024 Projected*	2024-2025 Projected*	*+5% increase
Revenues							
Operating and donations	1 415	685	1 338	1 477	1 501	1 576	
Grants	1 159	1 368	1 120	850	943	990	
Total	2 574	2 053	2 458	2 327	2 444	2 566	
Expenses							
Operating	833	529	872	745	748	785	
Museology and publications	1 269	668	948	1 256	1 176	1 234	
Buildings and grounds	547	435	518	584	520	547	
Total	2 649	1 632	2 338	2 585	2 444	2 566	
Visitors	65 717	14 708	50 849	56 000	62 000	68 000	*In 2024-2025: we catch up with pre-pandemic attendance