

2014-16 Executive Progress Report

Commonwealth of Virginia
Secretary of Education

Gunston Hall

At A Glance

To utilize fully the physical and scholarly resources of Gunston Hall to stimulate continuing public exploration of democratic ideals as first presented by George Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights.

Staffing 3 Salaried Employees, 0 Contracted Employees, 11 Authorized, and 21 Wage Employees.

Financials Budget FY 2015, \$0.69 million, 74.43% from the General Fund.

Trends Expand overall visitation

Key Perf Areas Increase visitation

Legend Increase, Decrease, Steady

Productivity

Legend Improving, Worsening, Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov

Background and History

Agency Background Statement

Gunston Hall was a thriving 5,500-acre plantation located along the Potomac River in Fairfax County, Virginia. Its owner, George Mason (1725-1792), was a fourth generation Virginian, a senior statesman, and author of seminal documents such as the Fairfax Resolves, the Virginia State Constitution, and most significantly, the Virginia Declaration of Rights. In writing the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Mason was among the first to articulate and call for such fundamental American liberties as religious tolerance and freedom of the press.

In 1932, a Deed of Gift from the owner of Gunston Hall, Louis Hertle, and subsequent legislation, conveyed the estate to the Commonwealth of Virginia and vested management and supervision of the property with a Board of Regents composed of members of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA). Today, Gunston Hall is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and a National Historic Landmark. Visitors to Gunston Hall receive guided tours of the mansion; self-guided opportunities to explore the plantation's outbuildings, landscapes, and grounds; and visit exhibits, view a film, or shop in the visitor center.

Major Products and Services

Gunston Hall is publicly accessible historic site and its primary service is education. This educational mission is fulfilled through guided mansion tours, on-site and off-site school programs, exhibits, research, archaeology, public programs, workshops and symposia, and self-guided cultural and environmental experiences throughout the site's 550 acres. The foundational philosophy for all these services are facilitating educational experiences which are intellectually and physically accessible, immersive and interactive, engaging and insightful, authentic, and appropriate for diverse demographics and learning styles across of broad array of formats.

Additionally, Gunston Hall provides for the stewardship of its resources through a significant commitment to historic preservation, collections management, and environmental conservation.

Customers

Customer Summary

Gunston Hall's customers include adults, seniors, school students, and families. As a result of expanded educational programming and enhanced community engagement, visitation to Gunston Hall increased in FY 2014 and we expect this trend, across all service areas, to continue.

Gunston Hall is also presently conducting a comprehensive survey of its daily guests and school program participants for the purpose of enhancing our ability to meet the needs and interests of those we serve. The results of this effort will further inform and support increased visitation and an expanded customer base for Gunston Hall.

Customer Table

Predefined Group	User Defined Group	Number Served Annually	Potential Number of Annual Customers	Projected Customer Trend
Adult	Adults	11,366	12,000	Increase
Child	Children (ages 6-18)	2,218	2,500	Increase
Child	Children (under 6)	302	500	Increase
Student	School Program participants	6,677	7,500	Increase
Aged	Senior guests	2,256	3,000	Increase

Finance and Performance Management

Finance

Financial Summary

Gunston Hall recognizes its organizational responsibility to be innovative and entrepreneurial in pursuit of financial sustainability. This commitment is articulated in the organization's strategic plan and is particularly important since Gunston Hall's general fund appropriation has declined 33% since 2007 while fixed operating costs (utilities, etc.) have increased 145% during the same time period. Gunston Hall has sought to strategically overcome this dramatic shift in resources by increasing efficiencies, reducing expenditures where possible, and seeking additional private support. Although Gunston Hall continues to focus on educational excellence, site stewardship, and community engagement, the reality of this decline in Commonwealth support continues to challenge the organization's ability to expand it's offerings to the public.

Fund Sources

Fund Code	Fund Name	FY 2015	FY 2016
0100	General Fund	\$509,989	\$510,582
0200	Special	\$175,184	\$175,588

Revenue Summary

Gunston Hall generates non-general fund revenue through site admissions. These funds directly support the operation of Gunston as a publicly accessible historic site. Increases in guests served in FY 2014 resulted in increased admissions revenue. Gunston Hall anticipates additional growth in these two categories in the future.

Performance

Performance Highlights

Gunston Hall evaluates and measures performance based on the number of guests served. In FY 2014, Gunston Hall served 22,819 guests, representing a 3% increase over FY 2013. This increase is largely based on growth among our adult, senior, and youth (children ages 0-16) visitors. Additionally, these increases correspond with an expansion of Gunston Hall's educational offerings and public programs, both in terms of number and the diversity of opportunities available at or in collaboration with Gunston Hall. Finally, guest surveys conducted and reviewed by Gunston Hall demonstrate an extremely high level of satisfaction with the experiences and services offered at Gunston Hall.

Selected Measures

Measure ID	Measure	Alternative Name	Estimated Trend
41714507.003.001	Follow all appropriate policies and procedures of the commonwealth.	Follow all appropriate policies and procedures of the commonwealth.	
M417AG12001	Annually increase total guests served.	Increase visitation	Improving

Key Risk Factors

In FY 2014 Gunston Hall adopted a strategic operating plan which articulated goals and opportunities specific to organizational advancement. This plan also identified potential challenges and risks which could hinder or prevent the successful achievement of this desired growth and expansion. These risks include declining public financial support, aging and failing infrastructure, a small staff, and the need to proactively and strategically align operations, educational offerings, and physical infrastructure with a rapidly evolving and increasingly diverse regional population in order to ensure relevance.

Gunston Hall is presently working to overcome these challenges in the following ways: 1) by diversifying its base of financial support and increasing the level of private financial support, 2) by seeking public and private funds for capital improvements, 3) by evaluating its organizational structure and identifying critical staffing needs while also considering options for adding staff, and 4) by collaboratively developing, designing, and implementing improvements to the site and our educational offerings which address the changing demographics of our region based on a series of community discussions and a comprehensive program of guest surveys.

Agency Statistics

Statistics Summary

Statistics Table

Description Value

Management Discussion

General Information About Ongoing Status of Agency

Gunston Hall will continue implementing its strategic operating plan and focusing on fulfilling its mission of stimulating the continuing exploration of democratic ideals as first expressed by George Mason in the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Fundamental to this work is becoming a national and international resource for the study of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, enhancing educational offerings, sustaining an acclaimed reputation, diversifying our base of financial support, preserving our cultural and natural resources, and facilitating research and collections based experiences. An exciting opportunity specific to these goals is the commemoration of the 240th anniversary of the ratification of the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 2016, an occasion Gunston Hall is beginning to plan and prepare for by developing an engaging slate of educational, recreational, and promotional events. Equally important, with Capital Fund support from the Commonwealth and private support from the community, Gunston Hall is renovating its museum / visitor center and completing significant repairs to the mansion and other cultural resources in FY 2015. Finally, Gunston Hall has initiated a dedicated effort to better interpret the history of the African American and enslaved population's experience at Gunston Hall through research and archaeology, to broaden and enhance partnerships and collaborations with other educational institutions such as George Mason University, and to increasingly engage its neighbors and the surrounding community.

Collectively, these efforts are intended and will support the future success and sustainability of Gunston Hall.

Information Technology

Gunston Hall's IT infrastructure is outdated, inefficient, and ineffective. In particular, given its somewhat rural and isolated location, connectivity is a challenge. This challenge is heightened by aging physical infrastructure at Gunston Hall. This lack of consistent and comprehensive connectivity hinders the development of digital educational experiences and the operational efficiency of the organization. Finally, increasing IT costs and fees for current or additional services challenge an already tight operating budget. Accordingly, Gunston Hall is proactively seeking private funds to support its website and other aspects of its IT infrastructure, but doing so within the parameters of the the Commonwealth's IT structure and systems limits options, delays implementation, and consumes significant personnel resources.

Workforce Development

Gunston Hall boasts a dedicated workforce who are passionate about the organization and its mission. The team is composed of a combination of experienced, skilled, long-tenured employees and talented, eager, emerging professionals. This balance serves the organization well and offers varied perspectives and viewpoints of value to the organization's efforts.

The Gunston Hall team is small and this reality poses operational challenges. These challenges are particularly acute in the areas of facilities and grounds (550 acres and multiple buildings), finance (complex budget and importance of a segregation of duties), and education (core mission and purpose). Accordingly, duties and responsibilities are spread across a variety of positions, making cross-training, communication, and collaboration very important and limiting time available for new initiatives.

While retention is a strength, recruitment represents an additional challenge. The Northern Virginia market is highly competitive, has low unemployment, a transient population, a high cost of living, and traffic congestion. Although amenities abound for current and potential residents, these factors frequently combine to limit the talent pool available and able to work at Gunston Hall where, despite overall high job satisfaction among the team, salaries are on average lower than our competitors and other comparable institutions. This is particularly true for entry and mid-level roles.

At present, Gunston Hall is refining its organizational structure, updating job descriptions and expectations, and developing a succession plan. Gunston Hall is also seeking private support for an enhanced program of continuing education and professional development. These efforts are part of an overall strategy designed to support the continuing development of the team.

Physical Plant

Gunston Hall features 550 acres, seventeen buildings of varying ages including, most importantly, Gunston Hall itself which was built by George Mason in 1755, and two cemeteries. The property also features multiple archaeological sites ranging from pre-history to the twentieth century. Accordingly, management of the physical plant is a significant investment and responsibility.

Stewardship of the site's cultural resources, again most importantly the mansion, is the top priority followed by the conservation of the site's natural resources. The visitor center and museum, reconstructed outbuildings, and work spaces such as the maintenance facility are the third priority.

Overall, Gunston Hall's physical plant is aging and failing in many areas, particularly relating to mechanical systems, and requires a significant investment of time and repair funds to maintain functionality. Gunston Hall is addressing some of these challenges by renovating its visitor center and museum in FY 2015 and is also completing several important historic preservation projects on the mansion in FY 2015. A master site plan is also desired, should funds become available, and would provide a blueprint for future growth.