

2018-20 Strategic Plan

Gunston Hall [417]

Mission

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.

Vision

That both George Mason and Gunston Hall achieve broader national recognition, George Mason for the significance of his unique contributions to the universal cause of human rights and Gunston Hall as a premier historic site, for the purpose of increasing the knowledge and understanding of those we serve.

Values

1. Integrity
2. Accessibility
3. Authenticity
4. Service
5. Creativity
6. Collaboration
7. Initiative
8. Leadership

Finance

Financial Overview

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 significantly since 2007 while fixed operating costs (utilities, etc.) have increased 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 its offerings to the public.

Biennial Budget

	2019 General Fund	2019 Nongeneral Fund	2020 General Fund	2020 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	661,973	180,177	661,973	180,177
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

(Changes to Initial Appropriation will be 0 when the plan is created. They will change when the plan is updated mid-biennium.)

Customers

Anticipated Changes to Customer Base

Gunston Hall is committed to diversifying its customer base and does anticipate changes to this base in the coming years. These anticipated changes are based on two primary factors; 1) organizational efforts to proactively expand this base and, 2) dramatic local, regional, and Commonwealth-wide shifts in population demographics. Accordingly, while Gunston Hall expects increasing participation in its offerings, these increases will likely be among segments of the population which do not presently represent a significant portion of Gunston Hall's current audience.

Current Customer List

Predefined	User Defined Group	Number Served	Potential Number of Annual	Projected Customer
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Group		Annually	Customers	Trend
Adult	Adults	10,100	12,000	Increase
Child	Children (ages 6-18)	1,236	2,500	Increase
Child	Children (under 6)	413	500	Increase
Student	School Program participants	6,435	7,500	Increase
Aged	Senior guests	1,981	3,000	Increase

Partners

Name	Description
Fairfax County Public Schools	Implementation of "Student Citizen Passport" Program
George Mason University	Digitization of collections and archives
George Mason University	School-based programming supporting teacher's and parent's ability to talk about difficult topics in our history with young people
Mason Neck Citizen's Association	Collaborative programming and community events
Mason Neck State Park	Collaborative programming and community events
Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce	Collaborative programming and community events
Multiple museums and cultural organizations	Collaborative programming and community events

Agency Goals

- To establish Gunston Hall as a national and international resource for the study and interpretation of the Virginia Declaration of Rights as a document of enduring international significance and the pivotal role of George Mason as its author.

Summary and Alignment

This goal is directly aligned with Gunston Hall's mission and organizational efforts to facilitate educational experiences, broaden understanding, and increase public awareness of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. The fulfillment of this goal and associated objectives will drive visitation, expand educational programming, diversify sources of support, enhance reputation, and bolster research and collections based initiatives. These efforts will also provide and support a level of public affinity for Gunston Hall necessary to ensure the preservation and stewardship of the resources entrusted to its care.

Associated State Goal

Education: Elevate the levels of educational preparedness and attainment of our citizens.

Associated Societal Indicator

Lifelong Learning

Objectives

- » To enhance national and international understanding of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and; facilitate educational experiences focusing on the Virginia Declaration of Rights, its enduring significance, relevance, and impact; and interpret George Mason's role as the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights.

Description

[Nothing Entered]

Objective Strategies

[Nothing Entered]

Measures

- ◆ Develop and implement educational experiences and opportunities targeted towards at-risk populations such as struggling schools in high poverty areas and youth in foster care and develop and implement early childhood educational experiences and opportunities.
- ◆ Enhance and expand training opportunities for teachers and develop programs specifically focusing on creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and critical thinking within a museum setting.

- » To increase public awareness of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and expand public engagement with Gunston Hall through a focus on this seminal document.

Description

[Nothing Entered]

Objective Strategies

[Nothing Entered]

Measures

- » **To study the intellectual and cultural influences impacting George Mason as he development the Virginia Declaration of Rights and incorporate this process of expression into educational experiences.**

Description

[Nothing Entered]

Objective Strategies

[Nothing Entered]

Measures

- » **To create a dynamic mix of authentic educational experiences providing value, impact, and benefit to a diverse audience.**

Description

[Nothing Entered]

Objective Strategies

- To provide support of veterans and military families.

Measures

- ◆ Create collaborations with Fort Belvoir, design and implement programs specific to military families, and expand offerings for Wounded Warriors and similar groups.
- ◆ Develop and implement educational experiences and opportunities targeted towards at-risk populations such as struggling schools in high poverty areas and youth in foster care and develop and implement early childhood educational experiences and opportunities.
- ◆ Enhance and expand training opportunities for teachers and develop programs specifically focusing on creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and critical thinking within a museum setting.

- **To preserve in superior condition Gunston Hall, the cultural resources and the natural ecosystems entrusted to our care; to provide an accessible, comfortable, sustainable, and safe environment for our stakeholders; and to facilitate a gateway experience for our guests through our management of this unique site that enriches all who visit.**

Summary and Alignment

Objectives

Major Products and Services

Opening to the public in 1952, Gunston Hall is a 550-acre National Historic Landmark passionately fulfilling its mission *to stimulate the continuing public exploration of democratic ideals as first expressed by George Mason in the Virginia Declaration of Rights*. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the visitor center and mansion are open to the public 362 days a year. During a visit, guests are able to experience guided tour of the mansion; self-guided exhibits and tours of the reconstructed outbuildings (schoolhouse, kitchen, etc.), an active archaeology program, and hiking trails. The property is also a certified nature sanctuary and former Virginia Governor Terrence McAuliffe designated the site's extensive Bluebird Trail as a "Virginia Treasure".

Additionally, Gunston Hall is a *Blue Star Museum* and proudly offers free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families. As a participant in the national *Museums for All* Program, Gunston Hall also offers free admission to underserved audiences upon presentation of an Electronic Benefits Transfer card.

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

Performance Highlights

One way Gunston Hall evaluates and measures performance is based on the number of guests served. In FY18, Gunston Hall served 20,165 guests including 6,435 school children. While this total reflects a 10% (2,273 guests) decrease versus FY17, since FY15 visitation has increased 2%. It is also important to note that in reviewing attendance at other historic sites and museums in VA and nationally, our decline in FY18 is comparable to others. While not ideal, this context is important in demonstrating that we are not an outlier. Finally, as was true for many comparable sites, weather once again impacted our visitation to a great deal this year. Most notably, extended closures associated with severe wind storms, snow on the days of major events like Christmastide, and significant flooding in our region all impacted our visitation.

Equally important, Gunston Hall evaluates and measures performance based on the impact and benefit we provide to those we serve. In support of doing so, we conduct evaluations of all our educational offerings and public programs. These surveys reveal and demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the overall experience at Gunston Hall.

Staffing

Authorized Maximum Employment Level (MEL)	11
Salaried Employees	3
Wage Employees	21
Contracted Employees	0

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 adding privately funded 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.

An additional major risk factor, however, is outdated and deficient IT infrastructure and systems. While the Agency received funding in FY19 and FY20 to help address these deficiencies, staying current with the rapid pace of technological innovation remains a risk factor for the overall organization.

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.

As a major component of this effort, Gunston Hall will also continue implementing its Campus Master Plan. Adopted in FY17, the Campus Master Plan will shape the next twenty years of improvements at Gunston Hall and it is based on four core goals, which are:

- Enlarge and enhance the historic core.
- Conserve the site's distinctive landscapes and natural resources.
- Increase access to educational and recreational opportunities throughout the site
- Implement experiences focusing on youth and provide facilities in their needs.

The restoration of the George Mason's Riverside Garden is the first capital project being undertaken in the furtherance of the Campus Master

Plan. Scheduled to break ground in 2018, once complete in 2019, the Garden will enhance the authenticity of the site, reveal much about the innovative and imaginative mind of Mason, demonstrate the humanity and relationships of those living and working at Gunston Hall, and provide an educational setting as distinctive as Mason's design for the signature landscape feature of his home—*The Home of American Rights*.

Furthermore, 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 archeology. This efforts includes the broadening and enhancement of partnerships and collaborations with other educational institutions such as George Mason University. Most notably, in 2017 Gunston Hall debuted a critically acclaimed theatrical performance exploring Mason's legacy as one who articulated "that all men are born equally free...", but who also enslaved over 100 individuals.

Additionally, in line with stated measures, Gunston Hall is now free to all active duty military and their families. This important determination has increased the participation of military families at Gunston Hall and enhanced collaborations with Fort Belvoir and the neighboring military community. This action has also, along with new collaborations with Fairfax County Public Schools and the development of new school aged programming, expanded opportunities for at-risk populations. A critically important component of achieving this measure and the organization's new master plan is the addition of a daily pre-school at Gunston Hall, a project that is also in the planning stages. Another associated impact and outcome of this effort is the expansion of programs for teachers and Gunston Hall has doubled the number of programmatic opportunities for teachers in the last year.

Finally, with Capital Fund and Maintenance Reserve 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. These repairs to the mansion include the installation of a new roof, exterior painting and wood restoration, the replacement of outdated HVAC systems at the mansion, securing a connection to the municipal water system, and preliminary planning for a new security and fire suppression system at the mansion.

These efforts have also included enhanced landscape management practices and currently Gunston Hall is working landscape architects, horticulturalists, and environmental specialists to restore historic landscapes at Gunston Hall, improve access to trails, and support watershed stewardship.

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.

Fortunately, Gunston Hall received funding in FY19 and FY20 for some much needed enhancements to the Agency's IT infrastructure. Ensuring that future investments in the Agency's ability to remain current and in alignment with the rapid pace of technological innovation, however, remains a critical priority.

Estimate of Technology Funding Needs

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. As reflected in the Agency's succession plan, the high percentage of wage employees fulfilling mission critical functions compounds the challenges reflected above.

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. Furthermore, 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 and updating job descriptions and expectations. 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 encompasses 554 acres along the Potomac River, three cemeteries, and seventeen buildings of varying ages including, most importantly, Gunston Hall itself which was built by George Mason in 1755. The property also features multiple archeological sites ranging from pre-history to the twentieth century. Accordingly, management of the physical plant is a significant investment and responsibility. As such, stewardship of the site's cultural resources is the top priority, as is the conservation of the site's natural resources.

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 and is also completing several important historic preservation projects on the mansion .

Supporting Documents

Title	File Type
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Collections Management and Curatorial Services [14501]**Description of this Program / Service Area**

This service area focuses on the stewardship of Gunston Hall, a 550 acre historic site featuring a vast array of diverse historical, cultural, and environmental resources. The mansion, built by George Mason in 1755, is the preservation priority, but the historic site includes many additional resources including buildings, cemeteries, archaeological sites, and ecosystems of significance.

Mission Alignment

The preservation and stewardship of Gunston Hall, including the cultural and environmental resources entrusted to its care, is a fundamental component of the organization's ability to facilitate exceptional educational experiences and drive visitation.

Products and Services**Description of Major Products and Services**

Provide exceptional stewardship for Gunston Hall and be recognized as a leader of preservation and conservation excellence.

Ensure Gunston Hall provides an accessible, comfortable, sustainable, and safe environment for all our stakeholders.

Ensure Gunston Hall is operating efficiently, cost-effectively, and sustainably.

Anticipated Changes

Gunston Hall is committed to the fulfillment of its stewardship responsibilities in perpetuity and there are no anticipated changes to products or services in this regard.

Factors Impacting

Factors impacting this service area include aging infrastructure, declining public support, and limited staff resources.

Financial Overview

Funding supports the general operation of Gunston Hall as a historic site and despite receipt of capital funds in FY 2015 for the purpose of renovating the museum / visitor center, private funds are necessary for many preservation and site stewardship initiatives at Gunston Hall.

Biennial Budget

	2019 General Fund	2019 Nongeneral Fund	2020 General Fund	2020 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	0	0	0	0
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

Supporting Documents

Title	File Type

Education and Extension Services [14503]**Description of this Program / Service Area**

Gunston Hall will create a dynamic mix of authentic educational experiences providing value, impact, and benefit to a diverse audience. Educational offerings include school programs, guided tours, exhibits, public program and special events, self-guided trails, workshops and symposia, and outreach.

Mission Alignment

The mission of Gunston Hall is to stimulate continuing public exploration of democratic ideals as first expressed by George Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights and education is the organization's foremost responsibility.

Products and Services**Description of Major Products and Services**

Exhibits

Tours

Public Programs

Special Events

Workshops and Symposia

School Programs

Outreach

Anticipated Changes

Gunston Hall is seeking the expansion and diversification of its educational offerings including the enhanced interpretation of the African American and enslaved population's experiences at Gunston Hall. Gunston Hall is also presently implementing key components of its Campus Master Plan including the restoration of the garden. Once complete, this garden will offer a significant educational experience for diverse audiences.

Factors Impacting

Limited personnel resources, new research and archaeological discoveries, aging infrastructure and limited digital connectivity, and changing demographics are all factors impacting Gunston Hall's development and implementation of educational experiences.

Financial Overview

Funding supports the general development and implementation of educational programs at Gunston Hall.

Biennial Budget

	2019 General Fund	2019 Nongeneral Fund	2020 General Fund	2020 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	94,350	0	94,350	0
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

Supporting Documents

Title	File Type

Operational and Support Services [14507]

Description of this Program / Service Area

Gunston Hall is committed to operational excellence and professional best practices. Reflecting this commitment, Gunston Hall is accredited by the American Alliance for Museums.

Mission Alignment

Operational excellence provides the capacity necessary for the fulfillment of Gunston Hall's mission.

Products and Services

Description of Major Products and Services

Operational and financial management and stewardship.

Site stewardship.

Marketing and public relations.

Guest services.

Business enterprise.

Development.

Anticipated Changes

Gunston Hall is committed to continual improvement and is always striving for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Based on this commitment, any anticipated change would be representative of outcomes designed to achieve this goal or in response to other internal or external factors.

Factors Impacting

Limited personnel resources, declining public funds, external demographics.

Financial Overview

Funding supports general operations and organizational management.

Biennial Budget

	2019 General Fund	2019 Nongeneral Fund	2020 General Fund	2020 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	567,771	180,177	567,771	180,177
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

Supporting Documents

Title	File Type