

TRANSFORMATION

1. Immersive Experiences

We place our guests at the heart of everything we do, ensuring their perspectives guide our initiatives. By delivering exceptional educational and emotional experiences, we aim to create lasting value and inspire lifelong learning and connection with nature.

To enhance the visitor experience, we will conduct a full audit of guest interactions, introduce more family-centered activities and launch the Guest Experience Excellence initiative, providing staff and volunteers with specialized training in hospitality and education. We will expand interactive and interpretive exhibits, and further develop transparent and exceptional animal welfare. We will advance onsite wayfinding through new digital tools and make discovery learning even more engaging.

By 2029, these efforts aim to increase annual visitors, memberships, and volunteers by 40%.

2. Innovative Partnerships

To expand its regional impact, the Museum is launching new initiatives to increase active collaboration with schools, universities, and conservation organizations to promote natural science, environmental stewardship and conservation impact. Growing community science and outreach programs will engage a wider array of participants in hands-on research and community-based learning. Major components include building a full pipeline of

students interested and experienced in science education and a digital platform connecting classrooms across Virginia with accessible, high-quality science curriculum.

Partnerships with regional tourism organizations – such as Virginia Tourism, Hampton Roads Tourism, and the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau – will broaden the Museum’s reach and reputation as a leader in science education and natural discovery. By 2029, the Museum aims to strengthen ties with at least 10 regional institutions and localities, ensuring strong community support for its mission.

3. Sustainability

We are dedicated to strengthening our brand by focusing on building stories through highly personalized, niche-driven engagements, and completing the Next GEN: Protect What’s Precious growth campaign to expand our campus, conservation impact, and community outreach. To ensure a sustainable future, we will advance our inclusive culture through staff and community development. Furthermore, priority efforts to modernize energy and sustainability systems will reinforce commitment to ecological responsibility.

By 2029, the Museum aims to boost online engagement, marketing reach, and community impact by 40% and drive annual revenue growth by 8-10%

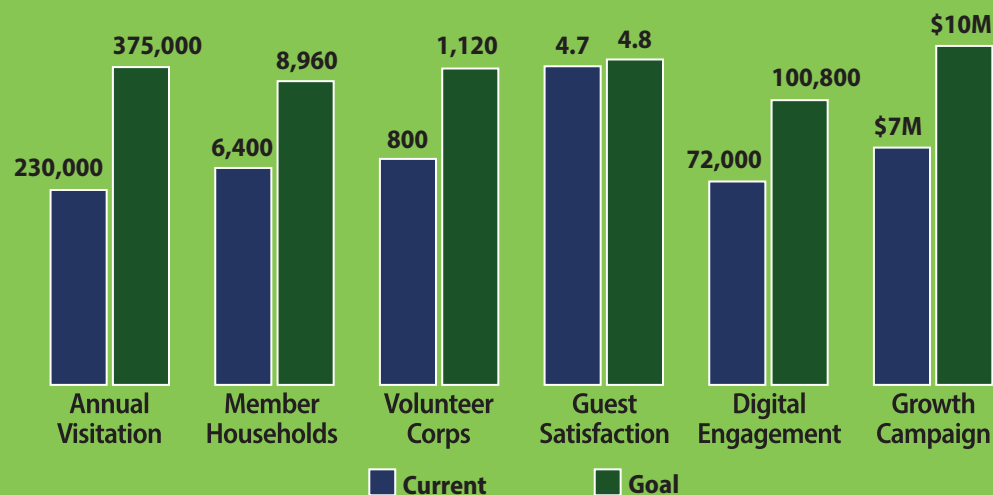
2026-2029

STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

serve as measurable benchmarks for Museum strategic goals. These targets reflect the organization’s deep commitment to excellence in natural science education, sustainability, and guest experience, ensuring continued advancement and accountability across all aspects of its operations.



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Open daily 9am-5pm | 757.595.1900 | thevlm.org

**VIRGINIA
LIVING
MUSEUM**

PROTECTING WHAT'S PRECIOUS

As we look to the future of the Virginia Living Museum, we do so with deep pride in what we have achieved and great optimism for what lies ahead. The Museum stands at a moment of extraordinary opportunity – serving more than 230,000 guests and over 6,500 member households annually, supported by a community of over 800 dedicated volunteers. Our mission to connect people to nature through discovery, education, and conservation has never been more vital. Through this 3-Year Strategic Plan (2026-2029), we reaffirm our commitment to “Protect What’s Precious” – the natural world that sustains and inspires us all in many ways. This plan defines how we will expand our impact across Virginia and eastern seaboard through immersive experiences, innovative partnerships, and

sustainability investments that strengthen both our institution and our community. We are already well on our way toward this future through a bold growth plan to expand our campus and bring transformative projects to life through immersive, elevated experiences that embody our mission of education through nature. Together, with our guests, members, partners, and supporters, we will ensure that the Virginia Living Museum continues to lead in science education and conservation, becoming the most impactful wildlife and discovery institution in Virginia.

Sarah Messersmith
President, Board of Trustees

Rebecca Kleinhample
Executive Director & CEO

1966-2026: 60 years of connecting!

OUR VISION

We aspire to be the most impactful discovery institution in Virginia – through living exhibits and dynamic family experiences – as leaders in science education and conservation.



CORE INITIATIVES

- Immersive Experiences
- Innovative Partnerships
- Sustainability

OUR FOUNDATION

Virginia Living Museum is a vibrant, highly accredited institution of discovery dedicated to Virginia’s natural heritage. From the coastal ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay to the Appalachian highlands, we connect our community to the native species and natural systems that define our state. We are preserving Virginia’s biodiversity, advancing scientific knowledge, and empowering the next generation to become stewards of irreplaceable natural resources. **Through five core impact areas, we inspire lifelong connections with nature and careers in science.**



LIVING DISCOVERY



<p>HUMAN NATURE</p> <p>Where people and planet meet</p> <p>Guests explore how human choices shape the environment – and how the environment shapes us. Reflection leads to purpose in living with greater care and connection.</p>	<p>EARTH IN MOTION</p> <p>Feel the pulse of the planet</p> <p>Guests come face-to-face with Virginia’s native landscapes and the creatures that call them home. Through living encounters and dynamic habitats, we sense the rhythm of nature and our role within it.</p>	<p>SCIENCE, ALIVE!</p> <p>The thrill of figuring it out</p> <p>Interactive experiments and hands-on demonstrations turn abstract science into pure excitement. Curiosity sparks, questions form, and understanding grows right before our eyes.</p>	<p>WILD VIRGINIA</p> <p>Cultivating Virginia’s wild side</p> <p>The energy of living systems fuels inspiration hiding amongst low growth, verdant greens, wooded forests, and dense canopy in the untamed beauty of terra firma.</p>	<p>BEYOND OUR WORLD</p> <p>Where imagination reaches the stars</p> <p>Immersive stories of light, sound, and motion carry guests beyond Earth’s horizon. Awe transforms into perspective with the wonder and rarity of the planet beneath our feet.</p>
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| <p>NATURAL HISTORY</p> <p>Reveal Virginia’s ancient past to understand our future.</p> | <p>BIRD AND MAMMAL</p> <p>Correlating animal, human and regional ecosystems health.</p> | <p>ECTOTHERMS</p> <p>Advancing understanding of fish, amphibians, reptiles and insects.</p> | <p>HORTICULTURE</p> <p>Discovering native plant diversity and botanical knowledge.</p> | <p>SPACE SCIENCE</p> <p>Exploring Earth’s place in the universe and our local geology.</p> |
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