

Dakota County Historical Society

Business and Strategic Plan

November 3, 2020

Vision Statement:

We make Dakota County history available and accessible to all.

Mission Statement:

DCHS exists to preserve, interpret, and promote the history of Dakota County.

Core Values:

Professional, Curious, Engaged, Inclusive, and Collaborative

Value Proposition Statement:

We make history come alive.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Why We Exist
- 1.2 Who We Are, and What We Do
- 1.3 Our Strategic Direction Highlights

2.0 Overview/Mandate

- 2.1 Governance, Leadership, and Management Structure
- 2.2 Our Engaged Board of Trustee Committees

3.0 Strategic Direction

- 3.1 Accomplishments for 2019
- 3.2 Focus Areas for 2020 & 2021
- 3.3 Focus Areas for 2021, 2022, 2023
- 3.4 Key Strategic Initiatives
- 3.5 Overall Performance Metrics and Expected Impact Driven Outcomes

4.0 Overview of Current and Future Programs

- 4.1 Our Value Proposition
- 4.2 Program Delivery Strategies
- 4.3 Exhibits
- 4.4 Site Specific Program Descriptions and Schedules
- 4.5 Member Services and Demographics

5.0 Marketing: Resources Available and Needed

- 5.1 County and State Funding
- 5.2 Grant Funding
- 5.3 Self-Generating Income
- 5.4 Lawshe Fund
- 5.5 Give to the Max Day
- 5.6 Endowment Fund

6.0 Environmental Scan

7.0 Financial Overview

8.0 Appendix A, Leadership and Management Organization Chart.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 WHY WE EXIST

- Vision Statement:
We make Dakota County history available and accessible to all.
- Mission Statement:
DCHS exists to preserve, interpret, and promote the history of Dakota County.
- Core Values: *Professional, Curious, Engaged, Inclusive, and Collaborative*
- Value Proposition Statement: *We make history come alive.*

1.2 WHO WE ARE, AND WHAT WE DO

Brief History of Dakota County

Dakota County is the third most populous county in Minnesota and lies at the confluence of three of the four major rivers of Minnesota: the Minnesota, the St. Croix, and the Mississippi Rivers. The county includes 21 cities, 13 townships, and four un-incorporated communities.

Dakota County was originally inhabited by Native Americans, specifically the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes. In 1849, the Minnesota Territorial legislature created nine original counties, including Dakota County, which stretched from the river at Hastings for several hundred miles west to the Missouri River.

The county seat was first established in Kaposia (South St. Paul) in 1853, moved to Mendota in 1854, and finally to Hastings in 1857. The county includes 36 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, two of which are managed by DCHS.

Brief History of DCHS

The DCHS is one of the top county historical societies in the Upper Midwest, operating a museum and two historic sites with more than 20,000 visitors annually. In 2019, the DCHS had more than 1,000,000 organizational impressions through programs and media. The organization is known for quality programs, interactive historical exhibits, and careful research results that produce amazing historical learning experiences.

The society was formed in April 1939 as the “historically minded Dakota County Historical and Archaeological Society” “to establish a link with the past by preserving the relics, written records, and other material of those historic days of long ago for future generations.”

The DCHS continues with more than 100,000 objects and photographs, actively interpreting these artifacts but also publishing original historic content through books and regular publications of the Society. This collection includes books and documents from county history, newspapers, census data, civic and religious records, oral history tapes, records from the Grand Army of the Republic Posts 47 and 48, and the official papers of Henry Sibley and Ignatius Donnelly.

The DCHS recently received documents and objects from Sperry/Univac corporations in Eagan, creating the largest single collection of early computer history in the Upper Midwest. Tours, exhibits and many interactive programs cover topics including the Civil War, the Dakota people, Minnesota as the original “Silicon Valley”, agriculture, produce, river and community histories, politics, and much more.

Incorporated in 1978 as a 501(c)(3), non-profit membership organization, the DCHS is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees. Donations and memberships fund the society, as well as grants from Dakota County, Minnesota Historical Society, and other historically minded individuals, organizations, and businesses.

Beyond the Lawshe Museum, the Society manages two other historic sites: the LeDuc Historic Estate in Hastings, a Civil War era Gothic Revival house built by General William LeDuc, and the Sibley Historic Site in Mendota, the oldest Euro-American settlement in Minnesota which contains four buildings (Minnesota’s oldest). It includes the house built by Minnesota’s first state governor, Henry Sibley, as headquarters of the American Fur Company.

1.3 OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Major Program Focus Areas

2020	2021	2022	2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand STEM educational opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support stem education and dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install enhanced computer industry exhibit (Lawshe) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install new children's exhibit area (Lawshe)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our marketing presence and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin renovation on Lawshe Museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install George Daniels exhibit (LeDuc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete new 145th anniversary LeDuc Comm. Agriculture exhibit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Board of Trustees Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop 9/11 Terrorist Attack exhibit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create new Sibley House exhibit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend and expand our diversity and inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to expand our diversity footprint with staff hiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit five new corporate sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend and expand our diversity and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Lawshe building renovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and distribute our 2020 DCHS Business and Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend and expand our diversity and inclusion footprint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit five new corporate sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit five new corporate sponsors

Targeted Community Partnerships

The DCHS is committed to increasing our partnerships with corporations and foundations based on their meeting or exceeding one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) An organization which has a significant presence in Dakota County for at least ten years
- 2) An organization which demonstrates a concern for the legacy and future of the residents of Dakota County
- 3) An organization which shows an interest in the history of Dakota County and shares a commitment to the vision and mission of our Dakota County Historical Society

The DCHS seeks funding from major partners within Dakota County to enable us to operate a county-wide organization. To accomplish this, we have identified organizational and site-specific sponsors. County-wide organizational sponsors include:

- Ardent Hills
- Bolton & Menk
- Bremer Bank, N.A.
- CHS
- Dakota Electric
- Firefly Credit Union
- Flint Hills Resources
- Innovative Office Solutions
- Keller Williams Preferred Realty
- Merchants Bank
- Minnesota Vikings
- Rihm Kenworth
- Smead Manufacturing
- Thomson Reuters
- Waterous
- Wings Financial Credit Union

Overall Performance Metrics and Expected Outcomes

Developing and implementing a strategic and operational set of organization-wide performance metrics and targets will demonstrate to our community of stakeholders and members what exact progress we are making toward achieving our stated vision and expected outcomes.

- Scorecard for Regular/Monthly Operational Progress Assessment
 - Four categories with a maximum of two measures per category
- Outcomes Metrics
 - For our Broader Stakeholder Community, Board meetings and reviews with the Dakota County Commissioners and Leadership Team
- Impact Metrics
 - Demonstrate an impact on an individual or for our society as whole: museums change lives in a “Good to Great” world

2.0 OVERVIEW/MANDATE

2.1 GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

As a Non-Profit 501c(3) organization in the State of Minnesota, the DCHS is led by our Board of Trustees, who select and hire our Executive Director, who leads and manages the day-to-day operations of the organization, in close coordination with the Executive Officers from the Board of Trustees. Sites are coordinated by Site Supervisors, Executive Director, and Associate Director. The Board of Trustees provides financial and operational oversight as needed through regular meetings, committee work, and volunteering at the sites as needed.

- Organization Chart: Board of Trustees, Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, Specific Leadership for Each Site
See attached chart – Appendix A

2.2 OUR ENGAGED BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEES

The DCHS Board of Trustees is a “working” board. Trustees provide financial and operational oversight, set short- and long-term goals for the organization (annual vision-setting, and multi-year strategic direction), establish the annual budget, and provide support and accountability for the Executive Director. Management of the daily operations and staff is accomplished by the Executive and Associate Directors.

Trustees are elected to two-year terms, serving no longer than three consecutive terms, elected at the Annual Meeting. Trustees generally are from various communities within the county, and often bring a useful mix of business skills to the organization.

Each board member is expected to participate in regular board meetings, Annual Meeting, annual Fall Retreat, and be part of at least one board committee (many are involved in more than one each year). Trustees are expected to be financial contributors, and volunteer at sites and events as they are able.

The Board of Trustees has several active committees: Executive Officers, Personnel, Events and Activities, Advancement, and Genealogy. Special ad-hoc committees are established for special short-term needs.

3.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

3.1 ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2019

- Increased engagement with members, local communities, and historically minded groups
- Continue to develop more programming with schools and by collaboration
- Develop strategic direction and decision-making, based on our vision and focus, with measurables
- Built depth and scope of the Board of Trustees
- Increase marketing and public awareness of the DCHS, with corporate involvement and sponsorships in programs and events
- Site development, included WW1 exhibits at Lawshe Memorial Museum, the county fair, the Mall of America, and elsewhere
- Work with the computer industry initiative with the release of the TPT documentary “Solid State”, which highlighted the Society and computer artifacts, nominated for a Midwest Emmy in 2020

3.2 FOCUS AREAS FOR 2020-2021

- Development of collaborative educational opportunities with local schools through STEM and History Day
- Extend and expand our diversity and inclusion footprint for our entire organization by adding more diverse board members, staff members, and related materials to our collection, in response to the recent George Floyd events on a global scale
- Increase digital online presence through social media, outreach and education, video clips, and short articles
- Development of mobile exhibits or “Pop-Up History”
- Increase marketing presence through strategic plan, marketing packet, and using analytics on the website
- Continued board development by adding two-three trustees in 2020 and another two-three trustees in 2021
- Recruit five new corporate sponsors in 2021
- Development includes WW2 exhibit and Women’s Suffrage exhibit, cosmetic upgrades to Lawshe building in South St. Paul, and the formal charter of a vintage baseball team

3.3 FOCUS AREAS FOR SUBSEQUENT YEARS

- As a follow-up from the Computer Industry History documentary, the DCHS will lead as a pilot agency/organization to develop and implement a full state-wide STEM performance metrics dashboard with global benchmarking comparisons. Similar requests are pending to selected leaders and other STEM focused organizations across our Twin Cities and beyond, to include the University of Minnesota College of Science and Engineering, Minnesota State Department of Education, Minnesota State Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Minnesota State University System, and potentially involve a review with Governor Tim Walz. More specifically, the DCHS will identify a “select few” (3 to 5) DCHS K-12 education outreach activities and use these activities as pilot proof of concept/approach STEM measurement projects.
- In partnership with the University of Minnesota, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, and similar STEM focused organizations, the DCHS will explore the feasibility of developing and conducting an annual State of Minnesota K-12 STEM Competition. This would be similar in structure and content to the national NCAA Basketball tournament, with regional tournaments such as the “Sweet 16”, the “Elite 8”, and the “Final Four,” across the entire state of Minnesota, starting in the year 2021.
- World War II exhibit at the Mall of America was planned for 2020, cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A WWII exhibit will be completed, with the exhibit at the mall when possible. A portion of it will also be on display at the Lawshe Museum.
- The LeDuc Historic Estate is applying for an MNHS Legacy Grant to hire a consultant / firm to create an exhibit design concept for enhancing the George Daniels exhibit in the Carriage Barn on the site.
- The Sibley Historic Site is working with MNHS education department to determine what exhibits can be created within the houses on the site. This includes using both MNHS and DCHS artifacts at the site. One new exhibit will be installed in the DuPuis House to provide context for the buildings on the grounds and the people for which they are named.

Specifically, for 2021

The 20th anniversary of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks will be take place. We will work with various agencies to create an exhibit and event to honor those from Dakota County that were impacted. This may include people affected, but also the National Guard and Minnesota's assistance offered at the time.

The Lawshe Museum will also begin exploring a new children's activity area, with hands-on educational opportunities like what would be found at a children's museum.

The LeDuc Historic Estate will complete the George Daniels exhibit design concept for the Carriage Barn. At the same time, the Simmons Shed exhibit will rotate from women's history/Hastings Needlework Company to "The Civil War and LeDuc." This will coincide with the 160th anniversary of the start of the Civil War.

The Sibley Site will install a new exhibit at the site. Depending on availability of artifacts from the Minnesota Historical Society, installation will be at either the Sibley House or Faribault House. At the same time, work will begin on an exhibit related to the Dakota Women, and their rights within the tribe and United States.

Specifically, for 2022

The Lawshe Museum will seek funding to create an exhibit design concept for a new children's exhibit area. This will include working with Dakota County leadership to determine resources and funding available to complete such a project. Additionally, Lawshe will submit a grant to implement a revised computer history exhibit.

The LeDuc Estate will submit a grant to install the George Daniels exhibit. This project may start toward the end of 2022, depending on grant availability and timing. The Simmons Shed exhibit will rotate to the "History of Hastings," to commemorate the 165th anniversary of when the city was platted.

The Sibley Site will install an updated exhibit in either the Sibley House or Faribault House. Additionally, a new exhibit on Dakota Women will be installed, depending on availability of artifacts from the Minnesota Historical Society.

Specifically, for 2023

The Lawshe Museum will finish the exhibit design for the new children's exhibit and activity area and enhanced computer history exhibit within the museum.

The LeDuc Estate will secure funding required for the George Daniels exhibit and open it to the public. The Simmons Shed will rotate to a new exhibit on "William LeDuc as Commissioner of Agriculture," commemorating the 145th Anniversary of his appointment.

The Sibley Site will finalize the installation of a Dakota Women's exhibit and work with Minnesota Historical Society to update the current exhibits displayed on the tour of the site, resulting in a complete overhaul of the site's exhibit areas within three years.

3.4 KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Corporate Partners Strategic Selection Criteria

The DCHS is committed to increasing our partnerships with corporations and foundations based on their meeting or exceeding one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) An organization which has a significant presence in Dakota County for at least 10 years
- 2) An organization which demonstrates a concern for the legacy and future of the residents of Dakota County
- 3) An organization which shows an interest in the history of Dakota County and shares a commitment to the vision and mission of our Dakota County Historical Society

Strategic Targeted Partnerships to Pursue (Current and Potential)

The DCHS seeks funding from major partners within Dakota County to enable us to operate a county-wide organization. To accomplish this, we have identified organizational and site-specific sponsors.

County-wide organizational sponsors include:

- Ames Construction
- Bolton & Menk
- CHS
- Dakota Electric Association
- Dart Transit
- Firefly Credit Union
- Flint Hills
- Innovative Office Solutions
- Keller Williams Preferred Realty Burnsville
- Minnesota Vikings
- Thomson Reuters

The Lawshe Museum has established connections with civic organizations within South St. Paul to assist with funding projects and activities. The South St. Paul VFW has been a strong partner since 2016. Additional sponsors include:

- Bremer Bank, N.A.
- Heartland Credit Union
- Prime Therapeutics
- Rihm Kenworth
- Waterous

The LeDuc Historic Estate has established connections and solid partnerships with several civic groups within the community. Current sponsors include:

- Ardent Hills
- Collins Wealth Management
- Merchants Bank
- Smead Manufacturing

We are working to expand our relationships with these groups and add additional funding sources from other banking institutions, civic groups and businesses within the city.

The Sibley Historic Site is developing our connections and partnerships with several businesses in and around the Mendota area. Current sponsors include:

- Gateway Bank
- Lucky's 13 Pub
- Wings Financial Credit Union

Additional businesses from Mendota Heights are being targeted to identify improved funding resources for the site.

The DCHS has expanded partnerships outside of Dakota County to include:

- The Metro Area Historical Society Collaborative has provided grant funded and partnered on archaeology projects multiple times since 2015.
- The Mall of America has agreed to continue partnering on public history programs that benefit both MOA and DCHS. Past programs included World War I and a planned program with the Commemorative Air Force for World War II.
- The Minnesota Historical Society provides resources for programming and funds. This partnership occurs through both our operations of the MNHS Sibley Site, but also through the Local History Services Department.
- The Minnesota High Tech Association is a key partner in the history of computing in Minnesota and Dakota County. With the recent "Solid State" documentary, the MHTA worked closely with the DCHS and the organization's volunteers to share Dakota County's connection to the computer history.

3.5 PERFORMANCE METRICS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Developing and implementing a strategic and operational set of organization-wide performance metrics and targets will demonstrate to our community of stakeholders and members what exact progress we are making toward achieving our stated vision and expected outcomes.

These metrics identified and described below are to be gradually introduced as 2020-2021 evolves and will be continually improved as we strengthen the leadership and management of the DCHS to hold ourselves accountable for achieving the outcomes and distinct impact we envision for the DCHS.

Scorecard for Regular Progress Assessment

- Membership/Customer Satisfaction: effectiveness, doing the right things, what customers value, overall member satisfaction with "all" of the services DCHS provides at all levels/sites
- Financial: return on investment (ROI) on both operational and long-term assets, from our financial statements or similar measure
- Operational Results: efficiency, doing things right, productivity, number of programs produced on time/within budget in total for all sites
- People: per cent of our DCHS employees that are fully engaged/compared to industry expectations and/or standards

Outcomes Metrics, for our Broader Stakeholder Community

- Progress in Achieving our Vision: We make Dakota County History available and accessible to all
- Proposed Vision Progress Achievement Metric
 - The per cent (%) of Children, Adults, and Organizations (in our major customer segments/or population) participating in the programs on a monthly or annual basis. Definition: participating means attending a program, accessing our web page, talking to our staff
 - All involvement in any of our programs or services
 - All member/customer potential touch points for population as a whole

Impact Metrics, impact on an individual or for our society as whole

- Our members/customers have access to knowledge/improve their knowledge of Dakota County history to create a fairer and more cohesive society
 - Percentage of our customers who indicate their knowledge has improved or grown as a result of programs or services; we have helped contribute to a more literate society
- We inspire engagement, debate, and reflection
 - Percentage of our customers who indicate they have been inspired and/or more fully engaged in society as a result of programs or services
- We help build a fairer, more inclusive, and more cohesive society
 - Percentage of Dakota County residents who state life in our county is more inclusive and fairer as a result of programs or services

The specifics of how our DCHS metrics will be defined, tracked, and reported will be similar in approach and content to dashboards currently in use by major museum organizations and beyond.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMS

4.1 OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

As a premier county historical society, Dakota County Historical Society demonstrates its value in this: *we make history come alive.*

Through the Lawshe Museum, and the historic sites at Sibley and LeDuc, the DCHS is more than its vast collection of artifacts and print media, and more than a collection of photographs and genealogical materials. We provide an interactive learning experience by stepping into the history through historic interpretations, interactive experiences such as the Young Curators Camp or through archaeology digs, or through special events at historic sites such as the Civil War Weekend at LeDuc, and Fur Trade Weekend and The Fete at Sibley.

4.2 PROGRAM DELIVERY STRATEGIES

Overall

The DCHS provides a variety of delivery methods of Dakota County's history programs. Each site offers programs and lectures on various topics related to Dakota County and Minnesota history. We also use exhibits to bring history to the public at our sites. Special events bring history to life through reenactors and hands-on demonstrations.

Site-Specific

- Lawshe Memorial Museum provides a wide variety of programs to visitors of all ages. History Storytime, in partnership with the South St. Paul Public Library, hosts a read-aloud on a different topic or theme each month. Quarterly, if not more often, we host genealogy lectures on various topics of interest to area genealogical researchers. We also partner with Dakota City Heritage Village to host a vintage baseball event with teams from throughout the state.
- LeDuc Historic Estate provides a variety of activities to engage in the history and era of the LeDuc family. The largest event is Civil War Weekend which brings in hundreds of volunteers and reenactors who bring the Civil War to life. This event highlights the history of William LeDuc as Quartermaster in the Civil War. Coffee with the General is a discussion-based event that explores different topics related to local and regional history. The teas and tastings held at the site relate to William LeDuc's different ventures, such as tea growing.

- Sibley Historic Site hosts a French-Canadian event called The Fete, which explores the heritage from the site and early fur traders. The largest event is Fur Trade Weekend, and it brings the site back to the 1830s when Mendota was the fur trade capital of the region. Each month Mendota After Hours features presentations on different topics that relate to Minnesota's history. As recognition to when the Sibley Tea House operated at the site, a variety of teas are held throughout the year. For children, we host Sibley Savants to honor the history of the site, once housing an art school.

Online Presence: Social and Web

- Social media is helpful to promote our organization, share bits of history, and advertise upcoming events.
 - Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are used for all three sites. Additionally, we cross-promote events to introduce people to the whole of activities provided by the DCHS.
- The DCHS works with Dakota County Communications to create videos with Dakota County history as a focus. These videos are created, edited, and promoted through the county's social media, then shared on our own.
- The DCHS website offers information for the entire organization, redesigned and rebranded in 2017. The website has sections for the history and information on each of our sites.

The website also has information on becoming a member or volunteer, and making donations, both monetary and artifacts.

Additional benefits of the website include online information for research, such as important landmarks to visit, searchable databases for census information, war records, etc., becoming a Trustee, and links to our sponsors and partners.

4.3 EXHIBITS

- The Lawshe Memorial Museum features the Old Town exhibit, which has been in existence since the building was constructed in 1978. The exhibit shows what businesses and buildings were like at the turn of the 20th century. The information inside the buildings change, but the physical structures do not due to the time and cost of such a renovation. Exhibits include, but are not limited to, a barber, dentist office, doctor office, blacksmith shop, apothecary, and general store. Lawshe also has the Great Hall, featuring a computer history exhibit, and larger space for temporary exhibits.

- The LeDuc Estate has limited space for exhibits, but we use an outbuilding called the Simmons Shed. This space features rotating exhibits, with themes such as Women and the Hastings Needlework Company.

The Carriage Barn currently has an exhibit on George Daniels, a former slave who escaped the Confederate Army and eventually moved to Hastings to work for the LeDucs. Through grant funding, we plan to enhance this exhibit and expand the narrative to tell more of his life story.

Additional exhibit opportunities include signage on the grounds to explain the different outdoor exhibits (chickens, apples, grapes), and walking trails with plants and flowers from that era.

- The Sibley Historic Site has multiple smaller exhibits located in each of the three primary houses and on-site. Additional nature tours on the expansive site are available.

4.4 SITE-SPECIFIC PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND SCHEDULES

Each site is operated in partnership with other organizations, requiring coordination which guides our exhibits.

- The Lawshe Museum is currently working on a Women’s Suffrage exhibit to highlight the county’s role in the movement.

The DCHS is working to enhance the computer history exhibit with new text banners and panels to describe more of the exhibit, as well as install video equipment that will show all or part of the TPT documentary “Solid State.” Pending funding, our goal is to have this completed by 2022.

- The Sibley Site is creating a new exhibit on Dakota Women and their rights under treaties. Our goal is to have this completed by 2022.
- The LeDuc Estate will hire consultants to create a new exhibit plan that will allow us to expand the George Daniels exhibit. Pending funding, our goal is to have this completed by 2024.

4.5 MEMBER SERVICES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Levels of Membership Available

Membership creates a defined partnership with the mission of the organization, subscription to the monthly email newsletter, and tri-annual history journal from the DCHS called “Over the Years”, free admission to Lawshe Museum, Sibley Historic Site, and LeDuc Historic Estate, 10% discount in gift shops, discounted admission to sponsored events, and invitations to special members-only events or activities.

General membership is \$40 for individuals and \$60 for households, \$25 for seniors (60 years or older) and \$40 for senior households, and membership for students younger than 21 years is \$25. There are special membership opportunities of Sustaining Membership at \$100, Silver Membership at \$250, Gold Membership at \$500, and Tower Membership at \$1,000.

Demographics and Communities

Membership in the DCHS currently stands at 535, with 18 states represented and 67 Minnesota cities.

Memberships include 245 senior members, and 98 senior household memberships. There are also 46 “Life Members”, and “Special Status” memberships with one Bronze Member, six Silver Members, two Gold Members, and 33 Sustaining Members. There were 35 new members in 2019.

There are several communities with significant membership representation: Hastings (98), South St. Paul (54), Eagan (50), Inver Grove Heights (38), St. Paul (26), West St. Paul (25), Mendota (20), Apple Valley (19), Rosemount (18), Burnsville (17), Lakeville (15), Farmington (14), and Minneapolis (10).

There are four states prominently represented: Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, and Ohio.

5.0 MARKETING: RESOURCES AVAILABLE AND NEEDED

5.1 COUNTY OR STATE FUNDING

The DCHS receives an annual operating grant from Dakota County. Our current grant received is \$107,185 and has remained the same since 2015. Additionally, Dakota County offers an additional \$25,000 matching grant on new revenue secured each year.

The DCHS does not receive any direct state funding. However, we do receive Legacy Amendment Funds administered through grants offered by the Minnesota Historical Society. These funds are used for programs, exhibits and new projects at the sites.

5.2 GRANT FUNDING

The Minnesota Historical Society manages the Legacy Funds for the State of Minnesota. These grant funds vary little in how the funds can be used. On occasion, special grant funding is made available, such as the Civil War Recognition Grant. The DCHS has typically applied for at least one MHS Legacy Grant each year.

The Minnesota Humanities Center offers a variety of grants that often change on an annual basis. In 2017, the DCHS received a Veterans Voices Grant, but it has not been offered again. As projects fit with the criteria, we apply for funding support.

The Union Pacific Railroad offers grants to any organization located on or near a Union Pacific rail line. The DCHS has received this grant twice in the last four years to assist with programming. Due to their funding and timelines, we are not able to apply on an annual basis.

Rotary Clubs within Dakota County often offer small grants for many organizations.

Other grants are available through foundations or organizations, but they have not been approached on a regular basis. As projects align with the grant requirements, the DCHS has applied for those grants. Every grant applied for is on a project basis, and they are not general operational grants.

5.3 SELF-GENERATING INCOME

The DCHS is a 501(c)(3) membership organization. Each year we engage approximately 500 members from people across the country, receiving approximately \$15,000 from annual membership dues.

We receive general and specific donations. A general donation is someone who donates to our sites through a donation box, etc. A specific donation is when it is for a specific cause. Each site offers gift shops to visitors, with revenue from sales tracked by site.

Admissions are tracked on general tours for the LeDuc Estate and Sibley. There is no admission fee to Lawshe, except for during special exhibits like World War I. The annual quilt show at Lawshe has a suggested donation. Admission prices vary by age, and all members are admitted free of charge.

As a partnership site with the Minnesota Historical Society and through our operating contract, we offer free admission to Sibley for the DCHS members, as well as MNHS and the Friends of the Sibley Historic Site.

Event registrations are tracked for any special event or program held at the site, above and beyond a general tour. This includes "After Hours" programming, Fur Trade, Civil War Weekends, etc.

5.4 LAWSHE FUND

The Lawshe Fund is offered at the end of each calendar year. The campaign starts early November and runs through December.

In 2018, the DCHS offered a \$1,500 match for the first time, enjoying an increase in donations. In 2019, the DCHS offered a \$3,000 match, and more than \$10,000 was raised. (By contrast, in 2016, our annual campaign brought in \$3,500.) In 2020, with \$4,000 in matching funds, the goal is to receive \$12,000 in donations.

5.5 GIVE TO THE MAX DAY

Each year, the State of Minnesota participates in Give to the Max Day, an initiative to help organizations raise funds. Due to the timing, this emphasis happens at the same time as our organization's Lawshe Campaign, but between \$600 - \$1,000 is raised during Give to the Max Day each year.

5.6 ENDOWMENT FUND

In 2017, The DCHS received a \$200,000 bequest from Thomas Mairs Estate. This unrestricted donation became a board designated endowment fund, allowing the principal to be used as needed. The interest gained on the endowment each year can be used for special projects by the organization.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

6.1 INTERNAL

Strengths

- Site staffing remains a strength, leveraging abilities and interests of people into the positions.
- The DCHS Research Library contains a wide collection of items from Dakota County and surrounding areas, assisting researchers in tangible ways.
- Archival storage at Lawshe contains a very diverse collection of artifacts from local history.
- Computer Industry Initiative is working with local and regional partners, allowing the DCHS to have a broader reach and visibility, and providing great pool of volunteers from retired Lockheed Martin employees helping to identify and document the large donation in 2013 of printed documents and physical relics related to Dakota County's and regional technology development.
- Genealogy programming within the DCHS has enjoyed great support and participation, and promises even more in the years to come, working closely with local ethnic historic collections and with the Minnesota Genealogical Society.

Weaknesses

- Archival storage at Lawshe and other sites is limited and overflowing, making cataloging and access to resources more challenging.
- Staff turnover at the various sites remains a constant concern; need to strengthen the compensation structure to improve salary and benefits and reduce staff turnover.
- The DCHS artifact collection needs the focused attention of a Collections Manager; in the interim, part-time staff and staff volunteers are assisting in basic collection responsibilities.
- Membership services remains good but not great, and more consistent communication, services, and benefits for membership is a need.
- Succession planning for the leadership (Board of Trustees and Directors) and emergency actions plans for the organization have yet to be developed.
- The DCHS website remains unfinished, and further refinements of the website and digital resources is needed.

Opportunities

- While membership remains consistently around 500, the site volunteers and membership are committed to serving as part of the organization. Understanding our membership base and strengthening organizational engagement is an untapped potential for DCHS.
- Local business partnerships have increased but is far from ideal, especially when Dakota County has such a wealth of small and larger businesses who care about this community and would welcome engagement through the DCHS Advancement Committee of the Board of Trustees and the DCHS Executive Director are eager to pursue more partnerships in events and activities with our business neighbors. Recent refinement of parameters, focused events, and financial needs should prove helpful.

Threats

- The deterioration and condition of the Lawshe Memorial Museum as primary offices and location for the DCHS remains an issue that impacts operations and visitor perception.

Beyond the physical condition, and the somewhat unknown location of the building, the internal flow of exhibits and space is limiting staff from trying new approaches for exhibits and events.

The existing structure of “Old Town” and the open but outdated exhibit space in the Great Hall is challenging for exhibits and events. The lack of adequate meeting space and outdated kitchenette for workshops and presentations has limited the ability of the staff to plan events of any scale.

- The archival space in the lower level is overflowing with items, and storage and “workshop” space has spilled out into the Great Hall and elsewhere in the building.

6.2 EXTERNAL

Strengths

- The brand image of the DCHS in the county, across the Twin Cities seven-county area, and throughout the state historical societies is one of the strongest enjoyed for many years. DCHS is building on that leading reputation by developing a strategic plan for the coming years (this document).
- Partnerships with Dakota City, Mall of America, Minnesota Historical Society, and the Cities of Hastings and Mendota is growing, and we are involving businesses in partnership with events and activities, such as Thompson Reuters, Smead Manufacturing, Flint Hills Resources, and others.
- The current financial situation of the DCHS is stable, with almost balanced annual budgets from the past several years and a growing endowment fund, all of which should enable us to continue our leadership efforts during this year and beyond.

Weaknesses

- As previously mentioned, the DCHS has experienced several attempts to develop the website. Well-intentioned attempts to develop the website in a cost-effective manner has resulted in less-than-committed people who have left it unfinished.

Several website pages remain weak of content and not very user-friendly. Efforts to update pages and information have been attempted by already over-worked staff, showing heroic effort but still incomplete of a finished product.

Opportunities

- Given the brand strength and financial stability mentioned earlier, along with excellent leadership from our Executive Director, Associate Director, and Site Supervisors, the DCHS has several distinct opportunities to expand and extend the visibility and impact within Dakota County and beyond.
- The DCHS has recently defined a strong sense of vision and mission, with complementary core values and a simplified value proposition statement. These serve as critical and foundational elements to launch the DCHS into the next decade and beyond.

Threats

- In 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic impacted communities and organizations worldwide. Many communities, public buildings, and businesses have been closed or open with limited availability.

The DCHS has been impacted as well, with sites temporarily closed and events either cancelled or moved to digital online delivery. While the extent of this pandemic has yet to be defined in scope, the next year or two will be impacted by restructured events/activities and likely by decreased membership and funding.

The DCHS continues to look for ways to remain engaged through social media and online events, and we look forward to reopening our sites for tours and activities when permitted. This pandemic will continue to impact funding and participation for years to come, some of it beyond our ability to foresee.

Thanks to the Small Business Administration providing funds through the Paycheck Protection Program, we were able to receive additional funding to retain staff in the short term. Beyond that, we have no idea what refinements will need to be made.

- Since 2014, significant discussion and numerous studies have entertained the idea to remodel, relocate, or redesign the Lawshe Museum in South St. Paul.

While the building belongs to Dakota County, the land where the building is located belongs to the City of South Saint Paul.

The DCHS Board of Trustees continues discussions with the Dakota County leadership about options and decisions moving forward. Meanwhile, the Lawshe building (dated 1976) needs some critical upgrades and changes to comply with ADA requirements and remain a viable location for historical research and programming.

Dakota County has recently approved essential updates to the building, including a new roof, new windows, and a bus drop-off zone at the front of the building. The DCHS remains hindered by lack of adequate signage, space needing remodeling, and overall upgrades to the building to bring it current with county standards.

- Sibley Site is a significant historical location for the State of Minnesota, and many parties have an interest in the site. Currently owned by the State of Minnesota, in the care of the Minnesota Historical Society, it is operated under a partnership contract between DCHS and MNHS.

Interested parties continue to pursue their concerns on a variety of issues with the site, some have added complications and stress when planning events and activities at the site.

DCHS maintains our position as a contractor for operations but has become included with many of the issues and discussions.

- The DCHS, Dakota City Heritage Village, and the Dakota County Agricultural Society have all existed for some time, adding value and benefit to the residents of Dakota County. In the past, there has been some tension and, in some cases, outright hostility in the relationships of the three organizations.

Over the past three years, the DCHS Executive Director and Board President have reached out to the other organizations to share resources and participate in cooperative events. However, there remains a level of lingering contention and competition, which limits further events and activities as a result.

7.0 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

7.1 ENDOWMENT

In 2018, the DCHS received a \$200,000 bequest from the Thomas Mairs Estate. This unrestricted donation was accepted and approved to be a board-designated endowment.

As of January 2020, the endowment sits at \$215,000 and earning an average interest rate of 5%. The interest gained on the endowment is reinvested to grow, while remaining available for use in special projects by the organization.

Previous use of endowment interest for special projects include the Mall of America event, and purchasing vintage baseball uniforms and equipment.

7.2 ATTENDANCE TRENDS

Since 2016, the organization's attendance numbers have increased annually. The Lawshe Museum has seen a 150% increase in attendance, while the LeDuc Estate has seen an increase of 2.5% and the Sibley Site an increase of 10%. Each year, these numbers continue to rise.

7.3 GRANT REVENUE

Grants are generally used for project-specific opportunities and rarely offset the cost of general operations.

Since 2016, the organization has received more than \$170,000 in grant funds to offset the cost of programming, publications and research, and we have received \$125,000 in matching grant funds from Dakota County for newly acquired revenue to the organization.

7.4 BUDGET SUMMARIES FROM LAST FIVE YEARS

The DCHS Board of Trustees and staff have worked hard to contain the budget and adequately plan for revenue and expenses, especially the last several years. Historically, this has not always been possible.

2012: budget of \$297,600; lost \$6,500

2013: budget of \$258,700; lost \$59,000

2014: budget of \$245,300; lost \$55,000

2015: budget of \$266,900; lost \$13,800

2016: budget of \$311,600; lost \$36,526 (addition of Sibley Site)

2017: budget of \$396,300; lost \$550

2018: budget of \$375,000; lost \$3,337

2019: budget of \$403,535; surplus of \$24,000

Pending final financial audit review and collaboration:

2018: budget of \$375,000

2019: budget of \$403,535

2020: budget of \$388,535

Board of Trustees

