Wyoming Humanities (WYH) is our state’s affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and one of 55 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. We are an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization and have promoted the public humanities in Wyoming through grants and programs since 1970. Our funding comes in the form of a general operating support grant from the NEH, special funding approved in every biennial budget from the legislature of the State of Wyoming, as well as private sources including foundation grants, corporate sponsorships, and individual donations.

In 2017, WYH completed an in-depth self-assessment for the NEH and in July 2017, the NEH conducted a site visit to our council resulting in a detailed assessment of our operations and programmatic impact. A final assessment report was approved by the National Council on the Humanities in April 2018. Such reviews are conducted every five years by the NEH and are used by state humanities councils to launch a new five-year strategy.

In thinking about what Wyoming Humanities should look like over the next two, five, or even ten years, WYH staff created this plan, with input from the NEH assessment, to make us more impactful and sustainable within the context of the current and anticipated cultural and socio-economic conditions in the U.S. and Wyoming. The contours of this plan were approved in October 2018 by our board of directors.

Our goal was to create a five-year plan that enables us to be agile and adaptive. We focused on creating intentional high-level directional goals for our organization with shorter-term strategies and action plans that aim in those directions. This allows both for experimentation and the ability to adapt to statewide needs and external impacts upon our organization. We are a small-but-mighty nonprofit whose plans must integrate the ambiguity that comes with working within the unpredictable federal, state, and private funding ecosystem of a state with a very small population.

Our process included a series of visioning sessions for the staff facilitated by Corey Billington, Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Wyoming College of Business. The result of that process was a broad new mission and vision statement as well as a set of operating “norms” to facilitate operations. Input from the board of directors was incorporated from feedback provided in the assessment process and from conversations held in board meetings throughout 2017 and 2018.

From this work, the staff created a proposed set of high-level directional objectives and intermediate goals and measurable action plans. Upon review, the board of directors suggested important organizational values that remain constant throughout the duration of this plan. Our intention is to revisit the plan annually to adjust objectives and desired measurable impacts according to current external and internal constraints and requirements.
Purpose, Mission, and Vision:

Creating clear, succinct, understandable, and inspirational purpose/mission/vision statements has been a long-time challenge for state humanities councils. This is mainly due to general confusion about the classic description of the humanities, “of or pertaining to the human experience,” which enables nearly all knowledge and art to be framed as humanities. This broad definition makes it difficult to describe, and make a case for, our work. The constant need to justify and legitimize humanities disciplines in education, from elementary to university curriculum, exacerbates the challenge of defining just what the word “humanities” means—and how they can make a life-affecting difference—to the average person. This ambiguity has ultimately manifested as an advantage to the nation’s state humanities councils, all independent 501c3 non-profits. It enables the flexibility to create distinctive mission/vision statements that appropriately address the unique contemporary needs of their constituents. We don’t all look alike or do the same work. Wyoming Humanities (WYH) was able to focus on what our state needs at this time in order to shape our vision for our future and to freshly describe our ongoing five-decade-long mission.

There is no clear consensus on the definitions of, and differences between, a mission, vision, and purpose statement for a nonprofit. There is universal acceptance that we all must have these to drive our organizations, but the use and definition of a nonprofit’s “mission,” “vision,” and “purpose” is by no means standardized. Indeed, the lines are especially blurred between vision and mission statements. As a result, a whole new industry of consultants specializing in mission/vision statement development has arisen. WYH used the definitions promoted by the Aespire marketing/branding strategy firm to create our purpose, mission, and vision statements.

Our Purpose:

Purpose guides you. Why are you here? A purpose is “why” your organization has begun its journey, guided by the deeply-held values and beliefs that inspire it to make a difference. A purpose statement provides the reason or reasons you exist. It is typically a private statement that is used within the organization and is generally not used in marketing and branding to the public.

The founding purpose of our organization derives from our 50-year relationship with the NEH as a state humanities council and is shaped by the NEH Federal-State Office’s overall purpose and mission: We bring humanities education, lifelong learning, and public humanities programming to the communities of our states to advance knowledge and understanding of the humanities and increase public awareness of, access to, and support for the humanities.

Wyoming Humanities Purpose:

To improve the quality of life in Wyoming through public programs in the humanities.
Our Mission:

Mission drives you. A mission statement focuses on today and describes what the organization does and how it does its work. It defines the organization’s business. It is frequently used to help brand an organization in marketing and PR campaigns and keeps organizations focused on the ultimate goal of their work.

Our mission statement explicitly states our role in supporting democracy in Wyoming—both political and cultural democracy. We are here to encourage active participation in community cultural life and assure fair and equitable access to cultural resources in Wyoming. We protect and promote cultural diversity and the right to culture for everyone in our society.

Culture, including politics, is a human creation and constantly evolving. The humanities—all those activities that explore the human experience—are the tools we use to help explore, understand, and ultimately strengthen the democracy that binds us together in our state.

Wyoming Humanities Mission:
To strengthen Wyoming’s democracy through the humanities.

Our Vision:

Vision is what you aspire to. A vision statement focuses on tomorrow and describes what the organization will look like, or hopes to achieve, in the future. It is where you aspire to be. It describes future goals/dreams/achievements, the results you want to reach for, and frames a measurable impact you want to make. Vision keeps you on course to fulfill your purpose through the execution of your mission and, as such, influences all marketing and programming decisions.

Wyoming is at a crossroads. For many decades our state’s leaders have sought solutions to the boom-and-bust economic cycles and youth out-migration that have defined our state narrative. Our state’s leadership is ready to make changes to attract generations back home to Wyoming and build a welcoming and modern image that takes to task some of the myths about the static, western, “cowboy culture” that has been perpetuated over the last century. There is a hunger to explore the myths and create “new Wyoming narratives” that usher in a modern way of thinking about our state and its dramatic western landscape in order to promote economic development and diversification and foster interconnected and highly engaged communities. WYH is in a unique position to help the state highlight, share, and expand its cultural narrative.

Wyoming Humanities Vision:
An expanded Wyoming narrative that promotes engaged communities, improves our quality of life, and enhances our economy.
Connecting Purpose/Mission/Vision to Strategy

WYH has the potential to play a major role in helping the state move in new directions. In response to decades of boom-and-bust economic cycles and looming changes in the energy sector, and to attract younger generations back to the state and to meet the clear need to diversify the state’s economy, in November 2016, Governor Matt Mead created the Economically Needed Diversification Options for Wyoming (ENDOW) initiative to create an economic action that spans the next 20 years—efforts that go beyond this Governor and the next. For a year and a half, ENDOW conducted research and held dozens of public meetings, ultimately hearing from over 140,000 residents, and created a 20-year vision for our state submitted to the Wyoming Legislature in August 2018. This vision makes clear that the cultural arts and creative economy are vital to our state’s future—both in terms of creating a quality of life that will attract and keep new residents, and in pure economic development terms. WYH played a significant role in helping the ENDOW council understand the role of the cultural and creative economy. The report ultimately recommended more investment in the creative and cultural infrastructure of Wyoming to grow and diversify our economy.

WYH believes that the individuals and organizations that comprise the creative/cultural sector are an economic driver and act as a “force multiplier” in pure economic development terms. Proportionately, with about 5% of the workforce, Wyoming already has one of the nation’s strongest arts and cultural sectors. Over the coming five years, WYH will work closely with our state’s leaders to explore how stimulus investment in this sector could impact Wyoming’s economy. A key component of our five-year strategy is WYH serving as the leader of the statewide organizations that comprise the infrastructure of our creative/cultural ecosystem.

To articulate our five-year plan, including our serving as a statewide leader of the creative and cultural economy, we connect directly to our purpose, mission, and vision statements. From our purpose we emphasize “the humanities,” from our mission statement, we emphasize “democracy,” and from our vision statement, we emphasize “Wyoming narrative” and “engaged communities.” All that we do can be clearly tied to these core aspects of our DNA—which are the pillars that guide our direction. We call them our core values in action.

Our Core Values in Action

- **Fostering Critical Thinking and Lifelong Learning through the public humanities (from our purpose)**
- **Promoting Civics and Democracy to strengthen our democracy (from our mission)**
- **Raising Cultural Awareness to expand the Wyoming Narrative (from our vision)**
- **Engaging Communities to improve our quality of life (from our vision)**
- **Enhancing the Creative Economy to support economic growth (from our vision)**
Wyoming Humanities Five-Year Plan

**Vision:** Within five years we will have *expanded the Wyoming narrative* to promote *engaged communities*, improve our *quality of life*, and enhance our *economy*.

**Mission:** Strengthening Wyoming’s *democracy* through the *humanities*.

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**Goal 1: Lead Wyoming’s cultural infrastructure**

**Rationale:** Because we are not a state agency, we are one of the only independent statewide organizations with the capacity to advocate for the entire *creative and cultural economy* while actively funding and supporting the network that comprises this economy. We do this through investments in the public humanities and through making the humanities easier to understand and relevant to daily life.

**Objective 1:** Become the primary point of contact for humanities and cultural project funding and partnerships

- **Action 1:** Develop and launch 2019 grants strategy
- **Action 2:** Develop a business sponsorship strategy
- **Action 3:** Develop organization/institution partnership framework
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** Number of grant applications
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** Number of grants funded
  - **FY2019 Measurement 3:** Solicit 10 new grant applicants
  - **FY2019 Measurement 4:** Increase sponsorship of WYH programs

**Objective 2:** Become primary point of contact for humanities project expertise (organizations come to us for help/expertise as well as funding)

- **Action 1:** Create a publicly accessible online scholar and expert database
- **Action 2:** Create a state-wide “Humanities Meet-Up” Program (staff tours around state)
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** 15 externally initiated requests for program support
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** Solicit 10 new partners on WYH projects

**Objective 3:** Become the recognized leader in advocating for a unified “Creative Economy” with greater stimulus investment from the State of Wyoming.

- **Action 1:** Build alliances with other statewide organizations in the creative/cultural network
- **Action 2:** Create advocacy strategy
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** Establish partnerships with three statewide organizations to help promote the creative economy strategy
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** One board meeting emphasizing the creative economy and development of board advocacy plans
Goal 2: Spark Synergy within and between communities

**Rationale:** Fostering collaborations between towns and organizations will cultivate creativity and reduce redundancy. Finding new partners will give voice to groups previously unheard *and expand the Wyoming narrative*. Energizing communities through their creative/cultural organizations will spur *economic growth* in the sector and generate momentum for future growth. Our investments and initiatives are specially tuned to expanding the Wyoming narrative and strengthening our cultural, political, and social *democracy* through cultural projects and events.

**Objective 1: Create new connections within and between communities**

**Action 1:** Increase involvement of new organizations in WYH programs  
**Action 2:** Seek out under-utilized organizations within communities  
**Action 3:** Promote and develop unique networking opportunities between communities

**FY2019 Measurement 1:** 40% of community projects have new organization partnerships or collaborations  
**FY2019 Measurement 2:** 3 WYH projects include new collaborations between communities

**Objective 2: Increase *interdisciplinary* programming (2 disciplines interacting together directly)**

**Action 1:** Develop and launch 2019 grants strategy  
**Action 2:** Intentionally pursue interdisciplinary elements for WYH programs

**FY2019 Measurement 1:** 50% of WYH programs are interdisciplinary

**Objective 3: Increase statewide interest in humanities/cultural programs**

**Action 1:** Formalize marketing/communications strategy for WYH  
**Action 2:** Formalize marketing/communications strategy for WYH events  
**Action 3:** Create a donor development lifecycle  
**Action 4:** Create formalized evaluation strategy for WYH events  
**Action 5:** Utilize podcast as vehicle for promoting our work and as a content initiative  
**Action 6:** Utilize “Wyoming narrative,” “strengthening democracy,” and “creative economy” as rhetorical tools that describe the humanities and strengthen our brand

**FY2019 Measurement 1:** 10% increase in individual donor dollars  
**FY2019 Measurement 2:** 10% increase of attendance by program type  
**FY2019 Measurement 3:** Increase in publicity (news coverage and social media)  
**FY2019 Measurement 4:** Incorporate narrative program successes into program evaluations and project close-outs  
**FY2019 Measurement 5:** Establish listenership baseline and targets for WYH podcasts.  
**FY2019 Measurement 6:** Implement one democracy-based project annually or be working on a democracy-based initiative at all times.  
**FY2019 Measurement 7:** Explore budget and reporting mechanisms that categorize our work (for instance into “Wyoming Narrative,” “Democracy,” or “Creative Economy”).
**Goal 3: Develop Organizational Sustainability**

**Rationale:** To set our organization up for a strong future with great potential to make major impacts upon our state, we must deploy best practices in nonprofit operations and governance and find ways to streamline our operations. We must also scale up our income to match our desired impact level on Wyoming.

**Objective 1:** Enhance Operational Capacity  
- **Activity 1:** Implement new cloud-based fiscal system and processes  
- **Activity 2:** Assess HR benefits and processes  
- **Activity 3:** “Projectize” operations  
- **Activity 4:** Explore new governance models and strategies for board of directors  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** to support succession planning for key roles, 75% of all operations thoroughly documented (see below)  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** 60% compliance with new operations  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** HR benefits and processes aligned with similar regional non-profits  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 3:** streamline accounting and reduce operational overhead

**Objective 2:** Enhance WYH stature and funding with State of Wyoming  
- **Activity 1:** Align state advocacy with current political environment  
- **Activity 2:** Strengthen relationships with state agencies and committees  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** In 2019, create connections to new gubernatorial administration  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** In 2020, increased state funding

**Objective 3:** Achieve Legacy Fund goal  
- **Activity 1:** Create a Board-led campaign taskforce for Legacy Fund fundraising  
- **Activity 2:** Explore earned-income opportunities for increasing Legacy Fund  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** baseline Board in-kind contributions related to Legacy Fund  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** one earned-income opportunity presented to board by staff

**Objective 4:** Create succession strategy for Executive Director  
- **Activity 1:** Ensure all operations processes are documented  
- **Activity 2:** Review all job descriptions, titles, and functions for efficacy related to organization goals  
- **Activity 3:** Create a succession plan including review of staff levels and resource requirements  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 1:** create index of process documents and set goal that 75% of key operations are written up and stored  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 2:** complete a job title review, and ensure all positions reviewed within context of strategic plan  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 3:** ED succession plan proposed to board for approval  
  - **FY2019 Measurement 4:** four-year board chairmanship transition plan confirmed