



MENDOCINO COUNTY *Museum*

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028





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VISION

To be a vibrant social, cultural, and educational center of Mendocino County, strengthening community and enhancing the wellbeing of all.

OUR MISSION

Mendocino County Museum is dedicated to preserving and interpreting its collections for the purpose of educating and inspiring awareness of the peoples, communities, and history of Mendocino County for the enjoyment and benefit of County residents and visitors.

Aspirational Values

Public Service

Engagement

Integrity

Diversity

Responsibility

Education

Vision for the Strategic Plan

Continue our legacy as an experience-based organization encouraging the engagement of staff, volunteers, and community in the preservation and interpretation of local history

Utilize the resources of the Mendocino County Museum to foster community connection and enhance well-being

Develop a strategy for improving the financial sustainability of the Mendocino County Museum

Improve our messaging and visibility to maximize the utilization of our museum resources

Expand our programming and educational opportunities to better serve Mendocino County



History

Mendocino County Museum has been operated and funded by the County of Mendocino since 1972. Today, the Museum functions under the Cultural Services Agency, and is funded through the Mendocino County General Fund, adopted annually by the Board of Supervisors. Programs, supplies, facilities, staffing, and special projects are budgeted accordingly.

The Museum originated with the Mendocino County Historical Society in the 1960s. The community envisioned a museum which would serve as an asset for the entire County. In 1968, the Mendocino County Historical Society chose the 400 E. Commercial Street site in Willits. The city offered a \$1.00 year for 99 years lease on what was then three acres.

In 1970, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion of intent to operate the new museum, thus construction of the building began. In 1972, the County of Mendocino formed a Museum Department, and the Mendocino County Museum officially opened to the public. In 1973, a formal transfer agreement between the Mendocino County Historical Society and the Board of Supervisors was signed.

In the mid-1980s, Mendocino County Museum and Roots of Motive Power created the Redwood Empire Railroad History Project with the intent of obtaining grants to expand the Museum facilities for the purpose of displaying and interpreting railroad related artifacts and history.

The Museum and Roots of Motive Power applied and received major funding from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA 21 funds), administered by the California Department of Transportation, the United States Forest Service Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative (Option 9), and from the County of Mendocino.

Expansion of the original building began in 2000. Major funding for the project was a joint effort between Roots of Motive Power, a local nonprofit group dedicated to preserving and restoring logging and railroad equipment, and the Mendocino County Museum.

In 2002 and 2003 an additional 23,000 square feet of space was constructed to expand the original building. The additions were an annex on the north side for Artifact Storage and Conservation Laboratory space and an expansion on the east side for additional exhibit and educational use increasing the complex to 34,000 square feet. This expansion included the following additional features: the “Engine House,” two Mendocino College classrooms, a conference space called the “Wonacott Room,” and the Roots of Motive Power Office and Research Library.

The expanded Museum complex continues to house multiple community partners that serve Mendocino County residents: Mendocino College, Roots of Motive Power, and the Mendocino County Conservation Resource District.

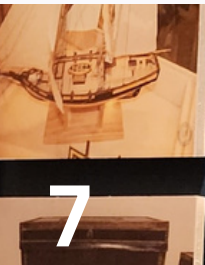
Strategic Plan Overview

The Strategic Plan Working Group committed to meeting monthly for an hour and half at the Mendocino County Museum. The process began with an analysis of the Museums' Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT Analysis). The group benefitted from themed presentations targeting key museum functions delivered by guest community leaders. Grace Hudson Director David Burton provided a presentation on the *Financial Management of Museums*, West Company CEO Maryanne Petrillo provided a workshop on *Marketing Strategies*, and Greg Melton of Melton Design Group provided a presentation on the value of *Community Placemaking*. The working group then met in smaller subgroups to develop outlines for the five nodes of the Strategic Plan:

- **Collections Stewardship**
- **Exhibit Enhancement and Expansion**
- **Program and Education Development**
- **Financial Sustainability**
- **Community Placemaking/Facility Enhancement**

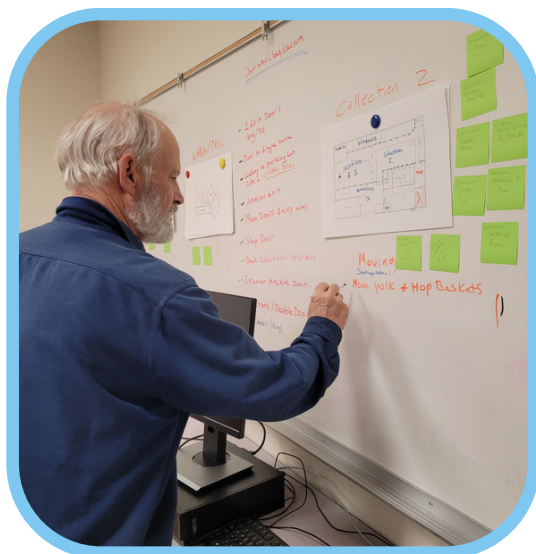


The committee strategized a community engagement effort to obtain input from the residents of the County about their vision for the future, and to better understand how the Museum is currently being used. The strategy included the development of a 20-question multiple choice and open response survey and a series of interactive Community Forums and outreach efforts. The survey was provided in English and Spanish, and made available digitally and in hardcopy format. It launched in mid-January 2023 and closed April 28th 2023.



Community Forums

A total of seven, two-hour Community Forums were held for the purpose of collecting feedback about the Museum from constituents. The Forums were held at the following locations: Ukiah Branch of the Mendocino County Library, Willits Branch, Round Valley Branch, Fort Bragg Branch, and Point Arena Branch. Community Survey outreach efforts were held at the Willis Grange, The Willits Farmers Market, The Laytonville Branch Library, The Historical Society of Mendocino County, The Willits City Council, The Ukiah City Council, and the Brooktrails Township.



"I value all that you are doing to keep the Museum viable in a variety of ways. Though I don't have kids, I think programming for families will bring attention to the next generation as to the value of the Museum."

-Survey Comment

The Strategic Plan Working Group identified clear goals for the Museum. Accomplishing these goals will depend on allocating sufficient museum staff to implement key tasks; designating resources via the budget process; close collaboration with our community members, businesses, nonprofits, and local government organizations; and finally, the Board of Supervisors' commitment and leadership.

Museum staff wish to extend gratitude to all the constituents who voiced their opinions about what is important to them and their families, and to those who shared their visions for a bright future of the Mendocino County Museum.

Governance

Board of Supervisors

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors' mission is to create and maintain a responsive and responsible government that enhances the quality of life of the people of Mendocino County. The County's mission is to deliver services that meet: Public safety, health, social, cultural, education, transportation, economic, and environmental needs of our communities. The Board of Supervisors is the governing body for the Mendocino County Museum.

Museum Staff

- Cultural Services Director
- Museum Administrator
- Museum Curator
- Museum Technician
- Staff Assistant

Volunteers

The Museum is greatly supported by community volunteers in collaboration with North Coast Opportunities.

Museum Advisory Board (MAB)

The Museum Advisory Board exists to review policies and recommend necessary innovations to the Board of Supervisors in connection to the Mendocino County Museum. The MAB is comprised of representatives of each supervisorial districts, City of Willits, Roots of Motive Power, and the Historical Society of Mendocino County.

Friends of the Mendocino County Museum (FOTMCM)

The sole purpose of the Friends Group is to represent the people of Mendocino County by providing support for the Museum through advocacy and financial assistance.

GOALS

Collections Stewardship

1 Improve Stewardship of Museum's Collections

- Digitize photography collections
- Photograph and upload images of objects in the collection
- Enter data about collections into the Past Perfect Database
- Continue to address the backlog of collections needing to be accessioned
- Establish a comprehensive collection management procedure manual
- Identify and label storage locations
- Address suggestions outlined by the Collections Assessment Program (CAP) * link to full (CAP) see pg. 20

3 Develop a Collections Acquisition Plan

- Use this document to plan for storage needs and future collections acquisitions

2 Develop Internal Research of Collections

- Create an Archives and Research volunteer position
- Attract and retain additional collections volunteers
- Establish an internship program

4 Disaster Preparedness

- Continue to improve Disaster Preparedness efforts by:
- Maintaining current contacts on the Emergency Plan
- Maintaining organized collections/storage areas
- Annual training of staff and volunteers on Museum Emergency Preparedness

GOALS

Exhibit Enhancement and Expansion

1 Expand Variety of Collections on Exhibit

- Establish a 12-month calendar of exhibits and programs
- Plan permanent exhibits 2-3 years in advance
- Ensure quality interpretation by providing well-researched text
- Identify locations throughout the county that can safely house and display museum collections physically or digitally
- Embed evaluation opportunities
- Increase number of thematic exhibits in the main galleries by updating text and utilizing museum collections

2 Create Engaging Narratives for Existing Exhibits

- Evaluate the quality of current exhibits
- Document collections on exhibit
- Prioritize improvements

4 Add Comprehensive Introductory Exhibit on History of Mendocino County

- Partner with local historical institutions county-wide
- Utilize community survey feedback to prioritize creation or reorganization of exhibits

3 Partner with Roots of Motive Power

- Strengthen and diversify exhibits that interpret transportation and logging history in Mendocino County
- Expand hands-on learning exhibits

Education and Program Development

1 Engage the Community

- **Involve the community and stakeholders in museum work by:**
 - Encouraging volunteering
 - Expand guest curation
 - Expanding educational opportunities
- **Establish ongoing evaluation opportunities through:**
 - Online comment forms
 - Printed materials
 - Surveys
- **Increase opportunities for museum staff, MAB members, and volunteers to work with the community by encouraging:**
 - Participation in community outreach
 - Event attendance
 - Committee meeting participation
- **Be proactive in filling Museum Advisory Board positions**

2 Expand Educational Programming

- **Develop a docent program**
- **Establish a training curriculum**
- **Implement a variety of ongoing adult-oriented programs:**
 - Year-round speaker series
 - Arts and culture programs
 - Living History events
- **Continue to develop a strong foundation for K-5 education program**
 - Schedule semi-annual meetings with school representatives
- **Extend open hours during events that are important to the community**
- **Circulate history programs throughout the county**
- **Develop Digitization Station**
 - Support the community in their efforts to preserve personal history
- **Work with the Native American Community to develop and utilize Land Acknowledgment Statement**

GOALS

Financial Sustainability

1 Sustainability

- **Publicize the positive impact of the Museum Endowment:**
 - Create an endowment brochure to encourage and simplify donations
 - Incorporate a recognition program
- **Collaborate with Friends of the Museum (FOTMCM)**
 - Identify ongoing ways to reward membership:
 - Acknowledge community efforts
 - Provide behind-the-scenes tours
 - Arrange special history lectures
 - Provide space for luncheons and events
 - Promote **FOTMCM** product sales in the Museum gift shop
 - Provide **FOTMCM** with social space and opportunities that promote belonging and encourage membership
 - Partner with **FOTMCM** to plan fundraisers that compliment planned exhibits and programs
 - Identify special projects that would benefit from **FOTMCM** fundraising efforts
- **Seek and apply for appropriate grants**
 - Reduce energy use
 - Support collections care
 - Support cultural programs and exhibits
 - Support or enhance community placemaking and facility goals

2 Marketing and Awareness

- Improve marketing strategies to increase awareness of the Museum as a pillar institution of the County
- Utilize the marketing plan to promote the organization's mission, values, and purpose
- Market programs
- Encourage use of Wonacott Room and Courtyard
- Ensure the Museum is using all possible channels of reaching the community. Document all efforts so that resources are targeted in areas with the biggest impact.

3 Long -Term Efforts

- Identify multiple long-term strategies for the financial sustainability of the Museum

GOALS

Community Placemaking and Facility Enhancement

1 Improve Accessibility

- Create pedestrian paths to increase access to all areas of the Museum campus
- Improve wayfinding signage for Museum Complex that directs people to College, Wonacott Room, and Roots of Motive Power
- Change from solid to glass doors between Tall Gallery and Engine House
- Remove carpet and seal floors
- Add entrance by Engine House
- Add more picnic tables to rear/ side of building
- Install electrical outlets for speakers, microphones, lighting, etc. in Wonacott Courtyard

2 Attract Attention to Museum Complex

- Improve visibility and expand use of the museum campus
- Install outdoor marquee or digital signage kiosk to announce programs and exhibits in the museum
- Remove lower limbs from redwoods to improve visibility of the Museum and outdoor exhibits
- Improve holiday lighting system
- Install outdoor artwork display spaces

3 Ongoing Facility Enhancement

- Remove unused ramp on side of the Museum
- Create accessible desk/reception space
- Ensure ADA compliance throughout the building, starting with public restrooms

SWOT ANALYSIS

S

Strengths

- Professional staff
- Amazing collection
- Great recent press
- Central location – in county/ near library
- Mendocino County tackling sustainability
- Supportive community

W

Weaknesses

- Lack of community knowledge of potential impact
- Lack of public trust in government staff
- Low staffing level
- Operating from a place of “need”

O

Opportunities

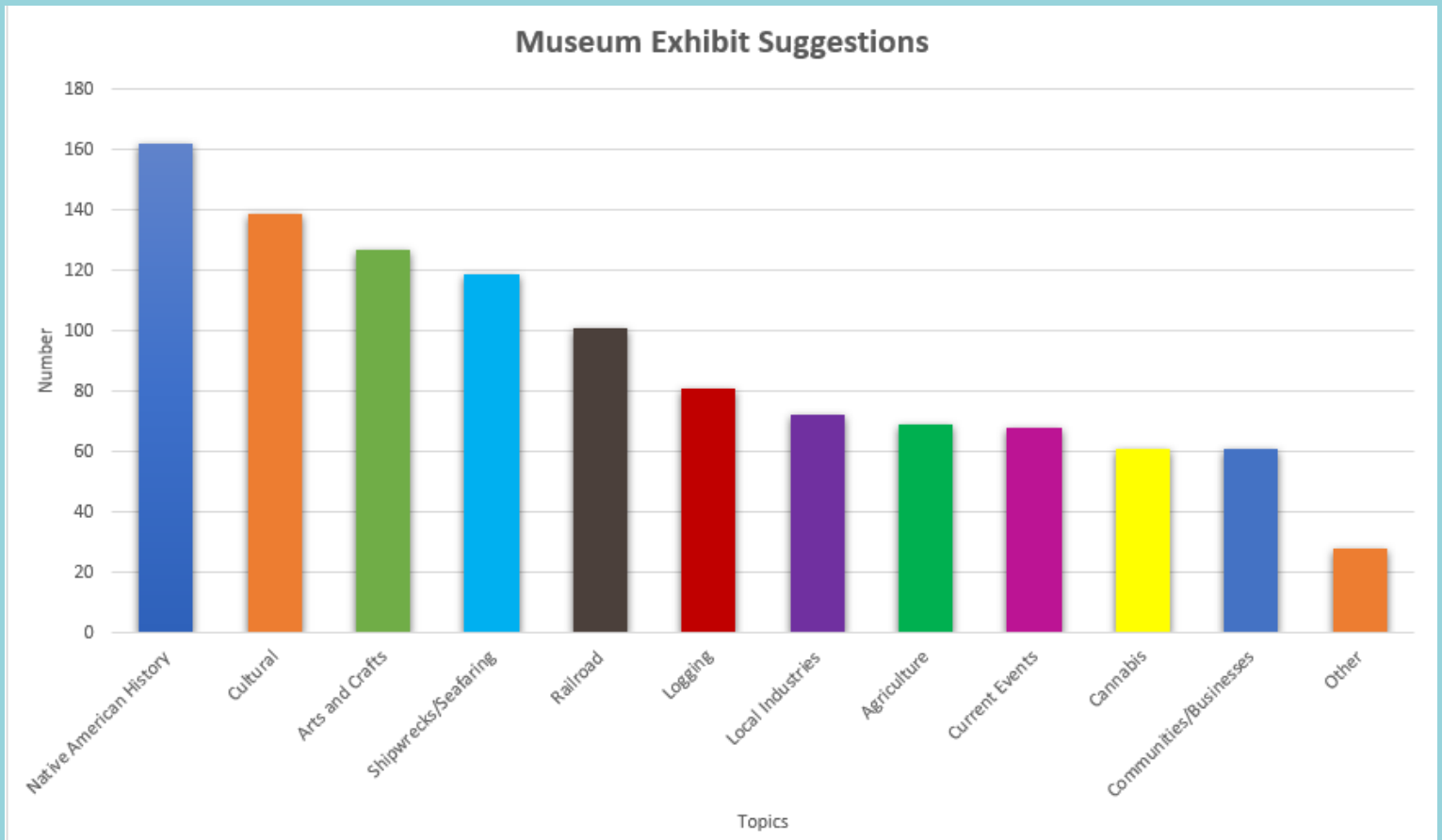
- Lots of quality neighboring organizations
- Focus on improvement
- 50th Anniversary
- Beautiful large campus
- Undeveloped space
- Collections Assessment Program Report
- Grant opportunities
- Community support

T

Threats

- Low expectations of community
- Past bad press
- Budget crunch (almost closed)

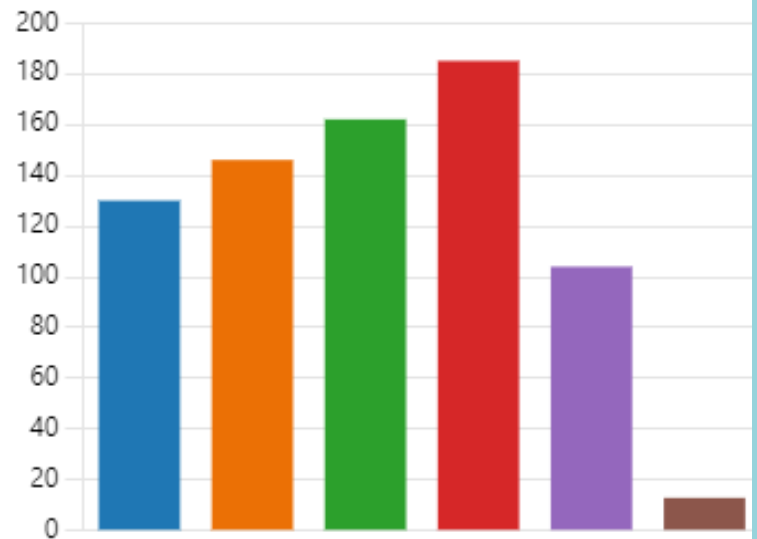
Community Survey Results



2. Please select any of the following events you would be interested in attending in the future:

[More Details](#)

● Hands-on Workshop	130
● Guest Performance (Music or De...	146
● Author Talks or Guest Speakers	162
● Living History Events	185
● Guided Tours	104
● Other	13



13. What days are you most likely to access the museum?

[More Details](#)

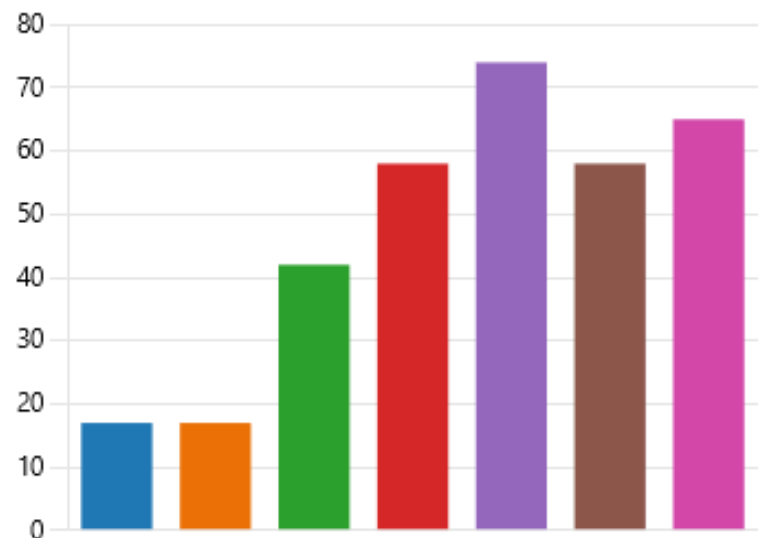
● Wednesday	60
● Thursday	59
● Friday	90
● Saturday	204
● Sunday	164



14. Would you be interested in extended hours programming? If so, When?

[More Details](#)

● Wednesday 5:00-7:00 pm	17
● Thursday 5:00-7:00 pm	17
● Friday 5:00-7:00 pm	42
● Saturday 10:00-12:00 am/pm	58
● Saturday 4:00-7:00 pm	74
● Sunday 10:00-12:00 am/pm	58
● Sunday 4:00-6:00 pm	65



Community Brainstorm

Programs

- Develop a docent program
- Add digitization station for public use
- Add more STEAM/learning opportunities, work with Roots of Motive Power
- Develop podcasts and VR Programs
- Increase living history programs
- Collaborate with MCRCD to connect collection/exhibits to nature walks
- Art nights, music, evening programs
- Partner with community to bolster existing events
- Guest speakers
- Rotating and sharing reference materials at libraries
- Bus tours via Visit Mendocino/bus trips to museum
- Increase social media output and engagement
- History trunk program
- Outdoor programs/events

Collections

- Increase collections on exhibit
- Digitize photography collection
- Improve collection storage space
- Continue to better utilize database
- Increase behind-the-scenes tours
- Increase research opportunities
- Increase marquee collections on display



Facilities

- Improve interior lighting
- Temporary art/murals on the exterior building by library parking lot and courtyard
- Digital or marquee sign announcing museum events and programs
- Additional outdoor interpretive signage
- Outdoor electrical
- Improved accessibility/trails on the campus
- Energy efficiency & sustainability
- Mark Walker sculpture preservation
- Physically alter the Tall Gallery space so the engine house can be viewed as part of the experience
- Space audit for possible extra public space
- Dog friendly
- Revamp outside

Exhibits

- Develop an introductory exhibit highlighting the history of Mendocino County
- Partner with the community to develop content
- Increase the amount and variety of collections on exhibit (solar, cannabis, etc.)
- Develop the Tall Gallery exhibits to interpret a variety of railroad and logging themes
- Develop media exhibit with working printing press
- Develop a North Western Pacific exhibit and connect it to the Great Redwood Trail
- Including adding text panels on trail
- Increase outreach efforts with traveling & digital exhibits and exhibits in community spaces
- Outdoor/folk art
- Contemporary space
- Guest curated Pomo exhibits, including art throughout time.

Collections Assessment (CAP)

About the Collections Assessment Program

"The Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) program provides small and mid-sized museums with partial funding toward a general conservation assessment. The assessment is a study of all of the institution's collections, buildings, and building systems, as well as its policies and procedures relating to collections care. Participants who complete the program receive an assessment report with prioritized recommendations to improve collections care. CAP is often a first step for small institutions that wish to improve the condition of their collections.

CAP is administered by Conservation and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) under a cooperative agreement with the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Funding for each program year is subject to the availability of funds in the federal budget."

- American Institute for Conservation

The full reports can be found below:

CAP Report - [Collections Assessment Mendocino County Museum](#)

CAP Report - [Facility Enhancement Mendocino County Museum](#)



County Strategic Plan Alignment

Priority 1: An Effective County Government Organization

- Museum staff cooperate regularly with Library staff to secure resources such as Wi-Fi, VOIP, mail delivery, and programming that educates and entertains the community. Pooling resources helps us reach a broader range of constituents
- Museum leadership invests in employee professional growth through online and in-person trainings to develop resourcefulness, confidence, and leadership skills
- Employee evaluations are held annually whether an employee has reached the top of their pay grade or not and employees work with their supervisor to set goals that fulfill the mission of the Museum and the employees' personal career goals
- Museum staff are utilizing technologies such as tablets, kiosks, and QR codes to make accessing historical and educational resources easier
- Staff created detailed policies for acquisition, retention, and de-accession of artifacts and made the information available on the Museum website for all to access.

Priority 2: A Safe and Healthy County

- The Museum offers Free Admission to Mendocino County Library Card holders on Wednesdays. Connecting the services of the Library with that of the Museum and cross promoting.
- The Museum has made its meeting spaces available to the public, by establishing a Meeting Room Policy, enabling more groups to access, gather, and collaborate effectively.
- The Museum is partnering with Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) to promote Cultural Heritage and Natural History by developing cooperative education programs for the public.

Priority 3: A Thriving Economy

- Museum serves as a tourist destination for visitors and residents with out-of-town guests
- Museum lobby displays pamphlets on local attractions and museum reception staff advise visitors on local restaurants and events
- Working with the City of Willits on wayfinding signage to encourage tourism
- Highlights the history of the cannabis industry in Mendocino County and supports local policies to encourage legal cannabis cultivation
- Contributes to a thriving economy by leasing classrooms to Mendocino College to educate new entrepreneurs
- Implemented a credit card payment system, thereby making our services more accessible

Priority 4: A Prepared and Resilient Community

- Museum staff are trained in Disaster Preparedness
- Staff have implemented and maintain Emergency Response Plan