
Archives Association of British Columbia

Strategic Plan

August 21, 2007

In Spring 2007 the Archives Association of British Columbia committed to undertake a strategic planning process with the help of consultant Rick Knowlan. The process was funded through a grant from the Arts Partners in Organizational Development (ArtsPOD) program, offered by the Centre for Sustainability, with additional funding from the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

The goal of the process was to develop a plan that would guide the AABC to restore financial sustainability while adapting to a changing business environment and meeting the needs of its diverse stakeholders.

A committee of key members was invited to participate in a Strategic Planning Committee by the AABC Executive. Throughout the process, the consultations were regularly opened up to committee chairs and regional representatives for feedback and participation, including a final review of the document on June 2, 2007. The document was adopted by the Executive of the AABC on July 9, 2007.

The resulting document includes recommendations to alter the business structure of the organization, develop budgets and plans to meet the needs of our funding partners and members, and evaluate the programs and services we deliver.

Consultant:

Rick Knowlan, Knowlan Consulting Group

Strategic Planning Committee:

Lisa Codd
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BACKGROUND: Analyzing our business environment.

The first step in the planning process was to identify our business environment: including the internal and external conditions that influence us.

Changes to our funding environment are the most fundamental challenges we face. Government funding (on which AABC has heavily relied) has declined. While the AABC can compete for funding from new sources (such as grants from foundations), funding programs that are not specifically geared to archives may not be aligned with the needs of archives. Both new and traditional funding bodies bring new requirements for accountability. Significant adaptability is required to take advantage of new opportunities.

Adapting to our new funding environment has been challenging. Volunteers are becoming harder to find. With increased challenges to secure funding, coupled with fewer human resources, the AABC has experienced several internal barriers to success. These include:

Barriers to achieving our goals, particularly financial sustainability

- We have had a structural deficit for several years – our costs have been higher than our revenues: we struggle to fund the same level of services with less money.
- We have had limited success in diversifying funding sources and remain largely dependent on NADP funding.
- Our diverse client base and geographic dispersion makes it challenging to meet all members' needs and expectations.

Barriers to satisfying our customers (including members and funders)

- We are trying to serve more audiences than we can successfully serve with current resources, and funding cuts are eroding the services we provide.
- There is no current consensus on how to prioritize and allocate resources to meet the diverse needs of our various customer groups.
- Decline in interest in serving the AABC suggests members are not engaged in the AABC.

Barriers to conducting our business efficiently

- The Executive is trying to both govern and manage without appropriate staff support
- The organizational structure and reporting structure may be out of date, and should be re-examined to deliver on our strategic plan.
- Lack of continuity and loss of organizational memory due to turnover and lack of organized records management.

Barriers to attracting, developing, motivating and retaining employees, board members and other volunteers

- Increasing difficulty in recruiting the executive, committee members and other volunteers needed to operate effectively, and no effective program to find, recruit, develop, recognize and retain a skilled volunteer corps.

BACKGROUND: Identifying our customers

Defining our customers was a challenging part of the process: committee members were not comfortable with thinking of the people we serve as “customers.” We were encouraged to recognize that in non-profit organizations, services are often used by one group (clients or members) and paid for by another group (funding agencies).

The customer groups we identified are listed below, along with the benefits we felt were important to offer to them.

Archivists with formal archival education

- Opportunities to increase knowledge about emerging archival issues
- Opportunities to network with others with similar concerns

Archivists with informal archival education, including employees and volunteers

- Opportunities to increase knowledge about archival practices
- Opportunities to network with others with similar concerns

Institutions and organizations with archives and an intention to manage them to archival standards

- Support to manage, preserve and provide access to their holdings in order to secure long term survival of their records
- A central means by which institutions provide information about their holdings to archives' users via provincial and national catalogues
- Raise the profile of archives in BC in order to promote greater support by governments and the public
- Information about and access to grants

Governments, foundations and other funding bodies that support archival programming in BC

- Increase public access to archives in support of priorities identified by funding bodies
- Implement NADP priorities in BC

The Plan

The strategic plan includes a revised mission statement, high level strategies, and detailed steps to get the work done. The mission and high level strategies are listed in the following section, along with a map illustrating the relationships between these core strategies.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to foster the development of the provincial archival community in order to better preserve and promote access to British Columbia's documentary heritage.

High Level Strategic Plan

We will pursue the following paths and patterns of sustained action over the coming years:

Achieving our Mission

- 1.1 Foster the development of the provincial archival community to promote a coordinated approach to preserving and providing access to B.C.'s documentary heritage.

Serving our Customers

- 2.1 Provide services to increase the capacity of archives throughout the province to preserve and provide access to B.C.'s documentary heritage.
- 2.2 Build and maintain the provincial catalogue in support of the national catalogue.
- 2.3 Allocate NADP and other funding to the best uses in support of our mission.
- 2.4 Provide the infrastructure to support networking opportunities for members.

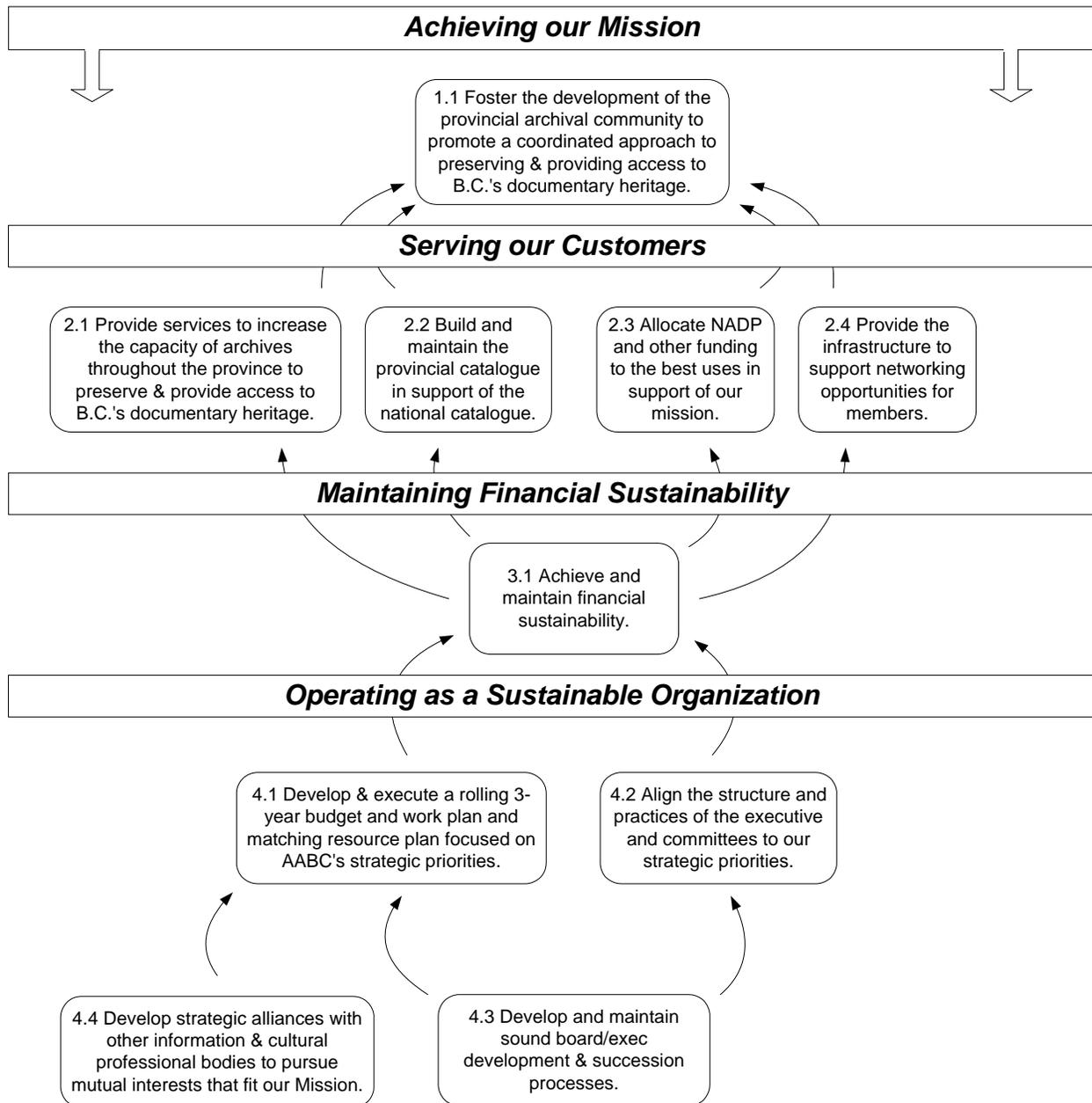
Maintaining Financial Sustainability

- 3.1 Achieve and maintain financial sustainability.

Operating as a Sustainable Organization

- 4.1 Develop & execute a rolling 3-year budget and work plan and matching resource plan focused on AABC's strategic priorities.
- 4.2 Align the structure and practices of the executive and committees to our strategic priorities.
- 4.3 Develop and maintain sound board/exec development & succession processes.
- 4.4 Develop strategic alliances with other information and cultural professional bodies to pursue mutual interests that fit our Mission.

AABC's Core Strategies in Strategy Map Format



Temporary Organizational Structure

It was recognized that the organizational structure of the AABC needed revision to meet our current challenges and enable us to operate more efficiently and flexibly and to implement the strategic plan. In particular, the committee felt that a more centralized approach would improve communication between committees and the executive. In the new structure, it would be the responsibility of the executive to develop annual work plans for the organization, and then directly oversee the work of committees to implement those plans.

In this structure, the Vice President would serve as Chair of a Programs Committee that would directly oversee the AABC's programs, including supervision of contractors. The Treasurer would serve as Chair of the Finance Committee, and oversee the work of the AABC's financial manager. The Institutional Member at Large would serve on the Nominations and Grants Committees and monitor the work of those committees toward work plan goals. Similarly, the Individual Member at Large would serve on the Membership and Conference committees, and monitor their work toward work plan goals. Finally, the Secretary would serve on the Newsletter and PAAL committees to monitor their progress on achieving work plan goals, while serving as liaison for regional representatives. The President is relieved from committee work to focus on governance of the organization.

The structure is intended for a one-year trial prior to a decision on which aspects will be recommended for formal adoption at the 2008 AGM.

