



Shaping Our Future Together


Children's
MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN
2015

INTRODUCTION

Where Children Learn and Grow

Building on its recent accomplishments and demonstrated capacity to deliver innovative exhibits, programs, and experiences that support hands-on, play-based learning for children and their families, the London Regional Children's Museum is entering a new phase in its journey.

It's a time of significant change for the Children's Museum, as the organization strategically heads in a bold and exciting new direction. Through the identification of strategic directions for achieving an innovative and sustainable Children's Museum, the strategic plan articulates how the dream of the new Children's Museum will become a reality.

Following in-depth consultation with the community, the Children's Museum Board of Directors and staff have developed an ambitious plan for the next three years.

The Strategic Plan sets out the objectives of the Children's Museum to 2018, which are grouped under six interconnected strategic directions that achieve the strategic vision:

- Be a leader in child-centred experiences
- Provide an exceptional visitor experience
- Attract and retain the best and the brightest
- Have a strong brand that is reflective of the work we do and engages our community
- Be a fiscally responsible and sustainable organization
- Collaborate and build meaningful relationships within the community

The Children's Museum must deliver on all of these directions to build a strong foundation that will support the transition from its current location to a new facility. The Children's Museum has a committed team of directors, staff and volunteers that will work collaboratively to achieve the vision.

This plan should be considered in conjunction with the business plan for the Children's Museum. These two documents provide the most recent information from the Board of Directors and museum staff regarding the Children's Museum's strategy and plan for the future. The business plan can be found on the Children's Museum website at www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca.



THE STORY OF THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Our History

The Children's Museum was the first children's museum in Canada. Established in May 1975, incorporated in March 1977, the Children's Museum has been in its present location since September 1982.

Children's museums, focusing on the educational and social development of children through hands-on, interactive exploration of exhibits and artifacts, have existed in the United States for over one hundred years. It wasn't until the mid-1970s, however, that the idea was introduced to Canada by our founder Carol Johnston.

A visit to the Boston Children's Museum in 1973 convinced Carol to establish a children's museum in London. "My children had never been in such a place before," Carol remembers. "It was a different kind of museum – one where children were welcome to touch, to interact, and to experience. My children were very excited. Watching them run and climb and play, I thought this was a wonderful way to learn."

With a wealth of grit and determination, and a large group of caring, committed volunteers, the London Regional Children's Museum became Canada's first children's museum.

The Children's Museum had the humblest of beginnings when during that first year several volunteers ran programs in 21 city playgrounds trying to build support for the concept. An interim board of directors was recruited and the children's museum was incorporated as a non-profit, charitable organization.

Various temporary homes housed the displays and programs of the London Regional Children's Museum until 1982 when the former Riverview Public School was purchased and renovated, supported by a \$1.5 million community fundraising drive.

In the first full year of operation in its new home, the Children's Museum served 60,000 visitors, ran 1,152 school programs, and conducted 200 workshops on a budget of \$200,000.

Since that time, the Children's Museum has evolved into nine exhibitions/galleries, and an array of targeted and general programs offered throughout the year plus selected outreach activities and other initiatives that have become widely valued by Londoners.

Over 2,000,000 people have visited the Children's Museum since it first opened.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Where Children Learn and Grow

The Children's Museum is a uniquely innovative childhood development resource that fosters creative learning and the excitement of discovery through play. It has been in the community, and in Londoners' lives, for over 35 years. It's where families go to dream and play, and where children gather to learn and grow.

Every year, the Children's Museum provides approximately 80,000 children and their families the chance to make memories that last a lifetime. Children who visit learn how the world works, who they are, and who they might become through play. Exhibits and stimulating learning experiences allow them to explore their history and heritage, investigate the complexities of science and social relationships, and celebrate the beauty in art and culture. The Children's Museum helps children indulge their curiosity and play their way to a life of innovation and creative discovery.

A Time for Change

After 30 years in the same location, the beloved building of the Children's Museum has seen a lot of play. If its walls could talk, it would tell you about the beautiful laughter, the play, and the learning. It would tell you about imaginative crafts, camps, and events. It would tell you about the extraordinary exhibits, the staff, and the families.

However, there have also been challenges and it has seen a lot of wear. The maintenance needs and cost of running the building, have imposed limitations on new exhibits, programs, and activities. The current space inhibits the ability to create new, dynamic content that appeals to and aligns with the needs of today's children and families.

This transition into a new location is key to the future success of the Children's Museum. While the essence of the Children's Museum will remain the same, it's time to re-imagine a new space, a new dream, and a new future.

This vision, and a bold new direction, will ensure more interactive play, up-to-date exhibits, and shared spaces that foster a community of innovation where all children can learn, connect, and grow through play.

The Dream

The Children's Museum will be a place to explore and discover for children and families. Permanent galleries and travelling exhibits, hands-on activities, and interactive programs will entice and engage children, making it a unique place that brings together children, families, and communities for meaningful interaction.

The new facility will exemplify the belief that children are competent and capable. The combination of artifacts, programming and exhibits will provide a rich learning experience that sparks a sense of wonder.

The Children's Museum will be:

A place for play and possibilities. A space filled with places to explore, examine, learn, and discover. A place where children can learn about science, technology, art, music, history, and nature through hands-on, interactive exhibits.

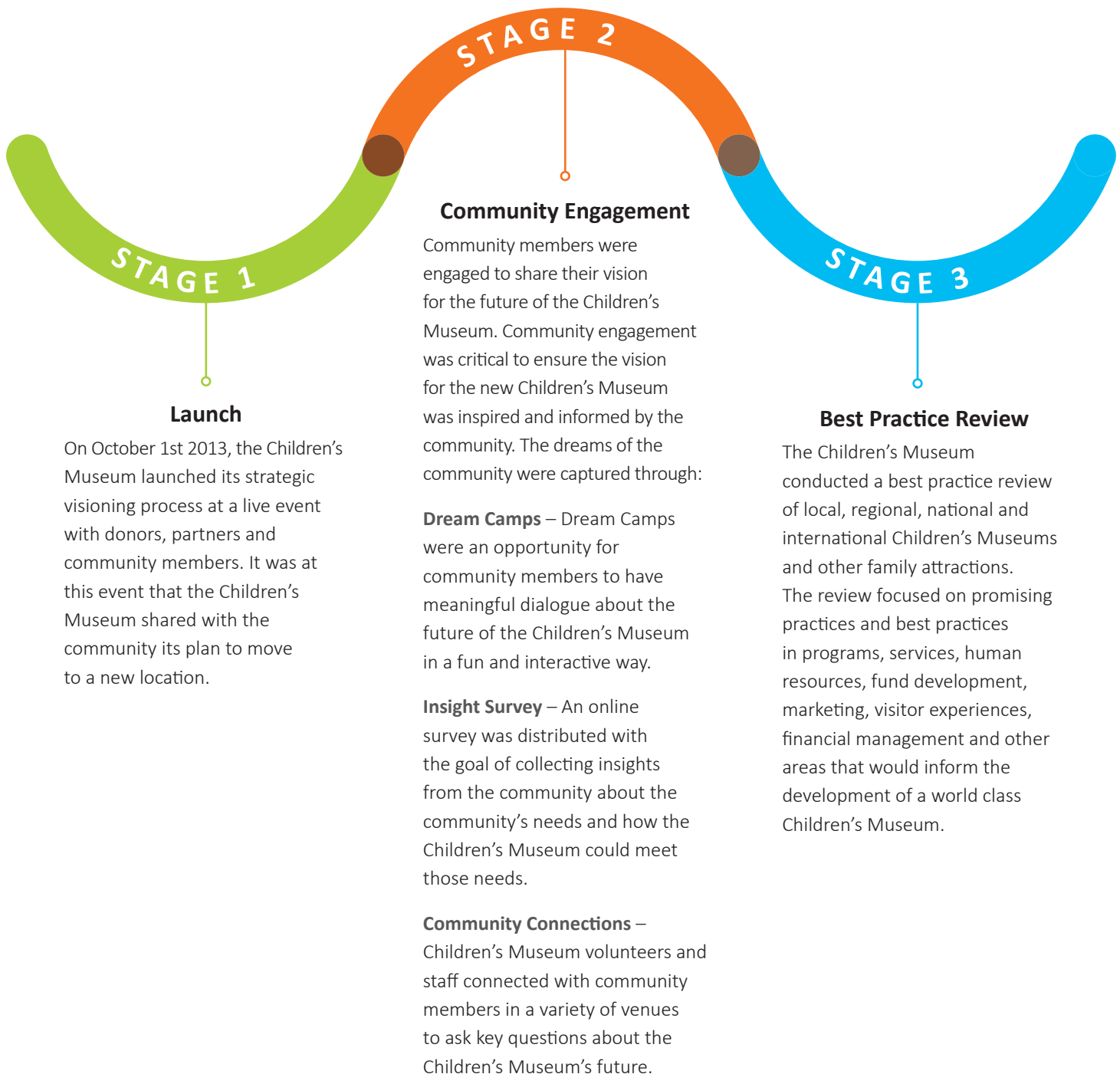
A place for experiential learning. A space offering unique experiences of interactive learning (including hands-on, technology-enhanced exhibits) that nurtures curiosity, builds knowledge and fuels imagination.

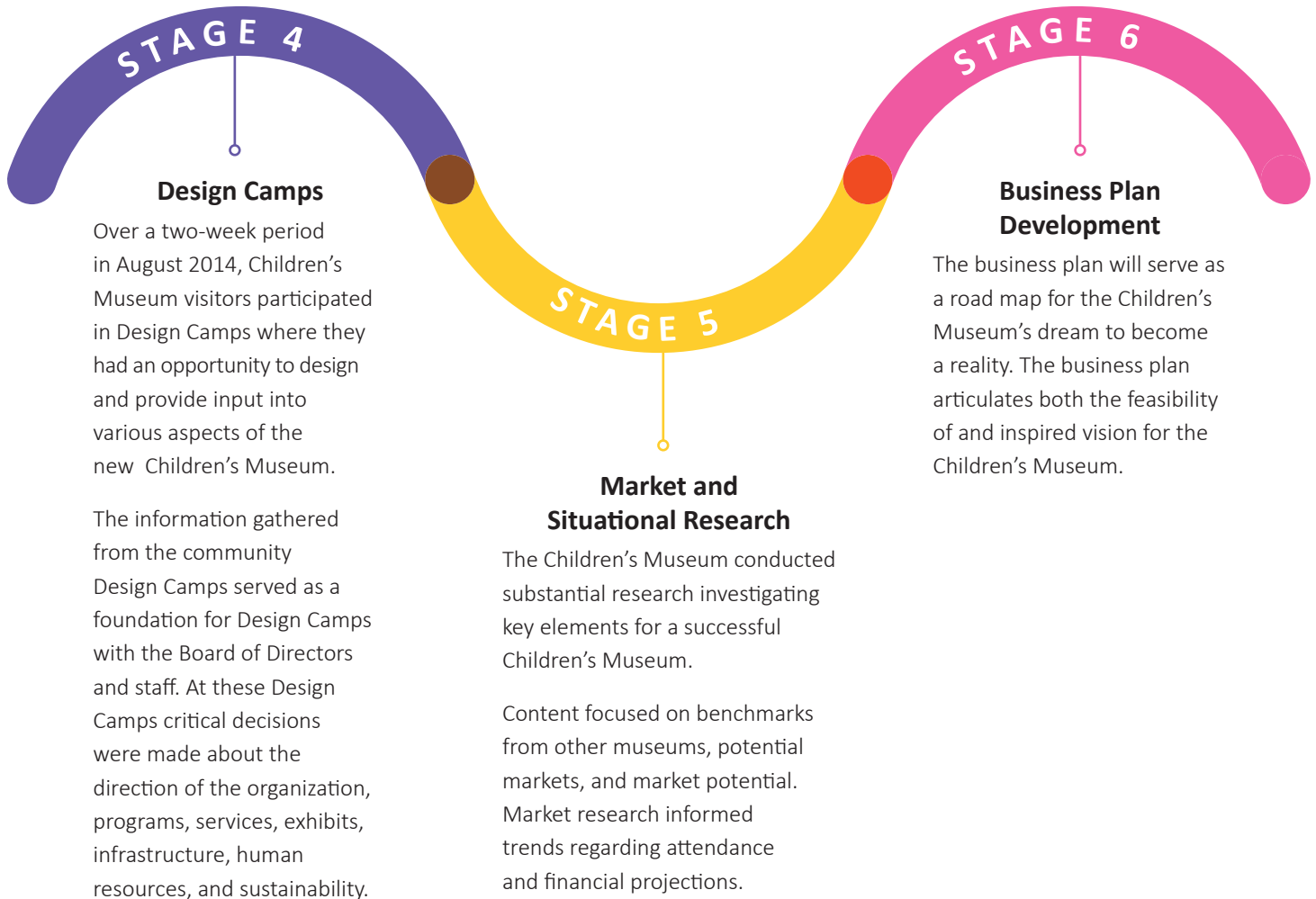
A place for all. A space providing a welcoming environment for children and families of all abilities and backgrounds. A gathering place where children can experience the diversity of our city and a vital resource for schools with supporting classroom curricula.



OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING JOURNEY

The Children's Museum conducted an extensive six-stage process to design its bold new strategy for the next three years:





OUR STRATEGY MAPS

Vision

Igniting curiosity through the power of play.

Mission

The Children's Museum will provide children and their grown-ups with extraordinary hands-on learning experiences in a distinctly child-centred environment.

Values

Our values serve as an important compass for our staff, volunteers, partners and visitors and guide how we operate as a family destination, employer of choice and strategic partner in the growth and development of our community.

1. **Stay Curious:** We will provide an environment that encourages creativity, innovation, and exploration through diverse learning experiences for our visitors, volunteers and staff.
2. **Be Awesome:** We will provide an environment that encourages and celebrates excellence in everything that we do.
3. **Be Helpful:** We will diligently steward the visitor experience and collaborate with our community to positively impact the lives of others.
4. **Dream Big:** We will inspire everyone to explore and realize their full potential and that of the Children's Museum.
5. **Include Everyone:** We will cultivate a diverse and accessible environment
6. **Have Fun:** We will strive to always be passionate about what we do, be energized by our work, and inspire others to share in our excitement, interests and discoveries.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Be a leader in child-centred experiences.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We embed experiential learning into all aspects of our work.2. We provide learning resources for parents, caregivers and teachers.3. Our work is driven by our statement of pedagogy.4. We design experiences that provide children with opportunities to choose.	<p>Play is essential to a child's development. When children are born, they are immediately seeking ways in which to explore and learn from the world around them.</p> <p>For a child to construct knowledge of the world, they need to explore and experiment for themselves. Both learning and thinking involve the active participation of the learner, and this primarily happens through play. Ultimately, play builds a foundation for a lifetime of learning.</p> <p>As a leader in child-centred experiences, the Children's Museum will combine theory, evidence and practice resulting in exhibits, programs and experiences that contribute to the cognitive, social and emotional development of children, while lighting a creative spark for discovery, exploration and learning.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Provide an exceptional visitor experience.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<div>1. We deliver high quality, educational exhibits, programs and services.</div> <div>2. Our facility and programming is universally accessible.</div> <div>3. We have an engaging and welcoming environment.</div> <div>4. We embed a culture of exceptional visitor service into all that we do.</div> <div>5. We listen and respond to our visitor needs and feedback to inform our decisions.</div>	<div>To succeed as a world-class destination for families the Children’s Museum must offer a compelling reason to visit and an exceptional experience to encourage families to visit again. To do that the Children’s Museum will listen to what visitors want and respond to visitor needs.</div> <div>The Children’s Museum will intentionally and thoughtfully welcome community participation in the museum experience. Through all these actions, the Children’s Museums will help to build a strong community.</div> <div>The Children’s Museum will provide nurturing, sensory-rich, experiences for children in which they are free to play and explore. Exhibits will engage children in simple and complex forms of play that result in foundational learning. Artifacts and programming will bring exhibits to life.</div> <div>The Children’s Museum environment will be essential to an exceptional visitor experience. All aspects of the visitor’s experience will be considered to provide a unique, interactive environment where children and adults connect.</div>

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Attract and retain the best and the brightest.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<div>1. We will celebrate and recognize the contributions and successes of our staff and volunteers.</div> <div>2. We will invest in professional development opportunities for our staff and volunteers.</div> <div>3. We have a governance structure that helps us achieve our goals and build a sustainable organization.</div> <div>4. Our systems, processes and policies foster a collaborative environment and align with the diverse community we serve.</div>	<p>The talented people who work and volunteer at the Children’s Museum are very special. They don’t mind the noise, they enjoy getting their hands dirty, they laugh a lot, they love kids and learning and they are passionate about the work they do.</p> <p>They have made a conscious choice to work and volunteer at the Children’s Museum. To continue to engage extraordinary people, the Children’s Museum will foster an environment that maintains an engaged and talented team working to achieve the Children’s Museum vision.</p> <p>The Children’s Museum will provide staff and volunteers with opportunities that challenge them, encourage growth and promote excellence. Processes, systems and structures will focus on providing staff and volunteers with a platform to do their best work.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Have a strong brand that is reflective of the work we do and engages our community.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<div>1. We consistently deliver on our brand promise to provide extraordinary hands-on learning experiences in a distinctly child-centred environment.</div> <div>2. We engage and inform our stakeholders through a variety of modalities.</div> <div>3. We facilitate market research and participate in ongoing evaluation of our programs and services to better understand consumer behaviour.</div> <div>4. We are a newsmaker and a thought leader.</div>	<p>Our greatest brand ambassadors are those who have experienced the Children’s Museum in some capacity. From children and their caregivers to teachers and funders, their opinion and perspective is shaped through every encounter. Be it how they are greeted at the front desk, the day camp brochure at their child’s school or the signage in the coat room, every touch point provides an opportunity to share the extraordinary impact, capacity and potential of the Children’s Museum.</p> <p>We have a responsibility to engage, inform and steward our community and commit to providing transparent and meaningful information that raises awareness, improves understanding and lays the foundation for support.</p> <p>As the very essence of why we do what we do, our brand promise will be delivered across all facets of the organization, provide clarity of our mission and vision and share our excitement for the future.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Be a fiscally responsible and sustainable organization.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We live a culture of philanthropy.2. We will embark on a capital campaign.3. We employ a financial model that ensures fiscal responsibility.4. We undertake a continuous evaluation process to enhance organizational efficiencies and ensure accountability and transparency of the Board of Directors and Management.	<p>The Children’s Museum plays a significant role in the cultural and educational well-being of our community. Financial sustainability is a cornerstone of which the Children’s Museum’s role in the community will be able to continue.</p> <p>The Children’s Museum’s operating budget is based on both contributed revenue which includes grants, donations and sponsorships and earned revenue which is derived from attendance, membership, and programming.</p> <p>The Children’s Museum will continue to explore and implement strategies to continue to build the sustainability of the organization.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Collaborate and build meaningful relationships within the community.

Objectives	Why It Matters
<div>1. We build strategic collaborations with business, government, non-profit organizations, community groups and educational institutions.</div> <div>2. We are known in the community as a leader in pedagogy.</div> <div>3. We create opportunities for community engagement that provide tangible benefits to our stakeholders.</div>	<p>To become a community where play and learning connect will require relationships beyond the walls of the Children’s Museum. In strengthening current partnerships and building others, the Children’s Museum will extend its reach and share its practices of playful learning.</p> <p>The Children’s Museum will continue to strengthen its current partnerships and explore new partnership opportunities. Through community-based partnerships, innovative collaborative experiences for children and families will be implemented.</p> <p>The Children’s Museum will continue to be open and accessible to all London families. The Children’s Museum will intentionally and thoughtfully welcome community participation in the museum experience.</p>

