

Summary

New Normal themes and initiatives (note that language in italics reflects specific New Normal Report recommendations):

Invest in Our Human Capital

As echoed in the New Normal Report, bringing innovation and efficiency to our recruitment, hiring, onboarding, promotion, and retention practices at the Smithsonian is paramount. Our administrative leadership team is working in earnest to bring about policy and process changes in this area. Also, consistent with the following New Normal Report recommendations, we are actively engaged in the following efforts:

- *Flexible Work Practices with Innovation.* Our administrative team is conducting a post-COVID workforce planning exercise to identify the ways in which the Institution can adopt long-term flexible work practices, invest in the technology and equipment necessary to facilitate those practices, and develop the policies and toolkits necessary to underpin them.
- *Plan to Realize Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion Across the Smithsonian.* As noted in the email dated November 16, 2020, we are working to bring into the Smithsonian a Head Diversity Officer who has deep background and expertise in the diversity and inclusion field to develop a “One Smithsonian” strategy on diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion; to serve as a resource to support individual unit efforts in this area; and to facilitate and encourage conversation. The New Normal findings support the vital importance of this work, in parallel with the work we have underway on the Race, Community, and Our Shared Future initiative.

Focus on Audience and Digital Transformation

The New Normal Committee effectively highlighted our need to digitally transform as an Institution in a way that not only synchronizes and integrates our internal platforms and activities, but does so in a way that continues to focus on a digital approach and keeps our audience needs paramount. To that end, we are moving forward on the recommendations around *increasing audience-centered, data-driven decision making* and thinking of the ways in which that will increase the *financial resiliency* of the organization. Specifically, we have launched the following efforts:

- *Creation of a Digital Transformation Function.* We are seeking a head of digital transformation position to help us transition into a digitally dexterous, data-driven organization with a virtual presence. This role will support the Institution’s broader strategic priorities, including attracting new and more diverse audiences, increasing audience engagement, emphasizing philanthropy and revenue generation, and expanding access to all Smithsonian collections, expertise, and educational resources in the U.S. and worldwide.
- *Ticketing as a Strategic Platform and Strengthening and Integrating Membership Across the Institution.* We have assembled a “Ticketing Team” that is exploring the viability of adopting a pan-institutional ticketing solution. The group is charged with not only

thinking through the technical requirements of such a system, but also about how we could use such a system to integrate and improve the audience experience, identify and pursue revenue opportunities, collect and utilize audience data, and build and integrate membership across the Institution.

- *Expand Mass Market Philanthropic Opportunities, Strengthen and Integrate Membership, Reimagine Special Events, and Integrate E-Commerce.* Our Offices of Advancement and Communications, as well as Smithsonian Enterprises, will work together with other key stakeholders to find new streams of revenue and brainstorm ways in which we can move these efforts forward by building out additional online and digital capabilities. This will include a review of membership programs across the Institution and how those different audiences might have a more cohesive experience. Smithsonian Enterprises has embarked on a wholesale revision of our e-commerce platform and will evaluate the ways in which it can integrate e-commerce with our digital platforms and outreach across the Institution. Similarly, the Office of Advancement is identifying new ways for our audiences to donate when they interact with the Smithsonian online, and our social media and special events teams are exploring ways to amplify our content as well as creating new ways to enhance events and program offerings on-site and online.

Recognize Education as a Part of Our DNA

As the New Normal Report so aptly characterizes, *education is a part of our DNA* at the Smithsonian. During our nearly 175-year legacy, education has been at the core of the Smithsonian’s mission. Under the leadership of our Under Secretary for Education, we look forward to expanding the Smithsonian’s public service role through education and rebranding the Smithsonian internally and externally as an education powerhouse. We will define a common understanding of education and embrace a strategic approach to education as ‘One Smithsonian,’ and specifically as called out by the New Normal Report:

- *Recognize the expertise of educators and elevate the value of education within the Smithsonian;*
- *Review collection, exhibition, digitization, and interpretation strategies to consider K–12, caregivers, teens, cultural consumers, and other education-focused audiences;*
- *Serve as a knowledge partner to pre-K–12 educational systems nationwide by making available the Smithsonian’s vast interdisciplinary content to K–12 educators; and*
- *Make education an integral part of the “Big Idea” implementation.*

Pursue Signature Initiatives or “Big Ideas”

Finally, the New Normal Report powerfully articulates that the Smithsonian’s vast resources, including collections, exhibitions, research, and programming, can *provide a depth of understanding and help move the nation to a better future.* To that end, the leadership team is currently contemplating ways in which such initiatives may be evaluated and effectively implemented. Such a process will help us discern those “Big Ideas” that make sense to pursue based on their strategic alignment, their anticipated impact, and our ability to support them. Two of the “Big Ideas” identified in the New Normal Report represent the signature initiatives already

underway at the Institution. We are highlighting them here because they model “Big Ideas” in action; specifically, they are of a size and scale such that there can only be a couple of them underway at the Institution at any given time, they reflect an alignment with unique Smithsonian knowledge and expertise, and they reflect efforts to bring about an enduring impact on the country, if not world. It is also our hope that we can use these initiatives, which are still under development, to think about new ways to distribute content and engage with our audiences and build on the digital transformation and other efforts we have underway at the Institution. These initiatives are:

- *Race, Community, and Our Shared Future.* This initiative aims to help the nation and the Smithsonian contend with its own racial past through an expanded discussion of themes dissecting contemporary movements that are intricately tied to historic roots. We are exploring ways to use this initiative as a template for a new way of delivering Smithsonian content at the community level through innovative digital means, and to bring forward Smithsonian knowledge and expertise in a way that generates current impact and makes a positive contribution to race relations in America.
- *Life on a Sustainable Planet.* As the New Normal Report notes, COVID-19 has shown us the interdependence of all aspects of life and suggests that the Smithsonian has an essential role to play in ensuring that we live on a sustainable planet. This is a compelling call to action, and we would add that the Smithsonian’s vast, unique, and unparalleled scientific collections and research uniquely positions us to inform, educate, and inspire a diverse public. We can increase scientific knowledge and improve society’s scientific literacy in areas of research as diverse as conservation biology; the biological, physical, and human sciences; planetary science; terrestrial geophysics; and astrophysics. By drawing upon these resources, we cannot only help map out life-sustaining strategies for the future, but in the short term look at ways our research and programs can help with the ongoing pandemic. In fact, we have colleagues who are already looking for ways to amplify our work in the One Health arena and developing new ideas to engage and educate the public on the vital concept of the interconnectedness of all life.

Please take a few moments to read the [full New Normal Report](#) to understand the details behind these initiatives, as well as to see the list of great ideas generated by our colleagues.