

FORWARD PLAN

2025-2027



Introduction

Welcome to the American Museum & Gardens' (AM&G) 2025-2027 Forward Plan.

This plan follows the most recent Forward Plan written in 2019 just before the covid pandemic. During the past four years, we have tested new ideas for exhibitions and events, grown audiences, deepened engagement in response to audience research, increased revenue, improved site-wide legal compliance and maintenance, and implemented a more appropriate and future-looking structure across the organisation. From the lessons learned and with a great deal of groundwork to enable further growth, our current 3-year plan has at its heart a focus on greater financial sustainability by 2027; reinforcing the role we play as a cultural organisation in our community, and ensuring we are sufficiently flexible and fit to successfully navigate both current and future challenges.

The American Museum & Gardens is a charity, UK registration number 1106989. American Museum Enterprises, a limited company number 00486293 administers the catering and retail operations. The Board of Trustees have responsibility for the charity with a separate board for American Museum Enterprises. The American Museum & Gardens is further supported by the U.S. based Halcyon Foundation which provides on-going financial support for AM&G.

The primary purpose of the American Museum & Gardens is to showcase American culture and arts in the UK, while celebrating the special relationship and intertwined history of the two countries and helping to dispel stereotypes. With the 250th anniversary of the formation of the United States in 2026, this plan overlaps with this historic moment. It presents an opportunity for AM&G to be even more relevant given the complexities and challenges of current times, and to highlight the importance that culture plays in sharing new perspectives and bringing people together.



Welcome

Over the past four years, we have learned a great deal through testing a range of initiatives, projects and ideas, and the challenges facing the sector in general and AM&G specifically. We significantly increased visitor numbers reaching over 70,000 in 2023, more than double the average number of visitors annually during the decade prior to the pandemic. We have intentionally moved from being an inwardly focused institution to one that is connected and relevant to our local community, leveraging our role as a place of well-being, enjoyment, and continued learning.

We have delivered significant and impactful projects including:

- The delivery of a vibrant and popular programme of special exhibitions and events, which has helped to increase and diversify our audiences while increasing revenue
- The creation of a Children's Garden which doubled family membership in its first year
- The transformation of the Museum Garden Cafe to the American Garden Deli, returning the catering operation to profit and increasing revenue
- Enhanced access across the site by repairing a Grade 2 listed retaining wall at significant cost
- The development of a new commercial kitchen to accelerate private hire opportunities and increase secondary income
- Delivery of Christmas Lights shows in 2021 and 2022 which brought in 40k visitors in total and helped to build awareness of AM&G

- The development of a new signposted and safe woodland walk, extending the visitor experience to previously unused areas of the estate, and in the process extending our wellbeing offer
- Bore hole (well) project to enable the provision of our own water source for all of our needs
- Developing our Fit for the Future masterplan to ensure future sustainability of the museum



In parallel to delivering these projects, we have worked extensively to improve internal processes and operations such as:

- Improving site wide legal compliance in all aspects of our operation
- Ensuring a warm welcome and visitor experience for all of our visitors
- Introducing HR processes
- Conducting detailed audience research
- Establishing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy and action plan
- Continued development of the landscaped gardens installed in 2018 by Oehme, van Sweden (of Washington DC)
- Planning our future needs with our Fit for the Future masterplan

This Forward Plan takes all of this into account and offers a clear vision for the future. The plan seeks to embrace the challenges, needs and opportunities of today as well as the future, as we aim to ensure our place in the community, enabling us to attract more visitors through increased relevance and attractiveness. We continue to embrace and leverage our founders' vision, updated to take account of life over 60 years on from our founding, and ensuring we remain relevant to a whole new generation of visitors in the context of new global challenges.

At the time of writing, some of the greatest challenges we are facing include the continuing cost-of-living crisis, coupled with inherently high operating costs of AM&G, given the complexity and extent of the whole estate. Also taking account of a relatively new government in the U.K. combined with a new and radically different administration in the U.S.



OUR MISSION

Who We Are

The mission of the American Museum & Gardens is to stimulate and inspire people of all ages to further their understanding of the richness and complexity of American culture.



OUR VISION

What we aspire to be

Famous as the destination that offers an enriching and entertaining experience **for all**, inspired by American Culture



OUR VALUES

We are **welcoming**, **respectful**, and **supportive** towards each other, our visitors and everyone we meet.

We are **passionate** and **dedicated** to our mission and take a **responsible** and **creative** approach to caring for our heritage, environment, and collections.



Strategic Aims

These **four Strategic Aims form our priorities for the next 3 years.**

Although the four Strategic Aims cover the breadth of work across AM&G, given the importance of achieving financial sustainability, the priorities below have been strategically focused and more heavily weighted on areas which will have the most impact on our financial position.

1. Protect our Heritage



We will focus on ensuring the best possible care of our Grade I listed Georgian Manor House, the Grade II listed buildings and grounds, 12,000 world-class items in our collection and all of our assets. This is a wide-ranging remit which extends from ensuring best practice care of our collections for future generations, maintaining our formal gardens in line with the original (Oehme, van Sweden) vision, and the upkeep of our grounds and buildings all across the estate. We will focus on the following priorities:

- Ensure continuous **development and care of collections**
- Deliver a **programme** of formal and informal **learning** to share collections and diverse perspectives related to American culture
- Apply a thorough programme of **planned preventative maintenance** across all of our buildings and equipment
- Deliver an on-going **woodland management plan**

By 2027, we aim to have delivered:

- A clear vision and description of our longer-term purpose for key stakeholders and the local community particularly in the context of the collection and our offer
- A collections review and rationalisation project underway
- A secure future for our collections with improved conditions (storage and display) and relevance
- New period room graphics, interpretation, and family trails to continue an already funded project
- On-going work for all buildings as part of our planned maintenance programme
- Objectives set within the woodland management plan
- Manor House refurbishment upgrade work progressing in line with our Fit for the Future masterplan, having secured sufficient financial support

2. Welcoming and Inclusive



We will continue to grow and diversify audiences and ensure that AM&G remains relevant, playing an important role as a cultural institution in the community. We will ensure that our employee and volunteer teams collaborate to offer a genuinely warm, welcoming and well-informed experience for all visitors. To achieve this, we will focus on the following:

- Improve and fully integrate **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** through our internal task force and curatorial Advisory Group
- **Partner** with charities and communities to enable access for people underserved by heritage and culture
- Leverage our role as a **place of wellbeing** for everyone
- Deliver an **exhibitions and events programme** based on regular audience feedback, diverse voices and perspectives

Our desired position by 2027 is to have achieved the following:

- Marketing and Communications activities which further expand our reach and relevance, increase visitation and reinforce our role as a place of well-being. This includes delivering an updated website, a range of social media outputs and partnership working to maximise potential and leverage external expertise and support.
- An Audience Development Plan which provides rich insights into our current audiences and identifies potential areas of growth to reach and appeal to a wider range of audiences and deliver:
 - A strategic programme of events and special exhibitions
 - A Community Engagement plan working in partnership with our curatorial Advisory Group, external organisations and charities to reach communities with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical representations
 - Working in partnership with the US Embassy and other UK organisations to offer rich programming around USA 250 in 2026 to share different perspectives exploring and reflecting on the anniversary
- Retain high visitor satisfaction and continually look to improve where we can by regularly checking and responding to online reviews, evaluating surveys results and capturing onsite feedback.
- Updated period room graphics and content which meet a broader range of visitor needs and learning styles
- A more diverse trustee, volunteer and staff body, better representative of the local community
- EDI training at all levels of the organisation and progress against our action plan reviewed regularly

- Delivery of a learning strategy that meets the on-going changing needs of schools while leveraging our collections, expansive outdoor spaces and expertise of AM&G.

3. Organisational Excellence

Great progress was made during the last four years around internal processes with HR, developing ways of working and refining our structure in collaboration and communication internally and externally, as well as growing income. To achieve financial sustainability further work is needed. This plan identifies key priorities which will drive us towards our goals.

- **Financial sustainability** through income generation in parallel with operational efficiencies
- **Champion our people** by listening and acting on feedback and ensure training and development opportunities to develop a high performing team
- Continued development of **policies, processes, and systems** to ensure organisational effectiveness
- Ensure **robust governance**

By 2027, we aim to deliver:

- Increased financial sustainability through a more varied and robust income generation and funding model which includes increases in admissions, membership, group travel, fundraising, private hire, public events, retail and catering income
- Significant growth from private hire and other non-visitor related income streams such as film location, and our collections through licensing, merchandise and touring exhibitions
- Museum accreditation renewed
- A training plan which will deliver consistent, holistic and team specific training and professional development for all staff and volunteers
- Sponsorship strategy underway with active UK and US near and long-term fundraising. The US fundraising strategy will prioritise the stewardship of current donors and the identification and cultivation of new constituencies to grow and strengthen financial support for restricted and unrestricted projects. Without a physical presence in the US, curatorial, programmatic, and marketing assistance from UK staff is required for the successful implementation of this strategy.
- An increasingly engaged, strategic and active Trustee board led by a Chair to be appointed in 2025



4. Environmentally Sustainable

We will continue our focus on environmental sustainability including the work led by our garden team and through priorities identified by the internal Climate Justice Task Force. Through these priorities we will ensure we are best placed to respond to current and future challenges and continue to have an increasingly positive impact over the stewardship of our buildings and grounds.

We will focus on the following priorities:



- Focus the **Climate Justice and Responsibility Task Force** on reducing our carbon impact to help combat the climate emergency
- Harness our **natural resources**, fully utilising our own water supply and endeavour to secure funds to introduce an environmentally sustainable energy supply to replace our current dependence on fossil fuels
- **Increase biodiversity**, eg; by the introduction of more beehives and increased grazing regimes
- Further our **organic policy** by removing non-organic chemical sprays, single use plastics and optimising recycling

By 2027, our goal is to have achieved:

- Establishment of the Climate Justice and Responsibility Task Force, to lead and recommend new sustainable policies and practices throughout the organisation and ensure they are embedded in all departments to focus on reducing our carbon footprint
- Furthering of our organic policy by reducing our use of chemicals in the gardens, reducing the use of single use plastics and optimising our recycling systems
- Reduction in our consumption of heating oil and electricity by investing in new lighting and controls to ensure our systems are operating efficiently
- Updated lighting in exhibition gallery from Halogen to LED



Appendices:

- Action plan
- EDI policy and action plan
 - [Equity, diversity and inclusion plan - American Museum & Gardens](#)