



STRATEGIC PLAN April 27, 2015

BACKGROUND

As the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA) enters its 21st year in operation, the Board of Directors determined to revisit the organization's strategic plan, last updated in 2010. The cultural resource management (CRM) industry has evolved significantly since ACRA's founding, and ACRA wishes to increase its legitimacy and leadership as the only national trade association for CRM firms and to achieve better outcomes for its members and the CRM industry.

ACRA's president created a Strategic Planning Committee (Committee) to revisit the plan in early 2015. The Committee, with the assistance of Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC (CHP), drafted and circulated surveys to both members and non-members, conducted in-depth interviews with members, analyzed budget changes over the past five years, and convened conference calls to discuss key issues. Thanks to committee members Ian Burrow, Wade Catts, Terry Majewski, Chuck Niquette, Patrick O'Bannon, Kevin Pape, Duane Peter, Mike Polk, Kay Simpson, Ellen Turco, Lucy Wayne, and Don Weir for your enthusiastic leadership.

Members of the Board and the Committee met in Washington, D.C. on March 1-2, 2015 to prioritize desired outcomes for ACRA in the next five years. Participants included: Ralph Bailey, Kerri Barile, Nathan Boyless, Ian Burrow, Wade Catts, Linda Scott Cummings, Charissa Durst, Terry Majewski, Tom Motsinger, Kevin Pape, Duane Peter, Mike Polk, Kay Simpson, Al Tonetti, Lyle Torp, and Andrew Weir. Marion Werkheiser, Eden Burgess, and Lucy Matthews from CHP helped to facilitate the meetings.

Members of the Board and the Committee provided feedback on earlier drafts, much of which has been incorporated into this final version for the Board's consideration.

VISION

A robust and thriving cultural resources management industry delivering responsible solutions that balance development and preservation and enjoying strong support from clients, government, and the public.

Our vision should describe how we want the world to be different in 20 years as a result of our efforts.

[Previous Vision: “ACRA: The voice of the CRM industry.”]

MISSION

ACRA improves the quality and effectiveness of cultural resource management firms, advocates for conditions that allow the cultural resource management industry to thrive, and supports responsible cultural resource management solutions.

Our mission articulates those aspects of our vision we are uniquely suited to accomplish, specifically those that are measurable and accomplishable in a 5-10 year time frame.

[Previous Mission: “The mission of ACRA is to promote the professional, ethical, and business practices of the cultural resources consulting industry.”]

VALUES

The Board agreed that ACRA’s [Code of Ethics](#) is an accurate statement of the organization’s values.

OUTCOMES

The Board prioritized outcomes for ACRA to achieve over the next five years. The Board should hold itself and its executive team accountable for achieving these outcomes, and the executive team should adjust strategy and work plans as needed to ensure these outcomes are met.

Outcome 1: Enhanced Appreciation of the Public Value of the Cultural Resource Management Industry By Clients, Regulators, and the Public.

Outcome 2: Improved Cultural Resource Management Practice that Delivers Responsible Solutions that Balance Development and Preservation.

Outcome 3: Improved Business Efficacy of ACRA Member Firms.

Each outcome is discussed in detail below.

Outcome 1: Enhanced Appreciation of the Public Value of the Cultural Resource Management Industry Among Clients, Regulators, and the Public.

Activities:

- Collect stories about responsible cultural resource management solutions and effective Section 106 consultations / processes
- Communicate these stories to the public through traditional and social media campaigns and through the campaigns of partner organizations like the Preservation50 coalition, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and NCSHPO
- Communicate these stories to legislators and regulators through a robust Capitol Hill advocacy campaign and through ACRA publications
- Communicate these stories to clients through ACRA publications and celebrate clients who act as good stewards and support responsible solutions

Outputs:

- More informed public who advocates for laws and regulations that support responsible cultural resource management
- More informed legislators and regulators who support laws and regulations that promote responsible cultural resource management and a thriving cultural resource management industry
- More informed clients who support laws and regulations that promote responsible cultural resource management and who will be responsible stewards of cultural resources

Outcome 2: Improved Cultural Resource Management Practice that Delivers Responsible Solutions that Balance Development and Preservation.

Activities:

- Collect best practices from industry practitioners and inform ACRA members through ACRA publications
- Provide expertise to regulators by participating in programmatic agreement and nationwide permit negotiations
- Provide training to regulators through partnerships with groups such as NCSHPO and ACHP
- Advocate for federal funding of cultural resource management
- Invest in products, programs, and processes that allow cultural resource management to be conducted more effectively and efficiently, such as synthetic data studies

Outputs:

- Higher quality solutions provided by ACRA firms because of greater awareness of best practices and model solutions
- Better trained and informed regulators who appreciate and expect quality solutions from the industry
- Better resourced regulators who can provide higher quality and more efficient oversight
- Innovations within the industry that lead to more effective, integrated, and efficient solutions

Outcome 3: Improved Business Efficacy of ACRA Firms.

Activities:

- Develop an assessment tool for firms to identify areas of excellence and areas that need improvement directly related to their business practices
- Develop curricula and training programs to help firms address areas that need improvement, including online learning and conference programming
- Inform ACRA firms about regulatory developments that could affect their businesses

Outputs:

- ACRA membership is perceived as an indicator of firm quality
- Firms are more successful and sustainable
- Low bids are reduced because firms understand what it takes to run a successful business

REQUIRED RESOURCES

To achieve these important outcomes, ACRA requires increases in membership, volunteer and staff capacity, and financial resources.

Members

Membership has hovered at 160-180 firms since ACRA's founding, out of a current community of 1,300 firms in the United States. The Board considered opening membership to individuals, but has decided instead to focus on expanding and providing greater value to a membership base of firms. The Board did express a desire to recruit university-based programs and public agencies as members.

Membership must be increased to achieve the plan's goals and maintain and deepen legitimacy as the industry trade association. By 2020 ACRA should have 360

member firms representing at least \$500M in annual industry revenue, or half of the projected industry total.

Human Resources

ACRA is blessed with an enthusiastic and committed group of volunteers, primarily present and past Board members, who steward the organization. Since 2011, ACRA has contracted with CHP to provide government affairs expertise and representation. In November 2014, ACRA terminated its relationship with a firm that provided a part-time senior and junior staff to support basic management and administrative duties. Since then daily management activities have been shared among several member firms with additional support provided by from CHP.

Achieving this plan's outcomes will require dedicated executive leadership, administrative support, and government affairs expertise.

- Executive leadership to manage this plan to outcomes
 - Plan and support membership expansion campaigns
 - Plan and support fundraising campaigns
 - Plan and support programs, including the conference
 - Provide direction and support to volunteer committees
- Government relations support to advocate for the industry on Capitol Hill and to Federal Agencies
- Administrative support to process memberships and provide member services and communications
- Professional bookkeeping and accounting

Organizations typically use the employee model, the managing firm model, or a combination thereof to support their activities. As ACRA works through this pivotal transitional period over the next 12-24 months, the managing firm model will likely provide the most flexibility and cost efficiency, especially if a single firm can be engaged to provide comprehensive services competently. A full-time employee-executive may best serve the longer term needs of the organization once stability is achieved under the new strategic plan.

Financial

ACRA's expenses have exceeded revenue in each of the past six years. ACRA must quickly identify new sources of income to regain its financial footing. We recommend focusing on recruiting new members, especially large companies, over the next two years. Model 2016 and 2017 budgets are attached to this plan for discussion purposes only. Budgets are moral documents in that they reflect the values of the association and the areas on which it intends to focus.

While a work plan needs to be designed to achieve the outcomes above, we expect that by shifting tactics, ACRA could increase its revenues in 2016 by \$100,000 over the 2013 revenues, and by reaching modest goals in 2017 could increase revenue by another \$100,000 from the 2016 revenues. This revenue will support priority programs and a robust executive team to help the organization achieve its goals. The model budgets yield small surpluses that can begin to rebuild a cash cushion for future years.

NEXT STEPS

To operationalize the strategic plan so that ACRA can achieve these outcomes, the Board and committee leadership will develop a work plan that identifies specific deliverables required over the next 8 months.

CONCLUSION

ACRA has a proud history of providing leadership for the CRM industry over the past two decades. It faces existential questions about how to remain relevant as the industry evolves, and this plan provides clear pathways to achieve the proposed outcomes.