



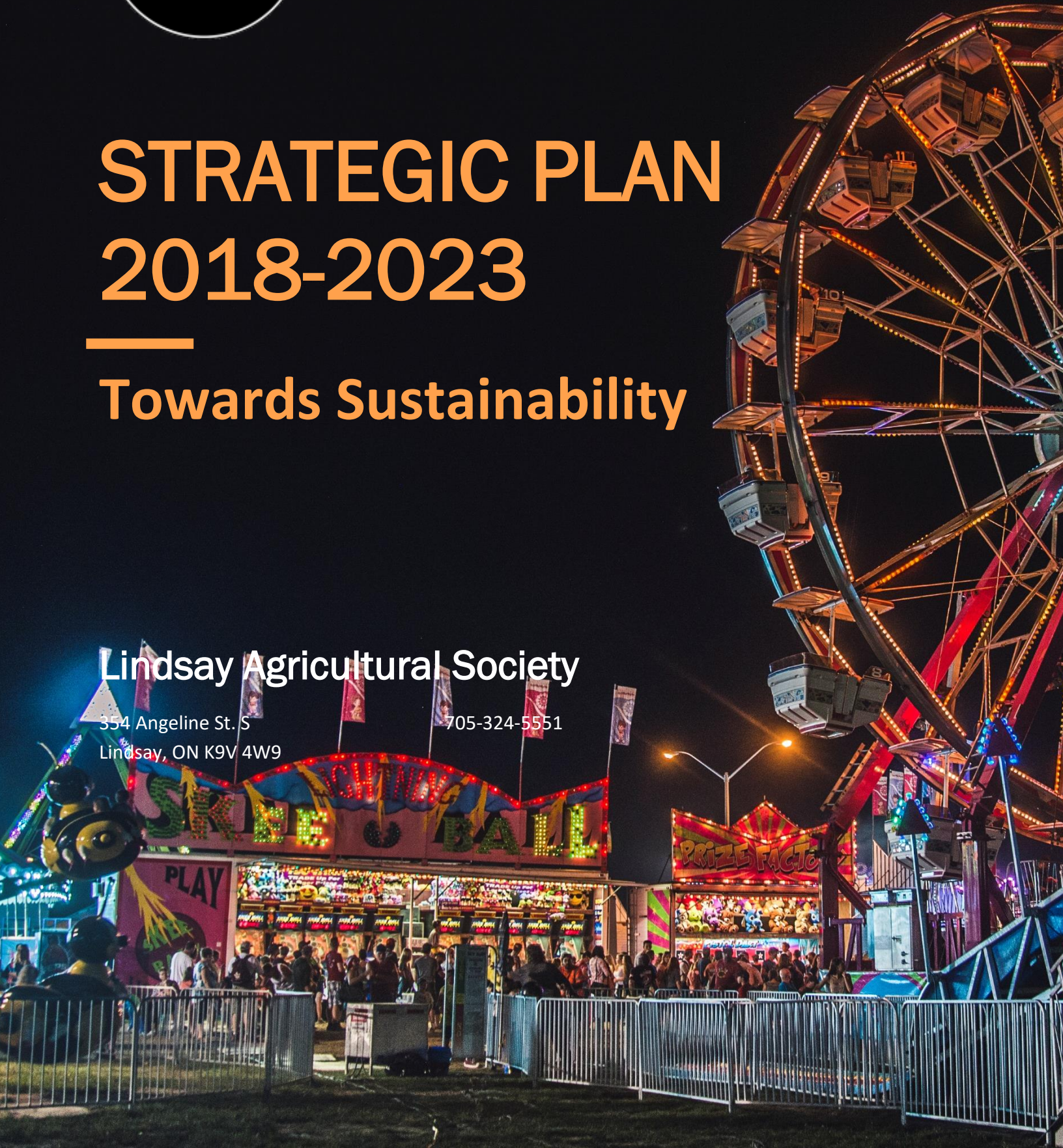
# STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023

## Towards Sustainability

Lindsay Agricultural Society

354 Angeline St. S  
Lindsay, ON K9V 4W9

705-324-5551



This page left intentionally blank.

## Table of Contents

Strategic Plan .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
1. Vision .....	6
2. Mission.....	6
3. SWOT Analysis .....	7
1. Strengths .....	7
2. Weaknesses.....	7
3. Opportunities .....	8
4. Threats .....	8
4. The Five Pillars .....	9
1. Financial Sustainability.....	9
2. Agricultural Education.....	10
3. Community Economic Development .....	11
4. Engaged Volunteers .....	11
5. Community Well-being .....	12
5. BHAG.....	13
6. Strategic Initiatives .....	14
1. Campground.....	14
2. Ag Education .....	15
3. Volunteer Engagement .....	15
7. 2018 Tactics .....	16
8. Performance Measures .....	17

This page left intentionally blank.

# Strategic Plan

## Introduction

The Lindsay Agricultural Society (LAS) was formed in 1854 for the purpose of encouraging an awareness of agriculture and promoting improvements in the quality of life of persons living in the agricultural community and beyond. Throughout the society's 165 years, it has remained loyal to its mandate, consistently promoting the agricultural community and forging ties through the region with service clubs, youth groups, and other organizations. The LAS annually hosts the Lindsay Exhibition, the fourth-largest agricultural fair in Ontario. The new LAS facilities have hosted numerous other shows and events including prestigious livestock shows, agricultural specialty shows, home and craft shows, trade shows and consumer shows; all of which add strength to the fabric of the community and agricultural life. This strategic plan has been created through a series of workshops of the Board of Directors. It is intended to govern the LAS from 2018 to 2023 with an annual review to ensure it is still relevant.



# 1. Vision

To be the premier agricultural and event facility in East Central Ontario

When the Lindsay Agricultural Society decided to move from the old fairgrounds on Angeline St. N., it was with the intention to create a facility that would be a lasting legacy for the City of Kawartha Lakes. The Commonwell Mutual Insurance Exhibition Building is the largest four season exhibition building between Toronto and Ottawa at just shy of 50,000 square feet. The barns are the brightest, airiest livestock show facility in Central and Eastern Ontario.

The Lindsay Exhibition Grounds are living up to the expectations set for them. The LEX Grounds host many trade shows, dog shows, and events that have a provincial or national scope. When national livestock shows come to Ontario, the LEX Grounds are always on the short list of locations. However, to fully attain the vision, there must be continuous maintenance and upgrades of the facility. To maintain the reputation, the facility must be able to generate a sustainable stream of funds to reinvest.

While the Lindsay Agricultural Society is more than just the facility, the facility is key to everything else that the LAS wishes to accomplish.

# 2. Mission

Agriculture will always be at the core of what the Lindsay Agricultural Society does. However, the mission is broader than just one industry. The LAS has a role in enriching the lives of the citizens of the community by increasing economic activity in the area and hosting a range of events. The Lindsay Exhibition is the flagship event for the LAS. The LEX is held annually in September and is the largest event in the community. Agriculture is put on display for education, competition, and entertainment.

We showcase the vibrant agricultural industry in the City of Kawartha Lakes while enriching the life of the community through the Lindsay Exhibition, events, entertainment, and volunteerism.

## 3. SWOT Analysis

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis tool looks at the organization from internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) points of view. The sections below summarize the SWOT analysis created by the 2017 LAS Board of Directors.

### 1. Strengths

- Cohesive board of directors
- Solar income
- Local economy
- Growing population of younger families
- History
- Emergency evacuation centre
- Commonwell Mutual Insurance Building
- Strong community partners
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Year round facility
- Location
- Property
- Parking
- Strong following/attendance
- Reputation
- Diversity (people + variety of events)
- Space
- Forward thinking
- Renowned competitions
- Tradition
- Variety of events
- Strong agriculture community

### 2. Weaknesses

- Balance Sheet
- Access to grounds
- Pedestrian entrance/exit
- Volunteer committees are not unified (co-ordinator)
- Lack of a mid-size building (CW is too large for some events)
- Site Scale
- Parking during fair
- Single entrance/exit
- Barn washrooms – small, closing in on end of life
- Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Year round functions
- Fair time
- Committee member retirement – not enough
- New blood?
- Volunteer burnout
- Lighting at exit
- Lack of funds for beautification, co-ordinator, etc
- “Shiny new” look is gone – starting to look weathered
- Balance sheet
- Funds to expand
- Update facilities
- Hire more staff, co-ordinator
- Grounds
- Access – 1 entrance, 1 exit

### 3. Opportunities

- Partner with City/Community
- Financial endowment/partnership
- Positioning Premier Livestock Facility & Exhibit Space
- Campground – expand, trails?
- Landscaping
- Robot Wars
- New Events
- New highways bringing new people
- Local Population Growth
- Outdoor Activities
- Runs, races
- New competitions during fair
- Water/riverside events
- Advertising – busy highway

### 4. Threats

- Increasing interest rates
- Decreased interest in agriculture
- Animal activists
- Extremist (security basis)
- Weather – tornado – 5 days of fair
- Economy – attendance
- Increase in age of farmers, decrease in # of farmers
- Other community events at same time - Plowing Match
- Urban influence and transient people
- Aging facilities & grounds
- Lack of campground
- Community perception
- Divisive board (lack of team work)
- Aging volunteers
- Competition
- Volunteers (time)
- Events (lack of marketing)
- Location of facility – not on bus route
- Acts of terrorists – PETA
- Lawsuits
- Staff turnover
- HWY 7 & MTO – access
- 2017: bridge out on 35
- Red tape
- Rate of change of technology
- Aging population
- Customer satisfaction – ripple effect
- Customer demographics



## 4. The Five Pillars

The vision and mission of the LAS are supported by five pillars. Each is integral to the Society performing its mission and achieving its vision.

### 1. *Financial Sustainability*

1. Financial Sustainability
2. Agricultural Education
3. Community Economic Development
4. Engaged Volunteers
5. Community Well-being

Financial sustainability is critical to any organization's long-term survival. The LAS has existed for 164 years and will only survive another 164 by operating a financially sustainable business. The LAS must be a responsible financial steward of the resources with which it has been endowed.

To meet the goal of financial sustainability, there are four objectives that must be achieved:

1. Cashflow positive annual operations.
2. Establish and maintain adequate reserves.
3. Seek opportunities to grow revenue sustainably.
4. Maintain and reinvest in facilities.

Each of these objectives is critical to the long-term survival of the LAS. Each year's budget must be planned with the objective of having cashflow positive operations. If the plan isn't cash flow positive, the reality definitely won't be.

In 2017, the LAS board established a reserve policy that defines an operating reserve and a capital reserve. These reserve funds are intended to allow the LAS to accumulate reserves in good years to mitigate challenges from either poor operating results or a large capital expense. Discipline will be needed to ensure the reserves are built up and maintained at adequate levels.

As of 2018, the LAS does not generate enough annual revenue to sustain the facility over time. Each fiscal year since the move, the Society has ended with a deficit on an accrual basis. These deficits have little impact in a new facility but will begin to show up as unfunded capital maintenance projects and a gradually deteriorating facility. To overcome this eventuality, additional sustainable revenue sources need to be found. There is room to grow the revenue from the LEX and the ancillary activities such as storage and event rentals. However, the upside potential in these business lines is insufficient to fund the deficit long term. An additional business line with healthy margins is required to meet the goal of financial sustainability.

A failure to maintain a facility results in failure. The temptation to make short-term savings by deferring preventative maintenance is often significant. However, reactive repair is always more

expensive. Preventative maintenance can be planned. Reactive repair is generally a surprise. A key to good financial stewardship is insuring preventative maintenance is carried out. Along with proper maintenance, a regular program of capital investment is needed. Incremental upgrades that are included in annual plans as a part of the normal budgeting process are much easier to accomplish than trying to catch-up after under-investing for many years.

## *2. Agricultural Education*

A primary goal of the LAS is to provide opportunities to learn about current and innovative agricultural practises while honouring traditional methods. This goal originates with the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act and is carried through to the LAS constitution. To that end, the LAS has the following objectives:

- Host the LEX annually
- Grow the agricultural education components of the LEX
- Seek and support additional opportunities to communicate and educate about agriculture

The LEX is the main vehicle the LAS uses to provide agricultural education to the public. While the LEX means many things to different people, at its core it is and must continue to be about agriculture – providing opportunities for the public to learn about agriculture and showcasing agriculture in the region through competition and displays. The LEX was rearranged in 2017 to create a central space in the Ag Pavilion that is focused on agricultural displays. The objective over the next several years is to grow and improve the content provided in that space to keep visitors engaged and informed.

Agricultural content is a key differentiator for agricultural exhibitions. There are many competing forms of entertainment in every area, but generally, there is only one annual event with local agriculture as its focus. The fairs and exhibitions that continue to have strong agricultural content will be the ones with the best chance of succeeding in the long term. Agricultural education is more than a goal of the LAS, it is a strategic imperative. As such, the LAS must continue to invest in ag education content.

The LAS also supports other initiatives related to ag education. The Taste of Kawartha school program was hosted at the LEX grounds for over 20 years. Due to labour disruption in the school system, it was folded into the ag education content at the LEX several years ago. However, the timing of the LEX makes it difficult for schools to participate and difficult to recruit volunteers to assist. Most school ag education programs across Ontario occur in March or April. With declining numbers in the program at the LEX, it is time to consider moving back to the traditional spring “Taste of Kawartha” initiative. Another group that the LAS supports is 4-H. While 4-H’s first objective is the personal development of youth in the community, learning about agriculture plays a key role in many of the clubs. The LAS currently supports 4-H by allowing the clubs to host meetings and events at the LEX grounds and by hosting the East Central 4-H Championship Show at the Lindsay Exhibition.

### 3. *Community Economic Development*

The economic prosperity of the region and the success of the LAS are intertwined. The LAS relies on the support of the community to stage the LEX and remain viable. The LEX and the LEX grounds are also important drivers of the economy. The LEX is the largest annual event in the area and the LEX grounds are the largest tourist destination. The events hosted at the LEX grounds contribute to the prosperity of the community. Without the LEX grounds, it is doubtful that a new hotel would have been built in Lindsay. The visitors to events make a material contribution to the bottom lines of hotels and restaurants in Lindsay. The contributions of the LAS were recognized by the Lindsay and District Chamber of Commerce in 2017 through the LAS receiving the Tourism Excellence award. The LAS has two objectives under the economic development headline:

- Grow the number of local and out of region visitors to the LEX; and
- Grow the portfolio of high profile events held at the LEX Grounds.

The LEX draws visitors from a wide area that stretches down to Lake Ontario and in to the GTA. Many patrons meet the official definition of “tourist” – meaning they travelled more than 40km. One aspect of the LEX that appears to be extending the reach is the LEX Party! on Friday evening. Anecdotally, visitors from farther away purchase concert tickets than purchase midway passes. While this event helps the LEX break in to new regions, the ultimate goal is to convert the concert goers into exhibition goers – that is, their first visit may be solely to see the concert but once here, they see everything that the LEX has to offer and they return for the other content.

The LEX grounds host between 30 and 40 other events during the year. They include snow cross races, the farm show, trade shows, dog shows, cattle shows, and craft shows. Some of the cattle shows are national in scope with out of province and out of country visitors. The dog shows draw people from a significant distance. While the event calendar is fully packed in spring, there is still room to grow in the summer and fall.

### 4. *Engaged Volunteers*

The LAS runs on volunteers. The success of the LAS is attributable to the many dedicated volunteers that contribute their time and skills to the activities of the LAS. It has been estimated that over 300 volunteers contribute to the LEX and other events at the LEX. The future success of the LAS is heavily dependent on the continued support of volunteers. Thus, the LAS has three important objectives:

- Ensure volunteers are appreciated,
- Engage and sustain the base of volunteers, and
- Welcome new volunteers.

Volunteers must not be taken for granted. While the LAS is fortunate to have many volunteers with over 25 years of service, there are many competing demands for volunteers’ time and they need to

feel appreciated. A simple “thank-you” can go a long way. Even better is giving them a sense of how they are contributing to something bigger -- that they are making a material and important difference to the community.

Traditionally, agricultural societies could rely on the farm community and succeeding generations of families to ensure their on-going success. The LAS has been blessed with many multi-generational contributions from local families. A current board member is the third generation of her family to serve on the LAS board. However, the LAS is increasingly reliant on volunteers from all walks of life. The LAS needs to attract new volunteers from the area to remain strong.

## *5. Community Well-being*

One of the original tenets of the legislation that created agricultural societies was that the societies would improve and enrich the lives of the citizens of the community. This can take many forms – providing entertainment, improving the economy, or bringing people together in a community celebration. The LAS contributes to all of these. However, it also contributes to the network of other volunteer and charitable organizations that serve the community. The LEX is the largest fundraiser for several community groups through their food booths, the beer tent, or staffing the entrance gates. The facility hosts the largest fundraiser for the local United Way – the Crayola sale. The LAS makes many other contributions that aren’t as high profile – lending tables, chairs, and crowd barriers or supplying passes to organizations for their silent auctions. Many community organizations benefit from the generosity of the LAS. While the city and other facilities make no allowance for whether an organization is a charity or not-for-profit, the LAS will discount rates for community groups. The LAS has one object under this goal: continue to leverage the facility and events to provide support to the community.

## 5. BHAG

Every organization needs to be working on a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG)<sup>1</sup>. A goal that seems unachievable currently but would significantly improve the fortunes of the organization if achieved or if progress is made towards achieving the goal.

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our **aim** too **high** and falling short; but in setting our **aim** too **low** and achieving our mark.

- Michaelangelo

### BHAG: LAS is financially sustainable by 2023

- Positive net profit on an accrual basis
- Reserves fully funded
- Maintenance backlog reduced to zero

<sup>1</sup>BHAG was coined by Collins and Porras in their book: "Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies"

## 6. Strategic Initiatives

### 1. Campground

There are currently approximately 30 acres of unused land on the LEX Grounds that the LAS is working towards building a campground on. The land includes a cleared area that is to be developed into a modern, fully serviced campground with pull-through sites along with a treed area and waterfront that will have primitive sites, trails and a day-use area. The working proposal is 95 serviced sites, 64 primitive sites, and 14 cabins.



The campground is an important piece of creating financial sustainability for the LAS. The LAS is running an annual deficit on an accrual basis that has averaged over \$100,000 for the last 5 years. In the short term this has limited impact. However, in the long term it results in an inability to reinvest in capital, maintenance, and further development of the LEX Grounds.

## 2. Ag Education

2017 saw the start of a three-year program to create a set of ag education displays that will be permanent assets for the LAS that can be mixed and matched at future LEXs as well as at other ag education events.

For the 2017 LEX, the following assets were built or acquired:

- Root viewing planter
- 2 double-sided magnetic boards
  - Where does it grow?
  - That grows on a farm?
  - Where's the Cut?
  - Ag Tic-tac-toe
- Summary of agriculture in CKL in 1967 and 2016
- Animal anatomy models

Additional assets proposed:

- Animal feed display
- Canola oil crushing
- Mariposa Dairy
- Rain simulator
- Ag questions to distribute through the grounds

As well, the 2017 LEX saw commodity groups provide funding for 3 “Ag Host” positions that staffed the ag education display in the Ag Pavilion for Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. They answered questions and assisted people and students with planting a bean to take home.

## 3. Volunteer Engagement

The LAS will only go as far as its volunteers will carry it. To this end, the LAS is building a strategic initiative to engage existing volunteers and attract new ones. Across all aspects of volunteerism and society, the “lifer” volunteer is becoming an endangered species. The LAS needs to update its approach to and recognition of volunteers to ensure a sustainable future.

This initiative began after the 2017 LEX with every volunteer receiving a personally signed thank-you card from the General Manager, a large thank-you ad in the KLTW edition the week after the LEX, and a thank-you ad in the Volunteer Week special section of KLTW.

The overall initiative involves tracking data on the LAS volunteers and understanding what motivates them and how satisfied they are with their volunteer experience with the LAS. This initiative is multi-year and multi-faceted. The exact tactics will be developed as the initiative progresses and more is learned about the volunteers that support the LAS.

## 7. 2018 Tactics

- Implement a new print-at-home online ticket system.
  - Good-any-day, multi-day passes
  - Gathering better data on LEX visitors
  - Increase advance ticket sales
  - Incorporate additional benefits in advance passes
  - Allows email of passes to exhibitors and vendors
- Maximize entertainment value of LEX through grants
  - CF SkyHawks
  - Ray's Nature Centres
  - Tent for Family Stage
  - 2 Headline bands for LEX Party
  - Battle of the Bands
- Move the ticket booths to the walk-in-gates
  - Improve traffic flow into the grounds
  - Allow the use of wristbands on all visitors
  - Allow security bag checks on all visitors
  - Provide benefit for advance pass holders
- Maximize use of AssistExpo functionality
  - Vendors
  - Use email capability
  - Use barcode capability to email passes
  - Move Jr. Arts to AssistExpo
  - Reduce duplication of effort between LEX Admin and Finance Admin
- Increase food vendors outside
  - Increase local content
  - Increase variety
  - Create a "Food Court" on Poultry Road with tables
  - Increase food vendor revenue for the LEX
- Pursue FCC building opportunity
  - Increase revenue for the LAS and therefore financial sustainability
- Focus on vision-impaired readability of main brochures
  - Improves accessibility for vision impaired
  - Improves readability for all patrons
  - Improves comprehension of all patrons
- Pursue Campground Zoning Approvals



## 8. Performance Measures

Goal • Objective	Measure	Definition	2023 target
<b>Stewardship</b>			
Cash flow positive annual operations	Cash flow positive budget	12 month net cashflow for projected period	>0
	Cash flow positive operations	12 month net cashflow for completed fiscal year	>0
Establish and maintain reserves	Percentage of operational reserve funded	(Total funds held in operational reserve)/ (one quarter of annual expense)*100%	100%
	Percentage of capital reserve funded	(Total funds held in capital reserve)/ (Capital Reserve established by board)*100%	100%
Sustainably grow revenue	Margin growth	Audited accrual net income	>0
Maintain and invest in facility	dollars of maintenance		
	elimination of maintenance backlog	estimated value of known maintenance required	0
<b>Ag Education</b>			
Host the LEX annually			Yes
Grow the ag education component of the LEX	# of students participating	Count of students participating in the ag education program	Double 2017 number
	Public perception of ag education content at LEX	Measure of public perception of ag education components of the LEX measured in post-LEX survey (TBD for 2018)	Steady improvement
Seek and support additional opportunities to educate the public about agriculture	Number of ag education events in addition to the LEX supported annually	Count of ag education events held at the LEX grounds or using LEX ag education resources	5 Current = 1
<b>Community Economic Development</b>			
Grow the number of local and out of	Attendance at the LEX	Paid attendance measured at the gate	10% improvement on 3 year average of 2015 -2017

region visitors to the LEX			attendance measured by gate
	# of visitors that are tourists	Estimated # of visitors that are from >40km away Measure in alternate years.	Double 2018 baseline.
Grow the number of high profile events hosted at the LEX	# of high profile events held annually	Count of events with >1000 attendance; or provincial or national profile	2 more than 2017 baseline
<b>Engaged Volunteers</b>			
Volunteers are appreciated	Volunteer satisfaction	Measured by end of year survey of volunteers	Steady improvement annually 10% improvement by 2023
Engage and sustain base of volunteers	Number of volunteer hours	Increase relative to 2018 baseline measured by post LEX survey	+ increase each year 10% increase by 2023
Welcome new volunteers	Number of new volunteers attracted	Net change in number of volunteers year over year	>0 annually, 10% by 2023
<b>Community Well-being</b>			
Continue to leverage the facility and events to provide support to the community	Value of contribution to community organizations	Total value of “donation” to community groups as measured by difference between rates charged to community groups and commercial rates	20% increase over 2017 baseline
	Number of organizations supported	Count of organizations receiving some form of support from the LEX	20% increase over 2017 baseline
	Value of fundraising activities by community organizations at LEX	Reported gross of organizations fundraising at the LEX – reporting gross to be made a condition of contract for 2018	10% increase over 2018 baseline