



SMITHSONIAN
CENTER FOR FOLKLIFE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 – 2018

Cultural democracy is the exercise of the right of free expression by diverse individuals and communities as they document, preserve, and share the music and culture that matter most to them.



Rooted in the principles of cultural democracy, we support the sustainability of cultural heritage and diversity in communities across the United States and around the world. We work with a broad spectrum of individuals and groups to promote cultural scholarship, traditional artistry, and participation as forms of civic engagement.

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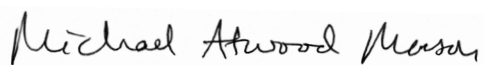
Mission

We envision a world that values cultural diversity, promotes cultural engagement, and sustains traditional culture, knowledge, and artistic expression for the benefit of humanity.

Today people around the world connect, collect, and share ideas at remarkable speed. It is within this context of an increasingly interconnected global community that the Center recommits our work to the principles of cultural democracy. With five decades of momentum and the Smithsonian as its platform, the Center is keenly aware of the power cultural democracy holds to transform lives. We promote culture of, by, and for the people in every aspect of our work. From research on compelling and contemporary issues that influence culture to making music and sounds from around the world available to anyone in the world, we promote cultural democracy. We celebrate the diverse cultures of the world with millions of visitors at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival each summer on the National Mall, and we provide leadership to our national and international colleagues in demonstrating that cultural expression is essential to human well-being. We have witnessed the potential for cultural practices to enhance local economies and improve community health.

Looking forward to the next five years, we have charted a course to safeguard what we have already achieved, even as we secure more resources, expand public engagement, and use new and emerging media to reach people everywhere. We will increase collaborations with individuals and organizations to maximize our impact on cultural heritage practices, policies, and scholarship in ways that are constructive, critical, and relevant. We commit ourselves to this endeavor because broad engagement is at the heart of cultural democracy.

For decades the Center has approached difficult questions and challenging engagements with creative spirit. This commitment is one of our strengths. While we design our efforts to spark discovery and inspire lifelong learning, we also strive to stimulate deep, lasting, generative impact. Motivated by the creativity of artists, musicians, and tradition-bearers, fueled by our collaborations with them, and inspired by emerging traditions in communities around the globe, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage invites you to join us on this exciting journey.



Michael Atwood Mason
Director, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

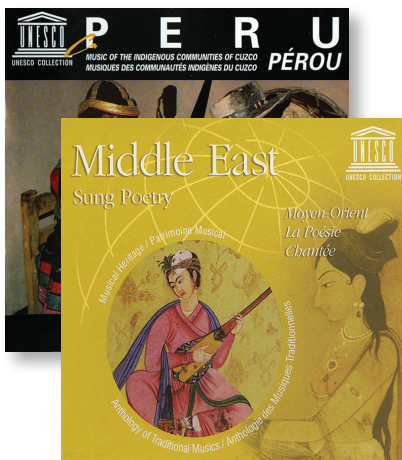
Building on Strengths: The Center is intellectually rigorous. Our work is rooted in deep understanding of histories, communities, and contexts. Going forward we will enrich our research capabilities, train the next generation of cultural heritage professionals, and invest in broadening the impact of our work by creating unprecedented access to our collections.

STRATEGIES

- Address scholarly questions that enrich knowledge of cultural heritage, creativity, and diversity.
- Train the next generation of cultural heritage professionals.
- Strengthen the stewardship, accessibility, and impact of collections.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce and disseminate one hundred scholarly books, articles, and media pieces that expand cultural understanding.
- Increase the number of dedicated research staff.
- Launch a series of research-related events and programs by 2015.
- Establish an endowed fellowship program to train the next generation.
- Host twenty fellows and six hundred interns from diverse demographics that mirror the U.S. population.
- Create exciting new learning opportunities for fellows and interns to present their research and collaborate with others.
- Build a new digital platform and social learning community to share research and collections and invite public contributions.
- Significantly increase the volume of Center collections and research that are easily searched and accessed by the public.



Access to the Diverse Cultures of the World

Originally published between 1961 and 2003, the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music* includes 126 albums of recordings made *in situ* from seventy countries. Smithsonian Folkways acquired the collection, out of print since 2005, and began publishing two albums per week in April 2014. Each album, available to the public in both digital and physical formats, is extensively amplified by text and image. The republishing of this collection offers a remarkable opportunity to experience the rich diversity of music from cultures throughout our world.

HOW ARE IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION TRANSFORMING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALIZED WORLD?

Immigration, migration, and transnationalism are transforming communities around the world. Population movement sparks discussion, debate, and even direct conflict concerning politics, economics, culture, and national identity. If current migration trends continue over the coming decades in the United States, the country's demographic profile will change dramatically.

This will impact not just daily social interactions; change also has implications for the nation's political and economic life—and how “American” culture is viewed within the United States and perceived by communities across the globe.

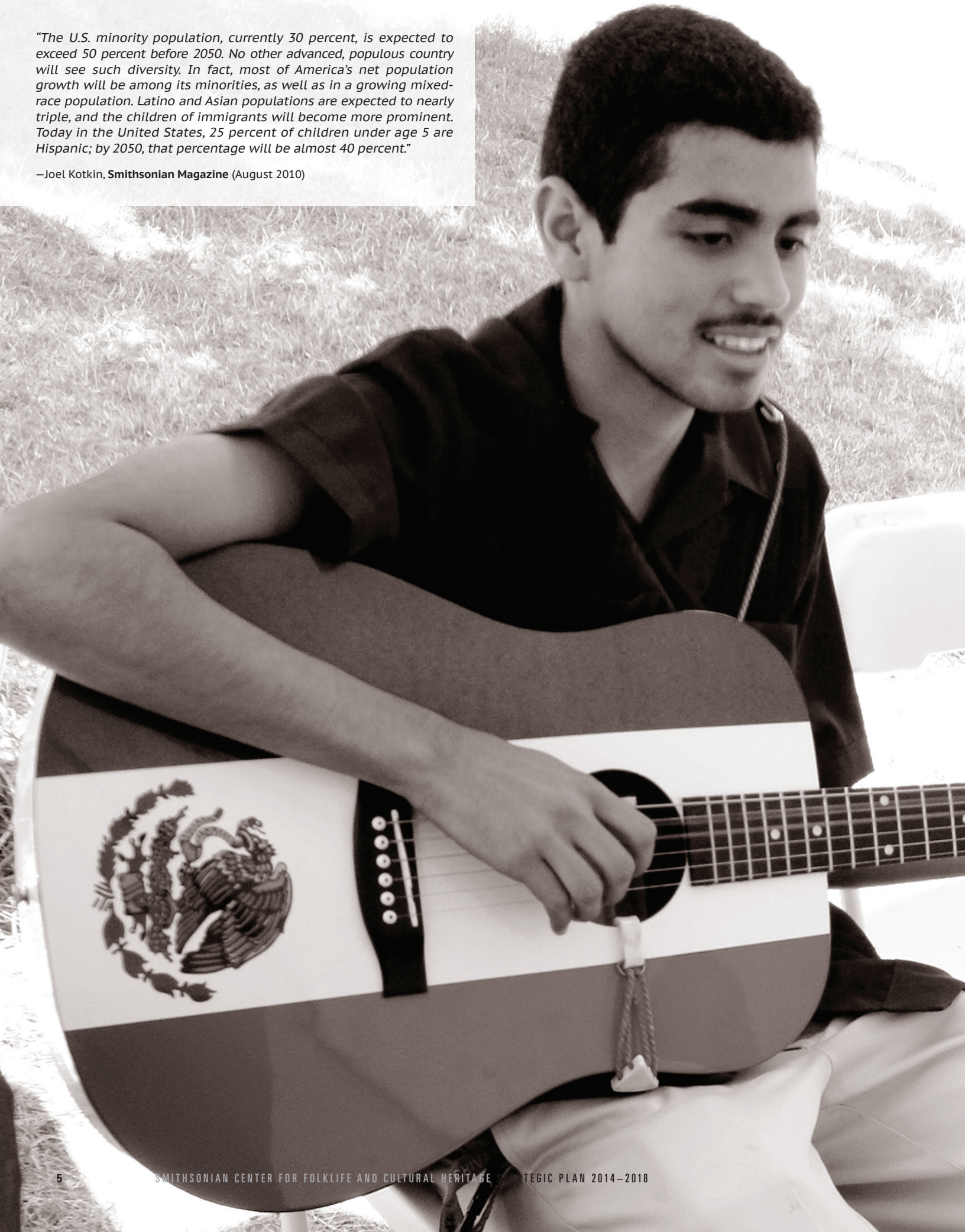
The Center is particularly well positioned to lead compelling programs that tell America's story and to show that migration is woven throughout our history and continues to influence and define our culture and community life. We are able to bring to life the connection between patterns of migration and peoples' everyday practices. For decades, the Center has been in the vanguard of the Smithsonian's efforts to highlight the significance of migration to this country's history and culture. Over the next five years, we will deepen this commitment by increasing our scholarship, expanding access to migration- and immigration-related resources online and in the classroom, and promoting public engagement through novel programming and new media productions.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce at least one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program focusing on immigration and migration in American communities.
- Produce five or more discussion sessions concurrent with international Folklife Festival programs to explore, compare, and connect issues of North American immigration and migration with similar issues impacting communities in other regions.
- Expand Smithsonian Folkways Latino and Asian-American music recordings by three per year with content that is ever more relevant to U.S.-based migrant communities.
- Provide intellectual and institutional leadership in Our American Journey: The Smithsonian Immigration/ Migration Initiative.
- Develop at least two exhibitions and educational programs in other Smithsonian units.
- Increase visibility and access to immigration and migration content and topics through the Center's website, new media productions, and expanded classroom resources.

"The U.S. minority population, currently 30 percent, is expected to exceed 50 percent before 2050. No other advanced, populous country will see such diversity. In fact, most of America's net population growth will be among its minorities, as well as in a growing mixed-race population. Latino and Asian populations are expected to nearly triple, and the children of immigrants will become more prominent. Today in the United States, 25 percent of children under age 5 are Hispanic; by 2050, that percentage will be almost 40 percent."

—Joel Kotkin, *Smithsonian Magazine* (August 2010)



Building on Strengths: The Center has decades of experience in creating rich opportunities for diverse audiences to learn about and appreciate cultures around the world and in their own communities. We will devote the next five years to reaching youth, new Americans, and underserved audiences.

STRATEGIES

- Use multiple methods to spark discovery, support sharing, and deepen knowledge about cultural life.
- Build our audiences.
- Significantly advance our capacity to inspire learning by providing dynamic educational resources in formal educational settings.

OBJECTIVES

- Host 7.5 million visitors at the Folklife Festival and related programs.
- Reach 25 million people worldwide through new and emerging media.
- Serve 175 million consumers through Smithsonian Folkways.
- Diversify our audiences to reflect the demographics of the United States.
- Provide educational resources to 25 million teachers and students from the Center’s research, collections, and programs through social learning networks and teachers associations.



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Smithsonian Folkways engages an international public with 44,000 audio tracks in its collections. Content is delivered through all major channels and Alexander Street Press, a multimedia resource site for libraries and students. Revenue generated from Folkways downloads and subscriptions supports development of new educational content, and a portion of revenues benefits artists and their communities.

Recognition and Engagement:

- Eight GRAMMYS, twenty GRAMMY nominations, ten GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement Awards, plus nearly sixty additional awards and honors
- \$3.5 million net annual revenue
- 3.5 million visits and 2.7 million downloads from *folkways.si.edu*
- 2.1 million social media impressions

PRIORITY INITIATIVE
SOCIAL POWER OF MUSIC

**IN WHAT WAYS DOES MUSIC CONVEY MEANING IN OUR LIVES?
 WHAT IS THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF MUSIC?**

As humans, we have long devoted ourselves to organizing sound, crafting it into forms of group and individual expression, and imbuing it with a significance. Music is a powerful communicator of social and cultural values and an invitation to understanding. Music both bonds and bridges. It strengthens ties within cultures—and builds mutuality and empathy across cultural differences.

The product of these bonds and bridges is “social capital”: shared values and ties that enable and encourage cooperation. Guided by the vision and principles of the Center, we will explore the nature, creation, value, and application of this social capital shaped through music and other organized sound. With its combined strengths as a premier collection of sound, a scholarly and popularly renowned independent record label, and a major international venue for the live presentation of music and dance, the Center is unique in the Smithsonian and in the world. Over the next five years, we will parlay these extraordinary assets to explore the nature, creation, and value of music and sound.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce three or more Smithsonian Folklife Festival programs exploring the social relevance of music and showcasing the work of Smithsonian Folkways as it intersects our other research and outreach initiatives.
- Produce fifty or more multidimensional documentation projects (e.g., video, radio, podcasts) that demonstrate the value and depth of our research and publications on music, its meaning, and social relevance.
- Acquire 6,500 tracks of new, strategically important collections of recorded sound and make them publicly accessible.
- Identify and fill twenty or more significant gaps in the Smithsonian Folkways collection to offer a more complete vision of humanity through recorded sound.
- Publish twenty-five original recordings of music with cultural and social significance.
- Create fifteen Smithsonian Folkways productions drawn from our archival collections.
- Develop four collaborative research projects to generate new knowledge derived from our recorded sound collections.
- Produce fifteen or more research proposals to incorporate the theme of music within priority initiatives (Immigration and Migration, Cultural Sustainability, and Intercultural Dialogue).
- Reach new audiences through Folkways music content compatible with mobile devices around the world and producing a radio series featuring the Center’s audio collections.
- Add fifty new multimedia lesson plans to our website and extend our impact with students and educators by facilitating twenty New World Music Teach Certification workshops.



HOW CAN CULTURAL CONVERSATION AND EXCHANGE PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES AND COMMUNITIES?

Difference is an inescapable component of social life. As communities compete for political and ideological rights, as global movements are reinterpreted in local spaces, and as broadly dispersed publics constantly negotiate the meaning of cultural practices, the power of difference proves undeniable.

Friction offers a metaphor for the conflicting interactions that make up the contemporary world—a metaphor that acknowledges the messiness of misunderstanding—but also the fresh insights that can arise from meaningful interactions. Friction also creates traction. Points of contention offer dynamic opportunities for conversation. At the Center, we recognize the value of debate, of acknowledging discomfort, and negotiating difference. We deliberately focus on important social issues and approach conflict with an eye to resolution. Over the next five years, we will address issues of cultural conflict and invite others to participate in productive exchange about bias, difference, and disagreement.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce three Smithsonian Folklife Festival programs addressing contentious social questions and other issues aimed at bridging difference.
- Facilitate fifteen programs where participants debate these issues.
- Develop a research team dedicated to organizing scholarly efforts, public outreach, and educational programming to advance knowledge and dialogue about contentious issues in cultural heritage practice.
- Develop ongoing public programming and digital initiatives to engage audiences on contentious issues.
- Produce fifteen collaborative programs that regularly bring culture bearers from communities-in-conflict together to honestly engage differences and explore common ground.
- Develop digital storytelling and social media platforms as new means for productive cross-cultural engagement.
- Convene experts in cross-cultural exchange and conflict resolution to articulate a set of best practices, which will then be piloted and refined before dissemination.



Building on Strengths: Our work goes beyond documentation and affirmation. The Center works to increase the visibility and vitality of culture bearers, artists, and traditions and to promote cultural expression as essential to human well-being and community health. We will build on our foundational work with individuals and communities to preserve and elevate cultural practices including those that improve and sustain local economies.

STRATEGIES

- Promote widespread recognition of the value of traditions, support their preservation, and showcase their creativity.
- Stimulate economic development by working with individuals and communities to support cultural and environmental sustainability.
- Draw attention to the impact of cultural heritage policy in local, national, and international forums, with an emphasis on the convening power of the digital sphere.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce one Smithsonian Folklife Festival program focused on the revitalization of endangered cultural traditions and address similar issues in at least four other Festival programs.
- Collaborate with at least forty communities to document and sustain their most cherished cultural heritage by training community members in cultural documentation—and organizing cultural sustainability field projects.
- Develop and publish best practices for strategically identifying, preserving, presenting, and enhancing traditions around the world.
- Expand our institutional leadership for the Smithsonian Recovering Voices initiative.
- Become a recognized leader and valued partner in cultural sustainability practices and audiovisual collections management.
- Increase attention to community engagement and perspectives in development of cultural heritage policy in local, national, and international forums.

Preserving Maine Indian Basketry

The Center collaborated with the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (MIBA) to feature master basket-maker Molly Neptune Parker and three young emerging basket makers in the *Carriers of Culture: Living Native Basket Traditions* program at the 2006 Folklife Festival. MIBA, founded in 1993, has worked to save the highly endangered ash and sweetgrass basketry weaving traditions of the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes. Through their efforts, MIBA has lowered the average age of basket makers from sixty-three to forty and increased numbers from fifty-five founding members to over two hundred basket makers today. Theresa Secord says their participation in the 2006 Festival was an important factor in helping to achieve these results and “helped change the face of Maine Indian basketry.”

HOW CAN CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY CONTRIBUTE TO HUMAN WELL-BEING ON LOCAL AND GLOBAL SCALES?

As global communication, movement, and migration thrust us closer together, and as population growth intensifies competition for limited resources, it is essential that people feel secure in their ways of life. Cultural practices often contribute to sustaining local histories, languages, health, and environments. Through strategic efforts to document, protect, and present cultural vitality, we strengthen human relationships that simultaneously center in local communities and connect to global needs.

The Center can be an agent of positive change, responding to the urgency of endangered cultural expressions and the associated loss of their meaning, beauty, values, and knowledge. In partnership with the Recovering Voices initiative, we have already made great strides to accelerate research and public understanding about cultural sustainability. But we are capable of deeper scholarship and increased outreach. Over the next five years we recommit to this mission, recognizing the importance of cultural sustainability for human vitality worldwide. We will continue to advance and apply knowledge about cultural sustainability—and inspire publics, participants, and professionals to champion cultural vitality.

OBJECTIVES

- Convene scholars from diverse disciplines annually to address the connection between cultural and human well-being and participate more fully in similar forums.
- Create a research hub on cultural sustainability at the Center.
- Recruit and train 620 emerging scholars devoted to understanding and preserving cultural systems, giving special attention to scholars from communities whose traditions are endangered.
- Recognize and train 200 community scholars in researching and presenting their own traditions.
- Increase public understanding of endangered languages and cultural traditions through collections digitization, social media, and enhanced programming at home and abroad.



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Building on Strengths: The Center brings together diverse and talented staff with a wide range of expertise dedicated to a common mission. In its role within the Smithsonian, the world’s largest museum and research complex, the Center is able to leverage tremendous institutional resources and extend its impact through strategic partnerships across the United States and around the world.

STRATEGIES

- Foster an internal culture of commitment to shared outcomes, mutual learning, collaboration, and increased efficiency.
- Build and expand durable partnerships.
- Leverage the Smithsonian Campaign to diversify Center resources and strengthen our impact.

OBJECTIVES

- Engage staff and align performance with the Center’s and institution-wide strategic goals.
- Improve communication within the Center and with external partners and collaborators.
- Build the production capacity of research, digital media, education, collections management, and administrative teams.
- Enhance staff skill levels for effective team performance and to excel in specialized technical areas.
- Create and sustain strategic relationships that increase and extend the impact of our work.
- Strengthen collaboration with our Smithsonian partners to advance Center and institution-wide goals.
- Raise \$6 million or more from diverse sources for priority initiatives.
- Build a \$3 million endowment.
- Increase revenue by thirty percent through other entrepreneurial efforts.



Leveraging Partnerships for Greater Impact

Smithsonian Folkways collaboration on a research and recording project with Colombian musician Carlos Rojas set the path toward partnership with the Ministry of Culture of Colombia to present *Colombia: The Nature of Culture* at the 2011 Folklife Festival. The research, design, and presentations for the Festival sparked further partnerships among artists, scholars, engineers, and educators from the United States and Colombia, resulting in the restaging of the Festival in Colombia, a website, consulting relationships, and ongoing communication. Participants found the Festival restaging particularly gratifying as their way of life, work, and traditions were not only validated by a broad public but also recognized as valuable to their own country.

EXPAND UNDERSTANDING

- Publish one hundred scholarly books, articles, and media pieces that expand cultural understanding and enrich knowledge of cultural heritage, creativity, and diversity.
- Create an endowed fellowship program through private investment that trains the next generation of cultural heritage professionals.
- Host twenty fellows and six hundred interns whose diversity reflects the demographics of the United States.
- Build a new digital platform and social learning community to share research and collections and invite public contributions.
- Produce a Smithsonian Folklife Festival program focused on immigration and migration in American communities.

INVITE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Host 7.5 million visitors at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and through related programming, reach 25 million through new and emerging media, and serve 175 million as consumers through Smithsonian Folkways.
- Make 6,500 new tracks of music in our collection available to the public, including access to archival material.
- Produce Smithsonian Folklife Festival programming and research focused on priority initiatives of Immigration and Migration, Cultural Sustainability, and Intercultural Dialogue.
- Produce and disseminate recommendations for best practices in cross-cultural exchange and conflict resolution developed and piloted by experts in the field.

CHAMPION CULTURAL VITALITY

- Become a recognized leader in cultural sustainability practices and audiovisual collections management.
- Collaborate with at least forty communities to document and sustain their most cherished cultural heritage by training community members in cultural documentation and organizing cultural sustainability field projects.
- Create a research hub on cultural sustainability at the Center through partnerships with like-minded organizations.

BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Strengthen the production capacity of the Center's research, digital media, education and evaluation, and collection management teams.
- Leverage the Smithsonian Campaign to diversify Center funding sources by raising \$6 million or more for priority initiatives, \$3 million to build an endowment, and a thirty percent increase in other gifts and earned revenue.

This strategic plan brings a clear focus and deep commitment by the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage to champion the sustainability of cultural heritage and diversity in communities across the United States and around the world. Nearly fifty years ago, the Center initiated a movement embracing cultural participation as a form of civic engagement. Today, we are prepared to harness fresh potential, redirect energies, move forward, and expand our impact. The complex and emerging issues of our times give us a sense of urgency to build our capacity to do more and to measure success by the significance of projects that go beyond our organizational boundaries.

Realizing this plan means creating a stronger organization and securing a broader investment of resources to achieve the outlined benchmarks for success. The timing of this initiative is right, as it synchronizes with the Smithsonian's first national campaign. Moving forward, we will bring more funding into the Center, and we will also operate more effectively with our existing assets. We will meet our goals with the nimbleness, intelligence, and entrepreneurial spirit that have for decades been the hallmarks of our research and productions.

Over the next five years, our internal emphases will include investments in expanding our research talent and capabilities, new and emerging media, and collections management. We will secure an endowed fellowship program to attract new talent to the Center that can grow with its initiatives. And we will streamline processes to make better use of existing resources. These goals require the strategic use of human resources, a culture of learning and innovation, and more transparent operational guidelines.

We will also strengthen and leverage relationships with other parts of the Smithsonian and with key external collaborators—from individuals to foundations to federal partners and communities. More ambitious goals, after all, demand additional resources and strategic partnerships. Finally, we recognize that investment by others in the Center's mission is most essential to our success.

