

Strategic Plan 2025-29



Eastern
State

Introduction to Strategic Plan & Goals

We're in a pivotal moment for Eastern State, where we have a unique opportunity to build out our mission with new vigor and momentum to address key needs for our institution and society. This strategic plan represents more than an outline of our goals; it's a plan to guide our journey forward into our next chapter of growth.

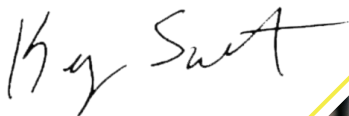
Our team set ambitious yet achievable goals that push us beyond business as usual, goals that will challenge us but are also grounded in our mission. By pushing ourselves, we can unlock new levels of impact and growth and energize the team.

This plan is a clear, measurable roadmap that will allow the team to track our course and measure our progress, and our board plays a crucial role in holding me accountable, ensuring that each step forward remains in line with our mission and values.

The journey ahead will sometimes feel challenging, but that's where the most meaningful growth happens. With purpose and a commitment to reach our full potential, we can create a lasting impact.

Let's lean into the boldness of these goals and start moving with intention.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kerry Sautner
President & CEO

Eastern State





**Mission
Vision
Values**

Mission

Eastern State preserves America's first penitentiary, advancing public understanding of the criminal justice system and its impact on the lives of those affected by it, to inspire a more just future.

Vision

Eastern State envisions a criminal justice system that treats everyone with fairness and dignity.

Values & Principles

PLACE MATTERS

We believe that Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site is the foundation of our authority and credibility in advancing discussion on the criminal justice system.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

We believe the voices of individuals who have had lived experience with the criminal justice system are central to our work.

PRESERVATION

We believe in protecting and preserving the history of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site through a multi-layered approach to preservation and interpretation.

OPPORTUNITY

We believe that people who have been incarcerated should be given a fresh start with the tools and opportunity to lead productive lives.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We believe we are all active participants in shaping our criminal justice system.



Strategic Priorities & Goals

Strategic Priorities and Goals, 2025-29

We are proud to share our strategic priorities alongside revised mission, vision, and guiding values that reflect a clearer understanding of our purpose. Over the next five years, we will invest time and resources in the following areas where we have identified important opportunities for impact.

REIMAGINE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

We will transform the visitor experience to be more cohesive, accessible, and engaging. By enhancing physical amenities, updating exhibits, and integrating digital and interactive elements that appeal to different ways of learning, we will offer a cohesive and enriched experience that invites diverse visitors to explore the site's history and mission in innovative and visitor-centered ways, both in-person and online.

Goal 1: Develop a Primary Interpretive Site Plan

Develop a primary interpretive site plan that balances Eastern State Penitentiary's historic architecture, its legacy in criminal justice reform, and contemporary debates, creating an engaging and transformative visitor experience that connects the site's past to current discussions on justice and reform and is accessible no matter the visitor's lived experience.

Goal 2: Reimagine the Visitor Experience through Modernized Exhibits and Programs

Enhance the visitor experience with modernized, interactive exhibits and programs by developing permanent and temporary exhibits, immersive learning opportunities such as simulations, and incorporating hands-on, technology-enhanced features (e.g., multilingual audio tours, augmented reality, interactive touchscreens). These offerings will engage diverse audiences across the spectrum of lived experiences, reflecting current criminal justice topics and accommodating various ages, backgrounds, learning styles, and accessibility needs.

Goal 3: Enhance Visitor Amenities, Accessibility and Navigation

Improve physical amenities such as climate control, restrooms, seating, and wayfinding to create a more accessible and welcoming experience for diverse visitors with varying needs (e.g., language, mobility, vision, sensory, and hearing). Revamp site-wide signage, maps, and digital guides to ensure clear, intuitive pathways and highlight key exhibits and installations for both self-guided and group visits.

Goal 4: Broaden Programming to Attract Diverse Audiences

Expand family-friendly events, seasonal festivals, and specialized programs

—such as re-entry simulations and curated tours—that align with our mission, increase visitation, and offer experiential and trauma-aware learning opportunities that balance engagement, fun, and reflection while remaining relevant to today’s America.

Goal 5: Reconceptualize Eastern State’s Work with Artists

Building on the success of over 25 years working with artists to create site specific installations, create a creative catalyst advisory group that will guide future artist collaborations, prioritizing artists who have been personally impacted by the justice system, and deepening visitor engagement with the transformative power of art to open dialogues around justice and catalyze change.

ADVANCE THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF ESPHS

We are committed to preserving and interpreting this historic site with care and integrity. Preservation efforts will honor the site's unique multilayered history, educating visitors on its historical, social, and architectural significance and reinforcing our mission to steward for future generations.

Goal 1: Advance the Conservation Management Plan

Expand upon the preservation plan that addresses immediate and long-term preservation needs with a clear timeline, budget, and prioritization, focusing on sustainable practices while opening additional historic spaces. Strive for projects that are proactive and holistic, enabling the saving of historic material, thoughtfully phased work, and preventive maintenance, rather than repairs.

Goal 2: Increase Public Awareness of and Engagement with ESPHS’s Preservation Efforts

Develop immersive, preservation-focused tours, exhibits, and workshops that highlight the site's history and ongoing work. Enhance onsite and online visibility through signage, interactive displays, and resources that showcase preservation methods, decisions, and challenges, connecting the importance of historic preservation to broader themes of justice and collective memory.

Goal 3: Maintain and Grow ESPHS’s Reputation as a Leader in Preservation

Strive for academic and industry leadership through exemplary preservation work that sets a standard for integrity and rigor in maintaining and interpreting historic structures. Work to advance research into the history of this site and criminal justice reform, using new technologies and methods where possible.

Goal 4: Expand Archive and Research Accessibility

Create additional climate-controlled storage, improve the catalog of abandoned items, and continue digitizing all collections, making ESPHS’s historical archives regularly accessible for researchers, educators, and the

public, both onsite and online.

Goal 5: Develop a Strategy for Climate-Responsive Solutions

Integrate solutions to protect the site, staff and visitors from climate impacts and ensure preservation projects meet accessibility standards, balancing preservation goals with the needs of our staff and visitors.

EXPAND OUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

We will serve as a catalyst for economic mobility and reentry support for returning citizens, providing pathways to sustainable, fair-wage employment through programs like the Preservation Trades Center (PTC) and the LEAD Fellowship. We aim to be a model of fair-chance employment, workforce development, and community connections, expanding opportunities in the preservation and union trades, nonprofit, and corporate sectors.

Goal 1: Expand Program Offerings

Expand programming opportunities for the workforce development programs and invest in on-site facilities and training infrastructure to support hands-on and classroom learning experiences. Continue to develop additional trade specialties (e.g., masonry, carpentry, metalwork) and improve integration with educational programming for the public.

Goal 2: Strengthen Community and Program Partnerships

Leverage partnerships to provide comprehensive support for participants navigating reentry challenges, including access to financial literacy, record-clearing assistance, housing resources, and long-term stability services. Broaden collaboration with reentry organizations, fair-chance employers, leading workforce development organizations, and educational institutions to create diverse job placement opportunities, fostering a pathway to lasting success, stability, and family-sustaining careers.

Goal 3: Continue to Grow Career Pipelines and Employment Opportunities

Enhance pathways for program participants to transition into full-time positions at Eastern State and partner organizations, supporting career growth, educational opportunities, and our commitment to fair chance employment. Grow the number of staff at Eastern State who are systems-impacted. Expand tools to measure program impact and track participant outcomes, enabling us to demonstrate program effectiveness to funders, partners, and future participants, positioning us as a leader in workforce development.

Goal 4: Expand Public Awareness and Recognition

Raise public awareness of our workforce development initiatives and successes, positioning the site as a national model for reentry and fair chance hiring at historic sites.

SUPPORT LEARNING THROUGH JUSTICE EDUCATION

We will become a recognized voice in criminal justice education, exploring the evolution of the U.S. justice system and its impacts. Through innovative exhibits, public dialogues, educational programs and classroom tools, we will convene experts, justice-impacted individuals, youth, and the public to foster a deeper understanding of the evolution and impacts of the criminal justice system and criminal justice reform, with our focus always turned towards human dignity and justice.

Goal 1: Engage Schools and Educators in Justice Education

Increase school group visits and educator professional development offerings both onsite and online and create mini-courses and standards-aligned multidisciplinary programs for K-12 and higher education institutions that appeal to classrooms across the nation.

Goal 2: Build Partnerships and Recognition

Strengthen our role as a trusted resource in criminal justice and civics education by collaborating with universities, school districts, classroom teachers, advocacy groups, and thought leaders with lived experience, fostering a core competency of partnership to amplify our educational impact.

Goal 3: Expand and Promote Dialogue around Criminal Justice

Expand our impact on justice education by engaging in conferences, panels, and virtual programs featuring leading experts, including individuals with lived experience, while developing online dialogues, interactive resources, and digital tools—such as reentry simulations, restorative justice hubs and educational content—to engage a broader and national audience in critical issues within the criminal justice system.

Goal 4: Leverage Historic Architecture for Contemporary Education

Develop programs focused on the historic site's architecture, history and impact to draw connections between past and present criminal justice issues, making these topics more accessible to diverse audiences.

ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site is a national treasure that preserves this powerful site of the nation's first penitentiary and presents the history and origins of the criminal justice reform movement as a vital part of the American experiment in democracy. Advancing organizational stability will allow us to preserve, grow, and strengthen the impact of this unique site.

Goal 1: Diversify Revenue Streams

Expand revenue streams beyond the gate, including government funding, corporate sponsorships, foundations, and mission-aligned partnerships to secure consistent, long-term support. Strengthen donor engagement and membership programs to increase visibility and build a steady pipeline of

individual support for Eastern State. This will include deepening relationships with donors, revamping the membership program, and engaging a broader audience through targeted advancement efforts.

Goal 2: Optimize ESPHS Facilities

Maximize income generation by making targeted upgrades that support events, rentals, and visitor amenities, while expanding earned revenue through group attendance and specialized events. This includes developing seasonal and year-round programs—including special events, holiday gatherings, themed tours, and behind-the-scenes experiences—that appeal to school groups, corporate groups, and diverse audiences, driving engagement and revenue throughout the year.

Goal 3: Continue to Cultivate and Support a Culture of Accountability, Agility, and Growth

Leverage data-driven insights to inform strategic decision-making, workforce planning, and employee engagement. Develop systems within the organization to continue to grow the institution's impact and accountability. Build a team of Board, staff, and volunteers that is reflective of our work and mission through lived experiences. Foster a workplace where team members are respected, valued, and visible, with leadership providing clear, mission-driven achievable objectives and measurable outcomes to guide collective success.

Goal 4: Strengthen Our Role as a Community and Civic Hub

Develop relationships with city, regional, state, and federal legislators, while expanding partnerships with government, businesses, universities, and high-profile organizations, both locally and nationally. Through these collaborations, create co-branded events, workshops, and community programs that enhance visibility, grow support, and position Eastern State as a valued community resource. Additionally, establish community-driven initiatives such as volunteer and internship programs and advisory boards to deepen engagement and foster long-term connections.

About Our Plan

In spring 2023, Eastern State began a process of learning more about how our staff, Board, and stakeholders see us and how we see ourselves. The objective of this process of self-reflection was to seek a deeper understanding of the value we were providing our stakeholders and of how we might continue to evolve. We conducted collaborative workshops with staff and the Board to co-create this plan, incorporating voices and feedback from every level of the organization to ensure alignment and a shared, collective pathway for our future. What we learned has contributed significantly to a revision of our mission and vision as well as to the strategic priorities and goals that will guide our investment of time and resources for the next five years. We are proud to share the results of our lively discussions in this plan. **Let us know what you think at ceo@easternstate.org.**