



VICTORIA
CONSERVATORY
OF MUSIC

Strategic Plan 2020-2025

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vcm.bc.ca



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

As its previous strategic plan has reached the end of its lifecycle, the Victoria Conservatory of Music has developed a new plan to guide the organization forward from 2020 through 2025.

As part of the strategic planning process, the VCM expressed an interest in reimagining its long term Vision to define a future direction around which the organization could be aligned for a multiyear journey. The VCM sought a long term Vision that would articulate a desired future state with a big promise and a stretch target that will shape its success for years to come – one that will be aspirational, engaging, compelling, and inspiring for internal and external stakeholders. In addition to developing a new Vision, the VCM revisited its Mission statement to ensure it remained appropriate and defined and articulated (for the first time) its organizational Values.

The Strategic Plan was developed and approved by the Board of Directors in March 2020, before the lockdown and other challenges resulting from the outbreak and continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The VCM has managed well through the pandemic so far and is proud of its demonstrated ability to pivot under significant COVID-related restrictions. While a number of the actions identified in the Strategic Plan were undertaken as per the Plan, the Plan itself was not launched officially in March as had been planned, as the VCM reacted to COVID-19. Thus, the Management and the Board of the VCM took the opportunity in late September to step back and revisit the Strategic Plan

(to “reboot” the Plan as it were) before proceeding to launch the Plan with the VCM’s many stakeholders and supporters.

The initial strategic planning process, as well as the “reboot” in which the Board and Management engaged, has resulted in the finalization of this Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

BACKGROUND

Strategic Planning Process

Beginning in September 2019, a robust five-phase process was designed and implemented:

- **Phase One | Planning and Preparation**
 - Objective: conduct all appropriate planning and preparation to set up project success
 - Deliverable: confirmation of project objectives and process, detailed project timeline



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

(Strategic Planning Process continued)

- **Phase Two | Develop Vision for the Future**
 - Objective: develop long-term (ten year) Vision for the VCM, revisit Mission, develop Values
 - Deliverable: one to three draft Vision statements, Mission statement, and Values for testing with key stakeholders in Phase Three
- **Phase Three | Affirm the Vision**
 - Objective: test the resonance of the Vision statements, Mission statement, and Values with key stakeholders, gain input into opportunities to reflect in the Plan
 - Deliverable: summary of findings from consultations, indicated actions
- **Phase Four | Set High Level Strategic Priorities**
 - Objective: finalize Vision, Mission, and Values based on input from Phase Three, develop three to five high level Strategic Priorities to move the VCM forward in delivering its long term Vision
 - Deliverable: final Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategic Priorities
- **Phase Five | Reboot the Plan**
 - Objective: revisit and refine the Strategic Plan in light of the changes brought about by COVID-19
 - Deliverable: Strategic Plan "Reboot"
- **Phase Six | Finalize the Plan**
 - Objective: finalize the VCM's new Strategic Plan, including specific goals against each of the Strategic Priorities (consistent with the new "COVID normal"), as well as a timeline for their achievement
 - Deliverable: Final Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

From individual interviews conducted at the outset of Phase One with Board members and the members of the Senior Management team, the expectations for the Strategic Plan itself, and for the process to be followed, were established. These included the need to articulate a clear action plan with measurable goals, a governance tool (for regular Board oversight and monitoring progress), a management tool (that would focus ongoing decision-making and priority-setting), and a one-page summary (the "VCM Plan on a Page") to focus the minds and energies of the organization against its priorities.

BACKGROUND

Stakeholder Consultation

From the outset, one of the goals of the strategic planning process was to ensure involvement and participation from the VCM's stakeholders. A series of consultations was undertaken in order to obtain reactions from key stakeholder groups to two draft Vision statements, a Mission statement, and a list of five Values that were developed by the Board and Management team at a facilitated session held on October 28, 2019. Stakeholders' opinions regarding the particular strengths, weaknesses or opportunities they felt should be addressed in the strategic plan were also sought. These consultations were conducted through focus groups with staff, artistic directors, students and parents, an online survey of faculty, and individual telephone interviews with key donors and community members.

From the detailed and extensive feedback and input that was gained from the consultations, the Board and Management team refined the Vision, Mission, and Values and developed the five Strategic Priorities that are incorporated in this Strategic Plan. The stakeholder consultations were invaluable in shaping the resulting Strategic Plan, and the VCM extends its sincere thanks to all who participated for their important contribution to the process.

BACKGROUND

Tracking Progress

The Board and Management of the VCM are committed to the achievement of the Strategic Priorities in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. They recognize that "what gets monitored and measured gets accomplished" and have agreed to a regular and ongoing review of the organization's progress against its goals.

In addition to updating progress against each of the Strategic Priorities at its regular Board meetings, the Board and Management will conduct an annual strategic planning review session to refine and/or course correct the Plan as appropriate.



OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION

Our Vision is our “WHY”, or our “North Star”: our definition of our ideal future, our long-term direction and where the organization is headed. Our Vision is our goal and our aspiration; it articulates what we want to create, the impact we wish to have and for whom.

“Music brings a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination...and life to everything.”

- Attributed to Plato.

MISSION

Our Mission is our “WHAT”, or our purpose: the organization’s focus and what we exist to do. Our Mission describes the work we do today and every day to bring our Vision to reality.

We inspire, nurture, and enrich our community through excellence in music education, performance, and wellness.

VALUES

Our Values are our “HOW”: the things we stand for, our culture, and our beliefs. Our Values define how we do things; they guide our decision-making. We strive to ensure that each decision we make reflects at least one of our Values.

- Excellence
- Inclusivity and Accessibility
- Stewardship and Accountability
- Leadership
- Innovation





PLEASE NOTE: The Strategic Priorities are of equal standing and are numbered in this document for clarity, not to represent priority order.

PRIORITY ONE

Achieve Financial Sustainability

Our day to day operations will be financially sustainable and prudently managed, strategic fundraising will maximize fundraising success, and our endowment(s) will grow to meet our evolving needs. By achieving financial sustainability we will ensure VCM is able to continue to fulfill its mission and achieve its aspirations.

To achieve this strategic priority, we will:

- **Grow earned revenue (from tuition, facility rental, and other revenue sources), manage expenses and maximize contribution**
 - Maximize earned revenues and capitalize on new opportunities as they arise and as possible in a post-COVID environment
 - Revisit earned revenue growth targets as clarity about “new normal” is reached
 - Continue to tightly manage expenses toward a balanced budget each year
 - Introduce new processes and technologies that will enhance efficiency and improve customer service
- **Explore new, innovative revenue streams to continue to address emerging student needs and further engage the broad community**
 - Continue to build on and enhance VCM’s unique programming

- Provide digitized content on a subscription basis
- Pursue opportunities in providing distance education with new technology
- Collaborate with other arts organizations, learning institutes, and creative industries
- Explore different ways to use the facility to generate incremental revenue (e.g. rent the facility to other arts organizations or not-for-profits, conferences, corporate retreats at Westhills, etc.)
- Grow the cohort for the postsecondary program to maximize use of space during daytime hours; develop and employ facility planning strategies, searching for efficiencies to maximize facility use and related income
- Investigate new and different ways to utilize VCM’s existing equity with a view to creating an additional revenue stream
- Maximize access to government funding (e.g. CERB or alternatives) on an ongoing basis
- **Enhance and implement our fundraising plan to maximize fundraising revenue**
 - Finalize and present for Board approval an annual fundraising plan, including all streams of fundraising revenue (annual giving, planned giving, major gifts, sponsorships, grants, etc.)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

(Achieve Financial Sustainability continued)

- **Strengthen VCM's Endowment Funds for the long-term stability of the organization**
 - Continue building the endowments held at The Victoria Foundation
 - Explore the feasibility of launching a long-term endowment campaign to help sustain VCM's day to day operations
 - Investigate establishing a VCM Foundation to build and diversify endowment funding
- **Develop and implement an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework and approach**
 - Establish and maintain a Risk Register and thereafter include risk assessment and mitigation strategies in regular reporting to the Board
 - Introduce other elements of ERM and enhance VCM's approach to risk management by engaging the Board in education and exploration of risk appetite, risk tolerances, and mitigation strategies
 - Ensure we are prepared (as much as possible) for the next "black swan"

PRIORITY TWO

Address Building/Location

Our physical environment will be safe, secure, suitable for purpose, and accessible; it will meet the needs of our students, staff, faculty, and our broader community.

To achieve this strategic priority, we will:

- **Maximize use of space by repurposing various parts of the building becoming available due to COVID restrictions and classes moving online**
- **Look beyond physical space to provide students and faculty with the necessary tools to ensure educational excellence whether in the building or online (Zoom accounts, education, and training, etc.)**
- **Continue to address the issues of deferred maintenance, physical accessibility, safety/security, and optimal facility use of our downtown location**
 - Integrate plans to address these issues with the longer term needs analysis and planning addressed below

- Develop and implement a strategic approach to facility use planning
- **Defer the needs analysis, determination of indicated actions, and implementation of decisions made regarding the renovation, development, or redevelopment of our downtown location until post-COVID**
 - Assess the feasibility and potential timing of a capital campaign
- **Assess the ongoing viability of our Langford/Westhills satellite location and, as required, address indicated actions related to this location**
- **Pursue opportunities and assess the potential of moving beyond our existing physical spaces by establishing additional satellite locations and/or remote access, both within and beyond Greater Victoria**

PRIORITY THREE

Enhance Community and Stakeholder Engagement

We will continue to build rewarding and mutually beneficial relationships with our stakeholders, including donors, governments, other arts organizations, our neighbours, and the broader community.

To achieve this strategic priority, we will:

- **Build and implement a long-term, far-reaching community and stakeholder engagement strategy that will incorporate both existing and new initiatives to maximize future impact**
 - Identify and inventory existing initiatives and stakeholder groups currently reached
 - Create detailed and thorough analysis of stakeholder groups not yet reached or not yet achieving potential (e.g. parents)
 - Analyze gaps and determine the appropriate strategy to address them
 - Ensure the strategy includes the appropriate emphasis on developing alumni engagement and recognition
 - Use the opportunities for stakeholder engagement that have been created by new technology, both in education and performance
 - Monitor progress and update strategy as required

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

(Enhance Community and Stakeholder Engagement continued)

- **Build and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications plan that will define our external audiences and deliver consistent and coherent efforts**
 - Enhance our awareness, profile, brand, image, and reputation
 - Determine high potential and priority targets and maximize efforts to achieve them
 - Ensure marketing and communications plans support all VCM programs and initiatives (e.g. the annual fundraising plan, recruitment initiatives, events planning, performance rentals etc.)
 - Develop a strategy for global engagement and education through the effective use of technology
 - “Brand” VCM’s online learning experience
- **Engage with all internal and external stakeholders to involve them in VCM’s commitment to and leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**
 - Ensure that this commitment is reflected in real action
- **Take a leadership position in the Greater Victoria arts community by leveraging existing relationships to facilitate open dialogue and develop the capacity of arts groups, social groups, and cultural groups, thereby elevating arts and culture on the community agenda**

PRIORITY FOUR

Build a Student-Centric Culture

We will be a student-centric organization that supports a healthy student body of all ages, stages, and abilities; this will encompass student recruitment, engagement, retention, and support.

To achieve this strategic priority, we will:

- **Provide relevant, innovative, and artistically engaging programming, from the beginner to the most advanced student**
 - All program areas will have the best faculty and departmental leadership which, together with the required VCM administrative support, will ensure artistic and academic success across all programs.
 - Existing methods for gathering student, parent, and faculty feedback about VCM music programs, and assessing faculty teaching, will be reviewed and enhanced where necessary, to ensure metrics are accurate and effective at identifying trends and opportunities for enrolment and/or new market segments
 - The Dean will periodically receive guidance from the Artistic Directorate Committee, the Artistic and Academic Committee of the Board, and various community stakeholder groups regarding new/ newly proposed programs and the development and implementation of artistic and academic strategies, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities and positive, sustainable outcomes
 - Refine online tools to facilitate student engagement in both education and performance opportunities
- **Recognize and build on the strengths of our music therapy program and the wellness and healing impact of music**
 - Develop and implement a continent-wide plan to raise the VCM’s national and international profile as a highly successful provider of music therapy, and its impact
 - Continue to grow the database of published peer-reviewed articles on the wellness effects of music and raise public awareness of the same



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

(Build a Student-Centric Culture continued)

- **Continue to provide the specialized programming that sets VCM apart from other music education institutions**
 - Launch (Fall 2020) the new VCM/Camosun pre-diploma level Certificate in Music Creativity and Performance Foundations, developing an average annual cohort of 20 by 2025
 - Develop and launch (est. Fall 2022) a new post-diploma level Advanced Certificate in Music, developing an average annual cohort of 20 by 2025
 - Anchor the School of Music Technology and Creativity as a central creative hub within the VCM's music programming, with a new director appointed by 2021, exploring and developing opportunities where possible, to innovate music education through creativity and technology, across all VCM music program areas
 - Continue to develop the BC Fiddle Orchestra program within the Chwyl Family School of Contemporary Music, as a leading provincial program within BC, and continue to develop and grow similar programs in Contemporary genres within this school
 - Grow the profile of the Young Artists Collegium Program nationally, develop exchange and touring opportunities for students and attract more internationally renowned faculty, with an average cohort size of 50 and the Junior and Voice Collegium programs growing to capacity
 - Offer Early Childhood Music programs more in the community where possible, including at the PARC Retirement Residence in Victoria once complete
 - Develop and launch new intergenerational programs for the community, tying into Music Wellness
 - Grow programs delivered via Community Outreach as both financial and teaching/admin support allows, develop and implement a strategy for maximizing positive impact on the VCM brand and growing the VCM's national/international profile
- **Enhance and support the student experience from enrolment to completion**
 - Consider creating a new position (e.g. Student Experience Coordinator) responsible for ongoing communications with current students, the referral process, interfacing with department heads, tracking student progress, student surveys, etc., as well as alumni engagement
 - Introduce a robust new student orientation program and welcome package
 - Implement ongoing communications that meet students' stated preferences as to how they wish to receive this information
 - Continue to grow a VCM online community for students that facilitates connections between/ among students
 - Engage with students to ensure the student experience and culture remain supportive, including incorporating the critical aspects of mental health and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
 - Develop a series of music-oriented events that reflect students' interests and, as appropriate, cultures and heritages
 - Create/redevelop existing and conduct annual student surveys that, in addition to supporting the existing Faculty Teaching Assessment Program, will evaluate the VCM's ability to engage, retain, and support them, and identify opportunities to enhance the VCM's capabilities in this area, including e-learning
 - Identify how VCM might support faculty's needs around how to keep students engaged and enhance the student experience
- **Develop a comprehensive student recruitment program that includes recruitment events and all of the information and collateral material required to engage potential students, and identifies necessary resources to support the VCM admin, department heads, and faculty engaged in student recruitment; regularly evaluate the program's success and adjust as required**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY FIVE

Support Our People and Culture

We will support and develop our Board, Management, Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers in an organizational culture of communication and collaboration.

To achieve this strategic priority, we will:

- **Enhance VCM's governance practices to ensure the Board and its Committees are exercising the appropriate degree of oversight and operating as effectively as possible:**

- Task the Executive Committee with overseeing an annual plan for Board development, including creating and maintaining a calendar of board education opportunities
- Introduce a robust process to evaluate the Board's effectiveness, starting with full Board evaluation and Individual Director evaluations, then extending to Board Chair and Committee Chair evaluations
- Introduce a process for the orientation of new Board members, under the oversight of the Executive Committee
- Develop a robust process for the recruitment of new Board members and for Board succession planning
- Move towards a reduced number of Board meetings annually
- Modify the format of Board meetings to ensure focus on strategic priorities (e.g. five meetings themed around one of each of the strategic priorities and the sixth serving as an annual review of the strategic plan and the AGM)
- Revisit Board practices, such as meeting frequency and timing, in light of the impact of remote meetings)

- **Continue to build on an already strong and collaborative culture to ensure all staff are engaged and motivated to contribute to their maximum potential**

- Emphasize continual and ongoing internal communications, including staff meetings, news updates, team building initiatives, social components, etc.

- Ensure all our people know their role in the organization, how it contributes to the VCM's success, and how they are performing in their role through regular, ongoing performance coaching
 - Review and update (if necessary) VCM's organization structure and staffing to ensure "the right heads are in the right hats" to deliver the strategic plan
 - Identify emergency and long-term successors for all critical management positions and provide professional development plans to prepare candidates for eventual succession
- **Build a culture that reflects VCM's commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**
 - Provide training and development opportunities as appropriate
 - Ensure all are aware that VCM is a workplace that will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, or other forms of intolerance
 - **Develop and implement a volunteer engagement and recognition program designed to ensure volunteers feel appropriately connected to the VCM and appropriately acknowledged for their contributions**
 - Revisit above in light of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and remote communications
 - **Conduct an internal communications needs assessment and develop and implement a plan with the objective of enhancing communication and collaboration across all functional areas of the VCM**
 - **Assist faculty in feeling more connected to the VCM and more integral to the long-term success of the organization**
 - Create a strategy to further the engagement of faculty members and ensure they feel recognized and valued, and that they have the tools and supports to facilitate student success

FIVE YEAR TIMELINE

Priority One: Achieve Financial Sustainability	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Maximize earned revenues, capitalize on new opportunities, manage expenses, and maximize contribution during and post-COVID; revisit growth targets with clarity about "new normal"	X	X	X	X	X
Explore new, innovative revenue streams to continue to address emerging student needs and further engage the broad community	X	X	X	X	X
Enhance and implement fundraising plan to maximize fundraising revenue	X	X	X	X	X
Strengthen endowment funds for long-term stability	X	X	X	X	X
◦ Explore feasibility of long term endowment campaign to sustain day-to-day operations		X	X		
◦ Investigate establishing a VCM Foundation		X			
Develop and implement ERM framework and approach		X			

Priority Two: Address Building/Location	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Maximize use of space, repurpose available space due to COVID restrictions	X	X			
Provide students and faculty with tools to ensure educational excellence both in the building and online	X	X			
Address current issues (deferred maintenance, physical accessibility, safety/security, optimal facility use) of downtown location	X	X	X	X	X
◦ Develop and implement strategic approach to facility use planning		X			
Defer needs analysis to post COVID, determine next steps (downtown location)		X	X		
◦ Assess feasibility and potential of capital campaign		X	X		
Assess ongoing viability of Langford/West Hills location, address indicated actions		X	X	X	X
Pursue opportunities and assess potential of additional satellite locations/ remote access, within and beyond Greater Victoria			X		

Priority Three: Enhance Community and Stakeholder Engagement	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Build and implement long-term, far-reaching engagement strategy (incorporating existing and new initiatives) to maximize future impact		X	X	X	X
Build and implement comprehensive marketing and communications plan to define external audiences and deliver consistent, coherent efforts		X	X	X	X
Engage all internal and external stakeholders in VCM's commitment and leadership re: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		X			
Take leadership in Greater Victoria arts community by leveraging existing relationships	X	X	X	X	X

FIVE YEAR TIMELINE

Priority Four: Student-Centric Culture	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Provide relevant, innovative, engaging programming, from beginner to most advanced student	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure metrics are accurate and effective at identifying trends and opportunities for enrolment/new market segments 		X	X	X	X
Build on strengths of music therapy program and wellness, healing impact of music	X	X	X	X	X
Continue specialized programming that sets VCM apart	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch post-diploma level Advanced Certificate 				X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor School of Music Technology & Creativity as central creative hub 	X	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and grow programs in Contemporary genres 	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow profile and develop Young Artists Collegium program 	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer Early Childhood Music programs more in the community, launch new intergenerational programs for the community (tie into Music Wellness) 	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow programs delivered via Community Outreach, growing VCM's national/ international profile (depends on funding) 		X	X	X	X
Enhance and support student experience from enrolment to completion		X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Student Experience Coordinator position 		X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust new student orientation program and welcome package 			X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct annual student surveys to evaluate VCM's ability to engage them and identify opportunities for enhancement 	X	X	X	X	X
Develop comprehensive student recruitment program	X	X	X	X	X



FIVE YEAR TIMELINE

Priority Five: People and Culture	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Enhance Board governance practices		X	X	X	X
◦ Annual Board development, recruitment, and succession plan		X	X	X	X
◦ Full Board evaluation		X			
◦ Individual Director self-evaluations		X			
◦ Board/Committee Chair evaluations			X		
◦ Orientation for new Board members		X	X	X	X
◦ Reduce number, modify schedule and format of Board meetings		X			
Build on strong collaborative culture, ensure all staff are engaged and motivated	X	X	X	X	X
◦ Emphasize continual, ongoing internal communications	X	X	X	X	X
◦ Ongoing performance coaching to ensure all know their role, how it contributes to success, and how they are performing	X	X	X	X	X
◦ Review/update organization structure and staffing to deliver strategic plan		X	X	X	X
◦ Identify emergency/long term successors for all critical management positions, provide professional development plans to prepare for succession		X	X	X	X
Build a culture reflective of VCM's commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		X			
Develop and implement volunteer engagement and recognition program			X		
Conduct internal communications needs assessment; develop and implement plan to enhance communication and collaboration		X	X	X	X
Assist faculty in feeling more connected to VCM and more integral to its long-term success		X	X	X	X




CONTACT US



Phone **250.386.5311**

Email **info@vcm.bc.ca**

Web **vcm.bc.ca**

 @thevcm

 @thevcm

 @thevcm



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