



ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SWOT

Survey 2022

Full Report

BY DR. DAVID BREECKNER
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ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **Internal Awareness**

- Internally, surveyed priorities and awareness reveal a focus on staff expertise/low pay rates/burnout/high vacancies as well as the success of AHS' archives as a realized public resource.
- Exhibits (dated, broken, limited scope, too dense) and DEI are recognized for their underdeveloped potential. Education and the sheer volume of collections holdings were recognized as both tremendous opportunities but current weaknesses.
- Underfunding (appropriated and generated) and a lack of awareness or support from the State legislature were identified as significant threats to long-term sustainability.
- Pains of past troubles with Chapters and Support Groups, and the forfeiture of management oversight of former AHS properties (owned or through contract) are still remembered.
- A lack of ADA accessibility



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **Internal Awareness**

- Internal cohesion is deficient, resulting in a lack of clear vision for strategic goals and general operations.
 - "Communication. We rarely know what is going on within the organization, and right now that has a lot to do with the lack of staff. Everyone is overworked and burned out. We have **more meetings than action**, and no staff to carry out the actions even when decided upon."
- Facilities require additional attention beyond their current level.
- There is a sense of stagnation compared to other regional museums and historical organizations.
- AHS staff/board do not believe it has adequately integrated itself into local community and member pools. Community outreach!
- Paid programming and rentals are a valuable source of revenue generation.



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **Internal Awareness**

- The upcoming Sunset Audit was recognized by several staff, but is poorly represented among the written comments.
- This reveals a numbers-driven consideration and one based on strong internal communications between non-Senior level staff, and a recognition of exceptionalism



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **External Awareness**

- Externally, surveyed priorities and awareness demonstrate that regional stakeholder are most concerned with AHS telling local narratives with a focus on regional histories.
- External partners have a good understanding of the symptoms of AHS' ongoing financial challenges, but a pervasive thought that AHS favors certain operations/facilities over others in its allocations.
- Accreditation and the other professional accomplishments -- credibility -- of staff and the Society are firmly recognized, but should be emphasized more.
- AHS was successful in its development of virtual content and outreach throughout the pandemic.
- In-building outreach through programs, education, tours, and archives research are strengths but can be further developed.
- DEI was mentioned in 2 responses, both celebrating the expanded scope of AHS exhibits but recognizing the still-underdeveloped potential.



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **External Awareness**

- Increased public programming is recognized as an immediate opportunity to inspire personal connections to history and for growing public recognition of AHS.
- There is a desire/need for additional tactile and immersive content in AHS exhibits, and to better showcase the breadth of AHS collections.
- It is recognized that AHS collections have excess materials that can be deaccessioned -- "Get rid of that stuff!"
- The ongoing closure of Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff is a recurring concern.
- The responsible stewardship of AHS' historic sites is regarded as both a point of pride but also deserving of reaffirmation and renewed attention.
- The lack of funding from the State of Arizona, and its impact on operational capacity and staff morale/recognition, is well noted and understood. An increased attention to fundraising and lobbying are two suggested solutions.



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **External Awareness**

- There were several comments directed at the AHS State Board, reflecting concern with tone and manner in communications with external partners ("abrupt" and "mean"). Vacancies on the Board lend themselves to arguments of a lack of true state-wide representation.
- Many responders do not believe AHS and its facilities are well known, even within their local communities.
- AHS needs to do a better job engaging its diverse partners and allies (including Certified) across the state; an integrated plan for state-wide activation is not present.
- The setting and success of previous hosted events at AHS is recognized and encouraged in its continued development.
- The academic success of the JAH was noted, but joined by a desire for a publication more accessible to general readership -- "Public history."



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

- **External Awareness**

- Chapter Boards and Support Groups see themselves and their geographic areas of interest as in need of additional support and attention, with too much attention to Phoenix.
- "1. Without direction and support, area boards find it challenging to understand our tasks and complete them. Coordination between state and chapter boards is important to maximize our productivity, teamwork and growth. It needs to be recognized that each board will have different issues and independant workstyles, but we all need AHS support, trust, loyalty, and communication. 2. Further work needs to be done to find a way to assist local museums in their collections and care management. Our local stories should not be consigned to the warehouse, but shared with the public in the most respectful and professional manner within the relative community."
- Particular attention was given to Flagstaff and Northern AZ and reflects a need for financial support and general updates in communication from either AHS or the State Board.



Overview

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

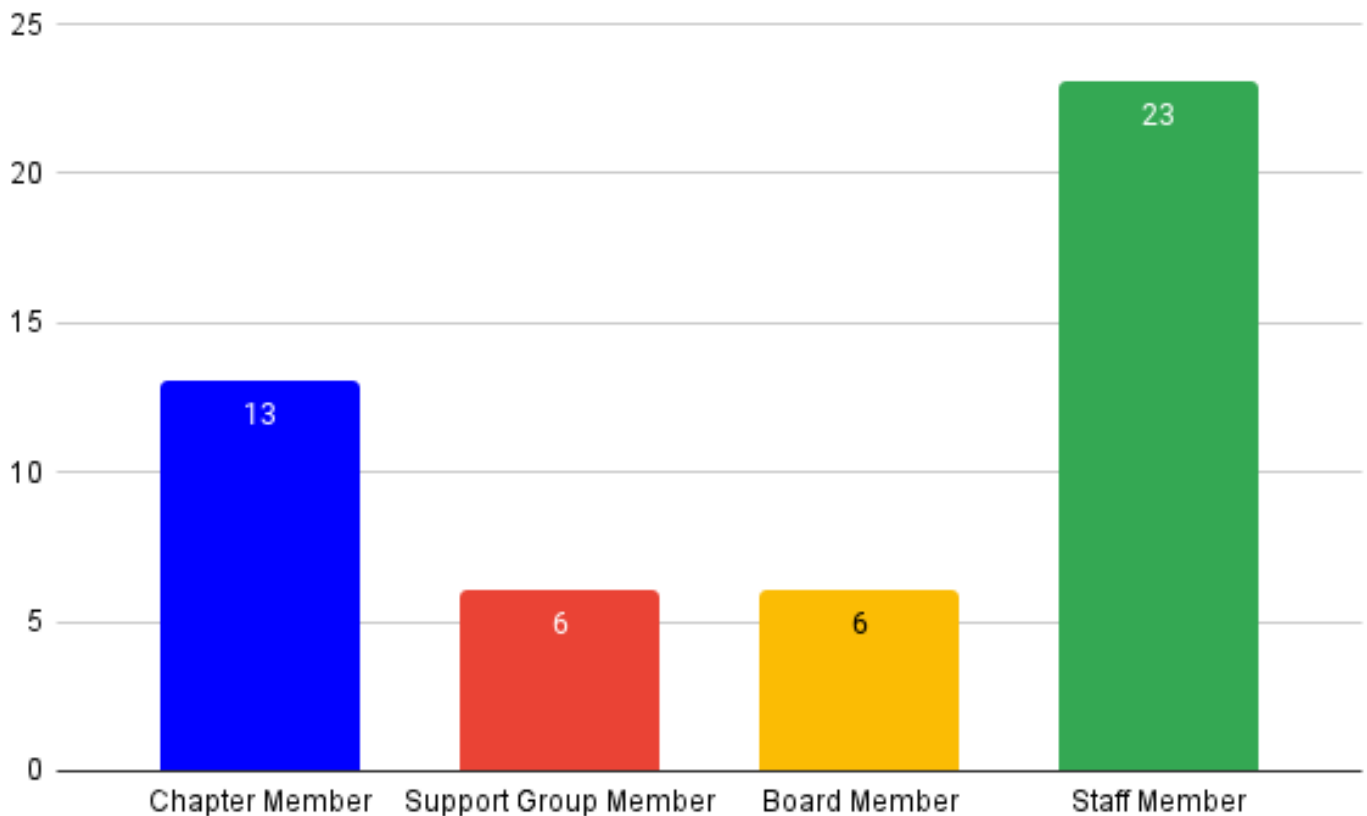
- **External Awareness: Criticisms**

- Criticisms reflect a distrust of AHS leadership in its transparency, Democratic/liberal partisanship, and honesty. Despite actual realities concerning certain decision-making processes being beyond the control of AHS, past controversies with regional partners have left a lasting impression.
- "The strong staff and board have destroyed this state-wide history-recording agency."
- "The top tier of AHS has an inability to tell the truth. This STRENGTH allows them to bulldoze their way through any controversy. Is there anyone who believes the governor has ever heard of the Southern Chapter of the Arizona Historical Society? Does anyone believe he has anything to do with picking the members of the AHS State Board? His membership in the Republican Party would cause one to expect him to pick Arizonans with Republican Party affiliation to sit on the AHS Board. ...Are the managers of AHS this obtuse, or are they this arrogant?"



Poll Results

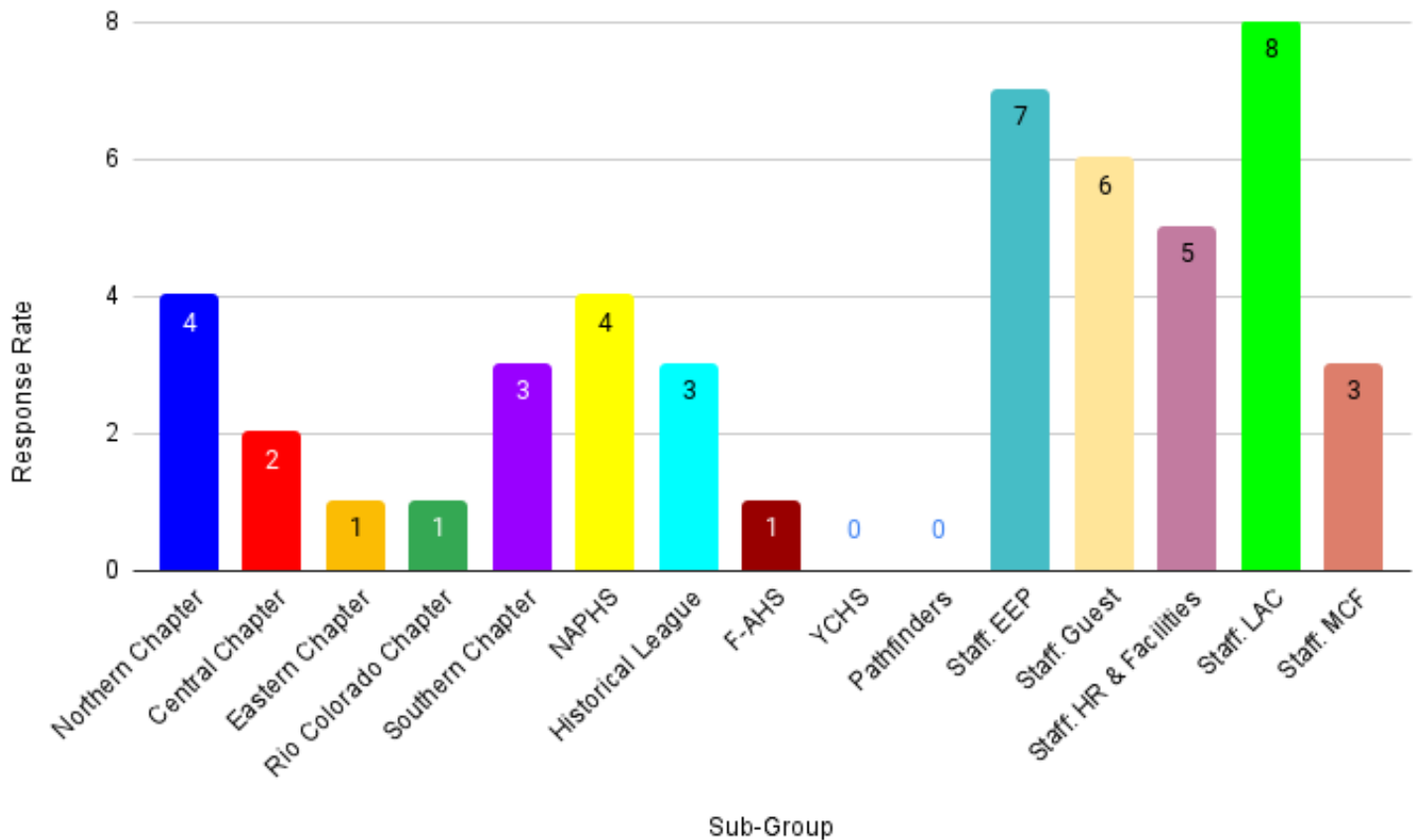
RESPONSE RATE





Poll Results

RESPONSE RATE

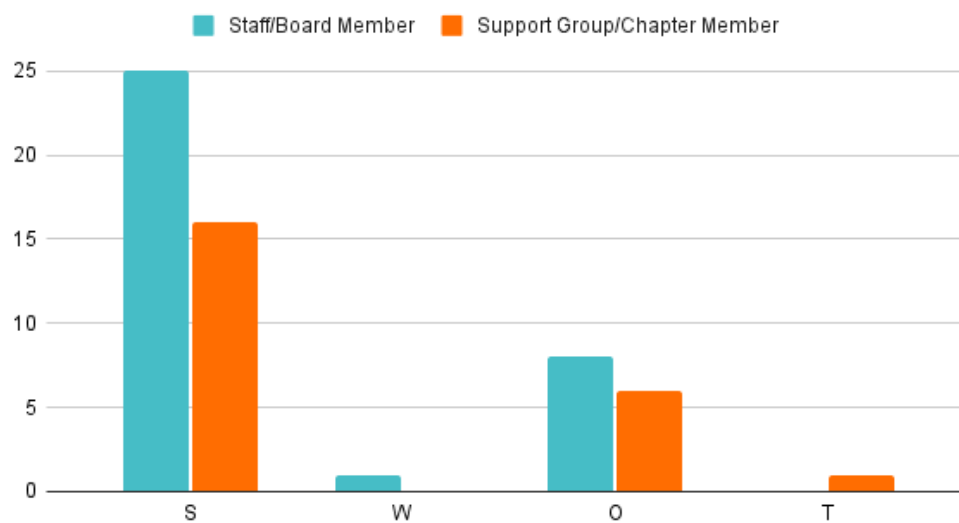




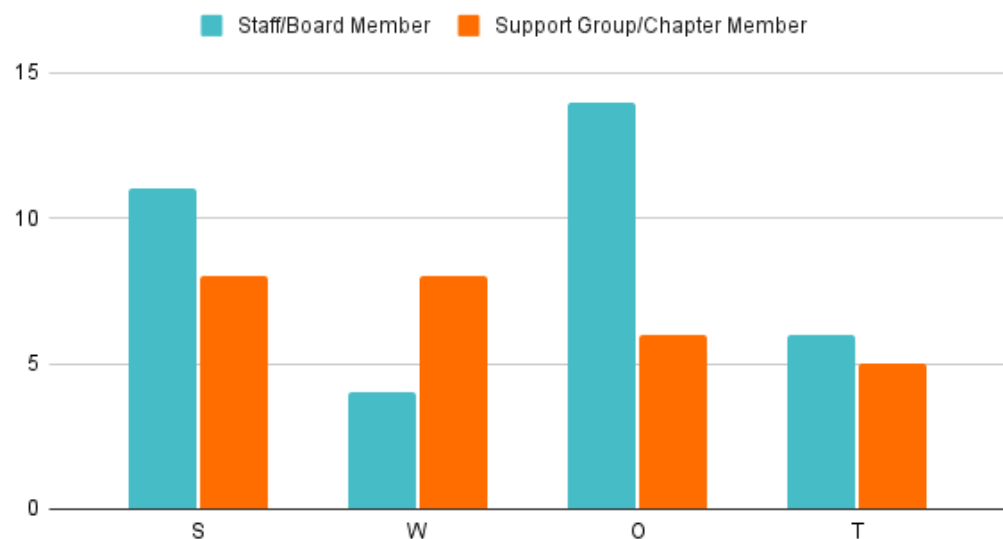
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

AAM Accreditation



Board of Directors

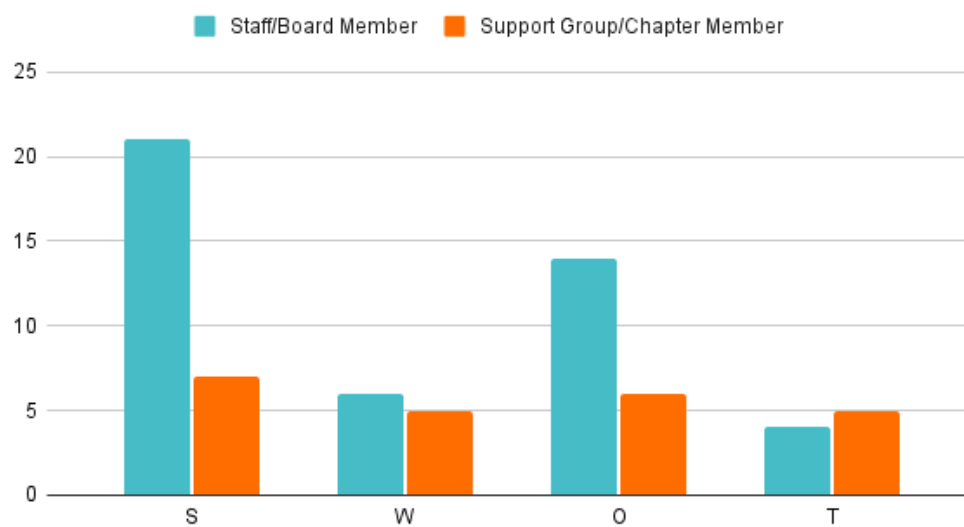




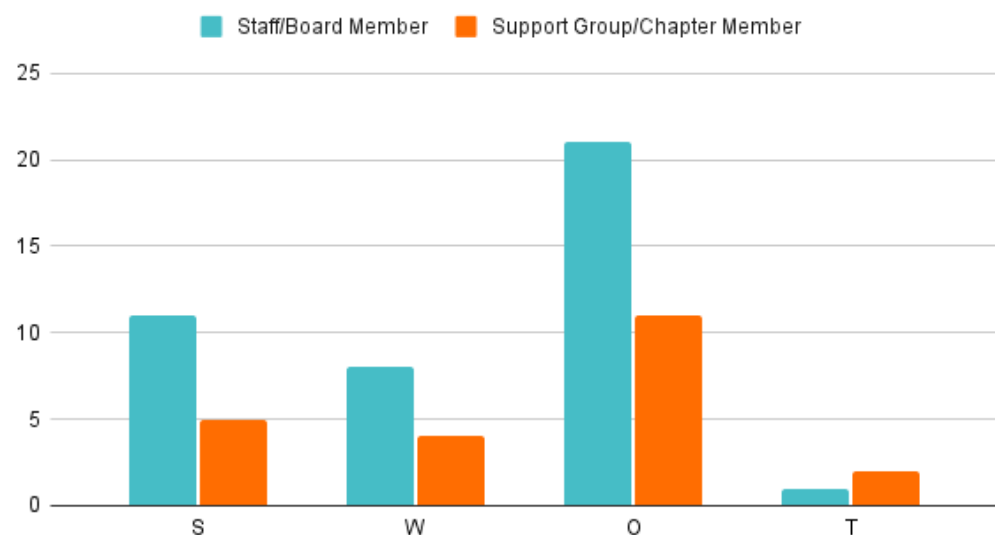
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Collections Care and Management



Communication of AHS' Mission & Goals

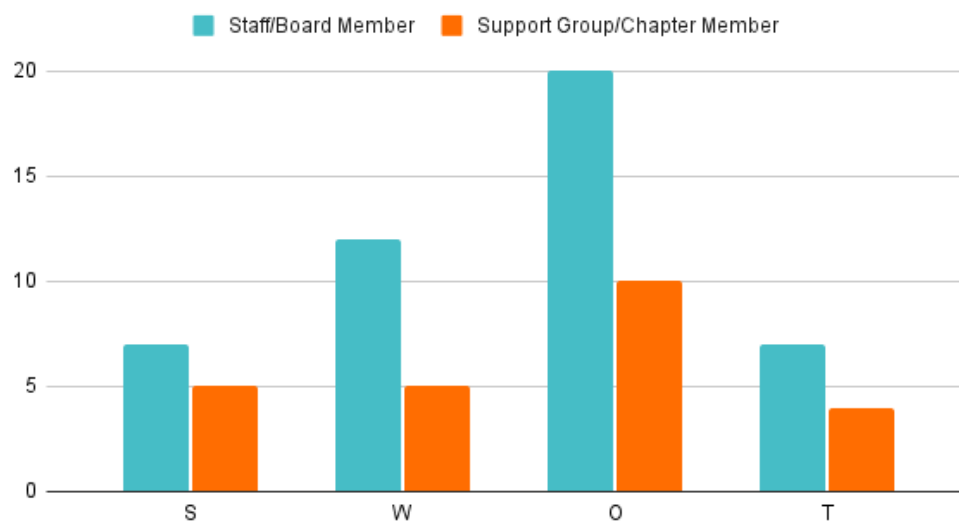




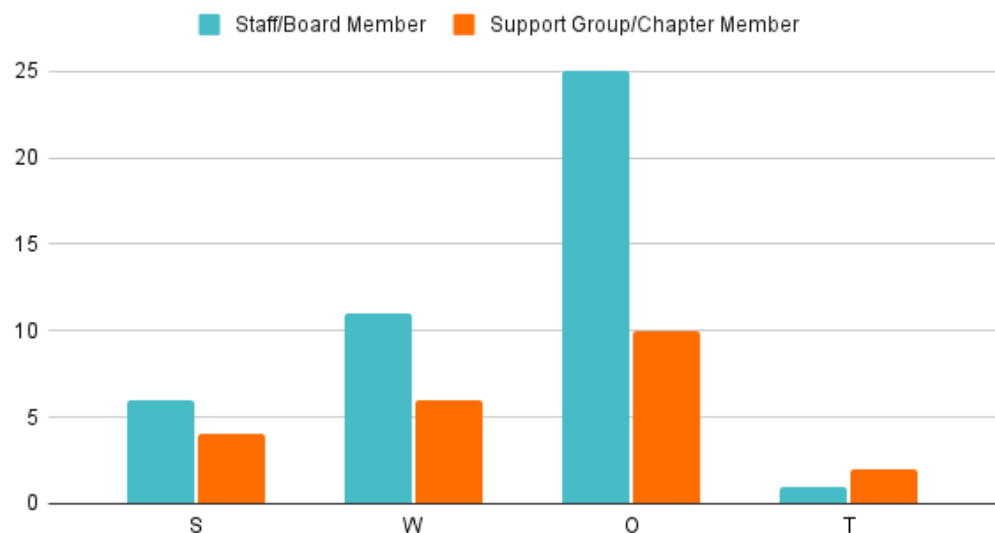
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Community & Support Groups



Community Outreach

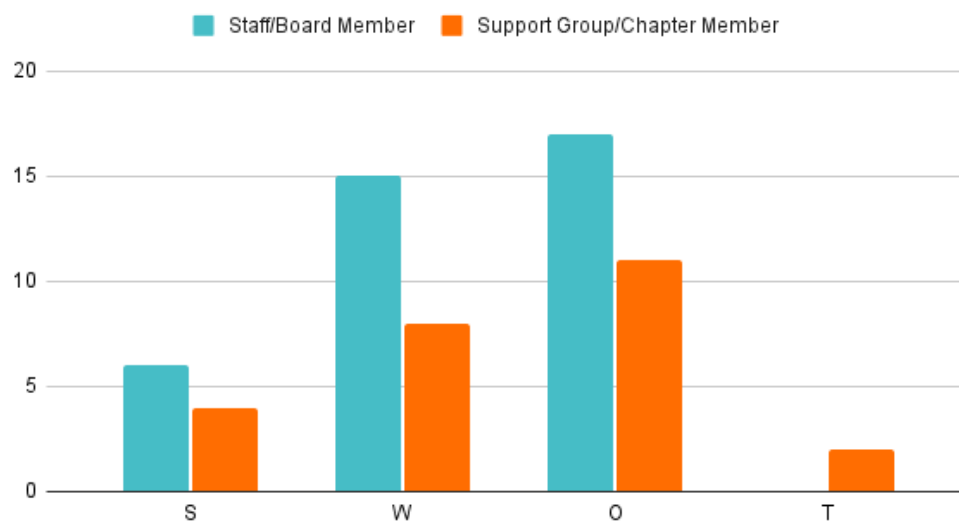




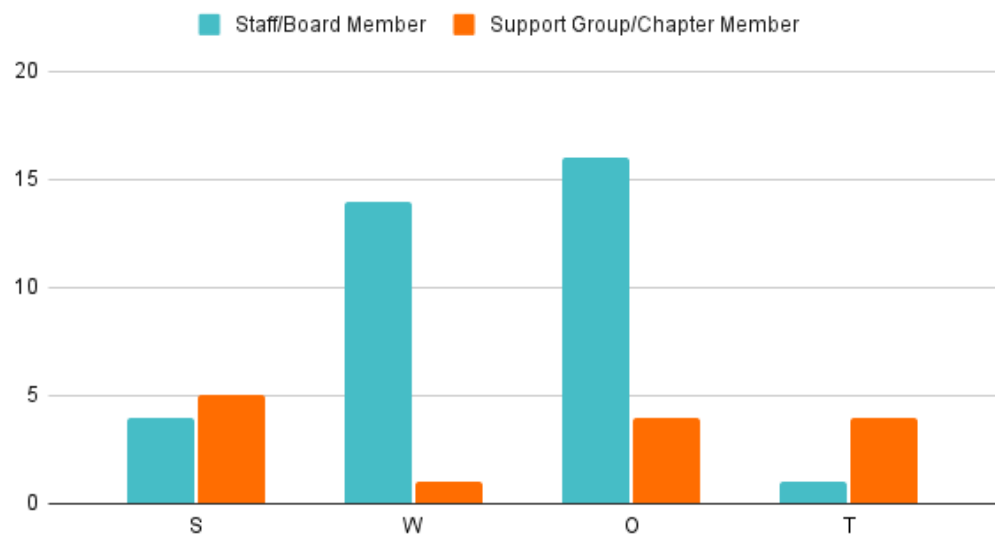
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Serving AHS

Donor Solicitation



DEI Engagement

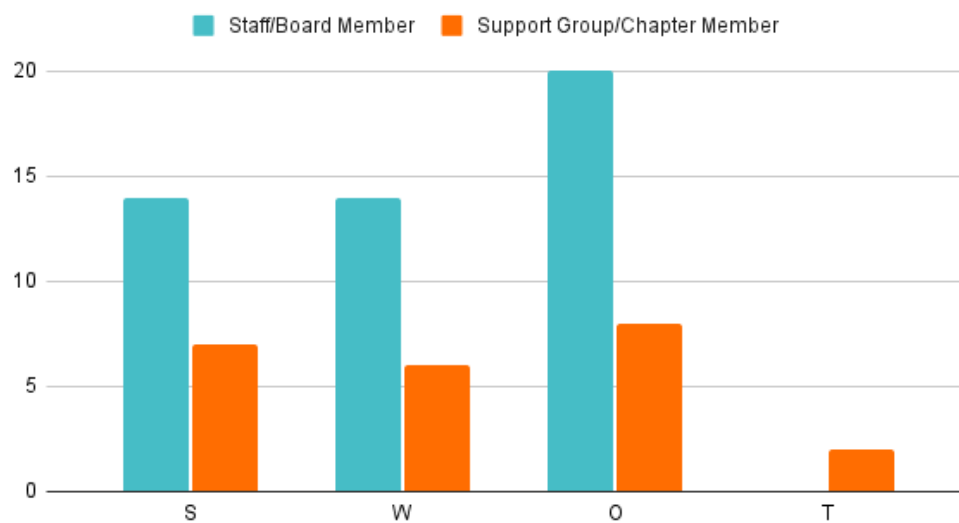




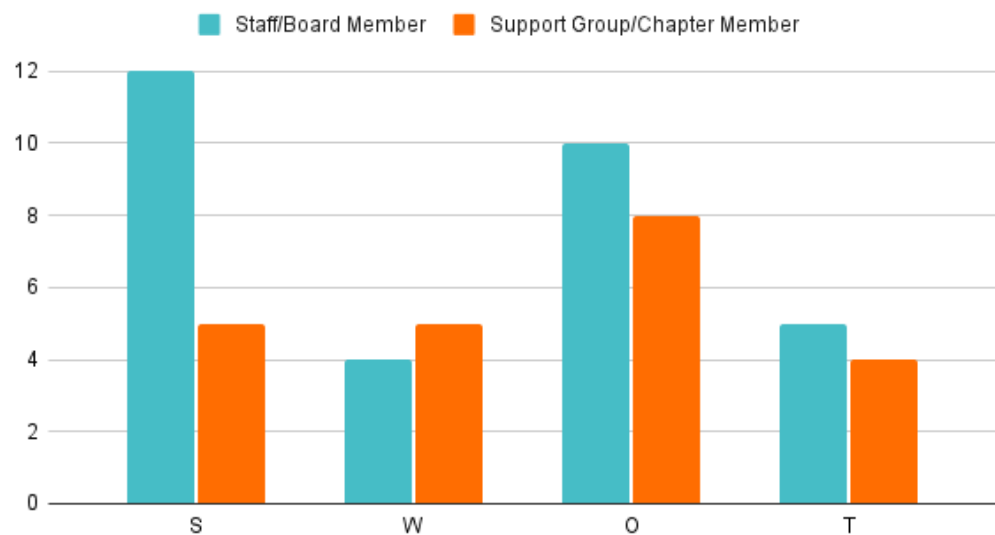
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Serving AHS

Exhibits



Financial Management

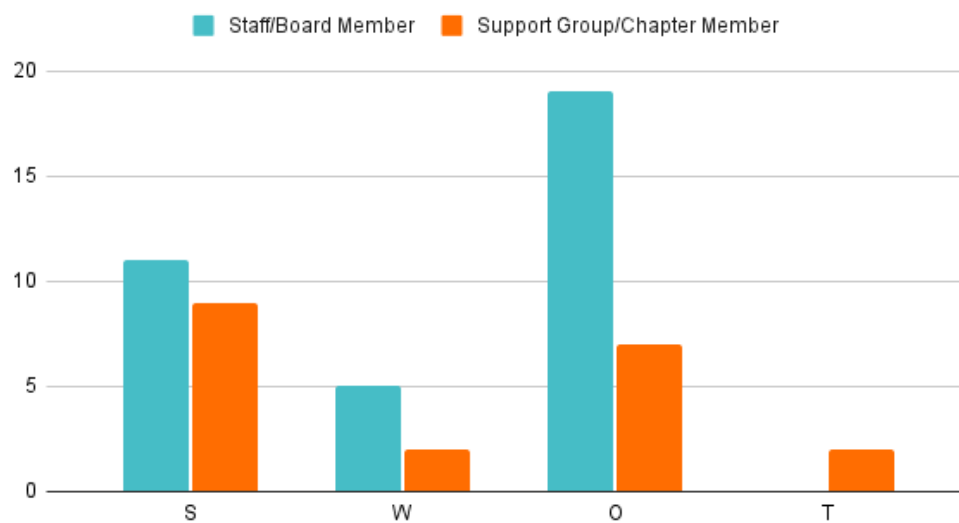




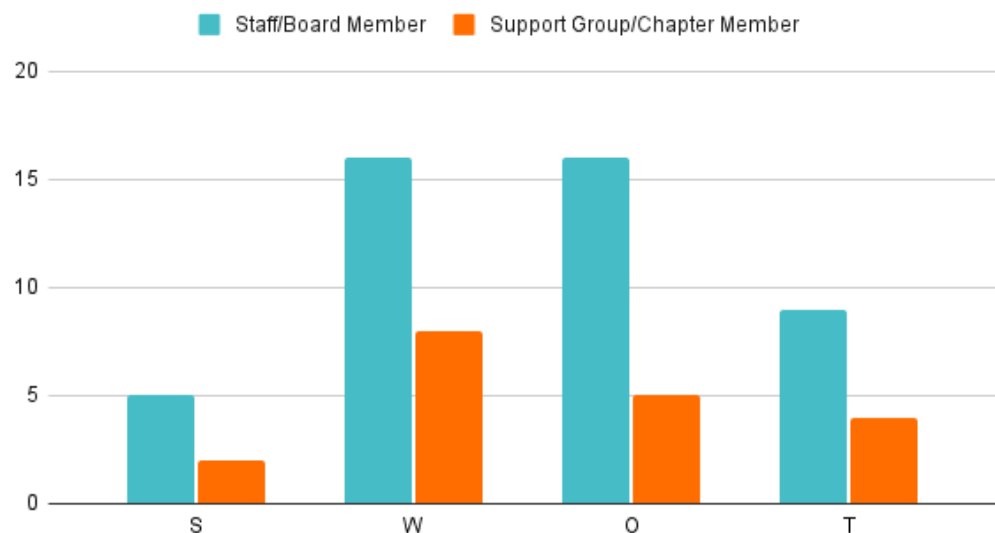
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Institutional & Professional Affiliations



Internal Communication & Cohesion

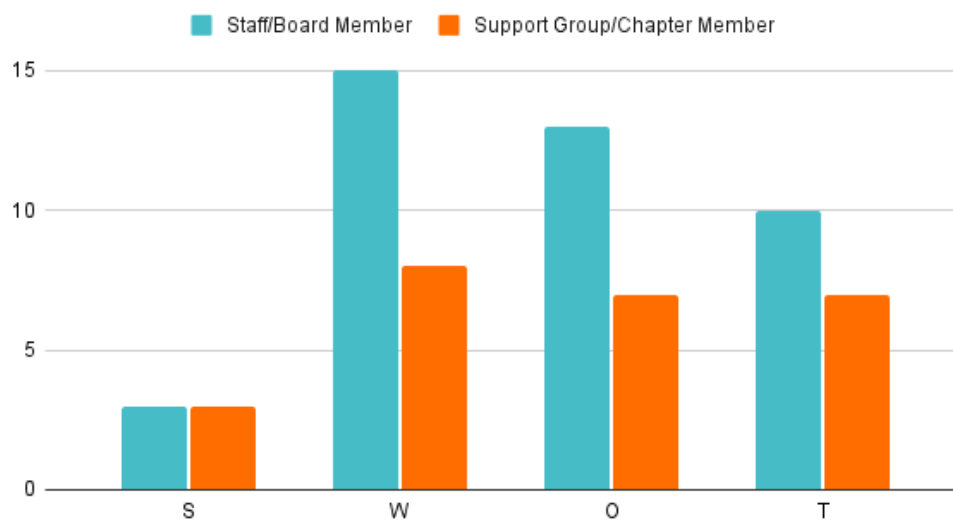




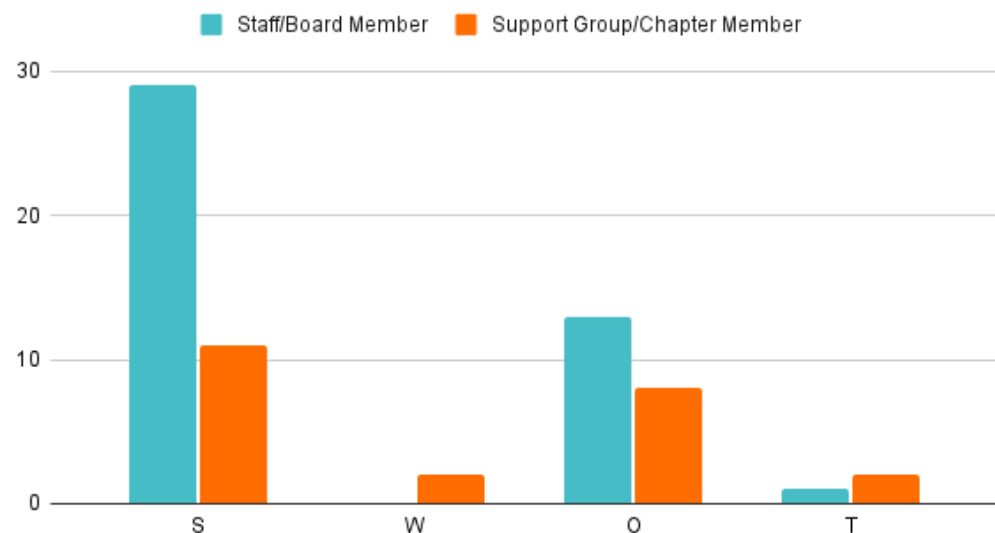
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Legislative Presence & Support



Libraries and Archives Services

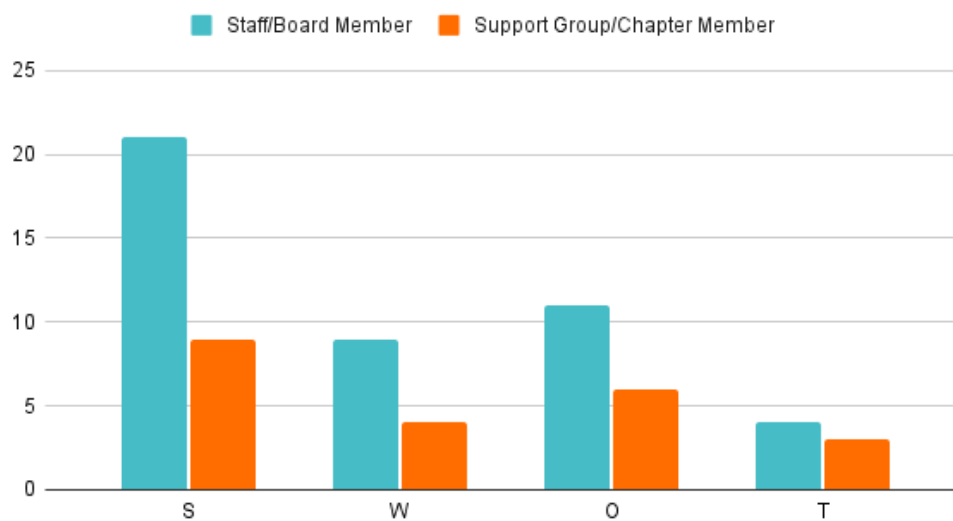




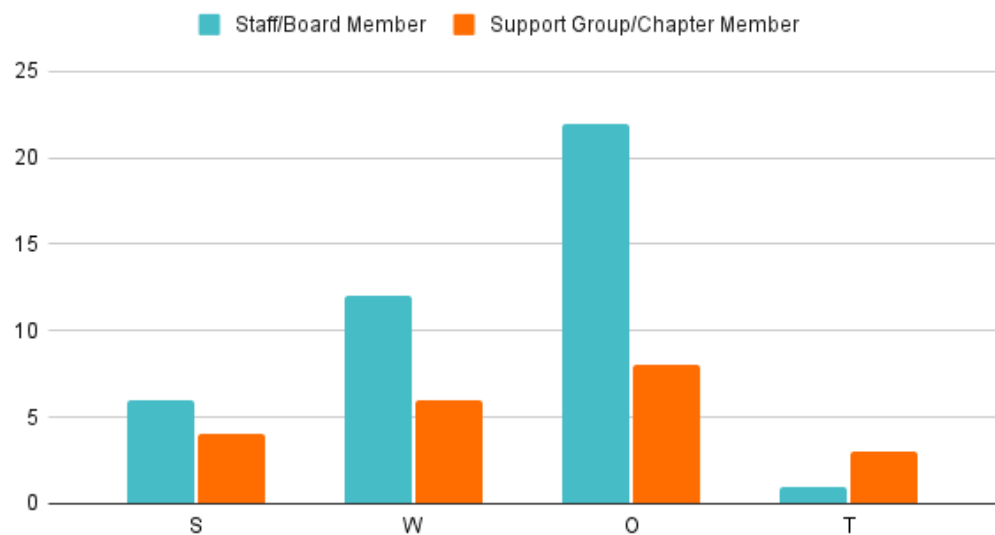
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Location of Museums in Proximity to Populations Served



Marketing

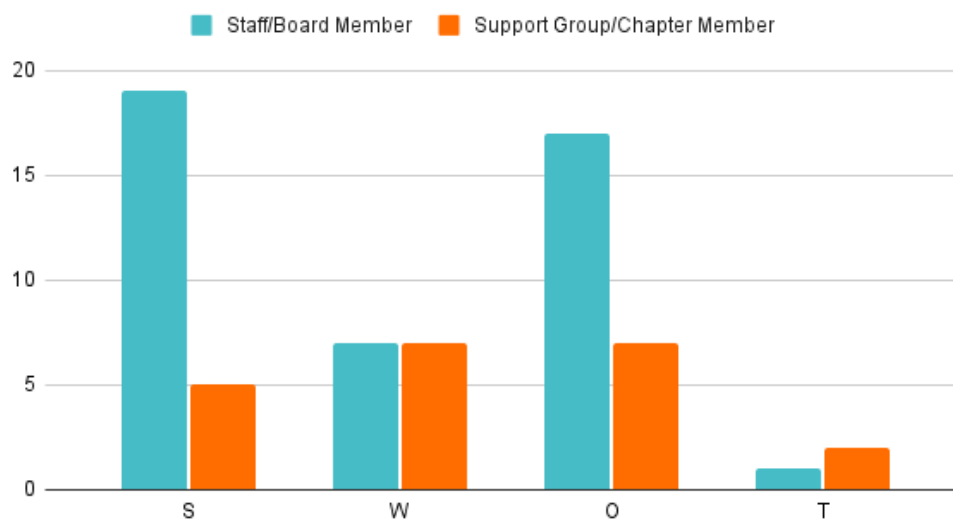




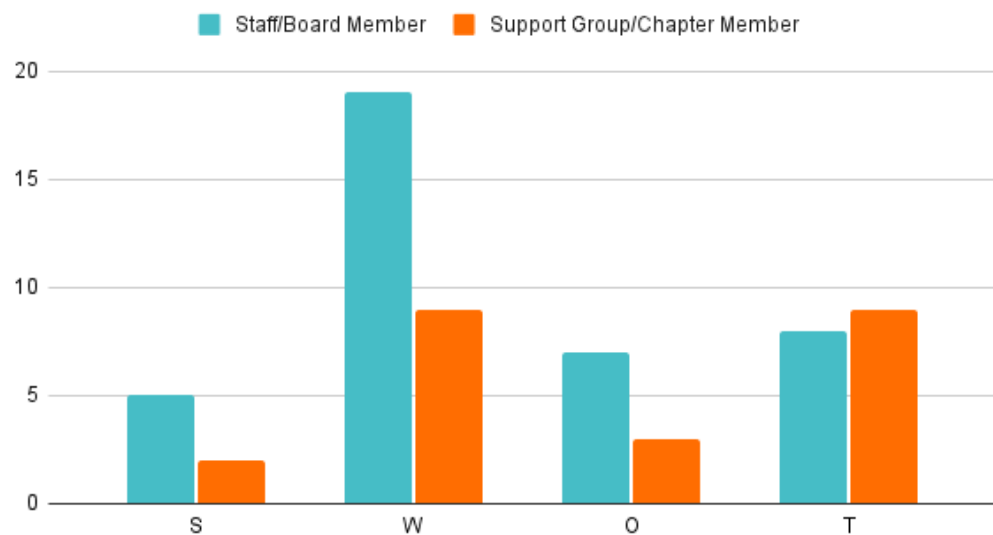
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Individual Assessment

Membership & Members Engagement



Operating Budget

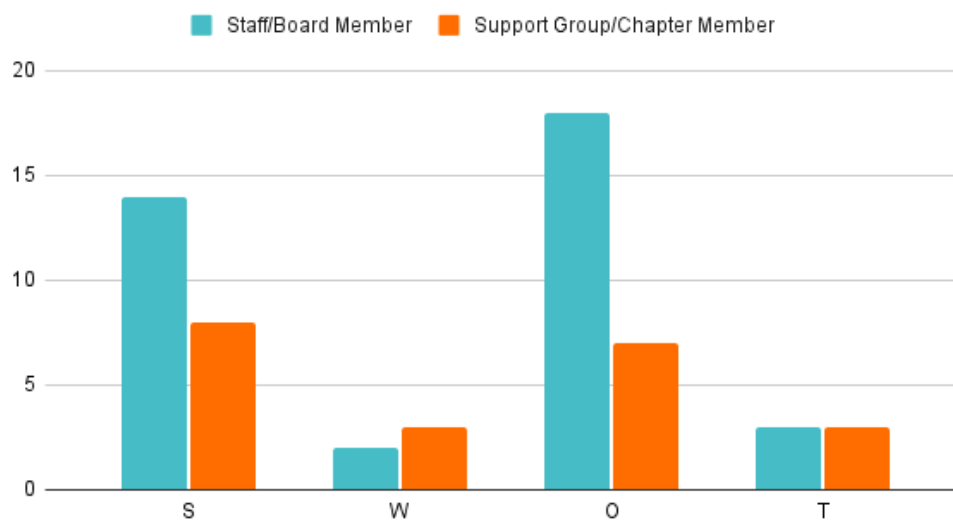




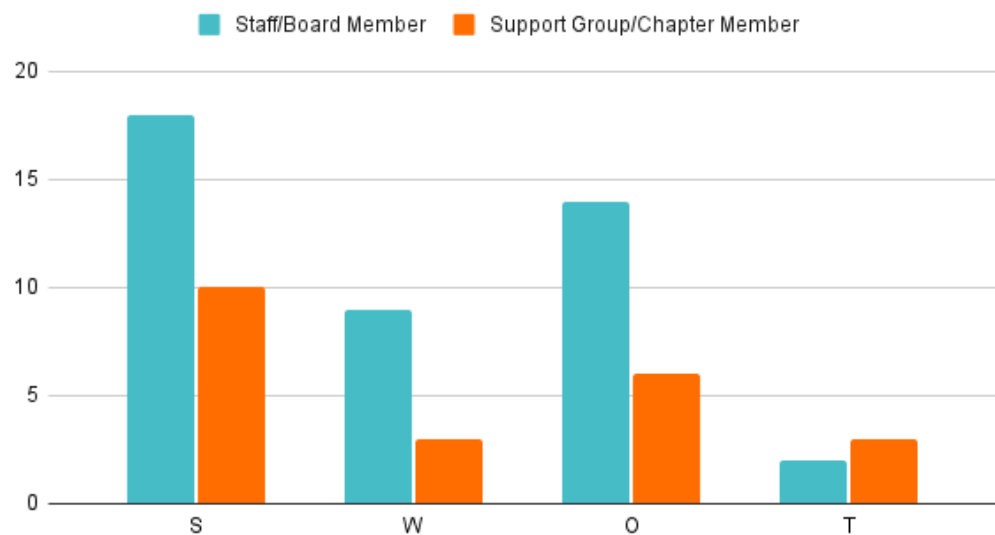
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Individual Assessment

Paid Programs & Rentals



Properties: Physical Assets

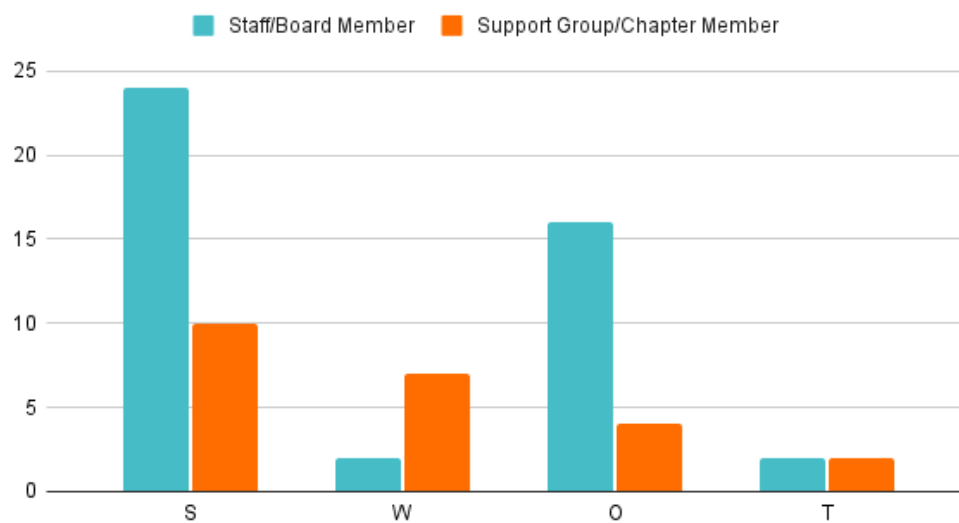




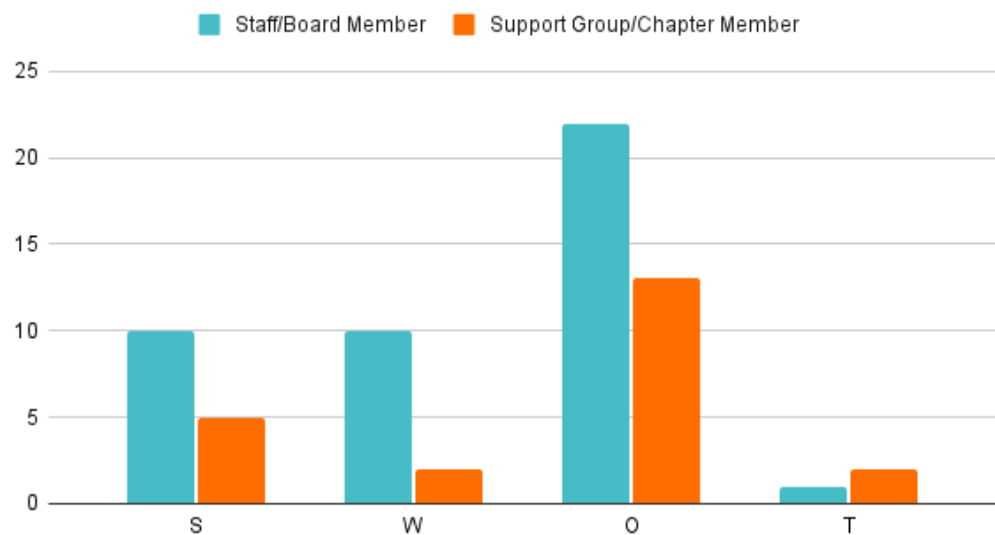
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Publications



Public Programming

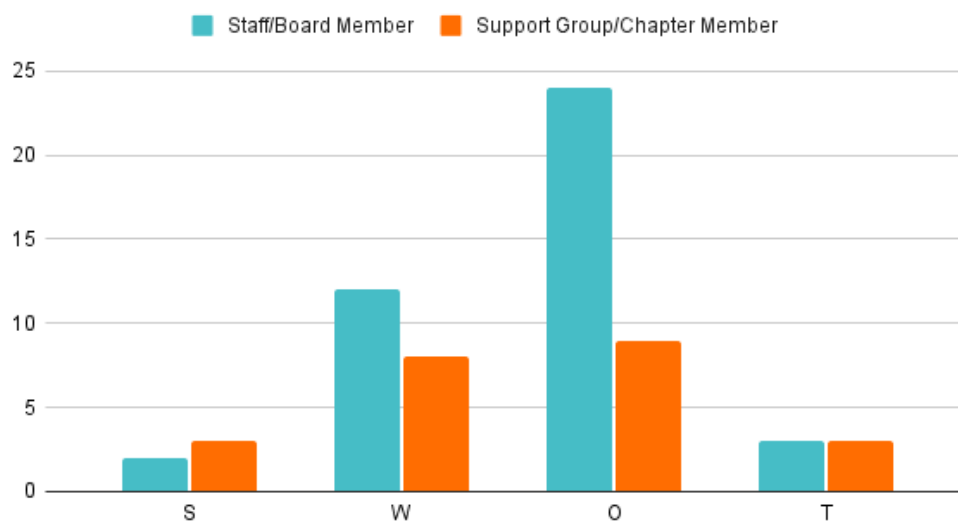




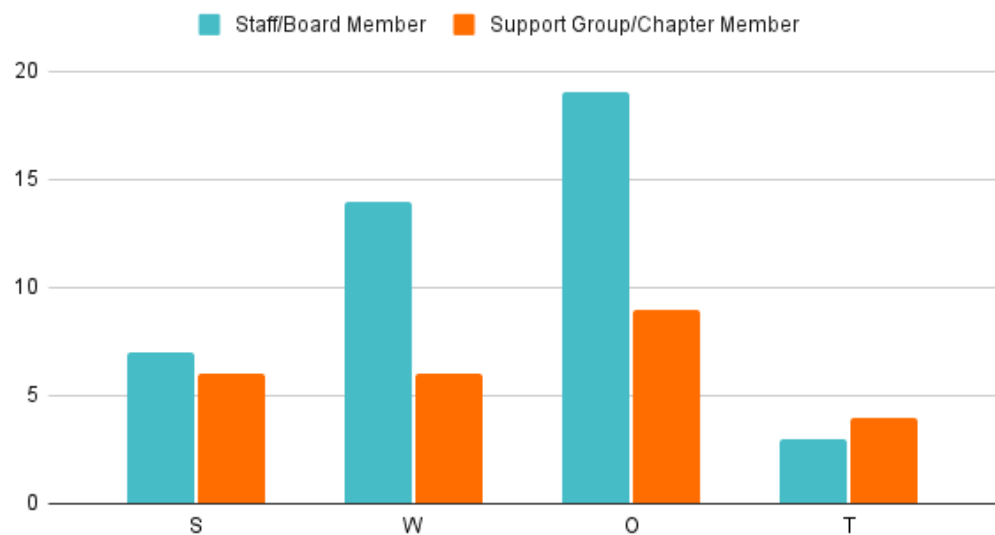
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Individual Assessment

Reach & Awareness



Representation of Diverse Perspectives

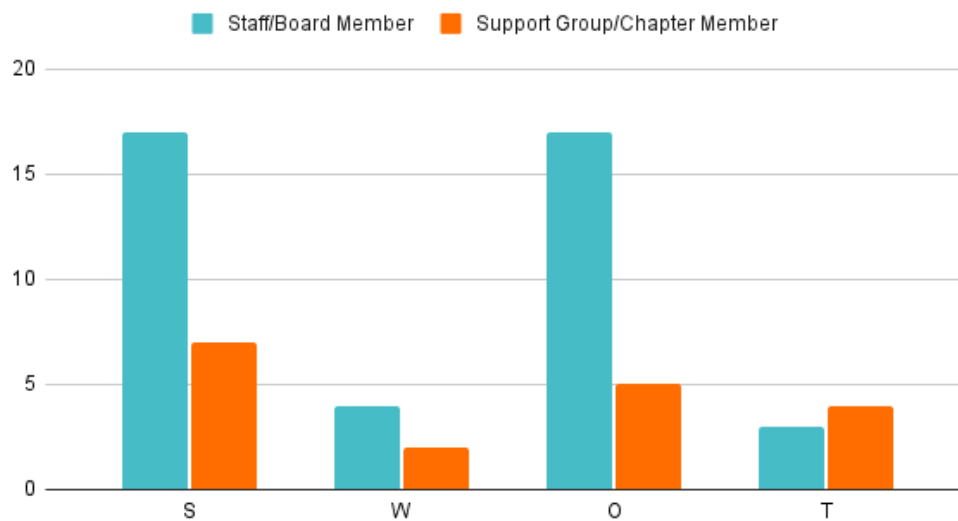




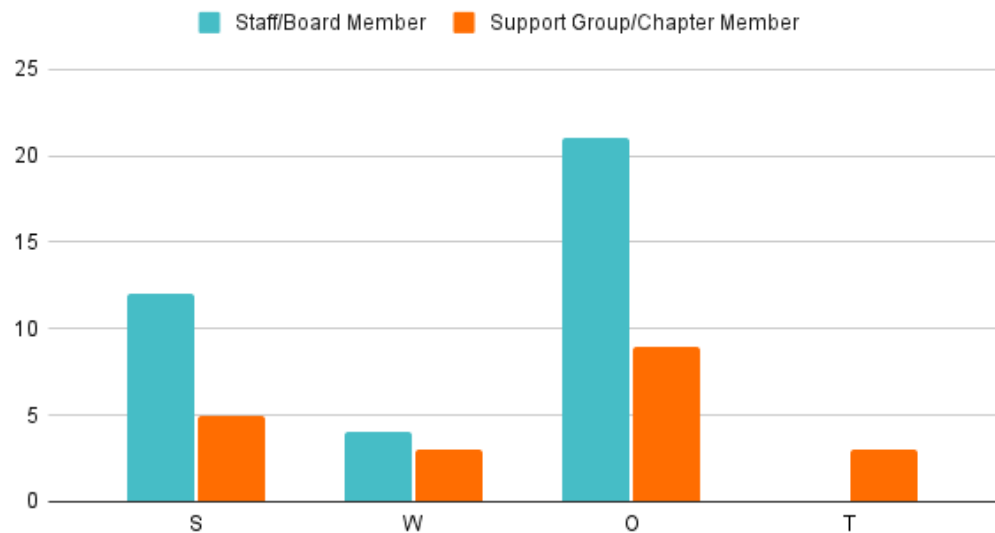
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Size & Scope of AHS 2D and 3D Collections



Social Media

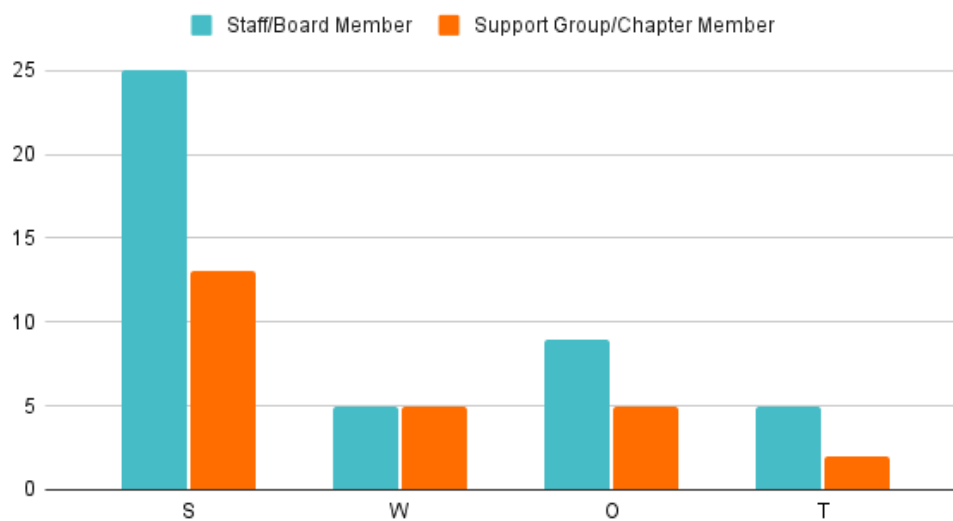




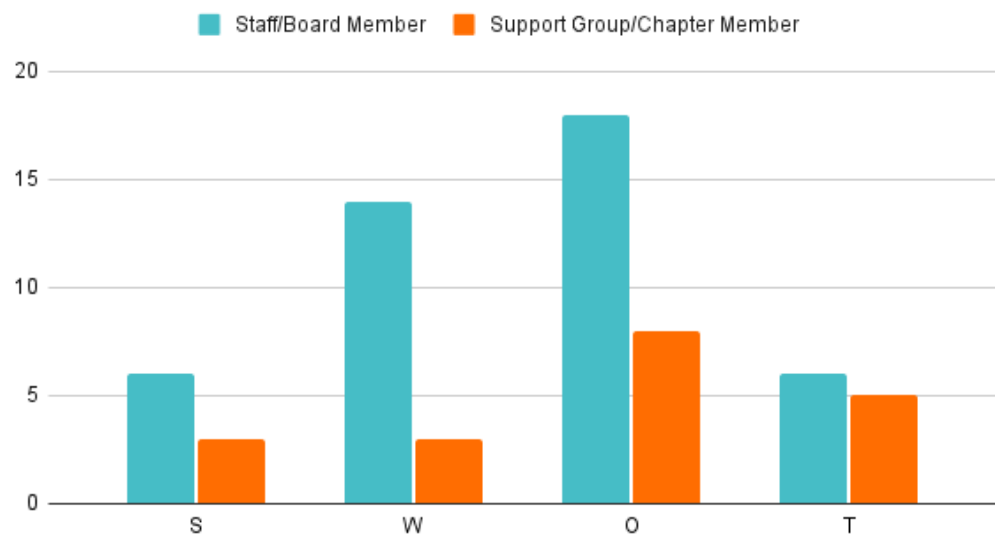
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

Staff Expertise & Energy



Staff Recruitment

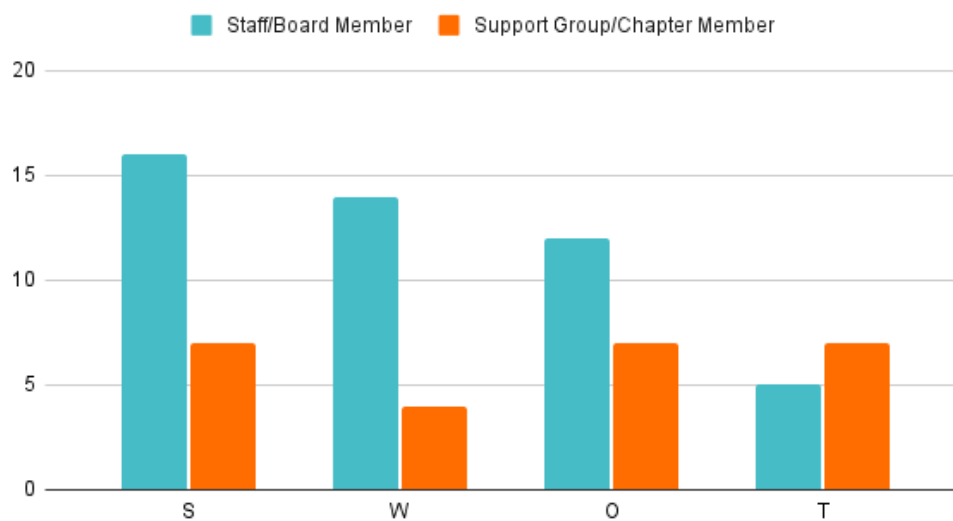




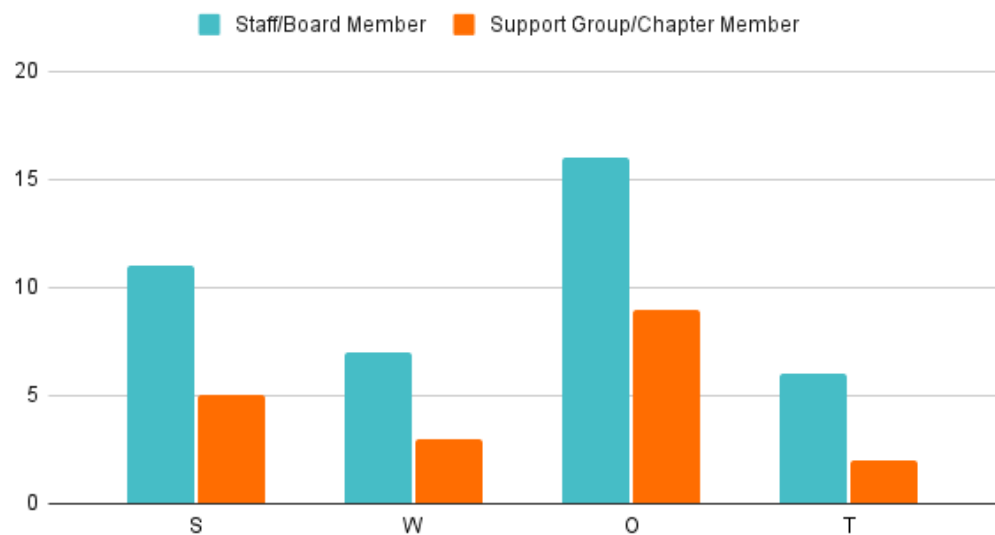
SWOT Analysis

Individual Assessment

State Agency Status



Utilization of Available Resources





Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- If the agency continues to hire new staff with the same work ethic as the remaining staff we will be able to achieve the agency goals and mission along with great public awareness and amazing exhibits and educational programs
- Success starts with a talented, well trained and engaged staff that has the capacity to identify, analyze and address problem areas.
- Our staff keeps this place going. Without our great staff, AHS would be nothing.
- Libraries and Archives services establishes AHS as a "trusted authority" in AZ history. L&A also represents a much needed revenue stream from micrographics. Facility rentals are a strength due to the amount of revenue generated. In the absence of other funding, this is critical revenue needed to support operations. I had a hard time deciding between L&A and Publications. Publications is also a significant strength as it also establishes AHS as a "trusted authority" of AZ history.
- The staff are the ones who implement the vision and use creative strategies to do more with less.
- Library and Archives seem to get the most use from visitors and researchers appear to be eager to visit.
- Library and Archives and Collections have to be the strongest traits to fulfill the mission in the long term
- Excellent people



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- Museum locations are key to connecting to the state's populations - we are a state that is spread out and having accessible venues is key.
- I have seen accreditation as an obvious strength in the industry, but also with the community and internally. It shows that AHS on a whole is heading in the right direction and all the hard work of staff and administration is apparent to the alliance and peers. It should be celebrated in all aspects of AHS media, promotions, marketing and when approaching donors. We should be showing off and celebrating accreditation whenever possible!



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- There is a reason that so many people think highly of AHS, and it is because of the staff. I put L&A as our second greatest strength, but really I would extend that to all of the people we have who interact with the public regularly (from member services, to front desk, to L&A and education and beyond). Our front line staff members are phenomenal - informative, bright, accomodating - and the evidence of that is in how people walk away from those interactions with positive memories of having visited or worked with AHS. I hear positive feedback every single day from the people who contact me for research. The challenge comes from our inability to harness that and turn it into something more than one-off interactions - for example, we could have a mailing list compiled from people who have done research in the L&A that specifically shares collections/archives news, or we could be compiling data on which collections are the most requested so we can harness that to know what people are interested in/what they want programs about/where we should be trying to recruit more materials or which community events we should be attending or partnering with. The data is there, but it's all in my head - we could do more with it to make us a more well-rounded and targeted organization.



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- The passionate and knowledgeable staff at AHS are the institution's greatest strength. In addition, the great archival and collection materials across the state continue to grow and develop, leading to more and more opportunities for programs, exhibits, tours, etc.
- Accreditation allows us status and gives us greater credibility.
- The staff always seems on the ball, fired up, and extremely motivated in my experience.
- Our exhibits are very important in drawing in visitors.
- Staff expertise and energy fuel AHS when other issues arise and cover over areas in need of assistance with their work. Many a project, program, or exhibition would not have come to fruition without this key strength.
- State agency status provides AHS with operating funds, credibility, and connections. Multiple, statewide physical assets allow for good geographic reach and support a desirable OPTIC: Statewide presence in both metro and rural areas, two significant museums/libraries with large and diverse collections, multiple historic properties with local flair and flavor.
- Library and Collections have the most potential for bringing in visitors and providing the content for everything AHS does. Library has potential to do much more with micrographics services, and has been carrying the programming and social media, as well as being the public face for education, along with NHD. But NHD brings no revenue. Social media and programming have the potential to grow our reach exponentially, with the added bonus of bringing in more revenue.



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- For the most part, AHS staff are not only qualified for their roles, but are excited about their work and passionate about making AHS the best that it can be. Each staff member has the potential to bring their own unique ideas and perspectives to AHS.
- However, from my knowledge, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, event rentals have always been the most significant source of revenue for AHS. While they are important for funding AHS operations, these events are not really mission-related - their purpose is to provide money for other mission-related programs and events.
- I think AHS has an opportunity to bridge these two strengths and use the revenue from our event rentals to fund the passions and ideas of staff to develop meaningful and relevant programs which excite not only the public, but the staff as well.
- Status as a state agency potentially sets the Society up for the long term. It's implied that certain standards must be met in maintaining the story of the people of Arizona.
- Passion for the work of AHS on behalf of talented staff and committed board members is seen across the organization. Positive morale is a tremendous organizational resource for AHS.
- The staff is very skilled, competent, and motivated. Library and Archives are very connected to museum visitors, researchers, and broader communities. The collections held are highly utilized and have a very broad reach via use in museum exhibits, direct access by researchers, and use in social media, as well as publications.



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- Many people utilize our collections and archives for many different reasons. We should work to highlight the vast amount of information that has been gathered here over the decades.
- N/A
- Immediately after being hired, one of the first things I noticed was that AZHS actually cares about presenting a more thoughtful history. I feel that representing diverse perspectives is one of the central goals in education.
- I believe that libraries and archives along with collections has been one of the most important part of AHS, because without them we wouldn't be an organization. We are cleaning out these areas to also become more representative of who we are and what we see as important to Arizona's history. I also believe that our exhibitions post covid have brought more people into the museum, as we cover more than just the "wild wild west" history and broaden our audience.
- Through publications and exhibits (virtual programming included) AHS has gained the attention of historical organizations, scholars, and researchers. Members of these teams have been called on by those people for expertise on AZ history and engagement, including presentations, public talks, committee assignments with professional organizations. Some of the "biggest" names in academia have looked to AHS for their expertise.
- I believe that the 2 areas that I have chosen are very rewarding to our ASU students



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- 1. Serving as member of the "stewardship team" perserving and displaying our state's history. 2. Providing "local" community history and education through exhibits, archives, historic sites and community participation is utmost in responding to the AHS mission statement to connect people through the power of our history. Our regional divisions are the heart of our society.
- The strong staff and board have destroyed this state-wide history-recording agency.
- Perceived Stature and credibility of AHS - needs to be widely communicated
- The staffs' knowledge and eagerness to share that knowledge and information.
- AHS has credibility as evidenced by the above - that's an important foundational trait for our organization.
- It's continued outreach/ability to adapt during the COVID pandemic was incredible.
- Sharing Arizona History, people, and experience with the public thru programs, tours, presentations, research and libraries, etc. will increase interest in our past and help explain the present.
- The building and it's surroundings gives allows for a variety of exhibits and community uses.
- In my 42 years of working with the AHS, particularly the Central Arizona affiliation, I do not believe there has been a more professional and dedicated staff.
- Change of exhibits keeps people engaged.
- AHS's collections are the biggest draw for members as well as the public, who are possible future members.



Written Responses

GREATEST STRENGTH : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- The first statewide national accreditation for AHS is a really big deal. Genuine DEI engagement is critical for the continuation of the organization.
- The museums I have visited have exhibits which reflect the diversity of Arizona settlers and citizens and demonstrate the contributions made by various racial, social and economic groups to the growth of the state.
- Public programming is a strength because it involves and includes everyone! It is a way of uniting people to share their strengths and also recognize other people's strengths.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- The ability to accomplish so much with so few resources
- A diverse, informed and engaged Board of Directors ready to act to acknowledge problem areas and act on them.
- There is a lot of passion for the work we do among the staff, but the threat is that they are getting worn out and at risk of leaving. They also lack coaching and mentorship from experienced leaders. Membership is also a strength that is underestimated.
- Community Support. Those individuals who know us and have worked with us are our best cheerleaders.
- Exhibitions, this trait can be adapted to the needs of the present
- There are many people who identify strongly as being Arizonans. They could be utilized to support the connection with history. Representing our diverse population is important.
- AHS has many, one is online programming, it has really taken off and has been done well. The topics and frequency are in tune. Expanding this is paramount to engaging the audiences that are out there. Endless opportunities. The Journal is another example of a huge strength within AHS. The time and efforts are immense, but its never failed to excel and engages the audiences.
- The centrality of education in AHS' activities - to use our Archives, Collections, Oral Histories, and Programming to engage and educate the public about Arizona's history - is a great strength of the organization and makes us unique, but sometimes gets overlooked given the variety of activities we do.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- Education is missing from this list, and education is at the core of our mission (and get very little attention!)
- Its past moving forward into the future. So close ... I think its often overlooked. From 1864 passing thru the Covid Pandemic. We have a lot to offer as we get back on track.
- Some of our properties are very much expressions of our history.
- The age of the institution as a whole is both a strength and a weakness. It garners us attention and potentially has people looking to us first. While the missteps and various administrations of the past linger within our walls as a weakness.
- Longevity - AHS has been around since 1864. Scope - AHS is Arizona's only statewide historical organization. Mission - The AHS mission is good and important and noble!
- The JAH is amazing, but publications could be even more profitable if they could branch out into e-book publishing.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- While I see the perception of AHS collections beginning to improve, I believe our collections and archives holdings have historically, and to a certain extent continue to be, overlooked. Since I started working at AHS in 2019, most of the temporary exhibits have been loaned from other institutions and have ignored most of the actual collection. I admit that a main reason for this prior to my arrival was the unorganized state of collections storage across the state. However, AHS collections storage is in a much better position now. We know what we have in collections and where they are located, and we know that we have important collections that are relevant to both a local, state and national audience. I think there is a lot more we can be doing with our collections and archival assets in every aspect of our operations - from exhibits and education programs to marketing and fundraising.
- None at this time
- [BLANK]
- The services the archives offer are used both internally and externally. It is obvious that there is a both a need and desire to use the expertise we have available.
- N/A
- Education- That is a huge part of our outreach, and the education team does a fantastic job connecting to schools, participating in NHD, field trips, etc.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : STAFF AND BOARD

- I see our exhibit, publications, and library & archives teams (staff) are incredibly talented and put out good products. Problem is, we don't have any marketing to go with it. I know money is an issue, but I don't see why we can't get even a radio commercial. This is where the Board can help (which I feel is a huge waste of resources - they need to be more proactive in advertising and in finding funding.) We can also use these teams to get new members (which I don't think we're doing nearly enough). The sunbirds who come to Arizona is a huge market - we just need to get the word out. We should be contacting Sun City (et al) about membership and the journal. Yet, we aren't.
- We have an outstanding collections vault . It would be nice to show it.
- 20 years of tradition hampered by progress
- The operating budget limits staff recruitment, retainment and AHS ability to compete with other similar agencies/institutions. Limits ability to fulfill basic mission. Limits ability to maintain facilities. Limits ability to market/communicate the agency, goals and its programs. Limits ability to adhere to state and national standards/mandates/trends. However, the budget is often used as a default excuse for every agency ill often resulting in handwringing and inability to act.
- AHS is woefully underfunded, making it difficult for staff to do their work at times.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- Having a sense of belonging to an effort laying a foundation for preservation of our State's history.
- The top tier of AHS has an inability to tell the truth. This STRENGTH allows them to bulldoze their way through any controversy. Is there anyone who believes the governor has ever heard of the Southern Chapter of the Arizona Historical Society? Does anyone believe he has anything to do with picking the members of the AHS State Board? His membership in the Republican Party would cause one to expect him to pick Arizonans with Republican Party affiliation to sit on the AHS Board. Since this doesn't seem to be the case, why would he have any qualms about putting one of the candidates from the Southern Chapter with Democratic Party ties on the State Board? Are the managers of AHS this obtuse, or are they this arrogant?
- na
- The public's interest in seeing, touching and hearing about "their" history both local and state wide.
- Staff and board members are passionate about Arizona and about strengthening AHS.
- It's staff.
- Knowledgeable people of earlier times, life styles, and people in AZ history.
- volunteer recruitment
- can't think of any
- Preserving Arizona's rich cultural history is an important, and I believe, easy sell.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED STRENGTH : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- Too much emphasis on southern Arizona.
- By displaying the collections in exhibits, the public can see first-hand artifacts that can take them back in time through a personal experience.
- The Sosa Carrillo House - most important property AHS has! Also, some of the new partnerships.
- I considered "museum location" because Flagstaff and Yuma are strategically located to attract visitors and serve the local communities. Pioneer Museum has the largest number of visitors when it is open. However, the Museum has been closed for the better part of two years. Tempe and Tucson are hard to find, not on the "beaten path," and have comparatively few visitors.
- I do not have a response to this question.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- Our budget is insufficient to support 4 museums in different locations. This weakness drives a lot of the other weaknesses in the organization. The limited budget restricts our ability recruit and keep experienced, talented staff. The limited budget means we can't afford to update our exhibits - which means they are outdated, lacking interactivity and diverse perspectives. Limited budget means we can't afford to advertise what we do. Limited budget means we don't have the internal resources to execute the great ideas the staff members have.
- It takes funds to run a museum. We are always trying to do more with less and make the most of what we have. Typically money and how the state will let us use that money is the first consideration to programs, exhibits, outreach, equipment, services, etc. It stymies the creativity of the staff.
- We are able to attract highly qualified employees, but are unable to keep them due to our inability to pay them a competitive wage.
- The lack of sufficient funding of the agency endangers all aspect of AHS
- Their limitations are stagnating progress.
- The salaries need to be adjusted to accommodate inflation and experience/expertise
- Having a strong support of donors and of members is key to surviving and thriving. There appears to be little direct contact with donors or members.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- Since I have been on the board which hasn't been long, support groups and chapters have been a topic of disaffection. Most of us could do nothing, it was horrible to hear and only speculate on causes. Some of the damage is irreparable because of how it was handled or not handled. This needs to be watched and built again when timely. Properties/Physical assets has been mismanaged in more ways than one in my opinion. From collections to buildings, we need to reinvest to preserve and maintain for the future. The board has made decisions recently to downsize and close some of the courses that AHS was moving in. These assets were not beneficial to the continuation of AHS and I feel hurting our reputation by not being able to fully care for and assist in the care of them. Letting go and handing over to capable entities is best.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- As I mention in the Opportunities section, the rapport and camaraderie of staff on an individual level is excellent, but it seems to fall apart when working team-to-team or communicating via managers. There is some sort of disconnect - I'm not sure if it's caused by physical distance or the mentality that "not everyone needs to know everything" - but it really throws staff for a loop at times and leaves us scrambling to implement things on the ground level. Starting up those regular all staff meetings again will help (maybe not at 3pm on a Friday though - my brain is dead by then!) We haven't been able to find the balance between burning everyone out with too many meetings/task forces/committees and keeping everyone informed on a regular basis and it causes a lot of unnecessary stress. I get the sense that ideas are discussed to death on a management level so that by the time they actually get implemented or put into action, even simple changes, they have been made way more complicated than they ever needed to be. On the recruitment note - it's easy for staff to find other job opportunities because the pay here is so low. We have major "brain drain" and lose a lot of institutional knowledge every time someone leaves.
- While it has noticeably improved in the recent months, there is still a level of confusion when it comes to communication between departments and even within departments. This confusion limits staff's opportunity to collaborate on projects and generate new ideas.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- While there are many diverse perspectives in AHS, the board does feel a bit one sided in some aspects.
- Our facilities needs exceed our operating budget.
- Internal communication and cohesion has continued to improve as I have been here but it still represents our greatest weakness. A shared vision and an understanding of how we move this institution forward together may be the only way we can ensure its future. We need to continue our progress to build input from various directions on all our endeavours.
- AHS is the lowest funded state agency in Arizona. AHS is among the lowest funded state historical organization in the country. Staff energy is low and often negatively charged. AHS has inexperienced and low-experience team members, which is not a weakness until it is paired with no solid mentor program to help them learn and advance and increased compensation to keep them on board. AHS salaries were not competitive before the Great Resignation, but now they dismal.
- It comes down to funding. Both of these selects reflect the lack of funding AHS has. Staff is over worked and grossly underpaid, and cannot keep good people because of this. Where is the support from our support groups? Where is the board fundraising? What legislative presence do we have? Where is the support from the State of Arizona for what we do and what we preserve? Where are the state funds to pay the employees better?



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- While AHS is a nonprofit organization, and its purpose is not to solely make money, money is required for everything we do or would like to do. And the money available to staff limits the scope of what we can accomplish and make available to the public. I am not involved in any of the financial discussions within AHS, but from what I have seen, AHS relies mostly on revenue from event rentals and smaller donations through programs and memberships, with the occasional grant approval. Since starting here in mid-2019, large donations that I have heard about have been rare, although I admit that I may just not have heard about them. Regardless, I think it is a weakness of AHS to have no effective development department. There is no sole staff member responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with large scale donors.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- I think there are several other aspects that tie into this as well. AHS is competing with a lot of other large and prestigious institutions for these large scale donations - The Heard Museum, the Phoenix Art Museum, the MIM and the Scottsdale Museum of the West. These examples are from the Phoenix Valley alone. People can only give to so many institutions and AHS needs to give them a reason to donate to it. This connects to another important aspect of this issue - AHS seems to have been stagnating for some time. Granted the COVID-19 pandemic put a lot of projects on hold and have delayed programs and exhibits. However, most of the permanent exhibits - particularly at AHM and AHC - have not been updated in over 30 years. The permanent exhibits in Tempe have not really changed since the museum first opened in the 1990s. And while AHS was able to shift its focus to consistent virtual programming during the worst part of the pandemic, programming has since become more sporadic now that things have, for the most part, returned to normal. Some of these content updates stem from lack of staff, resources and time, however, I think this type of stagnation can be very dangerous and difficult to escape from. Donors want to see active changes happening at the places they give their money to, but those changes are difficult to make without appropriate funding. Thus, a seemingly endless cycle of needing money to make the changes to convince people to donate more money.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- One area of change that I think would help in this regard is to increase AHS' representation of diverse perspectives. I do think AHS has recently been making positive changes in its content, particularly through the COVID-19 Memorial Event and Exhibit, the Migrant Quilts Exhibit and the upcoming Juneteenth Celebration Event. However, it takes a long time and a lot of effort to build connections with communities that have been ignored for so long. And while we have developed temporary exhibits and programs that represent diverse communities, I do not believe that is enough. Currently, there is hardly any representation of diverse communities in our permanent exhibits, and that which exists is very outdated. Until these communities are allowed into our permanent exhibits - what we present as THE history of Arizona - and are represented consistently in our programming, I fear that our efforts will feel like pandering and an afterthought.
- Community Outreach: Current programs & activities focus on areas around AHS properties. I think a general development of history appreciation is needed throughout the state. There may be some non-AHS properties that could help with elevating appreciation of the history in all communities.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- In my view, the AHS operating budget is our greatest weakness. Employee morale, perhaps our greatest resource, can be threatened when employees are stretched too thin. Lower salaries open doors for our talented staff to leave AHS for higher paying positions. Expectations must also align with staffing levels. AHS should take every opportunity to lobby for an increase in appropriated funds. Financial management was also listed as a weakness in that, in my view, there needs to be more transparency with management as to the financial condition of AHS and within team budgets. I have been told that we cannot afford certain purchases, but I have never seen the available budget. In order to manage properly, I need to understand what resources are or are not available to us.
- AHS claims to be in support of promoting diverse perspectives, yet our actions do not reflect that value. Our exhibits still lean heavily on the "old west" tropes, and when more diverse perspectives are highlighted, these tend to be presented very flatly without engagement for fear of making some people angry. Exhibits in general are also a weakness, they are very text heavy, hard to read, and inaccessible due to being only in English (we are the *only* museum in Tucson that does not have bilingual exhibit text). The exhibits also are very dated.
- We need to be working more closely with the community groups in our areas to highlight their history. Not just in rotating exhibit spaces and special programs, but while updating permanent exhibits as well.
- N/A



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- We need to expand our collections, and it's hard to do that when we don't communicate what we need/want for our collections/library and archives. We also need to gather more from minority and religious groups. As far as our presence and support from the legislature, it's almost like we don't exist between our funding and lack of recognition.
- The two weaknesses are tied together. We keep getting highly-qualified and good staff, but the low pay and lack of support (and in some cases hostility from certain Executive Leadership members) drive people away. We are constantly understaffed and overworked. We end up training people all the time (which is so time consuming).
- The exhibits in gallery need a lot of work. Somethings have not worked in years. It would be nice for someone not wait until the last minute to communicate what is needed.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- 1. Without direction and support, area boards find it challenging to understand our tasks and complete them. Coordination between state and chapter boards is important to maximize our productivity, teamwork and growth. It needs to be recognized that each board will have different issues and independant workstyles, but we all need AHS support, trust, loyalty, and communication. 2. Further work needs to be done to find a way to assist local museums in their collections and care management. Our local stories should not be consigned to the warehouse, but shared with the public in the most respectful and professional manner within the relative community.
- If the people's choices to govern the state were involved with AHS then there wouldn't be such widespread ethical corruption within its governance. The academic stifling of free speech is now the norm at AHS, which is lauded in some circles within both political factions that run this state and this nation.
- Properties are in disrepair and do not project the value of AHS / minimal effort has been invested in creating relationship with the legislature to garner support.
- Leaving money on the table to support programs is not good fiscal management.
- One goes with the other - lack of financial resources limits our ability to host engaging and changing exhibits.
- I don't believe AHS has been given a sufficient operating budget by the State of Arizona.



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- We need more money and more staff. We have strong financial support from some people, but we need more people and organizations donating in order to have the finances needed to expand our reach.
- The journal is heavily academic. It would be great to see something more readable for the average member.
- Being a state agency means we can have money swept from our budget and we are at the mercy of legislators who usually don't have any experience with the museum.
- Many, many people in Arizona, particularly in the greater Phoenix area, have never heard of the AHS and its Central Arizona Museum, the Arizona Heritage Center at Papago Park.
- Too much is centered in southern AZ
- Board of Directors should represent ALL ranges of politics and ideologies, and not be chosen to push a common agenda.
- BOD comes across as abrupt and mean in verbal and written communications in the past. Salaries are awful and do not take into account the education and expertise of staff
- Seems most the monies are redirected to Phoenix, need more support in Northern AZ
- Community groups with conflicts of interest who only look out for themselves and never the greater good have been ripping AHS apart for decades. DEI work is notable, but there's a long way to go!



Written Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESS : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- communication with communities
- AHS staff has not done an adequate job of lobbying for funding at the legislature, particularly in the area of salaries and properties maintenance. In comparison, AZ State Parks & Trails has been able to secure adequate funding to hire and retain staff and make improvements to its properties.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- We are doing better with intergovernmental interaction but we are not where we need to be
- Overcoming internal and external agency perceptions. Relevancy, flexibility, insularity - all impact our ability to see and act on potential, take risks, or understand or accept the causes and degree of the existential issues we face. Little understanding of where we fit vis a vis other state agencies or our standing vis a vis other cultural organizations.
- Lack of mentors. With such a young staff, they really need mentors and coaching to help them grow in their careers. The lack of collaboration across functional areas is also a major weakness. We need to find ways to break down barriers and invite all stakeholders to the table to brainstorm new ideas, find solutions.
- Headcount. To effectively run state-wide museums at multiple location takes people.
- More cross department conversations to better understand the others problems and long term plans.
- Your lack of empathy to your workers and their skill sets is a waste of their time.
- Legislation should be done to accommodate the needs of the staff and museums
- The AHS staff is stretched very thin. Connecting to donors, members, and residents is very important. A volunteer base could be used to do outreach, plus more social media.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- Funding from all sources could be improved upon. Donors, membership, budget, income, fees and marketing. More can always be done, but when revenue and funding is stretched its hard. I feel in the recent past, its hard with the lack of staff and resources to focus on these areas and other desired areas.
- The inaccessibility of our physical buildings and materials is a huge detriment to our reach. We don't offer any way to access our materials that isn't standing there and reading text-heavy panels - no audio assistance, no panels or materials in Spanish, no touchable exhibits. Our museums are eerily quiet, no background music or videos playing, to the point that the silence is quite overwhelming for people with sensory issues. I've heard personally from autistic friends that our museums are "too much" and unwelcoming to people with disabilities.
- Representation of Diverse Perspectives is directly tied to both Community Outreach and AHS' Reach and the public's Awareness. By expanding who we talk about in our programs, tours, publications, and exhibits, we attract new audiences. While we have been building these bridges and widening the stories we tell, it takes time and continued attention to maintain these relationships. However, due to turnover and the size of the staff, these connections are often lost.
- Our image and relationship to our members
- I feel we need to connect more with the younger populace on more levels.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- Communication. We rarely know what is going on within the organization, and right now that has a lot to do with the lack of staff. Everyone is overworked and burned out. We have more meetings than action, and no staff to carry out the actions even when decided upon.
- AHS' public programming seems limited. Education should be the backbone of everything we do. Once again, this problem boils down to limited staff, resources and time. But with the Education team focused on NHD, the quantity and quality of education programs (for children and adults, and virtual and in-person) suffer, as education programs take a lot of thought and preparation to develop and run. However, I believe that with the creation of our education collection, and with coordination between the Education Department and the Library, Archives and Collections Department, AHS can develop strong and impactful informal education programs for any age that are relevant to our exhibits and people's lives.
- None
- Another weakness/opportunity is in paid public programming. It is unclear to me as to which AHS team(s) is ultimately responsible for adult public programming. Perhaps it is a shared responsibility. I have found that if you offer a program, tickets will sell! Recurring programs/tours are particularly beneficial in that they are simpler to advertise and manage. In many cases, it makes sense to blend in-person programming with virtual programming to expand audience reach. Adult programming is practically a guaranteed revenue stream for AHS. If we offer it, they will come (and pay for it).



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : STAFF AND BOARD

- Updates need to be made on permanent exhibits. Both permanent and new exhibits lack accessibility for the physically disabled. While the information is solid, it can be too dense and over stimulating for children and those with disabilities or are on the spectrum.
- N/A
- Taking part in other coworkers jobs. I believe that helping each other is very important, but it needs to not be expected, and people need to do the work that is in their job description instead of passing it along.
- Lack of outreach. We concentrate more on retaining members (sometimes hostile members who only like to complain that AHS is too "new." and not reaching out to new member pools. We need to be doing outreach to groups (Elk Clubs, VFW, American Legion, Kiwanis, Chicano por La Causa, etc. I can't remember the last outreach we did. No advertising and no outreach events equals lack of membership with equals lack of funds. We also need to get the Board on board to advertise and help raise money. I'm not sure what exactly they do.
- It would be nice to see exhibits promoted better not just on computer social media.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- Its journal of record has become one big critical theory laboratory of social grievances. The real history of Arizona has been abandoned for the academic anarchy-inspired movements of the intellectually bankrupt sophists of the past three centuries. The Democratic Party is never mentioned in a bad light within the Journal of Arizona History, even when its central role in slavery, eugenics, Japanese internment, abortion, euthanasia, pornography, drug use, rape, sex trafficking, genital mutilation, human chimera experimentation, mass shooting sprees, hatred--of women, minorities, whites, and the religious (mainly Jews and Christians)--and infanticide is plain to see. Only America's other national party can be disparaged within its pages. The recent issue that trashed Barry Goldwater is just one of many examples. AHS is stuck. It has transformed itself from a fact gathering organization into an academic institution, to the detriment of the citizenry of Arizona, so it must now tow the intellectual line, but by doing so it has abandoned truth and abandoned the truth of the past. AHS is on a trajectory to self-emmolation. Since truth can no longer be tolerated at AHS, the people and our posterity lose no matter how hard AHS tries to remain relevant.
- na
- I don't understand this question. I have listed ten areas that I perceive as weaknesses. If there are more that are not yet identified, we are all going to have to abandon ship. I grant that staffing is a huge issue but there are volunteers that have been their help is not needed and that only AHS staff can do the job.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED WEAKNESS : CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- We need more people with an interest in AZ history and pioneer life.
- Ability to include community and work in coordination of support groups
- The lack of adequate appropriations from the state legislature and governor's office.
- Governor appointed state board. No real attachment to local, rural sites.
- #1: See above. #2. Communication MUST be frequent and accurate with the other AHS chapters. #3: Journals should be completely free of partisan politics, "woke" nonsense, political correctness, and should instead return once again to presenting Arizona HISTORY. #4: Exhibits should be free from any partisan politics and political correctness, and should be communicated with and agreed upon by local AHS chapters before displayed.
- Need to get better at selling the jobs in N. AZ, figure out better pay
- The collection, particularly the objects. There's a lot of junk. People just drop stuff off on the way to the dump. AHS has long had a hoarding problem. Get rid of that stuff!
- Collections care and management, and exhibits-With proper training staff at the local museums should have access to collections held on the property. Moving collections to the Tempe warehouse does not facilitate optimum use of artifacts. Local staff should be allowed to create exhibits to tell the local story. For instance, Flagstaff staff created two award winning exhibits, but the most recent installation was done by Tempe staff, largely rewriting the submitted research provided by local museum staff.



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- Guest want to see, touch and experience an exhibit, they become your best advertisement for visiting our museums. If they are excited and love what they see, they photograph and share on their social media
- Strengths and weaknesses are not static. I see almost every strength and weakness as an opportunity to improve and in fact, are improving overall but at different rates.
- AHS is barely known around the state. To be successful, we need to change that.
- With insufficient funding from the state, we must develop a strong donor base to support the organization. For us, this is completely untapped, and represents a major opportunity. Community partners can also help to bridge that gap - both for fundraising and for helping us build exhibits and programs that represent ALL voices.
- I think being more present in the communities that surround our museums will garner more support (financial and otherwise). The exhibits we produce is a product of those engagements. It is the venue for people to see themselves.
- Arizona is a diverse state. That diversity has never truly been expressed in any of our museums. AHS should be working harder to attract a more diverse audience, create exhibits that feature the history of diverse communities and focus on the collection of 2D and 3D objects that represent diverse communities.
- exhibits can fuel community interest in AHS as a whole the best and can be a good foundation to relay the mission and other aspect of AHS
- Exhibits need to work to tell a more diverse story



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- Community outreach is a strong opportunity to build a more solid foundation for connection and potential membership and donor base. I am concerned that more people are not aware of the Arizona Historical Society, or feel that it is only for a particular segment of the Arizona population.
- Outreach can open many doors and partnerships, the opportunities are huge. I feel our new Director has this in mind and look forward to seeing the possibilities explored. Although I am not "in the know" because of location and lack of being 100% in touch. I believe all resources are not being utilized 100%, some areas were left alone, didn't bother with, or wasn't an area of interest. The chapters and their boards are one example. Staff as a resource lacked because of funding issues, staff enrichment and growth are opportunities missed, but can be regained.
- AHS staff is excellent. The rapport amongst our teams on an individual basis is outstanding, but seems to fall apart on a managerial/team-to-team level. Each staff member is passionate about something, they just need to be given the opportunity to jump head first into whatever that is and engage with the community directly, which is difficult when we're all doing multiple jobs and have limited time. Bringing back volunteers will help, at least with some of that. In terms of our locations, we are right there in the middle of the main cities of Arizona and have access to all the local events and groups we could interact and work with more closely. The opportunity is there for us to be present at so every event possible, showing people face to face what we offer and drawing them in to make us a more well-representative organization to our communities.



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- There are a growing number of opportunities to connect with important people and communities to collect and tell their stories. Recent projects like the Migrant Quilt exhibit and the Okemah Community public program are examples of the potential new connections AHS can build and new audiences we can attract.
- AHS has many resources at its disposal ... it is still learning how to develop them and use them to their greatest advantage.
- In my experience, most Arizonans don't even know what AHS is. We have a huge state, and every citizen is not only a potential member, but a member of the public who's tax dollars pay for what we do. We could really be representing more diverse communities (race, gender, sexual orientation, income levels, etc.) better to draw more interest from disengaged communities.
- Securing higher budget allocations through the Legislature would help.
- All locations are surrounded by communities interested in our mission but that are not necessarily associated with us or have yet to discover us. There are so many new and old Arizonans that I believe could be advocates for the vision we currently hold. Also the collections we house are underused in various ways and it is in the sharing and preservation of them that we might find opportunities that we had not imagined.
- Paid programs and rentals have the potential to bring in significant revenue. Public programs--in person and online--have the potential to engage various and diverse audiences and allow for two-way connections.



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- We have amazing employees who want to create more diverse collections and a place within the community that all community members can come to and see themselves in our museums. We need to focus more on the community outreach.
- AHS can improve its image and the relevance of its materials by taking advantages of community outreach opportunities. I think we are moving in the right direction after the COVID Memorial Event and Exhibit, the Okemah Program and the upcoming Juneteenth Celebration, and should continue to develop these types of community-based events. Several staff members have incredible community connections that can serve as gateways to reach new audiences. These connections open AHS up to more visibility and visitation, monetary donations and could even bring collecting opportunities to fill gaps in our current holdings that can be used to update current exhibits.
- However, even with our current collections holdings, current permanent exhibits can, and should, be updated. Not only is the information out of date, but the way we present the information is outdated and now irrelevant to the present. This deters repeat visitors and does not engage with current audiences who are looking for relevance in their lives now. If the exhibit was developed for audiences 30 years ago, it does not do this. After years of cleaning up collections, there are opportunities to improve our permanent exhibits now, and replace the "prop" objects in our exhibits with objects with meaningful stories attached to them. This way, our exhibits will relate to a modern and diverse audience.



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- There is opportunity to show Arizonans are more alike than they are different - separating the myths from reality.
- I see opportunities for AHS everywhere. 1) Utilization of available resources: An example is in exhibition creation and the utilization of staff talent. Exhibitions should be viewed and designed from multiple perspectives - research, graphic design/marketing, collections, education, guest experience, facilities. Bringing our best exhibitions to the public involves tapping in to all talent and resources. 2) Nurturing positive, productive support group relationships also represents opportunity. We need more people in the AHS corner!
- Staff expertise and energy is a huge opportunity if it were leveraged better. Currently, it feels to me that due to lack of communication, and disconnection between departments staff energy and expertise is fairly hamstrung. With better communication, and trust from leadership of on-the-ground staff, we could have better opportunities to use that expertise and energy to advance AHS. Treating AHS as only a jumping-off point for staff looking to move up in the field, rather than creating opportunities for staff to advance careers *within* AHS is truly wasting the expertise and energy of existing staff, and placing a high burden on any staff members who withstand the high turnover rate.



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- Marketing has been much better the past couple of years, but I feel we could do more. While we do well during the winter season with visitors, we are failing to reach locals. Many have been here for decades and are just coming in. Others remember coming when they were kids. While it's good to bring in winter visitors, we are missing out on the support of locals.
- N/A
- I think we have one of the strongest boards we've had, and I think they have a great opportunity to help us grow as well as help us raise money for AHS. With staff recruitment, we have so many open positions that could be filled with very qualified people. I think we keep looking until we find someone who will help us grow, and not to just fill a position when we are in great need.
- Need to use our expert staff to make decisions and not the Board or "AHS members" or even executive leadership outside Exhibits to make decisions about programs and exhibits. Let the historians (hence Arizona Historical Society) plan, design, and create the exhibits. Marketing and EL should take their cue from the exhibits team. They are the heart of the museum.
- We have an opportunity to have events for the community



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- 1. Bringing the entire state together with a common goal; inclusive communication will only strengthen the society. 2. I am not aware that we have a strong lobbying team. A marketing plan to educate and involve the legislature should definitely be considered.
- Big Tech and the American university system are the impetus for suppression of freedom of speech and suppression of the facts of the past. AHS could sell off all properties and invest all their sales into Big Tech. Reach out to Big Tech as donors and cut out the little gal and guy--the average Arizonan lover of history.
- so much opportunity exists with both. Minimal effort has been invested at this time.
- Marketing not branding.
- Potential reach across the state of Arizona through our facilities and also through our certified museums/historical organization programs is huge if we can figure how to tap all those opportunities and relationships.
- The Arizona Heritage Center is a beautiful center and should capitalize on it's Museum and hosting of events.
- The more support groups and community involvement the more likely there will be sustainable support for AZ history.
- Need to work on engagement at all levels and state wide.
- We have come along way in improving the use of the building by individual and community groups, thanks to Debbie Mckinion. But this also presents a great opportunity for increased marketing and public relations



Written Responses

GREATEST OPPORTUNITY: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- AHS needs to lobby the state for more money.
- Archives, papers, photographs, and books are what ties the present to the past. And that is what AHS is supposed to be about: Arizona history. The collection of artifacts, their preservation, and their display as exhibits should be a priority of AHS.
- AZ budget should allow for increases in staff salaries. Be respectful of the dedication that friends group bring to their museums. We can enough to volunteer to promote history
- Tell the "story" of N. AZ
- The expertise of some staff members is incredible - and overlooked. The members seem to be really engaged. What more can be done to get them to contribute?
- affiliation with other museum organizations
- Full support of local chapter boards and support groups is essential to promotion of local museums, but AHS as a goal. The Northern Chapter Board has not met since before Covid shutdown and has no communication from AHS Administration. AHS administration and State Board need to make more of an effort to communicate with these entities.
- Local staff is great and truly works hard to promote the museum.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- Exhibits
- One of the most difficult issues is overcoming our own history in what we collect, how we tell our stories and who we engage as cultural partners. The status quo is not sustainable.
- Our collections are a strength, threat and an opportunity. The opportunity is maximizing the value of the collections that we have - through programs, workshops and exhibits.
- Education. Educating the public on what we have, how to use it, why history is important.
- Trying to reach other target audiences by being more present in the local universities
- We are coming out of a 2 year global pandemic where so many areas and individuals were restricted. People are looking for ways to connect that are meaningful. AHS could provide a venue to connect in a meaningful way.
- Not overlooked now, but seems AHS is on the right track with Friends, huge opportunity, and can be expanded once on track. Marketing has not reached its potential, there have been attempts. I feel it has been marginal and only random.
- The many, many opportunities that develop when Archives/Collections and Education/Exhibits/Publications and Guest Experience collaborate seems overlooked at times. By all working together, we can use our historic materials in new ways that excite the public. Plus, new exhibits and programs are a chance to fill the gaps that Library/Archives/Collections find in their holdings.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- None at this time
- A higher standard for our facility grounds, curb appeal.
- Our membership team is excellent and has great ideas for bringing wonderful content to the members.
- I think there are a lot of resources that are overlooked by staff at AHS. This goes beyond AHS's collections and archival holdings. Staff members in departments uninvolved in content creation often have unique perspectives and ideas that could be integrated into programs, events, and exhibits. I think it could be helpful to consult them and consider their thoughts either during the initial project planning phase, or during development not only to ensure that all staff feel like their voice is heard, but also because they represent our audience. The staff that create our content become experts in the content and can forget that their audience does not know as much as they do about the subject, resulting in content that is either filled with complicated jargon or is something that the public simply isn't interested in.
- AHS can also take advantage of resources beyond its walls. AHC sits on the edge of Papago Park. There are likely opportunities for events, programs and relationships using this resource. The Pioneer Museum is located adjacent to a school. I see opportunities for relationships to be developed there as well. Our available resources go beyond what we might initially consider.
- None



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY: STAFF AND BOARD

- In my view, facility rentals should be revisioned as opportunities for AHS to attract large audiences into our museums. Hosting an event at a historic site or museum offers a uniquely rich experience, much different from other venues. Facility rentals also often attract local residents, who normally would not come for a traditional museum visit. To be successful in this area, AHS needs to commit start-to-finish. If AHS commits to host weddings/events, then client renters deserve our best support and spirit of hospitality - before, during and after their event. This takes dedicated staff, coordination, and cooperation. Facility rentals have the potential to draw-in large audiences and high revenue for AHS if done correctly.
- We need to work to make membership more desirable. We have done well selling memberships this year, however there needs to be more of some sort of incentive. Going back to marketing to locals, what can we offer them that would entice them to be members?
- N/A
- Permanent exhibitons. I think if we were to update these over time through grants, exhibition money, donations, etc., we could truly get more people in the doors as well as reach out into the community more.
- Trusting staff - not leadership - to know what people want and are experts at.
- We need to take advantage of our surroundings



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- The importance of support for our affiliated museums.
- Does AHS have lobbyists in our nation's Capitol? The society's inability to tell the truth would fit nicely into the Washington, D.C. scene.
- na
- Same
- We need more interest and involvement of youth because they will be the future leaders in AZ history.
- Public relations and marketing.
- AHS also needs to create more awareness of itself in all of Arizona, and for me that would be particularly in the greater Valley of the Sun area.
- Many rare and important artifacts never see the light of day and end up in storage. Artifacts are what the public want to see, and preventing this is a missed opportunity.
- Don't use abbreviations without explanation. I have no idea what DEI stands for
- More functions to get the local community involved. Many new people/families in N. AZ and would be good to tell our story so they know local history
- Exhibits - some of the new ones are great and should travel around the state.
- The last I knew many positions on the Board of Directors remain vacant. Therefore, adequate state-wide representation is absent. It is also important for board members to visit each of the sites at least yearly to see and assess what has been done and what needs are not met.
- Nothing at this point.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Obsolesce of facilities, infrastructure and and outdated equipment will not allow us to improve our audience engagement, facility use, updating of exhibits or storage of collections and archives as needed/necessary
- I did not see any category that measures up to "the greatest" threat. All categories represent an opportunity and a preparedness to act commensurate to the perceived threat.
- Two words: Sunset audit
- Again, our budget is insufficient to support this organization - ability to recruit and retain experienced, professional staff; build engaging, interactive, accessible and diverse exhibits, delivering high quality programs on a consistent basis for a variety of audiences. The threat is becoming so irrelevant that the legislature shuts us down.
- It is very hard on an organization to constantly have multiple open positions and continually be in "training" mode. Our lack of ability to pay competitive wages that will attract mid-career professionals to help promote and elevate the agency hinders our success.
- The Arizona State Government does not support AHS. This is made clear by the operating budget they set for us. They do not seem to care that we are underfunded and understaffed.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- without the proper amount of money allocated to collection care, exhibits , library care and staff retention and recruitment services cannot be provided in a way that helps to guaranty the long term survival of AHS and its service to the public. The composition of the board can be a threat since it changes with every election cycle and the interests of any elected governor. I think this ever changing political composition and acting of the board could also influence the contribution willingness of potential donors.
- If the operating budget continues to be very restrictive, this would lead to restricted activities where AHS continues to struggle to survive. AHS has been successful in reducing the burn rate during the pandemic, but it appears the staff are burned out from taking on additional duties from those positions that are vacant.
- Not investing money and time in staff can be detrimental to the agency. Mentoring, building relationships and committing effort to building a team will bring loyal, capable and engaged staff.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- The people we have on staff who take care of the collections are excellent. The budget we have to take care of things, on the other hand, is not. I put our state agency status as a threat because AHS has been forced to downsize again and again over the years to the point that I believe our AHS collections (both museum and L&A) are more than can be taken care of by the small staff we have. I feel an ethical challenge every time we accept a new collection knowing that it will not go anywhere or be accessible to researchers in any kind of a useful way - it will get added to the backlog of the million other collections we have that we don't have the staff to take care of. Every archive has a backlog, of course, but the fact that AHS used to have a staff of 70+ and now has less than half of that means that we can't take care of things like we used to, or be as involved in community events as we should. Our name/mission as "the" historical society of Arizona is completely at odds with how few resources we have, so how can we ever be representative of "all" of Arizona? No number of grants will help with that if we don't have the resources to implement them or see projects to completion.
- The locations and departments often feel siloed from one another. This limits the opportunities to collaborate and to utilize the resources we have, while threatening to weigh down AHS as we try to achieve greater goals. In addition, a small staff means we lose opportunities to connect with new partners and grow our archives, collections, exhibits, and programs.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Staff burnout (underpayment, under-appreciation, too much work) is a BIG problem and I think is a direct contribution to why so many staff have left in the last 8 months.
- It is vital to raise our visibility and status in the support and awareness of the Legislature. They are important in our survival and growth.
- I only chose these threats because they are "required fields." I guess the biggest threat though, would be the fact that we are at the mercy of politicians who often make radical changes; thinking about their political careers more than the constituents they represent.
- Our teamwork could be better.
- I chose representation of diverse perspectives as a threat because if we do not aggressive try to find ways to introduce or make aware to the public the diversity that is Arizona History, we will loose new audiences. We cannot maintain, we must progress to achieve our sustainability. On this is staff recruitment, which suffers under our lack of funding and potentially our image.
- The state does not provide enough support or resources for our agency. We can't recruit good people with the wages offered. We can't keep good people with the wages offered.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Cross departmental communication has always been a weakness at AHS. While it is starting to improve, departments mainly remain siloed and some are very protective, and even secretive, about their plans and projects. While I think this in part has to do with the wide geographic spread of AHS, it also stems from competing goals between departments and animosity toward other staff members. In the past, miscommunication, and in some cases, refusal to communicate has nearly derailed important projects which could easily damage AHS' relationships and reputation. While I see this area beginning to improve, it is a statewide issue, and if staff continue to refuse to work together, the quality of work we present will suffer, preventing any growth in visitation, membership, donations and mission fulfillment.
- Our mission statement is why we exist as an organization. AHS's mission is to connect people through the power of Arizona's history. But how are we fulfilling our mission? Visitation to AHS (while improving) is still low. Attendance and quantity of our virtual programs has decreased since the program has launched in 2020. Granted, the trajectory of the pandemic has influenced this, but many visitors still say that they did not know that AHC existed, even though they have lived nearby their whole lives. AHS needs to increase awareness of our sites and give people a reason to come back. Education should be the backbone of our mission yet the permanent exhibits are rarely updated. Beyond the Ask the Author series, there are currently few education programs outside of National History Day. And even though many of our staff are overburdened with other projects, if we fail to offer consistent informal education, we fail to connect people through the power of our history.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Both can have significant impact on funding which is critical to the society's mission.
- It's easy to see why Operating Budget is considered a threat. Opportunities for AHS are unlimited, except by budget/financial resources to allow them to happen. Hard decisions may need to be made in the future as operations are prioritized. Properties/Physical Assets was listed as a threat due to limited space for collection storage and, as I understand it, the looming status of the AHM building.
- Internal communication and cohesion is the single greatest threat to AHS. There is sever lack of communication between departments, and between managers and their staff members. This makes it extremely difficult for front-facing staff to present a unified front to members of the public, or answer even basic questions about upcoming exhibits, events, etc. It also makes it difficult to retain staff.
- Another major threat is collections care and management of both 2D and 3D collections. The backlog of unprocessed archival collections is large, with many of these collections still in accessible to the public after being here for over 5 years. The Archives staff does not have the time to adequately process materials, yet we still keep accepting collections. In some ways unprocessed archival collections are no better in AHS's care than they would have been in someone's basement. The passive nature of our collecting also contributes to this problem, as well as other problems related DEI. Engaging with communities, and actively seeking collections would result in better materials that support more diverse voices.
- I have no idea who they even are, yet they make decisions that greatly effect all of us.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- HOURS OF OPERATIONS
- I think we do a great job at social media, but I fear we miss a large part of our communities by not reaching out in different ways or making connections to different groups. As far as staff expertise and energy, our staff is beyond knowledgeable and soar past expectations. I think being asked to do tasks that belong to other staff, not having notice when asked to do something that needs to be done quickly, not having clear communictions from other staff, etc., has lead to some burnout and resons why staff have left.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- The turnover of qualified, good staff. With low pay and hostile leadership, there is no continuity or loyalty. It is a workers' market and we have seen this past 2 years, people will leave and getting qualified people to replace them is not easy nor good. This is especially true for marketing and historians. People are unwilling to work for low wages and even more unwilling to put up with hostile Executive Leadership. (This is not to say all EL are bad, but there are a few who have driven away good employees - ie Shannon Fleischman, Eric Gonzales, Michael Goodwin, Robin Abbot, Marilyn Murphy, etc.) If we don't pay well then we need to have the leadership treat us with respect. We end up complete staff turnovers, hire people, train them, and in a year they leave. We're basically a training ground. This is especially dangerous with the historians on staff. If we lose qualified historians (ones who have degrees, especially advanced degrees) you will not be able to replace them with the pay we offer. We will end up reverting to the people we had 15 years ago. "History Buffs" who are not trained and design racial and gender insensitive materials. That is asking for our accreditation to be revoked or not renewed, not to mention sunset review. I feel that some in EL look at the historians not as professionals but as low-level staff members. Marketing has more of a say in the exhibits than the historians. That's not how it should be. The historians are the experts. They have the training to create the exhibits (and journal articles) and need to be compensated for it and most of all, respected as professionals.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Not only can a location be good ,but it can also be a threat .When there is a large number of homeless in the area they can make the location look run down with all the trash that is left behind. They can also steel and break things.



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- 1. With decreasing governmental support we need a strong donor solicitation. 2. Increasing costs to maintenance of our physical properties.
- The membership probably still includes some old-time holdouts yearning for a good story and an honest organization.
- We need the support of our legislature for funding of our organization. current funding is not enough to be a vibrant, dynamic asset to the state. / The tension and competition amongst the support groups hurts AHS. We need a common cohesive plan that leverages the attributes and contributions of all the groups - by "playing together."
- If State funding is removed, reduced or redirected, the AHS will fold.
- Lacking enough staff to develop a robust & engaging mix of public programming threatens our long term viability - I think we are very strong on the academic side of history, as evidenced by the Journal, but I'm concerned that we lack the "popular history" programs that appeal to wider ranges of people and represent the potential doorway into everything AHS does. State agency status can be both a strength (legitimacy) but the contentious relationship with the legislature, and the fact that we have to fight for state funding with things like law enforcement, etc. makes it difficult.
- Not being able to offer competitive salaries for recruitment.
- We must reach a wider audience to continue to grow and collect.
- Being able to retain excellent staff and recruit to open positions.
- Historically--meddling with little or no real knowledge, and non-support of the staff



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- Lack of public awareness will cease the growth of any museum.
- Journal is losing its local perspective by using out of state editors and too much academic. emphasis
- With Civil Rights laws in place and a professional editor at the AHS journal, there is no need to be concerned about diversity, equality, etc. Also, the board includes people of many races and colors. Keep the exhibits and journal articles free of any of this, unless an article REQUIRES mention of race, discrimination,, or politics. Members don't want to read about it in the journals, unless it is absolutely necessary to relate to the story line. Go back to articles on Arizona HISTORY.
- I hope a new state legislature and governor will allow for education of the value of promoting AZ history
- N. AZ seems to always be short funded
- Some of the community groups are divisive, work as hard as they can against AHS, and have ruined so many opportunities for raising significant funds. If the community groups don't do AHS in, the wing nuts in the legislature will.
- the communities need to enjoy visiting and would enjoy items that can be viewed and not just read about them



Written Responses

GREATEST THREAT: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- Staff recruitment is a problem because job descriptions are so detailed and, in the case of "operations manager," give the sense that applicants must be experts in everything, yet have little or no authority. The other issue is staff salaries, which are non-competitive. Additionally, the general reputation of AHS because of the previous administration is a deterrent for applicants. People who may consider positions are often part of the larger community of like organizations and are aware of AHS's reputation over the last few years. For example, the Employee Satisfaction Survey of 2018 or 2019 was abysmal. The director seemed to try and hide when it was reported to the board, instead of vowing to find out why and to make needed changes. Staff resigned or took early retirement in record numbers. In Flagstaff, 7 employees left AHS because of the way they were treated!



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- The most immediate existential threat is passing the Sunset Audit.
- The threat for collections is if we are unable to adequately care for our collections/archives that we will not pass the sunset audit.
- Technology. We are far behind on the hardware and software used by other institutions.
- The amount of well-funded museums in Tucson and Phoenix attract people away from AHS. It is hard for AHS to compete with museums who already have a large established donor network.
- The overall dependence on budget decisions by DOA in regards to building maintenance and renewal.
- People need to feel a connection to history where exhibits show that they are represented. There has been headway in including diversity in exhibits despite criticism from some.
- I think not investing in all relationships can be a threat. Whether it is legislators, universities, schools, chapters, communities large or small, certified museums, staff, or just engaging with anyone we come in contact with. We are dependent on these relationships to grow, and they are also dependent on us to teach, share and tell them about the history we hold.
- Communication has improved recently, but continued transparency about where AHS is, where we want to go, and how we plan on getting there gives staff a clear idea about what we are all working towards. Transparency about plans for individual locations is also important.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- none at the time..
- Staff is tired and burned out. It's not going to get any better if staff can't afford to live on the wages they make. No matter how much they love their jobs, they're going to keep leaving.
- I would not necessarily categorize AHS' status as a state agency as a threat, but moreso as a perceived threat. I sense that at the core of every exhibit proposal, program proposal and speaker invitation is a thought of how the legislature or the governor's office might respond, particularly given recent legislation related to educational institutions. Our ties to the state government limit how we discuss topics in our museums, rightfully so. Because AHS is a state institution, it should not be partisan in any way, regardless of political perspective. However, this should not limit what we discuss in our museums. Given the current state of the legislature, staff seem to self-select non-controversial topics for programs and exhibits for fear of detrimental repercussions. It is precisely these topics that are most in need of historical context. I recognize the unfortunate state of American politics, in which topics that should be non-controversial (such as the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledging the experience of underrepresented communities) are seen as controversial and even taboo. But this perceived fear of retaliation threatens other important AHS goals and initiatives, deters us from developing relationships with underrepresented communities, and prevents us from truly fulfilling our mission and sharing ALL of Arizona's history.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED THREAT: STAFF AND BOARD

- Pupfish. Interesting distraction, big responsibility for helping preserve a federally listed species. Urbanizing urban environment, changing climate, questionable disappearance
- There are people with a lot of different skills that are not being utilized.
- N/A
- I know there is only so much we can do, but if we are able to get our presence known in our community and legislature, we may be able to get more money to pay our employees so that we could become more competitive and keep our employees longer.
- While publications and exhibits do most of the outreach in the community (including universities across the US) there is little to no outreach from membership and outreach. Once again, staff shortages cause this problem. We need a full-time outreach coordinator to go across the state recruiting. We focus more on the members we have, which I agree, needs to be looked after, but growing business is as important if not more. Especially given the average age of members. If we don't have money for advertising (the board and others need to work on this) than we need people "selling" our product. The lack of outreach is just so blatant. Even people at UA have no idea who AHS is and the museum is across the street. We also need exhibits to appeal to a younger demographic (like Space). That will help generate new members.
- People taking care of the financial end have to be careful of fraudulent purchases and cyber attacks.



Written Responses

OVERLOOKED THREAT: CHAPTERS & SUPPORT GROUPS

- The political environment in Arizona.
- A movement committed to fixing the future has no use for the physical reminders of bygone days. The archives, which hold so many tangible artifacts of the past, need to be, in the long run, placed upon the chopping block.
- na
- Dealing with the identified is a full plate.
- We must reach the younger generations with the importance of understanding the past.
- Lack of public and private funding will impede the quality and growth of all the AHS museums.
- Journal once had more appeal to general membership with variety of topics written in a more readable style.
- Political correctness, cancel culture, and woke nonsense. This plays to just a certain group, yet offends the majority of the people.
- Need to get new avenues to get the word out on events, seem to just be focused on the folks involved.
- Representation of diverse perspectives. Some of the members and many in the legislature are only interested in a singular white pioneer narrative.
- communicate with the public
- There are several. I think I've answered this question from checklist in Part I and narrative on this page.



Methodology

WHAT WAS CONSIDERED, WHO WAS INCLUDED, AND HOW WAS THIS DATA UTILIZED?

- This survey was issued as two separate surveys. One was issued to all AHS staff and State Board members. Another was distributed to all AHS Chapter Boards and contracted Support Groups. Participation was not even, with a greater response rate among AHS staff and State Board members.
- The ratio of Staff/Board and Chapters/Support Groups was 3:2, yielding results in the "Total" column that are slightly skewed. It favors those with a deeper understanding of internal operations, and less on external perceptions and valuation.
- Written responses are presented in the order of their user submission, and divided by Staff/Board and Chapters/Support Groups. Due to the optional nature of written responses, the order of submission for users (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc) may not be the same for each question.