

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

LACKAWANNA HERITAGE VALLEY AUTHORITY

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Project Team

Jill Macauley
Catherine Grace



Relevant Strategies and Solutions

230 Kings Highway East, #298

Haddonfield, NJ 08033

(215) 480-4818

www.rssconsultantsllc.com

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Acknowledgements

In January 2020, Relevant Strategies & Solutions (RS&S) consultants, Jill Macauley and Catherine Grace, were engaged by the leadership of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) to facilitate the development of a new strategic plan.

RS&S appreciates the opportunity to support LHVA in this important process. We commend the entire LHVA staff along with the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority Board of Directors for their leadership and willingness to engage in a comprehensive and inclusive planning process about the future of LHVA.

RS&S expresses thanks to the staff for their leadership, regular discussions and meetings, and passion for the mission in guiding the development of the new strategic plan.

LHVA acknowledges and thanks the National Park Service for their continued partnership, which includes their support of this planning project through the National Heritage Area's program. This project was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, using the Environmental Stewardship Fund, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (DCNR). We are grateful for their commitment to LHVA and supporting this planning initiative.

The efforts of all who contributed to this document are greatly appreciated.

Introduction



The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) engaged Relevant Strategies & Solutions (RS&S) to facilitate the development of a new strategic plan. RS&S was pleased to be selected for this project and appreciates the opportunity to work with the staff, Authority Board and key partners to analyze, frame and implement a realistic and achievable strategic “roadmap” for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority.

RS&S’ planning approach is an inclusive process that engages internal constituents (staff and Authority Board members) throughout a six-phase planning process:

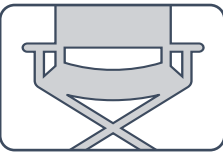
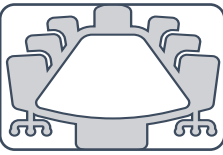





In providing strategic planning services for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, RS&S helped focus, refine and leverage the Heritage Area's resources and future opportunities. The RS&S team also provided an objective look at market and financial data, assisted with problem solving, and facilitated the direction of the strategic planning process, drawing on our expertise counseling a broad range of cultural and visitor-based institutions around the country. As a collaborative process, the full LHVA staff was engaged to review and discuss findings and to help frame recommendations and strategic objectives.

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority National and State Heritage Area has had a rich and robust history of growth and success in its nearly 30 years of existence. Established in 1991, LHVA became the first state heritage park in Pennsylvania. In 2000, LHVA was designated as a National Heritage Area by the U.S. Congress. Today, LHVA is the only state heritage area managed under an Authority.

In recent years, LHVA has worked extensively to develop the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, helping to connect the more than 30 communities through Luzerne, Lackawanna, Susquehanna and Wayne Counties. With the Delaware & Hudson Rail-Trail, the trail stretches more than 70 miles.

In addition, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority is well known for and highly regarded for some of its following distinguishing attributes:

	Leadership In 2017, a new Executive Director of LHVA was appointed. Joe Corcoran, after years of successful leadership as a Lackawanna County Commissioner, assumed the role of Executive Director after the retirement of the previous Executive Director.
	Volunteer Leadership In late 2019, the Authority Board transitioned to new leadership. The timing of the strategic planning process provided a beneficial platform upon which to onboard the new Board members.
	Strong Partnerships Throughout its history, LHVA has linked the region's historic, cultural and environmental organizations together to work collaboratively rather than competitively to advance and effectively tell the story of the region's rich history and impact.
	Well-Known Community Asset The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail is a significant community asset that is widely used, highly regarded and well-known throughout the broader community.
	Passionate, Engaged Staff LHVA has a small but dedicated and effective staff team that is well-known and highly respected among a broad array of partners and external stakeholders.

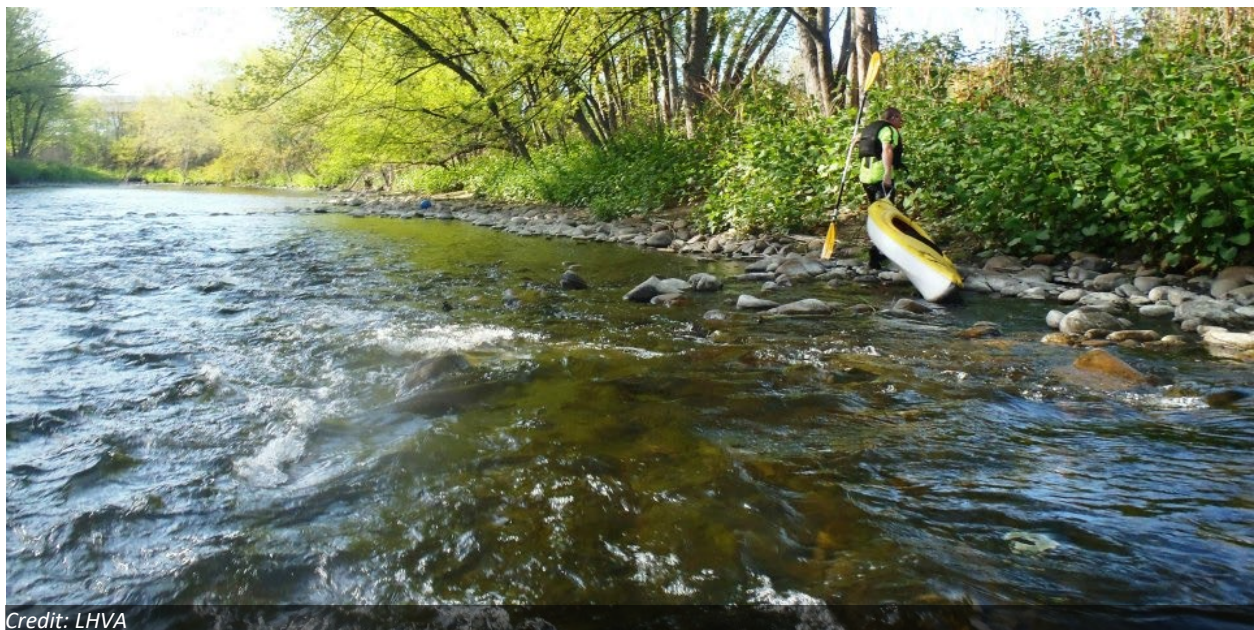
As is often the case, most organizations are focused on continuously growing and improving, which typically means that leadership and staff don't have the opportunity to stop and pause. This planning process offered the chance to really reflect on what they are doing, why they are doing it and what they strive to achieve in the coming years.

Maximizing this opportunity, leadership had the foresight to include the community in the process, allowing them to offer their perspective. In doing so, it quickly became clear that there is a desire for LHVA to strengthen and expand upon its existing role as a leader among the community's cultural, heritage and historical institutions. By doing so, the collective impact of the community's cultural organizations can be maximized, fully linking and leveraging the legacy and rich history of the past while celebrating its present and future.

The new strategic plan lays the foundation for LHVA to assume this leadership role by focusing on and strengthening its programming, operations and financial viability – taking the time now to get its proverbial house in order will position LHVA to be a model in the community and among other national and state heritage areas.

The unique situation caused by the 2020 global health pandemic pushed this planning process to look carefully at its plan and what is achievable amid tough economic times while also highlighting the importance of maintaining a diversified financial model. The leadership of LHVA remains committed to its vision and feels confident that this plan is structured to move LHVA forward as a great asset for the community. This plan leverages LHVA's core mission and compelling vision while providing creative business, organizational and operational strategies to strengthen their continued viability and sustainability in this challenging time.

The following report outlines the new strategic plan for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority National and State Heritage Area, which provides a comprehensive and integrated roadmap from 2021 through 2024. With a motivated staff and Authority Board committed to ensuring LHVA's sustained success, LHVA is poised for growth under the guidance of this plan.



Credit: LHVA

What is a Heritage Area?



As both a National Heritage Area and a Pennsylvania Heritage Area, LHVA benefits from these two designations that complement and support each other.

As a National Heritage Area, LHVA exists to conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Lackawanna Valley. These resources are brought together and leveraged through LHVA to convey the uniquely rich history of the region. With its significant history and impact in mind, Congress designated the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority a National Heritage Area in 2000. A National Heritage Area is a place where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape.

Any region or area designated as a National Heritage Area is affiliated with the National Park Service (NPS), but the land is neither owned nor managed by the NPS. Each National Heritage Area can access technical support, planning resources and limited financial assistance from the NPS, but maintains individual management to determine the best ways to link its specific heritage stories to its local community and celebrate its history in collaboration with local partners.

As a key player in the anthracite industry, the Lackawanna Valley enabled the growth of the larger region. In 1991, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority became the first State Heritage Park in Pennsylvania. National and State Heritage Areas work to revitalize and restore the region through natural and cultural resource preservation, education, recreation, community revitalization and heritage tourism.

Like all heritage areas, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority uses a strategic plan to reaffirm its mission, update its vision and outline its long-range goals. LHVA conducted a strategic assessment in 2011, which offered the organization a roadmap to guide it for the next decade. This plan laid out priorities, and high-level strategies for achieving goals of recreation, interpretation, partnerships and financial sustainability.

The following strategic plan document serves as “roadmap”, guiding LHVA through 2024. This strategic plan recommits to a mission and vision for the future, sets strategic priorities moving forward, and identifies action items for next four years. The goals should be revisited, and action plan should be updated annually to maintain a four-five-year rolling action plan.

A central part of this plan involved gathering input from the Heritage Area’s key stakeholders – staff, Authority Board members, partners and community members; assessing trends; identifying organizational needs and capabilities; defining program strengths and weaknesses; and thinking creatively about where LHVA should be headed and how to get there.

Building on its strong foundation, this plan is visionary in its forward-thinking approach, but remains consistent – LHVA is not changing what it does; rather it is simply mapping out its future with very focused action steps, positioning LHVA for continued leadership to leverage the economic development, recreational and heritage tourism opportunities made possible by its ever-evolving relationship with the Lackawanna Valley.

Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

RS&S began our engagement with a discovery process, during which we collected background materials about LHVA, including trail-related visitation data, mission-based program information, financial data and marketing materials, as well as other background information. During our initial visit to LHVA, we toured the Trail with Joe Corcoran, Executive Director, and Owen Worozbyt, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, which further informed our understanding of LHVA, as well as informed the opportunities and challenges to be considered in the planning process.



To guide the strategic planning process, the LHVA staff team was convened to help facilitate the discussions, assessment and planning. The staff team and the RS&S planning team held a launch meeting to review the process and discuss initial observations. The staff team was engaged throughout the planning process to share feedback, test findings, and to help frame the recommendations and strategic objectives. The LHVA staff involved in the strategic planning process includes:

Strategic Planning Staff Team	
Joe Corcoran	Executive Director
Mike Kilzi	Fiscal Director
Linda Mlodzienski	Director of Operations
April Rogato	Executive Assistant
Bev Rossick	Assistant Fiscal Director
Justin Topa	Community Engagement & Programs Manager
Owen Worozbyt	Trail & Environmental Projects Manager

Internal Interviews

To further build our background of LHVA, we conducted one-on-one interviews with all staff members, current and former Authority Board members, representatives from Heritage Valley Partners (now known as Valley in Motion), as well as additional external stakeholders. These interviews allowed us to gain a better understanding of the issues to be explored, as well as the scope of goals and vision, for the new strategic plan. The following individuals were interviewed during this stage of the planning process:

Authority Board Members	LHVA Staff Members	External Stakeholders
Tom DePietro , Authority Board Chair	Joe Corcoran , Executive Director	John Cosgrove , All in One Foundation & Former Executive Director, LHVA
Joe Haggerty , Solicitor	Mike Kilzi , Fiscal Director	Steve Durkin , Carbondale YMCA
Dominic Keating , Former Authority Board Chair	Linda Mlodzienski , Director of Operations	Gus Fahey , Valley in Motion
Thom Welby , Former Authority Board Member	April Rogato , Executive Assistant	LP Frieder , Valley in Motion Board Chair
Christine Dettore , DCNR Ex-officio Authority Board Member	Bev Rossick , Assistant Fiscal Director	Natalie Gelb , Former Executive Director, LHVA
	Justin Topa , Community Engagement & Programs Manager	Tom McHugh , Educational Consultant
	Owen Worozbyt , Trail & Environmental Projects Manager	Tom McLane , Landscape Architect
		Mark Palerino , DCNR
		Peter Samuel , NPS

The discussion guide used to facilitate the interviews is attached as an *Appendix* to this report.

Online Surveys

Using key findings from the internal interviews, RS&S developed three surveys – one for the Authority Board, one for volunteers and one for partners. Our goal was to identify key strategic opportunities and challenges facing LHVA, as well as to foster a sense of inclusiveness during the planning process. Surveys were sent out electronically via Survey Monkey and were conducted in a confidential manner.

Online Surveys			
Group	Number Invited to Take Survey	Number of Participants	Percentage Participation
Authority Board	7	6	86%
Volunteers	118	21	11%
Partners	103	31	30%

The summaries of survey responses are attached as an *Appendix* to this report.

The one-on-one interviews and the surveys informed our initial key findings. These findings also helped to identify external challenges or potential threats to LHVA that could impact its future operations, trail usage and funding over the next three to five years.

Our initial findings are included in the Baseline Assessment Report, which is attached as an *Appendix* to this report.

Benchmarking

To help further frame our strategic conversations, we identified four organizations that could offer background and new thinking around many of the opportunities and challenges LHVA is facing. RS&S worked with LHVA staff to identify these organizations.

While it is important to note that no two heritage areas are alike, the benchmarking information can be used as a frame of reference and to help inform future strategic discussions.

In this benchmarking analysis, we spoke with the following individuals:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
August Carlino	President & CEO, Rivers of Steel
Elissa Garofalo	Executive Director, The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
Patrick Starr	Executive Vice President, Southeast Region, Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Planning

Throughout the summer and Fall of 2020, RS&S conducted numerous planning meetings with the staff to engage in discussions around:

- A thorough assessment of LHVA's strengths and opportunities
- Updated the mission and vision statements
- Identified new strategic goals, objectives and action steps

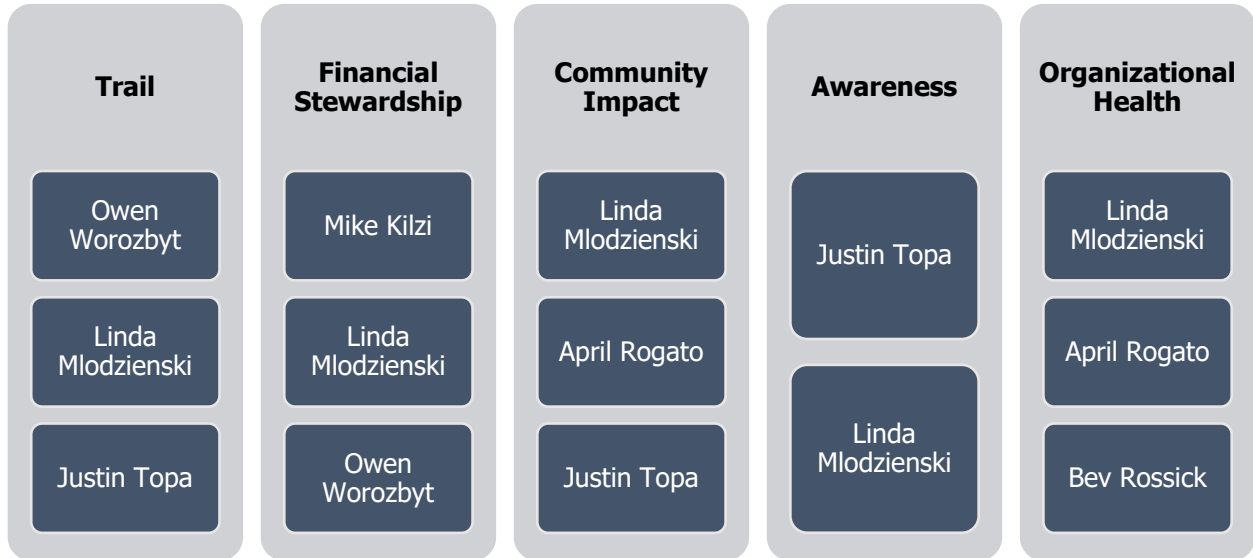
Using information gathered up to this stage in the planning process, RS&S then identified the following five key strategic opportunities to provide direction for planning discussions:



Workgroup Action Planning

To further focus each opportunity, five staff workgroups were created to finalize the draft goal statements, refine related objectives and outline action steps to support the implementation of the identified goals. Each workgroup met several times to complete this work.

Below is a chart that identifies each workgroup member.



While staff worked in small groups to flesh out the action plan associated with each strategic goal, collectively, staff worked in close collaboration with RS&S to finalize the strategic goals, objectives and action steps and identify a prioritized implementation sequence and/or timeline for each of the identified action steps.

After organizing the full working draft of the action plan, a public meeting was arranged to offer members of the public an opportunity to share their perspectives and input on the plan and preliminary strategic direction for LHVA over the next four years.

In September 2020, the strategic framework was presented to the Authority Board for their review and input including ex-officio Authority Board members – the representative from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources and the representative from the National Park Service – for their review and input, as well.

This last step completed the full strategic plan for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority – providing a clear, actionable framework for the next four years. The timeline built into the plan will serve as a reminder that the strategic plan is a living document and should be reviewed and updated at least annually.

LHVA's Strategic Plan: 2020-2024

Mission & Vision

A **mission statement** is a succinct expression of purpose that articulates what an organization does and why it does it. An organization's mission statement is the fundamental building block upon which the strategic plan is developed. The **vision statement** reflects a futuristic view of what the organization wants to become.

Together, the mission and vision unify an organization at all levels and galvanize positive action. An institution's mission and vision bring the internal team together to work toward achieving shared goals as well as establishes a unified external brand known and understood by an organization's external stakeholders such as partners, funders and community leaders.

During the planning process, staff and the Authority Board took the opportunity to re-work the mission and vision statements to assess how they could help guide the planning process and ultimately align with the new strategic plan.

The following are LHVA's updated mission and vision statements for 2020 – 2024.

Mission Statement

As the staff and Board reflected on LHVA's core mission, there was consensus that it plays a pivotal role in the community as a link between to the region's legacy and future. The staff and Board agreed upon the following mission statement:

The mission of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority is to facilitate community action in the preservation, promotion and development of the region's history, cultural heritage and natural resources.

Vision Statement

In developing LHVA's vision statement, the staff and Board wanted to fully embrace and emphasize its role as a leader in leveraging its broad and diverse range of programs as a tool that honors the region's rich history while also helping to contribute to its future. With this intention, the staff and Board agreed upon the following vision statement:

Honor the Lackawanna Valley's industrial legacy by fostering a proud regional identity connected through the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, the Watershed's natural resources, and region's cultural heritage of the past, present, and future.

LHVA's Strategic Direction

The power of planning lies in the excitement generated by realizing and reaffirming strengths, recognizing opportunities and unifying efforts to fulfill LHVA's mission and achieve its vision. During this planning process, RS&S and the LHVA staff and Board identified five strategic goals that provide the framework for the plan and connect every objective and action step within the plan to the mission and vision.

Each of the five strategic goals outlined in the plan focus on striving towards the highest levels of excellence. Key highlights include:



Leveraging the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail –

As the most recognizable aspect of LHVA, the Trail plays a pivotal role, not only in bringing awareness of the broader organization to the community but also to being a primary artery connecting and bringing the community together. LHVA staff and Authority Board sought to ensure that the Trail is being fully leveraged as a tool to better tell the “story” of the region’s history and to better engage users with the environment. Fulfilling this goal will involve continuing to work to complete the Trail, connecting the Trail to health and wellness initiatives, leveraging the Trail to enhance cultural and historical relevance, and using the Trail as a tool to promote tourism.

Maximizing Community Impact –

With a focus on maintaining the ongoing relevance of existing programming, as well as the accessibility to those programs, staff and Board outlined a strategic goal dedicated to ensuring that all of LHVA's efforts connect the community to the region's cultural, historical, and natural resources.



Enhancing the Visibility of LHVA –

LHVA takes great pride in its work promoting the history, cultural heritage and natural resources of the region. While LHVA is best known for the Trail, LHVA would like to leverage its position to strengthen its role as a convener and connector while also enhancing awareness of its work beyond the Trail. Doing so will include using the region's story to connect to broader audiences, convene more partners, attract visitors from beyond the region and strengthen the organization's brand and visibility.

Long-Term Organizational Resilience and Success –

LHVA staff and Authority Board have made a renewed commitment to collaboratively fostering a unified culture dedicated to excellence. Throughout the planning process, staff and Board recognized that empowering staff to leverage their passion, foster a healthy work environment, excel in their daily operations and elevate the consistency of their work through training and improved communication was critical to advancing LHVA's mission. In addition, LHVA has long extended its collaborative culture to include its incredible working partnerships, allowing resources to be shared to leverage greater collective mission impact. Within this goal, LHVA leadership is committed to keeping these relationships strong and relevant.



Financial Stability –

With a focus on advancing financial viability and sustainability, staff and Authority Board outlined a strategic goal dedicated to long-term financial stewardship of its resources. With the action steps laid out in this goal, LHVA will continue to refine its operations for maximum effectiveness and efficiency while working to diversify its funding model, particularly through increased fundraising efforts.

Photo Credits: LHVA

Implementing the Plan: 4-Year Action Plan



Although the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority's strategic goals are singularly significant, their relationship to one another is key to realizing the plan's vision for meaningful and lasting impact. The goals are aspirational, compelling and focused on advancing LHVA's new mission in measurable ways that will drive its achievements over the next several years and beyond.

The goals laid out in this plan are intentional in order and reflect LHVA's priorities as determined by staff and Board leadership. Some of the action steps around financial planning and working to complete the Trail, for instance, will serve as foundational guides for other action steps throughout the plan.

To ensure productive and measurable progress towards achieving the strategic goals, as well as the overall organizational vision, LHVA's action plan will serve as a living document, supported with specific, coordinated, and timed action items. These sequentially organized and sometimes overlapping actions form the work plan on which to evaluate staff performance and progress towards the strategic goals. In addition, metrics have been identified as a means of measuring specific progress against each of the goals over time.

For each action step, the staff has estimated a timeframe for implementation/completion and assigned responsibility. However, all staff recognize that all positions ultimately have a role in the implementation of all goals, objectives and action steps, as none can be accomplished in silos.

Lastly, estimated financial impacts associated with implemented plan are identified for each objective related to new or significant increases in expenses.

As a living document, this action plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually by staff and Authority Board so that the team has a timely and responsive annual work plan to consult at every step of the way from now through 2024.

This action plan will serve as an invaluable tool for LHVA staff and Board leadership. To Board leadership, it provides the template of accountability for the Director. For staff leadership, it offers a comprehensive roadmap of the tasks that need to be completed to strengthen the foundation of LHVA and position them for future significant growth.

The full strategic frameworks for each goal are also included as an *Appendix* to this report.

Strategic Goal 1: Lackawanna River Heritage Trail

Continue to expand the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail and leverage it for connectivity to the region's assets.

As the first goal in the strategic plan, this serves as the core of LHVA's work and embodies the broader impact of the organization's mission. Every year, thousands of individuals connect to the community, environment and more through the Trail. Committing to continuing to offer users access to an exceptional, educational trail experience, LHVA will raise awareness of its mission, connect to health and wellness initiatives and build meaningful and lasting relationships within the community that will ultimately contribute to LHVA's growth and success.

1.1. Trail: Continue to build the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail linking communities of the region together.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.1.1. Lackawanna Avenue Bellevue Connector - Create safe trail access to downtown Scranton from the 7th Avenue Trailhead	2021	Mileage of new trail built Funding secured for trail projects
1.1.2. Marvine Trail Project: Closing 1-mile gap in the trail in Scranton	2021	Mileage of new trail in diverse and underserved neighborhoods
1.1.3. Evaluate opportunities to develop trail links that reach into diverse and underserved communities.	2021	
1.1.4. Dickson City Trail Project: Close a 1-mile gap in the trail in Dickson City	2021	
1.1.5. Mayfield Trailhead Development: Establish a new trailhead and connection at the Chestnut Street Trailhead	2022	
1.1.6. Carbondale Crossing Trail Project: Create a safe crossing at the Meredith Street Trailhead	2022	
1.1.7. Dickson City RR Trail: Fill in .5 mil trail gap in Dickson City	2022	
1.1.8. Olyphant Loop Trail: 1 Mile loop trail in Olyphant along Eddy Creek	2022	
1.1.9. Carbondale Crossing Trail Development: Construct a 1-mile section of trail in Carbondale Township/Carbondale City	2022	
1.1.10. "Stone Property" Development – Easement Acquisition/Develop and construct a corridor linking Boulevard Ave. and Eagle Lane in Dickson City.	2022	

1.1.11. Scranton Tunnel Project: rehabilitate the former Cliff Street underpass. Entering near the Lackawanna Avenue Colts Intermodal site and linking to the Lackawanna County Trolley Museum/Steamtown NHS, in order to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.	2023	
1.1.12. Pittston Riverfront Extension: Construct a 1-mile section of trail in Pittston back to Duryea	2023	
1.1.13. Providence Connection: Connect a loop trail in Scranton from Poplar Street up to Market Street in partnership with the LRCA	2023	
1.1.14. Roaring Brook – Scranton Sewer Authority Trail from the South Side Flats at Washington Avenue toward Cedar Avenue and the Scranton-Keystone Iron Furnaces and onward up to the University of Scranton.	2023	
1.1.15. Develop a trail from Taylor South: Using findings from feasibility study, build 5 Miles of trail between Taylor and Duryea with no plan of being developed in 2020.	2023	
1.1.16. FLAP Project: Construct a pedestrian and bicyclist span from the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail linking to the Steamtown NHS near the Lackawanna Trolley Museum.	2024	
1.1.17. Poplar – Parker Connection: Connect a Loop Trail from Poplar St to Market St following the Green Ridge Street bridge replacement and continue along the former O&W Rail corridor through the Green Ridge plot Section to the new Parker Street Bridge and Parker Street Trailhead.	2024	
1.1.18. Scranton levee paving project: With input from Army Corp, pave the sections of trail in the Scranton levee system that are part of the trail	2025	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land acquisition • Material and construction for new trailhead and additional trail miles • Engineering and design costs 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager

1.2 Relevance of Trail Projects: Analyze the efficacy, funding and timing constraints related to trail projects and maintenance to ensure that projects are occurring in a way that maximizes potential and delivers the highest quality outcomes.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.2.1. Analyze all existing trail-related funding and outline expiration dates on funding to ensure funding is used to the fullest	Ongoing	Increased leveraging of funds Amount of new land acquired for trail projects
1.2.2. Identify trail projects that have the opportunity to seek matching funds	Ongoing	
1.2.3. Analyze trail maintenance tools and resources and seek opportunities to increase maintenance capacity	Ongoing	
1.2.4. Seek additional land for more trail projects	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land acquisition Maintenance equipment 		Executive Director, Director of Operations, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager

1.3. Health & Wellness: Connect trail to community related health and wellness initiatives to foster an overall healthier Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority region.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.3.1 Leverage web-based cellphone app to create strong connections to health and wellness	ongoing	Number of health and wellness programs occurring in connection with the trail
1.3.2 Identify potential links between the Trail and existing regional health and wellness programs.	ongoing	
1.3.3 Leverage existing pavilions/play areas to host more programs along the trail and identify additional areas for play areas/pavilions to support health and wellness initiatives	ongoing	
1.3.4 Explore potential partnerships with existing health and wellness programs	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for new programming Costs associated with tailoring app to align with health and wellness initiatives 		Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

1.4. Recreation: Leverage Trail-based recreation for connection to sites of cultural and historical relevance.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.4.1 Evaluate signage along the trail to help trail users understand the historical and cultural significance around them – use social media to gather trail user feedback	2021	Feedback from trail users on signage
1.4.2 Create a handout or message points to share with all participants about LHVA and the region’s history at any non-LHVA events hosted along the trail	2021	Frequency of sharing LHVA’s message with non-LHVA event participants
1.4.3 Identify opportunities to further integrate the region’s history and cultural relevance into recreational events hosted on the trail and provide LHVA materials for events	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to develop and distribute handouts • Promotional event materials • Fabrication and installation of signage 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager

1.5. Tourism: Leverage Trail to promote the Lackawanna region, encouraging “Heritage Tourism” within the County and those from outside the area.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.4.4 Ensure that LHVA is well-represented in local tourism literature and refresh messaging as needed	Ongoing	Followers on LHVA social media from outside the County
1.4.5 Develop consistent messaging that positions the Trail as a vital community and quality-of-life asset	Ongoing	Frequency of updated materials
1.4.6 Work with partner organizations to designate the Lackawanna River as a “Water Trail”.	2023	The Lackawanna River becomes a designated Water Trail.
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water trail studies and consultations 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

1.6. Trail Volunteers: Sustain and support trail maintenance through volunteer activity.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.6.1 Seek input from trail volunteers on how to improve their volunteer experience and engagement	Ongoing	Total number of volunteers annually Number of volunteers that continue year-over-year Number of trail volunteers that support LHVA in other means (i.e. donate, event attendance, etc.)
1.6.2 Identify means to connect trail volunteers with other elements of LHVA's mission	Ongoing	
1.6.3 Identify opportunities (i.e. gatherings, community spotlights, etc.) to steward trail volunteers and highlight their work	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds to host events and other initiatives to steward Trail volunteers 		Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager

Strategic Goal 2: Community Impact

Expand outreach and programming to link the community with the region’s cultural, historical, and natural resources.

Outreach, partnerships and education are powerful mechanisms for leveraging the broader impact of LHVA’s mission. More effectively connecting people to the community and its rich history and resources will fulfill its commitment to its mission and encourage greater action and engagement within the larger community and region. LHVA’s work in this area will center on creating and strengthening partnerships throughout the community, delivering high-quality educational programming and interpretive messaging aimed at raising awareness, and understanding and accessibility of key issues and actions.

2.1 Program Evaluation: Review existing programs for mission impact, relevance and return on investment.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.1.1 Identify criteria to determine mission impact, relevance and financial viability for existing programming	2021	Demonstrate existing programs mission impact (awareness/participation) and financial impact
2.1.2 Evaluate all current programming against criteria to ensure they align with strategic direction and to inform decisions around which programming will continue	2021	Number of program attendees Percentage growth in program attendees Return on Investment (ROI) on programs
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		All Staff

2.2. Accessibility: Focus on accessibility and programming for diverse groups.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.2.1 Expand relationship with both public and private transportation agency providers for seniors and under-served populations to have greater access to trail	2021	Demonstrate higher outreach to expanded audiences Number of seniors/members of underserved populations who receive transportation
2.2.2 Explore ways to expand LHVA programming to increase accessibility and appeal to more diverse groups (i.e. with mini excursions)	Ongoing	Number of program attendees Percentage growth in number of program attendees
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded programming costs 		Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Executive Assistant

2.3. Partner Roundtable: Review the role of the Partner Roundtable and leverage opportunities for the group to have greater collective strategic impact on the region.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.3.1 Develop and deploy a survey to all partners to learn ways to enhance and optimize the Roundtable	2021	Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Roundtable
2.3.2 Identify strategies to enhance the Roundtable meetings to better leverage the opportunity for LHVA to function as a convener and more influential agent of collaboration and change.	Ongoing	
2.3.3 As community wide strategic priorities are identified, link LHVA's partnership-grant application criteria to those identified priorities	2022	
2.3.4 Provide professional education on topics relevant to promotion of our missions and region	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.4. Education: Define LHVA’s role in school-age education – connection to school groups and curriculum.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.4.1 Seek feedback about local school, which LHVA is assigned and look to increase programming at that school.	2021	Number of educational outreach programs Number of school age children engaging in LHVA associated programming
2.4.2 Seek methods and greater understanding how teachers/schools are using the Trail currently	2021	
2.4.3 Increase outreach to local teachers to encourage their application to the mini-grant program	2021	
2.4.4 Identify how LHVA connects its programming and messaging to impact educational curriculum, including expanding Heritage Ambassador experience to be for children including exploring digital venues to provide mini-lessons	2021	
2.4.5 Work with local school districts to identify where LHVA could help fill gaps in education	2022	
2.4.6 Determine specific educational program plan for LHVA, including defining staff resources needed to implement program prioritizing schools within walking distance of the Trail and gradually increasing outreach to other regional schools	2023	
2.4.7 Where resources for field trips to the Trail are limited, work with school districts and educational partners to identify ways to bring the Trail to schools and connect them to the region’s history and heritage through digital or in-person methods.	Ongoing	
2.4.8 Measure and communicate the educational impact of LHVA to have a greater educational role and solicit funding to support its expansion	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded Ambassador programming Staff resources to support implementation of education plan Cost of research-related expenses for measuring LHVA’s educational impact 		Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.5. Ambassadors in Action: Leverage Ambassadors in Action to serve as a committed volunteer base to expand the reach of LHVA through non-Trail activities and programming.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.5.1 Review and update list of needs that could be supported by volunteers	2021	Number of volunteers for non-trail related activities and programming
2.5.2 Review staff resources to manage volunteers and the delegation of volunteer related duties	2021	
2.5.3 Implement strategies to recruit, train and retain committed, effective volunteers	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff resources for volunteer support • Funds for volunteer training and recruitment 		Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.6. Relationship with Steamtown National Historic Site: Continue collaborating with Steamtown NHS to maximize the mission impact through joint efforts.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.6.1 Identify overlapping strategic priorities between Steamtown NHS and LHVA and seek greater collaboration opportunities to increase mission impact	2021	Number of shared initiatives between LHVA and Steamtown NHS
2.6.2 Integrate Steamtown NHS's story and relevant message points into LHVA programming and signage and strive to help them do the same	2021	
2.6.3 Look to create programmatic and physical connections for Steamtown NHS guests to interact with the LHVA, in particular, the Heritage Trail	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new incremental costs identified 		Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.7. Partnership-Grant Program: Seek to increase the community impact of the partnership-grant program.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.7.1 Update criteria for partnership-grant program to fund strategically coordinated grants for larger community impact	2021	Collective measurable impact of the partnership-grant program
2.7.2 Determine if a dedicated annual fund is warranted for key partner programs that are integral to LHVA mission. Review every three years so organizations can plan.	2021	Amount given per year Cumulative documentation from grant recipients of measurable impact
2.7.3 Update criteria for funding more start-up initiatives rather than ongoing initiatives	2022	Number of grant applicants vs. number of recipients
2.7.4 Assess the partnership-grant program's connection to historic preservation	2022	
2.7.5 Work with DCNR and NPS to determine whether more funding can be dedicated to the partnership-grant program	2023	
2.7.6 Identify other local partner nonprofits and corporations who might contribute funding to support larger grants through the program	Ongoing	
2.7.7 Conduct grant workshops and reviews to make the process easier to understand for potential applicants and streamline reporting initiatives	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Executive Assistant

Strategic Goal 3: Awareness

Celebrate the region’s rich history and cultural significance today.

The objectives covered under this goal highlight LHVA’s commitment to its role as a primary convener and connector of the elements of the region’s story. This goal also affirms LHVA’s desire to convey a stronger but cohesive brand and message about its role and ongoing efforts in telling that story. Achievement of this goal revolves around maintaining a compelling, cohesive story about the region and helping to attract tourists to the Lackawanna Valley.

3.1. Regional Convener Serve as regional convener to refine a story that unifies the cultural resources of the region and supports tourism.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.1.1 Identify the key themes that unify the partial “stories” that many of the region’s organizations are telling	2021	Number of initiatives to promote the region led by LHVA
3.1.2 Develop core messages that bring all the partial “stories” together to a more coherent narrative for the region	2022	Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable
3.1.3 Leverage this messaging to position LHVA as the convener or hub at the center of the “story”	2022	Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Partner Roundtable
3.1.4 Leverage the Partner Roundtable and other regional organizations to ensure the messaging across partners is consistent and to collectively refine the message, as needed	2022	
3.1.5 Evaluate LHVA’s role in assisting in additional signage initiatives to share historical and cultural messages throughout the region (beyond the Trail)	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

3.2. Media: Use media and other outlets for communicating and connecting all audiences to the relevant history, culture and natural assets of the region.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.2.1 Develop a comprehensive awareness and educational strategy that defines the platforms and outlets by which LHVA can push out its messaging	2021	Number of initiatives to promote the region led by LHVA Placement rate of releases sent out
3.2.2 Work with other cultural attractions and community organizations to determine how to ensure maximum impact of messaging to enhance mutual visibility	2022	
3.2.3 Identify ways LHVA can promote its efforts using contributed funds or in-kind sources of support	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and informational materials 		Responsible Staff Member Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager

3.3. Tourism: Work to further develop strategies to use the region’s story to continue to attract visitors to the region and all its cultural, historical and recreational attractions.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.3.1 Ensure that tourism partners are aware of the messaging that LHVA and respective partners are leveraging to tell the “story” of the region	2021	Number of initiatives in conjunction with regional tourism partners
3.3.2 Seek a more active relationship with tourism partners, in particular the Visitor’s Bureau, to help ensure that messaging around the region’s “story” is aligned with LHVA and its respective partners through updating and providing brochures to tourism partners	2022	
3.3.3 Work with tourism partners, in particular the Visitor’s Bureau, to understand and potentially, help shape, the messages that are likely to most strongly attract visitors to the region	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

3.4. **Branding:** Explore the need to refresh LHVA's own brand and tagline to reflect the vision of the organization.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.4.1 Study the public's inconsistent use of language connecting LHVA and the Trail	2021	Demonstration of a rebrand of LHVA
3.4.2 Identify processes to ensure that LHVA's and the Trail's names are being used consistently the correct way	Ongoing	Decrease in misuse of LHVA's and the Trail's brand
3.4.3 Explore a formal branding process to update LHVA's brand and tagline	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional marketing and design consultation for LHVA rebrand 		Responsible Staff Members All staff

Strategic Goal 4: Organizational Health

Create a positive, engaged culture that enables staff, Authority Board members, partner organizations, and volunteers to fulfill LHVA’s mission.

Recognizing the power of an energized and motivated leadership team, LHVA staff and Board felt it was critical that the new strategic plan include objectives aimed at establishing and nurturing a positive and engaged staff and volunteer culture. To achieve the ambitious goals laid out in the plan and safeguard the plan’s viability, LHVA leadership has pledged to put consistent standards, protocols, resources and practices in place to cultivate and sustain its ongoing culture of excellence. Steps to fulfill that pledge include improved internal communications, professional development opportunities, Board development, and strengthened relationships with public partners.

4.1. Internal Communications: Assess internal communications and team meeting structure to ensure effective and efficient collaboration.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.1.1 Collect staff feedback on all-staff and committee meeting format and frequency along with regular standing program specific check-in meetings (i.e. trail, funding, etc.)	2021	Frequency of staff or committee meetings
4.1.2 Evaluate and update organizational structure for appropriate division of duties (clearly defined roles who is responsible for what) and cross-training on vital day to day operational needs	2021	
4.1.3 Review and update job titles and descriptions to reflect any changes to organizational structure and clarify responsibilities	2021	
4.1.4 Institute goal setting process as determined by executive director	2021	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

4.2. **Professional Development:** Provide thoughtful professional development opportunities for all staff positions.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.2.1 Engage in thoughtful succession planning to ensure contingency plans are in place for all staff members	Ongoing	Cross-training for all staff positions
4.2.2 Work with staff to identify professional development opportunities to support ongoing growth, develop and address any potential gaps in knowledge, skills, etc.	Ongoing	Frequency of professional development activities per year
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds to support professional development opportunities 		Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Director of Operations, Authority Board

4.3. **Board Development & Engagement:** Support active Board leadership, engagement, and development.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.3.1 Conduct update sessions where the strategic direction is discussed in detail as well as how the Board can support advancing LHVA's mission and goals	2021	Board meeting attendance
4.3.2 Develop role descriptions with Authority Board members	2021	Board participation in projects and events
4.3.3 Revisit onboarding process to ensure Board members can be fully informed about LHVA with information packets	2021	Board engagement (measured through annual survey of members)
4.3.4 Create more opportunities for the Authority Board members to interact with staff and each other to strengthen working relationships	Ongoing	
4.3.5 Notify board of special events	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Executive Director, Executive Assistant, Authority Board

4.4. **Partnerships:** Continue strategic partner organization relationship-building efforts to ensure they remain informed and engaged.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.4.1 Prioritize list of partner organizations based on current collaborations and desired future opportunities	2021	Partner satisfaction with LHVA (measured via annual survey)
4.4.2 Assign LHVA point of contact to regularly communicate and steward the relationship	2021	Number of partner events that engage partners
4.4.3 Collect feedback on partners' relationship with LHVA and how it can be strengthened	Annually	Number of invitations from partners for LHVA to participate in their efforts
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new incremental costs identified 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

Strategic Goal 5: Financial Sustainability

Advance financial viability and position LHVA for long-term sustainability.

This goal is the bedrock for the rest of the strategic plan. Without financial viability and operational stability and sustainability, LHVA will face significant challenges in pursuing and achieving its goals. Establishing financial sustainability will entail prioritizing funding opportunities, ensuring efficient and effective operations, assessing existing and new earned revenue opportunities, and strengthening a culture of philanthropy to better leverage financial support through contributed sources.

5.1. Business Planning: Define LHVA’s funding needs, project their timing and impacts and package into a comprehensive case for financial support.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.1.1 Study all trail related funding needs, associated costs, grants secured, timelines on those grants and additional sources to ensure the trail maximizes grants and is completed in the timeliest manner	Annually	List of clear and compelling funding needs
5.1.2 Review annual strategic priorities for LHVA and match with public and private funding opportunities	Annually	
5.1.3 As educational programs are developed and expanded, identify additional implementation costs and seek necessary funding to support increased operational costs	2022	
5.1.4 Develop a comprehensive case for general and trail maintenance support that captures all of LHVA’s funding needs into a compelling narrative that can be used to engage funders and partners to support LHVA	2022	
5.1.5 Ensure the Authority Board is familiar with the case for support and encourage them to share with their networks	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds to support expanded educational programming 		All Staff

5.2. **Relationship-Building:** Engage in a more concerted relationship-building effort and leverage external presence of the brand of LHVA and its Executive Director.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.2.1 Begin to conduct a Trail usage and economic impact study to share with funders and partners	2021	Number of cultivation interactions with donors, funders and public leaders each year Number of new relationships developed with support from Authority Board members Number of new relationships developed from Authority Board members' respective professional networks
5.2.2 Continue to cultivate relationships and engage in active stewardship of County leadership to ensure they are aware of LHVA and regularly updated about programming, progress, needs, etc.	Ongoing	
5.2.3 Engage in active stewardship of Lackawanna County and PA DCNR to ensure mutual awareness of programs and needs	Ongoing	
5.2.4 Identify private funders, both individual and organizational grantmakers, who have the potential to provide philanthropic support to LHVA	Ongoing	
5.2.5 Engage in relationship-building efforts with these potential funders to make them aware of LHVA and its funding needs	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic impact study Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager

5.3. **New Funding Sources:** Identify new sources of funding to build a diversified financial model.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.3.1 Work with public funding partners and local government to identify whether public funds are available to support key programs and initiatives	Ongoing	New revenue sources and funding received Size of reserve funds Number and amount of corporate sponsorships Percentage annual increase in funds from non-governmental sources
5.3.2 Assess LHVA's fees for programs and events to ensure they are increasing in revenue annually	Annually	
5.3.3 Explore whether the current fee structure adequately covers expenses incurred by LHVA for pavilion rental by a 3 rd party.	2021	

5.3.4	Build reserve funds to further leverage existing reserve funds from land sales and other sources	2021	
5.3.5	Expand effort to seek corporate sponsorships including using trail banners and other awareness building opportunities	2021	
Estimated Financial Impact			Responsible Staff Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation 			Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Assistant Fiscal Director

5.4. Fundraising Capacity: Strengthen LHVA's capacity to fundraise through a nonprofit partner.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.4.1. Determine the status of the relationship with the prior nonprofit partner.	2021	Determine if a new nonprofit partner is needed
5.4.2. Explore with LHVA's Solicitor to fully understand the legal implications and considerations that must be taken into account when solidifying a relationship with any nonprofit partner	2021	Private fundraising dollars raised and number of donors
5.4.3. Discuss with the LHVA board their support of new structure	2021	
5.4.4. If determined a new structure is needed, draft key points to structure that a new nonprofit relationship and would serve as basis for memorandum of understanding with a new entity	2021	
5.4.5. If determined a new structure is needed, research potential regional foundations or other regional nonprofits that have the infrastructure to serve as a "pass through" for funding received as a result of LHVA's fundraising efforts	2021	
5.4.6. Develop message points for conversations with the respective leadership of these foundations to ensure full transparency and clarity regarding what LHVA needs in a nonprofit partner	2021	
5.4.7. If determined a new structure is needed, reach out to and meet with leadership of respective	2022	

foundations to determine the organizations' (a) willingness to partner with LHVA and (b) fit based on LHVA's needs		
5.4.8. Outline external message points for announcing LHVA's nonprofit partner	2022	
5.4.9. Create fundraising plan for LHVA using nonprofit partner	2022	
Estimated Financial Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation 		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Board Solicitor, Authority Board

Conclusion

This document reflects nearly a year’s worth of thoughtful discussion, systematic planning, detailed analysis, outreach, engagement, and inspired thinking.

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority entered this process fully committed to putting in the hard work required for a viable, useful and, ultimately, successful strategic plan. LHVA’s goals are lofty and deliver on its commitment to enhancing the region. Even with the significant economic impacts from the global health pandemic, the leadership of LHVA have organized the strategic goals by year to allow them to systematically build capacity and deliver greater mission impact.

The chart below provides a high-level snap shot of each goal by year defining priorities for the short-term (2021), mid-term (2022-2023) and longer term (2024 and beyond).

Short Term Priorities	
2021	
Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build the Trail, connecting it with the region’s culture and history
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate programming for relevance and accessibility • Leverage Partner Roundtable for maximum collective mission impact • Update partnership-grant program for larger community impact and mission alignment
Marketing & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify unifying themes of the "stories" local nonprofits are telling • Develop strategy to promote LHVA and push out its messaging, including to tourism partners • Study inconsistencies in language around LHVA and the Trail
Internal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update internal structure (meetings, succession planning, goal setting, professional development, org. structure) • Keep Board apprised of LHVA's strategic direction and strategic plan execution • Update Board members' roles and responsibilities to enhance engagement and participation • Steward partners and solicit feedback on these relationships
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a financial case for support that matches funding needs with strategic priorities • Begin to conduct a Trail usage and economic impact study • Maintain strong relationship with County, DCNR, NPS • Begin to establish a culture of philanthropy to raise funds through private sources

Mid-term Priorities	
2022	
Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build and maintain the Trail, connecting it with health and wellness initiatives as well as the region's culture and history
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to leverage the Partner Roundtable for maximum collective mission impact Determine where LHVA could fill gaps in local education efforts Fund more start-up and historic preservation initiatives with partnership-grant program
Marketing & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the core messaging that defines the region's narrative and ensure consistency in LHVA's messaging with partners, funders, etc. Continue to promote LHVA Deepen engagement with tourism partners Begin to create consistency in the language used for LHVA and its various assets (i.e. Trail)
Internal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure relevance of internal structure Employ best practices for maximum Board engagement and participation
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update financial case for support with new education programming and as Trail is updated and maintained Maintain strong relationship with funders and public partners Create a fundraising plan, potentially with new nonprofit partner Continue to diversify funding model through fundraising Conclude Trail usage and economic impact study
2023	
Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build and maintain the Trail, connecting it with health and wellness initiatives as well as the region's culture and history
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to leverage the Partner Roundtable for maximum collective mission impact Create an education program plan Measure impact of LHVA's educational programming Determine if more funding can be dedicated to the partnership-grant program
Marketing & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate LHVA's role in signage around regional history and culture With tourism partners, develop core messaging to attract tourists Continue to promote LHVA Rebrand LHVA
Internal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure relevance of internal structure Employ best practices for maximum Board engagement and participation
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a relevant and up-to-date financial case for support Maintain strong relationship with funders and public partners Continue to diversify funding model through fundraising

Longer Term Priorities

2024

Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build and maintain the Trail, connecting it with health and wellness initiatives as well as the region's culture and history
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to leverage the Partner Roundtable for maximum collective mission impact Ensure relevance and accessibility of all programming
Marketing & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote LHVA Roll-out new brand
Internal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure relevance of internal structure Employ best practices for maximum Board engagement and participation
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a relevant and up-to-date financial case for support Maintain strong relationship with funders and public partners Continue to diversify funding model through fundraising

2025

Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build and maintain the Trail, connecting it with health and wellness initiatives as well as the region's culture and history
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to leverage the Partner Roundtable for maximum collective mission impact Ensure relevance and accessibility of all programming
Marketing & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote LHVA
Internal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure relevance of internal structure Employ best practices for maximum Board engagement and participation
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a relevant and up-to-date financial case for support Maintain strong relationship with funders and public partners Continue to diversify funding model through fundraising

The snapshot chart below summarizes the strategic goals and their related impacts, against which progress of the plan can be measured.

Goal	Related Measurable Impacts
Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage of new trail built • Funding secured for trail project • Mileage of new trail in diverse and underserved neighborhoods • Increased leveraging of funds • Amount of new land acquired for trail projects • Number of health and wellness programs occurring in connection with the trail • Feedback from trail users on signage • Frequency of sharing LHVA’s mission related messages with non-LHVA event participants • Followers on LHVA social media from outside the County • Frequency of updated materials • The Lackawanna River becomes a designated water trail • Total number of volunteers annually • Number of volunteers that continue year-over-year • Number of trail volunteers that support LHVA in other means (i.e. donate, event attendance, etc.)
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate existing programs mission impact (awareness/participation) and financial impact • Number of program attendees • Percentage growth in program attendees • Return on investment (ROI) on programs • Demonstrate higher outreach to expanded audiences • Number of seniors/members of underserved populations who receive transportation • Increased attendance at Roundtable meetings • Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable • Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Roundtable • Number of educational outreach programs • Number of school age children engaging in LHVA associated programming • Number of volunteers for non-trail related activities and programming • Number of shared initiatives between LHVA and Steamtown NHS • Collective measurable impact of the partnership-grant program • Amount given per year • Cumulative documentation from grant recipients of measurable impact • Number of grant applicants vs. number of recipients
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives to promote the region led by LHVA • Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable • Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Partner Roundtable • Placement rate of releases sent out • Number of initiatives in conjunction with regional tourism partners • Demonstration of a rebrand on LHVA • Decrease in the misuse of LHVA and the Trail’s brand

Organizational Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of staff or committee meetings • Cross-training for all staff positions • Frequency of professional development activities per year • Board meeting attendance • Board participation in projects and events • Board engagement (measured through annual survey of members) • Partner satisfaction with LHVA (measured via annual survey) • Number of partner events that engage partners • Number of initiatives from partners for LHVA to participate in their efforts
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of clear and compelling funding needs • Number of cultivation interactions with donors, funders and public leaders each year • Number of new relationships developed with support from Authority Board members • Number of new relationships developed from Authority Board members' respective professional networks • New revenue sources and funding received • Size of reserve funds • Number and amount of corporate sponsorships • Percentage annual increase in funds from non-governmental sources • Determine if a new nonprofit partner is needed • Private fundraising dollars raised and number of donors

It is LHVA's intent and expectation that the goals and actions steps outlined here in the 2020-2024 Strategic plan will ensure that the organization remains well-positioned to chart a continuing strong course through the next decade.

Lackawanna Heritage Valley Strategic Planning Internal Interview – Discussion Outline

Name of Person Interviewed:

Position/Role:

Length of Involvement with LHV:

Discussion Questions:

1. In your view/own words, what is the mission of LHV?
2. What is your vision for LHV for the next 5 years? For the next 10 years?
3. What is LHV known for, its unique characteristics? What is the level of awareness in the region of LHV? Has the community view of LHV changed in the past 5 years?
4. What are LHV's biggest challenges & opportunities in the next 5 years?
5. Looking towards the future, what programs/services would you invest in if you had additional resources to further enhance LHV?
6. Who are LHV's best partners? Why? What partnerships need to be changed or even stopped?
7. Does, and how, does the role of the Board need to change over the next three to five years to ensure that LHV remains a viable, sustainable and valued mission-driven institution?

8. In your position, what are your core job responsibilities? Does this align with your skills, abilities, knowledge and interests? What tasks would add/delete from your job responsibilities? What one thing that is getting in the way of your position's productivity?

9. If you could add one more staff person tomorrow, what would that position be?

10. Is there anything that LHV is doing today that it should stop doing? Why?

11. Is there anything else you would like us to know as we prepare LHV's strategic plan?



LACKAWANNA HERITAGE VALLEY

STRATEGIC PLANNING – INTERVIEW & SURVEY SUMMARIES

TOP-LINE INTERVIEW & SURVEY FINDINGS

One-on-One Interviews Completed

Staff Interviews (7)

- Joe Corcoran
- Mike Kilzi
- Bev Liuzzo
- Linda Mlodzienski
- April Rogato
- Justin Topa
- Owen Worozbyt

Stakeholder Interviews (14)

- **John Cosgrove**, All in One Foundation & Former Executive Director, LHV
- **Tom DePietro**, Authority Board Chair
- **Christine Dettore**, DCNR
- Steve Durkin, Carbondale YMVA
- **Gus Fahey**, HVP
- **LP Frieder**, HVP Board Chair
- **Natalie Gelb**, Former Executive Director, LHV
- **Joe Haggerty**, Solicitor
- **Dominic Keating**, Former Authority Board Member
- Tom McHugh,
- **Tom McLane**, Landscape Architect
- **Mark Palerino**, DCNR
- **Peter Samuel**, NPS
- **Thom Welby**, Former Authority Board Member

Questions Asked In Interviews

- In your view/own words, what is the mission of LHV?
- What is your vision for LHV for the next 5 years? For the next 10 years?
- What is LHV known for, its unique characteristics? What is the level of awareness in the region of LHV? Has the community view of LHV changed in the past 5 years?
- What are LHV's biggest challenges & opportunities in the next 5 years?
- Looking towards the future, what programs/services would you invest in if you had additional resources to further enhance LHV?
- Who are LHV's best partners? Why? What partnerships need to be changed or even stopped?
- Does, and how, does the role of the Board need to change over the next three to five years to ensure that LHV remains a viable, sustainable and valued mission-driven institution?
- In your position, what are your core job responsibilities? Does this align with your skills, abilities, knowledge and interests? What tasks would add/delete from your job responsibilities? What one thing that is getting in the way of your position's productivity?
- If you could add one more staff person tomorrow, what would that position be?
- Is there anything that LHV is doing today that it should stop doing? Why?

Online Stakeholder Surveys Completed

Online Surveys			
<i>Group</i>	<i>Number Invited to Take Survey</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>	<i>Percentage Participation</i>
Board	7	6	86%
Volunteers	118	21	11%
Partners	103	31	30%

Key Findings from Both Surveys & Interviews

Strengths

Highly respected, passionate staff

Trail - Well-known, highly regarded community asset

Strong partner relationships

Staff works well together

Weaknesses

Too trail focused

New Board (5 of 7 members are new)

“Story” of LHV being told is not always well understood by public

Unclear relationship with nonprofit partner

Lack of diversification in financial model

Key Findings from Both Interviews & Surveys

Opportunities

Better tell the story of the history of the region through the trail

Reevaluate events and activities to ensure still align with mission

Partnerships with other heritage areas

Diversify sources of revenue

Challenges

Unclear nonprofit relationship

Maintaining relevance beyond the trail

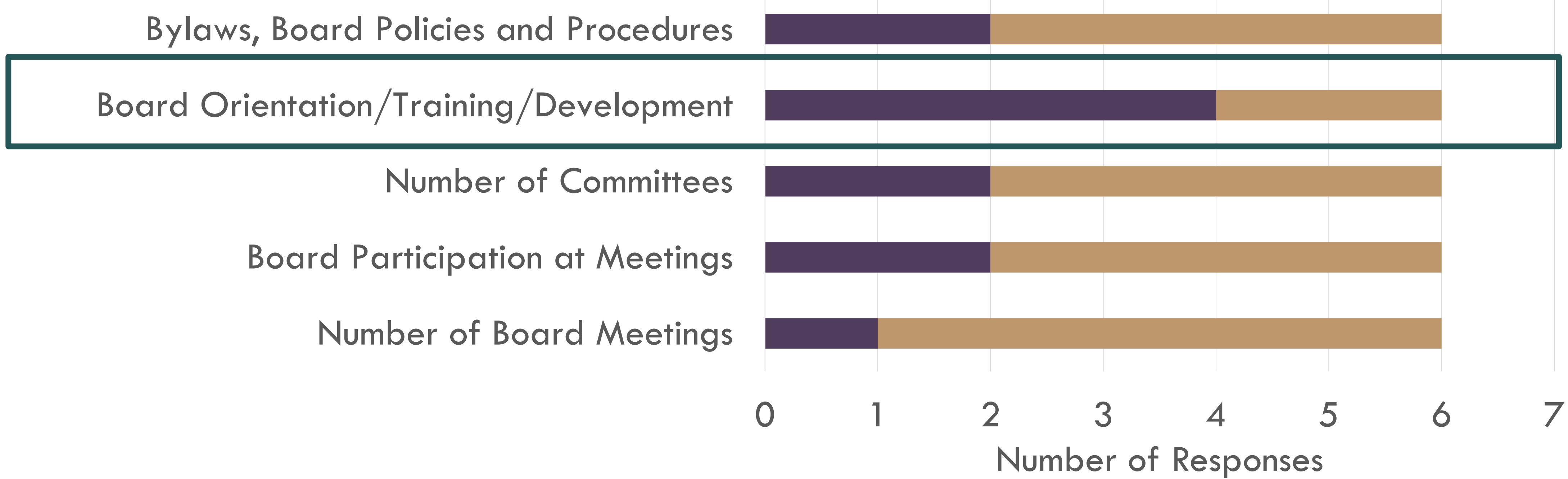
Reauthorization - 2021

Detailed Findings from Authority Board Survey

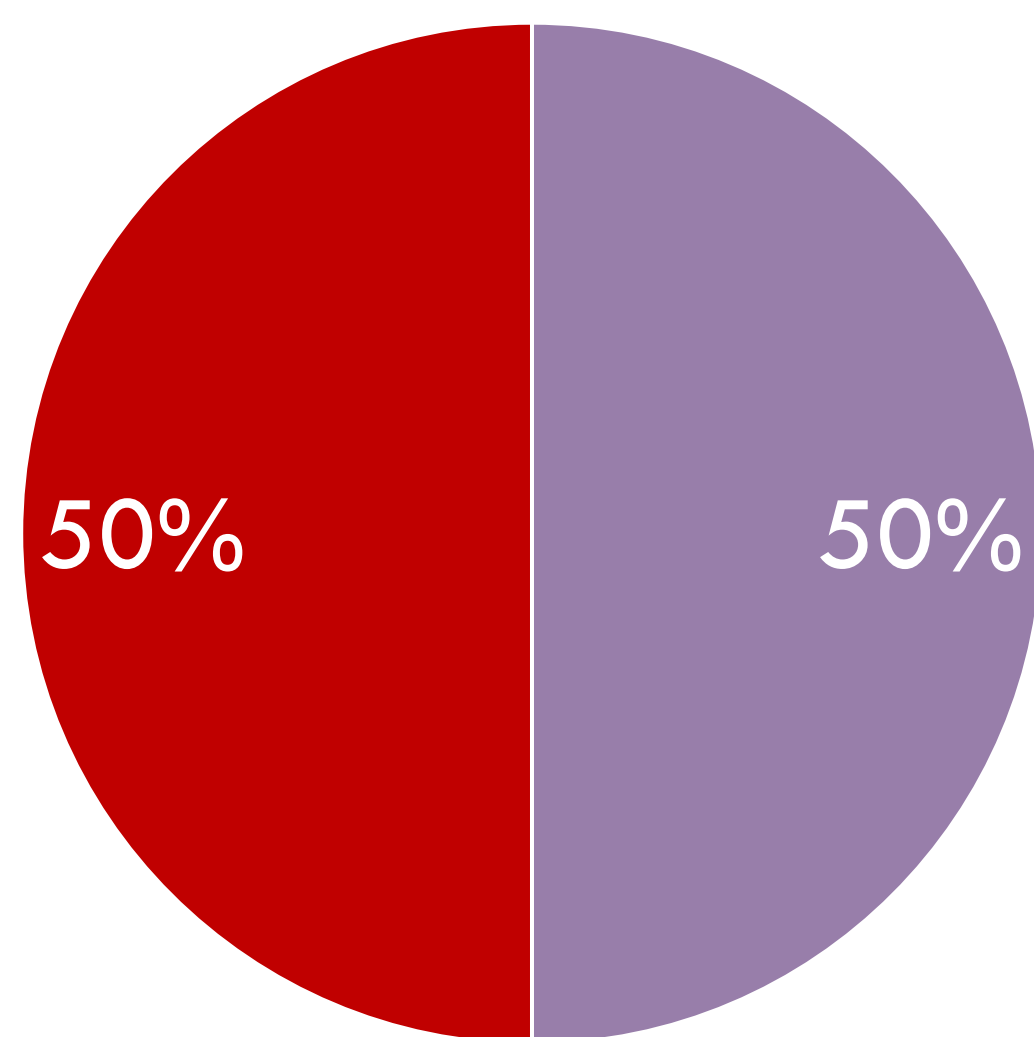
- 6 of 7 LHV Board members responded to the survey
- Most Board members have recently joined
- We asked: How do you define your role as a Board member?
 - Help however I can
 - Guide and support decision making of staff (2 responses)
 - Support fulfillment of mission
 - Serve as liaison between Authority, community and County
 - Provide oversight
- We asked: What about LHV's mission are you most passionate about?
 - LHV's role in promoting our region
 - LHV's role in engaging our current community with our region's history/heritage
 - LHV's role in connecting our community through recreation
 - LHV's role in leveraging recreation and heritage to environmental awareness

Detailed Findings from Authority Board Survey

Evaluating Board Structure



Are Expectations as a Board Member Clear?



■ Yes ■ No

■ Need More ■ Fine as Is

Community Partner Survey

- 31 Responses
- 27 Different Partners Represented

Steamtown
Lackawanna State Park
Lackawanna County Library System
HVP (3 Responses)
Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development
Hilton Scranton & Conference Center
McLane Associates
Linde Corporation
Rep. Marty Flynn
Lackawanna River Conservation Association and Lackawanna Valley Conservancy (2 Responses)
Leo Danylak
PA Environmental Council
Lackawanna County CVB
Leadership Lackawanna
Waverly Community House
ECR
Everhart Museum
Greater Carbondale Chamber of Commerce
Anthracite Bike Coalition
Electric City Trolley Station & Museum
Scranton Public Library
Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission
City of Carbondale Office of Community & Economic Development
Lexington Entertainment
Lackawanna Historical Society
Scranton Public Library
Rail Trail Council of NEPA

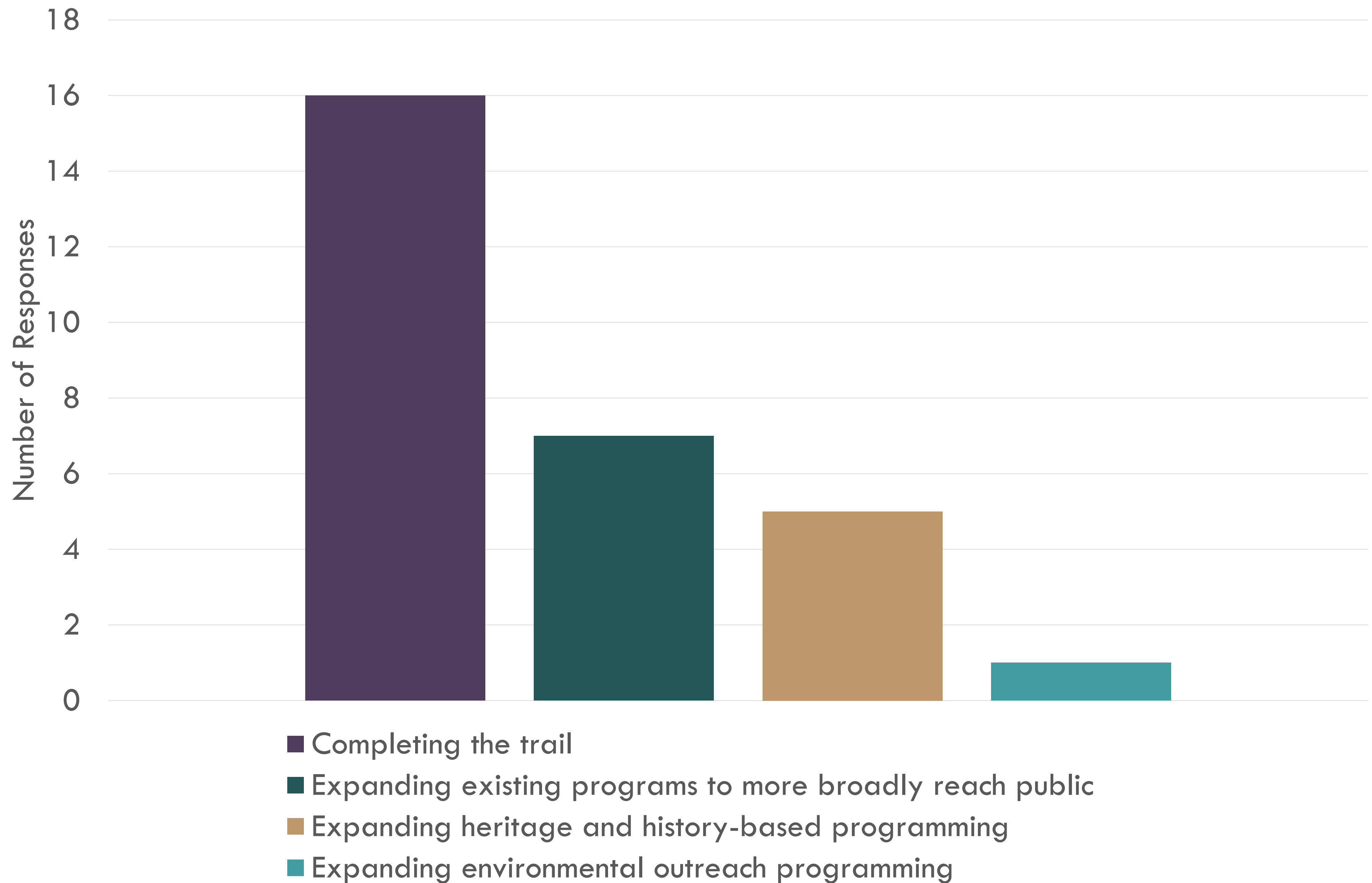


Detailed Findings from Community Partner Survey

- When asked to describe their perception of LHV leadership in the region, respondents were overwhelmingly positive.
- The key comments from an open-ended question were LHV:
 - Has excellent reputation
 - Does respected work
 - Has qualified staff team
 - Is organized and effective
 - Is a community leader

Detailed Findings from Community Partner Survey

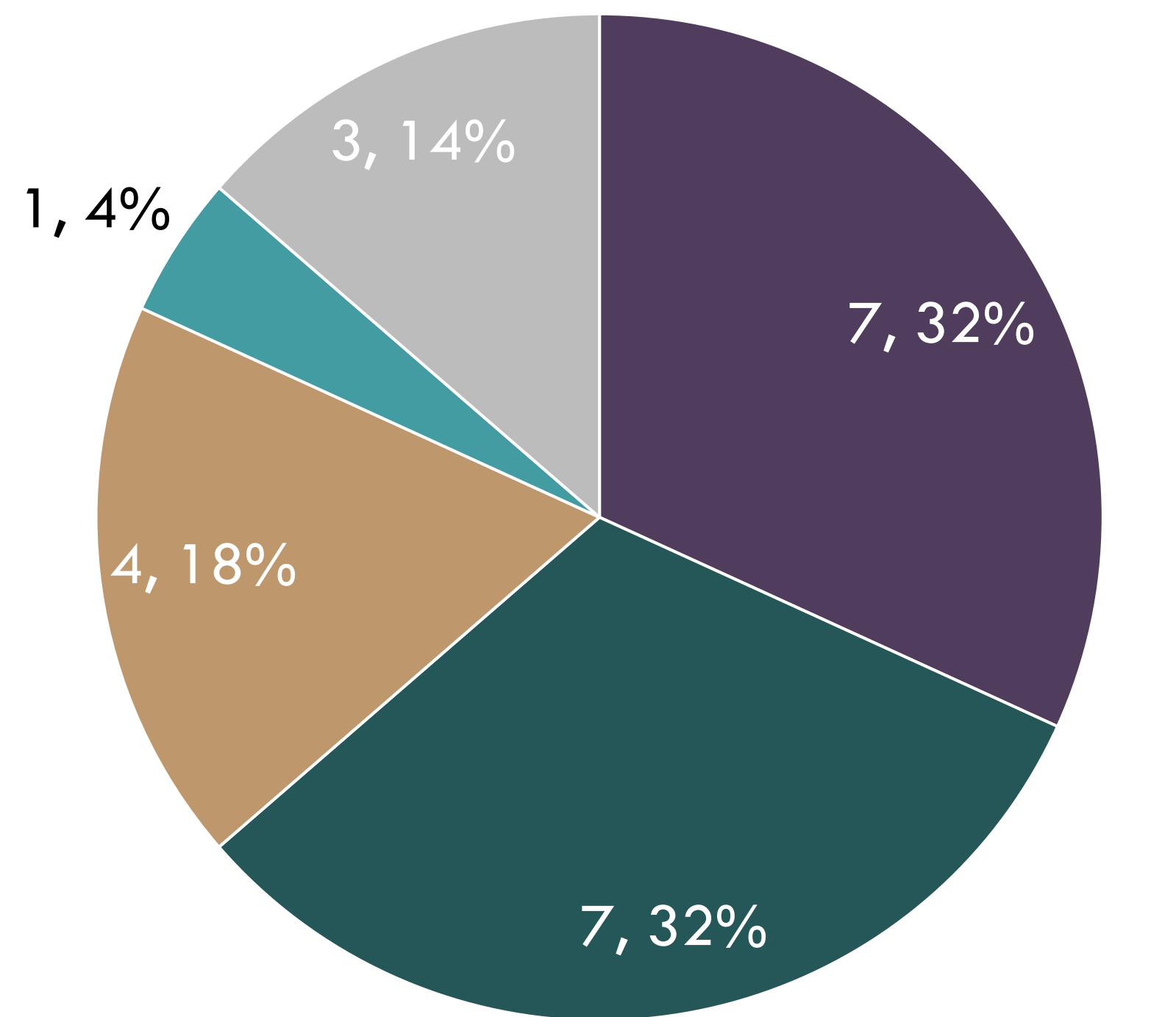
Where would you prioritize investment in LHV's programs or efforts?



Detailed Summary from LHV Volunteer Survey

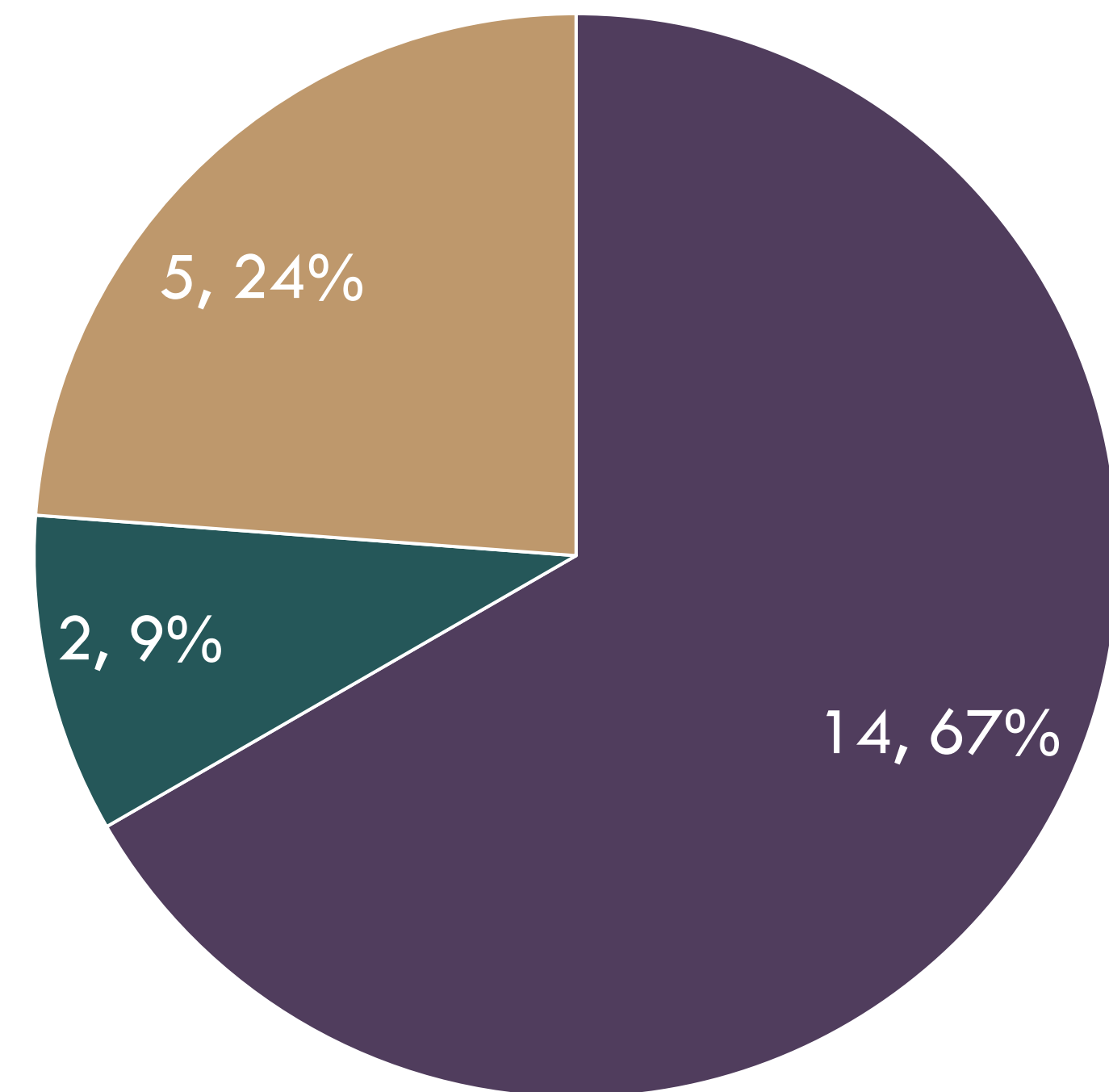
■ 21 Responses

How long have you been a volunteer?



■ Less than one year ■ 1-3 years ■ 4-6 years
■ 7-10 years ■ 10+ years

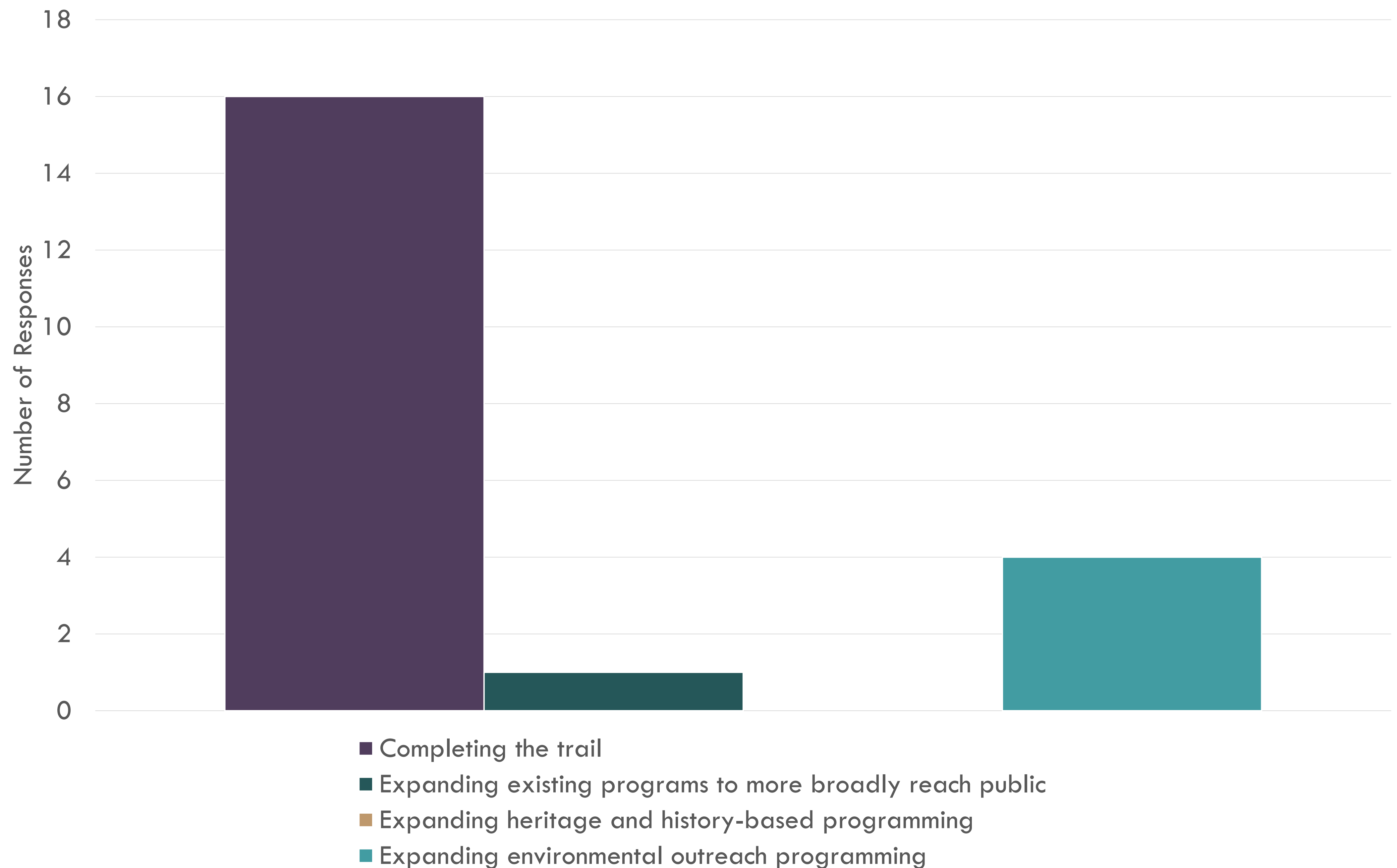
In what capacity do you volunteer?



■ Trail maintenance ■ LHV educational programs ■ Special events

Detailed Summary from LHV Volunteer Survey

Where would you prioritize investment in LHV's programs or efforts?



Baseline Assessment Report

LACKAWANNA HERITAGE VALLEY AUTHORITY

MAY 2020
(FINALIZED AUGUST 2020)

Project Team

Jill Macauley
Catherine Grace



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About the Baseline Assessment

This document is the baseline assessment report and reflects a summary of our initial findings and observations. The assessment will help the LHVA staff team make informed decisions about LHVA's mission, vision, core values, and strategic goals and objectives for the next five years.

Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority: 2020 Strategic Baseline Profiles

From our review of the materials submitted by LHVA, our internal interviews and survey results, we have developed the following strategic profile of LHVA's key baseline characteristics. **This profile, and the related data, will assist in framing LHVA's strategic plan and provide documentation of LHVA's current state in 2020 against which to measure progress as the plan is implemented.**

Facilities

LHVA moved to its current building on Railroad Avenue in 2012. While moving to this new facility shifted the organization away from its previous downtown Scranton location, it has brought the organization closer to the Steamtown National Historic Site, enabling closer alignment between the two organizations. It also provides LHVA with an additional asset, as it owns this facility.

The 40-mile Lackawanna River Heritage Trail links with the Northeast Pennsylvania Rail-Trail Council's D&H Rail Trail to form the 70-mile Lackawanna River Heritage Trail System, traversing Luzerne, Lackawanna, Susquehanna and Wayne Counties. Lackawanna Heritage Valley has worked closely with the Rail-Trail Council on development, maintenance, and programming and hopes to build upon this relationship to continue serving its more rural communities and provide for wider-reaching joint initiatives throughout the Lackawanna River watershed.

The ultimate goal for the Trail and a major priority for LHVA is to close all existing gaps so that users can be connected via a network of trails running from Southern Pennsylvania all the way into New York state. LHVA staff have been working for years to close these gaps and maintain existing segments. In doing this work, LHVA assumes the unusual role, relative to most other heritage areas, of owning the trail assets. This includes the pavilions at the Olive Street Trailhead and at the Laurel Street Trailhead, as well as the Nay Aug Avenue Natural Play Area and pavilion.

With regard to other facilities that LHVA owns, there is a 13-acre parcel of land in Carbondale, which is currently under contract for purchase. It is estimated that the sale of this land could generate \$600,000 in revenue for LHVA if the sale is finalized in early 2021.

Organizational Structure

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority was established in 1991 and became Pennsylvania's first State Heritage Park. In 2000, it was designated by Congress as a National Heritage Area. The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority is the coordinating entity of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area.

With a federal designation as a National Heritage Area, this places it within the National Park Service family. Currently, every five years, all heritage areas need to be re-designated by Congress. LHVA's re-designation is due in 2021. It is anticipated that LHVA will receive its re-designation, maintaining its status as a national heritage area, as well as its associated National Park Service funding.

Lackawanna County enacted the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority to serve as the management entity of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area. The Lackawanna County Commissioners oversee appointments to the organization's Board of Directors. County officials are regularly involved with daily operations, projects and programs, and the short- and long-term direction of the Authority and its initiatives. Under County leadership, a number of County departments, including Parks and Recreation and the Lackawanna County Visitors Bureau, work closely with LHVA to develop and maintain resources, ensure safety, and provide a robust and welcoming experience for residents and visitors of the heritage area.

The status as an authority allows LHVA to develop capital projects, acquire and operate property and other facilities, and receive public funds. While that status has benefitted the organization, most notably in its efforts related to the Trail, it has also presented difficulty with securing additional sources of funding, particularly in the form of private, contributed support. As a result, Heritage Valley Partners (now known as Valley in Motion), a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, was formed in 2008 as a strategy to raise private support through fundraising.

Nonprofit Leadership

At the time it was formed, the LHVA Executive Director also served as the Executive Director of Heritage Valley Partners (HVP). HVP was overseen by a Board of Directors that included business, education and community leaders. In addition, three members of the LHVA Board simultaneously sat on the HVP Board.

HVP was formed to be the non-profit development arm of LHVA so that LHVA would have access to funding otherwise unavailable to a municipal authority, with its activities and projects running parallel to LHVA's programs, enabling LHVA to participate in activities and programs from which it is precluded due to its status as a municipal authority.

Today, HVP is now operating as Valley in Motion with its own Executive Director. This new ED and the Board are functioning as a fully separate and independent organization from LHVA that intends to pursue its own mission and vision aimed at supporting and advancing Lackawanna County's quality of life. Through our one-on-one interviews, HVP/Valley in Motion staff and Board articulated a clear desire to continue a partnership with LHVA. However, as part of this strategic planning process, the relationship will need to be further explored and a decision around a potential future partnership clearly articulated.

LHVA Leadership

LHVA has a Board, comprised of seven members, all of whom are appointed by the Lackawanna County Commissioners. Currently, five of these members were new to the

Authority Board as of October 2019. The two longer-tenured members have been involved with LHVA for many years.

The LHVA Authority Board is responsible for overseeing contracts, finances and major grantmaking. In addition to this official capacity, the Board members are also ambassadors for LHVA and would ideally leverage their personal networks to promote and publicize LHVA and its programs and initiatives.

With such a large proportion of the LHVA Board new to the organization, it has taken some time to get them fully oriented to and knowledgeable about LHVA. This has been even further complicated as a result of the ongoing health pandemic. Once they are fully onboarded, LHVA staff leadership is confident that Board members will be fully engaged and effective ambassadors within the community. The strategic planning process will be helpful with providing the new members with further orientation, clarification around their role and potentially encouraging greater engagement as ambassadors and advocates for LHVA.

LHVA Staffing

LHVA currently has six full-time and one part-time staff members. While in the last several years there has been some turnover in staff, the current staff team has demonstrated both internally and externally that they are a passionate, dedicated and effective group that accomplishes a great deal with limited resources.

Given that LHVA is a smaller organization, staff members must wear many “hats” in their respective roles. We will explore throughout the rest of the strategic planning process whether adding staff or evaluating the current staff structure would help enhance and further maximize staff capacity.

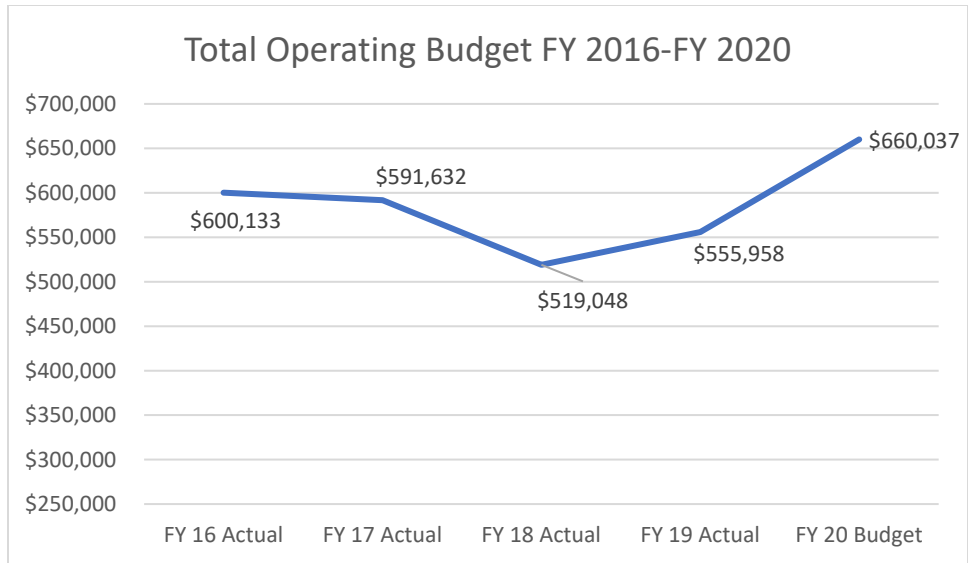
LHVA Volunteers

Ambassadors in Action are the volunteer corps of LHVA. Volunteers support LHVA’s operations with trail clean-up, heritage events, office support and more. LHVA’s corps of volunteers has grown over the years. While the recently completed online survey showed that the majority of volunteers support LHVA via trail maintenance and clean-up, this group is very dedicated and critical to LHVA’s operations.

Financials

Operating Budget

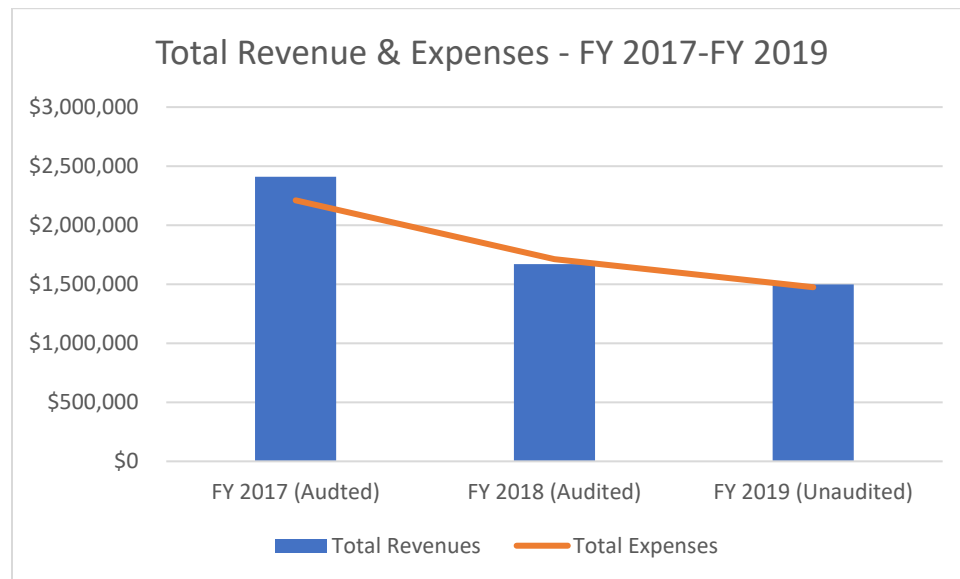
The following chart outlines the annual operating expenses associated with LHVA:



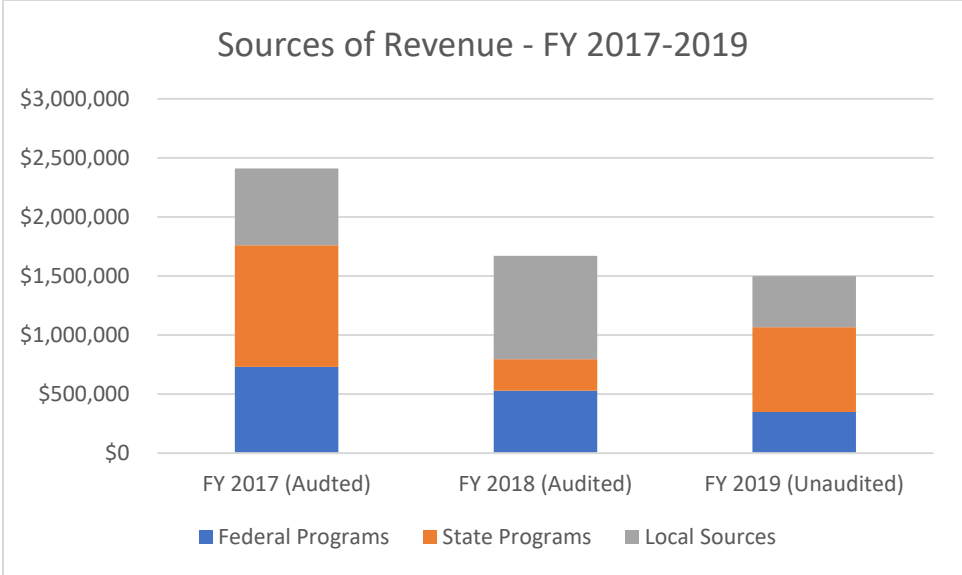
LHVA’s operating budget decreased 13.5% from FY 2016 through FY 2018. It then increased 7.1% in FY 2019 from the previous year. These changes appear to be largely due to a decrease in salaries and benefits, with associated departures and hiring of new staff.

Source: LHVA Budgets

Revenue



The chart on previous page shows that total revenue has decreased each year from FY 2017 through FY 2019. The chart below shows that this is due to a decrease in both federal and local sources of revenue.



Source: LHVA Audited Financials 2017, 2018 and P&L 2019

Operations

Lackawanna River Heritage Trail

As mentioned above, LHVA has committed to closing all existing gaps on the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. Staff is also committed to its ongoing maintenance to ensure it remains a high-quality asset that can connect communities throughout the counties it serves. Currently, LHVA is in the process of working on four sections of trail, all of which are funded. As of early March 2020, only two of these segments, the Marvine Trail Section and Lackawanna Avenue Connector, are set to be bid in 2020. It is unclear at this time how the ongoing public health crisis will impact the timing of these proposed projects.

In addition, there are five additional segments that have been proposed but where the land to connect the trail needs to be acquired and/or where funding needs to be secured. In addition, many of these remaining sections pose the greatest difficulties as the trail passes through private property where it either isn't possible to directly connect the trail or where significant negotiation is required with the current owner.

Some recently completed segments have helped to connect critical areas of the trail and have brought greater visibility to the Trail itself and to LHVA. For instance, the recently completed Scranton Half Marathon Pavilion at the Olive Street Trailhead offers a gathering spot for community events that aren't necessarily weather dependent. Currently, a high percentage of LHVA's programming occurs at this spot. As a result, staff would like to similarly promote and leverage assets like the Pavilion on other segments of the trail, especially for areas outside of Scranton.

Trail-Related Programming

In May 2018, the Carbondale Riverwalk was completed. At the same time, Lackawanna Heritage Valley expanded their existing and popular free bikeshare program to include BikeCarbondale, featuring lending sites at the Carbondale YMCA and Anthracite Hotel. The free bikeshare program now includes sharing sites at two hotels, a bike shop, coffee shop, one university, a YMCA center and LHVA headquarters.

In 2018 & 2019, there were independently organized group bike rides, which took place on a weekly basis throughout various sections of the Trail. These rides take place from May through October with the help of an LHVA volunteer. This also integrates the support from a former bike shop operator, who offers riders sessions on bike maintenance.

In addition, the University of Scranton's Physical Therapy Department and the local chapter of Individual Abilities in Motion partnered with LHVA to develop an adaptive bike share program to make the program inclusive.

There are opportunities for LHVA to make stronger connections between the Trail and health and wellness initiatives. Given the current global health crisis and the significant associated increase in the use of the Trail, communities are showing a greater

appreciation for these types of vital community assets. This is an opportunity that will be further explored throughout the remainder of the strategic planning process.

LHVA also offers a Heritage Explorer Bike Tour, which is a full-day event that occurs annually. The event offers riders an opportunity to take in beautiful scenery and learn about the region's history while exploring the River Trail with family and friends.

Arts and culture are also featured along the Trail with sculptures and other works of art showcased along the Trail.

LHVA sees the Trail as its venue for programming and delivering on its mission. As more sections of the trail are completed and subsequently, more infrastructure is in place, there is an opportunity to better leverage the Trail as its venue or forum for telling the story of the region's history, heritage and impact.

Educational Programming

LHVA offers Heritage Ambassadors, a rolling classroom that takes participants to key heritage sites throughout the region. Currently, this program is only open to business representatives and high school students. It provides an opportunity to educate and bring greater awareness to representatives from a wide variety of industries so that they can help promote the region's assets. There is potential for this program to be expanded to a wider range of audiences.

In recent years, LHVA offered a wider range of educational programming to students throughout the community. They currently work closely on programming with elementary students, including environmental workshops and outings at historic sites. However, with increased state mandates and standardized testing as well as decreased transportation budgets, getting students to the Trail or other community destinations has become increasingly difficult.

Other Programming

LHVA offers a variety of other programs, including heritage train excursions and the annual Santa Train event. Many of these programs are executed in partnership with other organizations in the region. For instance, train-related programming typically involves partnership with the Steamtown National Historic Site and the Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Railroad Authority.

LHVA has two small grants programs: educational mini-grants and partnership grants. The educational mini-grants program is funded by the National Park Service. The program offers grants up to \$1,000 to educators developing projects that either promote students' understanding and appreciation of the region's heritage and/or develop students' understanding of their role as caretakers of the environment. Partnership grants are also funded by the National Park Service. These grants are awarded, up to \$5,000, to qualifying organizations proposing projects that preserve or promote cultural, historic, community, natural resources, or ethnic traditions or folkways. The mini grants program is currently being assessed as how to maximize impact in the community.

Partnerships

One of the primary commitments of LHVA is to facilitate partnerships and leverage them to strengthen and maximize local capacity. LHVA partners with a wide range of organizations, including federal, state and local agencies, recreation organizations, museums and historical sites, arts, culture and heritage institutions, environmental and conservation-related organizations, schools, libraries and even private businesses.

The partnership relationships include those from whom LHVA receives funds, organizations to whom they grant funds through the mini grants program, and others with whom they collaborate on programming and events.

In addition, LHVA has critical relationships with its two primary funders: the National Park Service (NPS) and the PA Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR).

LHVA also facilitates a monthly meeting of the region's arts and culture, historic, heritage and community organizations via a Partner's Roundtable. These monthly meetings provide a forum and opportunity for greater collaboration among the region's cultural, historic and community organizations. Not only does it allow for participating organizations to be better aware of how other organizations are serving the region, but it will also allow them to collectively strategically tackle community issues together. The leadership role of LHVA within the Partner's Roundtable will be a strategic opportunity discussed during the remainder of the planning process.

Fundraising

LHVA's fundraising efforts are largely events-based and include such events as bike tours and more. They have also instituted regular donations through annual information dispersion and online initiatives. LHVA does receive support from a handful of grantmakers; this support has gone through HVP as a passthrough for LHVA.

Going forward, LHVA recognizes that fundraising and efforts to solicit more funding through private, contributed sources will need to be of greater priority in order to diversify its funding model.

Marketing & Advertising

LHVA is prohibited from formally marketing or advertising its programs and services. As a result, staff have made significant use of social media in order to build visibility and awareness of itself as an organization, promote the Trail and inform the community about its programming. Staff have effectively used social media, creating nearly 1 million impressions in the last year alone on Facebook. Each of the social media platforms it uses saw growth in the last year, as illustrated in the chart below.

FACEBOOK

Lackawanna River Heritage Trail:

Audience Metrics	Totals	% Change
Fans	5,860	17.29%
Net Page Likes	850	11.26%
Organic Page Likes	980	10.11%
Paid Page Likes	0	0.00%
Page Unlikes	130	3.17%

Lackawanna Heritage Valley:

Audience Metrics	Totals	% Change
Fans	2,480	11.51%
Net Page Likes	249	22.06%
Organic Page Likes	303	21.69%
Paid Page Likes	0	100.00%
Page Unlikes	54	17.39%

TWITTER (@LackawannaHVA):

1,888 Current Followers (+87)

Following: 363

INSTAGRAM (@LackawannaHVA):

1,156 Current Followers (+207)

Following: 106 (↑ 9.3%)

These efforts on social media have also enabled LHVA staff to collect relevant data regarding who is most likely to engage online with the organization. This can be helpful to informing a “profile” of the average online LHVA supporter. Across most platforms, LHVA’s strongest demographic is women ages 35-44. This group has the highest potential to see LHVA content and visit its associated pages. However, by using multiple social media platforms, LHVA staff have been able to reach additional audiences, including men between the ages of 25-34 and women ages 55-64.

Taking into consideration the restrictions on formal marketing and advertising efforts, community impact and increasing visibility will be discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of the strategic planning process.

Benchmarking

To help frame the strategic conversations, we identified four organizations that could offer background and new thinking around many of the opportunities and challenges LHVA is facing. RS&S worked with LHVA staff to identify these organizations.

While it is important to note that no two heritage areas are alike, the benchmarking information can be used to as a frame of reference and to help inform future strategic discussions.

In this benchmarking analysis, we spoke with the following individuals:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
August Carlino	President & CEO, Rivers of Steel
Elissa Garofalo	Executive Director, The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
Patrick Starr	Executive Vice President, Southeast Region, Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Rivers of Steel

About

Rivers of Steel showcases the artistry and innovation of our region’s industrial and cultural heritage through its historical and 21st Century attractions – offering unique experiences via tours, workshops, exhibitions, festivals, and more.

Rivers of Steel also supports economic revitalization – working on the grassroots level to deepen community partnerships, promote heritage tourism, and preserve local recreational and cultural resources for future generations.

Program Evolution

Rivers of Steel has grown to 60 staff members. Most of this growth was organic and somewhat unexpected rather than planned and overtly strategic. The organization didn’t expect to get involved directly in tourism-related services; however, given restrictions with the Convention and Tourism Bureau (i.e., can’t recommend one destination over another because supposed to promote all Pittsburgh-area amenities and organizations equally), an opportunity presented itself for Rivers of Steel to develop a receptive tourism services program where they can package and promote multi-day trips for tourists to visit their sites. This program has been highly successful and generates earned revenue for the organization.

Over the past several years, Rivers of Steel leadership recognized that the graffiti on some of its older industrial sites presented an opportunity to add an arts-related component to its programming. Leadership applied for and received a grant to develop and launch an urban arts program where they work with local artists and support their development.

Rivers of Steel is fundamentally organized as a community development organization while at the same time having a structure that allows it to be flexible and responsive to appropriate opportunities. This enables it to strive to be self-sustaining and to diversify its funding as much as possible.

Regarding its status as a heritage area, Rivers of Steel sees its heritage-related programming as one piece of its larger mission, rather than fitting its mission into a more “traditional” heritage area mission.

Key Challenges

Funding is always a primary challenge. Because Rivers of Steel defines itself more broadly than a heritage area and ultimately as a community development organization, it is the lowest funded heritage area in the state of Pennsylvania.

Taking a narrow perspective regarding an organization’s mission and subsequently “putting blinders on” to what you should/can do leads to a more restrictive mindset, particularly for heritage areas.

Opportunities/Efforts Supporting Continued Growth

Ongoing lobbying and advocacy efforts are extremely important. Many leaders think it’s enough to visit Washington, DC once a year during the annual conference. However, it’s important to go more regularly to meet with Committee staff members. This enables leaders to remain front of mind and visible and as a result, have more awareness and influence with informing and shaping policy. These relationship-building efforts should also be occurring with state and local officials, as well.

The Executive Director of Rivers of Steel defines his primary responsibility as creating policy and direction for where his organization will be going, working with staff to define those directives and then turning it over to staff to execute. He defines his other key responsibilities as fundraising, keeping key officials aware of the organization’s policy initiatives and being strategic in how to position his organization going forward. He feels that more Executive Directors need to assume these responsibilities rather than spending most of their time “rolling up their sleeves” alongside staff members.

The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor

About

The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) is a diverse, multi-faceted organization and a multi-use trail spanning 165 miles from the mountains of northeast Pennsylvania through the Lehigh Valley and Bucks County.

The D&L works to preserve and revitalize historic places and landmark towns, conserve green space for public use, document and interpret our heritage, celebrate our community and region, and create partnerships and programs for long-term sustainability.

Program Evolution

In recent years, D&L has shifted toward a more traditional nonprofit model while simultaneously embracing a more entrepreneurial mindset with regard to partnership and diversifying sources of revenue. Since heritage areas have broad, sprawling missions, D&L leadership wished to avoid mission creep and, from the beginning of the current Executive Director's tenure, took a very strategic, focused approach to executing their mission.

In this approach, D&L leadership convened focus groups and engaged in planning around where the organization was at the time and where it wanted to go. Leadership did this by electing to focus more on core projects and programs.

Since then, D&L has merged with the National Canal Museum. D&L has taken on programming that was more forward-facing to the public. This includes operating the canal boat and field trips. This shift has worked well for D&L and has enabled the organization to develop earned sources of revenue, helping to stabilize and diversify their financial model.

In its shift toward a more traditional nonprofit model, D&L leadership spent a great deal of time building their Board of Directors, cultivating a group of community leaders who are now very engaged and supportive of the organization. This has been another key evolution that has supported D&L's recent successes.

Key Challenges

D&L leadership must regularly help people understand what it is that they do with regard to their core activities and how they act as a convener (i.e., convene trail groups, municipal groups, etc.). D&L has a council of trail owners with whom they facilitate regular conversations and help build capacity where they can.

Another key challenge is funding, particularly with maintaining support at the federal level.

Opportunities/Efforts Supporting Continued Growth

D&L leadership is looking to partner with other counties to bring in a circuit rider to work on a specific area that would otherwise be a very heavy lift for their staff. The State will pay for this the first year with each subsequent year decreasing. D&L is hoping to bring in help for this aspect of work because it involves building community and trail connections in a diverse and financially challenged area. This is unlike anything D&L has had to address previously and so the outside support will help inform their thinking and support their efforts.

For D&L leadership, the trail is what connects the story, the people and the community. Leadership has used the trail as a great connector in the stories, to health programs, to supporting the local towns and businesses and the nationally significant story.

Pennsylvania Environmental Council

About

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) protects and restores the natural and built environments through innovation, collaboration, education and advocacy. PEC believes in the value of partnerships with the private sector, government, communities and individuals to improve the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians.

Program Evolution

In recent years, PEC has worked to build more regional collaborations with multiple nonprofits working together on projects whether across a landscape or supporting trail networks. PEC has also gotten involved recently in more watershed collaborations.

This has been a natural evolution for PEC, particularly because foundations want to see alignment among the goals that they fund. The work gets done more effectively and efficiently when groups are working collaboratively rather than at cross purposes. Foundations are starting to drive that.

Key Challenges

It's problematic for PEC (and other nonprofit organizations) that there isn't much funding available for true collaboration. Funders like to hear about collaboration, but they are often results- and metrics-oriented. Collaboration, to be truly effective, has to be purposeful and result in something; however, those outcomes aren't always quantifiable.

That dichotomy creates an ongoing need to demonstrate the value of a project or of PEC itself in order to articulate impact or qualify for funding. This can be very difficult because attendance at an event, for instance, doesn't demonstrate real change, investment or engagement. It doesn't show what has been accomplished. PEC tries to look at more obvious metrics such as miles of trail that are built or investment in specific water quality projects. It's a never-ending challenge around how to justify an organization's existence.

As with the other benchmarked institutions, funding is also a persistent challenge, as there is never enough funding to fully execute an organization's mission.

Opportunities/Efforts Supporting Continued Growth

PEC is aggressively pushing trail funding from sources that are considered less traditional. In addition, PEC wants to have a greater role in economic development. Some see environmental stewardship as being in opposition to economic development. PEC has been pursuing trail or river towns and "packaging" them as outdoor towns. The focus is about cultivating communities and relationships with natural resources and outdoor recreation infrastructure and persuading those towns to see it as an economic development opportunity. It's about getting towns to see that if there is good access to recreational assets, then that's something to promote and "sell."

Some of the towns along the trail are interested in outdoor trails. It's a way to help promote a specific region. A trail has so many opportunities that can be leveraged. PEC wants to encourage LHVA to continue working with towns along the trail to keep them engaged and ready for when the trail is completed. Local support and sponsorship are key to an integrated experience that helps to build community.

PEC is also working to push skill building and encourage watershed outreach organizations to increase their effectiveness and become better aligned with regulatory organizations around PA.

For PEC, collaboration is about being purpose oriented. It's not particularly helpful to get together for simple information sharing – there needs to be a greater purpose. PEC sees an opportunity for the NEPA Trails Forum, which is co-facilitated by LHVA to have more direction and advance a greater purpose.

Conclusion

As stated previously, this Assessment Report not only documents the current state of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area in early 2020, but it also serves as a benchmark against which leadership can measure progress as the new strategic plan is implemented.

With the preparation and assessment phases of the strategic planning process complete, we will continue to engage LHVA staff in discussions around mission, vision and strategic goals. We will then help finalize the goals and define the objectives and action steps required to achieve each goal over the next five years.

Next, we will organize and prioritize the strategic framework into a draft framework which will then be tested externally with groups of key stakeholders. We will continue our work with LHVA staff to develop the strategic action plan, which will outline the specific action steps needed to complete each goal as well as responsible individuals and timeframes for completion for each action step.

At the conclusion, a final report will be developed, capturing all steps in the process as well as the final action plan, which will serve as an implementation “roadmap” guiding leadership for the next five years.

Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

Strategic Framework

Mission: *The Mission of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley is to facilitate community action in the preservation, promotion and development of the region’s history, cultural heritage and natural resources.*

Vision: *Honor the Lackawanna Valley’s industrial legacy by fostering a proud regional identity connected through the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, the Watershed’s natural resources, and region’s cultural heritage of the past, present, and future.*

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: (Trail) Continue to expand the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail and leverage it for connectivity to the region’s assets.

1.1. Trail: Continue to build the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail linking communities of the region together.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.1.1. Lackawanna Avenue Bellevue Connector - Create safe trail access to downtown Scranton from the 7th Avenue Trailhead	2021	Mileage of new trail built Funding secured for trail projects
1.1.2. Marvine Trail Project: Closing 1-mile gap in the trail in Scranton	2021	Mileage of new trail in diverse and underserved neighborhoods
1.1.3. Evaluate opportunities to develop trail links that reach into diverse and underserved communities.	2021	
1.1.4. Dickson City Trail Project: Close a 1-mile gap in the trail in Dickson City	2021	
1.1.5. Mayfield Trailhead Development: Establish a new trailhead and connection at the Chestnut Street Trailhead	2022	
1.1.6. Carbondale Crossing Trail Project: Create a safe crossing at the Meredith Street Trailhead	2022	
1.1.7. Dickson City RR Trail: Fill in .5 mil trail gap in Dickson City	2022	
1.1.8. Olyphant Loop Trail: 1 Mile loop trail in Olyphant along Eddy Creek	2022	

1.1.9.	Carbondale Crossing Trail Development: Construct a 1-mile section of trail in Carbondale Township/Carbondale City	2022	
1.1.10.	"Stone Property" Development – Easement Acquisition/Develop and construct a corridor linking Boulevard Ave. and Eagle Lane in Dickson City.	2022	
1.1.11.	Scranton Tunnel Project: rehabilitate the former Cliff Street underpass. Entering near the Lackawanna Avenue Colts Intermodal site and linking to the Lackawanna County Trolley Museum/Steamtown NHS, in order to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.	2023	
1.1.12.	Pittston Riverfront Extension: Construct a 1-mile section of trail in Pittston back to Duryea	2023	
1.1.13.	Providence Connection: Connect a loop trail in Scranton from Poplar Street up to Market Street in partnership with the LRCA	2023	
1.1.14.	Roaring Brook – Scranton Sewer Authority Trail from the South Side Flats at Washington Avenue toward Cedar Avenue and the Scranton-Keystone Iron Furnaces and onward up to the University of Scranton.	2023	
1.1.15.	Develop a trail from Taylor South: Using findings from feasibility study, build 5 Miles of trail between Taylor and Duryea with no plan of being developed in 2020.	2023	
1.1.16.	FLAP Project: Construct a pedestrian and bicyclist span from the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail linking to the Steamtown NHS near the Lackawanna Trolley Museum.	2024	
1.1.17.	Poplar – Parker Connection: Connect a Loop Trail from Poplar St to Market St following the Green Ridge Street bridge replacement and continue along the former O&W Rail corridor through the Green Ridge plot Section to the new Parker Street Bridge and Parker Street Trailhead.	2024	
1.1.18.	Scranton levee paving project: With input from Army Corp, pave the sections of trail in the Scranton levee system that are part of the trail	2025	

Estimated Financial Impact	Responsible Staff Members
Land acquisition	Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager
Material and construction for new trailhead and additional trail miles	
Engineering and design costs	

1.2 Relevance of Trail Projects: Analyze the efficacy, funding and timing constraints related to trail projects and maintenance to ensure that projects are occurring in a way that maximizes potential and delivers the highest quality outcomes.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.2.1. Analyze all existing trail-related funding and outline expiration dates on funding to ensure funding is used to the fullest	Ongoing	Increased leveraging of funds Amount of new land acquired for trail projects
1.2.2. Identify trail projects that have the opportunity to seek matching funds	Ongoing	
1.2.3. Analyze trail maintenance tools and resources and seek opportunities to increase maintenance capacity	Ongoing	
1.2.4. Seek additional land for more trail projects	Ongoing	

Estimated Financial Impact	Responsible Staff Members
Land acquisition	Executive Director, Director of Operations, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager
Maintenance equipment	

1.3. Health & Wellness: Connect trail to community related health and wellness initiatives to foster an overall healthier Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority region.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.3.1 Leverage web-based cellphone app to create strong connections to health and wellness	ongoing	Number of health and wellness programs occurring in connection with the trail
1.3.2 Identify potential links between the Trail and existing regional health and wellness programs.	ongoing	
1.3.3 Leverage existing pavilions/play areas to host more programs along the trail and identify	ongoing	

additional areas for play areas/pavilions to support health and wellness initiatives		
1.3.4 Explore potential partnerships with existing health and wellness programs	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact Funding for new programming Costs associated with tailoring app to align with health and wellness initiatives		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

1.4. Recreation: Leverage Trail-based recreation for connection to sites of cultural and historical relevance.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.4.1 Evaluate signage along the trail to help trail users understand the historical and cultural significance around them – use social media to gather trail user feedback	2021	Feedback from trail users on signage
1.4.2 Create a handout or message points to share with all participants about LHVA and the region’s history at any non-LHVA events hosted along the trail	2021	Frequency of sharing LHVA’s message with non-LHVA event participants
1.4.3 Identify opportunities to further integrate the region’s history and cultural relevance into recreational events hosted on the trail and provide LHVA materials for events	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact Cost to develop and distribute handouts Promotional event materials Fabrication and installation of signage		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager

1.5. Tourism: Leverage Trail to promote the Lackawanna region, encouraging “Heritage Tourism” within the County and those from outside the area.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.4.4 Ensure that LHVA is well-represented in local tourism literature and refresh messaging as needed	Ongoing	Followers on LHVA social media from outside the County
1.4.5 Develop consistent messaging that positions the Trail as a vital community and quality-of-life asset	Ongoing	Frequency of updated materials
1.4.6 Work with partner organizations to designate the Lackawanna River as a “Water Trail”.	2023	The Lackawanna River becomes a designated Water Trail
Estimated Financial Impact Water trail studies and consultations		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

1.6. Trail Volunteers: Sustain and support trail maintenance through volunteer activity.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
1.6.1 Seek input from trail volunteers on how to improve their volunteer experience and engagement	Ongoing	Total number of volunteers annually
1.6.2 Identify means to connect trail volunteers with other elements of LHVA’s mission	Ongoing	Number of volunteers that continue year-over-year
1.6.3 Identify opportunities (i.e. gatherings, community spotlights, etc.) to steward trail volunteers and highlight their work	Ongoing	Number of trail volunteers that support LHVA in other means (i.e. donate, event attendance, etc.)
Estimated Financial Impact Funds to host events and other initiatives to steward Trail volunteers		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager

Goal 2: (Community Impact) Expand outreach and programming to link the community with the region’s cultural, historical, and natural resources.

2.1 Program Evaluation: Review existing programs for mission impact, relevance and return on investment.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.1.1 Identify criteria to determine mission impact, relevance and financial viability for existing programming	2021	Demonstrate existing programs mission impact (awareness/participation) and financial impact
2.1.2 Evaluate all current programming against criteria to ensure they align with strategic direction and to inform decisions around which programming will continue	2021	Number of program attendees Percentage growth in program attendees Return on Investment (ROI) on programs
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members All Staff

2.2. Accessibility: Focus on accessibility and programming for diverse groups.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.2.1 Expand relationship with both public and private transportation agency providers for seniors and under-served populations to have greater access to trail	2021	Demonstrate higher outreach to expanded audiences Number of seniors/members of underserved populations who receive transportation
2.2.2 Explore ways to expand LHVA programming to increase accessibility and appeal to more diverse groups (i.e. with mini excursions)	Ongoing	Number of program attendees Percentage growth in number of program attendees
Estimated Financial Impact Expanded programming costs		Responsible Staff Member Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Executive Assistant

2.3. Partner Roundtable: Review the role of the Partner Roundtable and leverage opportunities for the group to have greater collective strategic impact on the region.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.3.1 Develop and deploy a survey to all partners to learn ways to enhance and optimize the Roundtable	2021	Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Roundtable
2.3.2 Identify strategies to enhance the Roundtable meetings to better leverage the opportunity for LHVA to function as a convener and more influential agent of collaboration and change.	Ongoing	
2.3.3 As community wide strategic priorities are identified, link LHVA's partnership-grant application criteria to those identified priorities	2022	
2.3.4 Provide professional education on topics relevant to promotion of our missions and region	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.4. Education: Define LHVA's role in school-age education – connection to school groups and curriculum.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.4.1 Seek feedback about local school, which LHVA is assigned and look to increase programming at that school.	2021	Number of educational outreach programs Number of school age children engaging in LHVA associated programming
2.4.2 Seek methods and greater understanding how teachers/schools are using the Trail currently	2021	
2.4.3 Increase outreach to local teachers to encourage their application to the mini-grant program	2021	
2.4.4 Identify how LHVA connects its programming and messaging to impact educational curriculum, including expanding Heritage Ambassador experience to be for children including exploring digital venues to provide mini-lessons	2021	

2.4.5	Work with local school districts to identify where LHVA could help fill gaps in education	2022	
2.4.6	Determine specific educational program plan for LHVA, including defining staff resources needed to implement program prioritizing schools within walking distance of the Trail and gradually increasing outreach to other regional schools	2023	
2.4.7	Where resources for field trips to the Trail are limited, work with school districts and educational partners to identify ways to bring the Trail to schools and connect them to the region's history and heritage through digital or in-person methods.	Ongoing	
2.4.8	Measure and communicate the educational impact of LHVA to have a greater educational role and solicit funding to support its expansion	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact Expanded Ambassador programming Staff resources to support implementation of education plan Cost of research-related expenses for measuring LHVA's educational impact			Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.5. Ambassadors in Action: Leverage Ambassadors in Action to serve as a committed volunteer base to expand the reach of LHVA through non-Trail activities and programming.			
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact	
2.5.1	Review and update list of needs that could be supported by volunteers	2021	Number of volunteers for non-trail related activities and programming
2.5.2	Review staff resources to manage volunteers and the delegation of volunteer related duties	2021	
2.5.3	Implement strategies to recruit, train and retain committed, effective volunteers	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact Staff resources for volunteer support Funds for volunteer training and recruitment		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant	

2.6. Relationship with Steamtown National Historic Site: Continue collaborating with Steamtown NHS to maximize the mission impact through joint efforts.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.6.1 Identify overlapping strategic priorities between Steamtown NHS and LHVA and seek greater collaboration opportunities to increase mission impact	2021	Number of shared initiatives between LHVA and Steamtown NHS
2.6.2 Integrate Steamtown NHS's story and relevant message points into LHVA programming and signage and strive to help them do the same	2021	
2.6.3 Look to create programmatic and physical connections for Steamtown NHS guests to interact with the LHVA, in particular, the Heritage Trail	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

2.7. Partnership-Grant Program: Seek to increase the community impact of the partnership-grant program.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
2.7.1 Update criteria for partnership-grant program to fund strategically coordinated grants for larger community impact	2021	Collective measurable impact of the partnership-grant program Amount given per year
2.7.2 Determine if a dedicated annual fund is warranted for key partner programs that are integral to LHVA mission. Review every three years so organizations can plan.	2021	
2.7.3 Update criteria for funding more start-up initiatives rather than ongoing initiatives	2022	Cumulative documentation from grant recipients of measurable impact Number of grant applicants vs. number of recipients
2.7.4 Assess the partnership-grant program's connection to historic preservation	2022	
2.7.5 Work with DCNR and NPS to determine whether more funding can be dedicated to the partnership-grant program	2023	

2.7.6 Identify other local partner nonprofits and corporations who might contribute funding to support larger grants through the program	Ongoing	
2.7.7 Conduct grant workshops and reviews to make the process easier to understand for potential applicants and streamline reporting initiatives	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Executive Assistant

Goal 3: (Awareness) Celebrate the region’s rich history and cultural significance today.

3.1. Regional Convener Serve as regional convener to refine a story that unifies the cultural resources of the region and supports tourism.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.1.1 Identify the key themes that unify the partial “stories” that many of the region’s organizations are telling	2021	Number of initiatives to promote the region led by LHVA Percentage growth attendance at Roundtable Number of community wide initiatives coming out of the Partner Roundtable
3.1.2 Develop core messages that bring all the partial “stories” together to a more coherent narrative for the region	2022	
3.1.3 Leverage this messaging to position LHVA as the convener or hub at the center of the “story”	2022	
3.1.4 Leverage the Partner Roundtable and other regional organizations to ensure the messaging across partners is consistent and to collectively refine the message, as needed	2022	
3.1.5 Evaluate LHVA’s role in assisting in additional signage initiatives to share historical and cultural messages throughout the region (beyond Trail)	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

3.2. Media: Use media and other outlets for communicating and connecting all audiences to the relevant history, culture and natural assets of the region.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.2.1 Develop a comprehensive awareness and educational strategy that defines the platforms and outlets by which LHVA can push out its messaging	2021	Number of initiatives to promote the region led by LHVA Placement rate of releases sent out
3.2.2 Work with other cultural attractions and community organizations to determine how to ensure maximum impact of messaging to enhance mutual visibility	2022	
3.2.3 Identify ways LHVA can promote its efforts using contributed funds or in-kind sources of support	Ongoing	

Estimated Financial Impact Educational and informational materials	Responsible Staff Member Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager
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3.3. Tourism: Work to further develop strategies to use the region’s story to continue to attract visitors to the region and all its cultural, historical and recreational attractions.

Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.3.1 Ensure that tourism partners are aware of the messaging that LHVA and respective partners are leveraging to tell the “story” of the region	2021	Number of initiatives in conjunction with regional tourism partners
3.3.2 Seek a more active relationship with tourism partners, in particular the Visitor’s Bureau, to help ensure that messaging around the region’s “story” is aligned with LHVA and its respective partners through updating and providing brochures to tourism partners	2022	
3.3.3 Work with tourism partners, in particular the Visitor’s Bureau, to understand and potentially, help shape, the messages that are likely to most strongly attract visitors to the region	2023	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

<p>3.4. Branding: Explore the need to refresh LHVA’s own brand and tagline to reflect the vision of the organization.</p>		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
3.4.1 Study the public’s inconsistent use of language connecting LHVA and the Trail	2022	Demonstration of a rebrand of LHVA
3.4.2 Identify processes to ensure that LHVA’s and the Trail’s names are being used consistently the correct way	Ongoing	Decrease in misuse of LHVA’s and the Trail’s brand
3.4.3 Explore a formal branding process to update LHVA’s brand and tagline	2023	
<p>Estimated Financial Impact</p> <p>Professional marketing and design consultation for LHVA rebrand</p>		<p>Responsible Staff Members</p> <p>All staff</p>

Goal 4: (Organizational Health) Create a positive, engaged culture that enables staff, Authority Board members, partner organizations, and volunteers to fulfill LHVA’s mission.

4.1. Internal Communications: Assess internal communications and team meeting structure to ensure effective and efficient collaboration.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.1.1 Collect staff feedback on all-staff and committee meeting format and frequency along with regular standing program specific check-in meetings (i.e. trail, funding, etc.)	2021	Frequency of staff or committee meetings
4.1.2 Evaluate and update organizational structure for appropriate division of duties (clearly defined roles who is responsible for what) and cross-training on vital day to day operational needs	2021	
4.1.3 Review and update job titles and descriptions to reflect any changes to organizational structure and clarify responsibilities	2021	
4.1.4 Institute goal setting process as determined by executive director	2021	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
No new incremental costs identified		Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

4.2. Professional Development: Provide thoughtful professional development opportunities for all staff positions.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.2.1 Engage in thoughtful succession planning to ensure contingency plans are in place for all staff members	Ongoing	Cross-training for all staff positions
4.2.2 Work with staff to identify professional development opportunities to support ongoing growth, develop and address any potential gaps in knowledge, skills, etc.	Ongoing	Frequency of professional development activities per year
Estimated Financial Impact Funds to support professional development opportunities		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Fiscal Director, Director of Operations, Authority Board

4.3. Board Development & Engagement: Support active Board leadership, engagement, and development.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.3.1 Conduct update sessions where the strategic direction is discussed in detail as well as how the Board can support advancing LHVA's mission and goals	2021	Board meeting attendance Board participation in projects and events
4.3.2 Develop role descriptions with Authority Board members	2021	Board engagement (measured through annual survey of members)
4.3.3 Revisit onboarding process to ensure Board members can be fully informed about LHVA with information packets	2021	
4.3.4 Create more opportunities for the Authority Board members to interact with staff and each other to strengthen working relationships	Ongoing	
4.3.5 Notify board of special events	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Executive Assistant, Authority Board

4.4. Partnerships: Continue strategic partner organization relationship-building efforts to ensure they remain informed and engaged.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
4.4.1 Prioritize list of partner organizations based on current collaborations and desired future opportunities	2021	Partner satisfaction with LHVA (measured via annual survey) Number of partner events that engage partners
4.4.2 Assign LHVA point of contact to regularly communicate and steward the relationship	2021	Number of invitations from partners for LHVA to participate in their efforts
4.4.3 Collect feedback on partners' relationship with LHVA and how it can be strengthened	Annually	
Estimated Financial Impact No new incremental costs identified		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Executive Assistant

Goal 5: (Funding) Advance financial viability and position LHVA for long-term sustainability.

5.1. Business Planning: Define LHVA’s funding needs, project their timing and impacts and package into a comprehensive case for financial support.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.1.1 Study all trail related funding needs, associated costs, grants secured, timelines on those grants and additional sources to ensure the trail maximizes grants and is completed in the timeliest manner	Annually	List of clear and compelling funding needs
5.1.2 Review annual strategic priorities for LHVA and match with public and private funding opportunities	Annually	
5.1.3 As educational programs are developed and expanded, identify additional implementation costs and seek necessary funding to support increased operational costs	2022	
5.1.4 Develop a comprehensive case for general and trail maintenance support that captures all of LHVA’s funding needs into a compelling narrative that can be used to engage funders and partners to support LHVA	2022	
5.1.5 Ensure the Authority Board is familiar with the case for support and encourage them to share with their networks	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
Funds to support expanded educational programming		All Staff

5.2. Relationship-Building: Engage in a more concerted relationship-building effort and leverage external presence of the brand of LHVA and its Executive Director.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.2.1 Begin to conduct a Trail usage and economic impact study to share with funders and partners	2021	Number of cultivation interactions with donors, funders and public leaders each year Number of new relationships developed with support from Authority Board members Number of new relationships developed from Authority Board members' respective professional networks
5.2.2 Continue to cultivate relationships and engage in active stewardship of County leadership to ensure they are aware of LHVA and regularly updated about programming, progress, needs, etc.	Ongoing	
5.2.3 Engage in active stewardship of Lackawanna County and PA DCNR to ensure mutual awareness of programs and needs	Ongoing	
5.2.4 Identify private funders, both individual and organizational grantmakers, who have the potential to provide philanthropic support to LHVA	Ongoing	
5.2.5 Engage in relationship-building efforts with these potential funders to make them aware of LHVA and its funding needs	Ongoing	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members
Economic impact study Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation		Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Trail & Environmental Projects Manager

5.3. New Funding Sources: Identify new sources of funding to build a diversified financial model.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.3.1 Work with public funding partners and local government to identify whether public funds are available to support key programs and initiatives	Ongoing	New revenue sources and funding received Size of reserve funds Number and amount of corporate sponsorships Percentage annual increase in funds from non-governmental sources
5.3.2 Assess LHVA's fees for programs and events to ensure they are increasing in revenue annually	Annually	
5.3.3 Explore whether the current fee structure adequately covers expenses incurred by LHVA for pavilion rental by a 3 rd party.	2021	

5.3.4	Build reserve funds to further leverage existing reserve funds from land sales and other sources	2021	
5.3.5	Expand effort to seek corporate sponsorships including using trail banners and other awareness building opportunities	2021	
Estimated Financial Impact		Responsible Staff Members	
Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation		Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Community Engagement & Programs Manager, Assistant Fiscal Director	

5.4. Fundraising Capacity: Strengthen LHVA’s capacity to fundraise through a nonprofit partner.		
Action Step	Year	Measurable Impact
5.4.1. Determine the status of the relationship with the prior nonprofit partner.	2021	Determine if a new nonprofit partner is needed
5.4.2. Explore with LHVA’s Solicitor to fully understand the legal implications and considerations that must be taken into account when solidifying a relationship with any nonprofit partner	2021	Private fundraising dollars raised and number of donors
5.4.3. Discuss with the LHVA board their support of new structure	2021	
5.4.4. If determined a new structure is needed, draft key points to structure that a new nonprofit relationship and would serve as basis for memorandum of understanding with a new entity	2021	
5.4.5. If determined a new structure is needed, research potential regional foundations or other regional nonprofits that have the infrastructure to serve as a “pass through” for funding received as a result of LHVA’s fundraising efforts	2021	
5.4.6. Develop message points for conversations with the respective leadership of these foundations to ensure full transparency and clarity regarding what LHVA needs in a nonprofit partner	2021	
5.4.7. If determined a new structure is needed, reach out to and meet with leadership of respective foundations to determine the organizations’ (a)	2022	

willingness to partner with LHVA and (b) fit based on LHVA’s needs		
5.4.8. Outline external message points for announcing LHVA’s nonprofit partner	2022	
5.4.9. Create fundraising plan for LHVA using nonprofit partner	2022	
Estimated Financial Impact Any costs associated with fundraising through a nonprofit partner, including any need for consultation		Responsible Staff Members Executive Director, Director of Operations, Fiscal Director, Board Solicitor, Authority Board