

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2025 - 2027**

**Society for Industrial Archeology**

**Adopted by the SIA Board of Directors – March 15, 2025**

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**Strategic Plan – 2025 - 2027**

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## **A. PREFACE**

The Society for Industrial Archeology's 2025 - 2027 Strategic Plan - the first in many years - is the culmination of an intensive, 18-month planning process.

Behind this strategic plan is the collective recognition that the organization faces several critical challenges including building a younger, more-diverse membership, a need for new and improved program types, reaching new audiences, and more.

This plan is designed to address these challenges, and at the same time improve and coordinate the work of all segments of the organization.

Development of this plan has been informed by survey and planning efforts dating back to the early 2000s including a 2001 retreat, a 2018 member-survey, and a Board self-study that began in 2023. These formal efforts identified critical areas of need. Informal conversations with members and other supporters have validated these critical issues.

SIA Vice President Dave Vago and Board member John Mayer led the planning process and have served as compilers and facilitators. They organized the strategic planning retreat in the fall of 2024, wrote the plan, facilitated collaborative input from Board and committee members, and presented it to the Board for final review and adoption.

The 2025 – 2027 Strategic Plan reaffirms the mission and vision for the SIA and lays out clear and achievable goals for the next three years. This plan is the beginning of a renewed commitment from SIA leadership to create an organization able to serve as a world leader in industrial heritage action.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### About the SIA

The Society for Industrial Archeology (SIA) is the premier organization for industrial heritage, history, and archaeology in North America. Since its founding in 1972, the SIA has built a dedicated community of people and organizations – our members and supporters - interested in these topics. This open, diverse, and distinguished group gathers regularly to share new information about the development, history, and preservation of industrial heritage sites at conferences and tours, through our publications, and as part of other types of programs.

SIA programs support new and original studies that advance knowledge in the field of Industrial Heritage, including the identification, documentation, analysis, interpretation, and preservation of cultural resources that are associated with the history and development of industrial society.

The SIA encourages participation by both avocational and professional members, and by other people and organizations that are engaged in the stewardship of industrial heritage resources.

### The Future of the SIA

The SIA effectively works to build a world where the public understands and appreciates the value of our industrial past, integrates that understanding into everyday perceptions of the local, national, and global environment, and supports the stewardship of industrial heritage resources.

To achieve this vision and to remain sustainable, the SIA needs to strengthen operations, improve program offerings, and reach and engage a broader audience. It can do this by building upon the core offerings that have made the SIA unique and relevant to our members. This renewal will build upon what SIA does well and make it stronger, more relevant, and more sustainable:

***Reaching and engaging a broader audience*** - To increase its impact, the SIA should connect with a new and larger audience. We can achieve this by exploring and showcasing the often-hidden stories of industrial heritage. In so doing, SIA programs will inspire a world where the public engages with the industrial past—where our audience is familiar with industrial heritage, makes connections between resources and their context, and draws important meaning from them.

***Improving program offerings*** - These new and re-energized programs will increase public recognition of the importance of industrial heritage in our culture. New programs will facilitate new collaborative partnerships and draw from other disciplines. The more people engaged with industrial heritage (and with each other), the better opportunities for this audience to sustain the SIA and the broader activities of industrial resource stewardship.

***Strengthening operations***. To achieve our goals, an effective and coordinated organization is vital. This Strategic Plan outlines priorities for the SIA with clear responsibilities for the Board, our committees, and staff. And – when the resources are identified and supported by our growth - it forecasts a future where additional staffing will be needed.

The goal for this work is an invigorated organization built on an active and growing membership, new and creative programs, and an operating structure that works to the highest level of non-profit and professional organizations.

## 2. FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

### Mission

The SIA promotes exploration and understanding of our industrial past and how this past has shaped our world today, through the study, interpretation, and preservation of historic industrial sites and objects.

### Vision and Values

*Vision:* The SIA envisions a future in which the study, interpretation, and preservation of the industrial environment informs and inspires public understanding of the ways that industry has shaped the world and modern society.

*Statement of Values:* The SIA is committed to building a broad, open, and engaged community that promotes, informs, and carries out this work, which is essential to understanding the broader politics, economics, culture, and landscape of North America.

### Goals

#### **Build our audience through outreach and engagement.**

- The SIA attracts scholars, professionals, and enthusiasts from a broad spectrum of disciplines and backgrounds.
- Membership and participation in SIA are attractive and affordable to all interested users.
- SIA programs are relevant, active, engaging, and contribute to its growth.

#### **Offer programs and publications that are inspiring and excellent.**

- The SIA offers conferences and tours that provide an understanding of industrial processes and educate about sites that embody our industrial past.
- Our publications become the premier venue for current analysis and study of industrial heritage.
- Our programs inspire learning, encourage new scholarship, and foster stewardship of industrial heritage resources.
- Our programs are evaluated and improved to meet the needs of our audiences.

#### **Operate effectively and to a high professional standard.**

- The SIA operates at the highest level of a nonprofit organization.
- We manage our resources responsibly to ensure an effective and healthy organization.
- We build a pool of leaders to ensure succession and continuity of governance and growth.
- We regularly review and evaluate all aspects of our operations and programs, and strive to:
  - Include all who are interested in the work of the organization.

- Engage our members.
- Ensure we are proactively promoting industrial heritage stewardship.
- Executing our programs at the highest level of quality and relevance.

### 3. STRUCTURE and CAPACITY

To operate and deliver our programs, the SIA relies heavily on volunteers. They serve as Board members, they are members of committees and workgroups, and they support the work provided by a small and dedicated staff. Volunteers are drawn from our community and from our Board and are essential for achieving our strategic goals and building a sustainable and relevant organization.

Local Chapters and Special Interest Groups also provide support by attracting members and assisting in organizing conferences, tours, and other programs. The Board’s relationship with Local Chapters, Special Interest Groups, outside organizations, and others, is coordinated by a designated committee.

#### Current Staff

Presently, the SIA depends upon a small staff to support its programs and operations. These staff are as follows:

- **Executive Secretary:** Serves as a liaison between SIA and Michigan Tech Univ., coordinates and supervises operations in SIA HQ, and reports to the SIA Board regarding the status of HQ operations.
- **Office Manager:** Supports membership activities and the logistical operations of the Board. Provides program support, including information sharing, distribution of publications, and database maintenance.
- **Events Coordinator:** Performs logistical planning and coordination of the organization’s largest programs, including the annual conference and fall tours.
- **Journal Editor:** receives manuscripts of articles for the journal, conducts the peer-review process for submissions, organizes articles into issues of the journal, and oversees the work of our contract copy editor and graphic designer.
- **Newsletter Editor:** Compiles and edits the SIA Newsletter, and assists in coordination of distribution.

#### Future Staff

At some point, adding more staff – including an executive director – may be needed to pursue growth in programs, fundraising, and other activities. Exploring all aspects of this possibility is an essential part of strategic planning and will require careful and deliberate considerations of the impact, cost, purpose, and process of adding staff. The buildup to staffing will depend on a Board-approved job description with benchmarks, and a fundraising plan with budgeting goals for salaries, benefits and other operating expenses. Potential new staff may include one or more people. More than one combination of traits and skills is possible, enabling the organization to pursue growth or stability in several areas. The board may consider any of the following:

- **Executive Director:** An executive leader who coordinates the work of the board, committees, chapters, special interest groups, collaborative partners, and internal staff on a day-to-day basis.

Serves as a primary, public face for the organization and ensures continuity and quality of programming and messaging. Oversees / leads membership, fundraising, and fund management initiatives by supporting board and committee members in identifying targets and needs and providing logistical support to campaigns.

- **Administrative Staff:** Staff members who provide logistical, data and information management, or communications support to the organization and its leadership, including record management and retention. These can include finance staff, human resources coordinators, office managers, and various logistics coordinators.
- **Program Staff:** Staff members who coordinate the work of one or more individual committees, or who carry out a specialized portion of a committee's directed work. These can include educational staff, advocacy staff, fundraising staff, staff who work with events, staff who work with publications or online content, or liaisons with museums, chapters, special interest groups, committees, or other organizations.

### **Future Board and Staff Roles**

All committees and workgroups rely on volunteers to carry out the work of the organization. As volunteers, Board members serve dual roles – they are stewards of the organization and provide oversight of all operations. As volunteers they work as part of a team and under the direction of a committee or Board chair, staff leaders, or others. These are all different roles which require clear understanding of organizational structure and governance principles, and the discipline to work collaboratively and for the greater good.

Should the SIA decide to hire an executive director, the relationship between staff and Board will be converted into a new working structure. An executive director will provide professional leadership while the Board will serve a governance role with the duty to ensure there are adequate resources to cover expenses and clear measurements for success. Volunteer work will continue to fill essential roles but will be managed and facilitated by the staff.

## 4. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The SIA currently operates under a governance structure with a volunteer Board of Directors and committees and workgroups to manage programs and other activities. A committee is a standing body assigned to oversee, evaluate and deliver established functions and operating needs. A workgroup is established to achieve a defined goal, and will dissolve upon completion of its work or be incorporated into a standing committee. The Executive Committee oversees the work of committees and workgroups.

Over the next two years, this committee structure will serve as the basis for growth in the organization. Eventually, it may lead to structural changes that enable SIA to rely on permanent, full-time staff, including an executive director. Until the capacity exists to support those positions, committees and workgroups will carry out the work of the SIA.

The committees and workgroups identified at the 2024 Retreat are as follows:

### I. Committees

1. Executive
  - i. Purpose: Ensure excellence and accountability by cross-coordinating, and ensuring follow through on the work of board, committees, workgroups, and staff. Plans and runs meetings. Ensures there is focus on plan of work and organizational priorities. Acts on behalf of the Board between meetings. The SIA officers comprise the committee membership.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: annual Board survey is completed, the Board is engaged, committees are functioning, and a leadership succession plan is in place.
2. Finance
  - i. Purpose: Ensure effective, accountable use of the organization's funds. Develops annual budget linked to work plan, develops and oversees investment plan, and provides accurate reports to the Board. Coordinates audit as needed. The SIA Treasurer serves as committee chair.
  - iii. Measurement of Success: annual budget, financial reports, status of the SIA funds.
3. Membership
  - i. Purpose: Manage the annual membership program. Develop plans and strategies to retain existing and encourage new members with the SIA.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: number of members; growth, retention, satisfaction of members.
4. Fundraising and Development
  - i. Purpose: Increase the organization's revenue through fundraising at multiple levels including annual appeals, sponsorship and grant applications.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: amount of funds raised, support for programs, successful grants.
5. Local Chapters
  - i. Purpose: Re-evaluate and renew the organization's relationship to its chapters through re-envisioned benefits, oversight, and communication
  - ii. Measurement of Success: chapters are gaining members, organizing programs, and connected to the national organization, new chapters have been added, membership from local chapters participate in national programs.

6. Events and Programs
  - i. Purpose: Focus on programs consumed by members and close supporters. Develop an annual conference, tours, and other events. Develop a long-range calendar with conference and tour locations on an annual schedule and with a four-year outlook. Build a pool of local organizers. Plan and evaluate events to ensure high standards.
  - ii. Goals: Execute a range of impactful, high-quality events and public programs.
  - iii. Measurement of Success: Long term calendar and schedule. Increased attendance, and satisfaction of attendees
  
7. Communications
  - i. Purpose: Produce and publish written and online content including social media, website, newsletter, and others. Establish and implement marketing schedule.
  - ii. Goal: Increased visibility, audiences, and markets for the SIA and increased awareness of its work and causes.
  - iii. Measurement of Success: newsletter is published on schedule, events are promoted, the website is up-to-date and engaging.
  
8. Journal Committee
  - i. Purpose: Establish an Editorial Board which will gather, generate, and publish worthy academic content.
  - ii. Goal: *IA* is well respected in the academic and professional communities.
  - iii. Measurement of Success: an Editorial Board has been established. The journal has been re-launched and is published on time. Content is in hand, reviewed, and ready for publication.

## II. Workgroups

1. Reorganization and re-branding
  - i. Purpose: Define and pursue relevance and recognition for industrial heritage and the SIA through its identity, branding, and promotion, including consideration of the efficacy of the organization's name.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: development, testing and launch of new marketing and branding materials. Integration of these items into SIA operations.
  
2. Education, Advocacy, and Preservation Action
  - i. Purpose: Focus on programs that advance industrial heritage causes beyond the immediate membership. Identify and develop opportunities to develop programs and initiatives focused on industrial resources via advocacy, education, technical skills sharing, and funding. Should evolve into a standing committee as its work matures, and its work may justify a staff person to support it.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: Programs are integrated into SIA operations. New programs are launched. New sectors identified and engaged. Satisfaction is verified through survey.
  
3. Partnerships, Affiliations, and SIGs
  - i. Purpose: Research and cultivate new partnerships with individuals and organizations. Increase the reach, effectiveness, and membership of the SIA through collaborative relationships.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: Partnerships are formed and activated. New projects and programs are implemented. New and diverse members are engaged.

4. Staff and Capacity Study Group
  - i. Purpose: To identify the fiscal requirements to hire additional staff and develop a plan of action.
  - ii. Measurement of Success: Reliable figures are known for various staff positions, the board has provided input on which positions it would hire in which priority, there are in place position goals, job descriptions, and a plan of action for getting to successful, sustainable hires.

### **III. Other committees and workgroups:**

These groups will continue as they are currently formed.

1. Nominations
2. Awards and scholarship
3. Industrial Heritage Grants

## 5. PLAN OF WORK - 2025 & 2026

The work that takes place over the next two years will “get the organization’s house in order,” and also set the table for a reversal of recent membership and participation trends in favor of growth. If successful, growth will occur in areas of membership, chapter engagement, programming, and advocacy.

**Year One:** *At the end of the year our committees are in place and operating with Board members, volunteers, staff and others to address our goals. We are effectively communicating with our members, our local chapters, and with other groups interested in industrial heritage. Our programs and publications are engaging our audience and produced on a regular schedule. All members of the organization are positive and engaged.*

### 2025 Goals and Milestones:

- **Build our audience through outreach and engagement:**
  - Renew and rebuild program offerings
    - The final / pending issues of the initial series of *IA Journal* will have been published, and a new series begun
    - A new editor will be in place to manage the journal
    - Establish a three-year calendar for conferences, events, and programs
  - Build strategies for outreach and discover new collaborations and partners
    - Reach out to colleges, universities, museums, state historic preservation officers, CRM contractors, historical organizations, professional societies and others
    - Develop strategies to involve students in conferences, tours and other
  - Renew and share our Identity and purpose
    - Support the workgroup in review of mission, vision and programs.
    - Create communications tools to engage our audience
- **Offer programs and publications that are inspiring and excellent:**
  - Adopt and implement an operational structure based on committees
    - Committees are in place and have established duties and meeting schedule
  - Establish a comprehensive annual calendar of activities
    - This is a coordinated schedule of all SIA activities
  - Review established programs to ensure they are meaningful and effective
    - Develop survey tools for each committee
    - Committees develop metrics to measure needs and to share feedback
- **Operate effectively and to a high professional standard:**
  - Implement a coordinated effort to re-invigorate the SIA
  - Adopt standards of excellence as outlined by *BoardSource* and other nonprofit leadership groups
  - Implement an operational structure based on committees
    - Committees are in place and have established duties and meeting schedule
    - Strengthen and grow membership
      - ensure members understand and are engaged in the SIA
      - focus on retention and recovering former members
    - Develop fundraising capacity
      - Identify special initiatives
      - Build donor database and record keeping system

**Year Two:** *The committee structure is refined and adjusted to ensure continuity and effectiveness. Committees contribute to the annual plan of work. New initiatives are identified, developed and presented. The SIA has a newly refined mission and identity, which is being shared to a larger audience. Regional chapters and Special Interest Groups are active – and new partnerships are contributing to programming.*

**2026 Goals & Milestones:**

- **Build our audience through outreach and engagement**
  - The new series of the SIA's journal will have been launched, possibly with a new name
  - Local chapters and SIGs are engaged and active in planning and organizing tours and programs
  - SIA membership is reaching new audiences
- **Offer programs and publications that are inspiring and excellent**
  - The committee structure is reviewed and refined
  - Staff, committee, and Board work is coordinated in support of SIA projects
  - Committees inform the 2026 plan of work through their guidance and goals, as well as the work that takes place beyond 2026
- **Operate effectively and to a high professional standard**
  - SIA's new, updated, or reinforced identity has been shared with our audience
  - New initiatives are identified, a funding plan is in place, and new donors are supporting SIA programs

**Years Three to Five – 2027+:** *The success of the committees' work is measurable, and the SIA is on track to hire staff and implement new programs on a timeline determined through collaboration between the committees and the Board. Board members, committee members, and staff have standing new relationships with various collaborative partners that provide benefits to the organization and the cause of industrial heritage stewardship. There is continuity in succession from one board to the next that ensures the sustainability of the organization.*

**2027-2029 Goals and Milestones:**

- **Build our audience through outreach and engagement**
  - New education and advocacy programs, as well as outreach and collaborative activities with other people and organizations, make the organization more proactive in reaching people who see the value in SIA's work
  - These activities transfer from workgroup to committee management and continue to make the organization relevant to wider and wider audiences
  - Chapters are more involved in the collaborative management and growth of the SIA, and partnerships of other types play a similarly increasing role
- **Offer programs and publications that are inspiring and excellent**
  - The SIA is in position to hire an Executive Director and program staff who will ensure that the organization's programming and management meet standards set by the Board
- **Operate effectively and to a high professional standard**

- New staff, along with succession practices and bylaws changes developed by a governance workgroup and adopted by the Board, ensure continuity from one board to the next
- A date is set for the next strategic planning retreat