

Maryland African American Museum Corporation
Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget
Response to department of Legislative Services Analysis
Education & Economic Development subcommittee
S50B01

“Always educational and stunning. It’s one thing to read about history and another to share space with artifacts that were really there.” This quote sums up the experience guests have when they visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture (The Lewis Museum). We are, at our core, an educational institution teaching all visitors about the breadth and depth of the African American experience throughout the history of our great state. But we also serve as a significant contributor to the community infrastructure of our home city and more broadly the state. Extending The Lewis Museum as a place of convening, dialogue, presentation and thought leadership, we provide a platform for members of the community to create solutions, test hypotheses, and learn from the experience of others.

During last year’s testimony we talked about the process of strategic planning for the next five years. We successfully completed our strategic plan beginning with the revision of our vision and mission and a redefinition of our values. While a summary of our strategic plan is included in the annual report submitted with this testimony, it is important to present these elements of our institutional character.

Vision: To be a trusted custodian, a respected authority, and a thought partner on the history, art and culture of the African diaspora with an emphasis on the State of Maryland.

Mission: The Reginald F. Lewis Museum documents, interprets and preserves the complex experiences, contributions and culture of Black people. We serve as a catalyst for sustained change by providing programs and exhibitions and bold conversations that educate and challenge.

These foundational statements provide the direction for our activities as described above; as an educational institution, teaching about history and as an important part of community infrastructure, a public square if you will, to present ideas, to provoke thought and to challenge our visitors to personal and community action.

The following five strategic imperatives provide the framework for our work and outcomes over the next four and half years:

- Organizational cohesion and effectiveness

- Brand clarity and effectiveness
- Community involvement
- Supporting educational excellence
- Fiscal vision and stewardship

Bottom Line Up Front:

	FY22	FY21
General admission	12,251	7,523
School Tours	4,105	3,168
Public programming	2,880	3,374
<u>Other educational programming</u>	<u>868</u>	<u>2,690</u>
	20,104	16,755

In 2022 we began investing in brand recognition. This investment yielded a social media reach of more than 259,000 people; 173 articles that mentioned the Lewis Museum; and an advertising value of approximately \$4.15 million. Additionally, in 2022 we began to see our earned income from facility rentals and retail sales rebound, with \$228,617 in revenue from facility rentals and \$27,334 from retail sales. In 2023 we are projecting approximately \$490,000 in facility rental revenue and an increase of approximately 30% in retail sales.

In 2022 we brought back our annual gala which was themed The Jazz Age Gala. We introduced three awards – the Titan Award (Calvin Butler), the Trailblazer Award (Jason Williams and Teara Strum) and the Maverick Award (Dr. Destiny-Simone Ramjohn) – to honor corporate leaders and entrepreneurs. Through the gala we were able to generate nearly \$400,000 in general operating income. This year’s gala is scheduled for May 11, 2023 at the M&T Stadium.

As noted in our analysis, our costs for collections and exhibitions increased as we increased the number of changing exhibits in our Lewis Now and DeSousa Galleries. Most notably we hosted the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service (SITES), Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth. for seven months. We were the first museum on the eastern seaboard to host the full exhibit. This exhibit highlighted the positive contributions of African American men to society and identified them as culture creators, a narrative rarely used when describing Black men. The exhibit served as a draw for many of our facility rentals in the second half of fiscal 2022. In our Lewis Now gallery we

hosted an original installation, “All on The Court” by Chrystal Seawood. This unique, interactive exhibit, examined the safe space of the basketball court for black masculine youth.

Attendance continues to lag behind pre pandemic levels, but we are encouraged by an increase in general admissions through February. Virtual programming attendance has been 1,499 to date. As we bring back more in person programs and activities, fewer programs will be solely virtual, but we intend to maintain programming streaming as a way to broaden our reach. We anticipate increased admissions, school groups, and other tours through the end of fiscal 2023. We are currently evaluating our education programs and will be employing focus groups to get a sense of what the community would like us to provide.

As our docents and volunteers have often skewed older in age, we were impacted by COVID and concerns from our traditional group regarding being in large groups of people. However our volunteers are loyal and over the past year we have been able to attract more volunteers and individuals who want to be docents. A recently installed exhibition has led to a training for approximately 17 docents learning the exhibit and interpreting it for an intergenerational audience. Costs to support our volunteer recruitment and retention are minimal, but in fiscal year 2023, we intend to be more intentional in our recruitment efforts and our communication with this critically important asset to The Lewis Museum. The Visitor Services and Volunteer Manager is charged with organizing efforts for recruitment, working with our Development Department, as well as maintaining data on our volunteers, (as you can see in our annual report, our strategic plan emphasizes the need to improve our data collection across the organization).

Programmatically, as outlined in our annual report, The Lewis Museum continues to focus on providing a variety of public and educational programs that reflect our exhibitions using history as well as contemporary topics to further illuminate the exhibitions. Author talks, curator conversations, demonstrations, and opportunities for engagement and partnership have rounded out our year of programming.

Let me emphasize that the museum is still being impacted by the pandemic and has yet to see the numbers in admissions and contributions that identified the organization pre pandemic, but we have momentum and we are very encouraged that 2023 will see increases in numbers that have been lagging in the past. We will continue to produce quality exhibitions and present programming that reflects the talents and contributions of African Americans. We will continue to demonstrate our commitment to our physical

home, the city of Baltimore, while expanding our reach and engagement with potential partners across the state.

We are incredibly thankful to the State of Maryland for your continued support of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum.