



CENTER FOR DESERT ARCHAEOLOGY

Preserving the Places of Our Shared Past

STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2010

Approved by the Board of Directors on March 13, 2008

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Center for Desert Archaeology Strategic Plan 2008-2010

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Process

The strategic planning process began with a one day staff retreat, held on May 24, 2007, in Tucson, Arizona. That meeting focused on the Center's current activities and short term objectives for the rest of 2007. At that meeting, the need for a more directed long term strategic planning effort was identified.

We chose to follow the strategic planning and self-assessment process laid out in the following publications:

Drucker, Peter F.

1999 The Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool: Participant Workbook. The Drucker Foundation, New York and Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Stern, Gary J.

1999 The Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool: Process Guide, Revised Edition. The Drucker Foundation, New York and Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Board member Peter Boyle admirably served as facilitator for each of the strategic planning sessions, held in Tucson on November 14, 2007, and January 22, 2008.

Staff members participating in at least one meeting (5/24/07, 11/14/07, or 1/22/08) included: Jeff Clark, Tiffany Clark, Jacquie Dale, Bill Doelle, Doug Gann, Linda Marie Golier, Dave Gregory, Brett Hill, Deb Huntley, Rob Jones, Debbie Lee, Fred Nials, Linda Pierce, Paul Reed, Kate Sarther, Tobi Taylor, and Aaron Wright

Organizational Background and History

The Center for Desert Archaeology was incorporated as a private nonprofit institution in 1989. It has its roots in the Arizona Division of the Institute for American Research, which was established in Tucson by William Doelle in 1982. From its earliest days, the organization has existed to pursue research, preservation, and education activities focused on southwestern archaeology.

The Center is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, with additional guidance from a seven-member Advisory Board comprised of professional archaeologists. Its President and CEO, Dr. William H. Doelle, has led the organization from its inception. The organization has experienced fairly intense growth over the last decade, expanding from one employee in 1999 to its current structure of nine full time permanent employees, three part-time permanent employees, and three Preservation Fellows. Its main office is located in Tucson, Arizona, while employees also live and work from a distance in Pinetop, Arizona; Flagstaff, Arizona; Farmington, New Mexico; and Conway, Arkansas.

The Center is supported through memberships, donations, grants, and endowment earnings, and has over 1,000 members and donors throughout the United States and internationally. A private gift in 1997 established the Center's general endowment fund. That endowment has played a critical role in the maturation of the organization, helping the Center transform from a locally-focused and supported organization into a well-respected regional institution with ongoing projects throughout the Greater Southwest.

The organization is building a preservation archaeology network across the Southwest, combining active research, public involvement, and stewardship efforts to increase protection of archaeological and historical resources. Partnerships between the Center and other institutions and with volunteers play key roles in the successful implementation of this network.

CUSTOMERS

The primary customer of an organization is the person whose life the organization most wants to impact/change on a regular, ongoing basis. The primary customer is not necessarily someone you can reach or someone you can sit down with and talk to directly. Identifying the primary customer puts priorities in order and gives a reference point for critical decisions.

The Center for Desert Archaeology's Primary Customer:

People, individually or as community members, who find meaning in the places of the past.

Because of our mission's strong focus on preservation, it is important to explicitly acknowledge the place of the archaeological record itself. Archaeological resources are important because of their value to our primary customer. Therefore, the archaeological record is a major responsibility of the Center, but not directly a primary customer.

The supporting customers of an organization are all the people who must be satisfied in order for the organization to succeed. There can be many supporting customers. They are engaged with the organization to "support" the accomplishment of the mission.

Supporting Customers:

The Center has a wide variety and large number of supporting customers. The most important include:

- communities
- members, donors, and funding agencies
- tribes
- the media

Other supporting customers include: staff, archaeologists, volunteers, academic communities, people with historic community roots, governmental agencies at all levels, landowners, developers, universities, partners, Google searchers, board members, *Archaeology Southwest* readers, avocational archaeologists, local governments, other heritage groups, other conservation groups, museums, cultural resource management firms, and law enforcement.

SUMMARY OF MOST IMPORTANT POINTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

The following is a brief summary of opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses that affect the context in which we pursue our mission. This information was gathered directly from staff during the planning sessions, from one-on-one interviews with key constituents, and from an online survey. See Appendix B and C for more detailed information.

Strengths

The Center for Desert Archaeology's key strength is its commitment to the concept of "Preservation Archaeology." The combination of research, preservation, and outreach pursued by the organization over the years is recognized as unique, effective, and important. We are successful in pursuing big picture research questions that explore the human condition from a long-term perspective. The experience, professionalism, quality, and commitment of the staff to the tenets of Preservation Archaeology is another strength. The organization is highly-respected among the professional archaeological community, and its quarterly *Archaeology Southwest* magazine is widely read and appreciated.

Weaknesses

The Center suffers from a lack of recognition and/or clear understanding from the outside world regarding what it is that we do. Many still think the organization is a cultural resource management firm. As a private nonprofit, we don't clearly fit into a neat category. We need to develop ways to better articulate what it is that we do, and why what we do is important. Marketing and outreach should be strengthened.

Another weakness is in organizing people to do the work of the organization. We need ways to put volunteers, including Board members, to more effective work that furthers the goals of the organization. Related to this is the need for a fulltime Executive Director, and the need for more effective ways to monitor progress and results. This current strategic planning process is the first step in addressing this weakness.

It was recognized that the organization's efforts at preservation have not kept pace with resources and efforts devoted to research. The connections between research projects and preservation priorities need to be made more explicit, and more resources developed to support preservation and outreach activities.

Opportunities

The opportunities considered most important included:

- Connecting with Native American communities. As archaeologists, the material culture we study is the record of the ancestors of modern Native communities. Native communities share our concern for preservation and protection of prehistoric resources. We have had some success in working with Native American groups, but are a long way from truly collaborative relationships. The potential from such collaboration, both in terms of increasing our success in preservation and in coming to a richer understanding of the past, is great and should be capitalized upon.

- Partnerships. As a private highly respected nonprofit, the Center is uniquely situated to create and further more collaboration and partnerships between a wide variety of organizations, groups, and agencies. Some suggestions include changing academia by our philosophy and methods, networking with other organizations, more multi-disciplinary research, collaboration and uniting different constituencies to a common purpose, helping under-funded institutions with sites and collections, and data sharing.
- Enhanced and direct preservation outreach. Communities and individual landowners in the Southwest are looking for ways to preserve the unique heritage and character of their landscapes. The Center needs to devote more resources to taking advantage of this opportunity to preserve cultural resources.
- Curation crisis. While the current crisis regarding the lack of curation space and facilities is a threat to long-term preservation of cultural resources, it can also be seen as an opportunity. The crisis could be used to stimulate more preservation through avoidance and more use of existing collections.
- The Center has the opportunity to define, once and for all, what the “Preservation Archaeology” philosophy is. There was a call for Bill to write a public-oriented, hard-hitting book on preservation archaeology that would bring attention to the growing threats to cultural resources and share our tested methods for addressing those threats.

Threats/Challenges

The threats and external challenges considered most important included:

- The need to find effective ways to make the past relevant to people today and to share lessons from the past.
- Population growth and changing demographics. Growth is endangering cultural resources. Demographics are changing resulting in more retirees and recent immigrants to the Southwest, and new ethnic mixes. These newcomers to the Southwest may have different values regarding cultural resources.
- Funding – big grants are increasingly hard to get. We need more private and corporate support.
- Connecting with Native American communities. We need to build credibility and trust with Native communities.
- Transition to new leadership if and when Bill retires.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Our vision statement is intended to communicate a picture of the organization’s desired future.

Vision

A society where the places of the past are valued as the foundations for a vibrant future.

The mission statement explains why we do what we do. It shares the organization’s purpose, its reason for being and, in the end, says what we want to be remembered for.

Mission

The mission of the Center for Desert Archaeology is to preserve the places of our shared past.

Preservation. This mission statement is explicit about preservation. It is intended to broaden our conception of our mission. Its focus on preservation serves as a constant reminder to us regarding everything we do. We can ask ourselves regularly, how is what I am doing contributing to preservation?

- Developing easements and obtaining property donations are obvious examples of preservation.
- Conducting “big-picture” research that leads to new insights with exciting implications can help people to view the places of the past differently and to value them. That’s preservation.
- Getting our academic colleagues to conduct more research with existing collections and getting more funding institutions to support such research and to provide curation funding for excavated materials are also means of preservation.
- We can accomplish preservation in many ways—especially if we stay focused on preservation.

Places of the past. This is broadly conceived. In our goals, we call out archaeological sites, historic buildings, and cultural landscapes as explicit examples, but the artifacts within sites or in museums and the information from our research are all aspects of “places of the past” that are relevant to our mission.

Shared past. We do not automatically have the right to claim a particular aspect of the past as “ours.” We must work to build relationships with others who feel an ownership right to particular places—whether they are Native Americans, residents of a small town, or rural ranchers. While perhaps subtle, this is the “people” part of the mission statement. If we don’t earn the right to share it, we won’t succeed in preserving it.

GOALS

Goals flow from mission, build on strengths, address opportunities, and outline the organization’s desired future. They should be overarching and few in number. Goals make it absolutely clear where to concentrate resources for results.

The Center for Desert Archaeology’s goals are:

1. To conduct research that addresses questions of broad interest and connects people of today with the past.
2. To promote an ethic of preservation to the public and professionals.
3. To achieve long-term preservation of cultural heritage – archaeological sites, historic buildings, and cultural landscapes – in the Greater Southwest.
4. To enable people to explore and learn about the Southwest’s past through creative and varied means.
5. To achieve long-term financial security and organizational viability.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been developed to guide the Center's efforts for the next three years. For a more detailed Operating Plan for 2008-2009 which includes milestones and major action steps for each objective, see Appendix A.

Goal 1. Conduct research that addresses questions of broad interest and connects people of today with the past.

1-1. Improve understanding of prehistoric population change and the development of Coalescent Communities across the Greater Southwest, A.D. 1200 to 1700.

1-2. Improve understanding of the arrival of agriculture in the Greater Southwest, 2000 B.C. to A.D. 50.

1-3. Improve understanding of the rise and transformation of the Chacoan regional system in the San Juan Basin, A.D. 900 to 1300.

1-4. Integrate public outreach and programming efforts to share research process and results with a broad audience.

Goal 2. Promote an ethic of preservation to the public and professionals.

2-1. Develop a Preservation Archaeology field school program.

2-2. Integrate undergraduate and graduate students into practical training in preservation archaeology methods.

2-3. Bring the message of preservation archaeology to nonprofessionals (outreach).

Goal 3. Achieve long-term preservation of cultural heritage – archaeological sites, historic buildings, and cultural landscapes – in the Greater Southwest.

3-1. Create and implement a Preservation Outreach Coordinator position and program.

3-2. Establish a Little Colorado National Heritage Area.

3-3. Improve preservation opportunities in southern Arizona via the Southern Arizona Growth and the Cultural Landscape initiative.

3-4. Enhance community-based preservation efforts in the Southwest.

Goal 4. Enable people to explore and learn about the Southwest's past through creative and varied means.

- 4-1. Create and maintain a dynamic website full of information useful to a wide audience.
- 4-2. Develop innovative exhibits.
- 4-3. Integrate public archaeology into every project the Center pursues.
- 4-4. Create quality printed publications for a variety of audiences.
- 4-5. Create innovative public programming, for both local and distance learners.
- 4-6. Use cutting-edge computer technologies to help people envision and experience the past.

Goal 5. Achieve long-term financial security and organizational viability.

- 5-1. Recruit, train, and retain a diverse and vibrant Board of Directors.
- 5-2. Increase the number and amount of individual donations and successful grant applications.
- 5-3. Improve internal processes for increased organizational viability.