

AACTMAD's Long-Range Plan (2001 – 2006)

(During the weekend of October 27-28, 2001, AACTMAD held a Long Range Planning session, facilitated by Tom Seiss, open to all members and attended by AACTMAD board members and a number of other members of the organization. The following is the report from that session.)

Statement of mission and purpose

The Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance is a participatory membership organization that presents and supports events and programs which preserve living traditions of dance, music and song, build community among the participants and provide opportunities for healthy activity, fitness and exercise. It serves as a resource to other individuals and groups engaged in similar activities and as a facilitator for music, dance and song activities that it does not directly sponsor.

AACTMAD recognizes and responds to needs, opportunities and concerns in these areas by:

- offering resources, leadership and support to interested individuals and groups
- training new dance callers, musicians and organizers
- reaching out to other individuals and groups in the community
- designing and executing activities, programs and products which support and appeal to diverse participants and users.

In its dealings with individuals and groups, AACTMAD will always, to the maximum extent possible:

- remain open and welcoming
- provide a safe environment and ease of access to its programs
- involve new members and participants
- continue to evolve and change.

The core values of AACTMAD include a belief that the people who participate in its activities are its most important resource and that it should always remain open, welcoming and proactive in its relationship with those participants. It believes in being a member-driven, community-based sharing resource, which encourages participation as a means to enrich peoples' lives. It further believes in the importance of collaboration with groups that share similar interests.

Its distinctive or unique characteristics include its foundation status and the tax benefits which that offers, its respected name and reputation, its financial support of other groups through grants and its well-established communication mechanisms (e.g., its events calendar).

Stakeholder analysis

The Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and dance has a number of stakeholders, and these are outlined below:

The *key* stakeholders include:

- The membership
- The "artists" (i.e., musicians, callers, performers, leaders)
- Dancers and participants
- Volunteers and "doers"
- Leaders of collaborating groups.

The key stakeholders *may* also include the City of Ann Arbor, including the public schools and the public-at-large.

Other important, but lesser, stakeholders are:

- The folk community
- New Ann Arbor and U of M residents
- Single, unattached participants
- The Grange
- Users of the Calendar

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Internal Strengths

- We have a dynamic, committed Board and core of volunteers.
- We have long experience and a good reputation.
- We have a positive cash balance.
- We are a friendly community that fosters involvement and commitment.
- We have excellent musicians and leaders available.
- We have excellent sound systems and operators available to us.
- We have access to adequate dance space.
- We attract strong callers and musicians from outside our group and community.
- We publish a valued and useful Dance Calendar.
- We have the ability to offer and execute a diverse range of resources, support and events.

Internal weaknesses

- We often fail to capitalize on the experience and knowledge that we gain.
- We lack clearly defined policies, long-term plans and goals, including financial plans.
- We lack defined operational processes and are too dependent on individual leadership and action.
- We demand too little accountability, accepting irresponsible behavior because our participants are “only volunteers.”
- We do too little critical thinking about the results of our spending.
- We are sometimes perceived as operating with personal agendas that cloud the “big picture” and create internal strife; as being too focused on the “business” aspects of our activities; and as being “closed”, and having weak communication with our members.
- We have too few volunteers, resulting in “burnout”.
- We do not own or have control over our dance spaces, and our existing spaces are too small.
- Our membership is aging, and we are not reaching teens, young adults and families.
- We are losing a sense of community within the group as a whole.

External opportunities

- There is a large population of young people at the U of M and other nearby universities and within the city.
- There is potential for collaboration with schools, merchants, libraries, historical societies, and other ethnic/folk dance groups.
- There is potential for forming alliances with other dance and folk groups and organizations.
- There are untapped talents and energy among our participants.

- There is potential for significant fund-raising.
- The Web offers opportunities for improved communication and information dissemination.
- There are musicians, callers and potential organizers whose skills we could develop.

(On the summary sheet, “dance sites accessible to young people”, “library/resources”, “become a major folk arts centre”, and “reorganize the Mattis Foundation” were listed as “external opportunities”. As I put this all together, these seemed to me to be among your goals or objectives. I don’t think they are really “external opportunities” in the same way as the other things listed above. But if you really want them there, add them back in.)

External threats

- We could lose the Grange or Webster as dance sites.
- The Parking at the dance sites is sometimes a problem.
- We could lose key musicians, callers or organizers.
- The population, in general, is aging.
- There is heavy competition for people’s time and energy.
- The transition from the Mattis Foundation is not complete, and must be handled carefully.

Strategic issues

We have examined and affirmed our Statement of Mission and Purpose, identified our key and important stakeholders, and assessed our internal strengths and weakness and external opportunities and threats. Having considered all of those aspects of our current environment and circumstances, we believe that the following questions represent the key strategic issues, which our planning must address.

- Do we want to stay with what we know and do well or do we want to grow into something different? Where are we headed? What do we want to become?
- How can we transform the Board into an oversight or governance body?
- Should we try to secure a permanent dance space?
- How do we develop a coordinated process for allocating funds?
- How can we measure our successes and results?
- How do we ensure the continuity of our organization?
- What kind of alliances do we want to build? With whom?
- Should we define our “boundaries”? If so, how?
- How much growth do we want? What kind?

Vision of the future

If AACTMAD continues to increase and realize its potential, builds on its strengths and exploits its opportunities, overcomes its internal weaknesses and external threats and effectively answers the strategic questions it has posed for itself, we believe that by 2006 we will have made substantial progress toward the following “dreams” or goals:

We will have a “secure” dance facility over which we have significant control. It will include dance spaces, recording facilities and a library/resource center.

We will have entered into significant strategic alliances or partnerships with groups that might include public schools, the U of M, other dance organizations in the community, other Midwest music and dance organizations. We will collaborate with some of those groups in offering professional support, staging high school dances, creating school residencies, and supporting and encouraging traveling callers, bands and dancers. We have well-established communication with those partners, and are viewed as a resource by them.

We are an umbrella organization with an operating budget that exceeds \$100,000. We have a large pool of committed volunteers, and skilled leaders, and a paid staff. We are organized as the Peter Mattis Foundation, doing business as the Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance.

We have established a Web-based database of host/guest arrangements in the area, and a Web-based calendar.

We have undertaken a large fund-raising program that, among other things, has supported a greatly expanded scholarship program.

We participate in the running of a Great Lakes region summer camp, and in many weekend programs and workshops.

Objectives

If we are to make progress toward our Vision of the Future, we believe we must make significant progress toward the following objectives within the next two years.

Identify, explore and enter into alliances with other groups with whom we can share facility development and programming; contact at least half of the arts and educational institutions in the greater Ann Arbor area. (*12 mentions*)

Take steps to secure a permanent facility; form a Facilities Committee to explore ways in which a secure facility might be procured and managed. (*11 mentions*)

Undertake a formal fund-raising process. (*9 mentions*)

Formalize our long-range and operational planning (e.g., formalize our long-range plan; adopt a more passionate mission statement; formalize our budgeting process; adopt policies outlining the accountability of our committees; develop measures of success). (*7 mentions*)

- Develop plans for improving the quality of dancing. (*3 mentions*)
- Undertake surveys (to assess interest in exchanges with Midwest dance groups; members). (*3 mentions*)
- Improve our web-based services, including a web-based calendar. (*3 mentions*)
- Develop strategies for increasing membership and participation. (*2 mentions*)

The following were each mentioned by one person:

- Increase the number of volunteers and have a Volunteer Chair.
- Establish a greater presence in schools, colleges and seniors centers.
- Establish a downtown weekday dance.
- Develop an open culture that encourages people to call, play and write tunes and dances.
- Identify sites and potential collaborators for a summer family camp.
- Hire a part-time coordinator.

(Note from Tom Siess, who facilitated this session: You may want to combine some of the single mention items into a broader objective, or subsume them under another one, if you think they “fit.” You should also spend some time wording all of the objectives so that your goal and commitment is clear – I’ve merely tried to collate the individual lists in a way that retains all of the suggested objectives. Your task, I think, is to use this list to develop a set of clear and prioritized objectives that will “drive” AACTMAD over the next couple of years.)