



Strategic Plan 2022-2025

A note from the HGA President

The Handweavers Guild of America, Inc. (HGA) continues to center its direction and management through a mission based strategic plan. A membership survey of 2021 provided the Board of Directors with considerable responses from over 1,000 fiber arts enthusiasts! This feedback led our decisions for the scope of a renewed strategic plan. Special thanks to executive director Elizabeth Williamson and first vice president Martha Shimkin who led our meetings. This dedicated group was comprised of board members and other HGA membership.

Throughout the Autumn of 2021, our group met virtually to continue updating objectives, reviewing goals, considering strategies, editing ideas and putting our aspirations into words. The following plan is the result of these efforts: incorporating input from membership, the staff, the board of directors, and the drafting group. The 2022-2025 HGA strategic plan is a living document, subject to change. It steps forth exciting and ambitious goals for our organization to achieve in the next three years.

I hope you read, react, and respond to these action targets and find your own thoughts and input reflected within. I look forward to working across the membership to implement our common goals and strategies to educate, support and inspire the fiber art community.

Suzi Ballenger
President
Handweavers Guild of America, Inc.

Mission, Programs and Vision

The mission of the Handweavers Guild of America, Inc. (HGA) is to educate, support, and inspire the fiber art community. Our programs include:

- Convergence[®], a biennial international conference offering lectures, seminars, workshops, vendor marketplace, juried art exhibits, fiber-oriented tours and our popular fashion show
- *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot*, a quarterly magazine providing inspiring and educational articles about weaving, spinning, dyeing and the fiber arts community
- Textiles & Tea, an inspirational weekly series of interviews discussing creative journeys with emerging and leading fiber artists in the field today
- Certificate of Excellence (COE), a rigorous certification program in the fields of handweaving, spinning, dyeing and basketry
- *Small Expressions*, an annual juried exhibit of small-scale works created using fiber techniques by national and international artists that tours the United States each year
- The HGA Award, recognizing outstanding exhibited works of fiber art, is given to more than 30 deserving artists each year
- Spinning & Weaving Week Celebration, Careers in Textile Symposium, and the Guild Development Retreat; virtual conferences that encourage learning and engagement to connect and strengthen the fiber art community
- Scholarship opportunities for students enrolled in accredited academic programs in the United States and Canada for the purpose of furthering education in the field of fiber arts, including training for research, textile history and conservation
- Grant opportunities for individual members to study or take workshops

Insert Updated Image from Last Plan Here

HGA's vision is to be the leading resource for awareness and advancement of the fiber arts.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The Handweavers Guild of America, Inc. (HGA), was founded by a handful of weavers in the summer of 1969, working with 125 of the nation's leaders in the fiber arts to determine whether there should be a national guild, what form it should take and what it should offer its members. By November 1, 1969, HGA had 1,000 members and in December the first issue of *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot* was published. In 1972, HGA held its first Convergence[®] at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, hosted by the Michigan League of Handweavers with Peter Collingwood as the featured speaker. At this event, the HGA Scholarship fund was started in memory of Berta Frey. By the autumn of that year, the organization had 24 state representatives to add to its volunteer staff. In 1974, HGA began to explore the possibility of offering a Certificate of Excellence (COE) in handweaving. The first examination was conducted in 1976, and was followed by certificates for handspinning, then dyeing and basketmaking.

HGA received its 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 1977.

1984 was the 15th anniversary of HGA and also the first year the exhibition *Small Expressions* was held in conjunction with Convergence® in Dallas, Texas. This juried exhibit has held annually since. During even-numbered years it is exhibited at the Convergence® site and during odd-numbered years the exhibition rotates to various locations around the country.

In 1994 the Board felt that in order to meet the mission of HGA they needed to provide more educational programs. The Fiber Trust was instituted to pay for these programs. Through the years, money raised by the Fiber Trust has provided scholarships, grants, student assistantships, exhibits, and other programs. HGA members and non-members alike have benefited from the Fiber Trust.

In 1996, *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot* received a First Place Award in the category of Publications from Association Trends™.

HGA received the American Craft Council Award of Distinction in 2003.

In 2014, after 25 years of service, Sandra Bowles, Executive Director and Editor for HGA, announced her retirement from HGA. This set forth a series of changes and transitions including the hiring of Elizabeth Williamson as Executive Director (2015) and Sally Orgren as Editor (2014). In 2016 HGA published its 3-year strategic plan. During that time HGA invested in software for a better member experience and to increase staff efficiency, *Small Expressions* became an annual touring exhibition, and a Program Coordinator was added to the staff.

In 2018 Convergence® took place in Reno, Nevada with largest attendance record since the 2008 Convergence® in Tampa. Every session ran with 32% completely full, and for the first time HGA, Complex Weavers, and ATA all held their conferences in the same space.

Like many nonprofits in the arts, in 2020 HGA was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, HGA closed its office and transitioned the staff to a remote workforce and the Convergence® conference was postponed to 2022, significantly impacting finances. HGA's members and donors stepped up with their support and during this time membership and donations grew. HGA quickly pivoted to add online programming to connect and engage with members, including the 7-day Spinning & Weaving Week Celebration; the 2-day Careers in Textiles Symposium; and the popular Textiles & Tea weekly interview series.

Recognizing the need to support local and regional guilds and their leadership, in 2022 HGA produced a 1-day online Guild Development Retreat. For the first time, from across the world, guild presidents, officers, and their members converged to discuss pressing needs and innovative ideas to strengthen and grow their guilds.

With growth comes challenges. HGA must chart a clear path for success. Over the past year, the Board and staff have completed the initial phase of the strategic planning process, assessing HGA's strengths and weaknesses and identifying opportunities and threats to the success of the organization. This plan provides direction to the organization over the next three years and serves as a document for the Board and staff to help set priorities, allocate resources and measure progress through clearly stated goals.

Steps to Achieve Success:

- Be an organization that engenders enthusiasm among its constituents
- Be a respected leader in the fiber arts community
- Be a sustainable nonprofit

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Objective I: To be an Organization that Engenders Enthusiasm Among Constituents

- 1. Engage Membership in HGA Benefits and Activities**
 - a. Recruit new members and retain current members
 - b. Enlist volunteers to orient and mentor new members
 - c. Support and strengthen HGA's relationship with local guilds by providing resources to develop their leadership and grow membership
- 2. Provide frequent and Regular Inspiration**
 - a. Implement a weaving challenge program
 - b. Develop a job board to promote and share opportunities for careers in the fiber arts
 - c. Identify three ways to engage more frequently with membership
- 3. Produce a Magazine that Excites and Engages our Constituents**
 - a. Ensure representation of spinning, weaving and dyeing
 - b. Create an advisory committee to assist the editor
 - c. Create a member spotlight to highlight member stories

Objective II: To be a Respected Leader in the Fiber Arts Community

- 1. Review and Analyze the HGA brand and make changes for the future**
 - a. Examine costs of hiring a marketing consultant
- 2. Be a Resource for Fiber Arts Education and Programming and Increase Participation**
 - a. Define skill levels for weavers/fiber artists (beginner, intermediate, advanced)
 - b. Review, analyze and refine the COE program
 - c. Establish a Young Professionals Board
 - d. Explore opportunities on how to incorporate technology into our programming
 - e. Explore resources for digitizing HGA's existing textiles resources for accessibility and historical preservation
- 2. Strengthen Convergence[®] and Increase Participation**
 - a. Produce Convergence[®] Planning and Procedure Handbook to provide a clear guideline for future organizers (staff, board, and volunteers) to maintain a successful and well-documented event
 - b. Build relationships with vendors and increase vendor participation in both numbers and variety
 - c. Develop an advertising/marketing plan specific to each Convergence[®] site
 - d. Include a formal community service project in each Convergence[®]
 - e. Explore how to successfully incorporate artist sales into the Marketplace
- 2. Cultivate diversity and inclusivity**

- a. Work with a diversity task force to review language and ensure it is inclusive
- b. Identify groups for potential partnership and collaboration

Objective III: To be a Sustainable Non-Profit

1. Diversify Sources of Funding

- a. Increase advertising and sponsorships by seeking out new relationships with businesses in the fiber arts and textiles
- b. Evaluate current and future programming (beyond Convergence®) for additional revenue sources
- c. Increase Board participation in fundraising

2. Establish and Implement Nonprofit Best Practices in Policies and Procedures

- a. Determine what policies and procedures are important to HGA
- b. Develop a succession plan
- c. Train staff, board and volunteers in policies and procedures, and develop a training process for future board and volunteers

3. Be an Organization Which Attracts & Retains People Who Want to Work and Volunteer

- a. Clarify board and volunteer roles and responsibilities, and establish clear expectations and lines of accountability
- b. Establish a climate of transparency, diversity, and inclusion
- c. Provide development opportunities for board members



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