



2020 Strategic Plan

Version Tracking

Version	Date Modified	Modified By	Notes	Approved By
Draft 1	9/29/2019	Sam Aparicio	Original	N/A
Draft 2	11/18/2019	Board Working Group	Shared Edits	N/A
Draft 3	12/1/2019	Sam Aparicio	Financial projections	N/A
1.0	12/2/2019	Karen Shumway + Jim Girardi	Formatting, addition of comms plan, review plan, version rules	Board

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe at a high level the strategic plan to guide major initiatives at Nova Labs for the year 2020.

This document is for anyone who participates in our community, but is primarily intended for those who are in a position of leadership to use as a blueprint to implement the key projects outlined.

For the sake of brevity, the document does not include extended analysis - but you can ask those who produced it for the reasons behind the strategy and seek clarification.

If we've done our job right, this document should help you understand what matters and what can be practically done to advance our mission and vision.

Why should we do this?

– Sam Aparicio

Mission and Vision

Mission, *modified for ambition*:

Our mission is to create **the country's preeminent** place that enables people to share a fearless exploration of hands-on learning, entrepreneurship, and creative expression.

Annotated Mission:

Our mission,

*i.e. the reason that justifies our existence,
the reason that makes what we do worth the effort, the sacrifice, the spent
money, the human conflict, the endless meetings, the late nights... etc*

is to create

and now that we've created it to improve and to grow

the country's preeminent

*I.e. we have a real shot,
we are in a unique and enviable position,
we have been afforded a chance by our predecessors to create a really special...*

place

*and we see a lot of intention in that word, a place,
a physical place,
an anchor in our community
a distinctive location*

that enables people,

*all kinds of people, hobbyists and professionals and those in between,
children and adults and seniors,
people of different economic strata,
people who reflect the variety of our region,
people with special and people without special needs,*

to share a fearless exploration

*free from judgment
Done with the confidence that comes from knowing
Playful*

of hands-on learning

*So anything that has to do with learning is central to what we do, like
Teaching
Mentoring
Certifications*

No matter if you're a rookie or an expert, you're still learning

Entrepreneurship

So anything that has to do with entrepreneurship is central to what we do, like

Enabling professionals to launch maker-related products and services
Enabling hobbyists who want to become professionals
Supporting an ecosystem
And creative expression

Vision, *quantified for scope*:

Our vision is to create a community in which everyone in the **DC Metro Area** is a creator, learner, mentor, and teacher who finds fulfillment in tackling challenges with passion, generosity, and fearlessness.

Vision, annotated

Our vision

I.e. how we imagine ourselves in the future
How we define a reality in which we've succeeded in our mission
Our "promised land", our utopia,
How we think our shining city on a hill looks like

Is to create a community

We could accomplish our mission in several ways, but we chose to do it with community at the center - a community of volunteers

In which everyone in the DC Metro Area

Of note is how much ambition there is in this vision - we want everyone. There's 2.5M people in our metro area and there's 400 of us!

So we can't stop at 400.

We can't stop until reasonably everyone who wants to make can do it at Nova Labs
Because if we did, we'd be betraying our vision

Mantra and Tagline

Mantra & Tagline

REDISCOVER THE JOY OF MAKING THINGS!

Why add this? It is simple, and helps outsiders understand what we are about. Most people do not know missions or visions. (Compare with Nike: Mantra - Authentic athletic apparel. Tagline: Just do it.)

Tagline: We do not have one yet, but need this.

SWOT

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Shared values / culture • Sense of mission • Diversity • Outsized individual contributions 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disorganized • Weak Processes • Hostile to entrepreneurs • Risk aversion / fear of change • Disempowering
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>See below</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small revenue contraction could render us unviable • Paying market rates for space could render us unviable • We are one lawsuit away from disappearing

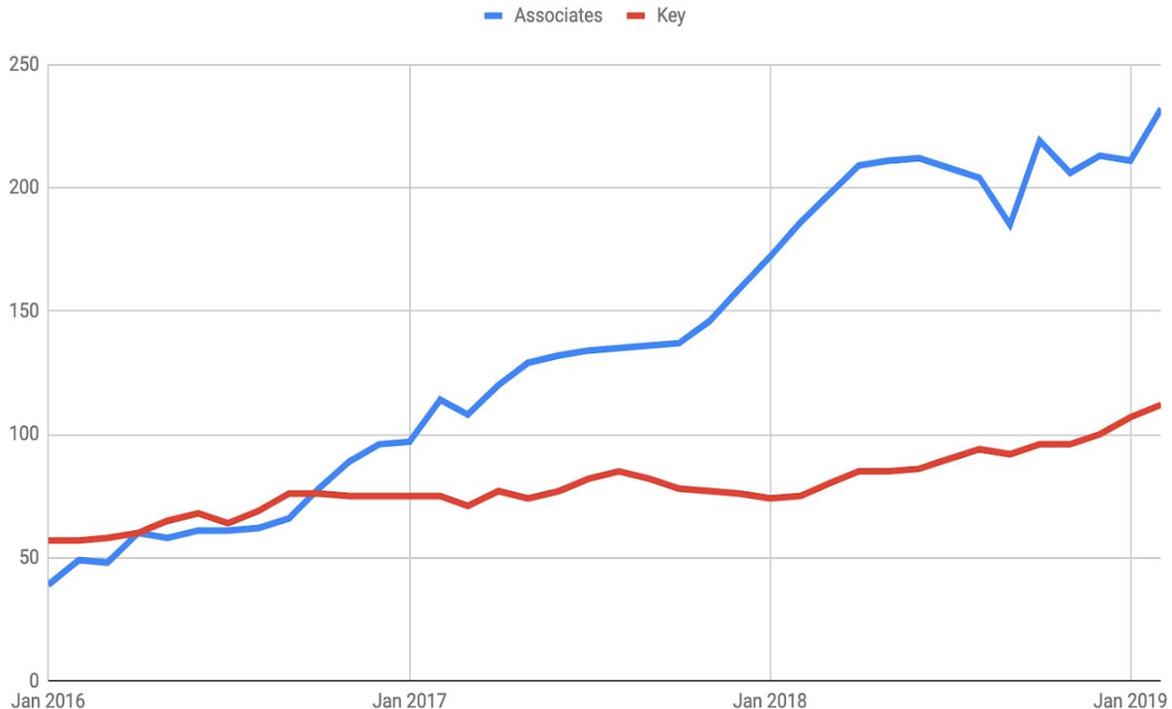
While many makerspaces are disappearing around the country, Nova Labs is beginning to thrive.

The delta in outcomes between others and us is due in large part thanks to the stewardship of those who came before us and being in a privileged/wealthy part of the country.

Nova Labs unique recipe for success has been:

Charging for membership + Publicity from large events + a few key donations + low costs from free volunteer labor

Membership Evolution 2016 - 2018



Our membership grew by 38% in 2019.

We stand a chance of becoming one of the most successful makerspaces in the world

- Supporting all sorts of makers of all ages and backgrounds
- Broadly engaged with our surrounding community through partnerships
- Financially stable
- Built to last decades

This cannot happen by accident, only by design

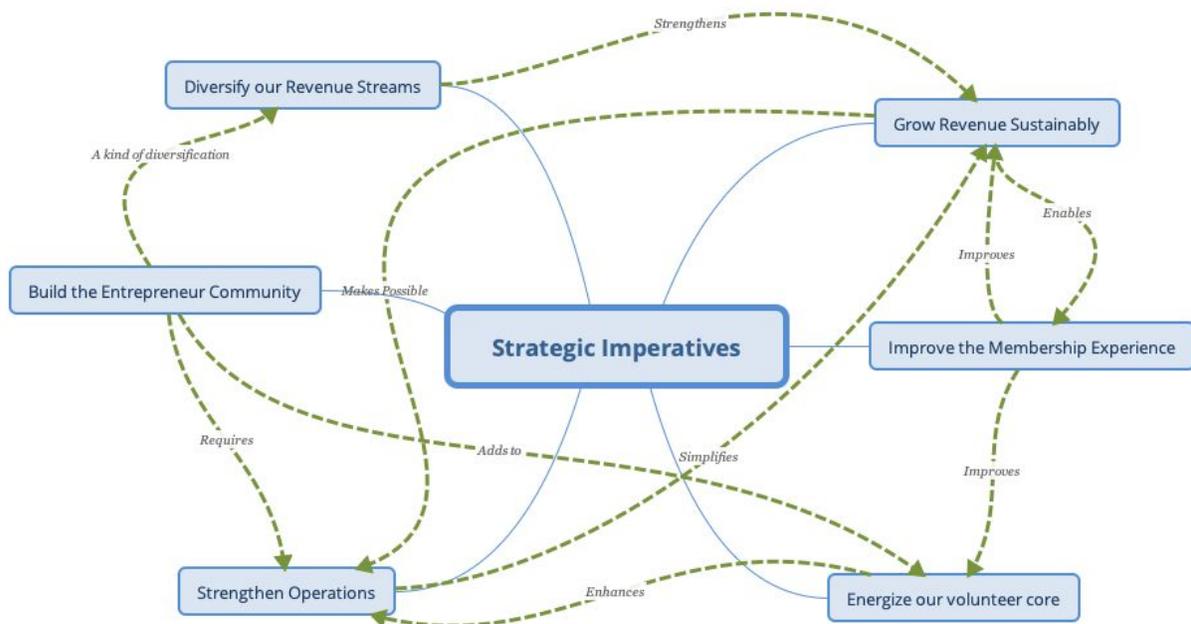
If we do it it will have positive repercussions far beyond our makerspace

- We can become a model for other makerspaces
- We can advance the maker movement
- We can become a bridge between the maker movement and our country's institutions
- We can leave a legacy for the next generation

North Star

TO CREATE A LARGE COMMUNITY MAKERSPACE FOR ALL AUDIENCES THAT HAS A PERMANENT PLACE AND ACTS AS AN ANCHOR FOR THE DC METRO AREA

Strategic Imperatives



Grow revenue sustainably

- To avoid putting at risk the viability of the organization
- To be able to afford the resources needed to solve the other imperatives
- To create a path that would allow us to purchase a property in the future

Improve the Membership Experience

- To improve key volunteer engagement, which is the lifeblood of an all-volunteer organization
- To reduce the new member churn rates

Energize our Volunteer Core

- To make available the human resources needed to operate

Strengthen Operations

- To improve execution
- To unburden the top of the leadership pyramid
- To strengthen the cohesion among active member volunteers
- To achieve consistent results

Seed a Self-Sustainable Entrepreneur Community

- The weakest part of our mission fulfillment
- A critical part of our ecosystem that can create synergies
- Congruence with FFX county efforts

Diversify our Revenue Streams

- To de-risk our strategic plan
- To unlock new capital expenditure that could help with the other strategic imperatives

Top Needle Moving Initiatives

Member Management Software

Area of Impact: Operations

Strategic Imperatives it Helps

- Improve the Membership Experience
- Strengthen Operations

Description

- Implement a new member management system that replaces our old management system.
- Decouple dependencies on Meetup
- Recoup fees paid through Meetup/WePay, get direct contact with attendees/members
- Have possibility of tiered cost (member discounts).

Justification:

- Current system is technically dead
- Lots of initiatives rely on this piece of software to be able to be implemented
- Easier access to all sorts of metrics directly

Metrics it Affects:

- On time revenue collection
- Increase in class registration/attendance
- Lower hours spent on operational and financial processes

Cost: No additional cost anticipated at this point, other than NL volunteer time.

Sponsor:

Hire Staff

Area of Impact: Operations

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Energize our Volunteer Core
- Strengthen Operations

Description

- Hire a group of people who can run Nova Labs on a day to day and weekly basis and allow the board and its officers to focus less on operational matters
- The list of hires would be determined based on the most urgent needs but at the end we would have a team of staff members led by someone in charge of staff.
- This staff would run all the core processes of Nova Labs.

Justification:

- Very few makerspaces at our scale operate on an all-volunteer basis
- Staff that is paid to be dedicated to implementing our mission can dramatically positively impact our execution
- Without staff it will be very difficult to make significant progress on all strategic projects
- Staff can multiply the impact of our volunteers

Metrics it affects:

- Hours of volunteering leveraged
- Revenue growth
- Profitability
- Member satisfaction

Sponsor:

Raise \$250k from Corporate Donations

Area of Impact: Outreach

Strategic Imperatives it Helps:

- Diversify Revenue Streams

Description

- Get 2 to 5 corporate donors to give \$50k - \$150k each

Justification:

- This initiative could single-handedly fund the hiring of staff.

Metrics it affects:

- Money in revenue coming from corporate donors
- Number of “big logos” that we can add to our regular donor roster

Sponsor: Daryl, Jeff

Pricing Membership Perks

Area of Impact: Operations

Strategic Imperatives it Helps:

- Member Experience
- Energize our Volunteer Core?

Description

- Membership currently only conveys access to the space, and sometimes preferential seating in classes
- Key members get 24/7 access to Nova Labs, while Associate members are limited to 3 hours in specific time slots each day, and Day Pass holders are allowed unlimited access for one calendar day
- Classes, Safety Sign-offs, and Projects currently have the same pricing structure for both members and non-members

Justification:

- Changing what, how, or if we monetize safety sign-offs, classes, and projects could have an outsized impact on the membership experience and how many people are willing to pay for Associate or Key Membership
- Could also impact our revenue stream

Metrics it affects:

- Money in revenue coming membership, classes, day passes, and projects
- Member Churn
- Member Growth

Sponsor:

Build Advisory Board

Area of Impact: Outreach

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Diversify Revenue Streams

Description

- Engage community leaders outside of Nova Labs who may not have the time required to take an active day-to-day or board leadership position
- Provide referrals of other makers to Nova Labs
- Provide leads for Nova Labs to businesses to provide services, create partnerships, etc.
- Strategic advice

Justification:

- Building a bridge to the area business community

Metrics it affects:

- Introductions and donations facilitated by advisory board members

Sponsor: Margaret

Implement Corporate Membership Program

Area of Impact: Outreach

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Build the Entrepreneur Community
- Grow Revenue Sustainably
- Diversify Revenue Streams

Description

- Create documentation/deliverables that can be packaged and re-packaged quickly into proposals for various organizations (ex., such as a sample proposal and pitch deck)
- Creating this documentation requires significant pre-work
- Dedicate time and effort to identifying opportunities and networking

Justification:

- Nova Labs needs more high-financial impact members, and the relationships that come along with those members
- We will not be able to take the next step without an expansion of our scope to groups other than hobbyist makers

Metrics it affects:

- Revenue
- Membership headcount

Sponsor: Brian, Jeff

New People Experience / Area of Interest Attachment

Area of Impact: Operations

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Membership experience

Description

- Attach new members to an Area of Interest
- Understand what new members want to get out of Nova Labs membership (what is their why?)
- Connect new members with mentors

Justification:

- Getting new members attached to a peer group fulfills their sense of local community
- New members can figure out how to contribute or ask other members how to do things at Nova Labs
- Retention / reduce member “churn” rate

Metrics it affects: Retention, Hours of volunteering leveraged,

Sponsor:

Existing Member Experience

Area of Impact: Operations

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Member Experience

Description

- Helping civilians transition to be successful members at Nova Labs
 - Nova Labs customs and culture
- Finding interest group(s) and teams where they fit
- Find ways to make a meaningful impact at Nova Labs
- Align orientation and tours to have less friction
- Distribute classes/projects/independent maker projects to have less friction
- Space optimization - figure out most efficient use of space to serve the most members in the Nova Labs community. (Income/Revenue)

Justification:

- More satisfied members leads to many desirable outcomes
 - Word of mouth promotion to friends
 - Awesome projects worked on... and completed.
 - Less

Metrics it affects: Members (key/full and associates)

Sponsor:

Strengthen Team Leads

Area of Impact:

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Improve Membership Experience
- Strengthen Volunteer Core
- Strengthen Operations

Description

- Team Leads are the Nova Labs shock absorbers, and they bear a lot of responsibility without matching authority--a recipe for burnout
- Strengthening their skills, broadening their authority to match their responsibilities, clarifying the board's expectations and exploring ways to enhance their compensation will increase their contributions to the smooth running of Nova Labs

Justification:

- Team Leads put in a lot of hours and know a great deal about how Nova Labs operates--they have different perspectives than either "regular" members or the board.
- They are valuable resources and investing in their success and sense of well-being as community members is a smart investment in the future of Nova Labs.
- Happy team leads mean happy members, happy members mean positive word-of-mouth, positive word-of-mouth means organizational growth

Metrics it affects:

- Membership headcount
- Contributions/donations

Sponsor: (No one yet)

Grant Person

Area of Impact: Outreach

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Diversify Revenue Streams
- Grow Revenue Sustainably

Description

- Hire grant person to focus on fundraising at greater scale than volunteer can accomplish
- Prospect, identify and track funding opportunities for grants from private foundations, corporate foundations, and municipal, state, and federal sources
- Oversee a portfolio of donors and funders to maintain and/or cultivate relationships with; and assist with other donor outreach and fundraising activities, as needed.
- Report to Daryl

Justification:

- NL is at a crossroads of where, how, and whether it can continue operations beyond 2022. We need needle-moving funds to achieve our goals
- Mitigates risk of reliance on single, major donor (Google) to support our growth initiatives.
- Hired personnel can achieve goals at a faster rate than on a volunteer basis.

Metrics it affects: Donations, cash flow, investments for NL 3.0

Sponsor: TBD

Revive the Pro Maker Community

Area of Impact: Outreach

Strategic Imperatives it helps

- Build the Entrepreneur Community
- Diversify Revenue Streams

Description

- Figure out what the Pro Maker community needs to flourish at Nova Labs
- Create a Pro-level tier of membership that represents that value proposition
- Give Pro Makers a way to get organized and speak with one voice
- Explore the possibility of partnering with other organizations to create a Pro-level joint venture

Justification:

- Entrepreneurship is in our mission
- Entrepreneurs can make outsized contributions to our community in knowledge, job creation, connections to corporate partnerships.

- Empowering entrepreneurs unleashes development opportunities with government entities and municipalities.

Metrics it affects:

- Revenue from Pro Maker memberships
- Number of businesses that call Nova Labs their home.

Sponsor: TBD

2020 Budget / Financial Forecast

See next page or [this spreadsheet](#)

For 2020	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
FINANCE (in 000)												
Cash	617	621	634	652	671	693	730	769	810	854	909	966
Operating account	99	103	116	134	153	175	212	251	292	336	391	448
Robotics account	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Savings account	477	477	477	477	477	477	477	477	477	477	477	477
Nova Labs 3.0 Capital Fund	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Revenue	43	44	62	73	75	77	94	96	98	100	112	114
Membership dues	28	29	42	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59
Classes (net of reimbursements)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Incubator / Rentals	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Programs (net of expenses)	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4
Donations	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Corporate Donations			5	15	15	15	30	30	30	30	40	40
Expenses	28	40	49	55	55	56	56	56	57	57	57	57
Rent	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Supplies & Materials	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Merchant Processing Fees	2	2	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	6
Other	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Payroll												
PT Executive Director (120k x .33 x 1.1 /12)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Volunteer Coordinator (60k x 1.1 / 12)		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Shop Coordinator (70k x 1.1 /12)		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
PT Stewards (10 x 10hrs week x 52 weeks / 12 m x \$25/hr)			5	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
PT Education Consultant (150k x .25 x 1.1 /12)			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Accountant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Utilities	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Facilities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Profit / Loss	16	5	12	18	20	21	37	39	41	43	55	57
<i>Profit / Loss Net of Donations</i>	5	-5	-3	-7	-5	-4	-3	-1	1	3	5	7
MEMBERSHIP	411	427	445	462	481	500	520	541	562	585	608	633
Key Members	156	162	169	175	182	190	197	205	213	222	231	240
Associates	255	265	276	287	298	310	323	336	349	363	377	393

Financial Analysis

Assumptions

- Membership growth similar to 2019

New initiatives with a revenue impact

- Implementation of corporate donations raises an added \$250k to our \$120k donation baseline
- We raise membership dues or restructure the membership plans to generate an additional \$10k/mo

New initiatives with an expenditure impact

- Hiring of staff. Would be done incrementally, first with a part-time Executive Director, then in a couple of months with Volunteer and Shop Coordinators
- Eventually extending the staff in the areas identified with the highest need.
- Assumes stewards become part-time paid positions

How we're going to keep track of progress

- We will review this strategy document quarterly
- If needed, we may introduce modifications to course correct; substantive changes will require Board approval
- Upon implementation we may discover that some other key initiatives may be needed and we may revisit the list.

Communication Plan

- Launch a conceptual plan to the community with the January newsletter publication
- Solicit feedback (within 28 days) from the community in order to inform the quarterly review cycle