

Embroiderers' Guild of America

A Stronger Thread

2026-2031 Strategic Plan



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About Embroiderers' Guild of America

For nearly seventy years, Embroiderers' Guild of America (EGA) has connected people through the practice of embroidery and the shared belief that needlework enriches lives. More than a creative pursuit, embroidery fosters self-expression, personal well-being, and cultural connection. Across generations, EGA has brought people together to develop their skills, share knowledge, preserve traditions, and experience the satisfaction and joy of creating by hand.

Founded in 1958 as the American branch of the Embroiderers' Guild and established as an independent organization in 1970, EGA today has almost 8,000 members who participate through a nationwide network of over 220 chapters and 12 regions, united by a shared passion for the needle arts.

Education and community are at the heart of EGA. EGA's rich and highly respected education program promotes excellence in embroidery while making knowledge accessible to learners at every stage. Just as importantly, EGA creates opportunities for friendship, mentorship, collaboration, and belonging, strengthening connections across the country. EGA's impact extends beyond its membership through outreach initiatives, educational partnerships with influencers and creators, as well as universities and cultural institutions, and public programs that introduce new audiences to embroidery and demonstrate its enduring relevance as both a creative and cultural practice.

As EGA looks to the future, it does so with deep respect for the traditions, techniques, and knowledge entrusted to its care. It also recognizes the opportunity to share the benefits of embroidery more broadly and to welcome new generations into the needle arts. This strategic plan reflects EGA's commitment to preserving and advancing the art and practice of embroidery, strengthening the community that sustains it, and ensuring that both continue to thrive for generations to come.



Strategic Planning Process

In 2025, Embroiderers' Guild of America (EGA) partnered with national nonprofit consulting firm Schultz & Williams (S&W) to guide a comprehensive strategic planning process focused on positioning EGA for long-term sustainability, future growth, and mission impact. Coming at a pivotal moment in EGA's history, the process sought to align staff, volunteer leaders, and members around a shared vision for the future while exploring how the organization must evolve to meet changing needs and opportunities.

This plan is grounded in a robust and highly participatory process guided by EGA staff and volunteer leadership. Nearly 2,000 individuals—including members, chapter and regional leaders, volunteers, educators, partners, and members of the broader embroidery community—shared their perspectives through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and planning sessions. This extensive engagement in the community provided valuable insights into EGA's current state while fostering broad ownership of the plan and its future implementation.

Several themes emerged consistently through the process. Stakeholders affirmed the central importance of EGA's educational excellence, community, and role as a trusted steward of embroidery knowledge and tradition. Participants also expressed a desire to expand access to embroidery, engage new and more diverse audiences, strengthen the member experience, and ensure the organization has the leadership, infrastructure, and resources needed to thrive.

The planning process also considered broader trends shaping EGA's future, including growing interest in handcrafted arts, the expanding reach of digital learning and social platforms, changing expectations around membership and volunteer engagement, and increasing recognition of the role creative practices play in personal well-being and social connection.

The result is a plan that builds on EGA's longstanding strengths while embracing thoughtful change. It outlines a path toward a more accessible, connected, and professionally supported organization: one that honors its heritage while positioning itself to preserve, advance, and share the art and practice of embroidery for generations to come.

Acknowledgments

This strategic plan is grounded in the engagement, insight, and thoughtful participation of many members of the EGA community. We are grateful to the staff, Board of Directors, Chapter members, donors, and peer partners who shared their perspectives throughout the process.

EGA's staff and Board of Directors met regularly to guide this process, review findings, and shape the direction and content of the plan. Their leadership and commitment were instrumental in bringing this work to fruition.

EGA's Evolution

Landscape

For nearly seventy years, the Embroiderers' Guild of America has preserved and advanced the art of embroidery through education, community, and a shared passion for needle arts. Through its national network of Chapters, Regions, volunteers, teachers, and members, EGA has built a community that is widely respected for its expertise, craftsmanship, and dedication to preserving the needle arts and its traditions.

An Inflection Point for EGA

Today, EGA stands at an important inflection point. The organization possesses many of the assets needed for long-term success: a passionate community, a highly regarded education program, dedicated staff, a national footprint, and financial reserves. At the same time, EGA must adapt to declines in membership, changing patterns of participation, and growing pressure on its volunteer leadership model. The question is not whether EGA has a future but how it can best leverage its strengths to grow more relevant, sustainable, and impactful for the years ahead.

Interest in embroidery and the broader needle arts is strong and growing, but the ways people discover, learn, practice, and engage are evolving. New generations of stitchers are finding inspiration and community through social media, online creators, virtual learning platforms, and informal local networks, often outside traditional membership organizations. As a result, much of the growth in needle arts participation is happening online or at the grassroots level.

The Opportunity to Evolve

This shift presents an important opportunity. EGA's longstanding Chapter network positions the organization to connect with individuals seeking in-person learning and community. EGA's depth of knowledge, educational credibility, and commitment to excellence are increasingly valuable in a landscape where interest in the needle arts is growing among both digital and in-person stitchers. With this foundation, EGA has an opportunity to strengthen its role as a provider of education and community and as a leading authority and trusted resource for the entire needle arts community.

The primary challenge facing EGA is not whether interest in embroidery exists—it clearly does. Rather, it is how EGA can evolve its programs, structures, and ways of engaging people to meet the expectations of current and future generations while preserving the quality, expertise, and sense of community that has defined the organization. By building on its strengths while thoughtfully adapting to changing expectations, technologies, and modes of participation, EGA can broaden its reach, engage new audiences, and ensure that embroidery continues to thrive for generations to come.

Strengths

The strategic planning process revealed a number of organizational strengths that provide EGA with a strong foundation for its future planning.

- An engaged community of members, volunteers, leaders, teachers, and donors who are committed to EGA's mission and long-term success.
- A strong national presence that fosters learning, connection, and engagement across the country through its 200+ Chapters and 12 Regions.
- A trusted source for embroidery education, offering diverse programs and access to experienced instructors who help preserve and advance needle arts education, tradition, and community.
- A respected reputation and strong credibility within the embroidery and broader needle arts community.
- Dedicated staff, engaged volunteer leaders, and a collaborative organizational culture that provides a strong foundation for effective operations and future growth.
- Strong financial reserves that provide EGA with a unique opportunity to proactively shape its future rather than simply react to emergent challenges and changing member needs.

A survey of EGA members revealed what they value most about their membership:

- Being part of the needle arts community and meeting other members
- Access to EGA's educational resources and opportunities

This considerable set of strengths begs the question: how can EGA leverage its assets to adapt to the changing environment and ensure its relevance into the future?

"I'm so glad that I joined—I've grown leaps and bounds." – EGA Member

"I want EGA to be even more on the map and to shine!" – EGA Staff

"I love embroidery. I'm not always doing embroidery, but I'm always interested in it, including its history." – EGA Member

"Through my EGA membership, I've been very fortunate to know and share this mutual love with so many others who have become dear friends, not only in my own chapter but many others throughout our Region." – EGA Member

Opportunities

Building on these strengths, stakeholders identified several areas of opportunity that will help EGA continue to evolve and thrive.

- Expand EGA's reach by offering more virtual, hybrid, and non-member participation opportunities, allowing individuals to engage regardless of location or Chapter affiliation.
- Strengthen EGA's position as the leading authority in embroidery education by modernizing curriculum, expanding beginner-friendly offerings, and creating structured learning pathways for deeper learning and engagement.
- Reduce volunteer burden and strengthen Chapter and Regional sustainability by providing additional administrative support, leadership development, and streamlined processes.
- Position EGA as an inclusive and accessible community that is home to a wide array of needle artists through contemporary programming, targeted outreach, and messaging that highlights creativity, wellness, and community.
- Make strategic investments in technology, staffing, infrastructure, and member experience initiatives that support long-term growth.
- Simplify governance structures to improve organizational effectiveness and enable more consistent decision-making by clarifying the roles of EGA National, Regions, and Chapters.
- Increase awareness of EGA and broaden its appeal to new audiences with a refreshed brand identity, stronger digital presence, and strategic partnerships.
- Expand revenue-generating programs and create additional ways for individuals to engage with EGA to reduce dependence on membership dues and strengthen long-term financial sustainability.

This plan represents EGA's commitment to strengthening three essential elements of its future: **the art and practice of embroidery, the community that sustains it, and the organizational capacity needed to support both.** By investing in education, member experience, and organizational capacity, EGA will be better positioned to preserve its heritage, welcome new generations of embroiderers, and expand its impact in the years ahead.

"The path forward will require intentional modernization that preserves connection, simplifies volunteer leadership demands, and leverages virtual engagement while ensuring continuity between individual Board terms." – EGA Board Member

Strategic Framework

Vision

We envision a future in which needle arts are widely valued as living art forms that foster creativity, connection, cultural continuity, and well-being, and EGA serves as a trusted national home for embroidery education, community, and preservation—where people of all backgrounds and skill levels can discover embroidery, develop mastery, share knowledge across generations, and contribute to a vibrant and evolving creative tradition.

Mission

EGA connects people to the art, heritage, and possibilities of embroidery through education, community, and the shared practice of the needle arts.

Core Values

Belonging – We foster a welcoming, respectful, and connected community where people feel valued, included, and able to participate fully.

Excellence – We are committed to excellence in the art and practice of embroidery, fostering the highest standards of craftsmanship, teaching, and lifelong learning while serving as a trusted resource for all who seek to learn, create, and grow.

Integrity – We act with honesty, accountability, and fiscal responsibility, building trust through the way we lead, communicate, and make decisions.

Forward-Thinking – We honor the rich heritage of needlework while embracing new ideas, evolving practices, and thoughtful change in how we learn and grow together.

Creativity – We bring joy and creativity to our work, fostering delight, connection, and personal expression through needlework.

Strategic Pillars



Advance the Art & Practice of Embroidery

EGA will preserve, advance, and share the art and practice of embroidery by providing high-quality, accessible learning experiences that honor tradition, foster creativity, and support lifelong learning.



Strengthen Community & Foster Connection

EGA will expand and strengthen a vibrant and welcoming community by creating accessible pathways for participation, fostering meaningful connections among members and with the broader embroidery world, and increasing visibility and engagement with embroidery and needle arts.



Build Organizational Resilience

EGA will build a resilient, financially sustainable, and professionally supported organization that strengthens member value, expands mission impact, and positions EGA for long-term success.



Advance the Art & Practice of Embroidery

EGA will preserve, advance, and share the art and practice of embroidery by providing high-quality, accessible learning experiences that honor tradition, foster creativity, and support lifelong learning.

Embroidery is both a living art form and a cultural tradition shaped by generations of makers, teachers, and practitioners. As interest in embroidery continues to evolve, EGA has an opportunity to expand its role as a leading source of education, expertise, and stewardship for the needle arts community.

Over the next five years, EGA will strengthen and modernize its educational ecosystem to better serve learners at every stage of their embroidery journey. This includes creating a more cohesive yet flexible curriculum defined by a shared learning philosophy; expanding access through virtual, hybrid, and self-directed learning opportunities; and establishing program development and evaluation systems that support educational quality, consistency, and continuous improvement. EGA will also invest in the next generation of educators by strengthening educator development, certification, mentorship, and support systems.

EGA will deepen its role as a steward of embroidery knowledge and expertise. By activating its collection, library, and other knowledge assets, preserving historical techniques and traditions, and creating new opportunities to capture and share expertise from across the embroidery community, EGA will ensure that the rich history of the needle arts remains accessible and relevant to future generations.

Through these efforts, EGA will strengthen its position as a trusted authority on embroidery, expand access to high-quality learning opportunities, and help ensure the art and practice of embroidery continues to thrive, evolve, and inspire.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal

- Create a cohesive, flexible educational model that elevates the learner experience and EGA's role as a trusted source for teaching and learning embroidery.
- Increase access to embroidery education through diverse formats, delivery models, and content offerings.
- Establish a data-informed framework for maintaining educational excellence and continuous improvement.
- Build and support a diverse, skilled, and sustainable pipeline of embroidery educators.
- Steward and activate EGA's collection, library, and knowledge assets to preserve, advance, and share embroidery knowledge and expertise.

Strengthen Community & Foster Connection



EGA will expand and strengthen a vibrant and welcoming community by creating accessible pathways for participation, fostering meaningful connections among members and with the broader embroidery world, and increasing visibility and engagement with embroidery and needle arts.

Community is at the heart of EGA and its mission. Over the next five years, EGA will strengthen the member experience while creating new opportunities for people to connect with EGA's community, participate in programming, and engage with embroidery in ways that reflect their interests, goals, and preferred methods of involvement.

EGA will focus on creating a more connected and consistent experience across the organization by strengthening member onboarding, improving communication and engagement practices, and helping members more easily connect with chapters, programs, volunteer opportunities, and one another. Recognizing that participation takes many forms, EGA will also expand opportunities for involvement beyond traditional chapter membership through affinity groups, virtual communities, outreach initiatives, and other flexible engagement models.

Simultaneously, EGA will work to broaden awareness of both the organization and the needle arts. Through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships, public-facing programs, and a stronger communications presence, EGA will engage new audiences, strengthen pathways from initial interest to deeper involvement, and reinforce its position as the trusted national authority on embroidery.

Through these efforts, EGA will cultivate a more accessible, welcoming, and connected community that supports lifelong engagement with embroidery while ensuring that EGA remains relevant and meaningful to future stitchers.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal

- Create a more connected and consistent member experience across all touchpoints and levels of EGA.
- Expand flexible opportunities for members to engage and connect with EGA.
- Increase awareness and reach among new and more diverse audiences.
- Strengthen the pathway from initial engagement to membership and long-term involvement.
- Establish EGA as the trusted national authority and voice for embroidery.



Build Organizational Resilience

EGA will build a resilient, financially sustainable, and professionally supported organization that strengthens member value, expands mission impact, and positions EGA for long-term success.

The future success of EGA depends not only on the strength of its programs and community, but also on the systems, leadership, and resources that support them. Over the next five years, EGA will undertake an intentional organizational transition designed to strengthen its capacity, improve sustainability, and better position the organization to fulfill its mission.

EGA will modernize and simplify its organizational structure, clarifying the respective roles of National, Regional, and Chapter leadership, and building a more professionally supported model. Investments in staffing, technology, operational infrastructure, and organizational systems will strengthen service to members, reduce administrative burden on volunteers, and create a stronger foundation for future growth.

The organization will also create more sustainable approaches to leadership and volunteer engagement. By redesigning leadership roles, expanding opportunities for more diverse and meaningful volunteer participation, and strengthening recruitment, onboarding, and succession practices, EGA will cultivate a broader and more sustainable network of leaders and volunteers equipped to guide the organization into the future.

Supporting these efforts will be a commitment to responsible stewardship of financial resources and thoughtful investment in mission priorities. Through long-term financial planning, diversified revenue, and strategic investment in people, programs, and infrastructure, EGA will strengthen its ability to serve members while ensuring the organization remains resilient and sustainable for years to come.

Over the course of this plan, EGA will evolve into a more agile, professionally supported organization that provides support to its members and leaders while growing its capacity needed to advance embroidery and the needle arts for future generations.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal

- Redefine and simplify the National / Regional / Chapter structure.
- Build professional staff capacity and centralized operational infrastructure.
- Develop a transition plan to support organizational transition and change management.
- Create a more sustainable and strategic leadership model.
- Expand and diversify opportunities for non-leadership volunteer engagement.
- Preserve financial sustainability through responsible stewardship, diversified revenue, and strategic investment.

How the Work Unfolds

1

YEARS 1–2

Build the Foundation

Assess current programs, structures, and systems; define future models; establish policies, frameworks, and plans.

2

YEARS 2–4

Implement the Change

Launch new programs, systems, staffing structures, participation models, and governance practices.

3

YEARS 4–5

Strengthen and Scale

Refine, expand, and sustain successful initiatives while fully operating under the new organizational model.

EGA is building on its strong foundation as a member-driven organization while evolving to meet the needs of future generations of embroiderers. Over the next five years, EGA will strengthen and modernize its educational programs, expand opportunities for connection and participation, and build the staff, systems, and resources needed to support long-term growth and sustainability.

Throughout this transition, EGA will remain grounded in its commitment to excellence in embroidery, stewardship of member resources, and the power of community to preserve and advance the needle arts.

Milestones

Read each pillar across the phases →

YEARS 1-2 Build the Foundation

YEAR 3 Demonstrate Progress

YEARS 4-5 Realize the Vision

PILLAR 1

Advance the Art & Practice of Embroidery

YEARS 1-2

- ✕ Educational philosophy established
- ✕ Programs inventoried; curriculum framework developed
- ✕ National and Regional seminar evaluated
- ✕ Curriculum and learner pathways mapped
- ✕ Educator certification reviewed
- ✕ Collection and library assessment complete

YEAR 3

- ✕ New curriculum framework implemented
- ✕ Virtual, hybrid, and on-demand learning expanded
- ✕ Educator development and mentorship programs active
- ✕ Collection policies adopted and integrated into programming

YEARS 4-5

- ✕ Cohesive educational program fully operational
- ✕ Robust qualified educator pool supporting programs
- ✕ Evaluation and continuous-improvement practices embedded
- ✕ Collection and library actively used as educational assets
- ✕ EGA acknowledged as a leading steward of embroidery knowledge

PILLAR 2

Strengthen Community & Foster Connection

YEARS 1-2

- ✕ Member engagement assessment complete
- ✕ Membership value proposition defined
- ✕ Member experience framework established
- ✕ Audience, communications, and content strategies created

YEAR 3

- ✕ Improved member onboarding and engagement practices in place
- ✕ Audience engagement initiatives active
- ✕ Affinity groups piloted and scaled
- ✕ Outreach partnerships expanded
- ✕ Content hub and communications infrastructure launched
- ✕ Member retention and growth increasing

YEARS 4-5

- ✕ Consistent, connected member experience across EGA
- ✕ Multiple ways to participate beyond chapter engagement
- ✕ Stronger membership retention and growth
- ✕ EGA widely recognized as a trusted national resource

PILLAR 3

Build Organizational Resilience

YEARS 1-2

- ✕ National, Regional, and Chapter roles clarified
- ✕ Staffing and infrastructure plans developed
- ✕ Leadership and governance assessments completed
- ✕ Financial policies and planning tools established
- ✕ Transition charter adopted

YEAR 3

- ✕ Assessment of three-tier structure complete
- ✕ Priority staff positions filled
- ✕ Centralized systems and governance modernization underway
- ✕ Expanded volunteer opportunities active
- ✕ Modernized digital infrastructure in place
- ✕ Fundraising assessment complete and strategy in place

YEARS 4-5

- ✕ Professionally-supported operating model in place
- ✕ Organizational structure aligned with strategic
- ✕ Strong leadership pipeline and volunteer ecosystem
- ✕ Sustainable, diversified revenue model supporting the mission

Conclusion

EGA has long understood that embroidery is more than a technical skill or pastime: it is a living art form, a source of creativity and connection, a means of preserving cultural knowledge, and a practice that can bring focus, calm, and meaning into people's lives. This strategic plan honors that understanding while recognizing that EGA now has an opportunity, and a responsibility, to share the value of embroidery more broadly.

The plan reflects a thoughtful and deeply participatory process, grounded in EGA's mission, informed by the voices of members and stakeholders, and shaped by a clear-eyed understanding of the organization's strengths and challenges. It is forward-thinking without losing sight of what has always made EGA essential: its commitment to excellence in embroidery, its culture of shared learning, and the community formed when people gather to stitch.

In a digital era marked by both extraordinary connection and growing disconnection, EGA's work feels especially relevant. While digital platforms create new opportunities to reach people wherever they are, embroidery offers something deeply needed: a hands-on practice that encourages patience, creativity, well-being, and human connection. By embracing both digital reach and the enduring value of making by hand, EGA can expand its impact while remaining rooted in the traditions it exists to preserve.

This plan provides a roadmap for that work. It is grounded enough to guide clear decisions and meaningful action, yet flexible enough to adapt as conditions change. By following this roadmap, and continuing to learn and adapt along the way, EGA can remain true to what is essential while stepping confidently into its next chapter, ensuring that the art and practice of embroidery continue to thrive for generations to come.

To ensure the successful implementation of this plan, here are a set of guidelines to employ:

- **Communicate and celebrate the plan.** Recognize the contributions of members, volunteers, staff, and leaders who helped shape the plan, and regularly reinforce how the strategic priorities support EGA's future.
- **Establish clear ownership and accountability.** Designate a staff lead to coordinate implementation and assign staff and volunteer leaders to champion each strategic pillar, monitor progress, and address barriers.
- **Embed the plan into organizational decision-making.** Regularly review strategic priorities and implementation progress through Board, committee, and staff meetings to maintain focus and accountability.
- **Monitor, adapt, and communicate progress.** Track implementation, evaluate results, make adjustments as needed, and communicate milestones, accomplishments, and lessons learned to stakeholders.
- **Celebrate successes along the way.** Recognize meaningful achievements and the contributions of members, volunteers, and staff that help advance EGA's vision.
- **Use the plan as a roadmap.** Allow implementation strategies to evolve as conditions change while remaining grounded in EGA's mission, values, and strategic goals.

