



# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is represented by a board of 12 Commissioners, one from each member community it serves. As a tax-supported transit system, DART is accountable to its region's voters. The DART Board of Commissioners is a volunteer group that sets policy and oversees DART's budget, with one elected official representing each individual member government.

**Altoona** – Commissioner Vernon Willey II, City Council Member

**Ankeny** – Commissioner Kelly Stearns, City Council Member

**Bondurant** – Commissioner Tara Cox, City Council Member

**Clive** – Commissioner Srikant Mikkilineni, Clive Council Member

**Des Moines** – Commissioner Josh Mandlebaum, City Council Member

**Grimes** – Commissioner Andrew Borcharding, City Council Member

**Johnston** – Commissioner Paula Dierenfeld, Mayor

**Pleasant Hill** – Commissioner Ross Grooters, City Council Member

**Polk County** – Commissioner Steve Van Oort, County Supervisor

**Urbandale** – Commissioner Bridget Montgomery, City Council Member

**West Des Moines** – Commissioner Russ Trimble, Mayor

**Windsor Heights** – Commissioner Joseph Jones, City Council Member

# OUR MISSION

Enriching Lives, Connecting Communities, Expanding Opportunities.

# OUR VISION

Facilitate affordable, seamless mobility options that support economic prosperity for all.

# OUR CORE VALUES

- ▶ **Adaptability:** We are responsive to customer, community and employee needs
- ▶ **Teamwork:** We are inclusive and enjoy working together with care and respect
- ▶ **Excellence:** We strive to exceed the expectations of our customers, member communities and partners
- ▶ **Safety:** We ensure safe and secure environments
- ▶ **Accountability:** We are committed to using resources responsibly with integrity and transparency
- ▶ **Innovation:** We are committed to using resources responsibly with integrity and transparency





January 3, 2023

Dear DART and Stakeholders

The DART Commission is extremely proud of the work this organization does to live up to our mission statement of Enriching Lives, Connecting Communities, Expanding Opportunities.

This Strategic Plan represents our vision for how best to fulfill our commitment to provide affordable, seamless mobility options that support economic prosperity for all. Our goal is to meet the needs of our customers and staff on a day-to-day basis, while also innovating and continuously improving to meet the needs of an evolving region and transit industry.

This Plan is intended to build on what has been working well for DART as well as recent technical assessments and Commission direction that can be found in the Transit Optimization Study for service planning, Technology Health Assessment for IT needs, and the Five Year Financial Plan which forecasts revenue and expenses.

This Plan includes major initiatives that could be transformative for DART, and it also includes finer points about how we can enhance our community impact and improve existing processes. While the Plan primarily focuses on the next three years, the initiatives identified in the plan will set DART up for continued success well beyond that timeline, and the values and objectives in the plan are intended to be a guide for how DART serves the regions well into the future.

Respectfully,

Russ Trimble  
Mayor, West Des Moines  
Chair of the DART Commission

**Des Moines  
Area Regional  
Transit Authority**

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# About DART

DART operates a family of transportation services that make getting around Greater Des Moines easier and more convenient.



## Frequent Local Fixed Routes

Operates 7 days per week until 9 pm or later (5 pm on Sundays), and are dense corridors with key regional destinations. These routes form the backbone of DART's transit network.



## Supporting Local Fixed Routes

Serves lower-density areas with fewer regional destinations, helping to provide weekday service to parts of the region where more frequent service may not be warranted yet. These routes operate Monday-Friday only, and some may operate only during peak commuting hours. Supporting local fixed routes also provide dedicated trips to many Des Moines schools.



## Express Routes

Operates Monday through Friday, mostly during the morning and evening rush hours, picking up passengers at limited stops and providing direct, nonstop service to and from Downtown Des Moines. Some provide local connections before proceeding nonstop to Downtown Des Moines.



## Shuttles

Facilitates first-last mile connections to other DART fixed routes and circulation in and around Downtown Des Moines. Downtown shuttles provide a fare-free connection between parking, employment centers, and other downtown destinations. Weekend service varies on Shuttle routes.



## On Call Zones

Pick up passengers at their door and take them to destinations within specific zones. Customers book trips by calling DART customer service at least one day in advance. Most services operate 1-2 days per week, except Grimes which operate Monday-Friday. Service hours are limited.



## Flex Connect

A new mobility-on-demand (MOD) service that connects passengers in areas where the fixed route network does not reach. Like On Call, customers can book trips within a defined zone to or from a bus stop that connects them to DART's fixed route network. Flex Connect allows same day booking using Uber, Yellow Cab taxi or a DART-operated accessible vehicle, and can be booked by phone or through the Uber app. DART introduced Flex Connect as part of a pilot program in 2019.



## Paratransit

Available for senior citizens and persons with disabilities who are unable to use DART fixed route service. Paratransit is a "door-to-door" and wheelchair accessible service, and includes federally mandated ADA complementary service, as well as contracted trips to senior meal sites and medical appointments.



## RideShare

Vanpool program administered by DART in which a group of commuters share a DART-provided van. Covering 18 counties in Central Iowa, RideShare is available beyond DART's normal service Area. Historically, DART has limited RideShare formation to areas beyond the reach of the Express Route network.



## DART on Demand

DART on Demand is a mobility-on-demand (MOD) service that operates using smaller transit buses to provide point-to-point trips within a designated zone. Trips can be booked in real-time (on-demand) or scheduled in advance using the DART On Demand mobile app, web app or by phone calling DART Customer Service.

# Introduction

This strategic plan reflects a long-term vision for DART, and a near term action plan to achieve that vision. The underlying assumptions that are guiding this strategy include:

- ▶ DART has a direct impact on improving the lives of thousands of Central Iowa residents every day
- ▶ DART will be mobility leader in Central Iowa, and use its expertise to influence policies that directly and indirectly impact transportation needs and services
- ▶ DART should partner with regional leaders and stakeholders to maximize its impact and value
- ▶ DART will test innovative service approaches to better understand how they can be used to address service needs and fiscal constraints
- ▶ The most cost-effective way to grow ridership is to retain existing customers and to attract new customers to existing services
- ▶ The most cost-effective way to serve a growing region is if growth is concentrated in areas with existing DART services, and DART will work with member communities to encourage job and housing growth in areas already well served by DART
- ▶ The next three years should be spent focusing on ensuring that DART's existing services are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible and preparing our infrastructure and workforce to respond to the challenges we face today and into the future
- ▶ There are gaps and barriers to transportation in our region, but most requests for service to new places would require additional funding unless corresponding efficiencies or service reductions could be identified



# Balanced Approach

Since the adoption of its last strategic plan, DART has used a continuous improvement approach to strategic planning, and has now developed a Work Plan that draws on the principles of a balanced scorecard. This approach prompts leaders to take a holistic view of their resource allocation and decision-making by providing a view of how it impacts customers and stakeholders, the internal team, business process, and financial performance. Seeing all of these perspectives at the same time helps prevent actions that strongly benefit one aspect of the organizations' performance but could also have a strong negative impact on another. This leads to improved budgeting and intentional trade off decisions towards creating enhanced value and better performance. On the Work Plan, one can see the focus areas selected for the next three-year cycle. These focus areas then have objectives that are accompanied by metrics that will be used to determine levels of success. Finally, in the right-hand column, one can see the projects contemplated in the plan that should help drive positive outcomes across the objectives and metrics have been classified according to their effort and potential relative impact as improvement, enhancement, or transformative. This Plan includes an organizational Work Plan with the most impactful initiatives and metrics, and work plans for each department will be developed on an annual basis.

## Focus Areas

The following focus areas have been identified to provide clarity on where DART is headed:

- ▶ **Ensure Financial Stability:** DART must ensure that its revenues are sustainable and that its services are as efficient and effective as possible.
- ▶ **Deliver a safe, high-quality customer experience:** Central Iowa deserves a transit system that ensures equitable access to jobs and essential services. DART will focus on providing safe and reliable service and strive to create an exceptional experience for its customers.
- ▶ **Modernize our infrastructure:** DART will meet the region's transportation needs today and into the future by maintaining a reliable fleet of vehicles and ensuring its technologies and facilities are working efficiently and effectively for its customers and staff.
- ▶ **Foster and Engaged, innovative and inclusive workforce:** DART's employees are its greatest asset, and DART's ability to serve its customers relies heavily on its ability to recruit, retain and nurture an exceptional workforce.



# Work Plan

OBJECTIVES	MEASUREMENTS	INITIATIVES	Impact	Lead	Accomplish by
<b>ENSURE FINANCIAL STABILITY</b>					
Generate sufficient revenue to maintain service levels and meet evolving regional needs while reducing reliance on property taxes	% of revenue from non-property tax sources Farebox recovery ratio	Revenue diversification State Legislative Action Local ballot initiative Continued pursuit of grants and revenue partnerships	Transformative	External Affairs External Affairs External Affairs	2023 2023 Ongoing
Maximize efficiency and control costs through continuous improvement	Fixed Route passengers per hour Operating cost per revenue hour	Five-Year Financial Plan TOS Implementation: Fixed Route Efficiencies Bus Plus Program Updates	Transformative Improvement Enhancement	Finance Planning Mobility Services	2023 Ongoing 2023
<b>DELIVER A SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE</b>					
Leverage technology and innovative transportation services to meet the evolving needs of the region	% of population living within 1/2 mile of all day service	TOS Implementation DART On Demand Implementation Implement Bus Stop Amenities Mobility Aggregation Study	Enhancement	Planning Planning Planning	2023 2024 2025
Enable equitable access to employment and essential services by minimizing barriers to riding DART	Ridership by service (Fixed Route, Paratransit, DOD, Rideshare)	Fare Collection Updates Fare Policy updates Fare collection media updates Mobile App update	Enhancement	Planning External Affairs External Affairs	2024 2025 2025
Provide an exceptional customer experience that leads DART customers to recommend our services to their family and friends	Net Promoter Score Develop customer sentiment metrics that can be collected frequently	Customer Experience Enhancements Operator customer service training Detour Communications Customer information enhancements Customer feedback collection improvements	Improvement	Fixed Route and Mobility Services Fixed Route External Affairs Customer Service	2023 2023 2023 2024
Deliver reliable, safe service	Fixed Route On-Time Performance Paratransit On-Time Performance Preventable Accident Rate	Service Monitoring and Reporting Program Implement Agency Safety Plan	Improvement Improvement	Planning Safety	Ongoing 2023
<b>MODERNIZE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</b>					
Maintain all infrastructure in a state of good repair so work can be carried out effectively	Average fleet age by vehicle type Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan cumulative score % project milestones met	Improved fleet planning process Fleet Diversification and Zero Emissions plan Operations & Maintenance facility Environmental Approvals Project Funding Plan Design and Construction Address Technology Assessment Findings Emergency Action Plan Disaster Recover/Business Continuity Plan	Improvement Enhancement Transformative	Planning Fleet Planning Finance Operations IT Safety IT	2023 2024 2023 2023 2025 2023 2023 2023
Develop our facilities, fleet and technology to address current and future needs and challenges	Cybersecurity incidents (phishing tests)		Enhancement Improvement Improvement		
<b>FOSTER AN ENGAGED, INCLUSIVE &amp; INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE</b>					
Ensure staffing levels and skills meet business needs	Fulfillment metric TBD Staff turnover rate	HRIS System Recruitment, Onboarding and Retention Enhancement Internal Customer Service Training DEI Initiative Implement Core Values	Enhancement Improvement Improvement Improvement Improvement	HR HR Training Planning HR	2023 Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2023
Create a welcoming and empowering work environment	Employee satisfaction/engagement/NPS scores EEO/DEI metric tbd	Performance Planning and Management Org Development facilitations and training	Improvement Improvement	HR Training	Ongoing Ongoing
Invest in our employees and provide pathways for growth and development	% completion of performance plans % participation in training each FY		Improvement Improvement	HR Training	Ongoing Ongoing



# Project Descriptions

- ▶ Revenue Diversification: DART is funded through a variety of local, state and federal sources, as well as revenue earned through fare payments, advertising and contracted services. The DART Commission has set a goal of reducing DART's reliance on property taxes by seeking new sources of revenue. DART staff are diligently working with members of the Iowa legislature and relevant departments to consider authorization for additional sources of local funding for transit.
- ▶ Five-year Financial Plan: DART has engaged with a financial advisor to forecast short- and medium-term revenue and expense expectations. The five-year financial plan will be used to help the DART Commission and staff plan for annual budgets and advise other important decisions.
- ▶ Operations and Maintenance Facility: DART's current bus maintenance garage at 1100 DART Way is outdated and many of its buildings and systems are beyond their useful life. There are significant limitations to the existing site, and therefore DART is exploring constructing a new Operations and Maintenance Facility at a new site.
- ▶ Transit Optimization Study (TOS): The TOS is DART's vision for near- and long-term service planning. It includes an analysis of what service is working well, and where improvements are needed, as well as guiding principles and recommendations for service changes to address the evolving needs of the region.
- ▶ Bus Plus Program Updates: Bus Plus is DART's federally mandated complementary door-to-door accessible service for customers with a disability that keeps them from being able to use Fixed Route service. DART is considering changes to eligibility and service area boundaries to better meet the needs of the region while balancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.
- ▶ Human Resources Information System (HRIS): DART seeks to replace the multiple systems that it currently uses to intake job applications, onboard employees, process payroll, manage benefits, and oversee employee performance. The goal is to replace these various systems with a fully integrated cloud-based solution to reduce redundant record keeping, decrease manual entries and improve utility.
- ▶ Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative: DART has an employee-led DEI committee that is a forum for exploring issues of equity and inclusion and proposing ways that DART can ensure its services are accessible to all and provide a welcoming experience to employees, DART customers and all community members.
- ▶ Fare Collection Updates: DART has launched new and innovative services such as DART On Demand and Flex Connect. Additionally, fare collection technology and the needs of DART's customers are evolving. DART staff will study the state of the practice and consider fare policy and fare payment technology updates to better serve DART's customers.

# Moving Forward

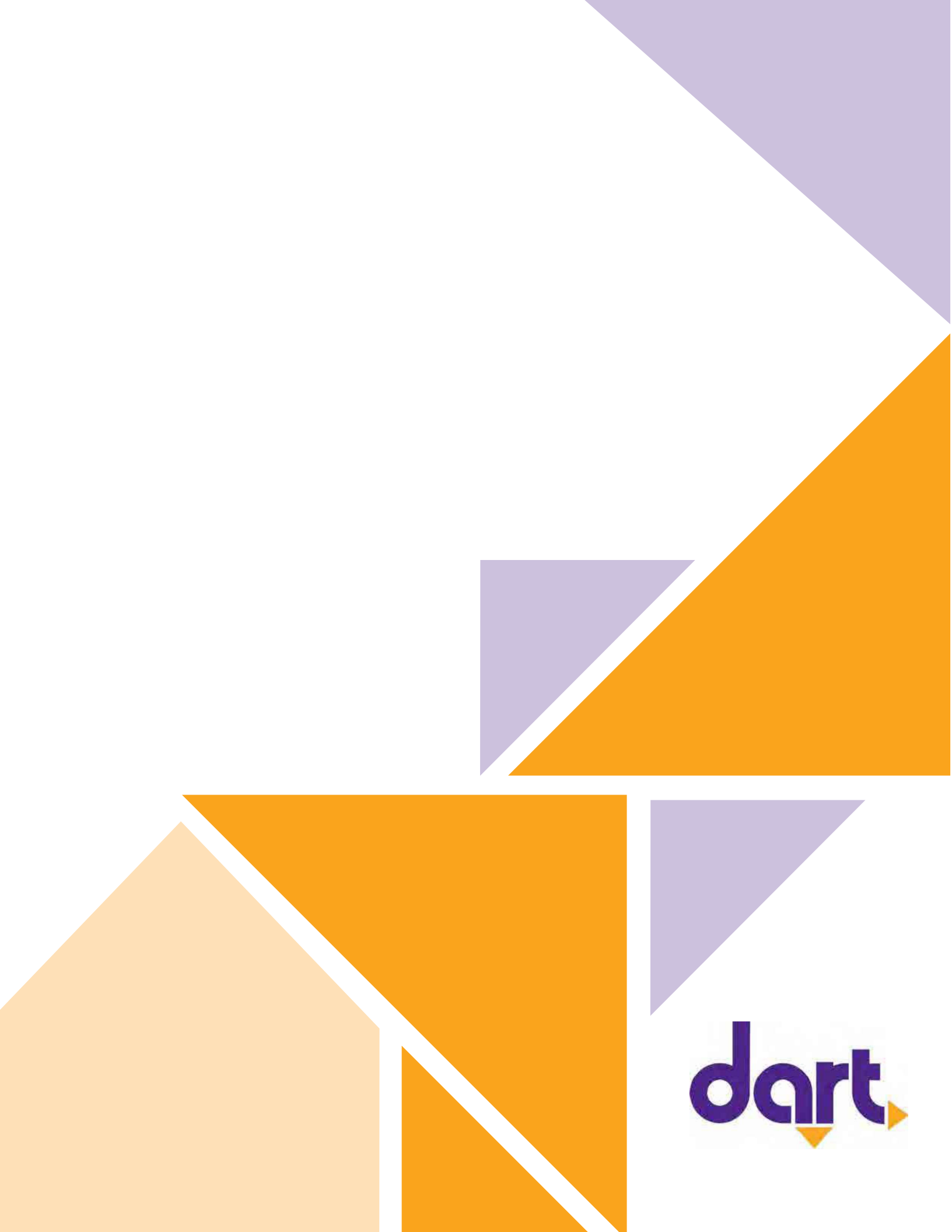
This Strategic Plan represents DART's vision for the next three years and beyond. It includes details about what DART is trying to achieve, how it will be done, and how success will be measured. The organizational Work Plan will be a guiding document for DART staff to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan, and each departments will also create an annual work plan so that the objectives of the Strategic Plan cascade throughout the organization's tactical initiatives and day-to-day operations.

## Implementation

DART staff will implement this Strategic Plan by taking a number of steps, including:

- ▶ Disseminating the Strategic Plan with staff, key stakeholders and the general public
- ▶ Enhancing existing internal reporting procedures to include monthly written status reports on items listed in the Work Plan
- ▶ Sharing a performance report with the DART Commission each month highlighting key performance indicators (KPI) identified in the Work Plan
- ▶ Conducting regular reviews of internal resources to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan
- ▶ Incorporating core values into recruitment, retention, and employee recognition programs
- ▶ Ensuring that any newly proposed initiatives or policies are in alignment with this Strategic Plan before presenting them for budgetary or Commission consideration





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