SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

2022 DIGITAL PLAN

Executive Summary
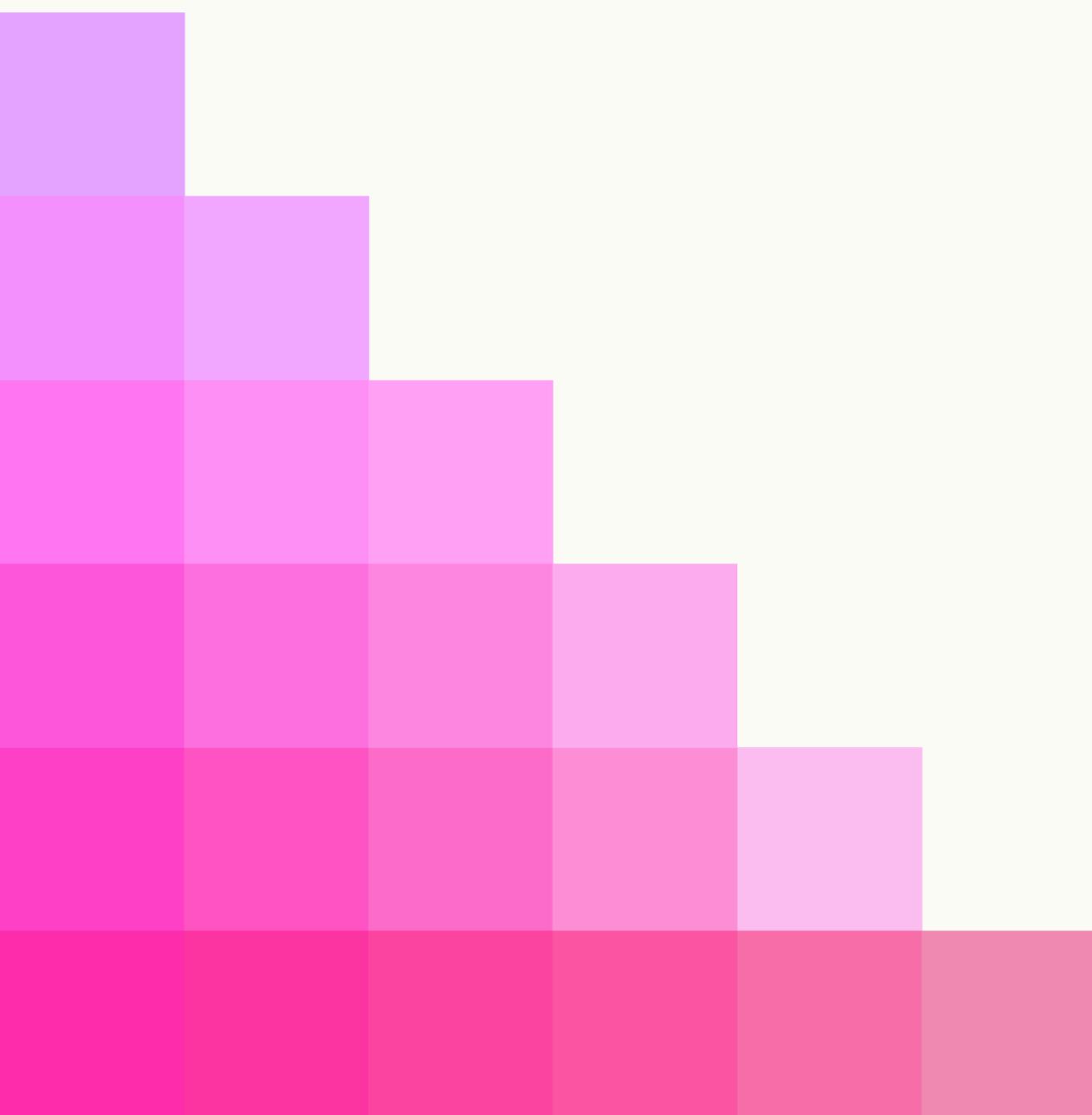
The Spencer Museum of Art (SMA) is an academic art museum located on the main campus of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. Its mission is to sustain a culturally diverse collection and encourage interdisciplinary exploration at the intersection of art, ideas, and experience. The Spencer strengthens, supports, and contributes to the academic research and teaching of the University of Kansas and is committed to serving communities of learners across Kansas and beyond. In 2018–2019, the SMA convened a cross-departmental team of staff to coordinate a study of its digital tools and practices with support from the Mellon Foundation. Through conversations with all staff, convenings with peer advisors, and guidance from two consulting firms (Design for Context and One Further), the SMA identified five overarching priorities for its digital work during the next few years.

Priority 1: Increase Internal Communication and Participation

Priority 2: Restructure and Standardize Records Management

Priority 3: Strengthen Online Presence

Priority 4: Enhance and Expand Community Engagement

Priority 5: Fundraise for Sustainability
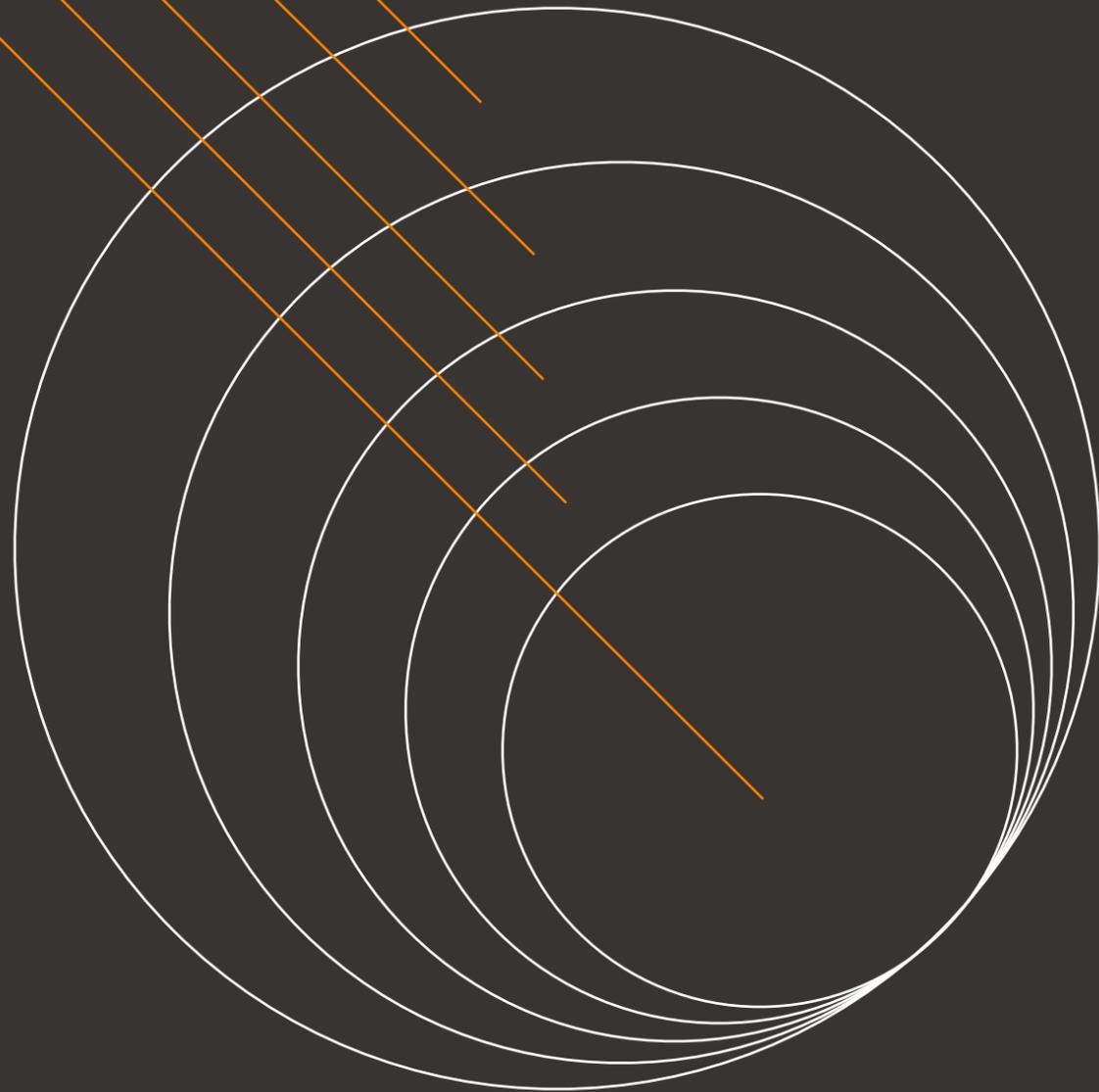
These priorities will advance the Museum's robust digital practices by pinpointing data-informed changes that will improve access to collections and other resources. Changes will include strengthening digital infrastructure, expanding staff-wide participation in digital practices, providing additional structure to workflows for projects and record-keeping, and analyzing audience studies and engagement data to hone resources and practices. As an operational plan, the document includes specific, measurable goals with action steps and indicators of success as a roadmap to achieving each priority and will be achieved by participation from all SMA staff. The staff will continue to revisit the Digital Plan and update priorities as new opportunities arise and goals are accomplished.
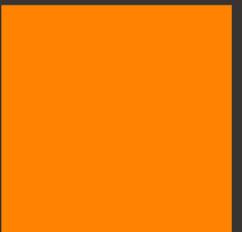
Priorities & Goals Overview

For each goal, staff have identified a series of action steps as well as indicators of success, methods of evaluation, and resources needed for achievement. These goals will be updated regularly. To view the latest version, contact Jennifer Talbott, Deputy Director for Operations and Innovation, at jtalbott@ku.edu.

PRIORITY 1

Increase Internal Communication and Participation

Goal 1: Communicate regularly with staff about current digital priorities and the process by which priorities are identified.

Goal 2: Clarify digital responsibilities and expectations for each staff member.

Goal 3: Support all staff developing and maintaining digital literacy to fulfill institutional projects.

PRIORITY 2
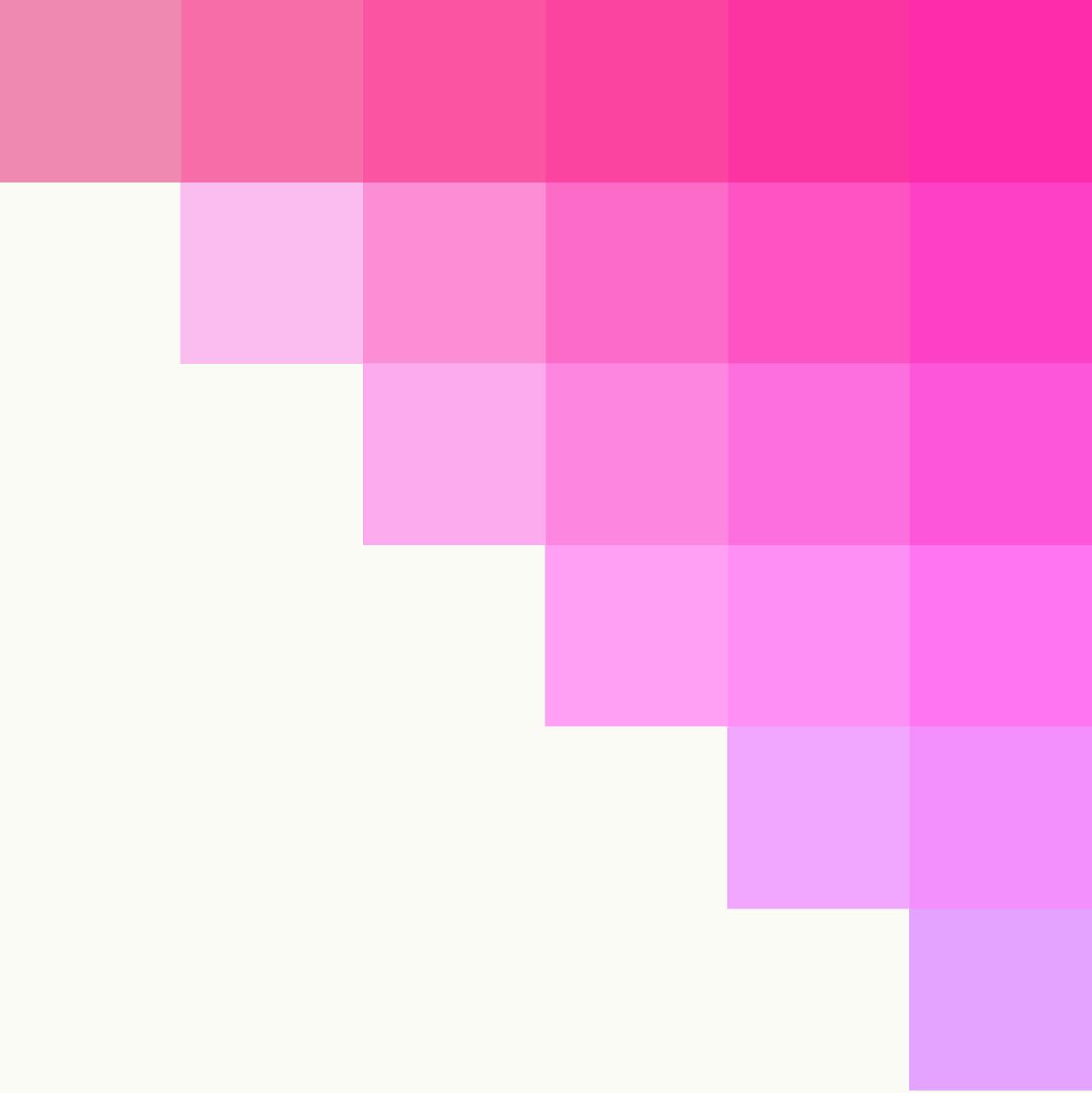
Restructure and Standardize Records Management

Goal 1: Sustain and improve the SMA's centralized digital records repositories (shared servers and MuseumPlus database).

Goal 2: Create a comprehensive records management policy that replaces and improves on previous standards documents.

Goal 3: Train staff to manage the centralized repository of documents in real time and on an ongoing basis.

Goal 4: Implement institution-wide workflows for the timely submission of information to data processing staff for entry in SMA databases.

Goal 5: Upgrade MuseumPlus Classic to 2017 edition.
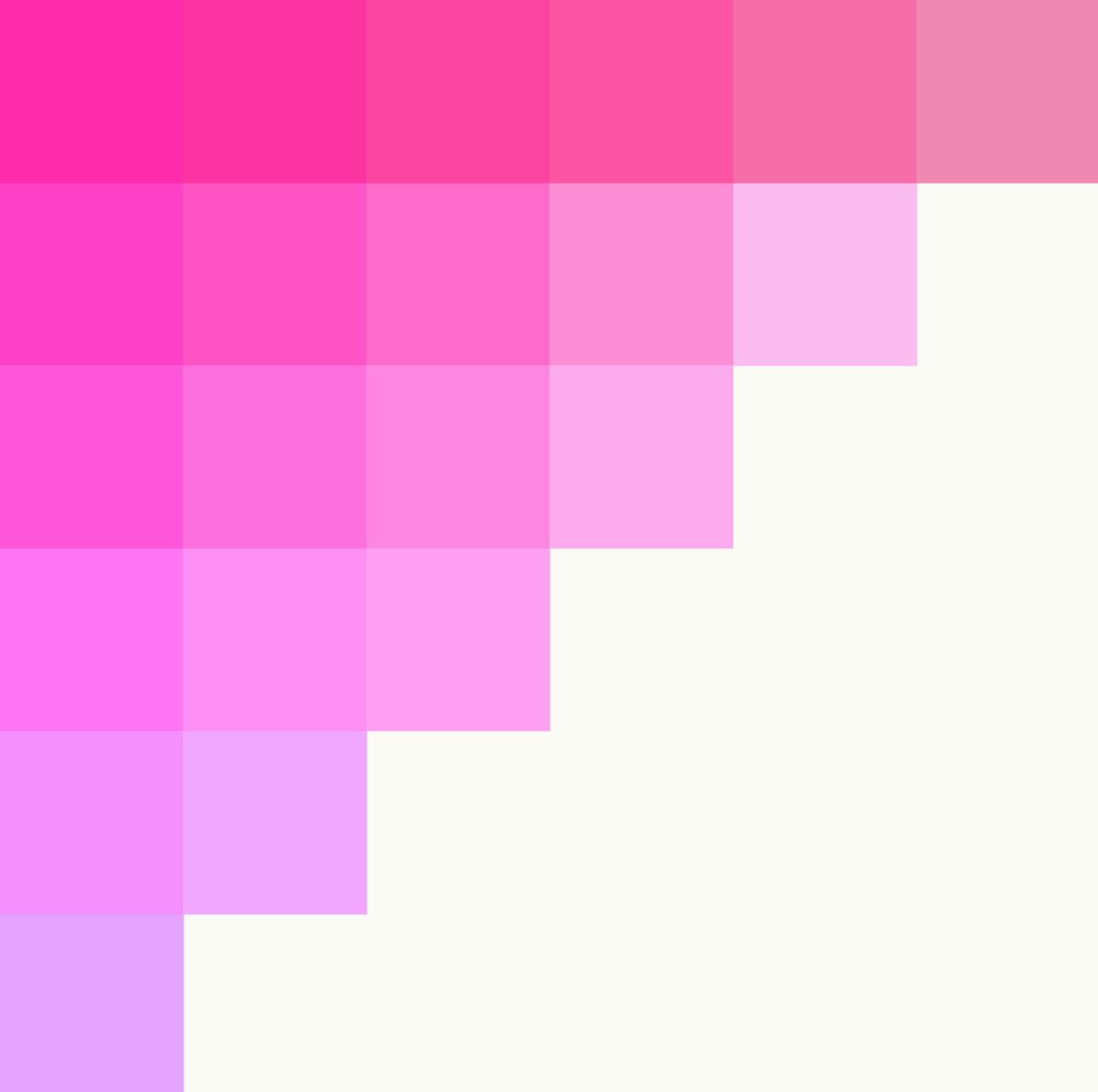
PRIORITY 3

Strengthen Online Presence

Goal 1: Create and implement a robust system for gathering and incorporating user feedback in web design and development.

Goal 2: Develop a single, unified website that combines existing resources and fully leverages API to feed content.

Goal 3: Deepen staff-wide understanding of how the SMA website represents and further extends the work they do.

Goal 4: Leverage analytic tools to monitor, refine, and report on digital activities.

PRIORITY 4
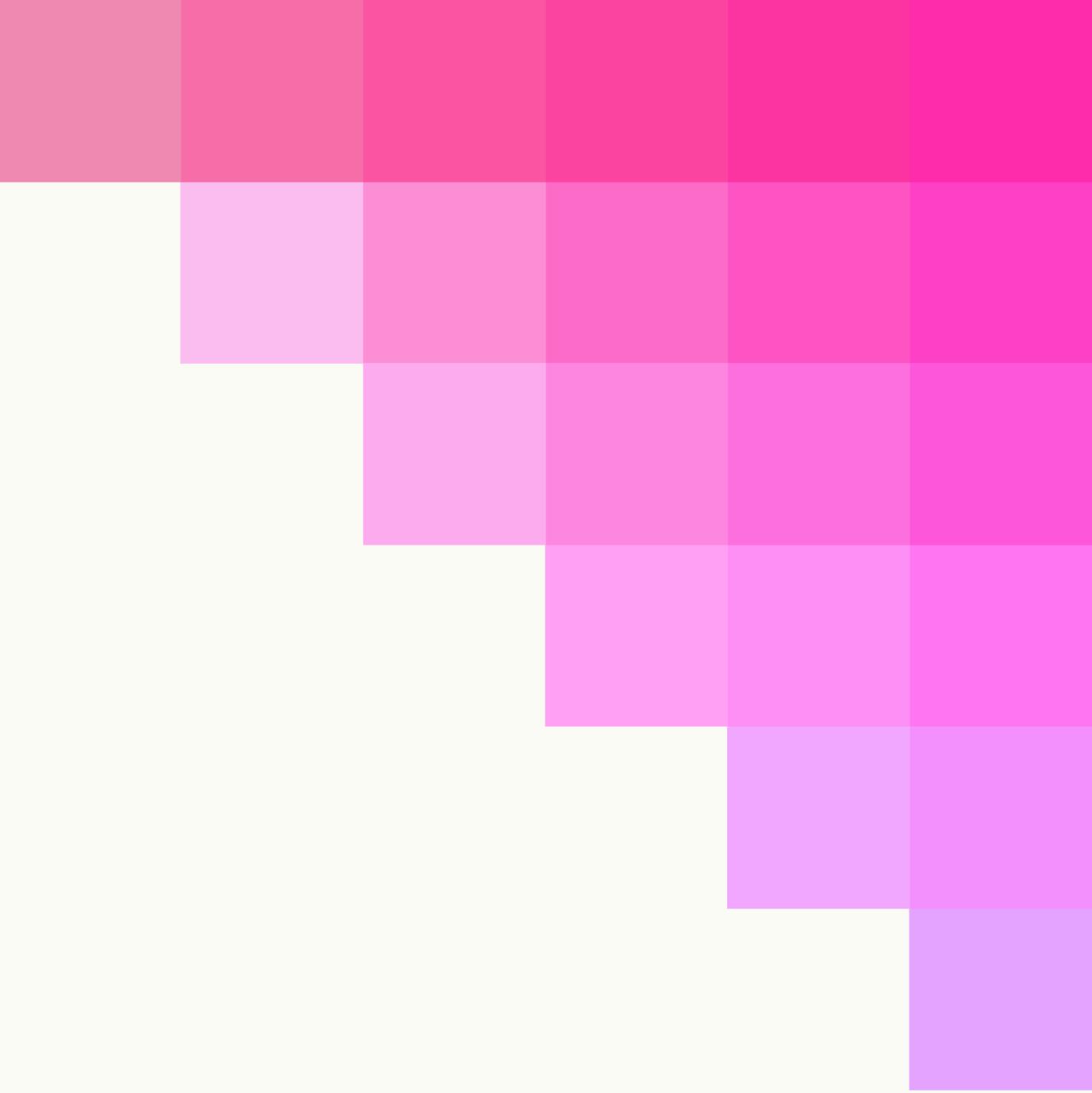
Enhance and Expand Community Engagement

Goal 1: Extend the reach of the SMA's digital messaging and communications to expand SMA audiences.

Goal 2: Use digital communications to increase general awareness of the SMA's mission and identity.

Goal 3: Review virtual programming practices during the pandemic and identify approaches to sustain long-term.
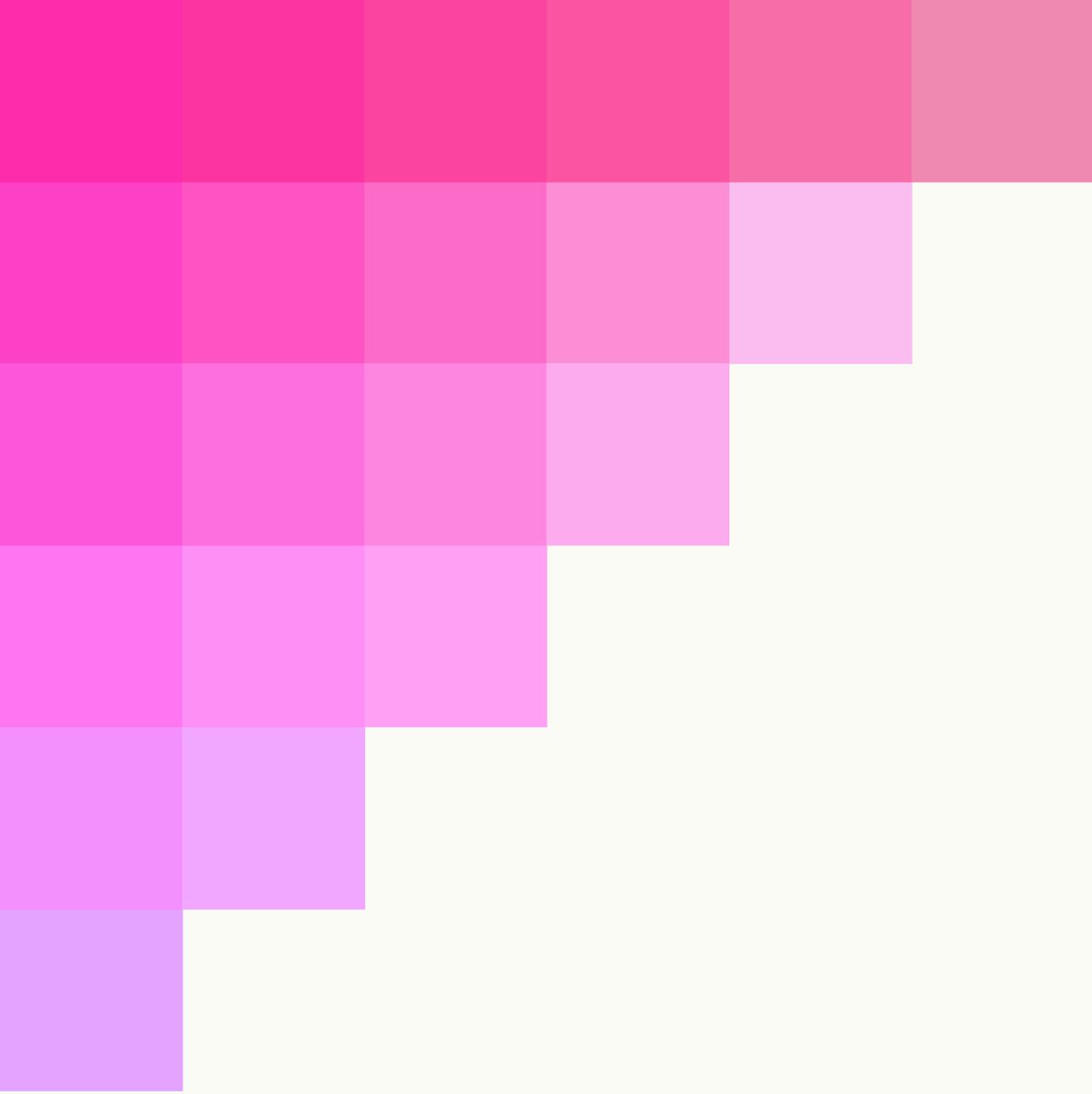
Fundraise for Sustainability

Goal 1: Secure annual commitments from individual donors for digital initiatives and technology.

Goal 2: Prioritize digital projects and infrastructure costs for grant opportunities.

Goal 3: Generate an endowment for digital initiatives and technology.
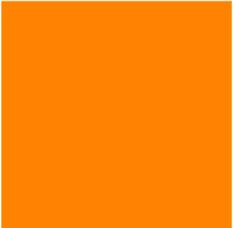
Alignment with other Institutional Priorities

In addition to its Strategic Plan (2018), the SMA's vision is reflected in its Interpretive Plan (2020), Digital Plan (2021), and forthcoming Culture Shift Plan, which is in development and focuses the Museum's antiracism and equity objectives. As the Museum looks toward its next strategic planning process, it anticipates weaving together these more focused roadmaps into a comprehensive document. As such, the cross-section of staff who developed the Digital Plan priorities did so with these other guiding documents in mind.

Intersection with the SMA Strategic Plan

→ Careful management of records and ongoing development of the SMA website ensures capacity to share the collection and other resources in ways that stimulate broader audience interaction with SMA resources, fulfilling the strategic direction to activate art.

→ Data-informed improvements to social media, advertising, and the SMA website are critical for engaging virtual audiences in alignment with the stimulate engagement strategic direction.

→ Records management contributes to improved documentation of research about the collection (exhibitions, publications, events, and more) and ensures that content is managed in ways that support sharing and dissemination to advance the goal to inspire inquiry.

→ An established system of internal digital practices, including consistent, thorough, and well-kept records, serves as the foundation for both current and future work, toward fulfilling the strategic direction to enhance organizational adaptability.

→ Building staff proficiency with internal digital practices and standards generates space for and openness to emerging digital methods and technologies, positioning more staff to contribute to the SMA's efforts to inspire inquiry.

Intersection with the SMA Interpretive Plan

→ Improving recordkeeping and the SMA's online presence will result in more accurate and complete data that is widely accessible, directly supporting the interpretive priority to create an interdisciplinary prism by integrating the SMA's diverse collection across academic subjects and community projects.

→ Continued improvements to the SMA's online presence and social media will further provide different pathways for community members to discover SMA resources, find meaning in works of art, and interact with the Museum, advancing the interpretive priority to cultivate visitor agency.

→ Cohesive and thoughtful social media and digital advertising strategies ensure the SMA presents welcoming and inclusive virtual spaces for all visitors, in alignment with the interpretive priority of creating a place for all people.

→ By strengthening digital records and broadly communicating its resources, the SMA aims to engage global citizens in a dialogue of historical and multiple viewpoints to advance social action for impact.

Intersection with the SMA Culture Shift Plan (currently in draft form)

→ Strategic changes to the SMA's online presence and social media will be audience-centered, drawing on findings from user feedback to engage current audiences more effectively and to reach new audiences.

→ Actions related to recordkeeping and strengthening the SMA's online presence will bolster access to SMA records and increase transparency of data about the SMA's history and archives.

→ Communication and drawing input from staff regarding digital priorities will bring greater transparency and help foster a staff-wide commitment for active digital initiatives.

Acknowledgements

MELLON DIGITAL TEAM

Jennifer Talbott / Deputy Director for Operations and Innovation, Team Lead
Ryan Waggoner / Creative Services Director, Team Co-Lead
Emma Davison / Financial and Systems Coordinator
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Sarah Snyder / Smithsonian American Art Museum
nikhil trivedi / Art Institute of Chicago
John Turner / University of Michigan Museum of Art
KU Information Technology

INTERNAL INTERDEPARTMENTAL TEAMS

Spencer Museum of Art Staff Advisors / cross-departmental leadership staff
Digital Team / cross-departmental staff serving to guide the execution of the Digital Plan
Information Management Team / cross-departmental staff dedicated to identifying and solving digital management opportunities