

Lakeshore Community Chorus Strategic Plan

In the spring of 2018, the Lakeshore Community Chorus Board of Directors initiated a strategic planning process. The chorus was 8 years old at that time and had grown significantly while going through turnover in staff, chorus members, and board members.

A board member's husband had significant experience in facilitating development of corporate strategic plans. He led our board through the process over a series of planning sessions.

The resulting document led us to implement changes and strategies that have helped us, and will continue to help us, grow over the next few years. We are regularly reviewing our strategies to update our tactics as we react to a changing environment.

Lakeshore Community Chorus Mission Statement:

The Lakeshore Community Chorus, an adult non-profit organization, is dedicated to the performance of varied choral music for the benefit, education, and enjoyment of its members and the surrounding lake shore communities

Strategic Plan Development Team

LCC Board / and Artistic Director

- Larry Sharp, Board President
- Shirley Sutton, Vice President
- Dick Hutchins, Treasurer
- Pat Sharp, Secretary
- Jim Bailey
- Wendy Gronbeck
- Brenda Marcy
- Kathleen Markland
- Mary Terzino
- Nancy Plantinga, Artistic Director
- Gregg Potter, Strategic plan facilitator

Strategic Planning Process:

During our sessions we reviewed our current situation, our strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for continued improvement. We also defined specific tactics to accomplish our goals.

Develop a common understanding of our current status

Review Stakeholders

- Within our organization
 - LCC Chorus Members
 - LCC Board
 - LCC Artistic Director
- Within the community
 - Audiences
 - Students
- Collaboration partners
 - Other choruses
 - Youth groups
 - Local High Schools
 - Other musicians
 - Area Businesses
 - Performance Venues
 - Businesses
 - Grant funding organizations Donors / Underwriters

Recent accomplishments

- Collaborations with students from Fennville, Saugatuck and Allegan High Schools
- Financial stability / sustainability
- Higher quality programs and significantly improved performance levels
- Chorus mastery of complex music
- More community out-reach
- Performances outside of local community
- Improved attire
- Expanded props/decoration/experience
- Developed a good rapport with our performance venues

- Outreach to Seniors (free concerts @ nursing homes/retirement centers)
- Increase in chorus membership (~26 to 41-48 members)
- Enhanced reputation with other choirs/inside and outside the community (though the local community has always been supportive)
- Choral library/repertoire has been growing, in size and quality
- Singer pride/artistic satisfaction
- Fundraising/donor efforts. Increasing repeat donors
- Improved & disciplined financial planning/budgeting under control
- Full commitment from the board ("all in")
- Increasing professional approach to administration and choral performance.

The "Market" we are serving

- Local market, pulling in people from a reasonably wide area of the lakeshore communities including Saugatuck, Douglas, Fennville, Allegan, Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, South Haven, and east towards Grand Rapids.
- Trending toward an older audience
- Loyal supporters that attend consistently
- Lots of return attendees
- Not a lot of tourists, our concerts are predominately before and after the tourism season
- Audiences predominantly from Saugatuck-Douglas area
- Families & friends of chorus members
- Occasional performances outside of area (Grand Rapids, Grand Blanc, Holland, South Haven)
- Joint concerts with other chorus's acquaint their audiences with us. They are also a learning experience for our chorus.
 - Chorus's that we have collaborated with:
 - Canticum Novum (Traverse City)
 - New Century Choral (Grand Blanc)
 - West Michigan Gay Men's Chorus (Grand Rapids)
 - Shir Shalom Chorus (Grand Rapids)
 - Fountain Street Church Adult Choir (Grand Rapids)
 - Fennville High School Chamber Choir (Fennville)
 - Saugatuck High School Choir (Saugatuck)
 - Lady Oak (Grand Rapids)
 - Windmill Chorus (Holland)

- Senior facility residents/facilities & their families (free concerts)
 - Warm Friend, Holland, MI
 - Freedom Village, Holland, MI
 - Rest Haven, Holland, MI
 - Grace of Douglas, Douglas, MI
- Partnerships with local churches, Rehearsal space, concerts, and board meeting space
 - UCC Church, Douglas, MI
 - First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, MI

Current resources/skill sets

- Dedicated, talented, energetic, and creative artistic director
- LCC Board is very active and has a broad range of useful skills
- Excellent accompanist (soloist-level)
- Well developed budgets with annual income and expense forecasting
- Stable finances with adequate rainy-day funds
- Choral library is well organized
- Chorus members contribute skills/talent that we would otherwise need to hire
- Concert logistics well developed. One of our board members was an event planner for a large agency in Chicago. He also has amazing set/stage design skills.
- Saugatuck High School collaborations with their student chorus & the school's willingness to have use of some of their instruments for concert performances
- Chorus America membership provides access to artistic and management resources from choruses across the country.
- Our director(s) have access to their local peer group of choral directors to share ideas and/or collaborate
- Accomplished/experienced singers
 - We are a community chorus with members who have varied musical backgrounds and levels of experience and training. They all perform at a high level.
 - The chorus members take personal responsibility to learn songs outside of rehearsal time
 - Being a chorus member is a big commitment and requires work outside of rehearsals to be successful.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Concert planning is a year-round activity
- Effective communication to chorus members via e-mail and our website. The artistic director sends out rehearsal plans and sheet music to chorus members well before the start of rehearsals
 - Director generated CDs to help LCC members learn the music
 - Rehearsal music is also available on our website
www.lakeshorecommunitychorus.org
- Growing attendance at our concerts and support from our audiences
- Growing community, individual and business donor base
- Successful grant funding awards from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the Allegan County Community Foundation, and Aware.
- Successful collaboration with other community chorus's and joint performances
- Outreach to assisted living and nursing homes, for free inhouse concerts
- Collaboration with local high schools to perform with us at our concerts
- Excellent support from local media
- We have a mailing list of over 500 people
- LCC has a professionally managed website and chorus member managed Facebook page
- A strong and committed board of directors who bring significant skills and experience to our board.
- We have successfully managed turn-over at the artistic director level, within the board and the chorus, and have become stronger

Weaknesses

- Not attracting younger chorus members
- Do not have a formal "welcome to the chorus" process/resource set
- Rehearsal space at churches can be difficult to work in (lighting and seating issues)
- Performance space at local churches is limited (concert attendance can exceed performance space)
- Need feedback from chorus members/communication gaps from board to chorus
- Limited storage space for equipment
- Need better ways to deal with incidental issues/committees in LCC?
- Website expertise

Strategic Goals/strategies

Artistic

- Continue to build on a wide variety of musical genres, styles, periods
- Decision made to Commission a choral work for the chorus's 10 anniversary May of 2020
 - Commissioned Work Criteria
 - Should be reflective of LCC / area / community
 - Should be educational for LCC
 - Should be an outreach opportunity for other musicians / schools
 - Could be dedicated / in appreciation to the people of Saugatuck / Douglas & in honor of LCC
 - Poems / recitation written for area
 - Couple with art community in general
 - Composer selection
 - We selected Linda Nemec Foster a local poet to write the lyrics in the form of a 4-stanza poem
 - David Brunner an internationally know composer was selected to compose the musical adaptation of the poem
 - Funding needs were established
 - Grant funding was obtained from the Allegan County Community Foundation and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs
- Collaboration with other groups
 - We will continue to seek collaboration with
 - Other adult choruses
 - Local high school choruses
- We have started doing “pop-up” performances at local restaurants with smaller groups of chorus members to advertise our upcoming concerts. These have been well received.

Marketing

- We hired a professional website development company to design and maintain a new website
- We developed a postcard concert advertising mail campaign using the USPS every door direct mail program
- Website
 - Integrate with social media
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
- Newspaper ads
- Press Releases
- Banners
- Window display posters

Fundraising

- Continue to hold our annual fall fund raising effort, to residents, and businesses
- Continue pursuit of grant funding from the Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Rehearsal Space

- We decided to use the First Congregation Church in Saugatuck as our primary rehearsal facility
 - Good lighting
 - Sanctuary space acoustics eliminate need to amplification
 - 3 pianos in separate locations in the church allow for breakout sessions for different voice groups
 - Adequate parking
 - Reasonable cost

Performance Venues

- We decide to move to the Saugatuck Center for the Arts for our December Holiday Concerts
 - Professional performance facility
 - It has the seating capacity that we need for our Holiday concerts
 - The SCA handles ticket sales online or at their ticket office.
 - Adequate parking
 - Excellent piano for accompanist
 - Lighting

- Sound system
- We decided to hold our spring concerts at the First Congregational Church in Saugatuck.
 - The space is adequate for our spring concerts
 - The acoustics are great, and we do not have to use amplification
 - Adequate parking
 - The facility is accessible
 - Facility rental cost is reasonable

Internal preparations

- Practice materials for members needed 2-3 weeks prior to the start of rehearsals
- Performance folder improvements needed
- Some chorus members really do like CDs and use them
 - Need to continue to supply practice CDs as needed
- Switch primary music access to on-line through LCC website
- Board communication with chorus members
 - In-chorus communications, improve communication from the board via email board updates and through our website
- Chorus structure
 - Large & small groups (Chorus & Chamber?)
 - Audition for this group?
 - Form from existing Chorus members?
- Chorus Member Recruiting / Training
 - "Welcome to the Chorus" information packet. We are developing a chorus member manual which be available by September of 2020
 - We formed a social committee to arrange other opportunities for the chorus to socialize
 - Standing committees
 - Set up committees to help with tasks rather than board members / directors+
 - Survey LCC members to get strengths/experience/preferences to help slot LCC members to help with chorus tasks,
 - We conducted a chorus member survey in late 2018 and have used the information from the survey to respond to chorus needs and to use skills that the chorus members have.