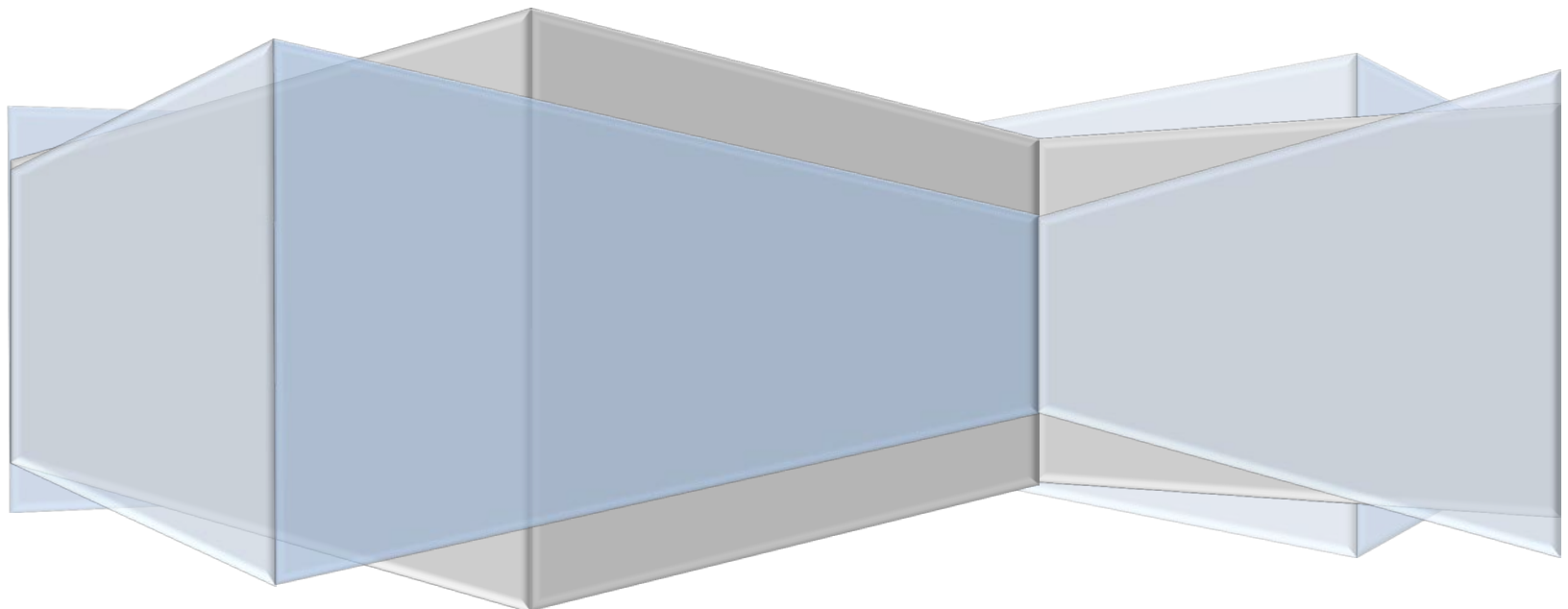




3 – 5 Year Strategic Plan

Developed in 2018

By Executive Director Brandon Mustful, and the Great River
Rescue Board of Directors



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*Animal photos courtesy of Photography by Trish

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Executive Summary

This plan is a result of the work Great River Rescue staff and volunteers who participated in a planning process over many months. The plan is intended to guide the work of the staff and volunteers of the organization for the next 3 – 5 years from 2019 and beyond. It is a living document that should be periodically reviewed and revised. Continued commitment to actions based on the strategies and strategic actions will be necessary to achieve its goals. Data and information related to the goals must also be tracked to ensure satisfactory progress. Effective use of the plan will help ensure a positive impact of Great River Rescue on the community.

Strategic Goals

Great River Rescue has identified five goals to work toward achieving over the next several years. The goals are a realistic outcome if staff and volunteers of the organization work on the strategies outlined later in the plan. They represent the earnest desire of those most closely tied to the work of Great River Rescue. Making progress toward the achievement of these goals will create value for the organization by impacting the community positively.

The five strategic goals are as follows:

- Highest Quality Care for Animals
- Elevated Stature of the Organization at all Levels
- Be a Community Leader in Animal Welfare
- Mobilized Community Working Toward our Vision
- Long Term Sustainability

Strategies and Strategic Actions

Great River Rescue has devised ten strategies to help deal with strategic issues identified during our planning process. These issues are challenges facing the organization affecting our operations and ability to achieve our mission. The strategies were developed by simply brainstorming activities after assessing our internal and external environment, needs and influence of our stakeholders, and strengths and weaknesses as an organization. After brainstorming, the planning team grouped and categorized the activities and then determined how the activities will influence each other. Finally, the planning team members brainstormed even more activities to further clarify the actions that could be taken to adequately conduct each strategy.

Great River Rescue's ten strategies are as follows:

- Increase Facility Capacity
- Increase Community Outreach
- Develop the Board of Directors
- Increase Service Offerings
- Maximize Membership Involvement
- Increase Earned Revenues
- Invest in Talent Management
- Strengthen Government Partnerships
- Energize Volunteer Program
- Streamline Fundraising Program

The Board of Directors and staff of Great River Rescue are committed to doing everything necessary to strengthen the organization, and to having a positive impact on the community now and into the future. Many months of work went into this plan because of that earnest commitment. By adhering to this plan the organization has the best chance for success. Not every action listed in this plan will be able to be implemented, and some strategies will need to be adjusted over time. Nonetheless, commitment to the overall direction provided by the plan will allow the organizational goals to be reached. Staff and Board Members are excited about the future possibilities for the organization and what that means for the animals and people of this community. It is hoped and expected that community members will join these endeavors and work together to protect, save, and care for animals.





History

Great River Rescue was established in 1977 in Bemidji, Minnesota as the Beltrami Humane Society by a group of concerned citizens who felt a need for an organization that would protect animals and provide them shelter. For over 40 years volunteers have kept that mission alive by saving thousands of animals while serving the community as a resource and advocate. Great River Rescue believes in the value of the lives of companion animals and the incredible bond that exists between people and animals. Throughout its entire history, the organization has worked to prevent the needless euthanasia of companion animals and create a society in which companion animals are more valued.

Introduction

Late in 2017, it became clear to staff and Board Members of Great River Rescue that the strategic plan developed in 2015 was no longer providing proper guidance for the organization. Substantial progress had been made toward achieving the goals set forth in that plan. And, although more work was needed in certain strategic areas, circumstances had changed both internally and externally. Leaders of the organization felt it was time to reassess the environment, and make a new plan for the future.

Over the course of several months, the Board of Directors, under the guidance of the organization's Executive Director, Brandon Mustful, began reviewing the aspects of creating a strategic plan, gathering feedback from stakeholders, and meeting to devise new strategies. Meetings were held to conduct a stakeholder analysis, strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats analysis, mission-vision-values workshop, strategy mapping, performance measures brainstorming, and other planning activities. Feedback was also sought and incorporated from staff and key volunteers of the organization.

This plan is a result of the work of those involved in the planning process. The plan is intended to guide the work of the staff and volunteers of Great River Rescue for the next 3 – 5 years from 2019 and beyond. It is a living document that should be periodically reviewed and revised. Continued commitment to actions based on the strategies and strategic actions will be necessary to achieve its goals. Data and information related to the goals must also be tracked to ensure satisfactory progress. Effective use of the plan will help ensure a positive impact of Great River Rescue on the community.



Mission, Vision, Values

A mission statement clarifies what an organization does. It provides a purpose for the efforts of its staff and volunteers. After careful thought and deliberation, the leaders of Great River Rescue have devised the following mission statement to provide that purpose for years to come:

Mission Statement

Great River Rescue transitions dogs and cats to loving homes, serves as a community resource, and advocates for kind, responsible pet care.

A vision statement describes what the organization should accomplish if it succeeds in achieving its mission or purpose. It provides a vision of success for anyone working for the organization in any capacity. After careful thought and deliberation, the leaders of Great River Rescue have devised the following vision statement to give inspiration for years to come:

Vision Statement

Great River Rescue envisions a society of responsible animal guardians in which every animal is treated with respect and care.

In much the same way that individuals have values that shape and guide their behaviors, organizations develop values over time. Published values are imperative for an organization to ensure that all staff, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders know what is important to that organization. After careful thought, the leaders of Great River Rescue developed the following value statements to illustrate what is important to us:

Value Statements

Great River Rescue Values:

Care, compassion and empathy for animals and people.

Accountability to high standards of professional and ethical behavior.

Respect and kindness with every decision and interaction.

Strategic Goals

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The five strategic goals are as follows:

- Highest Quality Care for Animals
- Elevated Stature of the Organization at all Levels
- Be a Community Leader in Animal Welfare
- Mobilized Community Working Toward our Vision
- Long Term Sustainability

Highest Quality Care for Animals

Great River Rescue wants animals both in the shelter and in the community to receive the highest quality care possible. Internally, we will strive to high standards of care for the behavioral and medical needs of shelter animals. Externally, we will strive to be a resource for pet owners and caretakers.

Elevated Stature of the Organization at all Levels

Great River Rescue is a professional nonprofit organization and we desire to continue to elevate the standing of our organization in the community. We will strive to recruit, retain, and properly train qualified staff and volunteers so that we can do effective work and hold ourselves accountable for the work we say we will do.

Be a Community Leader in Animal Welfare

Great River Rescue has worked in this community for over 40 years and has gained much skill and experience in the area of animal welfare. We want to share this experience and have our community look to us when facing challenges related to animals. We will strive to be the leader that the community needs.

Mobilized Community Working Toward our Vision

Great River Rescue envisions a society in which every animal is treated with respect and care. We know that this vision cannot become true with only a small number of citizens working

toward that reality. We will strive to get the entire Bemidji community engaged and excited about saving, caring for, and respecting animals.

Long Term Sustainability

Great River Rescue has had many ups and downs as an organization over its 40 plus year history. We want to be able to sustain the health and growth of the organization for decades to come. We will work to achieve financial stability that is sustainable long into the future so that we can continue to have a positive impact in the community from generation to generation.



Performance Measures

Great River Rescue is determined to make progress toward achievement of our strategic goals. Therefore, it is necessary to create measures that track our progress. In each goal category, performance measures have been devised. We believe that by adhering to our strategies these metrics will be reached. The effective use of the measures will depend on information and data that is available and credible. It will also need to be reviewed regularly by key staff and volunteers. Great River Rescue staff will record various data points related to our operations and those figures will be reported to the Board of Directors for review. Measures may be adjusted over time if they are overly-burdensome to track, or we learn that they are not satisfactorily tied to one or more of our strategic goals.

Performance Measures: Highest Quality Care for Animals

- Percentage of animals being treated for communicable diseases declining over time.
- 100 percent of staff is trained to observe and properly report animal health issues.
- Shelter assessment score of 90 or better (an adequate assessment must first be developed).
- 20% or more of our adopters have adopted from us before.
- 10% or fewer of adopted animals are returned.
- 100% of shelter animals are up-to-date on core vaccinations.
- Average outdoor time for shelter dogs 6 hours or more daily May through September.
- Post-Adoption survey score of 4.5 out of 5 or better for cleanliness.
- Length of Stay for shelter pets reducing by 5% or more per year.

Performance Measures: Elevated Stature of the Organization at all Levels

- Employee pay rates at average level compared to Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Data for the region.
- Maintain the Platinum Level of Transparency with Guidestar.
- Receive the Meets Standards Seal from Charities Review Council.
- Overall, positive responses from a community/membership survey (survey must first be developed).
- Post-Adoption survey score of 4.5 out of 5 or better for professionalism.

Performance Measures: Be a Community Leader in Animal Welfare

- At least 25% of adopters hear about us from family/friends/coworkers.
- Number of people participating in educational programming increasing by 10% per year.
- Increase in knowledge indicated from pre/post surveys of educational programming participants.
- At least 10 media hits per month.
- At least 5 referrals from other agencies per month.
- Present at 5 or more policy meetings per year.
- At least one meeting with city/county officials per year.
- Percentage of dogs surrendered for behavior issues declining over time.
- At least 20 participants in dog obedience training classes or individual sessions annually.

Performance Measures: A Mobilized Community Working Toward our Vision

- Total Township financial support increasing by 10% or more per year.
- Total volunteer hours increasing by 10% or more per year.
- Percentage of return volunteers at 50% or better each month.
- Total business donors/sponsors increasing by 10% per year.
- Total doggy banks increasing by 3 locations per year.

Performance Measures: Long Term Sustainability

- Percentage of funding going directly to animal care at 90% or better.
- Total earned revenues increasing by 15% or more per year.
- Total members increasing by 10% per year.
- Operating reserve at 3 months or better.
- Employee satisfaction rating at Good or better.



Strategies and Strategic Actions

Great River Rescue has devised ten strategies to help deal with strategic issues identified during our planning process. These issues are challenges facing the organization affecting our operations and ability to achieve our mission. The strategies were developed by simply brainstorming activities after assessing our internal and external environment, needs and influence of our stakeholders, and strengths and weaknesses as an organization. After brainstorming, the planning team grouped and categorized the activities and then determined how the activities will influence each other. Finally, the planning team members brainstormed even more activities to further clarify the actions that could be taken to adequately conduct each strategy.

Great River Rescue's ten strategies are as follows:

- Increase Facility Capacity
- Increase Community Outreach
- Develop the Board of Directors
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- Invest in Talent Management
- Strengthen Government Partnerships
- Energize Volunteer Program
- Streamline Fundraising Program

Work in one strategic area can and will influence our ability to do work in other strategic areas. For example, increasing facility capacity may greatly enhance our ability to increase earned revenues. Appendix B is a visual representation of those influences as devised by our planning team. Planners also identified the relative importance of the strategies and strategic actions and which actions could be taken within the next 6 months to one year. Ultimately though, work in every strategic area will be necessary to achieve the goals outlined in this plan.

The following is a list of strategic actions associated with each strategy. For effective work, an additional action plan prescribing responsible parties, timeframes for completion, and resources needed is necessary. Commitment to the completion of the actions from staff, volunteers, and Board Members is imperative for the successful fulfillment of this plan. With that said, as the plan is implemented, it may become apparent that some strategic actions are not going to be beneficial, or may not even be beneficial. This plan is a living plan which must be constantly reviewed, reassessed and adjusted as the leaders of the organization see fit.

Strategy: Increase Facility Capacity

Great River Rescue will conduct the following actions to help increase our facility capacity:

- Explore options for a new building
 - Meet with an architect
 - Identify targets - amount of space, amenities, number of animals
 - Seek and research shelter architects - research shelter design
 - Meet with leaders of other newly designed shelters
 - Conduct a feasibility study
 - Get feedback from staff/key volunteers/local veterinarians

- Explore options to upgrade or rebuild current main structure
 - Expand dog quarantine area
 - Create separate area for dog intake
 - Add additional laundry room for quarantine
 - Add more animal introduction rooms
 - Install solar panels on the roof
 - Add more cat colony rooms
 - Establish spay/neuter program on-site
 - Research grant opportunities for rebuilding or upgrading
 - Enlarge the parking lot
 - Build cat shed for feral cats
 - Investigate the reworking of the HVAC system

- Entice a Vet to relocate on our site
 - Tie into capital campaign and building plan
 - Offer a part-time opportunity for a new vet

- Increase use of our outdoor space- walking trails
 - Make promotional videos about the space
 - Reach out to apartment dwellers
 - Add donation boxes by the waste stations
 - Market this as a fitness activity
 - Engage with teenagers to exercise the shelter dogs on the trails

- Buy a better shelter vehicle for transports
 - Research operating cost of larger vehicle - create cost/benefit analysis
 - Research trade-in value of CRV

- Approach dealerships to see if they will donate a vehicle for a set period
- Talk with local corporations who turn over fleets like Enbridge or Ottetail Power
- Develop capital campaign for a new building or upgrade
 - Meet with partners who have conducted successful campaigns
 - Talk with local media about the need for a facility and how it will benefit the community
 - Partner with local media to promote the effort
- Investigate possibilities of satellite facilities
 - Review real estate options in other communities

Strategy: Develop Board of Directors

- Help current Board Members to recruit other members
 - More training on the elevator speech
 - Training on Board Recruitment techniques - reach out to NMF
 - Develop Board succession plan
 - Celebrate our victories!
- Formalize committee procedures
 - Develop goals/measures for committee performance
 - Emphasize the need to committee chairs
- Fill gaps on the Board
 - Actively recruit to fill talent gaps
 - Brag about ourselves in the community
 - Reduce pressure on fundraising
 - Continue to work on being a governing board, not a working board
 - Develop a benefits/rewards sheet for being a member of the Board
 - Develop nominating committee and recruitment questionnaire
- Conduct annual board orientation
 - Build into the meeting following the GMM
 - Regroup and bring back to the "why" of this work
 - Assign mentor for new members

Strategy: Energize Volunteer Program

- Increase number of committed/quality volunteers
- Recruit more volunteers for committees
- Recruit more volunteers for transports
 - Conduct strategic volunteer recruitment
 - Refine committee descriptions to clarify roles, time commitment and gaps
 - Identify gaps - highest needs
 - More volunteer incentives - highlight top five volunteers each month
 - Share volunteer bio/story in the newsletter or in blog - share their impact
 - Check in with volunteers who have been "missing"
 - Make volunteering an easy and fun commitment
 - Host volunteer event to show potential volunteers that the shelter is a warm, welcoming place
- Increase involvement from children
 - Develop a kids club
 - Have Community Education Committee work on increasing involvement
 - Purchase more children's focused curriculum
 - Bring pets to schools and Boys and Girls Club
 - Once a month kids programming at the shelter
 - Have at-risk youth help with Mod Squad
 - Start kid-run (parent supervised) fundraiser program
- Add a volunteer coordinator for shelter work and fundraisers
 - Create volunteer coordinator position description
 - Consider budget options - part-time employee
 - Seek a volunteer coordinator
 - Talk with senior citizen center
 - Offer as an internship
 - Develop internship handbook

Strategy: Invest in Talent Management

- Provide quality training at all levels
 - Close shelter for the day to hold training with staff
 - Put more money in the budget for professional trainings
 - Attend animal welfare conferences
 - Collaborate with other shelters

- Purchase training materials that can be reused
- Support professional development for staff
 - Seek grants in professional development
 - Utilize Petsmart trainings and other online resources
 - Determine specific training needs - survey other shelters
 - Seek donated time and resources from local professionals
 - Create staff mentorship program
- Continue to improve pay and benefits for staff
 - Offer reimbursement for approved education/learning
 - Write a newsletter article/blog sharing our desire to pay better and why
 - Increase revenue, cut spending
 - Employee of the month parking spot
- Provide compassion fatigue awareness and support
- Develop employee satisfaction survey

Strategy: Maximize Membership Involvement

- Clarify role and purpose of membership
 - Continue to revise by-laws
 - Poll other organizations to see what they are doing
 - Survey members - what role do they want?
 - Survey the public to learn what would cause them to become a member
- Increase membership
 - Ask adopters to become members
 - Hand out pamphlets at pet events like dog shows
 - Provide brochures to local vets and groomers
 - Increase member incentives - member exclusive dog park, members only dog leashes, etc.
 - Get businesses to give members deals or discounts on items if they are a GRR member
- Recruit community ambassadors
 - Ask Board Members and GRR members to approach others in the pet community

- Get members more involved
 - Create annual members only newsletter
 - Hold a members only party

Strategy: Increase Service Offerings

- Revise and improve foster program
 - Promote the program in newsletter and other public outlets
 - Place animals strategically and don't overuse someone
- Investigate animal cruelty claims
 - Get staff/volunteers trained and certified
 - Partner with BSU students in Psychology and Criminal Justice Departments
 - Offer internship for this program
- Conduct dog training program with incarcerated youth and adults
 - Connect with the NW Juvenile Center
 - Connect with the Boys and Girls Club about partnering
- Host pet play dates
 - Make it a public event and ask for suggested donation
 - Promote at dog park, vets, groomers, boarders
- Partner with local therapy & service dog program
 - Learn more about what they do and how we can help them
- Expand Adopt-a-Kennel to include enrichment time with the animals
- Run a pet cemetery
 - Contact real estate agent about available plots
 - Create business plan for cemetery project
- Provide community grief support group
 - Research other programs to see how they do this successfully
 - Reach out to mental health professionals in the community for help on this
- Reduce length of time people are on the surrender waiting list
 - Offer training if behavior is reason for surrender

- Implement new programs - wellness clinics, thrift store, dog training classes
 - Survey community and stakeholders to narrow down what is needed/wanted
 - Research what similar organizations offer
 - Pilot test one or two services
- Implement a "no-risk" adoption trial program
- Match pets with special needs homes
 - Create structured processes and eligibility guidelines
 - Test the program first
- Operate as the pound for the community
 - Share with our members why this is important so they can get behind us
 - Develop a business plan and present it to the city council
- Conduct Trap/Neuter/Return Programs
 - Watch webinars
 - Reach out to programs that have done this successfully
 - Look for grant opportunities
 - Recruit volunteers assist with the program

Strategy: Increase Earned Revenues

- Develop additional sources of revenue
- Research and establish sustainable revenue source
 - Poll other shelters as to how they sustain operations
 - Partner with businesses to give their customers the opportunity to support us
 - Promote gifts to GRR as memorials or in wills - planned giving
 - Continue to promote the sale of gently used items/thrift store items
 - Offer more training services for people with problem pets
 - Offer educational pet care classes
 - Create a store that focuses on healthy food and treats and enrichment toys
- Revise adoption fee structure
 - Research fees elsewhere and how we compare
 - Offer adoption credits from previous donations/membership
 - Consider increased fee on highly adoptable pets

Strategy: Increase Community Outreach

- Increase visibility of adoptable animals
 - Seek a weekly public TV spot
 - Conduct a community challenge
 - Profiles on Channel 1 or Weather Channel spots
 - Continue to attend community events that feature a few adoptable pets

- Create Social Media task force/ambassadors
 - Recruit students from BHS and BSU
 - Create talking points for dealing with community criticisms/concerns/myths
 - Create volunteer training for these ambassadors

- Increase our business network
- More GRR promotion outside of Bemidji
- Expand on network of similar organizations
 - Reach out to faith community
 - Reach out to BNI, Business Women, Rotary, YPN, Jaycees
 - Recruit supporters from areas outside of Bemidji to promote our work

- Create paid social marketing position
 - Create position description with help of our current intern
 - Look at Neilson Foundation paid internship grant or NMF

- Create and utilize shelter assessment scorecard

Strategy: Streamline Fundraising Program

- Fewer fundraisers with higher revenues
 - Make it a point to remove some fundraisers
 - Expand on already successful fundraisers
 - Try to get higher valued auction items
 - Explore creative fund raising options
 - Explore charitable gambling partnership with local establishments
 - Poll other shelters to see what fundraisers make them the most money

- Create fundraising goals for Board Members
 - Commit to a team goal so individual members don't feel pressured
 - Create a specific Board Member led fundraiser event

- Start Text-to-Give program
 - Investigate and use mobile giving
 - Sign up for webinars to learn more
 - Get a business that collects cell phone numbers to sell/share with customer permission

- Recruit highly visible fundraising person to spearhead fundraising
 - Place want ad in the paper
 - Be visible in community events and on TV
 - Send out messaging via GiveGab, MailChimp, and Newsletter

- Recruit businesses to hold internal campaigns to benefit the animals
 - Become more involved in Chamber activities
 - Create "round-up" programs with local businesses
 - Create "bring your pet to work day" program

- Expand sustainable donor base
 - Do presentations in areas outside of Bemidji
 - Provide special interest stories to newspapers
 - Create alumni club - medal & picture on our wall of fame
 - Promote planned giving- get information to local attorneys' offices
 - Promote the percentage of funding that goes directly to animal care
 - Achieve Meets Standards Seal from Charities Reviews Council

Strategy: Strengthen Government Partnerships

- Advocate for animal friendly ordinances
 - Bring revised ordinances to the city council after elections

- Improve and nurture partnership with City & County
 - Survey township, city and county elected officials to see what they think we should be accomplishing
 - Meet with newly elected officials one-on-one
 - Host a meeting with city/county officials
 - Try to get more involved in emergency planning
 - Send gifts/thank you notes to city and county staff
 - Offer to help with pet registration

Conclusion

The Board of Directors and staff of Great River Rescue are committed to doing everything necessary to strengthen the organization, and to having a positive impact on the community now and into the future. Many months of work went into this plan because of that earnest commitment. By adhering to this plan the organization has the best chance for success. Not every action listed in this plan will be able to be implemented, and some strategies will need to be adjusted over time. Nonetheless, commitment to the overall direction provided by the plan will allow the organizational goals to be reached. Staff and Board Members are excited about the future possibilities for the organization and what that means for the animals and people of this community. It is hoped and expected that community members will join these endeavors and work together with Great River Rescue to protect, save, and care for animals.



Appendix A – Strategy Map

The following strategy map is a visual representation of Great River Rescue’s overall strategic plan. The map illustrates how strategic actions, strategies, and goals are linked to the mission of the organization. Although each category can influence any other, the map shows how, generally, strategic actions help accomplish strategies which in turn result in accomplishing strategic goals. Ultimately, accomplishing the strategic goals helps achieve our mission.

Mission

Great River Rescue transitions homeless dogs and cats to new loving families while serving our community as a resource and advocating for kind, responsible pet care.

Goals

Elevated Stature of the Organization at all Levels

Long Term Sustainability

Highest Quality Care for the Animals

Be a Community Leader in Animal Welfare

Mobilized Community Working Toward our Vision

Strategies

Increase Facility Capacity

Increase Community Outreach

Develop the Board of Directors

Increase Service Offerings

Maximize Membership Involvement

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

Increase Earned Revenues

Invest in Talent Management

Strengthen Gov't Partnerships

Energize Volunteer Program

Streamline Fundraising Program

ACTIONS

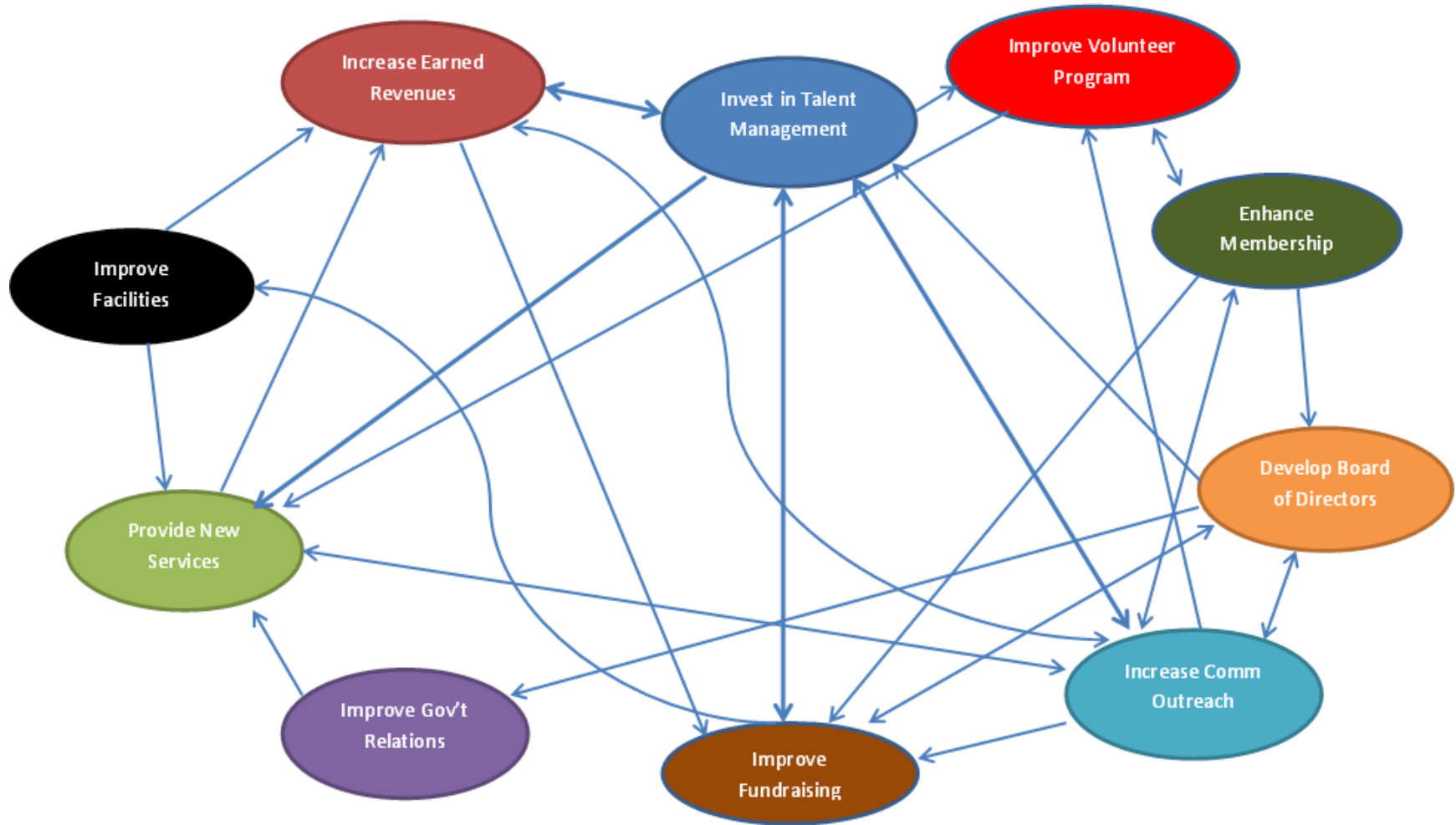
ACTIONS

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

ACTIONS

Appendix B - Influence Map



Appendix C – SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- High quality care for shelter animals
- Effective financial oversight
- Great people who really care
- Robust adoption program
- Positive engagement with the community
- Improving facility

Weaknesses

- Inadequate utilization of human resources
- Insufficient/inadequate funding efforts
- Unprofessional behavior
- Insufficient training/enrichment opportunities for the animals
- Weak partnerships with our stakeholders
- Unclear messaging regarding our mission and services
- Inefficiencies with our building
- Poor vision of the future

Opportunities

- Large community with resources available
- Improved processes and engagement
- Strong funding opportunities
- Lots of in-kind resources
- Increased knowledge in animal sheltering
- Professional networking
- Improved transportation
- Governmental partnerships
- Facility improvements

Threats

- Steady or decreasing revenues
- Negative economic trends
- Competition for donations
- Negative attitudes
- Indifference from community partners
- Legal/regulatory issues
- Increased/changing animal issues
- Inefficient veterinary services
- Weather related disasters

Appendix D – Stakeholder Analysis

