



**Great River Rescue
Strategic Plan**

2023-2027

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to everyone who helped create this plan:

GRR Board of Directors

Ann Mork
Jeanne Edevold-Larson
Ara Gallo
Kevin Johnson
Eric Sundem
Jaimee Towers
Jacob Pearlson
Rory Haaland
Dr. Paul Anderson

GRR Staff

Katlynn Fjeld
Erin Gamst
Julian Richardson
Andrea Gerrard
Briana Propst
Ginger Day
Marissa Pribyl
Sedona Lindstrom

Plan creation facilitated and prepared by: Brandon Mustful, Executive Director

Approved February, 2 2023

Great River Rescue
1612 Carr Lake Rd SE
Bemidji, MN 56601
www.greatriverrescue.com
218-751-7910



Table of Contents

History	Page 1
Mission, Vision, and Values	Page 1
Introduction	Page 2
Strategic Issues	Page 3
Strategic Goals	Page 4
Strategies	Page 5
Performance Measures	Page 7
Conclusion	Page 9

Appendix A - Stakeholder Analysis
Appendix B - Power vs Interest Grid
Appendix C - Mission Matrix
Appendix D - SWOC Analysis
Appendix E - Strategy Map





History

Great River Rescue is a private, non-profit, companion animal shelter located in Bemidji, Minnesota. We make every effort to save, care for, and find homes for each animal that comes through our doors. We provide high-quality care and enrichment for shelter pets, and get them into homes with loving and responsible pet owners. Additionally, we offer low-cost spay/neuter services through our Pet Fixers program. Great River Rescue is supported by our community who believe in our work and have always been by our side.

Since our inception in 1977, Great River Rescue has helped thousands of animals get a second chance at life. We are very proud of these and many other efforts that have made our dream a reality and

now allows us to provide even greater quality service for more than 350 animals per year.

Great River Rescue is located in Bemidji, Minnesota, but we have no geographic restrictions for our services. Our services are available for anyone in need.

Mission, Vision, Values

A mission statement clarifies what an organization does. It provides a purpose for the efforts of its staff and volunteers. A vision statement describes what the organization should accomplish if it succeeds in achieving its mission or purpose. Finally, value statements express shared beliefs of organizational stakeholders that remind us what is important. The planning team did not feel it necessary to change our mission, vision and values during

this planning cycle as it still accurately expresses our purpose and driving force.

Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

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

Value Statements

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.

Introduction

In 2022, the Great River Rescues Board of Directors began discussing the renewal of its strategic plan, previously approved in 2018. Much has changed in the world around us, and internally at Great River Rescue in the past five years, and the Board felt the time was right to review progress on previous goals, identify current strategic issues, and develop new strategies to address them. Therefore, in late 2022 the organization began working on a new five-year strategic plan.



The creation of this plan involved a number of steps including feedback from stakeholders, an assessment of stakeholders, a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-challenges assessment, strategy ideation, and development of an action plan. This document lays out the results of those steps. The staff, Board, and volunteers will be responsible for carrying out the devised strategies to reach our goals.

Strategic Issues

Strategic issues are fundamental policy questions or critical challenges affecting the organization's mandates, mission and values, product or service level and mix, clients, users or payers, costs, financing, organization, or management.¹ During the planning process, the planning team identified seven strategic issues that needed to be addressed. Although there are likely other issues affecting the agency, these were the issues that were pulled out.



How do we create a consistently balanced budget?

Year after year, we find a way to stretch our budget and make it work. Creating a consistently balanced budget would allow us to devote more time and energy to our mission.

How do we avoid burnout of our people?

While turnover hasn't been a major issue, it is always a

threat. We need to take care of our people so that we don't have to manage regular staff and volunteer turnover.

How do we attract diverse talent?

It is easy to find people who love animals, but challenging to find people who have the skills and experience to take our organization to the next level.

How do we create useful partnerships?

Working with other businesses, community groups and governments is crucial to increasing our overall impact. These partnerships should help serve our mission, while benefiting our partners.

¹ Bryson, John M., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 5th Ed., Wiley, p. 50

How do we meet our community's needs?

Our community is lacking vital services. We may be able to meet some of those needs.

How do we ensure quality care for our pets?

The animals in our care should always be our number one priority.

How do we increase adoption rates while keeping the public safe and looking after the best interest of the animals?

While we strive to save more animals, we must balance the desires of the public with the needs of the shelter pets.

Strategic Goals

The planning team identified five specific goals to work towards in the next 5 years. These goals represent the earnest desire of staff and volunteers as we work to improve our organization and further impact the community.

Safe Haven for Companion Animals

Key Objective: We will reach 500 annual adoptions.

We will continue to ensure pets in our care are in a safe, secure setting where all of their physical, medical and behavioral needs are met, while growing our capacity for providing that care.

Accessible Care for all Companion Animals

Key Objective: We will provide on-site veterinary services for shelter and community pets.

We will work to provide members of our community with quick, affordable access to veterinary care and behavioral training for companion animals.



Operational Stability

Key Objective: We will achieve an average length of stay of 15 days or less.

We will assess our policies and processes, review best practices, and seek feedback from our clients to create an efficiently operating organization that can quickly respond to challenges.

Financial Sustainability

Key Objective: We will have three consecutive years of positive financial growth.

We will use our funding responsibly while working to ensure adequate financial resources as well as a predictable flow of funding so we can focus on the mission.

Stable and Thriving Workforce

Key Objective: We will reach 5000 hours of annual volunteer service.

We will strive to create an environment in which our volunteers and employees feel valued and who feel empowered to contribute toward our mission.

Strategies and Strategic Actions

Thirteen strategies were devised to help address the identified strategic issues and achieve our goals. For each strategy, a variety of strategic actions were also created. The strategies are all inter-related, and many actions could fall into several strategic areas. The planning team then measured the overall importance of each area after considering the influence the strategies have on each other.

Strategy: Enhance and Expand Facilities

We will work to enhance our current shelter facility while also considering a shelter expansion so we can provide better care for the pets, and more services for our community.

Strategy: Promote our Brand

We will further promote our strong brand name, especially through social media platforms so we can reach more supporters, and further our mission.

Strategy: Develop Consistent Community Messaging

We will promote a consistent message to the community to further garner support while educating the public about animal welfare related issues.

Strategy: Attract and Retain Qualified Staff

We will attract and retain qualified staff through competitive pay and benefits, a healthy work environment, and regular professional development opportunities.

Strategy: Build-up our Volunteer Program

We will recruit a diverse volunteer workforce to serve in a variety of needed areas and do more good work.

Strategy: Further Develop Community and Regional Partnerships

We will improve relationships with current partners while seeking new partnerships that will benefit the organization and our community.



Strategy: Improve Shelter Pet Flow

We will assess every aspect of our intake and adoption procedures to promote efficiency and save more animals.

Strategy: Build-up our Foster Care Program

We will recruit and utilize community foster caregivers to promote the health and welfare of our pets.

Strategy: Prioritize Veterinary Care

We will improve relationships with local veterinarians while doing what it takes to make regular on-site veterinary care a reality.

Strategy: Increase Community Support Services

We will seek to provide accessible pet-related services to animal lovers in need to promote a healthy and strong community.

Strategy: Improve Dog Enrichment

We will work to ensure every dog receives superior care and enrichment during its shelter stay to improve their welfare and get them into homes faster.

Strategy: Develop More Active Fundraising

We will further our fundraising activities to provide needed funding to carry out our mission and reach more people with our message.

Strategy: Develop More Earned Revenue Opportunities

We will investigate ways to diversify our funding by adding earned revenue opportunities and expanding on current strategies on the way to becoming sustainable in the long-term.



Performance Measures

Performance measures will help our team track progress toward our stated goals. Although they are not an end in themselves, they should provide reasonable evidence of progress. Over time, some measures may be adjusted if they are overly-burdensome to track, or we learn that they are not satisfactorily tied to one or more of our strategic goals.

Goal Area - Safe Haven for All Companion Animals

- Total Animal Intake Increasing by 5% each year
- Total Adoptions Increasing by 5% each year
- Total Home to Home Posts increasing by 5% each year
- Average time on waitlist decreasing by 5% each year
- Turned away ratio decreasing by 5% each year

Goal Area - Accessible Care for All Companion Animals

- Percentage of public reporting access to care increasing by 5% annually
- Percentage of public reporting pet insurance increasing by 5% annually
- Number of pets served through GRR Wellness Services increasing by 5% annually
- Total clients served through food program increasing by 5% each year



Goal Area - Operational Stability

- Average Length of Stay decreasing by 5% each year
- Percentage of animals adopted at 90% or better
- Program efficiency rating at 80% or better
- Adoption return rate at 10% or less

Goal Area - Financial Sustainability

- Positive profit margin
- Earned revenues increasing by 10% each year
- Annual expenses within 3% of budgeted
- Earned revenues as a percentage of total increasing by 5% each year

Goal Area - Stable and Satisfied

Workforce

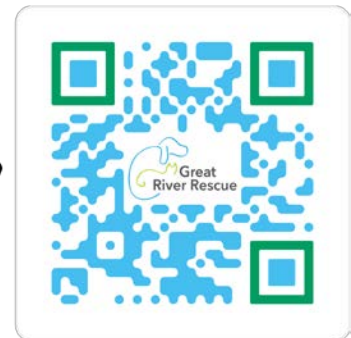
- Employee turnover rate at 20% or better
- Employee satisfaction rated at 4 out of 5 or better

- Total volunteer hours growing by 5% each year
- Total active volunteers (5 hours or more within past two months) growing by 5% each year

Conclusion

The staff, volunteers and supporters of Great River Rescue are committed to serving our community by saving the lives of companion animals and supporting people in need of pet-related services. If staff, volunteers and other stakeholders of Great River Rescue can work together on the strategies outlined in this plan, **by our 50th Anniversary (in 2027) we will increase our facility capacity to provide in-house veterinary services and on-site impounding of stray pets.**

This plan was created with input from our stakeholders, and carefully deliberated. The success of the strategies laid out in the plan will depend on continued commitment and support from our partners. We are grateful for the support we receive from our supporters and partners to make our mission possible. We encourage anyone who loves companion animals to join us in that mission.



FOLLOW US

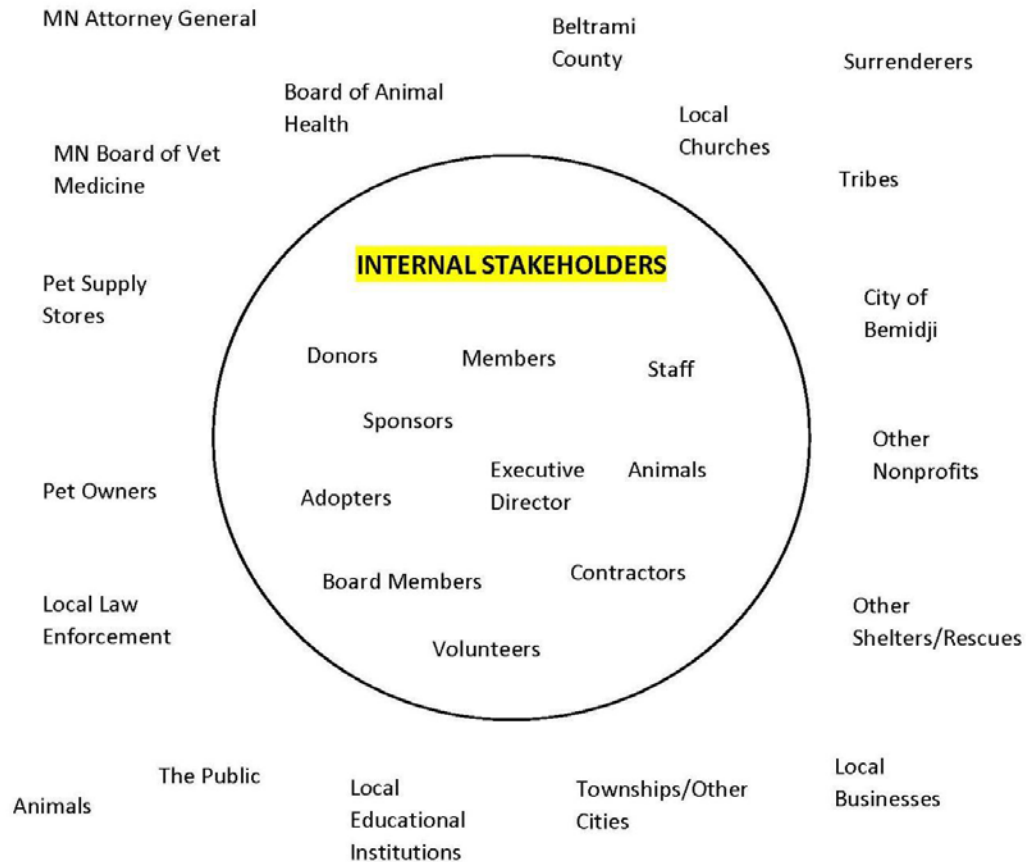
Appendix A - Stakeholder Analysis

Great River Rescue Stakeholder Analysis

November 3, 2022

A stakeholder is any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on the organization's resources, attention, or output or is affected by its output.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

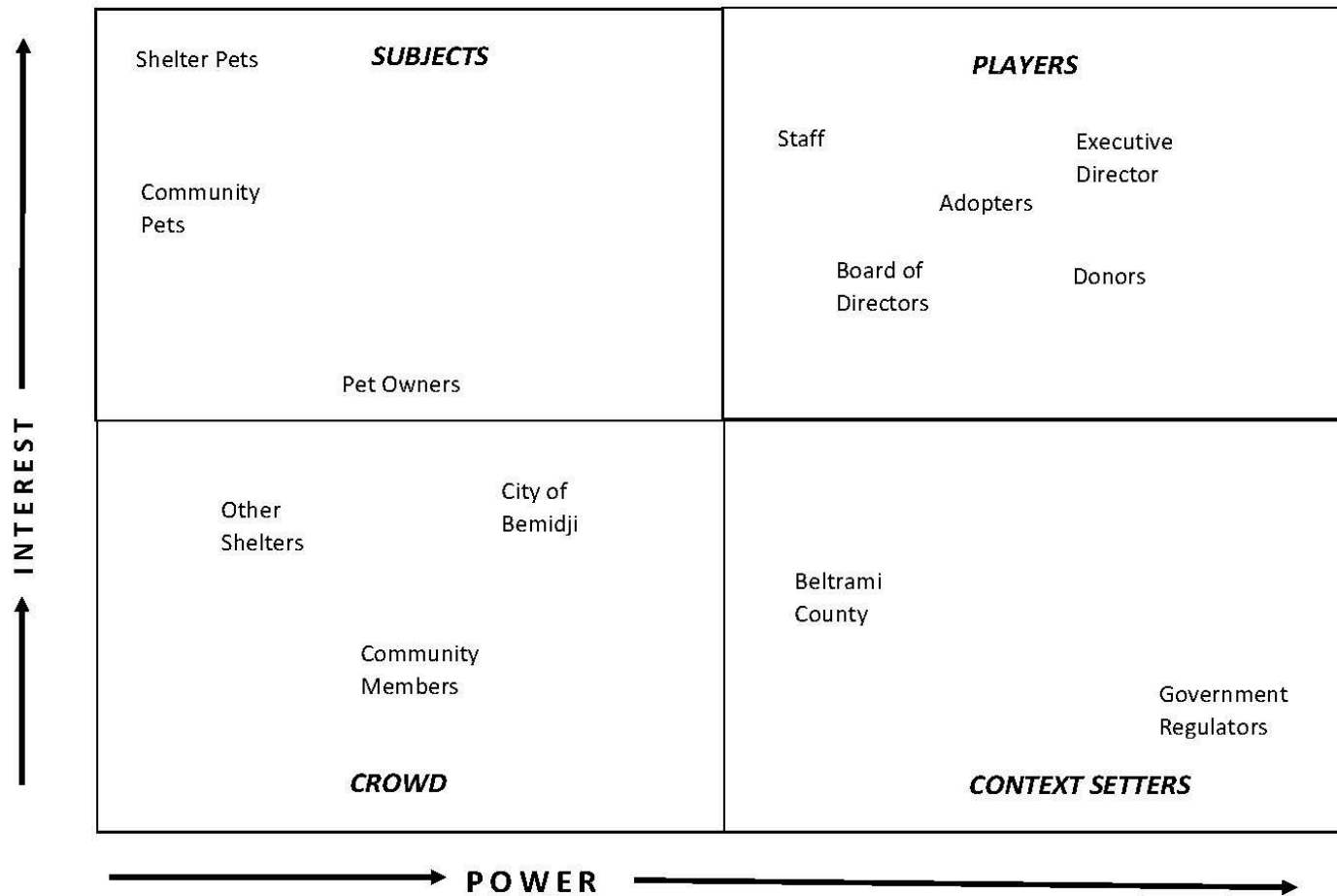


Appendix B - Power vs. Interest Grid

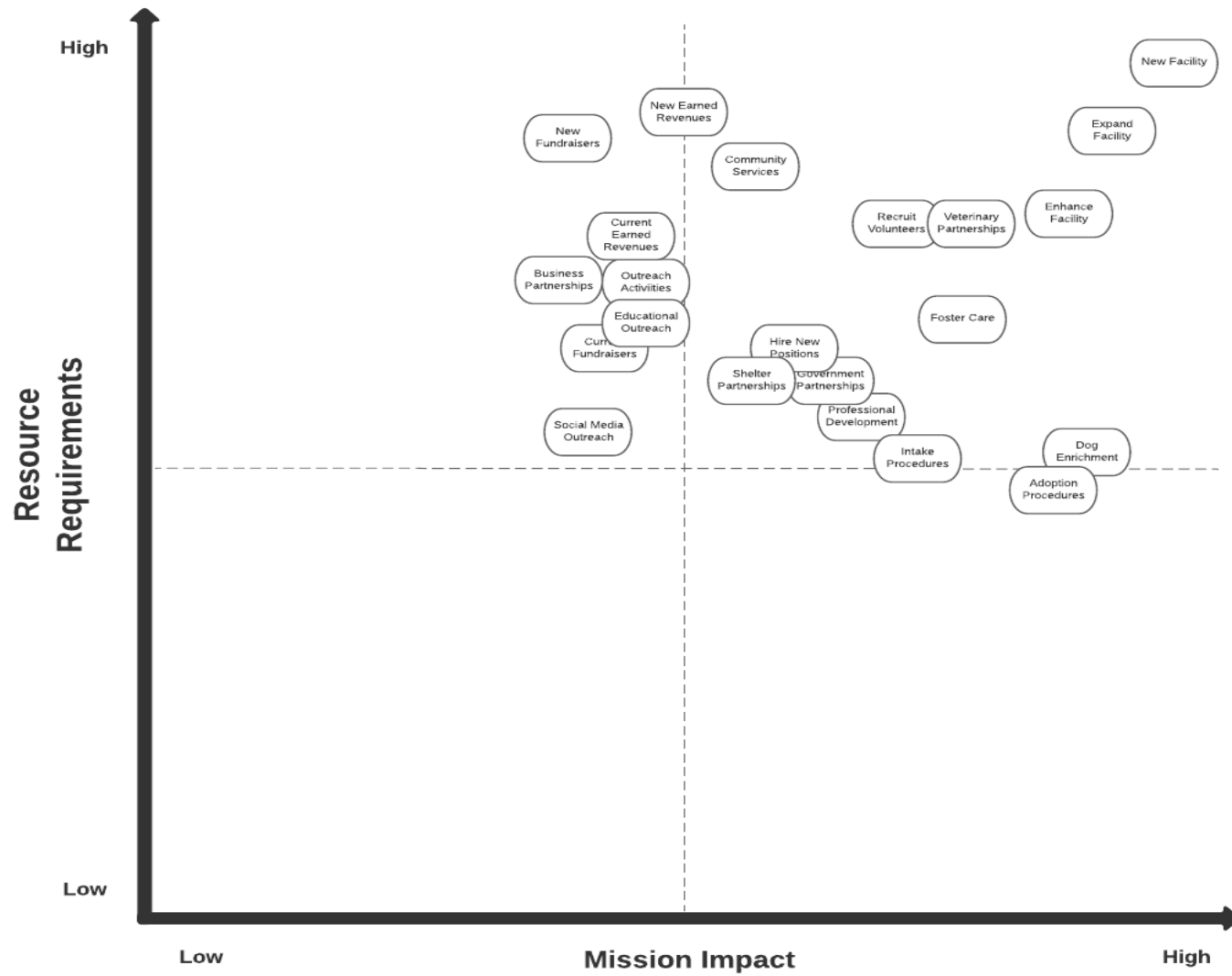
Great River Rescue Stakeholder Analysis

November 3, 2022

POWER VS INTEREST GRID



Appendix C - Mission Matrix



Appendix D - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges Analysis

STRENGTHS – Things we do well

- Positive community image
- Positive volunteer feedback
- Caring and committed staff
- Effective use of space
- Established community relationships
- Strong Executive Director
- Quality animal care
- Facility improvements
- Proper policies and procedures
- Legal compliance
- Funding cushion
- Programs that meet community needs
- Nimble- able to make and implement policy changes quickly
- Committed Board of Directors
- Strong social media presence
- Pet Fixers program is one of a kind for the region
- Offer options in place of surrender

WEAKNESSES – Things we don't do well

- Lack of public involvement/lack of volunteers/lack of fosterers
- Inadequate facilities
- Poor long-term financial plan
- High reliance on the Executive Director
- Staff turnover at times
- Unqualified staff in some areas/no vet on staff
- Not enough physical resources
- Poor response plan to public outbursts
- Tenuous relationship with local vets
- Tenuous or nonexistent relationship with local governments
- High length of stay for shelter pets
- Can't meet community demand for programming

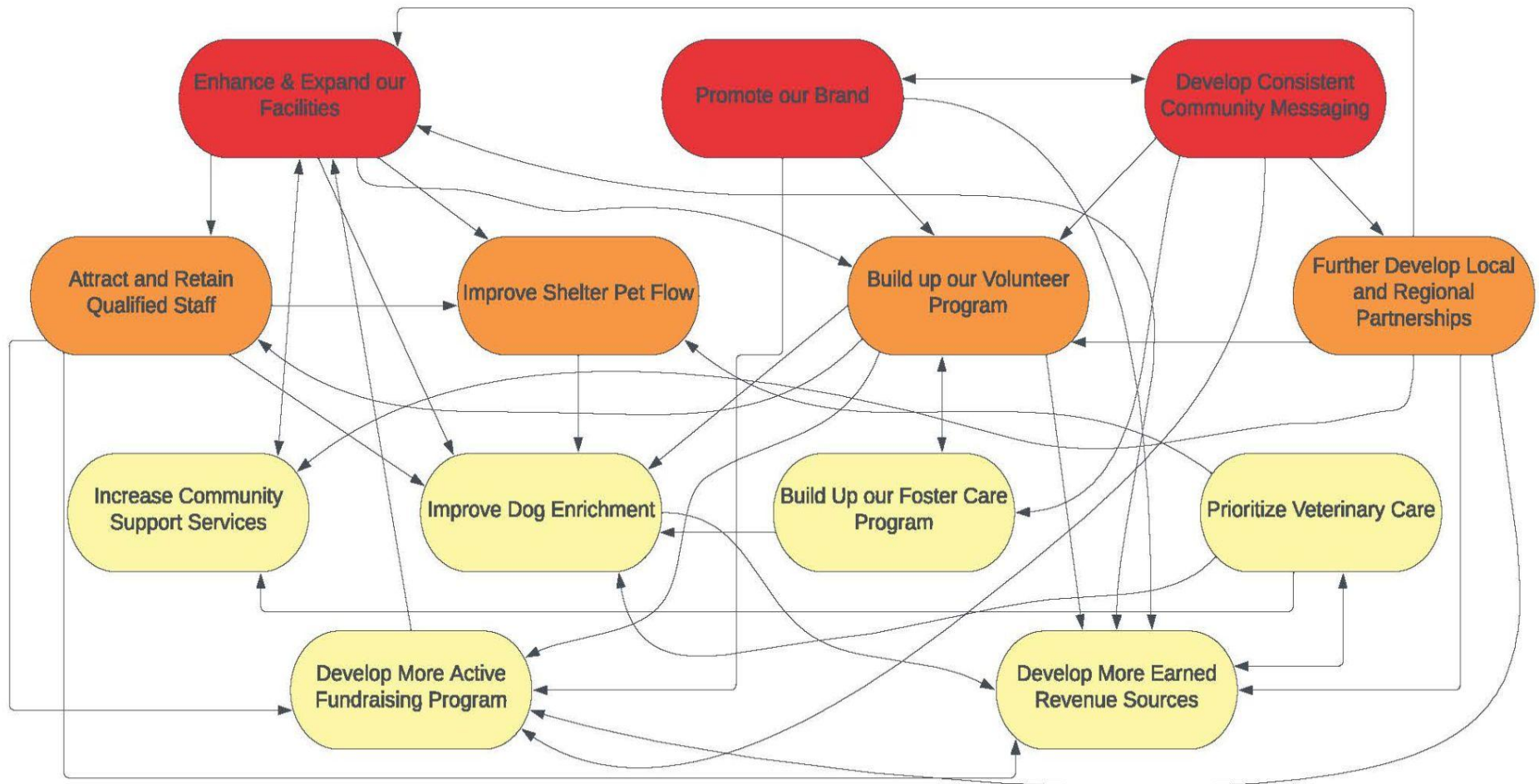
OPPORTUNITIES – Things we can take advantage of

- More involvement with the Minnesota Partnership for Animal Welfare
- Lots of Bemidji area businesses
- Great vet team that comes for Pet Fixers
- Local grant opportunities such as the Neilson Foundation
- We own 12 acres of land
- We have access to a lot of clients
- Interest in fostering still exists in the community
- Current challenges can lead to greater efficiencies
- Further development of donor relations
- Partnering with the city on the City Pound
- More social media outreach
- Home to Home adoptions
- Additional service needs from the community
- Lots of people believe in our cause
- Build off of our good reputation to attract clients and donors
- Tribal partnerships
- Community partnership to help people and pets in crisis
- Lots of untapped volunteers

CHALLENGES – Things that could harm us

- Vet shortage
- Rising prices
- Increasing animal behavior issues
- Lack of qualified workforce
- Overwhelmed staff
- Employee retention
- Communication barriers
- Large geographic region depending on us
- Slumping economy
- Adoption is trending down
- City could prevent progress
- Internet trolling
- Lack of civility
- Weather disruptions
- Misperception about what we do
- Community donor fatigue
- No emergency vet care in town
- Poor foster care experiences

Appendix E - Strategy Map



Overall Strategic Importance

- High
- Medium
- Low

Great River Rescue Strategy Map

Arrows indicate direction of influence. Arrows to an idea indicate causes, influencers, or something that has to happen first. Arrows from an idea indicate effects, outcomes, or consequences.