



York County Honors Choirs Long-Range Strategic Plan

2019 Objectives

Adopted by the Board on January 22, 2019

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Introduction

This document is the result of a series of meetings conducted with the Board of Directors and professional staff of the York County Honors Choirs (the Choirs) between August and December, 2018. During these meetings, the participants:

1. analyzed the state of the organization—its strengths and weaknesses—as they exist today;
2. defined the community music environment—its opportunities and threats—now and into the future;
3. identified the key issues facing the organization in 2018;
4. affirmed the current mission statement and modified the vision statement for the organization;
5. defined the long-range strategies and supporting 2019 objectives to be used by the organization to achieve its vision, fulfill its mission and gain and address its key issues;

The results are as follows.

Strategic Assessment

Strengths

The strengths of the York County Honors Choirs, as identified by their volunteer and professional leaders, fall into four categories:

1. The quality of our program and the singers in it.
2. Our board, music directors, staff, and students
3. Our financial stability
4. Our relationships/partnerships

More specifically,

The quality of our program and the singers in it

- We have a great program. It is unique in our community, and is seen as such.
- We continue to have high-quality singers who show up every year and attempt to do what they have not done before.
- Kids from almost every school district in the county, as well as home-schooled students and members of church choirs, participate in our program. We are a countywide program.
- We do a good job removing barriers to participation for students.
- We offer kids a music education (some of it at an advanced level).
- Our students are exposed to all genres of music.
- We start with 250 singers who tryout and select approximately 200 from that group to join the choirs.
- Our transitional retention is consistently good. We only lost one boy and five girls (95 percent +/-) last season and this is common.
- Our kids get significant “social capital” from their involvement in the choirs.
- Our success is well recognized by other similar organizations. They see how strong our organization is.
- We have a performance model that our singers value and excel at.
- Nearly 1,000 people attend our end-of-year concerts.
- Our choral festival is excellent and growing.
- We are trusted by parents.
- We have a happy place!

Our board, music directors, and staff

- We have “magnet” directors.
- We have been able to succeed as Judy has stepped back.
- Our staff works as a team. They complement each other.
- Bill was the right leader at the right time. Beth is the “brain” of the organization.
- Beth and Bill complement each other exceptionally well.
- We have a credible board. Judy Simpson has provided exceptional leadership.
- We have talented, passionate directors.
- We are developing an effective board structure.
- There is great communication between our directors, and this extends to many of the choral directors in the schools.

Our financial stability

- We have built a stable organization. We are in the sweet spot, and we are well balanced.
- We are financially strong and we assess our financial status quarterly.
- We have a fund balance and often operate at a surplus.
- Funding has increased every year.
- We receive some in-kind contributions.
- We support the education of our music directors.

Our relationships/partnerships

- We have a dedicated group of followers.
- We are collaborative with other music organizations (such as River City Brass and Deer Creek Chorale) beyond York County.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses of York County Honors Choirs, as identified by their leadership team, fall into six categories:

1. Our inability to attract some groups of singers
2. Our lack of/instability of support
3. The limited level of community awareness surrounding our organization
4. Weaknesses surrounding our locations
5. Our operational processes and procedures
6. Issues surrounding our students

More specifically,

Our inability to attract some groups of singers

- There are other quality singers who we are not getting (due to strong music programs in some school districts).
- It's hard to attract senior singers (but we retain well).
- We have limited representation from the city schools.
- We are not as diverse as we would like to be.
- It is difficult to attract male singers.

Our lack of/instability of support

- We are too financially dependent on our traditional donors.
- We do not have a committee structure that replaces Judy's fundraising efforts (yet).
- Our "alumni" giving program is still under development.
- Some school choral directors do not support us (and do not support their kids by attendance at programs). They do not see the benefit we bring to their programs.

The limited level of community awareness surrounding our organization

- Too many people still do not know about us.
- We have pulled in choral directors from grades 3 – 12, but we lack community awareness of our existence and excellence.

- Our current schedule limits the majority of our performances to February through May. This limits our exposure.
- We have fewer school districts participating in our Elementary Choral Festival.

Weaknesses surrounding our locations

- We are too dependent on location hosts.
- We don't do pop ups well.

Our operational processes and procedures

- We lose touch with our students after they graduate (but we have email addresses for many students).
- We lack a tradition that unites our former and current students.
- We lack a succession plan for our artistic and administrative leadership.

Issues surrounding our students

- Some of our students are not prepared to participate in our program and this may result in disappointment for them.
- Our students' time is very limited, and this impacts their ability to participate.
- We are not as diverse as we would like to be.
- Not enough male students progress from the junior choir to the senior choir.

Opportunities

The opportunities facing York County Honors Choirs as they move forward fall into five categories:

1. Marketing opportunities for the Choirs
2. Student recruitment opportunities
2. Programmatic opportunities
3. Funding opportunities
4. Internal systems and resource opportunities

More specifically,

Marketing opportunities for the Choirs

- Focus on increasing our community awareness.
- Find a way to overcome the (mis) impression about the word “choir.”
- Rebrand our organization.
- Cross market with other arts organizations and high school musicals.
- Cross market with YSO.
- Mobilize parents to help promote the choirs.
- Explore hiring a marketing resource.

Student recruitment opportunities

- Expand our outreach to kids in the city and targeted school districts/areas.
- Increase our singer diversity.
- Increase our focus on singers from the city.
- Address access issues for our students and potential students.

Programmatic opportunities

- Build a model for serving young city elementary school students.
- Expand beyond vocal music to music education on a broader basis.
- Create a York Arts Group that functionally and structurally brings together many youth performing arts programs.
- Create an adult music program.

Funding opportunities

- Pursue additional programs/events/services that are both mission appropriate and surplus generating.
- Broaden our donor base beyond our traditional supporters.
- Enhance our deferred giving efforts.

Internal systems and resource opportunities

- Develop a succession plan for our professional leadership.
- Capitalize on our alumni.
- Focus on developing our board of the future.

Threats

The threats currently facing the York County Honors Choirs fall into two basic categories:

1. Those threats primarily within our control
2. Those threats primarily outside of our control

More specifically,

Those threats primarily within our control

- Our greatest success is also our greatest threat. Randy and Donna are well regarded, but will ultimately retire.
- Any venture that strays from our traditional model could jeopardize our current stability.
- We may lose the program feature(s) that makes us special.

Those threats primarily outside of our control

- If school districts continue to cut funding for music, we could lose good students.
- We could lose traditional, large supporters.
- We can't control the security of our venues.
- Other recreational and/or music activities could attract our students away from us.
- Someone else could form a youth vocal group.
- We are one incident away from an event that could damage our reputation.
- Our kids tend to be “crazy busy,” and this limits the time they are available.
- While some middle, junior and senior high music directors are supportive of our efforts, support from these groups in general is unreliable.

Key Issues

Based on the identification and analysis of the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats as detailed previously, we have concluded that the following key issues must be considered in York County Honors Choirs' long-range plan.

Human resource issues

- How do we create leadership succession and sustainability?
- How can we capitalize on our alumni?
- Where do we take our board from here (sustainability, model, diversity, renewal)?
- How can we increase our diversity at all levels of our organization?

Marketing issues

- How do we create more community awareness?
- Can we broaden our audience, and if yes, how?
- Is it time to rebrand, and if yes, to what?

Program issues

- What do we want our singers to get from their YHC experience?
- How do we keep kids in the choirs as school districts reduce support for music programs?
- Can we capitalize on the decrease in school district music funding?
- Can we expand beyond our traditional program, to younger and/or older singers, and if yes, under what model?
- Do we want to reach out to city kids, and if yes, how and to what end?
- What constitutes a “special event” and what are our parameters around them.

Funding issues

- How do we create financial sustainability?

Location issues

- Do we want to create a “hub” location, and if yes, how?

Mission Statement

The mission of the York County Honors Choirs is to engage the hearts and minds of its singers by providing choral education and performance opportunities to diverse young people, from throughout York County. As a result of our efforts and activities, we enhance the quality and culture of our community.

Vision Statement

We prepare young singers to be excellent.

In doing this we will:

- teach young people through a rich repertoire that develops their vocal instruments,
- provide concert experiences that excite their spirits,
- challenge students to rise to their full human potential, and
- create an enduring appreciation for music and choral excellence in our community.

Long-Range Strategies

Based on the strategic assessment as detailed previously, York County Honors Choirs has identified five overriding strategies it will implement in its efforts to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision and address its key issues.

York County Honors Choirs will grow its commitment to create excellent youth music in York County. To do so it will:

- **Expand to include a Children's Choir.**
- **Expand its collaborative relationships with instrumental music and performing arts groups.**
- **Expand the diversity of its choirs.**

2019 – 2020 Objectives

- Prepare to convert our Choral Festival into a Children's Choir in 2020 – 2021 (when our arrangement for space expires).
- Collaborate with other York-based organizations to create a system to reduce, if not eliminate, schedule conflicts among youth performing arts groups.
- Launch a process, focused on York City Schools and other school districts with growing diverse populations, to increase the diversity of our choirs. Support this effort with a recruiting process that acknowledges the value of diversity.

York County Honors Choirs will launch a focused promotional campaign to better position its brand in its community. In doing so it will elevate its singers and the opportunities the choirs provide to them and promote its concerts.

2019 – 2020 Objectives

- Charter the Marketing Committee to launch and sustain a promotional campaign that:
 - Promotes the choirs to churches to attract elementary school singers.
 - Advertises in elementary school concert programs to attract school singers of all grade levels.
 - Advertises in high school musical programs to attract elementary school singers.
 - Promotes the choirs in the programs of other arts-related organizations and voice studios.

- Increases the awareness of the choirs among potential corporate sponsors.
- Capitalizes on Public Relations opportunities.

York County Honors Choirs will ensure its leadership sustainability, as measured by uninterrupted program delivery, through continuous board, staff, and alumni development.

2019 – 2020 Objectives

- Increase our board engagement.
 - Develop and conduct a board “reorientation” process to reengage our board members.
- Reconfigure and restructure our board to create active, engaged committees focused on supporting the implementation of our strategic plan.
- Activate our Succession Planning Committee to prepare for the future.
- Create a pattern of alumni concerts. To do this we should:
 - Secure an independent director for the alumni choir.
 - Improve our alumni data base.
 - Connect with our alumni on social media.
 - Grow our alumni into “brand ambassadors.”
 - Promote the alumni travel program.

York County Honors Choirs will ensure its financial sustainability, as measured by uninterrupted program delivery, through focused fundraising, and sound fiscal stewardship.

2019 – 2020 Objectives

- Grow our corporate sponsorships and Patron Program over the next three years. To do this we should:
 - Form a taskforce of board members, parents, and community members to work on this initiative.
 - Create additional ways to promote new corporate sponsors.
 - Increase membership in our Patron Program.
- Activate a *Give Local York* effort.

York County Honors Choirs will explore a “hub” location from which it can operate over the long term.

2019 Objectives

- This strategy is on hold until at least 2020.

Critical Measures of Success

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of and progress toward its long-range strategic plan, York County Honors Choirs will measure and track the following Critical Measures of Success. The results will be reviewed by the leadership team on a regular basis.

- Dollars of philanthropic funds raised
- Number of members of the Patron Program
- Dollars of corporate sponsorships
- Number of corporate sponsors
- Dollars of ticket sales
- Number of concert attendees
- Dollars of grants awarded
- Total dollars raised
- Number of students auditioning for each choir
- Number of students who participate in the Festival who eventually audition for and are accepted into the Junior Honor Choir
- Number of students provided with financial support
- Number of performances
 - Revenue generating
 - Non-revenue generating
- Number of engaged alumni
 - Participating in alumni concerts
 - Participating in other YHC events/initiatives
- Net Promoter Score
 - Singers
 - Parents
 - Audience