

| Artistry | Community | Advocacy |

Sample GALA Chorus

Strategic Plan

FY2014-FY2016

Approved by the Board of Directors of
Sample GALA Chorus
[Approved May 23, 2013]

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have seen marked advances in social acceptance of and human-rights gains for LGBT people. But despite these gains, LGBT-related discrimination continues to be a problem. In response to continued discrimination, the Sample GALA Chorus (“CHORUS” or “the Chorus”) seeks to promote self-acceptance, provide a sense of accomplishment and unity to its members, promote the acceptance of LGBT loved ones and friends, and present a positive portrait of the LGBT community.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Using music as a common thread, the Chorus fulfills its need for providing great entertainment (**artistry**), promoting greater understanding between all of us inside and outside the Chorus (**community**), and supporting causes they believe in (**advocacy**).

Artistry: The Chorus strives to provide excellent musical performances, build understanding of LGBT issues through the selection and performance of important and entertaining music, and advance the LGBT-choral movement by commissioning new works. The Chorus is a safe place to creatively express oneself and serves as an important creative outlet.

Community: The Chorus forms strong relationships with its audience and supporters (external community) and among membership (internal community). Much of our audience is connected to singing membership and attends performances to show support for family members, friends, or colleagues. And among the membership, the Chorus fosters a supportive environment to build fellowship and create strong interpersonal relationships.

Advocacy: Advocacy is an integral part of the Chorus’s mission. Our presence and repertoire draw attention to issues facing the LGBT community, including:

- HIV and AIDS
- Religious inclusion
- Addiction
- LGBT youth
- Marriage Equality

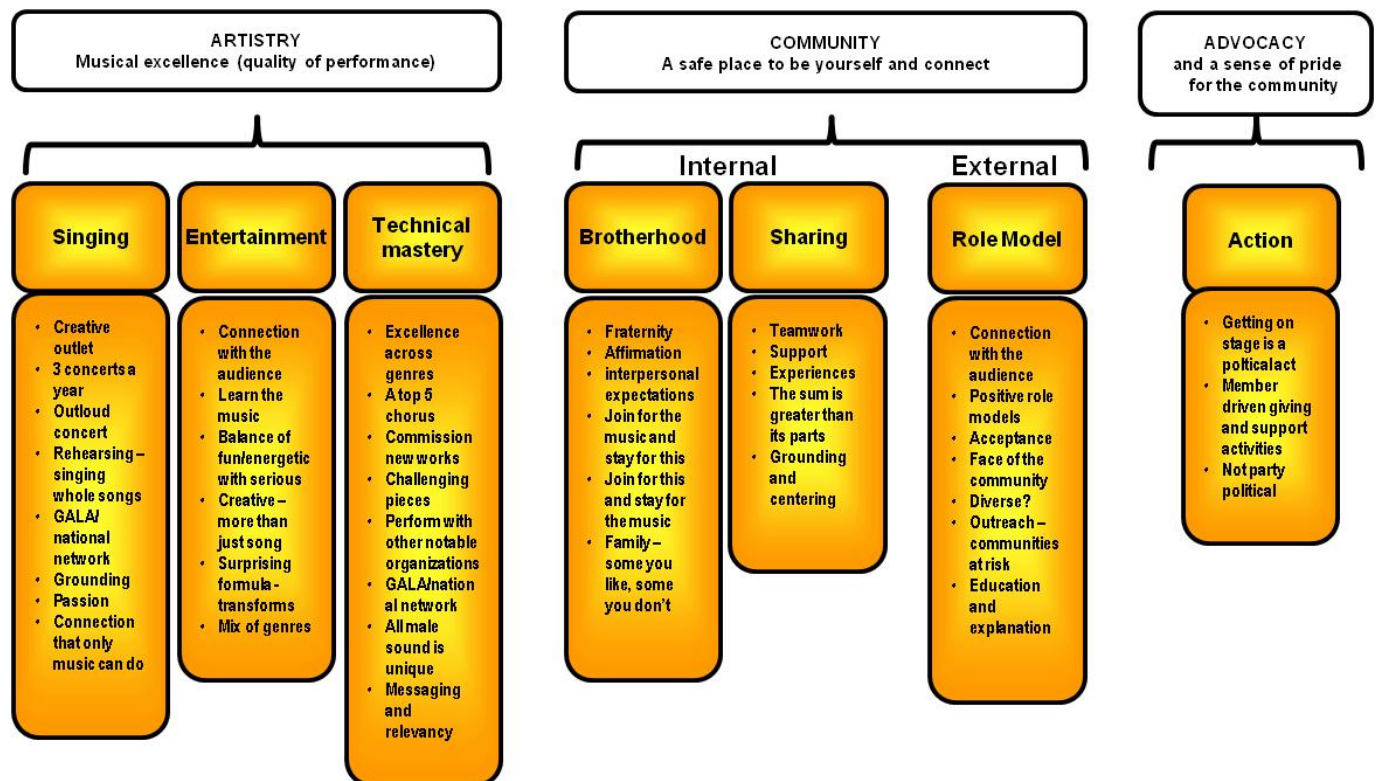
In September 2012, the Chorus adopted the following advocacy statement:

For the Sample GALA Chorus, advocacy is voluntary and member-led actions that enacts positive social change and build community through music that furthers the mission of our organization. By our history and our very nature, we are an advocacy organization. Advocacy will typically be focused on:

- *musical expression*
- *consensus values*
- *community outreach and relationship engagement*
- *empowerment of marginalized sectors of society, and*
- *unique ability to speak to the gay-male experience and identity.*

We will build a community and culture that values our inherent differences, secures our full participation and rights within society, and addresses oppression of other marginalized or socially excluded members of our community.

COMPONENT SUMMARY



WHO ARE OUR COMPETITORS/WHAT DO WE COMPETE ON

Our biggest competitors are other arts organizations. These arts organizations compete for media attention, funding, and audiences. According to survey results, more than 50% of our audience members attended events at these organizations within the past 12 months.

Our metropolitan area is home to many world-class and critically acclaimed non-choral arts organizations.

Our metropolitan area is also home to many professional choruses.

STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS

As part of the strategic-planning process, the Board of Directors looked at internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats.

Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- The Chorus has a strong reputation for artistic and musical excellence within our metropolitan area' LGBT community and the arts community.
- The Chorus is committed to commissioning new music for the LGBT choral movement—over 35 new works.
- The Chorus has a committed membership—singing members, a Board of Directors, and volunteers.
- The Chorus employs a knowledgeable administrative staff.
- The Chorus has strong financial management and is debt free.
- The Chorus has a loyal audience well connected to the singing membership.
- The Chorus has a long history within the community.
- The Chorus has a very loyal base of recurrent season-ticket holders.
- The Chorus has a core group of individual major donors.
- The Chorus has thrived for more three decades of issues facing the LGBT community—demonstrating its relevancy, longevity, and adaptability.
- The Chorus has a strong relationship with its venue and box office staff.
- Many members join for the music but stay because of the connection to each other and their belief in the Chorus's social mission.
- The all-male sound is unique and particularly powerful when performing without sheet music.
- The Artistic Director has set a good tone and developed a respectful environment.
- Social media implementation—affordable marketing.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of building and nurturing leadership development
- The Chorus's website needs to provide more current and timely information about concerts and other events. It needs to provide an easier way to order tickets online. It also lacks content that talks about the Chorus, its mission, and

relevant outreach. Currently, it is just an e-commerce portal to order tickets, buy merchandise, and make donations.

- There is a perception in the community that the Chorus is not as large as it is and only appeals to a small niche audience. It needs to show that the Chorus appeals to a large and diverse audience (“Many people just like you come to our concerts!”).
- There is a lack of awareness about the Chorus in the broader metropolitan area community. Many are surprised that the chorus has been around for over 30 years.
- There is a reputation within the gay community that the Chorus is an elitist organization.
- The Chorus lacks racial/ethnic diversity.
- The Chorus lacks financial reserves of half a year of reserve revenue.
- The Chorus has limited financial and human resources and therefore has to carefully choose how to spend its capital.
- The Chorus does not have a strong non-singing volunteer base outside the Board.

External Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities:

- The Artistic Director can help to shape the future of the Chorus by aligning its goals with the strategic plan.
- Recent public support of gay rights allows the Chorus to continue supporting the community and to provide a resource for positive change towards LGBT equality—particularly regarding marriage equality.
- The Chorus needs to continue to nurture our individual relationship with donors of all levels.
- Continue developing the membership and fostering a culture of respect.
- Develop repertoire for outreach and build outreach into the season.
- Increase production values, e.g., music selection, size, overall look, through greater membership participation.
- Strengthen relationship with other arts and GALA organizations
- Increase publicity to make the Chorus more-well known.
- Need to develop funding plan for tours, travel, commissions, and outreach.

Threats:

- The current economic situation is still precarious and audience members continue balancing basic needs versus entertainment.
- State budget concerns and political shifts could result in cuts to state-arts funding.
- Conservative family-values groups and the backlash against the LGBT-rights movement could result in cuts to LGBT organizations.
- Foundations and corporations are tending to narrow their focus of grants away from the arts to need-based organizations or to a single, non-arts-related cause.
- Potential for donor fatigue and donor's shifting priorities for charitable giving.

KEY ISSUES FOR CHORUS STRATEGIC PLAN

The SWOT Analysis revealed the following areas to be addressed in this Strategic Plan:

1. Allow the Artistic Director to develop the artistic standards of the organization.
2. Increase fund development opportunities, reserve revenue, and endowment.
3. Develop culture that values leadership, internal community, and a safe Chorus environment.
4. Increase diversity within the Chorus and the audience.
5. Develop and execute advocacy plan.
6. Engage the Chorus singing members and Board of Directors in collaboratively executing the Strategic Plan.

STRATEGIC GOALS FY2014-FY2016

ARTISTIC:

“Provide musical programming that is exceptional, entertaining, and educational”

- Articulate an artistic vision and plan that furthers the performance, outreach, and advocacy goals of the Chorus.
- Assist the Artistic Director to build upon the artistic successes of the Chorus.
- Commission new music that creates an artistic legacy for the Chorus.

COMMUNITY:

“Build a safe place where our achievements are recognized and our differences valued”

- Build community by promoting leadership and an understanding of differences, including differences in musical ability, as a unifier rather than a divider, and developing a set of behaviors among members to enhance Chorus unity.
- Foster a safe space/place where the audience and members can be themselves and be accepted.
- Promote diversity within the Chorus and the audience.

ADVOCACY:

“Be a leader in identifying and addressing LGBT community issues and delivering messages through music”

- Produce programs that reach and develop new audiences. This might include performing in different concert venues and touring outside our metropolitan area.
- Provide proactive leadership in identifying and addressing issues relevant to the LGBT community of the Upper Midwest.
- Be an organization that is open and responsive to outreach and advocacy opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The chorus's board of directors established a strategic planning committee in 2012 to review the strategic plan from 2011-2013, to propose changes to it, and to make a new strategic plan that coincides with the Chorus's fiscal year. The committee met several times in 2013 to review the prior plan and to propose changes to it in light of where the Chorus is today.

The Strategic Plan FY2014-FY2016 builds on the foundation of the 2011-2013 strategic plan, and the committee has relied substantially on the process that started in September 2009 during a Board of Director's retreat. The Board formed a strategic planning subcommittee early in 2010 and it began the process of "planning for planning." The subcommittee built off the results of the work the Board completed in September 2009 and conducted multiple sessions to gather information from stakeholders. This included two focus groups with singing members in August and September 2010. It included the Board of Directors' retreat in September 2010 and two membership forums during membership retreats in 2010. The Board also considered the results of an audience survey from December 2009. The process was also significantly informed by the marketing plan for 2010-2012 developed by the Executive Director and the Manager of Marketing and Development.

The following documents collect the data from those exercises and were considered in the preparation of the 2011-2013 strategic plan: Dreaming exercise summary – themes 10-4-10.doc; Dreaming exercise results.xls; Dreaming exercise.docx; CHORUS strategic plan appendix – Oct 10.ppt; Marketing Plan 2010-2012; December 2009 Audience Survey; Report Out from Board Retreat 2009; and Chorus architecture October 2010.ppt.