STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COMMUNITY ROWING, INC 2024

November, 2020
BACKGROUND

Community Rowing Inc. (CRI) was founded in 1985 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the belief that the sport of rowing provides unique opportunities to promote personal and community growth through teamwork, discipline, and physical fitness. CRI has become one of the largest rowing programs in the United States, with more than 5,000 people rowing with us annually.

Located on the Charles River, an internationally recognized attraction for rowing and a gem within the Massachusetts park system, CRI was the first public rowing club in Boston and remains one of the largest in the United States. CRI is committed to its mission and provides broad-based programs for youth and adults of all skill levels—from novice to elite. Since its inception, CRI has enriched the greater community by providing education and training for more than 30,000 people, including:

- Youth (boys and girls) from local high schools
- Individuals with disabilities
- Adults of all levels of ability through recreational and competitive programs
- Olympians and National Team Rowers
- National Champions in Women’s, Men’s, and Girls’ Competitive teams

A reputation for excellence and outstanding accomplishments in the sport has made CRI the place to learn to row in the Boston area and a model for similar programs nationally.

Strategic planning process

The CRI Board of Directors (BOD) began a strategic planning process in October 2019 and appointed a Strategic Planning Committee. The BOD and committee were advised by a consultant for 6 months, Ona Ferguson of CBI, who had worked with CRI previously. The BOD and Executive Director (ED) participated in 2 moderated half-day retreats, and CBI conducted focus groups with staff and coaches as well as a large cross-section of community members. (see Appendix for Committee members and planning process details). The COVID-19 pandemic required that we refocus our attention and resources during the spring and summer of 2020 but we were able to finalize this plan by the fall of 2020.

Summary

The following Plan will serve as a guide for the near-term future of CRI. The goals and objectives reflect an unwavering commitment to our mission, to diversity and inclusion and to the pursuit of excellence in the programs we offer to the community.

The leadership of CRI will use this plan as an ongoing reference for goals, actions and decision-making. The Plan will not be read once and filed but rather, it is to be considered a living, organic and dynamic document, enabling CRI to respond flexibly to new data as well as relevant changes or developments in the community and the sport of rowing. It is a roadmap pointing us in a desired direction, and the strategies outlined below are the specific routes we will take to reach our destination.
THE PLAN

This Strategic Plan is focused on the next 3 years, through 2024. The plan aims to advance CRI’s mission through deliberate action towards specific, measurable and attainable goals, all of which are grounded in our core values.

MISSION

At CRI, we invite individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and levels of experience to grow through rowing.
VALUES

These are the values that guide our work. We commit to practicing what we preach by rigorously adhering to the core values of our organization.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WE VALUE</th>
<th>WE BELIEVE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DIVERSITY</strong></td>
<td>Diversity refers to the makeup of our community.</td>
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<td>Everyone should have the opportunity to access and experience the benefits of rowing and being a part of our community.</td>
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<td>We believe in actively recruiting and including people of all backgrounds and abilities, including those who may not find it possible to access rowing elsewhere.</td>
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<td><strong>BELONGING &amp; RESPECT</strong></td>
<td>Inclusion refers to a culture that allows diversity to thrive. In an inclusive community, people feel respected and a sense of belonging.</td>
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<td>Feeling respected by and connected to a welcoming and supportive community enriches a person’s life and sense of worth. Social support improves emotional, intellectual and physical health.</td>
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<td>It is important that we be good stewards of and citizens in the broader Charles River Community.</td>
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<td><strong>PERSONAL GROWTH</strong></td>
<td>Rowing changes lives in diverse ways, such as: the value of challenge, commitment and grit; a connection to the outdoors and nature; the physical and health benefits of exercise; teamwork and camaraderie; the satisfaction of teaching, coaching and learning.</td>
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<td><strong>RESILIENCE</strong></td>
<td>Embracing rowing and coaching challenges and overcoming obstacles and setbacks are meaningful opportunities for growth, connection and improved well-being.</td>
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<td>Cooperative problem-solving breaks down barriers and builds connection.</td>
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<td>We believe in the power of generous assumptions.</td>
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STRATEGY

CRI offers exceptional, accessible and inclusive rowing programs in a diverse community context.

This plan describes four ‘pillars’ - areas of implementation focus - that steer CRI to grow and thrive in the mission and values described above. Within each pillar, 3-year strategic goals provide specific priorities for improving CRI’s program delivery, management, operations and financial outlook. These strategies for the organization are then supported by specific implementation actions. Note that in many cases the actions listed reflect work that is already underway.

Pillars

- Increase Diversity, Champion Equity and Nurture Inclusivity
- Deepen Local Community Engagement
- Strengthen Employee Engagement & Operational Health
- Build Financial Resilience
Strategic Goals

Increase Diversity, Champion Equity and Nurture Inclusivity

- Understand the barriers to increasing diversity at CRI: listening to what has worked and what hasn’t both at CRI and other organizations.
- Develop new program offerings and/or modify and adapt existing programs to better attract and serve people of color.
- Tailor outreach strategies to actively recruit people of color and facilitate access to CRI.
- Build a workforce and BOD that is reflective of the communities we serve.
- Nurture a self-reflective and inclusive community and workplace built on a foundation of respect.
- Increase awareness within the CRI community about the organization’s mission, values, and strategic goals.

Deepen Local Community Engagement

- Strengthen our existing relationships with key Boston stakeholders.
- Pursue and establish new partnerships in local communities of color.
- Engage in new partnerships with other sports programs that serve people of color.

Strengthen Employee Engagement & Operational Health

- Develop comprehensive operating processes and procedures to cultivate a thriving and effective staff.
- Measure and communicate CRI’s impact on those we serve.

Build Financial Resilience

- Build a strategy to support major capital outlays and protect from major downturns in revenues.
- Develop new revenue models to generate income for the organization.
APPENDIX: STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE AND PROCESS

Planning Committee:
Kevin Dutt (Chair, BOD), Ted Bedford (Executive Director), Ona Ferguson (CBI, consultant), Christina Wood Baker (BOD), Loryn Sheffner (Community Representative).
Starting April 2020, Malcolm Doldron (BOD) joined the committee.

Process:

**September/October 2019: Information Gathering**
- Planning team established and Ona Ferguson, CBI, hired.
- Ona reviewed information about CRI, previous strategic work and current status of the organization, with input from ED and committee.
- Planning team developed content for online survey for staff and questions for staff focus group.
- Planning team scheduled board retreat.
- Online survey for all 130 staff, including full & part-time staff (early Oct)
- Ona holds a focus group with staff who self-nominate (early/mid-Oct)
- Ona synthesizes findings from information gathering effort and shares in writing with board

**November 2020: Board Retreat #1**
- November 3, 2019. 4 hours. Held at CRI. BOD and ED.
- Established subgroups to work on edits of mission ideas and values ideas.

**November/December 2020: Processing results, more information gathering**
- Revised mission and values by subgroup. Sent drafts to Ona and then to BOD for feedback.
- Revised mission and values again. Shared draft mission and values with trustees, community members and staff; collected and integrated feedback.
- Scheduled February Retreat #2.

**January 2020: Staff and Community Focus groups, Trustee call**
- Staff Focus Group (run by CBI)
- Community Focus Group (run by CBI)
- Trustee Conference Call (BOD Chair and ED)
- Compiled feedback from staff, donors and trustees and incorporated into final draft of mission and values to go to BOD for approval.

**February 2020: Board Retreat #2**
- February 9, 2020. 4 hours. Held at CRI. BOD, ED and Trustee Representatives.
- Voted and approved new CRI Mission and Values.
- Developed initial ideas for Strategic Priorities.
March 2020: COVID-19

- Contract with CBI halted

April/May/June 2020: Finding Consensus on Strategic Priorities

- March-April BOD Homework: Survey completed and results compiled.
- Presented results of survey at May BOD meeting.
- New BOD member, Malcolm Doldron, joined strategic planning committee.
- Strategic Planning Committee tasked with creating strategic planning document

July-October 2020: Strategic Plan Created

- Planning committee met every few weeks to review new drafts and make plans for next steps.
- Created final draft of strategic plan document to share with BOD at November 2020 BOD meeting.

November 2020: Approved Strategic Plan

- Strategic planning committee presented strategic plan document at BOD meeting.
- BOD voted to approve Strategic Plan