



FORWARD

TEAMWORK • RESPECT • ENTHUSIASM • COLLABORATION • COMMUNICATION
2022 - 2024 NWSRA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

Introduction

In 2021, NWSRA initiated its strategic planning process to develop a strategic plan for 2022-2024. However, shortly into this process, we were all hit with something no one saw coming - a global pandemic. In terms of our strategic planning process, it left us a big decision to make - was developing a strategic plan in the middle of a pandemic right for our organization? There was much discussion around this, but at the end of the day NWSRA has thrived due to always having a plan. Now none of us saw getting hit with a pandemic but due to responsible financial management, operational excellence, our amazing staff, and providing essential services that our participants have learned they can't live without; we knew we would navigate the pandemic and at the end of the day, pull through. It's because of the foundation we laid, the plans we developed, and our ability to execute on those plans, NWSRA has been able to thrive.

Now over the years, the plans we developed may have not always gone exactly as planned; however, having a plan has allowed us as an organization the ability to pivot. Without a plan, an organization is essentially navigating blind and being in that position, in the middle of a pandemic, was not a position we could imagine ourselves in. With this thinking in mind, we knew there was only one decision to make - move forward with our strategic planning process.

Moving into this process no one was entirely sure how our participant's feedback would look, but what we soon realized was completing this process during the pandemic provided us a unique opportunity. The feedback we were receiving from our surveys and focus groups was very raw. Our participants did not hold back, they were very honest with their answers which provided very valuable feedback.

The plan's pillars, focuses, goals and action items were all derived from community, board member, and staff input solicited during the planning process. In developing the plan, opinions were included from staff, board members, resident surveys, staff and community focus groups, board member interviews, and staff and board member feedback. Through the strategic planning process, NWSRA identified its core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. It also affirmed the mission, vision, pillars and values of the association. We could not be more excited for the future of NWSRA as we implement the following plan to strengthen our organization and in turn provide even more opportunities for our participants.



Tracey Crawford
NWSRA Executive Director

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Acknowledgments

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Org. Treasurer	Kevin Romejko Rolling Meadows Park District
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Executive Director
Superintendent of Recreation
Superintendent of Recreation
Superintendent of Administrative Services
Superintendent of Marketing and Comms.
Superintendent of Development



A photograph of a person in a wheelchair on a bowling alley. The person is seen from behind, wearing a dark shirt with a logo and shorts. They are on a wooden floor, and a bowling ball is visible on the lane in front of them. In the background, there are bowling lanes with pins and a large American flag hanging on the wall. The entire image has a purple tint.

Organizational Background

SRA's and NWSRA

What is an SRA?

The Special Recreation Association (SRA) model is unique to the state of Illinois and leads the nation in inclusion and accessibility for residents with disabilities. The model represents a consolidation of local Park District, Village and Township efforts to provide recreational services to individuals with disabilities. Collectively addresses the financial and social responsibilities set forth by the unfunded ADA mandate and inclusion of individuals with disabilities

- Pools resources and funding to address the need for services and accessible public parks and facilities
- Centralizes a team of staff to collectively address best practices and trends affecting individuals with disabilities
- Increases the range of inclusive services for individuals with any type of disability provided within member communities

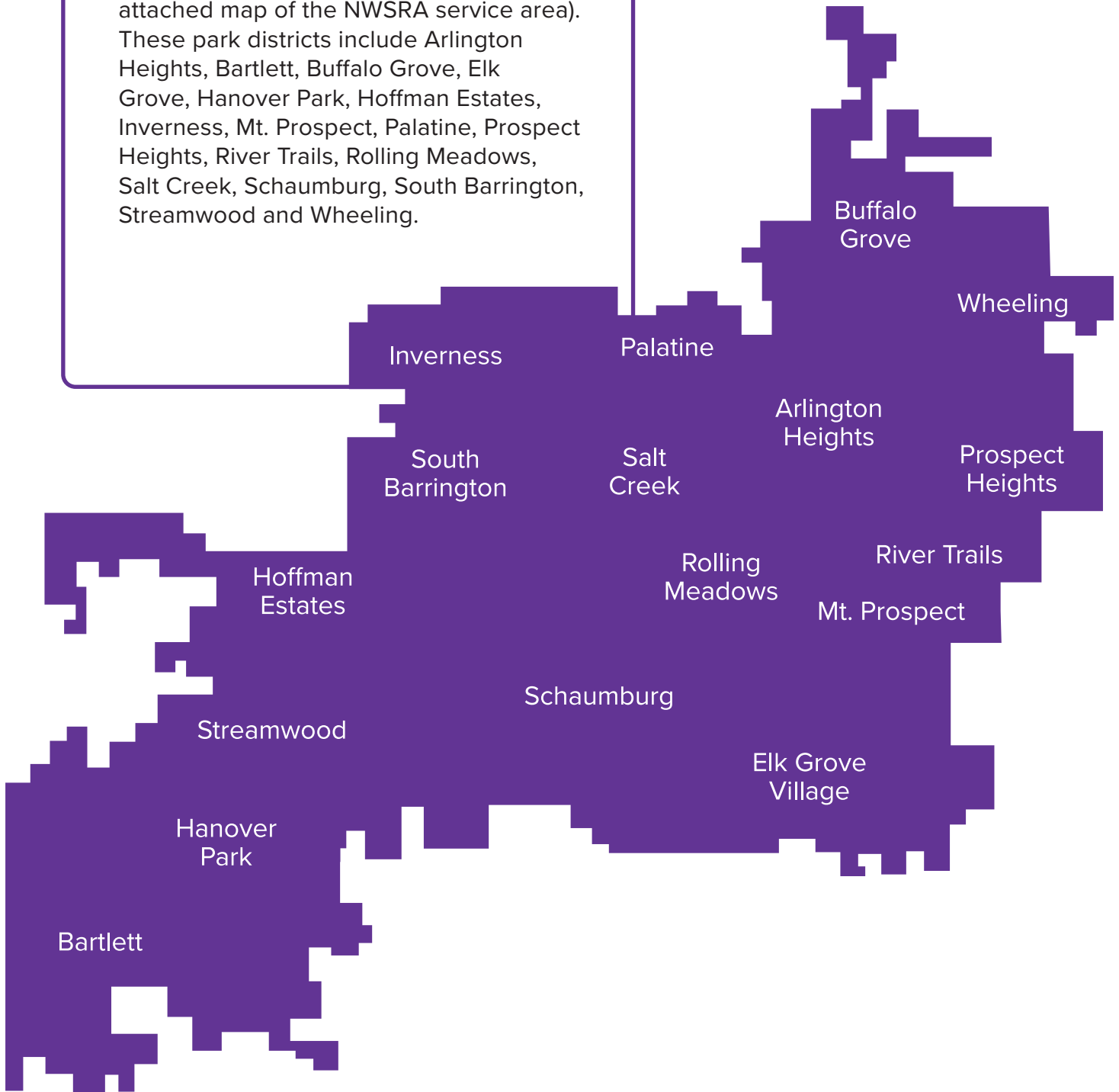
Who is NWSRA?

The Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA) is the largest provider of recreational services for children and adults with disabilities in the state of Illinois. As an extension of 17 park districts throughout the northwest suburbs, NWSRA offers public access, year round recreational programming to over 6,000 individuals with disabilities in its service area. Founded in 1974, NWSRA:

NWSRA is a leader among peers with over 15,000 registrations in more than 2,000 programs in 2014. The organization is a two-time National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) National Gold Medal Award winner and is recognized as a Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, an honor only 10% of Illinois park and recreation agencies have received. NWSRA has received the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Excellence in Inclusion award, recognizing the national leader in service and promotion of inclusive opportunities for children and adults with disabilities.

Service Area

NWSRA serves 17 northwest suburban park districts located within Cook County and southern Lake County (see the attached map of the NWSRA service area). These park districts include Arlington Heights, Bartlett, Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Mt. Prospect, Palatine, Prospect Heights, River Trails, Rolling Meadows, Salt Creek, Schaumburg, South Barrington, Streamwood and Wheeling.



Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

We exist to provide outstanding opportunities through recreation for children and adults with disabilities

Vision Statement

We exist to provide outstanding opportunities through recreation for children and adults with disabilities

Core Values

Teamwork: Support each other and work together

Respect: Be open, honest and kind

Enthusiasm: Exceed expectations

Collaboration: Combine resources to achieve common goals

Communication: Listen, share and adapt





Our Planning History

What is Strategic Planning

The Strategic Planning Approach

A process utilized by NWSRA to engage participants, family members, care providers, partners, staff and Board Members in the identification of specific strategies for the next three years. A strategic plan establishes relevant goals with assigned action steps to achieve the goals that are evaluated through measurable outcomes. It is a systematic approach to define long-term organizational goals (2-3 years) and short-term departmental goals (1-2 years).

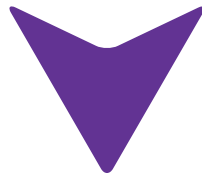
Five Phases of Strategic Planning

1. Situational analysis – engage and involve (survey, focus groups, and interviews)
2. Affirm or define principles of governance (mission, vision, values) and pillars
3. Strategy Map - formulation of focuses, priorities, SMART goals, and action steps
4. Establish metrics for the strategic plan and align with Capital Improvement Plan and budget
5. Execute, edit, and evaluate

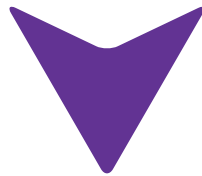


History of NWSRA Strategic Planning

In 2006, Leisure Vision conducted a Needs Assessment Survey for NWSRA. The survey determined the attitudes, interests, opinions, and needs of those who are served by NWSRA. Questions were tailored to proactively identify issues of strategic importance to effectively plan for the future and complete a Comprehensive Plan. This master plan guided future decisions and the development of NWSRA programs, services and infrastructure for five years.



This process resulted in a revision of NWSRA's mission statement, which for over ten years has accurately articulated NWSRA's reason for existing. As adopted by the NWSRA Board in 2010, the mission is: "To provide outstanding opportunities through recreation for children and adults with disabilities."



Revising the mission statement and developing a comprehensive direction for the future helped to move the Association to function as a strategy-focused organization. Instilling a common purpose, identified shared core values, and establishing a set of key, strategic initiatives provided an aligned course of direction in meeting NWSRA's mission today and in the future.



Strategic Planning Process

Define Strategy Attributes

Strategic Plan Process:

A process utilized by NWSRA to engage participants, family members, care providers, partners, staff and Board Members in the identification of specific strategies for the next three years. A strategic plan establishes relevant goals with assigned action steps to achieve the goals that are evaluated through measurable outcomes. It is a systematic approach to define long-term organizational goals (2-3 years) and short-term departmental goals (1-2 years).

Mission

Defines the fundamental purpose of NWSRA, describing why it exists.

Vision

Defines the desired or intended future state of NWSRA in terms of its fundamental objective and strategic direction.

Values

Describe the way NWSRA operates and a system of shared values about what is important. These are expectations for consistent practices by stakeholders of the organization. A shared philosophy and attitude toward team members and guests.

Using a Balanced Scorecard Perspectives:

The four perspectives include Financial, Internal Processes, Learning and Growing, and Customer. They demonstrate cause and effect relationships in the completion of strategy. All Strategic Initiatives are in alignment with these five perspectives.



Strategy Attributes Continued

Pillars:

Essential principles that lay the foundation for aligning the organization's Mission with its Vision.

Focuses:

Areas identified within each Pillar that are in need of improvement

Goals:

Broad endpoints with the goal of realization throughout the 3-year Strategic Plan Process

Action Steps:

Annual goals identified and prioritized for each year of the 3-year Strategic Plan Process

Metrics:

A standard used to evaluate and communicate performance against expected results. Measures are quantitative indicators, and typically show growth or decline in numbers, financials, percentages, etc. Measures assist staff with the ability to determine organizational performance.



2021-2024 Strategic Planning Process

Stage 1: Pre-planning meetings with Staff and Facilitators



Pre-planning Stage 1:
Define Strategy Attributes
Questionnaire Development

Stage 2: Participant, Board & Staff Survey



Input Stage 2:
Review and affirm Mission, Vision, Pillars, and Values

Stage 3: Regional, Staff, and Community Partner Focus Groups



Input Stage 3:
Utilize SWOC Analysis and Facilitate Focus Groups

Stage 4: Development of focuses



Review Stage 4:
Develop Trends Analysis and Identified Key Priorities

Stage 5: Finalizing the Strategic Plan



Development Stage 5:
Use all Collected Data to Reaffirm Focuses and Pillars and Develop SMART Goals



Survey

Questionnaire

A 22-item online questionnaire was developed to collect information to meet the following strategic plan objectives:

- The NWSRA stakeholders' opinions regarding the current mission, vision, pillars, and values.
- Perceived level of improvement and importance for the NWSRA standards.
- Obtain feedback from stakeholders on the NWSRA's effectiveness across key priority and resource areas.
- Obtain feedback on the residents' willingness to support future expansion/development of recreation services.
- Obtain demographic characteristics of the Northwest Special Recreation Association's stakeholders.

The NWSRA Strategic Planning Survey sought to obtain feedback from stakeholders on the agency's:

Mission

Vision

Core Values

Pillars



Data Collection

The data collection involved emailing each of the NWSRA's agency partners and participants requesting their involvement in the study. A link to the online survey was included in the email. The email was sent weekly during the month of April 2021. A public link to solicit participation was also available on NWSRA's website. Once the questionnaires were submitted, the Campfire Concepts project team checked the data for completeness and accuracy prior to analysis.

Survey Participation

201 Respondents

34% Board, Staff, Volunteers & Partners

66% Participant/Parent

Opinions on Mission Statement

Survey respondents were then asked, “With the Mission in mind, please rate your agreement with the following statements:”

The purple boxes represent the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

The mission clearly defines the purpose of NWSRA.	96%
The mission of the Association is realistic.	95%
The programs of the Association are consistent with the Mission Statement	96%
The Association’s planning and budgetary priorities are supportive of the mission	72% 24% Don't Know
The Association’s actions and decisions demonstrate an understanding that the association service the 17 area park districts	88% 7% Don't Know
The Association engages the participants and responds to their needs accordingly.	90%
In relationship to the planning process for the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, I believe the mission is still relevant to the Association	88%



Opinions on Vision Statement

Survey respondents were then asked: “With the Vision statement in mind, please rate your agreement with the following statements:”

The purple boxes represent the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

Communicates the direction of the organization.	95%
Keeps the Association focused.	93%
Motivates employees.	77%
In relationship to the planning process for the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, I believe that this vision statement is still relevant to the Association.	90%



Aligning the Mission and Vision

Our Foundation

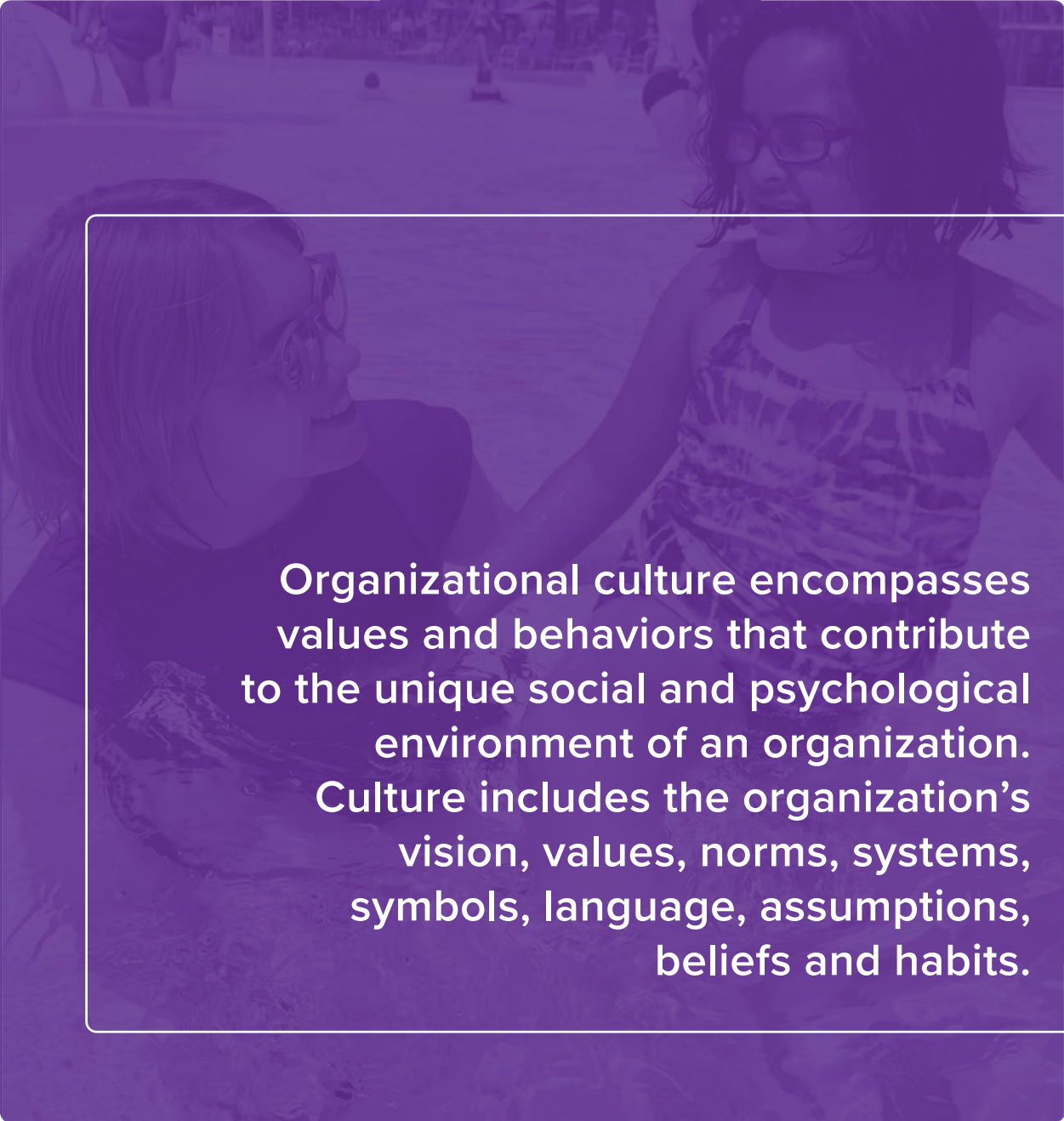
The NWSRA has four pillars that lay the foundation for aligning the Association's mission with its vision. These four pillars were defined in the last strategic plan and are based on the balanced scorecard approach.

Pillars	Focuses	Mission
Financial Management	Financial	To be a leading force, creating greater options that enrich the life experiences of the participants, families and communities we serve.
Operational Excellence	Internal Process	
Promoting Leadership	Learning and Growth	
Outstanding Service	Customer	

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the four pillars as they relate to the NWSRA's mission and vision.

Nearly 100% of stakeholders felt each of the four pillars (Financial Management, Operational Excellence, Promoting Leadership, and Outstanding Service) were important or very important principles that lay the foundation for aligning the NWSRA's mission with its vision.

Definition Organizational Culture Values

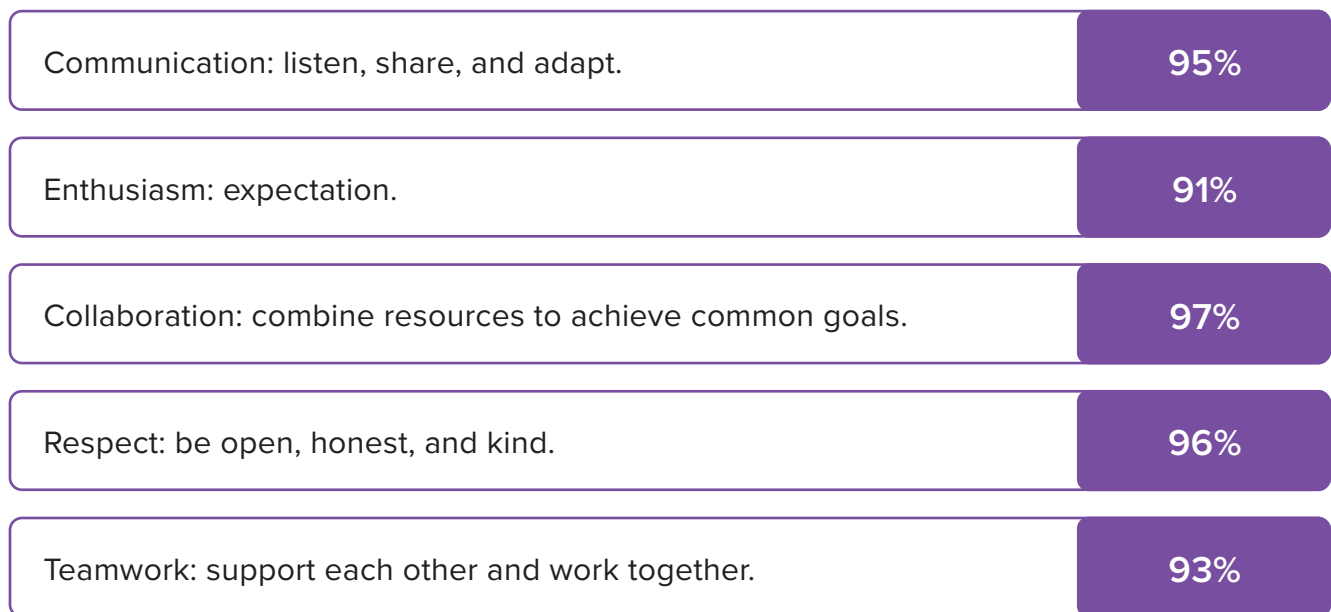
A photograph of two women sitting on a beach, talking. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a dark top, while the woman on the right is wearing glasses and a patterned top. The background shows a sandy beach with other people and buildings in the distance. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Organizational culture encompasses values and behaviors that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization. Culture includes the organization's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs and habits.

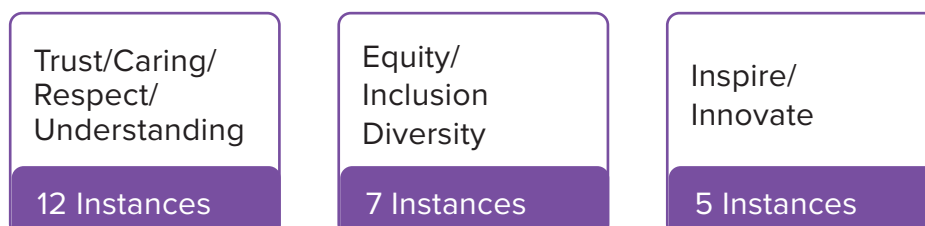
Opinions on Organizational Culture

Stakeholders were presented with each of the NWSRA's values (teamwork, respect, enthusiasm, collaboration, and communication) and asked to rate each value and their presence in the Association's culture on a five-point agreement scale.

The purple boxes represent the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.



Survey Respondents were also given the opportunity to share additional values they felt were relevant to the culture of the NWSRA. While a majority of the stakeholders did not respond to this item, the most popular responses to this open-ended question included:



Analysis for NWSRA's Standards

Standards

Stakeholders were presented with 19 standards or measures that were linked to each of the NWSRA's pillars and asked to rate the Association's level of improvement across each of these standards. Stakeholders rated the level of improvement, or performance, for each standard on a five-point improvement scale (5=Excellent Improvement – 1=Minimal Improvement).

Stakeholders were then asked to rate the perceived importance of each these 19 standards, plus an additional six financial standards, using five-point importance scale (5=Most Important – 1=Least Important).

The mean scores for each standard across both the improvement/performance and importance scales are presented on the following pages.



Analysis for NWSRA's Standards

Standard	Since Last Strategic Plan	Perceived Importance
All areas of service should be available to the residents in each of the member park districts.	4.0	4.7
A balance of programs and services should be provided throughout the calendar year.	4.1	4.6
Services should be offered to all age groups and to all disabilities.	4.0	4.7
Financial need should be not limit access to participation.	4.2	4.6
Programs shall allow for consumer input to evaluate and offer future suggestions.	4.1	4.5
NWSRA will use electronic communications effectively to promote the organizational mission.	4.3	4.4
Uniform and professional appearance to all external published information.	4.3	4.1
Consistent and timely communication to internal and external customers.	4.1	4.5
A comprehensive marketing plan will establish a heightened awareness of NWSRA.	4.0	4.1
NWSRA will be receptive and responsive to ideas and suggestions from user groups.	4.1	4.5
Member District financial commitments will be made on a three-year cycle.	---	4.0
Develop a reserve equal to 30% of NWSRA's Annual budget.	---	4.1
Maintain a diversified SLSF revenue plan.	---	4.2
Build an endowment fund within SLSF.	---	4.1
Maintain approved financial management practices.	---	4.5
Demonstrates ongoing planning process.	4.2	4.5
Demonstrates loss prevention practices.	4.1	4.2
Demonstrates progressive utilization of a technology plan.	4.1	4.2
Organizational structures that supports the mission of NWSRA.	---	4.5
Recruiting and retaining a dynamic work force.	4.2	4.7
Demonstrates consistent management practices amount NWSRA and SLSF	4.2	4.4
Provide a comprehensive annual training program for volunteers.	4.1	4.4
Volunteer recruitment should target organized groups including corporations, service centers, and schools.	4.1	4.2
Implement a volunteer retention and recognition program.	3.9	4.3
Train and educate NWSRA staff to effectively manage and supervise staff.	4.2	4.7

Opinions on NWSRA's Effectiveness Across Key Priorities & Resource Areas

Stakeholders were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point agreement scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Don't Know).

The purple boxes represent the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

NWSRA has a positive reputation in the community.

95%

NWSRA engages the participants and responds to meet their needs accordingly.

90%

NWSRA's actions and decisions demonstrate an understanding that NWSRA serves 17 area park districts and has obligations to the public.

89%

NWSRA has embraced individual and group differences.

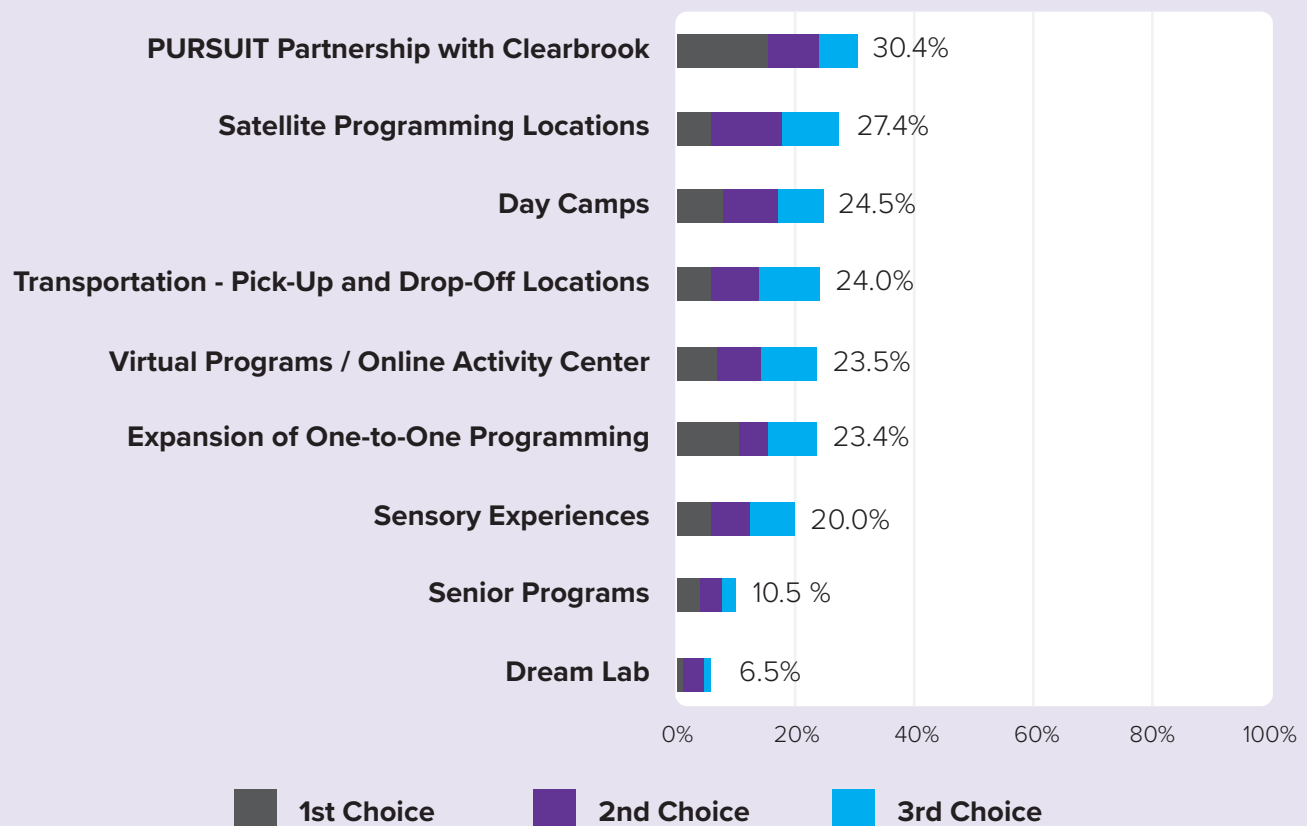
87%



Future Recreation Needs

An item on the survey asked stakeholders to identify and prioritize recreation needs within the Northwest Special Recreation Association. Respondents were presented with nine recreation service areas (plus an “other” option) and asked to identify which ones should be expanded through the 2022- 2024 strategic planning process. Specifically, stakeholders were asked to rank the top three recreation service areas they felt were the most needed for the NWSRA.

Future Recreation Needs for NWSRA (n=154)



Review and Affirmation

Upon review

Mission and Vision

Based on survey and feedback from stakeholders including; staff, board, parents and community supporters it was determined that the Mission and Vision set forth appropriate direction for the agency.

Core Values

Based upon feedback received through the online survey with participants, family members, care providers, Trustees, and staff; NWSRA's existing Core Values were affirmed.

Pillars

Upon review of the survey feedback from stakeholders including; staff, board, parents and community supporters, the four Pillars were affirmed and retained for the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan.



Conclusion

When reviewing the existing core values and comparing it to survey responses, all language was covered except diversity. Moving forward we will add the following as a core value and expand enthusiasm's explanation:

Diversity: Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility



Focus Groups

The Process

Process Overview

- An overview of the Strategic Planning Process and purpose of strategic planning was provided.
- Focus group protocols were reviewed.
- Input was solicited on a variety of topics (see next page for details).
- NWSRA administrators provided feedback to focus group participants if they posed questions or shared comments that were unrelated to the strategic plan.

Things to Note

- Focus group participants met via Zoom video teleconferencing software.
- The meetings were recorded through Zoom to utilize Zoom's transcription features.
- The focus group moderator reviewed field notes and the Zoom transcriptions to identify salient themes and create a brief report.



Purpose and Publicity

Purpose: to explore survey results and themes at a deeper level with family members, care providers, partners, and staff:

- This goal was accomplished through qualitative inquiry with the following objectives:
- Review and affirm NWSRA's mission
- Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Challenges Analysis
- Evaluate past achievements (*only staff) & Collaborations (*only partners)
- Assessment of programming and transportation needs
- Investigate Key Priorities

Publicity of Focus Groups

- Survey participants were invited to share their contact information to join a focus group
- Invitations were sent to survey participants, volunteers, and stakeholders
- Information was included on the website
- Participants were asked to RSVP
- Potential attendees who RSVP'd were sent a focus group meeting date, time, and virtual room link.
- Email reminders were sent prior to each focus group.



Focus Group Categories/ Participation

Categories

Resident

Four were offered. Residents from the following communities participated in the Regional Focus Groups:

Region 1: Bartlett, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Streamwood

Region 2: Inverness, Palatine, Salt Creek, South Barrington

Region 3: Elk Grove Village, Mt. Prospect, River Trails, Rolling Meadows, Schaumburg

Region 4: Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Prospect Heights, Wheeling

Community Partners

One was arranged with the following partners:

Clearbrook

NSSEO

Staff

Four were organized by job position:

Session 1: Recreation Specialists/Specialists

Session 2: Coordinators

Session 3: Managers

Session 4: Administration and Interns

Participation

Thirty-seven family members and care providers signed up to participate in four regionally organized focus groups.

Three partner organizations attended their own focus group.

Nearly forty staff members participated in four “staff” focus groups.

Five family members or care providers who were unable to attend the regional focus groups also shared their input by email.

Nine total focus groups with nearly 80 participants were held throughout the month of June 2021.



Part 1 | Questions

Questions - Regional

Regional focus group participants were asked to respond to similar versions of the following questions.

Additional prompts were used at times to probe specific topics.

- How appropriate is NWSRA's mission statement?
- What does NWSRA do well?
- What NWSRA services have been valuable to your household during the pandemic?
- How have your needs been met as restrictions have varied?
- When life returns to "normal," would you keep the following NWSRA services that were developed during the pandemic?
- What other challenges will NWSRA face in the next three years?
- What are ways NWSRA can better serve your transportation needs within its model?
- What do you believe NWSRA should prioritize for its strategic plan?
- Other thoughts you would like to share about NWSRA and your recreation needs?



Questions - Community Partners

Community Partner focus group participants were asked to respond to similar versions of the following questions.

Additional prompts were used at times to probe specific topics.

- With the effects of the pandemic in mind, how should recreation services for individuals with disabilities look for individuals with disabilities in the next year? Three years?
- NWSRA adapted by offering virtual programming, one-to-one calls/videoconferencing, and an activity center, among other things. How important is it to retain this type of programming?
- Are there ways you all can work together to make virtual programming more effective?
- What other challenges do you feel service providers for individuals with disabilities will face in the next three years?
- What are the top 2 major initiatives your organization will be addressing over the next 3 years?
- Currently, how do your organizations “win” by working together?
- In what new ways would you like to collaborate with NWSRA?
- What tools or resources do we need to ignite your idea?
- Beyond what we have discussed so far today, what do you believe NWSRA should prioritize for its strategic plan?
- Other thoughts you would like to share about NWSRA and your recreation needs?



Questions - Staff

Staff focus group participants were asked to respond to similar versions of the following questions.

Additional prompts were used at times to probe specific topics.

- What are the greatest achievements by NWSRA you have seen since you became a staff member?
- How appropriate is NWSRA's mission statement?
- What are the greatest strengths of NWSRA?
- What are the internal areas of concern for NWSRA?
- What are opportunities that NWSRA should explore?
- What external challenges will NWSRA face in the next three years?
- What recreation programs, activities, or services are needed in the communities you serve that are not currently available?
- In your opinion, what is the most important priority for NWSRA?
- Do you have any thoughts you would like to express that have not been discussed in this conversation?





Focus Groups

Part 2 | **SWOC**

SWOC Analysis

Organizing Results

- The results of the focus groups were organized by theme to inform NWSRA's strategic plan focuses.
- Emergent themes from the three types of focus groups (four regional resident focus groups, one partner focus group, and four staff focus groups) were similar. Themes for all three types of focus groups were presented by groupings (mission, strengths, opportunities, challenges, and priorities) in the resulting report.
- Salient themes are reported on the following pages with supporting quotes that summarize each theme. Quotes are presented by the specific type of focus group to help concentrate future focuses.

Staff focus group participants were led through a series of questions based on the following parameters. Regional and community partner responses also touched on these topics and were integrated into the corresponding themes.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	<p>STRENGTHS Attributes of the organization that help achieve the mission</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES Attributes of the organization that stop achievement of the mission</p>
External	<p>OPPORTUNITIES External conditions that help achieve the mission</p>	<p>Challenges External conditions that could damage the mission</p>

Focus Group Categories

Strengths

Innovation | Staffing | Collaborations

Weaknesses

Recruiting and retaining staff | Board relationships

Challenges

Recruiting and retaining staff | Growth in number of adults and/or severely disabled requiring services | Funding and regulations | Transportation

Opportunities

Collaboration | Adult Programming | Online growth
Parent Resource Board





Focus Group
Part 2 | SWOC

Strengths

Strengths – Individual Observations

Regional

- Light years ahead with inclusive programming
- Adult programming is cutting edge
- Progressive
- Adaptive
- Bright spot in a dark state (Illinois)
- Address each participant's needs
- Evolves well in an evolving world
- Grounded in the communities they serve
- Remarkable breadth and depth of services
- Nobody does it better than NWSRA
- Organized
- Offer more than just recreation – life skills and socialization
- Highly educated
- Offer fun activities and opportunities to travel
- Maintain high standards
- Reach everyone at every ability
- Innovative
- Expanded into areas to meet great need
- Nobody does it better than NWSRA
- NWSRA makes everything look easy
- Leader in the community
- Hub transportation system has been a nice bridge

Board

- Always striving to be better
- Communication
- Great leadership
- Approachable for calls
- Outreach
- Great decentralization of services
- Adaptive
- Problem solvers
- Accredited
- Staff are professional
- Impressed with transition to virtual
- Personal connections
- Transportation model
- Passionate and a valuable resource
- Get people involved in every aspect of what they do
- Assistance with training
- Readily available
- Incredible advocates
- Unparalleled fundraising
- Leaders in special events
- Educating legislators, member agency staff, and the general public
- Intuitive
- Knowledgeable about trends
- Positive name recognition
- Outstanding opportunities

Staff

- Adaptability and flexibility shown during the pandemic
- Unity of common goal: to provide outstanding recreation opportunities
- Passionate, dedicated, and knowledgeable staff
- Staff genuinely care. They advocate for their participants
- Types of programs offered
- Personal relationships
- Collaborations with community partners
- Developed a flexible transportation model
- Leadership takes the time for yearly visioning and SWOT analysis sessions
- A lot of specialized training
- The ability to hire from within
- Close knit group of staff
- Problem solvers
- SLSF
- Innovation – Pursuit program, dream labs, etc.
- Sense of family
- Outreach
- Endless opportunities

Focus Groups Quotes | Strengths

Strengths – Innovation, Collaborations

Regional

The expansion of Pursuit was praised and several expressed hopes that it would continue to grow.

Partner

“...the only thing I just want again to state is how wonderful it is to have a collaborative partner like NWSRA. You know, you can do a lot of partnerships, and some go well, and some don't but in this one is because of the willingness to collaborate and see each other's strengths and how that enhances the end result. It's in the creativity. It's been really a great opportunity, and in the end it's the individuals that we support who benefit from those things.”

Staff

In every focus group, participants highlighted the ever-expanding number of programs and sites. One coordinator summed it up saying simply, “one of the biggest accomplishments is probably opening up all the new spaces”.

Focus Groups Quotes | Strengths

Strengths – Staff | Staff Training

Regional

“Well, the staff are so well trained and there’s such a variety of personalities and no difference with my daughter learning like painting on Zoom from one of the staff, you know they just have a variety of really good ideas. Yeah, staff is well trained.”

Staff

“We do a lot of specialized training too, so like literally every year, I’ve been here five and a half years, and every year I get a new certification; I get more letters behind my name because that’s part of my personal goal but NW gives me the ability to do that”.



Focus Groups Quotes | Strengths

Additional Strengths

Every regional focus group shared their appreciation for NWSRA: “We are thankful, you know that you guys exist, especially in a state like Illinois you know where there, there is a lack of services.”

Socialization and raised engagement with non-disabled individuals were noted strengths by families and care providers: “I think they enjoy going out on a bus for something special without their parents. They’re doing something without their parents and I think they like that, and I think it also makes the world aware of these children and adults with special needs, that they can do this; they can go on a field trip; they can have fun that there’s these things that are offered to them, and maybe someone has a child and they’re not aware of what there is, and they can see that by our groups that go out have lots of fun.”

Regional focus group participants shared concern for stretching staff too thin across multiple platforms of programming if both virtual and in-person were offered. Participants did appreciate the convenience of virtual programming, especially when considering transportation issues.

Parents also expressed their gratitude for the services being offered with comments like, “We are thankful, you know that you guys [NWSRA] exist, especially in a state like Illinois you know where there, there is a lack of services.”

In every focus group, individuals referenced the growth that NWSRA has had and often attributed it to the high standards it held. One staff member shared, “I feel our greatest accomplishment is just kind of the standard that we set for other agencies.”

Another staff member noted that upward mobility in the agency allowed them to truly understand the mission of the agency and to develop relationships with her peers. She stated “Okay, I think another strength of ours is our ability to hire from within, I think that there’s always a mindset here that the strongest candidates possible are the ones that we already have. The ability for the upper management to get the entry level staff and the coordinators ready for the manager position, superintendent positions and other places, or here”.



Focus Group
Part 2 ISWOC

Weaknesses

Weaknesses – Individual Observations

Regional

- Funding
- Staff burn out
- Competition attempting to hire away high-quality staff
- Competition stealing ideas and market share
- Can NWSRA keep up with the ever-increasing demands?

Board

- Advocating at the University level for the recreation professions
- Can NWSRA keep up with the Pursuit demand?
- Looking for a clearer financial picture
- Need budget restructure
- Need best practices for budget
- Need capital and repair/replace planning
- Reorganization of the funding system may be needed
- Some trustees can be territorial at times
- Can be difficult to achieve consensus at times
- Can't be everything to everyone – need to stay focused on the mission
- Need to get the Board, staff, and SLSF on the same page
- Just need to tidy financial picture up a bit
- Need processes and metrics to prepare for future chaos

Staff

- Staff turnover
- Recruiting and retaining staff
- Entry level pay and educating staff on the additional benefits
- Individual goal setting to build a career
- Differing communication styles
- Feel under appreciated at times
- Work/life balance
- Large Service Area
- Need balance - on location vs. being in the office to complete administrative tasks
- Resources needed for vehicles, programs, services, reserves, and staffing
- Needs vs. Resources how do we strike a balance

Focus Groups Quotes | Weaknesses

Weakness & Challenge – Recruiting and Retaining Staff

Regional

“My concern is that the staff would be spread too thin; that there’s some area that’s going to have to give, so I would hope that the Zoom portion would give in to the in person, but just like everywhere else, everyone else’s really strapped for staff and trying to keep staff.”

Partner

“Everyone is fighting for the same kind of group of individuals who are looking for work and some are offering more money so especially if you’re looking for people with compassion and with kindness and....it’s you have to give them extra perks but you’re counting on that same number of kind compassionate people coming in.”

Staff

I think, as we continue to grow and add more things we run the risk of burning staff out, so I know we said staffing, but like just burning the staff out that we currently have or putting too much on their plate. As we add these new things we don’t always have somebody that’s just dedicated to it, and so it gets added on to somebody’s current load, which can be a lot on take up and be consuming, and it can definitely burn people out.

Focus Groups Quotes | Weaknesses

Weakness – Board Relationships

Board

Board relationships was identified as a weakness by the Board and staff. Board members and staff cited the recent frequency of Trustee and member agency staff turnover as a possible concern. Time, concerted effort, and advocacy for alignment of philosophies and shared goals is a continual need to sustain relationships. The pandemic and politics heightened divisiveness and physical isolation making it difficult for the Board and staff to bring everyone together in a forward-thinking mindset.





Focus Group
Part 2 | SWOC

Opportunities

Opportunities – Individual Observations

Regional

- Restoring safe, regional trips when appropriate
- Restoring safe, in-person programming
- Respite care
- Veterans
- Increased variety of hours for programming, specifically weekends
- Job crafting
- Pursuit sites
- Virtual programming can be a great bridge for those who aren't willing to or are unable to leave their homes
- Collaborations

Board

- Metrics and evaluation of services
- Pursuit program is in high demand
- Return to in-person programming
- NWSRA is in a good financial position
- Growth in interest in outdoor activities
- SLSF events and fundraising are a step ahead and continue to grow
- Finance committee work
- Tell story about how NWSRA has helped participants get through the pandemic
- Innovations in technology – virtual programming

Staff

- Pursuit demand
- Collaborations
- Partnerships
- Innovative staff and spaces
- Senior/Older adult programming
- Mentoring
- Having “own” space or facility
- Certifications and training
- Advances in technology – virtual programming
- Succession planning
- Virtual programming
- Early childhood programming and outreach
- New facility opening in Hoffman Estates
- Transportation services
- Legislative advocacy

Focus Groups Quotes | Opportunities

Opportunities - Collaboration

Partner

“I would just say that the people are our greatest assets and the collaboration among us is really all trying to kind of do what’s going to be best for our adults with disabilities ...that’s going to drive success and advancement.”

Partner

A common theme among the community partners were the opportunities for enhancing adult programming including specific topics and continuing to use Zoom. “One of the things we’ve been talking about is how can we develop some of those work experiences that give that Medicare credit, while they’re in school, much like high school student gets college credit, how can we do some of that and certainly with some of the legislative changes really enrich that and really work harder on that bridge idea”.

Partner

Another noted a value of Pursuit and encouraged the partners to consider opportunities for engaging in educational arenas, “we have to kind of reengage in a recreational as well as an educational arena around collaborative kind of things – team working together on a project that kind of thing”.

Partner

“I would just say that the people are our greatest assets and the collaboration among us is really all trying to kind of do what’s going to be best for our adults with disabilities ...that’s going to drive success and advancement.”

Focus Groups Quotes | Opportunities

Opportunities – Adult Programming

Regional

Another noted a value of Pursuit and encouraged the partners to consider opportunities for engaging in educational arenas, “we have to kind of reengage in a recreational as well as an educational arena around collaborative kind of things – team working together on a project that kind of thing”.

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Focus Groups Quotes | Opportunities

Opportunities – Online Programming

Regional

“My son participates in a lot of NWSRA Zoom activities and he loves them and they’ve been a real lifeline for him until Pursuit and other things started opening up. So there may be a continued need for that for some families and I guess you have to determine how many families, that is, and what works for them and what works for you as an organization.”

Opportunities – Parent Resource Board

Regional

“I would love to see something online that would let the parents [who] need other parents [receive] some sort of support, then maybe that’s; I don’t know if that’s a total fit with the mission, but to be able to share resources with other parents.”





Focus Group
Part 2 | SWOC

Challenges

Challenges – Individual Observations

Regional

- Regional
- Pandemic has been overwhelming
- Lack of funding
- Adults who “age out” lack options
- Hybrid programming can be a challenge for staff and participants
- Staffing due to the current workforce market
- Staffing due to competition
- Reaching everyone at every age and ability
- How to effectively address each client’s needs and desires
- Lack of support for work opportunities for individuals with disabilities
- Transportation – time, cost, behavioral issues

Board

- Board
- Pandemic has led to divisiveness
- Hard to find staff in the current job market
- No good outlets for participants and their families during the pandemic
- How to keep everyone safe during the pandemic
- Older adult population increasing
- Minimum wage increases and compression
- Rebuilding in-person programming base
- Transportation – ongoing expenses, need for drivers, staff time, liability
- Transportation – participants drive times, wait times, lack of reliable options
- Some member agencies have limited resident participation in NWSRA’s services
- Severe and unique disabilities
- Medical cannabis
- Ever growing need for services and equity for member agencies
- Viewing NWSRA as an extension of member agencies and not an affiliate

Staff

- Pandemic fluctuations
- Hard to find staff, especially with job skills that are necessary
- Private competition
- Demand for programs and services growing for older adults and individuals with severe disabilities
- High expectations
- Large footprint
- Transportation – huge barrier for participants
- Transportation – very expensive for participants and NWSRA
- Medical Cannabis legislation
- Competition for staff
- Staff burnout
- Properly serving and caring for the medically fragile
- Offering a variety of programs for different lifestyles of seniors
- Some participants afraid of in-person programs and events in light of the pandemic

Focus Groups Quotes | Challenges

Challenges - Funding and Regulations

Partner

“Funding is certainly an area that plagues all of us in terms of wanting to do more than we have the resources to do, certainly when you’re doing dual platforms... [online and in-person]” and “so really navigating and understanding what is that going to mean over really the long term, and one of the primary drivers of that is the CMS’ settings role, which is going to have, I think, potentially a profound impacts on the adult service delivery system, I think, in very positive ways, but the transition to those through those changes is going to be something that we’re very focused on in the next couple of years.”

Challenges - Transportation

Regional

“...when you do have the hub somewhere sometimes my son doesn’t want to be on the bus that long or I just would prefer he wasn’t. So I will go pick them up, because sometimes the bus can get delayed if parents are late picking up, so if you’re not the first stop and your kid is on the bus for 45 minutes or so and you don’t necessarily want it, but if you have for me it’s probably transportation.”

Staff

“We really need something that works better than Pace, because our clients they set it up and might be waiting hours like two hours for the bus to actually show up and then it might not ever show up and they either miss program because the bus doesn’t come or they’re at program and then we’re stuck staying with them for two three hours after program until a boss can get there, or a family member can get there, we really need some sort of reliable transportation.”



Focus Groups

Part 3 | Review and Affirm Mission Statement

Focus Groups Quotes

NWSRA's Mission Statement – Appropriate and Outstanding

Overall

- Overall, participants felt that the mission statement was very appropriate.
- Participants felt it was broad enough to encapsulate the variety of ages and clients being served by the program.

Regional

- “The mission statement because it is, it is meant to be broad, I think, and it pretty much encompasses everything that NWSRA does so I think it’s fine”.

Staff

- “I feel like that mission statement currently encompasses what we do and I feel like our agency is continually reminded what our mission statement is”.



Focus Groups Quotes

Theme: NWSRA's Mission Statement – Sustainability of Outstanding

Staff

- The word outstanding in the mission statement was explored in different ways among the staff. While all staff members were supportive of the mission of the agency, there were questions among junior staff as to how sustainable being “outstanding” will continue to be given the workload that it requires.





Focus Groups

Part 4 | Priorities

Focus Groups Quotes | Priorities

Based off the SWOC Analysis the following themes were identified

In-person
Programming

Adult
Programming

Staff
Training

Transportation

Priorities – In-person & Adult Programming

All

In the short term, the priority identified in all focus groups was the need for NWSRA to restart in-person engagement opportunities for clients and families. One participant stated: “trying to get back to whatever the new normal is I mean I know people are just so anxious to see their friends and to be out the community, and to do all the wonderful things that they were doing before I think they’re doing a great job you know kind of easing people into that.”

Regional

“Yeah and more adults aging out and, as you know, just going to have more and more adults with nothing to do so things to do during the day for them. In addition to all the other programming trying to keep up with weekends and evenings and more and more adults needing daytime just weekday things to do”.

Partner

“The people with the highest need have the fewest options, if any options honestly, and those families are the ones who obviously need the help and the respite and the support more than anyone. It’s an incredible challenge”.

Focus Groups Quotes | Priorities

Priorities – Staff Training

All

“I also feel like a priority should be training staff, I know a lot of us obviously have moved up in the Agency and it’s sometimes just expected that you’re going to know your new position right away when that’s not always the case because you’re moving from one position to a completely new one.”

Priorities – Transportation

All

Transportation was discussed consistently throughout the focus groups. While regional focus group participants expressed gratitude for the transportation NWSRA was providing; staff spoke about the amount of time they spent transporting participants. Some staff members noted that time they spend providing transportation took away from time they could be providing programming. Across all of the focus groups, participants spoke about transportation being a primary challenge for individuals with disabilities’ socialization and involvement in programming. For this reason, it is listed as a priority.

Focus Groups Quotes

Additional Challenges/Priorities

Community Partners discussed collaborating on work models for individuals with disabilities, “One of the things we’ve been talking about is how can we develop some of those work experiences that give that Medicare credit, while they’re in school, much like high school student gets college credit, how can we do some of that and certainly with some of the legislative changes really enrich that and really work harder on that bridge idea”.

Parents expressed support for the idea of NWSRA being involved in the creation of an online parents’ resource stating, “I would love to see something online that would let the parents who need other parents get some sort of support, then maybe that’s I don’t know if that’s a total fit with the mission, but to be able to share resources with other parents.”

A community partner noted, “The people with the highest need have the fewest options, if any options honestly, and those families are the ones who obviously need the help and the respite and the support more than anyone. It’s an incredible challenge”.

NWSRA should explore how changing cannabis regulations may affect the organization, “the example of Medical marijuana; it is growing now obviously it’s a huge trend in Illinois, with it being recreationally legal and it’s been medically legal here for a while, but we had a child that used it in a park district program.”



Focus Groups

Part 5 | Board Member Interviews

Purpose and Participation

Purpose

To provide a space for open dialogue in which each Director could share their opinions, needs and priorities for the strategic plan:

This goal was accomplished through qualitative inquiry with the following objectives:

- Strengths and trends analysis
- Review of challenges or concerns
- Investigation of Priorities

Participation Process

- Invitations were sent to Directors by email.
- Participants were asked to RSVP through SignUP Genius.
- Two time slots were provided per day for the month of June and beginning of July. Other options for meeting times were made available if necessary.
- After interviewees selected their preferred meeting time, they were sent a calendar invite and virtual room link.
- Email reminders were sent prior to each interview.



Interview Process

Interview Details

- An overview of the Strategic Planning Process and purpose of strategic planning was provided.
- Interview protocols were reviewed.
- Input was solicited on a variety of topics.
- Next steps for the strategic plan process were reviewed.

Facilitation Process

- Interviews were conducted via Zoom video teleconferencing software.
- The facilitator posed questions and recorded notes and quotes about each discussion item.
- Field notes were reviewed to identify salient themes and organize a report.



Participation and Results

Participation

Trustees from 15 of the 17 NWSRA member agencies participated in ½ hour interviews to review and share:

General Observations
Strengths
Challenges
Priorities

Topics

Interview participants were asked to respond to similar versions of the following questions. Additional prompts were used at times to probe specific topics.

- What are three to five things NWSRA does very well?
 - What are areas of concern? What are the challenges?
 - What is your vision for the future of NWSRA? (direction, opportunities, etc.?)
 - Imagine it is three years from now. What priorities has NWSRA accomplished that we would be celebrating?
 - Other thoughts or comments
-

Results

The results of the interview were organized by theme to inform NWSRA's strategic plan focuses.

Field notes taken by the facilitator were used to identify salient themes and organize summative quotes. Quotes captured during the interviews are not intended to be a verbatim record, but rather summary notes that capture the essence of what was conveyed in each conversation.

Salient themes are reported on the following pages with supporting summary statements for each theme to help concentrate future focuses.

Interview Themes

What NWSRA Is and Does Well

Crucial | Critical | Essential
Passionate | Positive | Professional | Promptly Responsive
Premiere | Personal Connections | Partnerships
Provide Tremendous Opportunities

Challenges

Financial Clarity | Overextended Staff & Resources | Demand for Programs, Services, and Staff
Refine Strategies | High Expectations | Boardmanship – Decorum

Priorities

Financial Model | Managed Growth | Calibrated and Aligned Strategies
Board – Accountability | Decorum
Programming – In Person | Pursuit | Staffing



What NWSRA Is and Does Well

Crucial | Critical | Essential

- Many of the interviewees described NWSRA as an “essential service.” Participants frequently characterized NWSRA as “vital,” “crucial,” “necessary,” or “critical.”
- Some wondered out loud about how challenging their jobs and the provision of services would be without NWSRA:
 - (NWSRA offers) Vital services with crazy important functions.
 - We cannot offer services without their help and expertise.
 - Some care providers had no outlet for their loved ones during the pandemic. Some individuals with disabilities were inconsolable without NW’s services!
 - There is a void without NWSRA.

Passionate & Positive | Professional | Promptly Responsive

Passionate & Positive

- They are leaders. I see this in their passion, adaptability, and intuition.
- They are full of energy, vision, and direction.

Professional

- We love Tracey. She does a phenomenal job. She is very professional, full of energy and excitement. She is an amazing and captivating speaker. She sets the standard. You want a leader like her.
- They seek continuous improvement – organizational, professional, and personal.

Promptly Responsive

- (Staff are) always available and on call.
- (Staff are) Responsive to a magnitude of needs and issues.

Theme | What NWSRA Is and Does Well

Premiere | Personal Connections | Partnerships

Premiere

- One of the best at what they do.
- NWSRA is a premiere organization. Evidence of their success includes their recent rapid expansion within a vision that includes trends such as the pursuit partnership and sensory rooms.

Personal Connections

- NW is great at creating personal connections with participants and families.
- (Staff) have intimate connections with their people. They offer so many genuine opportunities for individuals with disabilities to realize their potential.

Partnerships

- The pursuit sites offer forward-thinking collaborations.
- (NWSRA offers) Really important engagement with legislators – connects in ways Park Districts do not.

Provide Tremendous Opportunities

- Their robust services and diverse programs are essential to our residents who experience the greatest need.
- They have done an incredible job in the last five years. They have attained space and they utilize it very well.
- (NWSRA) have answered the call for transportation needs.



Theme | Challenges

Financial Clarity | Overextended Staff & Resources | Demand for Programs, Services, and Staff

Financial Clarity

- We need to establish a clear post-pandemic financial picture that equitably outlines goals and best practices for NWSRA's operations, reserve fund, capital fund, and member district assessments.
- Member agencies are hurting and with NWSRA's reduced programming it created a surplus. Member agencies should be reimbursed.
- We need to support their (NWSRA) reserve fund and capital plan. They own vehicles, help with infrastructure at member agencies. They need support to repair and replace at the appropriate times.

Stretched Resources

- We need to ask ourselves, what is the best way to serve all communities, all residents with disabilities?
- They do it well, but presence in six regional locations has to be hard.
- They have a very challenging footprint. It is difficult to serve 17 members!
- 17 is big! The overall size of NWSRA's region and attempting to service it was a challenge even prior to COVID.

Recruiting & Retaining Staff

- Staffing – hard to find staff, let alone those with the skills needed to serve the NWSRA participants.”
- It is difficult right now to find qualified people.
- It is hard to attract good people – especially for a mentally and physically challenging job!
- There is an ever-growing need with limited staffing resources.
- Competition is stealing a piece of the pie and staff.
- It's only a matter of time before SRA staff are burnt out.

Theme | Challenges

Refine Strategies | High Expectations | Boardmanship – Decorum

Refine Strategies

- We need to slow down and determine if we are using our resources to the best of our abilities.
- We need to refine key performance indicators; these metrics need to prepare for the future; the world is much more unstable in many areas – politics, economic uncertainty...
- Resident demands continue to increase due to our high-quality programming, but is there a cap on how many people we can help?
- How do we handle the transition to hybrid or in-person? We don't want to have too few people in programs moving forward – we want to make the most of staff's time.

Board Decorum

- The pandemic has grown conflicts and tension. Things are slightly off a bit. We need to realign.
- The pandemic has tested all of us.
- We need to get the Board, staff, and foundation on the same page.
- Board members need to wear their hats more effectively – tend to lobby positions and seek their own best interests at times. Some communities are too involved, others are non-existent.
- The NWSRA Board experiences splits sometimes – finances are a factor, protecting own turf, and there is a variety of levels of engagement.

Recruiting & Retaining Staff

- Staffing – hard to find staff, let alone those with the skills needed to serve the NWSRA participants.”
- It is difficult right now to find qualified people.
- It is hard to attract good people – especially for a mentally and physically challenging job!
- There is an ever-growing need with limited staffing resources.
- Competition is stealing a piece of the pie and staff.
- It's only a matter of time before SRA staff are burnt out.

Theme | Priorities

Financial Model | Managed Growth | Calibrated and Aligned Strategies

Financial Model

- We need to strengthen our financial position.
- A new financial plan is a priority. The taskforce is currently writing this road map.
- Determine appropriate reserves levels and outline equitable distribution of finances for both NWSRA and its member agencies.
- Service equity for member districts by percentage paid; we understand that overhead is necessary too.
- A majority of NWSRA's funds come from dedicated sources. What financial position(s) and services should we defend without overfunding or underfunding?
- Leverage the opinions, advice, and positive suggestions of skilled financial experts.
- Sometimes, Board members have limited philosophical differences about budgeting. Should we be a business model or a social service model? If it is a hybrid system, we need to determine the percentage goals and support a possibly different model than we have at our park districts.

Managed Growth | Calibrated and Aligned Strategies

- High functionality of all operations and offerings is our top priority.
- We need to be dedicated to managed growth with checks and balances. It may be time for a short season of maintenance mode. The current pattern may not be sustainable.
- At the macro level, NW has a clear vision, mission, values. It is on the leading edge of SRAs. We just need to fine tune at the micro level. Our decisions should focus on the good of all.
- We still need to get through the pandemic and also prepare for future uncertainty.
- Slightly revising the submittal process for ADA projects would be very helpful – waiting for board meetings (every other month) is challenging at times. It takes a while to go through process (the bid, approval, board approval, etc) and better timing would help us align with our own processes and construction.

Theme | Priorities

Board Accountability & Decorum

- For a variety of reasons, the Board has drifted at times.
- We may need board training; some are overstepping their roles.
- Some may need to drop the park district hat and respect the opinions of the NWSRA staff.
- We are lost in the finances; we need to reset, get on the same page with a clear and shared vision.

Programming - In-Person | Pursuit | Staff

Programming – In-person | Pursuit

- NWSRA should complete a comprehensive evaluation of its services due to COVID. What will people come back for? How can we get them back? What metrics and data can we leverage to help with program decision-making?
- We need to focus on rebuilding program our participant base! Will they come back? I believe it will be harder for individuals with disabilities to return to in-person programs.
- (Lack of) Socialization is an outcome (of the pandemic). NWSRA functions as an extended family for its participants. Individuals with disabilities need interaction outside of Mom and Dad.
- Feasibility of new spaces – should be a focus but have we hit the limit; can we afford this five years from now?
- Overall, pursuit sites have been a huge success, any resident that wants into pursuit should be allowed and fully taken care of.
- Demand for pursuit program will grow, but how do we best support the end user? Transportation for example, there are a lot of ongoing costs – gas, staff-time, and liability to name a few.

Staffing

- The Board member interview participants also recognized that these programming priorities hinged on recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality staff to meet programming demands. Almost every Board member mentioned that staffing and training were priorities. Some highlighted staffing as it specifically related to aides and inclusion.

A photograph of two young boys in a science laboratory setting. They are both wearing face masks. The boy on the right is leaning over a table, carefully pouring liquid from a beaker into a graduated cylinder. The boy on the left is looking on. The table is covered with various pieces of glassware, including beakers, test tubes, and a funnel. The background shows a typical lab environment with cabinets and equipment. The entire image has a purple color overlay.

Finalizing the Strategic Plan



Finalizing the Strategic Plan

Part 1 | Pillars and Focuses

Defining and Affirming Pillars

Staff previously defined each pillar in the following ways:

- Financial Management: Strategic stewardship of revenues and expenses to build capacity and maximize the financial stability of the Association.
- Operational Excellence: Creation, establishment and monitoring of policies, procedures and systems to increase efficiency and organizational preparedness.
- Promoting Leadership: Staff engagement and continued development to create independent leaders who are informed, capable and ready to implement best practices.
- Outstanding Service: Delivery of quality service and community access through effective communication and collaboration with customers, including participants, families, donors, Board Members and partnering organizations.

Staff utilized the feedback from the stakeholders and staff to affirm the Strategic Plan Pillars:

- Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the four pillars as they relate to the NWSRA's mission and vision.
- Nearly 100% of stakeholders felt each of the four pillars (Financial Management, Operational Excellence, Promoting Leadership, and Outstanding Service) were important or very important principles that lay the foundation for aligning the NWSRA's mission with its vision.

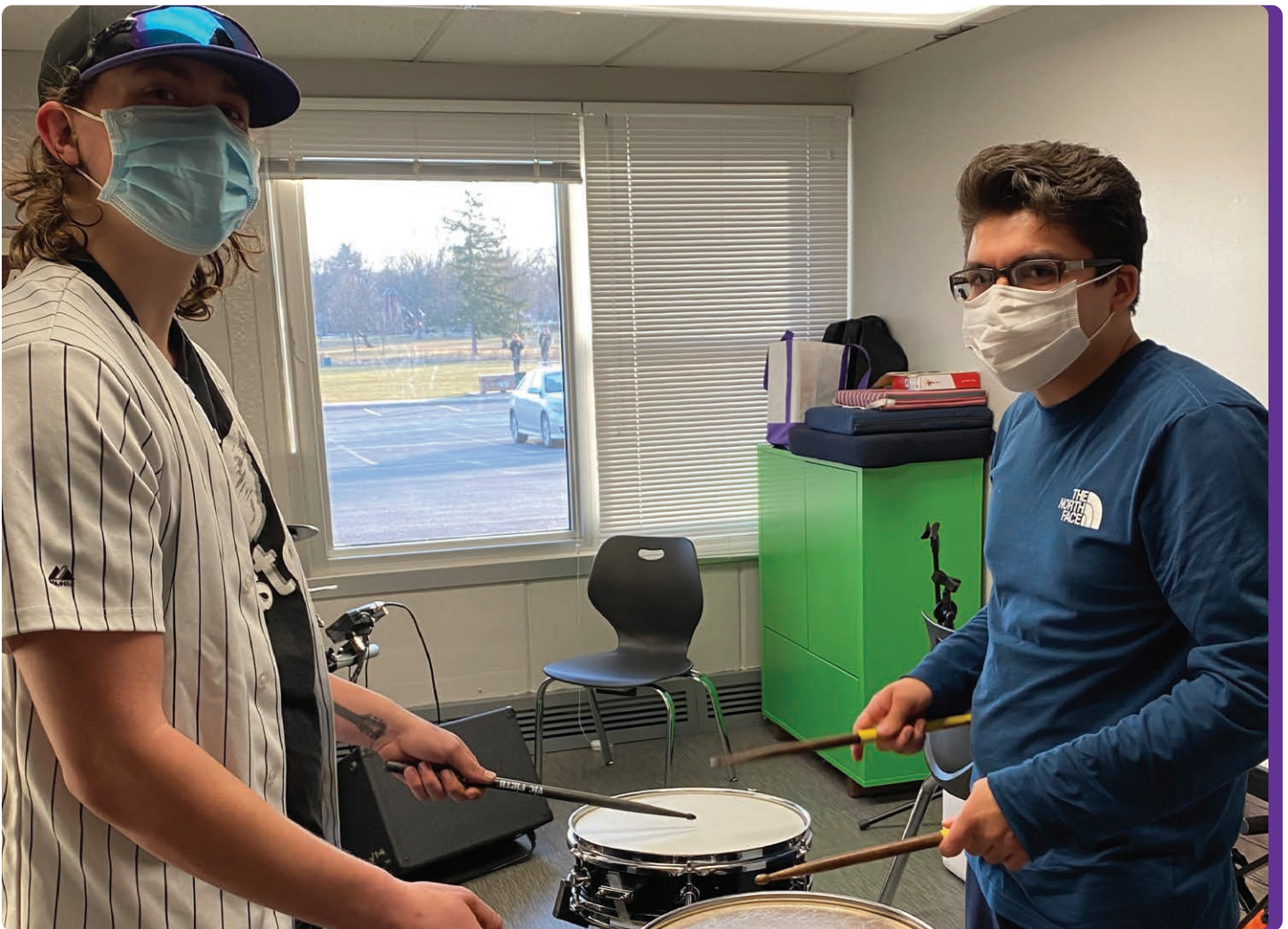


Re-evaluation of Focuses

Using the quantitative and qualitative feedback

The consultant team reviewed and considered quantitative and qualitative feedback that was received throughout the Strategic Planning process. NWSRA staff then took the following steps to re-evaluate the Focuses:

- Reviewed the strategic planning input results to identify focus gaps or revisions.
- The recommended Focuses were then evaluated to ensure that they were sufficiently broad enough to encompass the recommended Goals.
- Focuses that were deemed too narrow in scope were broadened.
- The previously recommended Focus then became a Goal under the newly broadened Focus.
- Reviewed previous Strategic Plan to ensure that any unaccomplished Focuses were moved into the new Strategic Plan



Pillar: Financial Management

Recommended Focuses:

- Clarify Financial Model
- Cultivate Strategies
- Controlled Growth

Clarify Financial Model

The pandemic has presented an opportunity for the Board and staff to revisit NWSRA's financial model and to clarify funding strategies, philosophies, and goals. There are many "individuals" within the Association; individual member agencies, individual staff members, individual participants – all with specific needs. NWSRA has brought these individuals together under a collective umbrella: meeting the recreation needs of individuals with disabilities. Finance have been and should be viewed with this lens.

Cultivate Strategies

Programming has been as fluid as a river in recent years. Some seasons, in-person programming has dried up. Other times the river has been raging, but participants have been reluctant to enter the water. As the river continues to wander off-course, analytics and an Association-wide assessment of the viability of programs and services may play an important role in the future of the Association.

Controlled Growth

Growth management is typically a government strategy that is employed to manage population growth to ensure that resources meet demands in particular regions. In this case, NWSRA has found several niche areas with high demand and has grown quickly to meet these needs. A feasibility study and a managed growth model tailored to NWSRA's situation, may be appropriate for NWSRA's future.

Are staff and resources overextended? What strategies will help NWSRA maintain excellence, meet demand, and support member agencies and staff.

Pillar: Operational Excellence

Recommended Focuses:

- Restore In-Person Programming
- Recruit and Retain Staff
- Remain on the Path to Meet Adult Programming Needs
- Reaffirm NWSRA Programming Operations and Sites

Restore In-Person Programming

NWSRA quickly pivoted to a virtual programming platform during the pandemic. It has been an effective strategy, but it does not replace the benefits of in-person programming. Families and care providers want participants to safely return to in-person. However, many question if and when this vulnerable population will feel comfortable in public again. Socialization, travel, special events, and many other benefits have been missed by participants.

Some might say, “the way we were working won’t work anymore.” How does NWSRA need to adapt its programs and services in unstable circumstances?

Recruit and Retain Staff

It is difficult to find staff in the current job market, let alone applicants who possess the skills and character needed to serve individuals with disabilities.

Burn out and turnover are all too common for SRA staff. How can NWSRA bolster staff? In what ways can everyone thrive?

Remain on the Path to Meet Adult Programming Needs

The older adult population of individuals with disabilities continues to grow. Demand for services continues to increase with some requiring day services or longer programs due to the lack of school, work, or activities in general.

Reaffirm NWSRA Programming Operations and Sites

In collaboration with its member districts NWSRA has acquired 6 satellite locations within its footprint and has maintained its standard of excellence throughout the transition.

How can NWSRA effectively maintain this service, its capital output, staffing needs, while maintaining standards and meeting the growing demand?

Pillar: Promoting Leadership

Recommended Focuses:

- Everybody Always: Our Doors are Always Open
- Empower Staff Through Training
- Encourage Current Succession Plan

Everybody Always: Our Doors are Always Open

Author Bob Goff titled his book with this statement. It may apply well in the current circumstances in which the pandemic has turned all of us into a task-oriented society; focused inward and on the details. NWSRA has always been a people-oriented organization, focused on caring for Everybody. Always. Reorienting the Board, staff, and SLSF to focus on this culture is a crucial step toward restoring decorum. NWSRA has been built upon kindness, caring, and understanding for all. This needs to be authentically lived out at all levels!

Empower Staff Through Training

All would agree that staff are NWSRA's greatest asset and the training program supports this belief.

Staff want to grow and perceive the training they receive is an important benefit. NWSRA's clients, member agencies, and partners recognize the importance of its highly-trained staff with specialized skills.

Encourage Current Succession Plan

Effective succession planning identifies key roles and targets staff with enhanced resources to develop through goal setting. This process has prepared many staff for future responsibilities. Staff, Board Members, and clients found the current process to be of value to NWSRA.

Pillar: Outstanding Service

Recommended Focuses:

- Sustain Pursuit Community Adult Day Program
- Support Innovative and Specialized Programming
- Stand Behind Transportation Needs

Sustain Pursuit & Satellite Programming

The PURSUIT program is in high demand. The situational analysis and environmental scan points NWSRA in the direction of employing a managed growth model. This includes projection modeling, an assessment of finances, infrastructure and human capital, and repair and replacement planning to protect NWSRA's standards, character, and investments.

Support Innovative and Specialized Programming

Safely restoring in-person programming, caring for the recreation needs of individuals with severe disabilities, partnering to find work opportunities, and adult programming were niche priorities for families and care providers. However, virtual programming and micro-adventures (opportunities for day trips to participate in outside of ordinary activities) were also important options, pending circumstances.

Stand Behind Transportation Needs

Individuals with disabilities continue to lack reliable and affordable transportation. Families and care providers often fill this need at costly expenses in time and money. NWSRA has risen to meet this challenge with its own effective transportation model. Planning and staff/capital investments should be considered to address this need.





Finalizing the Strategic Plan

Part 2 | Development of **SMART Goals**

SMART Goals

Creating SMART Goals

The Admin Team compiled all of the feedback from stakeholders and staff members to develop and finalize the Goals that would fall under each established Focus.

- Each goal/objective was created to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).
- Several recommendations from the stakeholders were not included as a goal:
- These recommendations were either already accomplished or NWSRA is currently in the process of achieving.
- To ensure that no recommendation is left behind, NWSRA will engage with its stakeholders throughout 2017-2021 to provide education relating to the recommendations.

Assignment of Completion Dates for Goals

- Utilizing the SMART Goal setting system, all goals were assigned completion dates to ensure that they could be measured within a specific time frame. Goals were categorized by the following:

Short Term Goals:

Initiatives that will be completed by the end of 2022

Mid Term Goals:

Initiatives that will be completed between 2023 - 2024

Long Term Goals:

Initiatives that will be completed by the end of 2024

Ongoing Goals:


Initiatives that will occur through the life of the Strategic Plan

Reporting goals

Staff developed the following process for Goal reporting:

- Annually, staff will review the Goals set for the upcoming year and measurable Action Items will be identified and assigned.
- Completion dates for each Action Item will be identified by Quarter.
- Action Items and Goals will be monitored, and progress will be reported on a quarterly basis to the NWSRA Board of Trustees from each Department.
- Staff will work with their supervisors to create Individual Work Plans that will reflect the Goals in which they are responsible for completing.





2022-2024 Strategic Plan

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Pillar 1: Financial Management

Strategic stewardship of revenues and expenses to maximize financial stability of the Association.

Feedback from the Strategic Plan was collected from the Survey, Board, Residents, Community Partners and Staff Focus Groups. In the following Strategic Plan Goal Document Community Partners and Residents are identified as the Stakeholder origin.

Financial Management

Focus : 1 A Clarify Financial Model

The pandemic has presented an opportunity for the Board and staff to revisit NWSRA’s financial model and to clarify funding strategies, philosophies, and goals. There are many “individuals” within the Association; individual member agencies, individual staff members, individual participants – all with specific needs. NWSRA has brought these individuals together under a collective umbrella: meeting the recreation needs of individuals with disabilities. Finance have been and should be viewed with this lens.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Educate and increase the understanding of how the Association’s planning and budgetary priorities are supportive of the mission	2022-2024	Survey
Establish a clear post-pandemic financial picture that equitably outlines goals and best practices for NWSRA’s operations, reserve fund, capital fund, and member district assessments	2022	Board
Create a maintenance and replacement plan for vehicles	2022	Board
Create a maintenance and replacement plan for NWSRA programming spaces including specialty rooms	2022	Survey





Pillar 2: Operational Excellence

Establishment and monitoring of internal policies, procedures and systems to increase efficiency and organizational preparedness.

Feedback from the Strategic Plan was collected from the Survey, Board, Residents, Community Partners and Staff Focus Groups. In the following Strategic Plan Goal Document Community Partners and Residents are identified as the Stakeholder origin.

Operational Excellence

Focus : 2A Restore In-Person Programming

NWSRA quickly pivoted to a virtual programming platform during the pandemic. It has been an effective strategy, but it does not replace the benefits of in-person programming. Families and care providers want participants to safely return to in-person. However, many question if and when this vulnerable population will feel comfortable in public again. Socialization, travel, special events, and many other benefits have been missed by participants. Some might say, “the way we were working won’t work anymore.” How does NWSRA need to adapt its programs and services in unstable circumstances?

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Set thresholds for programs offered each season by age group and day of the week	2023	Board
Assess the need for programming for medically fragile, intense behavioral and personal care needs	2024	Stakeholders
Revamp current program evaluation system and hold planning meetings based on evaluation input	2022	Stakeholders

Focus : 2B Recruit and Retain Staff

It is difficult to find staff in the current job market, let alone applicants who possess the skills and character needed to serve individuals with disabilities. Burn out and turnover are all too common for SRA staff. How can NWSRA bolster staff? In what ways can everyone thrive?

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Determine an effective way to motivate all employees and volunteers based on the vision statement	2022-2024	Survey
Continue to analyze full and part time salaries in order to stay actively competitive in the work force	2024	Survey
Market the unique benefits of working at NWSRA	2023	Stakeholders
Revamp and implement a Volunteer Program	2023	Survey

Operational Excellence

Focus : 2C Remain on the Path to Meet Adult Programming Needs

The older adult population of individuals with disabilities continues to grow. Demand for services continues to increase with some requiring day services or longer programs due to the lack of school, work, or activities in general.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Ensure current adult program offerings are meeting the needs of the community	2022-2024	Stakeholders
Create programming to meet the needs of the senior population	2024	Board
Enhance marketing efforts to increase awareness of adult programs offered at NWSRA	2022-2023	Survey

Focus : 2D Reaffirm NWSRA Programming Operations and Sites

In collaboration with its member districts NWSRA has acquired 6 satellite locations within its footprint and has maintained its standard of excellence throughout the transition. How can NWSRA effectively maintain this service, its capital output, staffing needs, while maintaining standards and meeting the growing demand?

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Reestablish Research Outreach Initiative (ROI) to evaluate the census, school and stakeholder statistics	2022-2023	Staff
Identify resources needed to sustain regional programming	2023	Survey
Create regional programs and services	2024	Survey
Diversify marketing efforts to bring awareness to the newly established regions within NWSRA footprint	2024	Survey

Operational Excellence

Focus : 2E Cultivate Strategies and Controlled Growth

Programming has been as fluid as a river in recent years. Some seasons, in-person programming has dried up. Other times the river has been raging, but participants have been reluctant to enter the water. As the river continues to wander off-course, analytics and an Association-wide assessment of the viability of programs and services may play an important role in the future of the Association. Growth management is typically a government strategy that is employed to manage population growth to ensure that resources meet demands in particular regions. In this case, NWSRA has found several niche areas with high demand and has grown quickly to meet these needs. A feasibility study and a managed growth model tailored to NWSRA's situation, may be appropriate for NWSRA's future. Are staff and resources overextended? What strategies will help NWSRA maintain excellence, meet demand, and support member agencies and staff.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Increase awareness of financial scholarships to remove financial barrier to participation	2022-2024	Survey
Research, develop and implement a Technology Plan to meet the demand of current trends	2022-2024	Staff
Reestablish partnerships with agencies that align with NWSRA's mission and vision to maximize resources	2022-2024	Survey
Create teaser/showcase/one-day programs to increase outreach efforts	2023-2024	Staff



Pillar 3: Promoting Leadership

Staff engagement and continued development to create leaders who are informed, capable and ready to educate and lead.

Feedback from the Strategic Plan was collected from the Survey, Board, Residents, Community Partners and Staff Focus Groups. In the following Strategic Plan Goal Document Community Partners and Residents are identified as the Stakeholder origin.

Promoting Leadership

Focus 3A: Everybody Always: NWSRA's Doors are Always Open

Author Bob Goff titled his book with this statement. It may apply well in the current circumstances in which the pandemic has turned all of us into a task-oriented society; focused inward and on the details. NWSRA has always been a people-oriented organization, focused on caring for Everybody. Always. Reorienting the Board, staff, and SLSF to focus on this culture is a crucial step toward restoring decorum. NWSRA has been built upon kindness, caring, and understanding for all. This needs to be authentically lived out at all levels!

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Revamp Core Values based on survey results	2022	Survey
Create a committee to address diversity, equity and inclusion	2022-2024	Survey
Strengthen relationships among Board Members and between Board Members and Staff	2022	Board
Expand knowledge and understanding of the partnerships between NWSRA and Member Districts	2022-2024	Survey
Increase awareness of the field of Therapeutic Recreation and the Recreation Therapy Services provided by the Association to participants, families, staff and stakeholders	2022-2024	Survey



Promoting Leadership

Focus 3B: Empower Staff Through Training

All would agree that staff are NWSRA's greatest asset and the training program supports this belief. Staff want to grow and perceive the training they receive is an important benefit. NWSRA's clients, member agencies, and partners recognize the importance of its highly-trained staff with specialized skills.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Enhance current training opportunities for specialty programs and facilities for staff	2022-2023	Staff
Increase knowledge of job roles across all departments	2022	Board
Create a comprehensive training program for all staff	2022-2023	Survey

Focus 3C: Encourage Current Succession Plan

Effective succession planning identifies key roles and targets staff with enhanced resources to develop through goal setting. This process has prepared many staff for future responsibilities. Staff, Board Members, and clients found the current process to be of value to NWSRA.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Create a Professional Development program for all staff to encourage growth and advancement	2022-2024	Survey
Executive Director will conduct SWOT analysis to create individual professional development plans with staff who have completed one year of service, or veteran staff who have chosen a career path and are actively pursuing advancement	2022-2024	Survey
The Professional Development Committee will present and role out the full time mentoring program for staff actively seeking advancement	2022-2023	Survey



Pillar 4: Outstanding Service

Delivery of quality service and community access through effective communication and collaboration with customers, including participants, families, donors, Board Members and partnering organizations.

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Outstanding Service

Focus 4A: Sustain PURSUIT Community Adult Day Program & Satellite Programming

All would agree that staff are NWSRA's greatest asset and the training program supports this belief. Staff want to grow and perceive the training they receive is an important benefit. NWSRA's clients, member agencies, and partners recognize the importance of its highly-trained staff with specialized skills.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Collaborate with Member Districts and Clearbrook to incorporate vocational services to PURSUIT Community Adult Day Program	2022-2023	Staff
Research, Create and Implement the program model for PURSUIT Plus with collaborative partner Clearbrook	2022-2024	Staff
Assess and evaluate all 6 PURSUIT Community Adult Day locations	2023	Staff

Focus 4B: Support Innovative and Specialized Programming

Safely restoring in-person programming, caring for the recreation needs of individuals with severe disabilities, partnering to find work opportunities, and adult programming were niche priorities for families and care providers. However, virtual programming and micro-adventures (opportunities for day trips to participate in outside of ordinary activities) were also important options, pending circumstances.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Assess and evaluate 1:1 Therapy Programming	2023-2024	Stakeholders
Assess and evaluate Specialty Programs and Facilities	2023-2024	Stakeholders
Assess and evaluate Virtual Programming	2023-2024	Stakeholders

Outstanding Service

Focus 4C: Stand Behind Transportation Needs

Individuals with disabilities continue to lack reliable and affordable transportation. Families and care providers often fill this need at costly expenses in time and money. NWSRA has risen to meet this challenge with its own effective transportation model. Planning and staff/capital investments should be considered to address this need.

Goal	Year to Complete	Origin
Assess and evaluate transportation usage	2022-2023	Staff
Create a transportation logistics plan using a regional approach	2024	Survey
Assess future transportation/vehicle needs	2022	Board





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