Introduction
Our three-year Strategic Planning occurred over months of examination of the Chorale’s history, with particular attention to its last three seasons. It has been revised and approved by the full board in May 2020 to ensure that our purpose, focus and activities are relevant and attainable within the scope of our mission and core values. (See Holland Chorale’s mission and core values.)
Where We Are Today

Using choral music as a common thread, the Holland Chorale fulfills its goals by providing distinguished entertainment (artistry), promoting greater understanding between all of us inside and outside the Chorale (community), and supporting mutually beneficial organizations we believe in (engagement).

Artistry: The Chorale endeavors to provide excellent musical performances, build empathy among people through the performance of important and engaging music and text, and advance the West Michigan region by collaborations and support. The Chorale is a safe place to creatively express oneself and contribute one’s musical gifts for a greater cause.

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

Engagement: Engagement is an integral part of the Chorale’s mission. Through educational projects such as ADVENTURES IN HARMONY, we build a lifelong commitment to singing. Artists (Turning Pointe School of Dance, Holland Symphony Orchestra, Opera Grand) encourage all artistic media. Presence draw attention to social needs. Recent repertoire has included texts about Alzheimer’s Disease, diverse families, racial equity, religious tolerance and new visions of patriotism.

In the spring of 2020, the Chorale adopted the following statement stressing our commitment to engagement:

*For the Chorale, engagement endorses positive change and builds community through music that furthers our mission and vision. By our history and our very nature, we are an engagement-centric organization. Engagement will typically be focused on:*

- musical expression
- community outreach and relationships
- empowerment of at-risk and underserved sectors of society, and
- our unique ability to break down cultural barriers through vocal music

*We will build a community and culture that values our inherent differences, secures the full participation in society, and encourages empathy/support for marginalized or socially excluded members of our community.*
**COMPONENT SUMMARY**

**ARTISTRY**
Musical Excellence/Quality of Performance

- Singing
  - Creative outlet
  - 3 choral concerts per season
  - 1 other major performance
  - Rehearsing
  - Collaborating
  - Grounding
  - Passion
  - Connection unique to music

- Entertainment
  - Connection with audience
  - Learning the music
  - Balance of musical style
  - Creativity
  - Surprising the audience
  - TLC: Tears, laughter, chillbumps
  - Mix of genres

- Technical Mastery
  - Excellence across genres
  - To be the most accomplished Chorale in the region
  - Challenging music
  - Perform with other notable organizations
  - Unique programming
  - Socially relevant messaging.

**COMMUNITY**
Internal among singers/External with audience

- Sense of Family
  - Commonality
  - Affirmation
  - Personal interaction
  - Join for the music/stay for the social
  - Join for the music/stay for the music
  - Family: some you like, some you don’t, but still family.

- Sharing
  - Teamwork
  - Support
  - Shared experiences
  - The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
  - Grounding
  - Centering
  - Non-discriminating

- Outward Focus
  - Connection with audience
  - Musical role models
  - Face of the community
  - Cross-generational
  - Outreach
  - Marginalized and at-risk sectors

**ENGAGEMENT**
A Sense of Pride in the Community

- Action
  - Every time we sing, we change someone’s life – on the stage or in the audience
  - Member-driven, passionate about purpose, power and effect
  - Invested in the power of music to...
    - give purpose to the marginalized
    - celebrate diversity in all forms
    - generate empathy
    - stimulate curiosity and learning
  - Passionate about arts education in the schools and community
  - Life-long learning and skill-building
Who Are Our Competitors/For What Do We Compete?

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

Within the Holland area, these organizations are...
- Holland Windmill Chorale
- Holland Symphony Orchestra
- Holland Civic Theatre
- Tulip Time Festival
- Hope Summer Repertory Theatre
- Evergreen Chorale/Evergreen Singers
- Holland Arts Council

In the wider Lakeshore area, these organizations include...
- Lakeshore Community Chorale
- Saugatuck Center for the Arts
- West Michigan Symphony Orchestra

In the West Michigan region, there are a number of choral arts organizations as well, including...
- West Michigan Community Chorale (Grandville)
- West Michigan Gay Men’s Chorale (Grand Rapids)
- Chamber Choir of Grand Rapids
- Calvin Alumni Choir (Grand Rapids)
- Grand Rapids Symphony Chorale
- Muskegon Chamber Choir

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats

The organization considered internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats.

Strengths:
- The Chorale has a long history and strong reputation for artistic and musical excellence within our region.
- The Chorale has commissioned dozens of new choral work by both evolving and established composers.
- The Chorale has a committed core of long-time supporters—singing members, a Board of Directors, and volunteers.
- The Chorale has an especially-gifted group of recent new singing members.
• The Chorale employs a knowledgeable artistic and administrative staff.
• The Chorale is debt free.
• The Chorale maintains positive relationships with all five of its Artistic Directors.
• The Chorale has an evolving group of sponsors/donors.
• The Chorale has thrived for six decades through cultural and financial challenges, demonstrating its relevancy, longevity, and adaptability.
• The Chorale has a strong relationship with its rehearsal and performance venues.
• Many members join for the music but stay because of the social and/or strong connections to each other and their belief in the Chorale’s mission.
• The artistic staff is well organized and respectful of the members’ time and talent.
• Programming is challenging but achievable.

Weaknesses:

• The Chorale lacks a structure for building and nurturing leadership development, especially for the Board of Directors.
• The Chorale’s online presence needs to improve.
• The Chorale needs to develop a consistently relevant outreach program to the community.
  • There is a perception in the community that the Chorale is “smaller than it used to be” and only appeals to a small niche audience.
  • There is a lack of awareness about the Chorale in the broader region. Many are surprised that the Chorale has been around for sixty years.
  • There is a reputation within the community that the Chorale is an elitist organization.
• The Chorale lacks racial/ethnic diversity.
• The Chorale lacks financial reserves of half a year of reserve revenue.
• The Chorale has limited financial and human resources and therefore has to carefully choose how to spend its capital.

Opportunities:

• The Artistic Director can help shape the future of the Chorale by aligning its goals with the strategic plan.
• Recent improvements (musical, financial, visibility) allow the Chorale to continue growing and to provide a resource for culture, education and societal change.
• The Chorale needs to continue to nurture our individual relationship with donors of all levels.
• Continue building the singing membership and fostering a culture of respect.
• Develop repertoire for outreach and build community service into the season.
• Continue to develop production quality (staging, size, venues).
• Strengthen relationship with other arts and non-profits.
• Increase publicity to build audiences, visibility and support.
• Need to develop funding plan for travel, commissions, and outreach.

Threats:

• The current economic situation is precarious and audience members continue balancing basic needs versus entertainment.
• State budget concerns could result in cuts to state arts funding.
• Changing political and professional landscape in Holland creates challenges to attractive programming and priorities.
• Foundations and corporations are tending to narrow their focus of grants away from the arts to need-based organizations or to a single, non-arts-related cause.
• Potential for donor fatigue and donor’s shifting priorities for charitable giving.

KEY ISSUES FOR CHORALE STRATEGIC PLAN

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

1. Encourage the Artistic Director and Artistic Advisory Committee to pursue unusually creative programming and collaborations.
2. Increase fund development opportunities and reserve revenue.
3. Develop culture that values leadership, internal community, and a welcoming Chorale environment.
4. Increase diversity within the Chorale and the audience.
5. Develop and execute an engagement plan.
6. Engage the Chorale singing members and Board of Directors in collaboratively executing the Strategic Plan.
STRATEGIC GOALS 2020-2023

Artistry:
Provide musical programming that is exceptional, entertaining, and educational
• Articulate an artistic vision and plan that furthers the performance, education, and engagement goals of the Chorale.
• Cultivate an environment of excitement for outside-the-box performing opportunities.
• Commission new music that continues the artistic legacy for the Chorale.

Community:
Build a welcoming place where our achievements are celebrated and our differences valued
• Build community by promoting leadership.
• Actively promote an understanding of differences, including differences in musical ability, as a unifier rather than a divider.
• Develop a set of expectations among members to enhance Chorale unity.
• Foster a safe space/place where the audience and members can be themselves and be accepted.
• Promote diversity within the Chorale and the audience.

Engagement:
Identify and address community issues, promote music education and deliver life-changing messages through music
• Produce programs that reach and develop new audiences. This might include performing in different concert venues and cities.
• Provide proactive leadership in identifying and addressing issues relevant to the musical, artistic and cultural community.
• Be an organization that is open and responsive to outreach and advocacy opportunities.
METHODOLOGY
The Chorale’s board of directors adopted a strategic planning proposal in 2019 to review and evaluate its previous strategic plan and to make a new strategic plan that coincides with the Chorale’s artistic season. The board, Strategic Planning Team and other committees met throughout 2019 and 2020, discussing the prior plan and considering either an update or complete reworking of it in light of where the Chorale is today. A new strategic plan was desired, and “planning for planning” began.

The Chorale explored many possibilities for professional facilitators, but given its limited budget, chose not to retain them for the current process. Instead, the board established and adopted the current plan, with the commitment to begin a facilitated five-year strategic plan in 2023 for the 2024-2028 seasons.

Also, in light of major economic, health and societal changes of late, the organization is best served by a strategic plan for the next three seasons, closely monitored as the seasons progress. The Chorale will budget for the five-year strategic plan in 2023, and begin the structuring process in 2022.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2023 builds on the foundation of the previous strategic plan, and the process has relied substantially on singer, staff, board and supporter input. President-Elect Jean Lemmenes was named to spearhead the process, working closely with Artistic Director Dr. Patrick Coyle. The Chorale gathered input from the audience, singers, foundation input and expressed donors wishes. This comprised two artistic seasons, including the 60th anniversary year.