



**CENTER FOR  
RURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

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**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2008-2010**

**APPROVED NOVEMBER 2007**

# CENTER FOR RURAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

## STRATEGIC PLAN

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### MISSION

The Center for Rural Policy and Development provides high quality and objective research to examine and advance policy and decision-making, advocacy, and civic engagement for Greater Minnesota's development.

### VISION

The Center for Rural Policy and Development will be the leading and most trusted source of research and recommendations to advance policies that improve the quality of life in Greater Minnesota.

### VALUES

#### **Research Excellence**

We endeavor to strive for excellence in every project in which we engage.

#### **Political Non-Partisanship**

Political non-partisanship is the historical foundation of our work. We are committed to maintaining that reputation.

#### **Collaboration**

Collaboration will be the hallmark of our future work. Our success will be defined by the partnerships we create.

#### **Commitment to Minnesota**

A strong Minnesota requires a healthy and vibrant Greater Minnesota. We are committed to supporting quality decision-making that will positively impact Greater Minnesota's ability to thrive.

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## **STRATEGIC GOAL 1: To expand and enhance CRPD's research capability, scope and resultant impact on issues and priorities of vital importance to rural Minnesota.**

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*Rationale:* The Center for Rural Policy and Development has developed a unique strength, capability and reputation for producing a credible and objective work product dealing with issues affecting rural Minnesota. By expanding its scope and extending its research outcomes, the Center for Rural Policy and Development can significantly enhance its impact and extend its capabilities to influence desirable outcomes -- on a regional, national and international basis -- that will positively and measurably impact rural Minnesota.

*Strategies:*

1. Adopt a new research decision-making model that expands the Center for Rural Policy and Development's research scope and extends the research outcomes to include, as appropriate, policy alternatives and specific recommendations.
2. Develop and implement processes and guidelines to support the Center for Rural Policy and Development's role as a facilitator/convener/leader on the development of strategies and solutions that can have a positive impact on rural Minnesota.
3. Establish and implement performance indicators, benchmarks and measurements to accurately and continually monitor the efficacy and quality of the Center for Rural Policy and Development's research products.
4. Implement processes and methods to broaden the distribution and visibility of the Center's research products.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 2: To increase public accessibility to the Center for Rural Policy and Development; improve brand awareness and recognition; enhance and improve all communications initiatives.**

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*Rationale:* The Center for Rural Policy and Development has not yet reached an effective level of communications, public visibility and awareness to support its growth, funding diversification and the broadening of its research product distribution. Through the creation and implementation of comprehensive communications strategies and processes, the Center for Rural Policy and Development can increase its public support and level of funding to capitalize on opportunities for growth and impact.

*Strategies:*

1. Evaluate existing communications tools to measure their effectiveness and specifically identify needed improvements and enhancement.
2. Define each of the Center's principal constituencies and develop specific communications objectives for each. Identified constituencies should include, but not be limited to: State legislators (rural caucus); foundations, corporate and other funding sources; city, county, state and federal employees; the research community; academia; potential research product customers (including foundations); and nonprofit organizations.
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive long-range plan for communications processes and activities that will support the achievement of specifically identified objectives for each of the Center's principal constituencies. The long-range plan should address external, internal and two-way communications processes; key messages to various constituencies; leveraging the knowledge and passion of current and past advocates ("CRPD Champions") to bring the Center's message to specifically identified external audiences – including the news media; and new communications tools for the future.
4. Create a systematic process aimed at developing and expanding CRPD's brand visibility and awareness including specific objectives, branding alternatives and internal guidelines for supporting and expanding the brand.
5. Identify and implement specific and definitive communications initiatives that directly support the achievement of Strategic Goals 1 (Research capability) and 3 (Partnerships).
6. Establish and implement performance indicators, benchmarks and measurements to continually monitor the quality and effectiveness of all communications activities.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3: To develop key strategic partnerships that will leverage CRPD’s capabilities, expertise, credibility and knowledge base to the benefit of rural Minnesota.**

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*Rationale:* The Center for Rural Policy and Development has a high level of credibility and capability in its research products and its reputation for objectivity and non-partisanship. By aggressively prospecting and developing key partnerships, the Center can more effectively leverage its existing strengths and positioning to broaden its reach, impact and contribution to the well-being and vitality of rural Minnesota.

*Strategies:*

1. Research and identify “best practices” of other organizations in creating effective and enduring partnerships.
2. Develop and implement a systematic process for identifying potential partnering organizations, together with an approach message, tailored to each organization, for gaining their support in a partnering collaboration. The process should also incorporate specific objectives for each potential partnership.
3. Establish specific methods and objectives for increased external funding resulting from key partnerships.
4. Create guidelines and supporting materials to support the enlistment of key advocates (e.g., current and former board members, members of the research committee, key staff and other committed advocates) in the development of new partnerships.
5. Incorporate the expanded research scope and outcomes model into the process and content of the partnership development initiative.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 4: To strengthen governance practices by the board of directors to enhance the effectiveness of the board and its contribution to the development and growth of CRPD and to the benefit of rural Minnesota.**

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*Rationale:* The Center for Rural Policy and Development's board of directors is considered effective by external stakeholders; a two-thirds majority considers the current mix of board members to be correct and appropriately representing the interests of greater Minnesota. However, some shortfalls are perceived in the board's governance practices, creating a meaningful current opportunity. Increasing the emphasis of the board on governance issues will serve to further strengthen CRPD's reputation and credibility and support the expansion of CRPD's research scope and outcomes, contributing to increased visibility, impact and growth.

*Strategies:*

1. Develop a clear definition of the board's role and responsibilities, delineating the board's vision, policies and role with respect to CRPD's management and staff.
2. Research and identify "best practices" of other organizations in creating successful governance by the board of directors.
3. Create and implement a process for enhancing the board's functional effectiveness including position statements on individual commitment, mutual expectations and team building.
4. Develop and install a systematic process of board development including board member recruitment, orientation, and training.
5. Review and audit any and all existing board governance documentation and develop a specific plan for their improvement and/or enhancement.
6. Determine and articulate the board's role in resource and funding initiatives.
7. Prepare a board of director's policy and procedures manual documenting preparation for, and conduct of, board meetings, committees, and member responsibilities. Strive to create a "model" for effective board governance.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 5: To build organizational capacity, functions and infrastructure that will fully support CRPD's goals for growth.**

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*Rationale:* Achievement of each of the Center for Rural Policy and Development's strategic goals depends on a solid and improving infrastructure and a growing support capacity. By systematically employing specific strategies to build capacity, CRPD can better leverage its existing strengths and broaden its reach, impact and contribution to the competitiveness and strength of rural Minnesota.

*Strategies:*

1. Develop a 3-5 year resource development plan including funding diversification, the role of individuals, other organizations, appropriations and foundation grants in supporting CRPD's growth. Consider both fundraising and "fundraising" strategies.
2. Determine future staffing needs linked to strategic goals and the anticipated future allocation of research initiatives to be supported by internal capacity, outsourcing and contract affiliates.
3. Develop a sustainable process for measuring customer satisfaction, with built-in measures to respond to deficiencies and capitalize on opportunities.
4. Evaluate the creation of a fundraising task force to focus on resource/funding development and establishing quantitative targets for contributor funding and earned income.
5. Create a process for identifying and prospecting individual contributors and developing membership concepts.
6. Study and determine future facilities and office space needs in conjunction with an evaluation of the geographic location of CRPD's central location.
7. Determine and implement quality control measures for internal management systems critical to effective and accountable operations.