

RiverSHARED Strategic Plan (Jan 20, 2021)

INTRODUCTION

This document lays out a strategic plan for RiverSHARED. RiverSHARED's vision and mission are as follows:

VISION: Guiding river restoration through a culture of sharing

MISSION: Developing and advancing and developing best practices, funding sources, regulatory solutions and the workforce for river restoration.

In order to develop the strategic plan, we have carried out a preliminary analysis of our situation.

ANALYSIS

A review of the marketplace suggests that RiverSHARED appears to be the only organization focused on advancing the river restoration through sharing. So, there are huge opportunities and little competition.

While we have great opportunities, we face many challenges.

1. The organization is being supported by very few people. While we have lots of interest, we have few people actually doing work to move the organization forward. We need to get more people involved if we are to move the organization forward and not burn out the few people who are doing the bulk of the work. This is especially important for continuity. If we cannot get more people involved, we are dead. **We need to get more people involved.**
2. While the organization has existed (e.g., website) for more than 4 years, it has become more structured in 2020. In 2020, the organization incorporated, opened a bank account, created a mission and visions statement, created an organizational structure, updated the website and are working on a strategic plan. However, the organization is young and not well known. **We need to raise the profile of the organization.**
3. To date, the organization has been supported by 5SSR. 5SSR has paid the webmaster, secretary and interns. The organization has plans to expand its programming. We cannot continue to rely on 5SSR for financial and in-kind support. It will take a significant and steady income stream to support the organization. There are early signs of progress (e.g., donations, project income), but these revenues do not provide the steady stream of income required to fund the organization. **We need to develop a budget process and create a reliable revenue stream.**
4. RiverSHARED has a foot in science and religion. The religion component will and has scared some people off. We need to sort out if and how RiverSHARED can balance these two topics. **We need to determine the role of Religion in RiverSHARED**

While RiverSHARED has many opportunities and challenges, we have limited resources (e.g., manpower and dollars) and therefore must focus our efforts in the coming year.

OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS:

Based on the previous analysis we recommend several initiatives for 2021 which build on the momentum generated to date. Many of the initiatives support more than one of the opportunities identified above.

Involvement:

We need to increase involvement in the RiverSHARED and should request the core group of 20 or so individuals who routinely participate in the Monday morning calls to join as members. We also need to expand our reach, such as resource agencies, investors, practitioners, etc. RiverSHARED needs to get more members by:

- Consider expanding the executive beyond the 4 people who currently serve, with an eye to increasing the number of people involved. We are currently seeking a 5th member.
- Request weekly call participants to become members and define the benefits of membership. (see Membership)
- Consider creating committees to spearhead certain initiatives (e.g., National Conference Rollout, Website, Membership) and consider having the committee chairs participate in the Monthly Executive call.
- Identify additional target list member for circulation

Financial Plan (Budget):

Develop a financial plan that considers revenues and expenses over the next 5 years by developing a revenue and expense budget:

- Revenues: grant projects (see Grants), membership fees (see Membership) and Training (see Training)
- Expenses: Participation in National Stream Restoration Conference, admin costs (e.g., websites, licenses, etc.)

Increase Organization Profile:

Increase the profile of the organization by:

- Launching RiverSHARED at the National Stream Restoration Conference to be held in Baltimore Aug 23 – 25, 2021.
- Taking the website live and continue to refine it.

TARGETTED INITIATIVES TO INCREASE INVOLVEMENT AND REVENUE

Define benefits of Membership and Expand Members:

Membership will encourage involvement and participation. Membership also provides a revenue stream. We need to figure out membership, including the following:

- Why join RiverSHARED – does it give you access to some things that nonmembers cannot access? Must be member to participate in grants? Training? Access to website? Participation in Monday morning calls
- Cost of membership (we have set some numbers, but it was done quickly for the NMBEC and this should be revisited)
- Figure out enrollment (e.g., renewal date, administration is an issue, do we need a membership secretary?)

Grant Projects:

This could be the linchpin for driving increased membership and involvement. There are many funding mechanisms that are available only to not-for-profit organizations. RiverSHARED has already successfully completed one project (i.e., Cook Ditch in South Dakota) but it did highlight the need to standardize our approach to these types of projects. RiverSHARED could be an umbrella organization for pursuing such grants in the stream context. RiverSHARED could consider only allowing members to participate in these grants. RiverSHARED should:

- develop templates for proposals and budgets for Board approval of grant projects
- figure out how RiverSHARED would be compensated for these projects (depending on the role)
- target at least 1 to 2 projects per year in the early years with a ramp up to greater number in future years

Education/Training:

RiverSHARED has a long history of organizing the holding education/training workshops. Bidelspach has done several each year for several years and there are more opportunities available (e.g., New Brunswick). These training sessions are very much in keeping with “sharing” and development of the workforce. The training session also provide opportunities to generate some revenue. RiverSHARED should:

- define its role in education and training (what types of training do we want to offer: design, fieldwork, etc.)
- respond to requests/opportunities as resources (time and talents) permit

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Website:

The website is critical to the success of the organization as it represents an important vehicle for sharing. Considerable effort has gone into the revamping the website, but much work remains to be done. This includes the following:

- Continuing to develop the website to support the objectives of the organization
- Figure out the structure (e.g., portion open to the public with restricted access to certain valuable components – software)
- Strengthen the visibility of the 4 pillars on the website
- Add project write-ups to the website
- Figure out if religion fits into the web bent or sharing (Prayer Page)
- Figure out the “ASK TIM” idea – good idea but it will require a number of volunteers to handle with component of the website

Policy Initiatives:

RiverSHARED has 4 pillars. We are very strong on Best Practices but not as strong in the other three. Some of the founding members are interested in developing Funding Sources for stream restoration as this creates opportunities for all of the other activities. RiverSHARED should consider participating in policy Initiatives focused on creating Funding Sources for the industry:

- Consider writing/participating in policy papers (e.g., Stage 0 Streams, use stream restoration to help meet TMDLs in CA.
- Consider responding to the Martin Doyle’s recent book.

Religion & Science:

RiverSHARED is currently addresses both religion (Inspirational Talks) and science (stream restoration best practices). These two are topics are not mutually exclusive. However, the fact that religion is present at some meetings, may discourage involvement by some potential members. RiverSHARED should look at ways to manage the two topics to ensure that it does not discourage involvement by all. RiverSHARED needs to:

- Figure out how to manage science and religion so that it does not discourage participation

SUMMARY:

This document has outlined a number of ideas/strategies to advance the organization. However, it is clear that we cannot undertake them all at the same time. For this reason, we have outlined what we believe to be the important activities for 2021:

- Clarify membership benefits and costs
- Continue to develop the website
- Undertake 2 projects
- Undertake 2 training sessions