



Highlights of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Mission

Lincolnway Special Recreation Association's mission is to provide recreation and leisure services for individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities while promoting greater disability awareness in the community.

Vision

A community without limits for individuals with disabilities

Values

Recreation
Empower
Community



<u>R</u> ecreation	Providing leisure for individuals with disabilities
<u>E</u> mpower	Encouraging individual autonomy
<u>C</u> ommunity	Connecting participants to develop and thrive

Priorities

LWSRA has outlined three priorities to guide this strategic plan:

Participants	• Right-size programs to meet the needs of participants
Staff	• Create plans to meet the internal needs of staff
Funding	• Maintain funding to meet the needs of participants and staff

Goals

LWSRA has outlined specific goals under each priority area (participants, staff, funding) to drive strategic decisions from 2025-2030. These goals are itemized and listed in the central planning document.



2025-2030 Strategic Plan

1/6/25



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2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Overview of LWSRA

Since 1976, the Lincolnway Special Recreation Association (LWSRA) has provided adaptive and special recreation services for individuals with disabilities through cooperative agreements with eight-member park districts: Crete, Frankfort, Frankfort Square, Manhattan, Mokena, New Lenox, Peotone, and Wilmington Park Districts. Participants enjoy active and healthy independent lifestyles through a variety of recreational and social opportunities. LWSRA programs are for individuals from preschool through adult who have recreation needs that are not met by traditional recreational programs.

Strategic Planning History

Strategic planning is a process to help organizations thoughtfully plan for the future. LWSRA's recent strategic planning history includes:

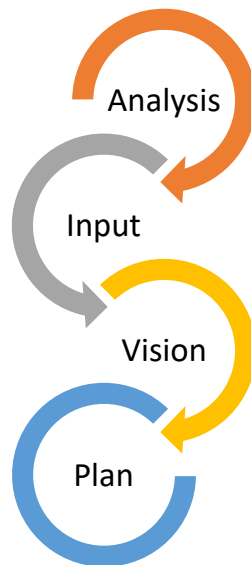
- 2012 Formal strategic plan adopted that included the opening and start-up of the Lincolnway Special Recreation Center (LWSRC)
- 2018 Formal strategic plan adopted that included goals in the areas of funding, growth, and staffing to promote expansion into new municipalities and park districts and support for the programming within the LWSRC facility and neighboring communities
- 2024 Launch of a new strategic planning process to build a 2025-2030 plan
- 2025 Formal strategic plan adopted that includes an internal focus on needs for staff, right-sizing opportunities for participants, and continuous focus on funding to support operations

Strategic Planning Process

LWSRA has developed this strategic plan to serve as a guiding document for the organization's staff and board through the next five years. The plan sets forth priorities, strategies, goals, and objectives for the organization to use to enable quality service.

The planning process was organized in four phases:

Analysis	Review the past ten years
Input	Stakeholders – staff, boards, participants, parents
Vision	Future Thinking, Future Outlook – 5 years/10 years
Plan	How do we get there?



To lead the strategic planning process, an external facilitator was chosen to offer expertise, organization, and perspective on the current status of the organization. The external facilitator, Dr. Bonnie J. Covelli, is a professor at a local university with demonstrated experience in leading strategic planning efforts for park districts and non-profit organizations and has worked with LWSRA on the previous two strategic plans.

The process included various process steps such as: analysis via the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) tool; individual and group meetings with staff, board members, and volunteers; stakeholder input via survey data; external scanning and research; and an evening retreat with staff members. This report provides a summary of the work accomplished and a list of the priorities, goals, objectives to guide the organization for the next five years.

Background on the Organization

What is an SRA?

According to the Special Recreation Associations Network of Illinois (SRANI),

“A special recreation association (SRA) is formed by two or more park districts/villages who want to join together to provide recreation programs for their residents with disabilities.”

There are 31 Special Recreation Cooperatives in Illinois serving 207 Communities (as of the most recent data published by SRANI, 12/2022). The cooperatives serve park districts, municipalities, and townships.

Therapeutic recreation professionals within the **Illinois Therapeutic Recreation Section** of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association provide recreation programs for people with disabilities in a variety of settings such as community-based Special Recreation Associations, hospitals, physical rehabilitation centers and many others. These professionals are advocates for special recreation services for all residents of Illinois and through valuable partnerships they collaborate to provide innovative programming for individuals with special needs.

What is LWSRA?

The Lincolnway Special Recreation Association (LWSRA) operates through cooperative agreements with eight-member park districts: Crete, Frankfort, Frankfort Square, Manhattan, Mokena, New Lenox, Peotone and Wilmington Park Districts. LWSRA is an integral part of the overall recreation services of each of its partners and offers programs for individuals from preschool through adult who have recreation needs that are not met by traditional recreational programs.

LWSRA offers a wide variety of quality programs, including participation in Special Olympics, to residents of all ages and all abilities. Social programs, programs for children, trips, special events, athletic programs, and an adult day program, are some of the many opportunities available for participants and families.

LWSRA relies on a variety of sources to provide funds needed to support its services. Member park districts provide the largest share of the support to ensure the stability and success of the cooperative. Fundraising and donations are sought

to help support the many programs. Registration fees are charged for programs and events, similar to those charged by our park districts and other SRAs. In an extended effort to keep programs affordable, LWSRA has a scholarship program for those who are otherwise unable to participate because of financial hardship. This program is solely funded by donations.

LWSRA has an award-winning staff of over 50 part-time and full-time employees committed to providing quality services through educational advancement, training, and certification. LWSRA is also committed to safety, earning accreditation with the Park District Risk Management Agency.

Member Park Districts



Peotone Park District





Lincolnway Special Recreation Center

The Lincolnway Special Recreation Center (LWSRC) is a first of its kind facility to be built by a special recreation association from the ground up. Thanks in part to the \$2.5 million from the Park and Recreational Facility Construction (PARC) grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the dream of an accessible recreation center for our community became a reality. With the addition of capital funds & donations, construction was completed in March of 2014.

The LWSRC Grand Opening Celebration was held June 21, 2014.

The LWSRC is located on Heatherglen Dr. (near Laraway Rd. and Schoolhouse Rd.) in New Lenox, inside the Heatherglen Subdivision.

The facility hosts more than 200 LWSRA programs annually in addition to being available to the general community with rental opportunities for meeting space, youth sports teams, and party space when not in use by LWSRA.

Amenities include three multi-purpose rooms, a learning kitchen, gymnasium with wheelchair-friendly floor, sensory room, therapeutic garden, wheelchair softball field and a universal design playground as part of Leigh Creek South Park. The location also hosts the Association's offices. The facility is fully accessible in order to accommodate its clients with special needs.



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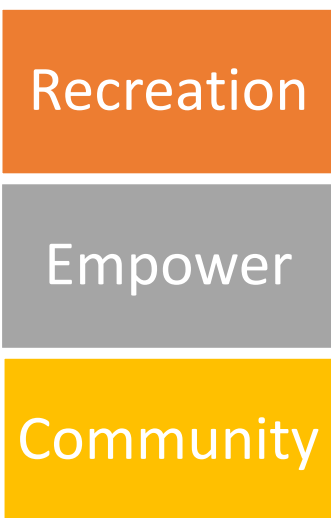
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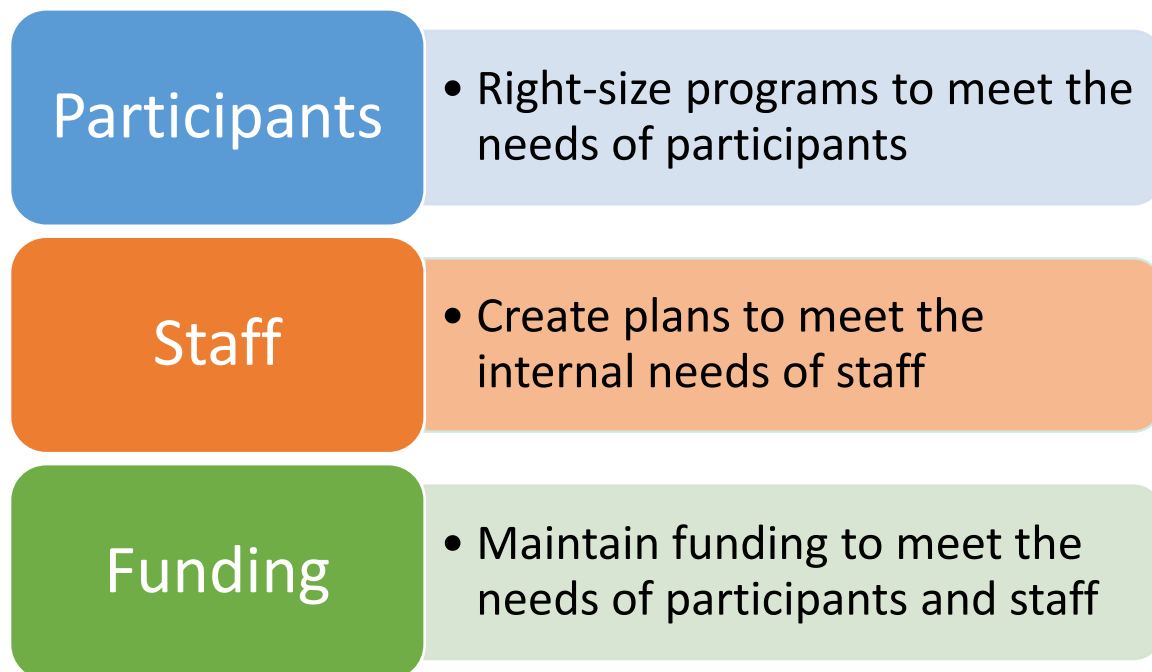
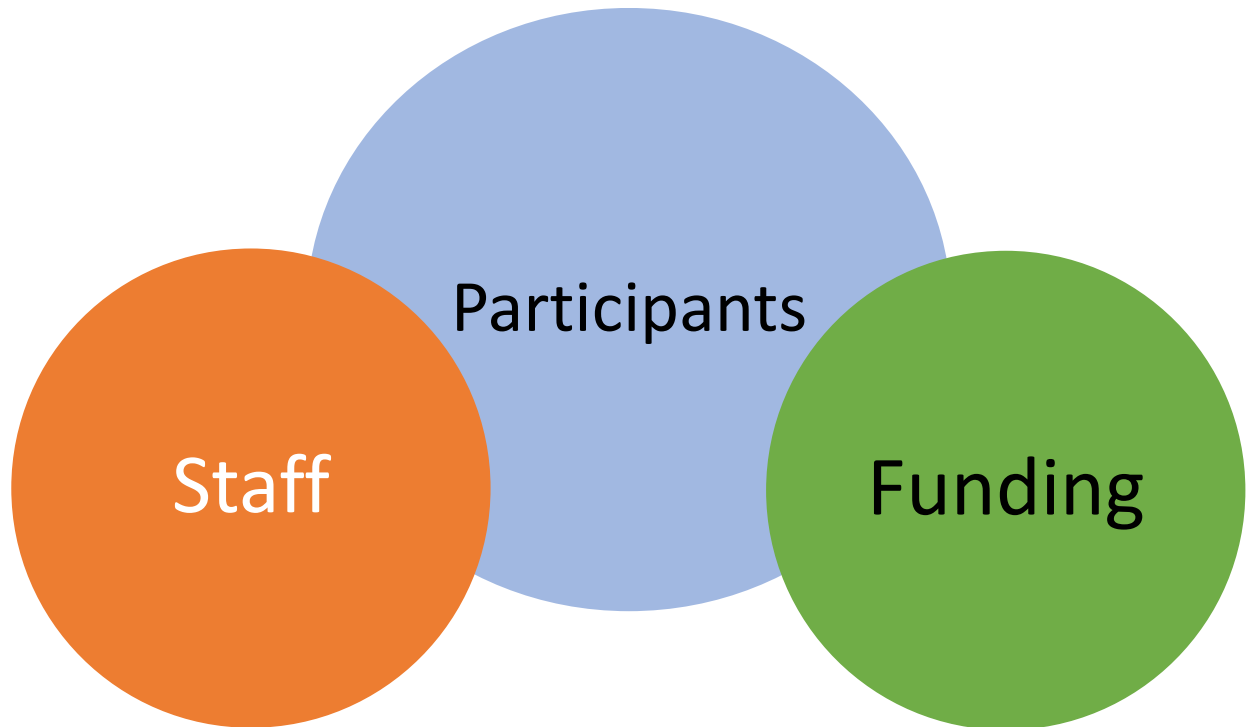
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Priorities

LWSRA has outlined three priorities to guide this strategic plan:

1. Participants
2. Staff
3. Funding



Overview of Goals

This planning document includes the high-level goals set forth during the strategic planning process. Each high-level goal will be supported with specific tasks to accomplish the goal.

Priority 1: Participants

Right-size programs to meet the needs of participants

The data from the strategic planning process demonstrated the importance of the distinction to provide quality programs within the limitations of the organization structure, funding, staffing, and abilities. LWSRA has a long history of offering excellence, safety, and quality. The staff is committed to continuing these efforts to serve participants and provide positive outcomes for its participants.

Priority	Number	Item	Goal	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Participants	1	a	Facilitate open house/meet and greet with program participants	x				
Participants	1	b	Expand sensory garden	x				
Participants	1	c	Implement sensory bus	x				
Participants	1	d	Implement traffic flow/parking lot project	x				
Participants	1	e	Review variety of adaptive program offerings	x		x		x
Participants	1	f	Maintain minimum & maximum enrollment within programs (noted in brochure) based on annual report	x	x	x	x	x
Participants	1	g	Conduct a survey to review offerings in Titans	x				x
Participants	1	h	Explore vacation trips			x		
Participants	1	i	Increase programming in smaller park districts	x	x	x	X	x

Priority 2: Staff

Create plans to meet the internal needs of staff

The themes from the strategic planning process were clear that the LWSRA staff is dedicated to going above and beyond their job descriptions to provide the best possible service and experience for participants and families. There is also a reality that staff need balance and policies, procedures, and compensation to acknowledge their dedicated work.

Priority	Number	Item	Goal	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Staff	2	a	Create a small team within program aides to train to be outreach staff		x	x	x	x
Staff	2	b	Seek out social media and event intern once a year	x	x	x	x	x
Staff	2	c	Create part time employee manual (procedures)	x				
Staff	2	d	Update full time employee policy manual (procedures)	x				
Staff	2	e	Complete Safety Manual (procedures)	x				
Staff	2	f	Training: Implement training through Paycom	x				
Staff	2	g	Training: Write a cross-training plan		x			
Staff	2	h	Complete the power DMS process (procedures)			x		
Staff	2	i	Training: Develop professional development plan			x		
Staff	2	j	Assist the Foundation with new support structure	x	x			
Staff	2	k	2030-2035 Strategic Plan					x

Priority 3: Funding

Maintain funding to meet the needs of participants and staff

As a public entity, LWSRA is committed to responsible allocation of public funds. As an SRA, there are also specific funding needs and realities related to specialized equipment, staff, outreach, and services.

Priority	Number	Item	Goal	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Funding	3	a	Build a five-year budget (with targeted revenue goals from campaigns) to fund identified priorities including staff salaries	x				
Funding	3	b	Maintain online marketing presence (web site, online registration, electronic information signs, social media (Facebook & Instagram), agency videos)	x	x	x	x	x
Funding	3	c	Continue to save for fund balance	x	x	x	x	x
Funding	3	d	Continue to find nontraditional revenue streams (1 per year)	x	x	x	x	x
Funding	3	e	Create sponsorship packet (tiered level sponsorships per event)	x				
Funding	3	f	Funding efforts for: shade structure to park bench area, awning, softball field, maintenance vehicle	x	x			
Funding	3	g	Create vehicle replacement plan	x				
Funding	3	h	Generate capital improvement plan		x			
Funding	3	i	Implement Board Governance Manual into PDMS		x			
Funding	3	j	Update website		x			

Appendix

2024 Strategic Planning Timeline

1. Staff input (focus groups conducted via virtual platform)
 - a. Held five sessions at various times: 8/6, 8/12, 8/21, 8/22, 8/23 (2024)
2. Board input (focus group conducted in-person)
 - a. Held: August 8, 2024
3. Community survey (conducted electronically)
 - a. Survey open: September 9 – October 10, 2024
4. Staff evening retreat
 - a. Held: October 15, 2024
5. Staff follow-up survey
 - a. Deadline: October 21, 2024
6. Document review
 - a. November/December 2024
7. Plan adoption
 - a. 1st Quarter 2025