

*Make It Yours*  
**KEOKUK**  
I O W A

“RESTORING PRIDE IN KEOKUK”

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

“Restoring Pride in Keokuk” is a strategic plan that details objectives, projects, and tactics directed at aiding Keokuk, Iowa in becoming a more civically engaged community that can take pride in itself. With the COVID-19 pandemic limiting in-person functions and business operations, we recognize the unique challenge our clients face. We also recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic will have lasting effects on communities like Keokuk across the nation. This plan will provide structure and guidelines for activities starting in 2021 while recognizing that we will be living in a post-COVID-19 society. Keokuk aims to increase volunteerism and pride in its community, and this plan primarily targets young professionals and community members to achieve that goal.

## **BACKGROUND**

This strategic plan will clearly state problems, objectives, and projects that will be put in place to transform the product, target market, and environment of Keokuk, a small Iowa town, looking to increase volunteerism and pride in its community through a strategic communications plan.

Together, the Hoerner YMCA, the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way of the Great River Region, are working to achieve similar goals mapped out in this plan. The problems, objectives, and projects laid out in the plan are intended to benefit all three organizations as they work toward making Keokuk a more civically engaged community that can take pride in itself.

Records of Keokuk’s earliest history dates all the way back to the 1820s as a trading location for settlers. In 1829, the settlement was named Keokuk, after Chief Keokuk of the Sac and Fox Native American Tribe. The city was eventually plotted by Dr. I. Galland in 1837 and was incorporated in 1847.

Since its establishment, Keokuk, the southeasternmost city in Iowa, was an important center for manufacturing and industry in the Midwest up until the early 2000s when plant closures took place and job opportunities diminished. It is home to the largest hydroelectric power plant on the Mississippi, as well as distinguished shipping facilities and freight rates. However, in terms of community wellness indicators, many Keokuk residents do not fall within the same high ratings of its industry. Changes in population, economy, and demographics have left the city facing problems such as unemployment, poor health for its residents, and an overall lack of pride. Keokuk currently ranks among the most at risk cities in Lee County in categories including adult obesity, high school graduation rates, and children in poverty; all of which contribute to a loss of faith and pride throughout the community. Due to the nature of these issues, our three client organizations are seeking to recruit young professionals and community members for volunteer and community engagement opportunities in hopes of increasing civic pride in Keokuk.

Historic Keokuk’s scenery and culture have the potential to make it a promising location for families and future generations. Currently, one of Keokuk’s main initiatives is to re-instill a sense of hope within its residents and increase the quality of life. In the past year, the Hoerner YMCA, a leading nonprofit community service organization, conducted a community needs assessment and interviewed community leaders and community members at-large to determine how they can best respond to their community’s needs. From their discussions, one need surpassed all others: the need to engage residents in volunteer efforts and improve the pride in the community.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

One objective we believe can help increase volunteerism in their community is having local businesses establish Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. CSR relates to the actions of a company in regards to its communities, social causes, and the environment. CSR programs can positively boost the public image of businesses and internally increase employee morale and satisfaction, employee retention, and assist in new employee recruitment. For nonprofits, Corporate Social Responsibility programs can assist in increasing volunteer engagement and support from the community. Together, the Hoerner YMCA, Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way of the Great River Region want to identify local businesses in Keokuk that have the potential to develop CSR programs. As a part of a project, they will work with identified businesses to educate them on what CSR programs are and why they should establish their own programs. As they meet with more businesses to discuss establishing CSR programs, our clients should create a form where businesses can report if they have established a CSR program and work to highlight these businesses to the community. Having CSR programs in place at different local businesses will assist in recruiting more young professionals as volunteers as well as find ways to recruit other members of the community to volunteer. They and other community leaders recognize that the path to a stable, healthier community requires positive momentum and broad community support.

## **THE HOERNER YMCA**

The Hoerner YMCA is a leading nonprofit community service organization, serving the City of Keokuk, Southern Lee County, and the Tri-State area. Its mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all by focusing on Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hoerner YMCA had a relatively large staff with a portion of it being made up of instructors and people to help oversee their programming. Since the outbreak of the pandemic however, the Hoerner YMCA's staff has been laid off. We recognize this unique challenge and hope that after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended that the Hoerner YMCA can continue carrying out its mission and providing programming for the community it serves. The Hoerner YMCA aims to provide programming for adults, youth, families, and seniors. Because a lot of the Hoerner YMCA's programming relies on in-person interaction and communication, there is no opportunity to engage the different audiences they serve during the COVID-19 pandemic. This limitation has led the YMCA to close until the crisis has been managed. We have developed this plan for consideration during the expected recovery.

For adults, the Hoerner YMCA's goal is to provide multiple channels for them to become physically active and help educate them in ways to improve their physical and nutritional health. They aim to meet this goal by providing educational seminars, fitness classes before, during and after work, personal training, and adult sports leagues.

For youths, the Hoerner YMCA's goal is to provide academic support structures outside of school. They want to be a leader in providing opportunities for youth to build good character and morals and in supporting youth's educational efforts. They aim to meet this goal by offering mentoring and tutoring programs for youth in their Teen Center. They also

want to provide non-athletic programs that draw out youth skills and confidence. They aim to meet this goal by offering life skills classes focused on subjects like changing a tire and keeping a checkbook, providing arts and crafts programming, non-sports health classes like cooking, and intramural sports.

For seniors, the Hoerner YMCA's goal is to be a place to improve their healthy living, but will also be a place to socialize, network and improve their mental health. They aim to meet this goal by offering targeted group exercise such as chair yoga, planned social gatherings like coffee groups and potlucks, and classes focusing on life skills for seniors like using technology.

The Hoerner YMCA aims to be a place where families can gather, play, and learn together, while also providing opportunities for family members to grow on their own. Their goal is to provide programming for families including child care, after school programs, Family Fun Day, sports and non-sports programs alike, programs stressing morals and values, parenting classes, and fitness classes for all.

A final goal of the Hoerner YMCA is to be a leader in encouraging and growing volunteerism and promoting civic pride. They aim to meet this goal by establishing volunteer programs, pride programs, and pairing up with other local nonprofit organizations like the United Way and RVAP to provide volunteer opportunity listings.

## **THE KEOKUK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

The Keokuk Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization that advocates on the behalf of its members to improve the business environment in Keokuk and works with businesses for the betterment of the Keokuk area. They aim to make Keokuk the best place to live, work, and play. The Chamber has five different volunteer committees that all play a part. The Chamber's Ambassadors aim to support the local business community and come together to identify progress they've made within the community. The Chamber Golf Outing helps plan and promote the largest fundraising and networking event of the year. The Community Pride committee works towards creating Keokuk pride by encouraging cleaning up after yourself, recycling, and taking care of their community and the air they breathe. The Chamber's membership committee offers a lot of benefits personally and professionally. This membership offers growth within the company and the individual, helps with economic growth, and provides resources. The last committee is the Women Inspiring Women. These committee members work together to help keep a strong presence of women pride within the community. All five of the committees aim towards making The Keokuk Chamber of Commerce a well-run organization with a lot of positive community involvement within Keokuk.

Like the Horner YMCA, the COVID-19 crisis has limited all in-person events for the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, including fundraisers, community engagement events, and volunteer opportunities sponsored through the Chamber. They have also halted membership renewal for the time being.

## **THE UNITED WAY OF THE GREAT RIVER REGION**

The United Way of the Great River Region is a nonprofit organization that focuses on three areas that it calls the building blocks for a good quality of life and strong community: Health, Education, and Financial Stability. They support local nonprofit organizations who show a measurable impact in any of the three focus areas. They also provide their own programs including a Volunteer Center, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Back to School Festival, Literacy Project, & Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program.

Headquartered in Keokuk, the United Way of the Great River Region serves three counties in three different states — Lee County, Iowa, Hancock County, Illinois, and Clark County, Missouri. It is one of approximately 1,200 offices throughout the United States that pools efforts in fundraising and support. Programs from the national United Way include a tax preparation service, an early learning initiative, a health and human services hotline, and a fight to end human trafficking and modern slavery. United Way has a total of 2.8 million volunteers and 9.8 million donors.

The United Way of the Great River Region is continuing to offer its services and support to other nonprofit organizations in the Keokuk area during the COVID-19 crisis. They are working to find ways to continue to engage the community it serves through digital communications during this time as they face limitations on in-person interactions as well.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Hoerner YMCA, as noted, has closed pending further notice. Similarly, The United Way of the Great River Region and the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce are facing limitations regarding communication between staff, volunteers, and potential volunteers as of March 30. The statewide closure of most public facilities, including fitness centers and prohibiting of social gatherings of more than 10 people, has forced the organizations to work remotely as they continue their efforts in recruiting volunteers and serving their community. In order to practice social distancing guidelines, methods such as phone calls and online conference calls, on platforms like Zoom, will be utilized until further notice. We recognize the unique challenges our clients are facing at this time and have developed this plan for consideration during the expected recovery.

All three organizations aim to build a stronger and healthier Keokuk community. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe these organizations can transform the way members of the Keokuk community think about and engage with their community.

## **PART ONE: THE NARRATIVE**

### **1. THE PRODUCT**

The goal of this project is to enhance civic pride in Keokuk through increased volunteerism. A key for us will be to focus on young professionals and members of the general community of Keokuk. By dialing in on this demographic, we feel as if we can attain our goal.

We have studied Keokuk to come up with a goal to increase civic pride through volunteerism with the Hoerner YMCA, Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, and The United Way of the Great River Region. To do so, we encourage local businesses to adopt Corporate

Social Responsibility programs, while showing the general public the effects of volunteering in the community.

This section focuses on the benefit of businesses adopting Corporate Social Responsibility programs, as well as benefits of showing the community positive results of volunteerism and digital volunteerism.

If we can get more local businesses in Keokuk to adopt Corporate Social Responsibility programs, the door would be opened for much more volunteering in the community. Studies show that millennials would prefer working for an organization with a CSR program in place, so both sides would benefit. Two Rivers Bank & Trust is a business with a program already in place, and it is widely known. If more businesses can incorporate a CSR program, it will be a good public relations boost for the business, while still having an important impact in the community to make Keokuk the best it can possibly be. It is equally important to have managers and line workers take advantage of the CSR program. That way, it may be able to spread into the general community, which would help in showcasing the effects of volunteering. This will look much different in the age of COVID-19, but there are still ways to include businesses — both managers and line workers — in a form of digital volunteerism until there is a clearer future.

It is clear that Keokuk as a whole could benefit from consistent volunteerism throughout the community, but the public's view of the city does not help the cause. To get more community members to volunteer, it would be important to show them the effects that volunteering has. One way we can do this is through social media. It would be helpful to have each organization — the Hoerner YMCA, Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, and The United Way of the Great River Region — to post how successful different initiatives are. If local businesses adopt a CSR program, it would be beneficial to advertise this to the community as well. We understand that things will look different as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, but there are still be ways to promote and celebrate success in volunteering. As our clients have already done, it will help to continue to run focus groups to gather information and ideas from the community. Outside of social media, it would be useful to utilize target publics that haven't necessarily been targeted as often, such as Southeastern Community College and local high schools, for volunteer opportunities. It will be just as important to have these non-business organizations making an impact in the community as well. To do so, we will need to include every interested organization we can to maximize the impact. Keokuk would then become a more rounded city, allowing community members to take pride in the collaboration between each organization and business. While those options haven't worked very well in the past, we could work with each to institute a program that would show they have pride in the city.

## **2. TARGET PUBLICS**

This section focuses on the target publics that our strategic communication plan is aimed at engaging through detailed objectives and projects. A target public is a specific group of people you want to reach with your message. The target publics listed below were identified by our three client organizations as groups that they wanted to recruit for volunteering and community involvement.

**Young Professionals:** Young professionals can be recruited for volunteering through opportunities presented through Corporate Social Responsibility programs that the businesses they are employed for have in place. Corporate Social Responsibility programs have been shown to positively boost the public image of businesses and internally increase employee morale and satisfaction, employee retention, and assist in new employee recruitment. An important way to reach this potential audience is through manager-led efforts to increase volunteering. When management invests in something genuinely, it is more likely to be seen as sincere and will have more positive buy in from young professionals.

Additionally, it is important to ensure that young professionals are being connected to the right volunteer opportunities that fit their skill sets and interests in order to help create an emotional connection between young professionals as volunteers and their work. This helps foster positive feelings around the impact they are making as volunteers and increases overall morale in both the workplace and community they are serving.

**Community Members:** Because community members of Keokuk lack pride in their community, our client-organizations hope that their increased participation in volunteering can help boost morale and overall pride in the community. Community members that are already actively engaging with our three client organizations are more likely to continue to engage with and volunteer with them. Social media provides an opportunity for our clients to advertise and communicate volunteer opportunities with community members. Other opportunities to engage with community members and increase volunteerism among them is to work with local pastors and religious leaders to advertise and organize volunteer opportunities for their congregations.

Additionally, identifying opinion leaders within the community who can encourage others to volunteer and get engaged in different opportunities around Keokuk can increase volunteerism. We identified this through projects in the strategic plan by making a list of community members who are well-know, choosing the best social media channels to use, and creating a strategy that works well to get information out to the public. This would create more online conversations from all community members who follow these opinion leaders and increase the number of people who want to volunteer in Keokuk.

### **3. ENVIRONMENT**

This section focuses on the environment of Keokuk. Environment is the surrounding locale and the organizational and business climate within it.

Located in Lee County Iowa, Keokuk is Iowa's southernmost city. Keokuk is one of Iowa's small towns with a population of 10,274 people. Until the COVID-19 pandemic, the Horner YMCA in Keokuk held events relating to physical wellness, music, art, reading, and more throughout the year to encourage community engagement. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there are limitations to holding in person events.

The community has many opportunities for the citizens of Keokuk to get involved however, it lacks the resources to reach community members to encourage them attend these events. With the community participating in social distancing currently, now would be a great time





*Figure 1: Keokuk High School*

Residents of small towns such as Keokuk and the towns surrounding it know the way they are personally affected by activities. In each of these smaller communities, they participate in high school level sports that entertain many on the weekends. Sports are a great way for the community to get involved and spend time with each other, whether it be on or off the fields and courts. Community members are also aware of what has benefited their involvement in the past. This is a great way to get feedback on how Keokuk as a whole feels about different volunteer opportunities. The series of projects we have identified in the strategic plan below allows us to take a deeper look and survey community members on their volunteer experiences along with finding trends in perception towards volunteering and CSR within the community.

Like many cities across the nation, Keokuk is feeling the social, emotional, and economical implications of the COVID-19 Crisis. Many businesses have had to close their doors, schools are no longer in session, and some in the community are unemployed. As Keokuk works to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their community, volunteer and community involvement opportunities have the potential to become more vital and necessary in the community's recovery efforts. Our clients can work to engage local businesses in establishing CSR programs and work with community leaders to engage other members of the community in volunteer opportunities through the projects we have identified further below in the strategic plan.

This plan provides our clients with objectives and projects aimed at increasing the strategic communication of volunteer opportunities offered within Keokuk through collaboration with leaders in the community, the establishment of CSR programs at businesses in the area, and the use of digital communications. Together, the Hoerner YMCA, Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way of the Great River Region can work toward creating more awareness of volunteer opportunities and increase community involvement as the Keokuk community recovers from the COVID-19 crisis together.

### **OBJECTIVE SUMMARY**

Objective 1 researches how the Keokuk community feels about Keokuk, its volunteer opportunities, and thinking about their past volunteer experiences. Objective 2 aims to look for local businesses in the area that want to engage in and create volunteer opportunities post-COVID-19 that can benefit their employees as well as the community they serve. Objective 3 aims to look for other groups in the community, such as churches and schools, that we can engage in volunteer opportunities. Objective 4 is looking to find leaders within the community who can help encourage others to volunteer and get engaged in the Keokuk community.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The non-profit leadership of Keokuk lacks a strategic communication plan to maintain a high level of volunteers within the community, resulting in a lack of community engagement.

## **PART TWO: STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **GOAL**

To increase volunteerism and pride in Keokuk.

### **OBJECTIVES, PROJECTS, AND TACTICS**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Assess how past experiences with volunteering have affected the attitudes of Keokuk community members toward the town itself as well as available volunteer opportunities.

**Target Publics:** *Community members*

**Project 1:** Conduct brief door-to-door surveys of Keokuk residents pertaining to their current volunteer habits— including incentives and reasons for interest, environment of the workplace, and knowledge of CSR.

#### **Tactics:**

1. Create a list of questions asking target publics their opinion of Keokuk based on living there, and reasons why or not they volunteer within the community.

2. Enlist staff and volunteers from YMCA, United Way, and Chamber of Commerce to go door-to-door and collect data from surveys.
3. Provide survey participants with contact information and email list for the Hoerner YMCA, The United Way of the Great River Region, and the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce.

**Project 2:** Analyze responses, synthesize data, and identify trends in perception toward volunteering and CSR.

**Tactics:**

1. Gather all responses together.
2. Create a task force composed of members from the Hoerner YMCA, The United Way of the Great River Region, and the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce to review each response individually.
3. Examine responses and group them based on common responses toward current volunteer habits in the community.
4. Report findings to Hoerner YMCA, The United Way of the Great River Region, and The Keokuk Chamber of Commerce.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Identify and recruit businesses in the area that want to engage in and create volunteer opportunities for their employees.

**Target Publics:** *Young Professionals*

**Project 1:** Make a list of businesses in the area who have the potential to develop Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

**Tactics:**

1. Get a list of all the businesses in Keokuk from the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce.
2. Determine whether they are a local business or nationally or internationally owned. (This will have an influence on what their ability is to adopt and establish a Corporate Social Responsibility program)
3. Make a final list of which businesses have been identified as potential businesses to develop CSR programs.
4. Create a timeline for meeting with those businesses.

**Project 2:** Educate businesses on what Corporate Social Responsibility programs are and why they should establish one at their business.

**Tactics:**

1. Make a list of contact information for management at the identified businesses.
2. Write up a pitch for why businesses should adopt Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

3. Set up meetings with management at the identified businesses and pitch them reasons to adopt a CSR program at their business.

**Project 3:** Create a form for businesses to report if they've established a CSR program to the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce.

**Tactics:**

1. Use this information to keep track of which businesses have established CSR programs.
2. Find ways to highlight or honor businesses that have CSR programs so the Keokuk community is aware.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Identify non-business organizations in the area that have an interest in creating volunteer opportunities for its members.

**Target Publics:** *Community members*

**Project 1:** Create a list of organizations who could realistically benefit from volunteering in the community.

**Tactics:**

1. Retrieve a list of organizations around the community, including clubs at Southeastern Community Colleges, area high schools, and churches.
2. Survey these community organizations in regards to their interest in volunteering in the community.
3. Reach out to the interested organizations for further information.
4. Set up volunteer times with interested organizations.

**Project 2:** Share the successes of volunteering efforts through social media and other media.

**Tactics:**

1. Create a social media page (or use a previously existing account) for each client organization.
2. Capture photos and videos from events.
3. Get volunteer perspectives during events.
4. Post about group and individual successes with photos and videos from events.
5. Monitor comments on social media pages.
6. Reach out to other organizations after posting, inquiring about volunteer interest.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Identify leaders within the community who can encourage others to volunteer and get engaged in different opportunities around Keokuk.

**Target Publics:** *Community members*

**Project 1:** Make a list of opinion leaders, or influential members in the Keokuk community, who have the platforms needed to reach members of the community.

**Tactics:**

1. Identify different types of industries to find opinion leaders.
2. Reach out to potential opinion leaders to ask for their participation in encouraging volunteering in the community.
3. Make sure the opinion leaders are diverse and can capture different demographics of the Keokuk community.

**Project 2:** Identify communication channels that can be used to reach and engage community members.

**Tactics:**

1. Find the most popular platforms that our target publics use.
2. Use diverse platforms to capture all members of the community.
3. Post the correct type of content to the correct social media platforms (good pictures on Instagram, succinct posts on Twitter, etc.)

**Project 3:** Create a strategy for posting content to these communication channels that are popular amongst community members and study trends in usage and engagement.

**Tactics:**

1. Identify what time periods are most popular to post to social media sites.
2. Identify what platforms are useful for different types of content.
3. Use this data to shape what types of content is posted to social media aimed at highlighting volunteer opportunities and the impact of volunteering on the community.

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