MAPOR Strategic Plan
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Introduction

To the current MAPOR Executive Council's knowledge, MAPOR has not had a strategic plan for at least 10 years. The goal of this strategic plan is to identify key initiatives that are underway at MAPOR and set the stage for MAPOR's growth for the next five years.

The primary goals for MAPOR in 2020 are:

1. Increase MAPOR's value to members,

2. Increase MAPOR's reach by growing membership and revenue streams, and

3. Develop systems for documenting MAPOR's history and current operating state.

To reach these goals, MAPOR has 6 initiatives. These initiatives are:

1. Evaluate the fall conference for opportunities for change and growth,

2. Extend in-person and "virtual" non-conference benefits to members,

3. Communicate regularly, and with different media,

4. Grow MAPOR's membership,

5. Grow MAPOR's revenue stream, and

6. Move forward while looking back.

MAPOR has a diverse membership, with a large proportion of students and young professionals. With this comes a great deal of turnover in the MAPOR members – roughly half of the attendees for the annual meeting are first-time attendees and roughly half of the MAPOR membership are students. This membership composition provides energy and vitality to MAPOR as an organization, but it also leads to a lack of continuity. Providing benefits for this MAPOR membership, along with increasing the number of renewing members, underlie the goals presented here.

Over the last few years, MAPOR Council has undertaken a number of initiatives to add value to a MAPOR membership. With the added loss of MAPOR's home for the last 35 years (the Avenue Hotel), MAPOR Executive Council wanted to lay groundwork for future MAPOR Councils to continue to document the core values and benefits of MAPOR for members and also expand on opportunities for change and growth.

We expect that future Councils will report on their progress for these goals and initiatives to the MAPOR membership in newsletters and at the annual meeting in November.

Goal 1: Increase MAPOR's value to members

Initiative 1. Evaluate the fall conference for opportunities for growth and change.

The MAPOR November conference is a considered by many as a "mini-AAPOR" conference. With a change in venue required in 2014, there are a number of opportunities for evaluating the structure and format of the meeting. At the writing of this strategic plan, MAPOR does not have a permanent home for its meeting moving forward. We see these uncertainties as opportunities for growth and change.

Short-term goals

1a. Review the structure of the conference with space constraints in mind.
The MAPOR annual meeting has had a similar structure for the last decade due to the space constraints of the Avenue Hotel. Moving to a new hotel requires evaluating how the key facets of the MAPOR conference may work or not work in a new space. This is both a short-term goal for the 2014 and 2015 conferences and a long-term goal as a new "home" for MAPOR is investigated.

1b. Increase the number of conference-related events devoted to professional development.
In the MAPOR membership survey, members reported wanting more opportunities for professional development. Recent MAPOR Councils have made strides in this area by providing

short courses at the annual meeting. However, additional forms of professional development (e.g., sessions devoted to journal article submission, pedagogical sessions) could be developed.

1c. Increase the number of conference-related events devoted to networking.
Similar to opportunities for professional development, MAPOR members report wanting more opportunities to network with other MAPOR members. Prior MAPOR Councils have added opportunities for networking (Presidents' Reception; Birds of a Feather Lunch) to the conference, but other events could also be planned (e.g., round table luncheons, speed networking).

1d. Maintain a database on session attendance.
Although counts have been made on the number of people attending sessions, no permanent record of these counts has been maintained. However, MAPOR Council views this information as key for planning purposes for subsequent sessions.

Long-term goals
1e. Evaluate the structure of the conference with organization growth in mind.
As MAPOR grows and has no current permanent home, the current structure of the annual meeting may need to change. MAPOR Council recommends creating a subcommittee of MAPOR Council members and members of the MAPOR membership for long-term conference planning.

1f. Evaluate the desire of the membership to have a permanent date/home for the annual conference.
The annual MAPOR meeting has historically been located in Chicago during the weekend before Thanksgiving. This is also the weekend for the holiday parade on Michigan Avenue, leading to challenges in identifying hotel space at a reasonable cost to the organization. MAPOR Council has set a priority for keeping costs for the conference low for its members, especially its student and young professional members. Although this location and date are considered important for some members, other members have requested moving to a different time or less expensive location. MAPOR Council recommends including this information on the post-conference

survey of members and being part of the recommended subcommittee on Long-Term Conference Planning's task.

1g. Increase attendance at the annual business meeting.
MAPOR Council values input from the membership at large. However, a substantial majority of the membership does not attend the annual business meeting. The goal is to increase attendance. Possible methods to do this are to change the timing of the annual business meeting, increase publicity for the meeting, and "rebranding" the meeting to a membership meeting rather than a business meeting.

Initiative 2. Extend in-person and "virtual" non-conference benefits to members.

MAPOR members benefit greatly from the fall conference, but, to date, this has been the only benefit offered to members. The organization views many other methods that could be used to increase benefits to members. These include both in-person events in cities other than Chicago and virtual events.

Short-term goals
2a. Offer at least one webinar per year on topics that rotate between survey methods, public opinion, and professional development.
MAPOR has not previously offered webinars. The first MAPOR webinars were offered during the fall of 2014, with one webinar focusing on survey methods and the second on public opinion research. Webinars are a useful way to increase membership benefits and showcase the work of prominent MAPOR members. Webinars may also be used to increase professional development opportunities for students and young professionals. For example, a webinar on how to give effective presentations could be provided before the annual meeting. Through these offerings, MAPOR will build a webinar library for purchase at a later time.

2b. Sponsor "MAPOR in your City" happy hours.

MAPOR members report wanting more opportunities for networking. One of the challenges for this is the geographic spread of the MAPOR membership. However, in person events may be a method for introducing people to MAPOR and recruiting new members, as well as retaining members who do not attend the annual meeting. One in-person event could be a happy hour organized in the spring around the release of the Call for Papers in 3-4 cities with large concentrations of MAPOR members where MAPOR provides refreshments and information about joining MAPOR.

Long-term goals

2c. Partner with AAPOR or other AAPOR chapters for jointly sponsored webinars.
One way to add value for members without increasing burden on the MAPOR Executive Council is to partner with national AAPOR or other AAPOR chapters for jointly sponsored webinars. This requires long-term planning as issues of coordination and revenue sharing, among others, require enumerating.

2d. Offer members "virtual" networking opportunities.

Given the geographic spread of MAPOR membership, in-person networking opportunities may be limited. Using online meeting place tools, MAPOR could offer networking opportunities for members. Examples may include MAPOR sponsors having a dedicated webinar to talk about what work is like at the sponsoring organization, or opportunities for questions to be asked of prominent MAPOR members.

2e. Include newsletter content on professional development.
A relatively simple method for increasing the professional development offerings to MAPOR members is by including a professional development column in the newsletter. These professional development offerings may be related to conference presentations, journal submissions, job seeking, or a "day in a life" column. It may also include information about the graduate programs that frequently send students to MAPOR.

Initiative 3. Communicate regularly, and with different media.

MAPOR members have reported that they want more communication from MAPOR. With multiple media at hand, this requires strategic planning for how each medium will be used, and how frequently communications will come from the MAPOR Executive Council.

Short-term goals

3a. Establish an at-large MAPOR member as MAPOR's Communications Chair for two years.
On post-conference surveys, MAPOR members have reported wanting more communications from MAPOR during the year. Given current demands on MAPOR Executive Council, a MAPOR Executive Council member dedicated to communications is required. As such, a new Communications Chair will be established. This Communications Chair may also establish a subcommittee of MAPOR Council members and the MAPOR membership to assist in communications planning.

3b. Investigate cloud-based website editing programs for the MAPOR website.
As an organization with frequent turnover of executive council members and webmasters, it is essential that the website be able to be edited and updated by a large number of people. MAPOR's website is current managed by a webmaster - with an expected term of 2 years - with use of Adobe Dreamweaver. This method is more flexible than the previous MAPOR website editing software but is difficult and costly to transfer between individuals. Cloud-based website creating and editing methods would provide flexibility to the organization and hopefully reduce costs of website maintenance. Of interest is also a place for a "members only" section of the website.

Long-term goals

3c. Develop communications plan for regular, timed communications.
Increased benefits are useful only to the extent that members are aware of them. Part of the strategy for increasing benefits also includes communicating to members about them. The

Communications Chair will develop a plan for more frequent, regular communications. One option is increasing the MAPOR newsletter from twice a year to four times each year. Additionally, methods of disseminating notes from Executive Council meetings should be considered to members only to increase transparency of MAPOR Executive Council operations.

3d. Identify strategies for use of MAPORNet, Facebook, and other electronic communication media.

MAPOR now has multiple methods of communicating with members and for members with each other. This is useful only to the extent that these media are used. The Communications Chair will identify a set of methods and priorities for use of MAPORNet, Facebook, Twitter, and other communication media.

Goal 2: Increase MAPOR's reach by growing membership and revenue streams

Initiative 4. Grow and Document MAPOR membership.

A professional organization is only as strong as its membership base. This includes increasing the number of new members, and encouraging first-time members to renew their membership. MAPOR currently does not engage in any membership renewal activities, simply encouraging members to attend the annual conference and renew membership at that time. This is clearly not optimal for the growth of the organization, nor for the retention of institutional knowledge about MAPOR among the membership.

<u>Short-term goal</u>
4a. Identify the rate at which new members renew their membership and other statistics about the membership.

MAPOR does not currently keep data on the membership renewal rate of its members, nor their characteristics. This lack of empirical information on membership introduces a significant disadvantage for the organization. In particular, we do not know how many of our student members remain MAPOR members when they are not students, nor how much "churn" there is in our membership from year to year, nor what groups are likely to renew or not renew.

Additionally, the voting rate of the MAPOR membership, MAPOR membership survey data, and conference attendance of the membership is not currently recorded in a way that permits easy trend analysis. Consistent collection and reporting of this information will facilitate planning for the future of MAPOR.

4b. Launch an annual membership renewal drive.

MAPOR currently does not send anything to members asking them to renew their membership from year to year. Although MAPOR benefits from national AAPOR's efforts in the annual renewal drive, there are MAPOR members who join through MAPOR and are not AAPOR members that are not captured during this drive. Additionally, MAPOR has members who do not attend the annual conference but may want to stay MAPOR members. MAPOR Council strongly recommends the Secretary-Treasurer and Associate Secretary-Treasurer develop an annual set of mailings or emails to send to current and former MAPOR members, encouraging them to renew their MAPOR membership. This encouragement is facilitated by MAPOR's new web platform and credit card processing site that permits memberships to be accepted outside of the annual conference registration.

4c. Recruit new members by contacting AAPOR members who live in the Midwest but are not MAPOR members.

AAPOR permits regional chapters to contact AAPOR members living in a geographic region who are not a member of a regional chapter for chapter membership recruitment. To our knowledge, MAPOR has not used this information for recruiting new members during the last decade. An annual mailing to non-MAPOR member AAPOR members would be a logical place to increase the MAPOR membership.

Long-term goals

4d. Identify and target natural audiences (e.g., AASRO members, local universities, city/state government) as potential MAPOR members.

MAPOR provides an opportunity for early professional development, networking, and integration into a professional network of survey research and public opinion experts across a wide variety of fields. There are a number of organizations for which a MAPOR membership

may be beneficial, but whose members are not aware of MAPOR. Strategic consideration of logical places to target for growing the MAPOR membership is likely to start with academic survey research organizations, local (Midwest) universities, and city and state government officials doing survey research. This may also include partnering with local chapters of other professional organizations such as the American Statistical Association or the Market Research Association.

4e. Increase the rate of new members renewing membership for a second year.

MAPOR currently does not know the rate at which members renew their membership. Anecdotally, MAPOR Executive Council members report seeing "many new faces" at the annual conference each year. The annual post-conference survey results indicate that roughly half of the conference attendees were first-time attendees, indicating likely first-time members. Longevity and continuity of membership is important for an organization's health, institutional knowledge, and development of leadership. Thus, increasing the number of "second-year" MAPOR members is key.

Initiative 5. Grow MAPOR's revenue stream.

MAPOR is financially healthy, but is limited in the work it can do or additional benefits that can be offered to members due to a limited revenue stream. A key part of this strategic plan is to expand the opportunities available to members; these opportunities require additional revenue streams. Furthermore, as MAPOR expands the opportunities made available to members, additional governance and oversight may be necessary. Additionally, changes in hotels for the MAPOR conference may require additional on-site visits.

<u>**Short-term goals**</u>

5a. Develop a comprehensive budget for MAPOR.

Historically, MAPOR's only expense has been the annual meeting. As new membership benefits are developed, costs are incurred to the organization. MAPOR has not traditionally had a budget for different operating expenses. The first step in growing MAPOR's revenue stream is thus identifying costs to the organization, related to and separate from the annual meeting.

5b. Publicize need for sponsors and benefits to sponsors for MAPOR.

Sponsors to MAPOR receive benefits in accordance to their sponsorship levels. Although these benefits may be revised, they are crucial for helping sponsors understand their returns on investment in the organization. Additionally, some sponsors may have different needs, from a simple method of advertising their organization to MAPOR members, to more prominent recognition and interaction with the MAPOR membership. Additionally, having a plan in place for how and when to target MAPOR sponsors is crucial for the long-term health of the organization.

Long-term goals

5c. Work with conference chairs to host exhibits at the MAPOR conference.

The annual conference has not historically had an exhibit hall or place for companies to sell or advertise their products or organizations. MAPOR has received inquiries about having vendor exhibits recently. As a potential way to increase benefits to members (vendors often have conference-related discounts; members receive information about vendors) and increase revenue for the organization, this strategy could benefit both MAPOR members and MAPOR sponsors. An exhibit hall, however, would require a different type of conference space and set-up. Thus, implementing this goal will require more long-term planning.

5d. Increase the number of sponsors and total sponsorship dollars.

MAPOR Executive Council views providing support for members and keeping costs low as critical. There are opportunities that could be made available to student and young professional members that are not currently possible given MAPOR's financial state and uncertainties about future conference sites. For example, travel awards for students could help students mitigate costs; similar travel awards could be given to young professionals. Additionally, the MAPOR student paper competition is funded out of MAPOR's general operating budget, although MAPOR members have given donations for promoting its sustainability and to expand the scope to have two winners. Increasing numbers of sponsors and total sponsorship dollars assists in meeting all of these goals.

Goal 3: Develop systems for documenting MAPOR's history and current operating state

Initiative 6. Move forward while looking back.

The first MAPOR conference took place in 1975, with bylaws accepted in 1976. As such, MAPOR has a long history with a devoted membership base. This history provides MAPOR with a solid foundation and sense of community. As many founding MAPOR members reach retirement age, it is critical that the organization archive the history of and institutional knowledge about MAPOR.

Short-term goals

6a. Update MAPOR website with lists of past presidents, past student paper winners, conference themes, and other prominent MAPOR events and people.

Archives of MAPOR history has been slowly growing on the MAPOR website. However, some of this history is difficult to find, lost in newsletters or conference programs past. Simply compiling this information and putting it on its own page for the MAPOR website is an important step toward documenting MAPOR's past for future MAPOR Executive Councils and membership.

6b. Add photos from past MAPOR events to MAPOR website.

Although many MAPOR events have been documented by MAPOR members and MAPOR fellow Steve Everett, these photos are not available or viewable for MAPOR members. Creating an archive of MAPOR past conference photos from the membership and of future MAPOR events is critical, especially moving forward in an age of digital media and photographic communications.

Long-term goals

6c. Create a report on MAPOR history through archival analysis of newsletters, conference programs, and interviews with prominent MAPOR members.

Understanding MAPOR's history has been important to many past MAPOR Executive Councils. Past MAPOR newsletters contain analyses of MAPOR's history; past MAPOR conference

programs include snippets of interviews with prominent MAPOR members about their affiliation with the organization. However, these documents are difficult to search and - without knowing that the information is contained in them - interested parties would not be able to find it. With an almost 40-year history, a stand-alone document about MAPOR and its history seems important and valuable to the MAPOR membership.