



Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2026-2030

ABOUT

The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals, or SORP, was established in 1983 to support state outdoor recreation planners. The organization has evolved and expanded to include a wide variety of people who plan, manage, and provide outdoor recreation on public lands. There are many types of outdoor recreation professionals in the broader outdoor recreation industry (e.g., guides, outdoor educators, retail businesses). SORP's audience is natural resource management practitioners and members represent federal, state/provincial and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, consulting firms, universities, and tourism and destination stewardship organizations.

The 2026-2030 Strategic Framework describes SORP's focus and outcomes. This framework will guide all of the organization's programs, policies, and partnerships. It was developed with input from the SORP board of directors and staff, members, partner interviews, and 2026 National Outdoor Recreation Conference participants.





MISSION

SORP provides leadership for the outdoor recreation profession through skill development, networking, and technical guidance.

VISION

SORP creates sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

CORE VALUES

SORP's core values are embedded in all of the work we do. Each strategy below aligns with one or more core values. Annual work plans and new initiatives will be assessed through these lenses.



Collective Strength

Our organization is strengthened by the variety of thoughts, experiences, and connections of the outdoor recreation professionals who work to provide outdoor recreation for all.



People

Our strength is the passion, diversity, knowledge, and leadership of our members and the outdoor recreation profession.



Community

We thrive in the opportunity to support lasting connections and the cultivation of shared purpose in serving the recreating public.



Skill Development

We believe that a fulfilling career includes life-long learning and evolves to be responsive to changing conditions.



Collaboration

We embrace diverse collaborations to advance the outdoor recreation profession and foster meaningful and lasting relationships.



Sustainable Recreation

We embrace and share our members' work that demonstrates sustainable balance among environmental, social, and economic conditions and benefits present and future generations of all backgrounds.

CROSS-CUTTING COMMITMENT: EQUITY & ACCESS

Woven across all four pillars, SORP commits to centering equity and access in every program, partnership, and decision — ensuring the outdoor recreation profession reflects and serves all communities.



PILLAR 1

Elevating the Outdoor Recreation Profession

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Outdoor recreation is essential to physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Effective outdoor recreation planning and management supports outdoor access and natural and cultural resource conservation. Outdoor recreation professionals need tools, community, and best practices to steward our public lands for generations to come. SORP is well positioned to provide national leadership for the outdoor recreation profession through strategic partnerships and meaningful collaboration.

GOAL

Advance outdoor recreation as a clearly defined and widely recognized profession by implementing core competencies, strengthening professional standards, and positioning SORP as the trusted convener and voice of the discipline.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- The ORPCF is adopted by state, federal and local land management agencies, universities, and outdoor recreation workforce development programs.
- Outdoor recreation professional competencies are referenced in training and professional development programs, job descriptions, individual development plans, and academic programs.
- SORP partners with nonprofit organizations, agencies, and universities focused on the intersectionality of outdoor recreation, public health, and environmental stewardship to strengthen the collective impact of this work.

STRATEGY 1.1

Align training and development with the Outdoor Recreation Professional Core Competency Framework (ORPCF)

STRATEGY 1.2

Position SORP as the trusted voice and convener for the outdoor recreation profession

STRATEGY 1.3

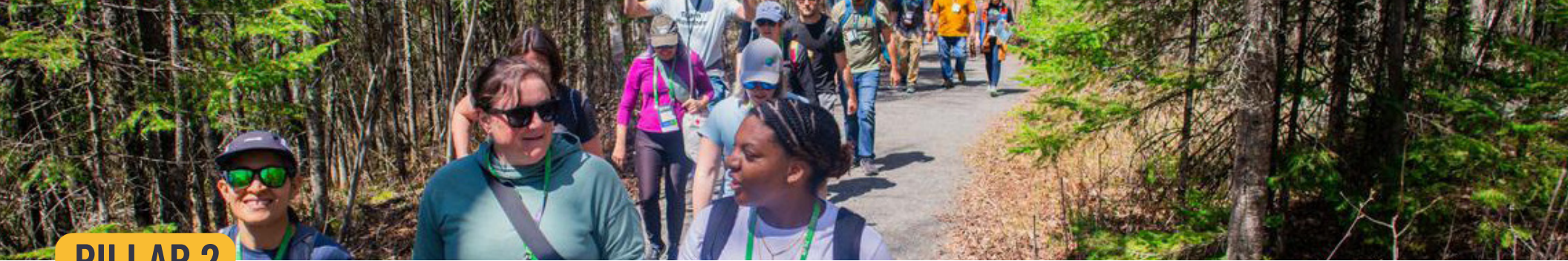
Expand partnerships with adjacent organizations to adopt and adapt the ORPCF

STRATEGY 1.4

Strengthen diverse representation in leadership and programming

STRATEGY 1.5

Develop compelling narratives about the value of the profession



PILLAR 2

Financial Sustainability & Resilience

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Financial sustainability is the foundation for an effective and resilient organization. The SORP Endowment will position the organization for operational stability. Annual and long-term financial planning will ensure that organization capacity aligns with the mission and vision and serves SORP's members.

GOAL

Diversify and stabilize SORP's revenue base to reduce dependence on any single income stream, ensuring the organization can weather political and economic cycles and continue delivering on its mission.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Financial stability that reduces risks and vulnerabilities.
- Strong value proposition for members and donors to invest in SORP's future.
- Diversified revenue portfolio that includes a mix of contributed and earned income.

STRATEGY 2.1

Develop and implement a 5-year financial plan

STRATEGY 2.2

Leverage programming to diversify revenue and sponsorships

STRATEGY 2.3

Grow the endowment and philanthropic donor base

STRATEGY 2.4

Implement low barrier membership and registration fees



PILLAR 3

Organizational Capacity & Leadership

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Retaining key staff and hiring additional FTEs reduces organizational fragility and expands program delivery capacity. Well-functioning committees leverage the full strength of the board and reduce staff burden. Stable, consistent member communication and technology infrastructure are foundational to organizational effectiveness.

GOAL

Strengthen SORP's internal structure, leadership pipeline, and operational capacity to effectively deliver on its mission and support a growing, evolving profession.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- SORP's capacity to deliver its mission and provide value to its members is strengthened.
- There is a clear succession plan for the board and staff.
- Members and the broader community recognize the value of belonging to a professional organization.

STRATEGY 3.1

Attract and retain staff and contract positions

STRATEGY 3.2

Create Board structures and succession planning

STRATEGY 3.3

Strengthen infrastructure to support connection and community-building



PILLAR 4

Career Development & Pathways

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Clear career pathway maps grounded in core competencies help people in these roles view themselves as professionals and part of a bigger purpose. Assessing professional development needs at all career stages ensures resources are targeted and relevant. Partnerships with universities, conservation corps, tribal colleges, community colleges, and public schools build pipelines into the profession. Supporting today's leaders and mentoring those of tomorrow is necessary to the profession's long-term success.

GOAL

Create clear, accessible, and inclusive pathways into and through the outdoor recreation profession, supporting professionals at every career stage and background.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Career pathway maps are developed in partnership with agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations.
- SORP is known as a go-to resource for fostering mentorship and life-long learning.
- Outdoor recreation is recognized as a legitimate career for high school and college students and for people making mid-career transitions.

STRATEGY 4.1

Develop career pathway maps for all career stages

STRATEGY 4.2

Expand and formalize the mentorship program

STRATEGY 4.3

Partner with academic and workforce institutions to build pipelines

STRATEGY 4.4

Scale professional development opportunities to support career pathways