

Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals

2021-2025 SORP Strategic Plan

Vision: The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals creates sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

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

Values

1. **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Our organization is strengthened by the diversity of thoughts, experiences, and connections of the outdoor recreation professionals who work to provide outdoor recreation for all.
2. **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.
3. **People:** Our strength is the passion, diversity, knowledge, and leadership of our members and the outdoor recreation profession.
4. **Community:** We thrive in the opportunity to support lasting connections and the cultivation of shared purpose in serving the recreating public.
5. **Collaboration:** We embrace diverse collaborations to advance the outdoor recreation profession and foster meaningful and lasting relationships.
6. **Skill Development:** We believe that a fulfilling career includes life-long learning and evolves to be responsive to changing conditions.

Services

1. We provide a support and collaboration network for outdoor recreation professionals through communities of practice, web-based tools, and gatherings.
2. We serve as a confluence for resources, tools, information, and innovation provided by our network of outdoor recreation professionals.
3. We advance skill development and training by creating and disseminating high-quality learning opportunities through webinars, gatherings, and our annual conference.
4. We promote the scholarship and advancement of students and new professionals by providing monetary support and development opportunities.
5. We contribute leadership on contemporary policy issues relevant to outdoor recreation by participating in national forums and gatherings, and supporting applicable position statements.

Definitions

Outdoor Recreation - Activities undertaken for leisure, mental and physical health, spirituality, or other reasons that take place outdoors and are typically dependent on a nature-based environment.

Nature-based environment - Any outdoor setting of any size where the sights and sounds of the natural world are present, from urban parks and greenways to designated wilderness areas.

Outdoor Recreation Professional - Any person who participates in activities as part of their paid or volunteer labor that facilitates access to outdoor recreation. This includes traditional outdoor recreation disciplines such as research, planning, management, and administration; as well as other disciplines and services such as public affairs, landscape architecture/design, tourism, destination marketing, outfitting and guiding, camps, specialty group outings, etc.

Sustainable Recreation - Sustainable recreation is the intersection of social, economic, ecological, managerial, and political factors about desired conditions for a discrete outdoor recreation setting. Sustainable recreation is part of the larger socio-ecological system and contributes to the overall sustainability of ecosystems, communities, and economies.

The following definitions are courtesy of the [Avarna Group](#):

Justice: Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals and communities can live a full and dignified life. These barriers are essentially the “isms” in society: racism, classism, sexism, etc.

Equity: Allocating resources to ensure everyone has access to the same resources & opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers—the ‘isms’—exist. Equity is the approach & equality is the outcome.

Diversity: The differences between us based on which we experience systemic advantages or encounter systemic barriers to opportunities.

Inclusion: Fostering a sense of belonging by centering, valuing, & amplifying the voices, perspectives & styles of those who experience more barriers based on their identities.

Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Goal 1: Membership, Collaboration & Partnerships

The SORP board must ensure that the Society’s vision, mission and values are conveyed across its membership and to outdoor recreation professionals, strategic partners, and targeted outside audiences. To be a viable organization, SORP’s members must represent the facets of the outdoor recreation profession. The effectiveness of SORP in providing national leadership for the outdoor recreation profession requires strategic partnerships and meaningful collaboration.

Objective: Promote, support, and maintain a membership that is representative of the diversity that exists across the United States.

- Ensure member retention and recruitment aligns with SORP Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) commitments.
- Outreach and build awareness of SORP’s mission and services among non-traditional outdoor recreation organizations such as Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), nonprofit groups, tourism providers, and land trusts.

- Use member and/or broader surveys to understand barriers and opportunities to increase diversity in the outdoor recreation profession.

Objective: Improve member retention and continue to grow of membership.

- Increase member retention to 45%. Better understand why members leave/do not renew.
- Grow membership by at least 10% annually.
- Develop option(s) for agency/organizational membership and training-focused categories (e.g. training subscription).
- Develop marketing and communication tactics to attract members throughout the year (not just pre-conference).

Objective: Provide opportunities for a wider audience of outdoor recreation professionals to connect & collaborate.

- Use collaborative opportunities to promote JEDI to members and the outdoor recreation profession.
- Leverage new collaborations & partnerships as a broader coalition.
- Provide opportunities for members to collaborate using technology and in-person gatherings. Improve the tools and platforms for virtual collaboration to function more effectively.

Objective: Build, maintain, and grow partnerships.

- Develop a SORP partnership approach that includes desired outcomes for partnerships and potential partners.
- Develop partnerships that promote operational sustainability such as agency-specific training agreements and conference-based partnerships.
- Support partner development and networking by the SORP Executive Director.

Knowledge, Skills & Professionalism

SORP recognizes that outdoor recreation professionals must possess unique skill sets and must balance a wide array of challenges to ensure that outdoor recreation opportunities remain available and sustainably managed. We also recognize that many outdoor recreation professionals are in this field without formal training or degrees. Supporting today's leaders and mentoring those of tomorrow is necessary to the profession's long-term success.

Objective: Explore and celebrate the breadth of work that falls under the "outdoor recreation professional" umbrella.

- Develop core competencies for the breadth of outdoor recreation professionals in order to better define and welcome a more diverse audience of people and programs.
- Understand different perspectives about terms such as "outdoor recreation professional." Revise terms and definitions to promote inclusion.
- Communicate definitions, competencies, and values to a wide variety of stakeholders associated with the outdoor recreation profession.

Objective: Expand and grow information sharing and knowledge transfer among members, researchers, and the outdoor recreation professional community.

- Coordinate and support relevant communities of practice gatherings and resource sharing.
- Explore innovative ways to involve more researchers and graduate students in the organization. Expand opportunities for practitioners to connect with researchers.

- Collaborate with universities and academic programs focused on outdoor recreation/outdoor industry to provide relevant research, data, and networking.

Objective: Improve access and functionality of the online resource library through technological improvements.

- Collect and disseminate materials relevant to outdoor recreation professionals.
- Provide expanded access to the most up-to date relevant research.
- Update resource library, case studies, add JEDI topics, utilize technology & website

Objective: Provide training, guidance, and resources to support experienced and emerging outdoor recreation professionals' needs

- Provide high-quality skill development, training, and educational opportunities for all outdoor recreation professionals.
- Revise SORP planning principles.
- Develop technical guides and training that promote JEDI, sustainable recreation, and other SORP values.
- Develop business strategy/market analysis for consulting and training offerings.

Communications, Outreach & Advocacy/Policy

SORP will provide relevant information and resources to support and enhance professional development among its members and the larger outdoor recreation profession.

Objective: Develop and implement a communications plan that highlights and promotes SORP's vision and mission.

- Use social media and other communication tools to share timely and relevant messages about SORP's programs, members, outdoor recreation issues, and successes.
- Update SORP logo and visual communication products.

Objective: Increase the awareness of SORP and its activities, programs, and resources.

- Be intentional with targeted audiences to be inclusive of nonprofits and a broader spectrum of organizations involved with outdoor recreation.
- Leverage partnerships to promote SORP's mission and members' expertise.

Objective: Focus advocacy on the largest outcome-based goals that benefits the widest audience.

- Collaborate with other organizations, agencies, researchers, and the outdoor recreation industry to elevate the importance of outdoor recreation to a broad audience.
- Bring SORP's voice to coordinated advocacy efforts (e.g., Outdoor Recreation Roundtable).
- Contribute to outdoor recreation policy development and implementation.

Organizational Sustainability

SORP recognizes that operational sustainability is imperative to its existence. Programs, events, and offerings will be undertaken with full recognition of financial impacts. The board will seek enhancement of its financial status through partnerships, sponsors, and donors.

Objective: Diversify financial revenue streams to sustain the organization annually and maintain or grow financial reserves.

- Increase revenue percentage from non-conference programs including webinar sponsorships, training agreements, technical assistance, and memberships.

- Explore other opportunities to diversify financial revenue streams.
- Secure National Outdoor Recreation Conference sponsorships as identified in the conference budget.
- Increase investment income return.

Objective: Expand service offerings to increase the value and exposure of the organization as well as to diversify income streams.

- Assess financial implications of providing additional service offerings using Small Business Administration or similar resources. Additional service offerings may include:
 - Technical assistance program for Subject Matter Expertise at an hourly rate and/or estimated project cost.
 - Consulting services at an hourly rate and/or estimated project cost.
 - Training program development and delivery.

Risk Management, Governance & Organizational Structure

SORP provides quality services and opportunities to its members and to the profession at large. Towards this end, the organization will operate in an efficient, effective, transparent, and professional manner in all aspects.

Objective: Minimize risk to the organization by complying with all applicable laws and best practices for nonprofit governance.

- As soon as practical, dissolve incorporation in Minnesota and incorporate SORP in California.
- Develop new policies and procedures and/or resolutions in alignment with revised bylaws.
- Provide board development and training based on identified gaps and skill development needs.
- Ensure board complies with fiduciary responsibility and monitors SORP's financial health.

Objective: Develop an organizational chart and structure for the future based on goals outlined in this strategic plan.

- Identify roles and responsibilities of the board and staff.
- Identify and prioritize additional positions to support organization growth.
- Develop an employee handbook.
- Increase staff capacity to support the organization as it grows.