Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Strategic Plan 2025-2027

Plain text version

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

2025-2027 Biennial Strategic Plan

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Our Mission

The Mission of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is to provide and protect outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational sites for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations.

Our Vision

To take the long view to protect Oregon's special places and provide the greatest experience while creating stable future funding.

The mission is supported by three main focus areas:

- Great Experiences
- Special Places
- Long View

These three areas overlap and work together to form the mission. Staff surround and support all three focus areas.

Our Values

- Accountability
- Commitment
- Empathy
- Empowerment
- Engagement
- Fun
- Respect
- Well-Being

Our Welcome Statement

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is proud to care for Oregon's extraordinary landscapes and rich cultural history. The department serves its visitors and all Oregonians through its properties and programs and recognizes that the state's resilience and beauty are strengthened by its diverse population. Oregon State Parks are public spaces where all are welcome. We value and serve everyone, and we are committed to providing safe and equitable access to state parks and agency programs. The department will not tolerate racism, harassment, discrimination or intimidation in any form.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strong leadership and governance (engaged commission and exec team, accessible leadership, empowered and responsive management styles)
- Mission-driven staff with lots of passion and commitment (high retention, positive and inclusive culture, passionate and driven)
- Known budget processes with leadership proactively planning for sustainable financial future (approved budget, Financial Foundations Initiative with inclusive input, known and reliable revenue streams)
- Agile and adaptable
- Diverse and appealing assets/destinations (iconic places, wide spectrum of recreation, accessible services)

Weaknesses

- Improve consistent communication, decision-making. Over reliance on executive team. Communication and decisions need more clarity, too many competing priorities, inconsistent practice through the decision-making structures put into place (ex: Leadership Team/Steering Team/Executive Team). Not a structural issue, but an accountability, training, implementation, and role clarity issue. Leadership is service driven and helpful to the point of always providing answers, not methods to solution
- Lacks standardized procedures (overly reliant on the past anecdotal methods, gaps in cross training, mysterious processes)
- Staff development gaps (hard skills/trade skills are limited, succession planning is inconsistent, need more investment in staff)
- Disorganized record keeping (files are in multiple places, antiquated software, documentation lacking)

Opportunities

- Strong public and political support
- Lots of marketing and outreach potential by leveraging economic impact, ability to market and collaborate with local businesses, ensure that our services are desired by all Oregonians
- Adaptable recreation opportunities and distribute visitation to better utilize areas and services Evolution of governance to increase financial stability

Threats

- Costs are going up (operations, contracts, construction, maintenance, and staffing)
- Environmental and climate challenges are increasing
- Visitor behavior, socio-political-economic complexities (mental health, houselessness, etc.)
- Over visitation/use/strain (impacts are growing rapidly)
- Collective bargaining, classification, and compensation are not keeping up (wages are not competitive enough for NR positions, depth and breadth of work are diluting the proficiency of hard skills – circumstances driving increased generalized skill sets and knowledge, right sizing classifications)

Agency SWOT Analysis

Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats

The SWOT Analysis for the 2025 Strategic Plan was done with employees and agency leadership. Included are comments from workgroups and advisory committees made up of the members of the public, community-based organization, tribal members, members from historically underrepresented or marginalized communities, business partners and other stakeholders as they met over the last year over a variety of topics. While these groups did not always specifically focus on a SWOT analysis, their input about the agency was valuable to the foundation of this strategic plan.

OPRD Org Chart

The Director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Oregon State Parks report to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission. Under the Director, the organization is structured into three main divisions.

The first division is Operations, led by the Deputy Director of Operations. This division manages field operations across the Coastal, Mountain, and Valley Regions, and also oversees state park experiences through the Engagement Team.

The second division is Field and Community Services, overseen by the Deputy Director of Field and Community Services. This division includes the community support programs of Heritage, the State Historic Preservation Office, Recreational Grants, the ATV program, Real Estate Services, and Planning and Design. It also contains the Park Development Division, which is responsible for Park Resources, Park Improvement, and Safety.

The third division is Central Business Services, managed by the Deputy Director of Central Business Services. This area includes Financial Services, Communications, Agency

Support, Human Resources, Information Services, Internal Audits, Procurement, and Government Relations and Policy.

OPRD Goals

- Welcoming service delivery
- Sustainable system support
- Respectful tribal partnerships
- Invest and improve in people and processes
- Evolve Efficiently

To achieve these agency goals over the next two years, OPRD can pursue a set of integrated strategies that build on existing strengths while identifying and addressing key operational gaps.

In this strategic plan, each goal is articulated by its priorities. These priorities are determined by agency leadership, OPRD Commissioners, post-stay survey comments from visitors, public comments on rulemaking and agency actions, legislative direction, and coordination direction from the Governor's office. These goals are paired with actions, objectives and strategies. These strategies, when pursued in coordination, will position the agency for long-term resilience and relevance.

Additionally, reference documents and action plans are also articulated to tie together the multifaceted strategic planning efforts occurring throughout the agency at every level.

Goal #1: Welcoming Service

Specific Priority Goal

Create a park system where all staff and visitors feel welcome, experience a sense of belonging, and have equitable access to OPRD programs, services, and spaces as guided by the agency's Belonging, Equity, and Engagement (BEE) Plan and Affirmative Action (AA) Plan.

Measurable and Achievable actions, objectives and strategies

Strategy: Implement a welcoming framework (universal goals) and customer service strategy across all park regions.

- Action: Create inclusive signage, culturally respectful staff practices, responsive customer service standards, and universal design principles.
- Action: Confirming accurate rollout of the 2025 updated Welcome Statement implementation.

Strategy: Create measurable and actionable plans for OPRD units and the overall agency that identifies and addresses barriers to belonging and access.

- Action: BEE Coordinator will collaborate with all managers to create unit initiatives that advance the BEE Plan.

Strategy: Have a well-trained workforce that is committed to the values and culture of OPRD.

- Action: Establish and identify staff belonging, equity, and engagement training relevant to their roles in a way that supports full understanding of the Welcome Statement.

Relevant action plans and reference documents

- Belonging, Equity, and Engagement Plan
- 2025-2027 Affirmative Action Plan
- OPRD Welcome Statement
- 2021 ADA Transition Plan
- OPRD Universal Access Policy

Goal #2: Invest and Improve

Specific priority goal

Strengthen OPRD's internal capacity by investing in staff development and refining core operational processes to ensure all employees are supported, engaged, and equipped to succeed.

Measurable and achievable actions, objectives and strategies

Strategy: Cultivate holistic agency perspective for staff and encourage employees to fully engage in their roles, engage in professional development opportunities, and foster a more comprehensive understanding of the agency's operations.

- Action: Continue to provide, train and develop staff through establishing internal opportunities like the employee INSIGHTS program and trainings like POST. Track the participation and successful completion.
- Action: Reimagine OPRD's Manager Academy and roll out to new and existing managers.

Strategy: Identify opportunities for growth and establish principles of belonging, equity, and engagement into OPRD culture and work.

- Action: Review and update onboarding and annual training requirements for staff and volunteers.
- Action: Create a 2-year learning plan based on input from training needs assessment and annual employee engagement survey.

Relevant action plans and reference documents

- 2025-2027 Succession Plan
- OPRD Employee Manual
- OPRD Onboarding Guide
- OPRD Workday Training

Goal #3: Sustainable Systems

Specific priority goal

Deliver high-quality, reliable park services for both internal operations and external visitors by investing in system modernization, infrastructure resilience, and sustainable operations that meet the evolving needs of Oregonians and the environment.

Measurable and achievable actions, objectives and strategies

Strategy: Advance priority projects in the IT Strategic Plan and invest in new equipment and technology upgrades that improve process and system modernization. Implement solutions for projects such as:

- Action: Heritage Hub- Create a combined integrated database management system that supports the state's heritage programs, enforcement, grants, permits and preservation efforts by completeing procurement of system.
- Action: Rec Hub- Replace current reservation system with a solution that improves customer experiences, reduces staff administrative burden, and provides opportunities to increase revenue with a long-term contract procurement and implementation.

Strategy: Develop and begin implementing a multi-year capital strategy that aligns General Obligation Bond projects and other funding with top needs in deferred maintenance, climate-resilient infrastructure, and emergency preparedness.

- Action: Promote agency resilience and preparedness by updating emergency operation plans and upgrading infrastructure and capital planning priority projects.

Relevant action plans and reference documents

- 2025-2030 OPRD Information Technology Strategic Plan

- OPRD Continuity of Operations Plan
- 2025-2027 Capital Planning Project Prioritization and Status

Goal #4: Efficient Evolution

Specific priority goal

Guide OPRD through efficient and adaptive evolution by strengthening governance, embracing continuous improvement, and preparing for a more resilient financial future.

Measurable and achievable actions, objectives and strategies

Strategy: Strengthen governance and accountability by exploring structures that ensure the highest level of flexibility and success for the agency's long-term financial sustainability.

- Action: Implement priority recommendations from the Secretary of State audit and legislative changes including procurement reform with completed rule changes by end of fall of 2025.

Strategy: Ensure financial stewardship through the "Financial Foundations Initiative" that updates internal budget processes.

- Action: Redesign budgeting process at unit levels to promote long-term savings strategies, develop budget decision-making tree procedures, and reimagine creative revenue generating strategies.

Relevant action plans and reference documents

- 2025 Senate Bill 565
- 2025 Senate Bill 838
- FY 2025-2027 OPRD Budget Narrative

Goal #5: Respectful Tribal Relations

Specific priority goal

Maintain and strengthen government-to-government relationships with Oregon's federally recognized tribes through meaningful consultation, shared stewardship, and culturally respectful collaboration.

Measurable and achievable objectives and strategies

Strategy: Include tribal voices in cultural resource protection and collaborate in areas such as land use, interpretation, education, or natural, historic, and cultural resource management.

- Action: Continue to establish consistent and proactive consultation early and often to build meaningful relationships with tribal governments by consistently following the agency's tribal relations policy, ensuring government-to-government consultation for significant programs, projects, and rulemaking.

Strategy: Honor traditional use, cultural heritage, respect for sovereignty, and awareness of tribal histories and perspectives across all levels of the agency.

- Action: Develop and provide ongoing staff training and update guidance documents, procedures and policies to align with respectful tribal relations.

Resource Allocation

The allocation of resources throughout OPRD over the next two years are outlined in the agency's FY 2025-2027 budget. This outlines the agency's different departments, programs, staff allocations and resource planning.

While the budget for the current biennium is stable, the agency faces critical external factors that could impact our mission achievement including an unavoidable budget deficit between limited revenue streams versus increasing expenditures. To sustain and enhance park operations, there is an immediate need for greater flexibility in both expenditure authority and revenue generation.

The state park system does not receive any General Fund for daily operations but instead depends on revenue by human choices, all which can be volatile: park operations (visitor fees), Lottery funding, and RV registration funds.

Meanwhile, deferred maintenance of a 100+ year old park system, climate change threats, over-visitation, inflation, cost of living and pay equity increases, and other mandatory budget allocations have pushed expenditures beyond the revenue's ability to keep pace.

To prepare and plan for the future, the agency is preemptively and strategically studying options for financial sustainability and taking actions where possible towards stability. Visitor fees for both day-use and overnight have increased in 2025 along with planned increases for the coming biennium. These continued market-based adjustments are needed but visitors alone cannot bear the weight of the rising costs.

The agency's internal "Financial Foundations Initiative" is exploring new budgeting strategies and reviewing better use of existing properties. Multiple bills from the 2025 legislative session seek to give OPRD more flexible governance to explore more creative, stable revenue streams and save money by directly procuring with small, local businesses in rural communities where our parks are located rather than through a giant state-wide system that overlooks and overcharges necessary services.

Additionally, the Oregon Secretary of State's 2025-2026 audit plan will examine the agency's priority areas to focus and reduce risk so the agency can better meet its mission and overcome barriers.

To ensure that our parks continue to provide lasting value for generations to come, we must act now to secure the financial resources needed to support our ongoing work and meet the growing demands of our visitors.

OPRD 2025-2027 Projected Expenditures by Program and Fund Type

Percentage:

- Direct Services: 49%
- Community Support and Grants: 33%
- Central Services: 10%
- Park Development: 7%
- Director's Office: 1%

Dollar Amounts:

- Director's Office: $3.1 M
- Central Services: $64.9 M
- Park Development: $25.2 M
- Direct Services: $170 M
- Community Support & Grants: $137.3 M

Total: $400.3 million

Total less grant carryover (POP101): $350.5 million

Positions: 865

FTE: 629.4

Monitoring and Evaluation

The agency will focus on taking steps to ensure the strategic plan's goals and objectives are met by periodically measuring, monitoring, identifying and evaluating progress. The OPRD Executive Team will conduct quarterly check-ins and temperature measurements on each goal to monitor performance and keep up accountability. Updates to this strategic plan will be made annually and shared transparently with the agency and its partners.

The calendar below outlines expectations, deadlines, and quarterly performance checks.

Monitor and Evaluation Calendar

Year 2025

Quarter 1: Develop strategic goals and prepare them for the strategic plan. Applied to Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Quarter 2: Submit strategic plan for review to DAS. Publish plan. Applied to Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Quarter 3: No listed activity.

Quarter 4: Review strategies and objectives. Track measurables and identify gaps. Define targeted actions.

Year 2026

Quarter 1: No listed activity.

Quarter 2: Track training participation and evaluation if applicable.

Quarter 3: Revisit goals, measurements, outcomes, and results.

Quarter 4: Conduct PESTLE analysis.

Year 2027

Quarter 1: Draft revisions to strategic goals and prepare new draft of plan.

Quarter 2: Submit strategic plan for review to DAS. Publish plan.

Quarter 3: No listed activity.

Quarter 4: No listed activity.