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Planning a Thriving Future for **Colorado Parks & Recreation Association**

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For Colorado Parks & Recreation Association

www.cpra-web.org

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CPRA STRATEGIC PLANNING SUMMARY

To build on the decades of success of the Colorado Parks & Recreation Association (CPRA) and to focus its efforts moving forward in the best interests of the CPRA membership, the organization hired Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to facilitate a strategic planning process in spring and summer 2021. During the “discovery phase” of this project, the JVA team gathered original feedback on CPRA via a survey of CPRA board, staff and section board members; a separate survey of CPRA members; and ten 30-minute phone interviews with current or former board and section board members, CPRA partners and CPRA members. Informed by the findings of this discovery process, CPRA’s board and staff, joined by JVA facilitators, convened remotely for two 3-hour strategic planning sessions on August 2 and August 10, 2021. The following pages briefly summarize the outcomes of the planning sessions.

Revised Mission Statement

Responding to mixed feedback on the mission statement from survey respondents, and to help guide the board and staff on future endeavors, CPRA retreat participants worked to revise the organization’s mission statement and ultimately proposed the following, which will formally be voted upon by the CPRA board at its December meeting:

“Promoting excellence in the Parks & Recreation industry through connection, education, and recognition.”

Strategic Planning Priorities

Participants agreed on the following strategic planning priorities:

CPRA Strategic Planning Priorities
Prioritize membership and engagement beyond the Front Range
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eastern Plains, mountains ▪ Board members from broader area
Explore reorganizing CPRA sections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start with member feedback ▪ Consider geographic focus ▪ Create space for existing section categories to continue to connect
Strengthen partnerships and sponsorships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find two to five strategic partners to collaborate with on programming ▪ Grow sponsor list
Create opportunities for online engagement

CPRA Strategic Planning Priorities

- Continue to offer relevant workshops and networking opportunities online
- Leverage CPRA's Connected Community platform

Deepen programming opportunities for underserved demographics

- Students, new professionals
- Parks, trails and open space professionals

Ensure a thriving and growing staff

- Create conditions for staff retention
- Grow staff by one or two

INTRODUCTION

To build on the decades of success of the Colorado Parks & Recreation Association (CPRA) and to focus its efforts moving forward in the best interests of the CPRA membership, the organization hired Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to facilitate a strategic planning process in spring and summer 2021. During the “discovery phase” of this project, the JVA team gathered original feedback on CPRA via a survey of CPRA board, staff and section board members; a separate survey of CPRA members; and 10 phone interviews with current or former board and section board members, CPRA partners and CPRA members.

Informed by the findings of this discovery process, CPRA’s board and staff, joined by JVA facilitators, convened remotely for two 3-hour strategic planning sessions on August 2 and August 10, 2021.

The desired outcomes were to:

- *Build a sense of teamwork and alignment among retreat participants to help create buy-in among those who will guide CPRA toward its desired future going forward*
- *Create a dynamic and broad new mission statement based on a shared vision of CPRA’s future*
- *Identify a shared vision for program strategy for the next three to five years*
- *Develop next steps for implementation moving forward*

Feedback from the discovery process is referenced in this report and was used to inform the conversation and decision-making during the CPRA strategic planning session. The full discovery report is included as an appendix herein.

Strategic Planning Participants

The following CPRA staff and board members participated in one or both strategic planning retreat sessions:

Justin Perdue, board president

Hillary Roemersberger, board president-elect

Karen O'Donnell, past president of board

Clay Shuck, board member

Chad Redin, board member

Mark Snow, board member

Allison Kincaid, executive director

Ashley Perillo, professional development program manager

Rachel Hungerbuhler, professional development coordinator

Jillian Strogis, membership & communications coordinator

The JVA facilitators were:

Adam Brock, JVA senior facilitation consultant

Sandy Wiegand, senior editor

Planning Session Outline

Days before the first strategic planning session, CPRA board and staff members attended a one-hour JVA presentation on the findings of the discovery report to familiarize themselves with the feedback collected from CPRA members and others. Thus, planning retreat participants were able to enter the sessions with stakeholders' concerns and priorities fresh on their minds.

The first CPRA strategic planning session centered on refining the organization's mission statement and on homing in on CPRA's strategic priorities for the next three to five years. The second facilitated session, in addition to wrapping up discussion of the above, centered on considerations related to CPRA's financing and communications.

MISSION STATEMENT

Responding to mixed feedback on the mission statement from respondents to the board, staff and section board member survey, and to help guide the board and staff on which future endeavors to undertake, CPRA retreat participants worked to revise the organization's mission statement. The current statement is the following:

"Promote the Parks and Recreation profession and its growth throughout the State of Colorado."

After considering the approaches of some sample mission statements, participants sought to create a mission statement that:

- **Was as concise as possible**
- **Was inspiring**
- **Made it clear what CPRA does and, to some extent, what it does not do**

Participants worked individually and then in groups to write a new mission statement. After the group came to consensus on the main points for the statement at the first planning session, staff and board members dedicated time outside the meetings to work out the remaining details. Their statement was presented at the second planning session, and after some final discussion and tweaks, the retreat participants agreed to **the following proposed new mission statement:**

Mission Discussion Points

- **Advocacy:** Retreat participants agreed that although CPRA may at times conduct advocacy, treating advocacy as core to CPRA's mission would require significant realignment of resources and the neglect of other areas that now constitute the bulk of the organization's work.
- The word "**industry**" was included, in part, to help clarify that CPRA is not a state agency serving public parkgoers and hikers.

Figure 1. Proposed new CPRA mission statement

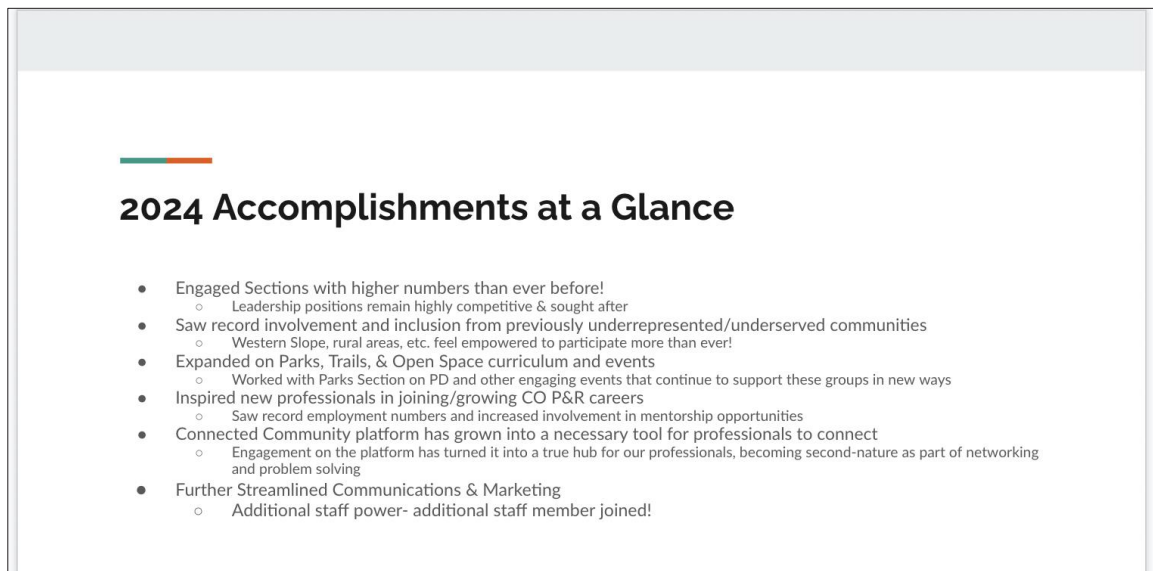
“Promoting excellence in the Parks & Recreation industry through connection, education, and recognition.”

Next steps will include formal adoption of the new mission statement by the board.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To help the CPRA team refine its strategic priorities, retreat participants were asked to envision a presentation on CPRA's accomplishments, to be given in the year 2024. Each participant recorded their ideas on a separate online “presentation slide.”

Figure 2. A presentation slide from the planning exercise



As group members shared their individual visions, themes began to emerge. Based on these themes, participants were sent into small groups to consider specific plans for a few of the priority areas of their choice. The ideas from these small breakout groups were shared with the broader group and then carried over to the second planning meeting for further discussion and development. A summary of ideas specific to each category is included in the appendices.

By the second session, the group had agreed on **the following strategic priorities for the next three to five years**, while recognizing that **financial** and **communications** activities associated with these activities would also be necessary:

Figure 3. CPRA strategic priorities



CPRA Section Organization

One of the ideas that surfaced amid strategic priorities exploration was to examine the possibility of working hand-in-hand with CPRA members to reorganize the CPRA sections. When this idea was shared with the larger group, participants saw several potential advantages:

- Professionals would have the opportunity to **connect with a broader range of people**, potentially exposing them to **new ideas**
- A regional/geographic alignment could make **connection easier within regions**, and some areas are already undertaking efforts to create regional groupings
- Reorganization could allow for **better use of CPRA resources**

“There’s a lot of overlap among our different sections. From a professional development viewpoint, it’s a different way to look at things ... not pigeonholing people.”—planning session participant

However, both CPRA board and staff recognize that such an endeavor could never occur without the input and support of CPRA membership. All agree that any movement in this direction will happen slowly and be informed at every step by the voices of CPRA members and other stakeholders.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

During CPRA’s second strategic planning session, the group spent time considering CPRA’s financial model, looking at it particularly in light of the strains imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Member spending on professional development has consistently been low when the economy is poor (e.g., 2008 economic crisis). Recognizing this, CPRA made changes to its funding strategy prior to the pandemic. Nonetheless, funding remains a challenge for the organization, and its leadership is eager to bolster and diversify its funding through current or new sources.

With this in mind, participants were asked to brainstorm individually and then in small groups on ways the organization could raise money. The ideas generally fell into the following categories:

- Fundraisers (e.g., selling CPRA promotional items, holding events)
- Partnerships and sponsorships (with industry partners)
- Fees for services (increasing fees or doing new things)

A task force of board and staff members volunteered to review the full list of ideas (see appendix), looking at it through a lens of return on investment, and to make recommendations at the next CPRA board meeting, in December.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

In light of CPRA's proposed new mission statement, its clarified strategic priorities, and feedback in surveys and interviews suggesting that CPRA's messaging could be improved, participants spent a few minutes brainstorming marketing slogans as a way to help them pinpoint the new information they would like to share with the membership.

Further discussion led to participants agreeing that CPRA should undertake a **rebranding** effort in the not-too-distant future, followed by an eventual **website redesign**.

The group also agreed to work toward making it possible for stakeholders to **opt in or out of specific types of communications**, e.g., emails on particular topics, as well as **possible development of a CPRA app**.

Finally, the team decided to outline plans for a **listening tour**, as a means to continue to connect with CPRA members and stakeholders, especially as it considered changes to the structuring of the organization.

Fun with Slogans

CPRA is evolving to better serve YOU & set the organization up for a bright future.

No matter the reason or season, CPRA is here for you!

CPRA: Helping you reach your peak!

Your success is our success. Let's keep learning and growing together.

Shifting Gears: Enhancing our work to Bring ALL CO Parks & Recreation Professionals into the CPRA fold

YOUR association is ready to revamp in the years to come with more from and for you!

Everything is evolving! And so is CPRA!

CPRA is evolving the way it supports its members by continually being dynamic in its growth opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

As a culmination of CPRA’s strategic planning process, JVA facilitated the team through outlining next steps to pursuing goals in the priority areas highlighted and the specific tasks agreed upon.

Table 1. CPRA action plan

Goals	Responsible Parties	Target Deadline
<p>Begin planning listening tour of CPRA membership. Determine what format(s) this listening tour might include, such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc., and whether it is online or in person, as well as its timeline, etc. Plan to seek feedback related to section reorganization; feedback on fee-for service options; and communications preferences, including rebranding and possible website revamp.</p>	<p>Hillary, CPRA board, including incoming members, possibly past board members</p>	
<p>Begin outreach to parks, trails and open space professionals. Find contacts among these professionals who might be willing to offer insight into how CPRA can create a track that meets their needs at the annual conference. This could include discussion of relevant areas within parks, trails and open space (e.g., athletic fields, playgrounds, irrigation), as well as trends/issues such as vandalism.</p>	<p>Clay</p>	<p>CPRA December board meeting</p>
<p>Outline rebranding plan. Review whether current platform allows individuals to opt in or out of communications, whether current website provider offers a mobile app option, and other necessary technical questions. Staff will develop a request for proposals (RFP) seeking an update of CPRA’s visual identity.</p>	<p>Rachel and Jillian, with Allison support</p>	
<p>Draft funding plans. Review the full list of funding ideas for potential return on investment, and make recommendations on which ideas to pursue. Consider staff capacity and potential for volunteers to support activities, as well as information on what CPRA members may be willing to pay for.</p>	<p>Allison, Karen, Ashley and Clay</p>	<p>CPRA December board meeting</p>
<p>Create advocacy guidance. Determine next steps in creating a policy that sets parameters for the circumstances under which CPRA will engage in advocacy, how advocacy is defined, how CPRA communicates this to its members, etc.</p>	<p>Allison, legislative chair (Karen) in Colorado Springs, and Chad</p>	<p>CPRA December board meeting</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING

Based on the strategic priorities identified and the ensuing discussions at CPRA's strategic planning sessions—and informed by feedback from CPRA members and stakeholders during the discovery process—JVA has the following recommendations for next steps:

- Conduct formal board vote to **approve new mission statement**.
- **Complete all columns in the table above** to all include person(s) responsible and a timeline for each goal. This will help ensure follow-through for your organization.
- **Create 12-week plans** for each of the goals listed on the table (see template in appendices). A 12-week plan breaks down the goals into smaller more “digestible” action steps that can be fit into everyone's weekly schedules.
- Develop an **accountability plan** for each goal and corresponding action step to help those responsible for action items stay on track. This may be in the form of weekly or monthly check-ins, email updates, etc. To support this accountability and the continual updating of the action plan, we recommend creating a shared document (e.g., Google Drive) that all can access and update. Action plans are living documents—you may need to add more action items or update existing ones as the year progresses.
- **Review alignment between strategic priorities and developed goals** to ensure clarity on how goals address priorities. Revisit priorities as resources allow to address any remaining gaps.

JVA has enjoyed partnering with Colorado Parks & Recreation Association throughout this strategic planning process. Your enthusiasm for and commitment to your work supporting parks and recreation professionals is clear, and we believe that your organization's strengths (e.g., dedicated and passionate board and staff, adaptability, and collaborative approach) will allow you to successfully implement this plan.