

# OUTDOORS EMPOWERED NETWORK

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Outdoors Empowered Network is a national network of community-led, youth-centered outdoor education groups that are dedicated to increasing access and diversity in the outdoors through gear libraries and outdoor leadership training.

## A NATIONAL NETWORK OF MEMBERS

Our member programs are at the heart of the work of Outdoors Empowered Network. These regional organizations actively support youth service organizations and schools with outdoor leadership training and gear libraries. Together, we are working to increase our collective impact on the world, and create equitable access to nature.



OEN's member organizations support access to outdoor adventures for tens of thousands of youth each year. Members partner with community-based youth service agencies, schools, and other youth-centered groups to make transformative outdoor experiences happen through the following core programs:

### TRAINING

Members provide experiential, skills-based trainings for teachers and youth workers in their regions so they are empowered to take youth outdoors on their own. For every adult trained, 20+ youth get a chance to experience the power of nature and the outdoors. For many young people, this is the first time they'll see the Milky Way, hear a rushing waterfall, or experience an environment free of the urban cacophony of horns, sirens, and cell phones. Nature-based experiences change lives.

### GEAR

Members reduce one of the biggest barriers to getting outside—cost of gear—by curating and providing access to outdoor equipment libraries that cater to schools, youth service organizations, and families. Gear libraries can look different in different communities, using a wide array of partnerships. Read through our member descriptions on the next page to explore their cultural and locational diversity.

**WE SEED AND SUPPORT A  
TIME-TESTED MODEL FOR  
CONNECTING YOUTH  
WITH THE OUTDOORS  
THROUGH THE ADULTS  
THEY TRUST.**

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Members often provide mini-grants, transportation subsidies, and connections through social media and listservs. Some also provide campgrounds, simplifying the preparations required for teachers and youth mentors as they plan their trips.

## A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY



Being part of OEN gives members the opportunity to build networks, share best practices, fundraise for gear, and see the national impact of collective work. Our core “train and support” program model brings together a wide variety of members, all working together to bring equity and access to the outdoors. OEN supports core members wherever possible, including through:

### GEAR DONATIONS

Our members are responsible for twenty gear libraries throughout the United States, reducing one of the biggest barriers to access for hundreds of thousands of young people. Outdoors Empowered Network supports these gear libraries through fundraising for in-kind and monetary donations, bulk purchases, and programmatic design.

### MEMBER SUPPORT

From designing new programming to applying for grants, running an outdoor education organization can involve a lot of hard and lonely work. OEN staff works hard to create connections, problem-solve, and support new program design.

### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We encourage year-round member engagement on topics connected to our work like diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outdoors, best practices, and risk management, creating opportunities for growth and leadership. We also engage external thought leaders during our annual Summit.

### PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

From monthly calls to ad hoc virtual meetups to our annual Summit, OEN cultivates a professional community for outdoor educators and administrators. Our network model gives members a community to work with as they explore new ideas, develop programming and best practices, and face inevitable challenges.

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## OUTDOORS EMPOWERED NETWORK MISSION

Outdoors Empowered Network is a national network of community-led, youth-centered outdoor education groups that are dedicated to increasing access and diversity in the outdoors through gear libraries and outdoor leadership training.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

- INCREASE DIVERSITY
- ACTIONABLE LANGUAGE
- TRAUMA-INFORMED WORK
- CULTURE CHANGE
- INDUSTRY LEADER

### MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

- OUTDOORS FOR ALL
- MISSION ALIGNMENT
- PROGRAMMATIC ALIGNMENT
- LEARNING COMMUNITY
- ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- CENTERING INCLUSION, ACCESS, AND EQUITY
- SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS
- PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
- THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

### ADVANCEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

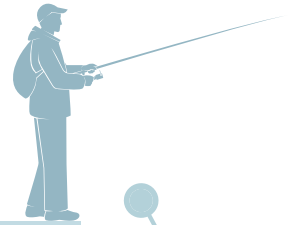
- MEMBER-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION
- MISSION-ALIGNED FUNDRAISING
- ADVOCACY DRIVEN MARKETING
- WELCOMING WORKPLACE
- ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

## INCREASE DIVERSITY

Representation matters. We strive to bring intersectional diversity to all parts of an organization, paying particular attention to representation that matches the larger community in which they sit. In addition to recruiting for diversity, we must also identify and dismantle barriers to access that negatively impact representation.



## ACTIONABLE LANGUAGE

We always strive to use explicit language when working towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, rather than implicit and coded language. We are also conscious about using asset-based language and bringing awareness to passive grammar that shifts responsibility. In addition to helping people feel seen and understood, this actionable language provides clear direction, goals, and accountability.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED WORK

We are constantly learning and implementing cutting edge practices that address current and generational trauma, especially in regards to racialized and misogynistic violence in outdoor spaces. Understanding the challenging historical contexts for current recreation and conservation systems is essential for healing.

## CULTURE CHANGE

We strive to transform philanthropic culture from a charitable power-over model of serving communities in need to a power-with model of working with communities from the ground up. This requires understanding the landscape of grassroots, community-led organizing as well as internal organizational dialogue around philanthropic power and privilege.

## INDUSTRY LEADER

Once a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion process has commenced, organizations have an opportunity and even a responsibility to lead in their industry. Demonstrating and publicizing decolonizing language and action in practices and culture will create a beneficial ripple effect across the industry landscape.



# MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

## OUTDOORS FOR ALL

We deeply believe that all people, and particularly all young people, should have access to the outdoors. Membership growth must expansively meet this vision by extending into regions and communities that have been historically excluded from outdoor recreation. OEN continuously surveys our network and the field to see who is getting left behind and to explore how we can be increasingly inclusive.

## MISSION ALIGNMENT

All potential members must be deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outdoors and be engaged with OEN's DEI Strategic Framework in their programming. They must be willing to challenge the cultural status quo of outdoor recreation when it perpetuates white supremacy and engage in practices that begin to create intersectional repair.

## PROGRAMMATIC ALIGNMENT

Potential members must be deeply committed to increasing access to and diversity in the outdoors by loaning quality outdoor gear free or at reduced costs, providing outdoor skill training opportunities for youth-facing adults, and exploring and modeling decolonizing language, culture, and practices. We are committed to working with emerging members to find and develop culturally aligned ways of recreating outdoors.

## LEARNING COMMUNITY

OEN's strength is in its member community. Potential members must be committed to engaging with the network through monthly Advisory Council meetings and quarterly all member meetings, in-person conferences, ad-hoc working groups, and resource sharing. OEN is committed to growing a diverse and resource-rich community that is mutually beneficial for all members.

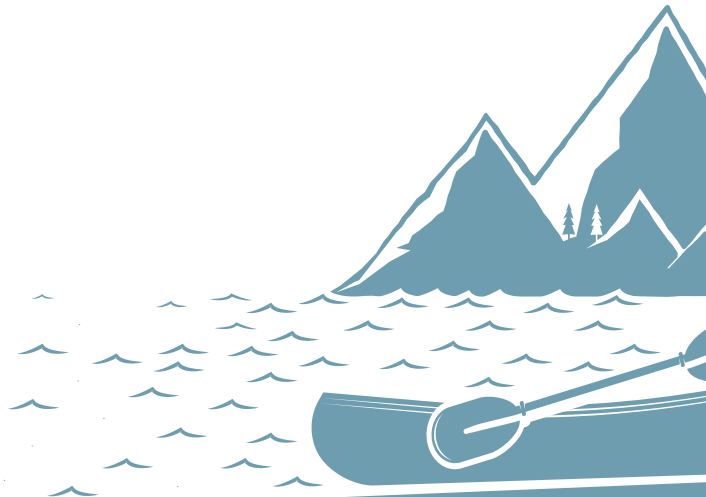
## ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

A potential member must demonstrate organizational readiness to sustain a gear library and bring outdoor skills to community members. This readiness can vary depending on the community being supported, and includes financial sustainability, leadership commitment, dedication to equity, and outdoor recreation experience. OEN is committed to supporting capacity building for grassroots and community organizations that demonstrate dedication to our mission.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### CENTERING INCLUSION, ACCESS, & EQUITY

All of our programming must be culturally inclusive, capacity building, and community building. We understand that because of historical systemic inequities and injustices, many communities lack easy access to the outdoors and all our programming must participate in building a more equitable future. This includes paying attention to opportunities to create cultural inclusion as well as situations where we need to address both real and perceived lack of safety.



### SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

Providing support to our members is a key programmatic commitment. OEN is available to members both individually and collectively to help create connections, problem-solve, and support new program design. When feasible, we support gear acquisition, capacity building, fundraising initiatives, operational growth, and programmatic innovation.

### PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

From monthly calls, to ad hoc virtual meet-ups, to our annual Summit, OEN cultivates a professional community for outdoor educators and administrators. Our network model gives members a community to work with as they explore new ideas, develop programming and best practices, and face inevitable challenges.

### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We encourage year-round member engagement on topics connected to our work like diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outdoors, best practices, and risk management, creating opportunities for growth and leadership. We represent the membership in conferences and speaking engagements around the country, growing an awareness for the work in which we are collectively engaging.



## ADVANCEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

### MEMBER-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION

OEN's primary focus is to support the work of our member organizations as they implement our mission of increasing access and diversity in the outdoors through gear libraries and outdoor leadership training. All administrative and advancement decisions are made through the lens of how they bring support to our members.

### MISSION-ALIGNED FUNDRAISING

All of OEN's fundraising campaigns and grant requests must be mission aligned. We strive to develop a culturally inclusive, power-with model of philanthropic requests that positively engage our collective communities and allow us to build our network together. We avoid fundraising situations that play into a power-over model of charitable service.

### ADVOCACY DRIVEN MARKETING

OEN strives to deliver marketing and communications that are culturally inclusive and grounded in our mission. We cultivate language and images that decolonize outdoor recreation, including avoiding language that perpetuates the erasure of indigenous peoples on our public landscapes and other historical violence in nature. We also work to include perspectives that are often left out of the industry's dialogue because they meet a different cultural need than traditional outdoor recreation.

### WELCOMING WORKPLACE

We believe that our organizational structure and practices must reflect the change we want to see in the world. To this end, we are committed to cultivating a workplace culture that is collaborative, safe, transparent, and dedicated to growth. We additionally strive to support employees through thriving wages and meaningful work-life balance.

### ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

OEN's leadership, including its executives, Board of Trustees, and member Advisory Council, keep the momentum of our mission moving. Our leadership group has intersectional representation and lived experiences of the importance of our mission. Board Members and Executives are active in outdoor recreation and education, ambassadors for OEN in their personal and professional networks, and engaged in personal and professional diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

