Strategic Plan

2022-2024

Prepared by Georgia Center for Nonprofits

11-21
Introduction
In 2021, the board and staff of the Georgia Tree Council (GTC) undertook strategic planning to chart the organization’s future. Over the last two years, GTC adapted to meet the challenges caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a part of these adaptations, GTC was able to move programming virtual and continued to reach out and engage members and supporters across the state. In partnership with advocates, tree councils, government, and private industry, GTC works to preserve Georgia’s community forests. GTC’s programs include educational events, an annual conference, a Landmark and Historic Tree Registry, awareness building activities including awards and newsletters, regranting programs to support local tree planting initiatives, and local community forestry assistance. Additionally, GTC offers memberships to connect interested individuals and organizations with networking, advocacy, and professional development opportunities.

Throughout its thirty three year history, GTC has grown organically and cultivated a dedicated group of members, sponsors, and partners. GTC has reached a point in its organizational development where it needs additional capacity to meet the increased need for services. The board of directors engaged the Georgia Center for Nonprofits to facilitate a strategic planning process to chart its growth and impact over the next three years. This plan builds on GTC’s foundation with the goal of growing sustainably over the next three years.

Mission Statement:
To sustain Georgia’s green legacy by partnering with individuals, organizations, and communities in raising awareness toward improving and maintaining Georgia’s community forests.

Vision Statement
That every Georgia community experiences the many benefits of healthy trees and a strong community forestry program.
**SWOT**

Based on interviews with board members and staff the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>Increasing and retaining members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Programs/ CEUs</td>
<td>Long-term financial model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of information</td>
<td>Marketing and awareness for Georgia Tree Council outside of core supporters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Lynne highly praised</td>
<td>Diversifying membership and organization</td>
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<td>Access to experts in the field</td>
<td>Need for geographic, racial and ethnic, and age diversity</td>
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<td>Organized, well-run organization</td>
<td>Focus on environmental justice and equity</td>
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<td>Able to balance and navigate Georgia’s politics</td>
<td>Clearly articulating the value proposition for membership</td>
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<td>Strong and engaged board</td>
<td>Expanding beyond tree professionals</td>
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<td>Place for information, networking, and support for industry professional</td>
<td>Engagement with philanthropic sector and donors</td>
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<td>Creating a network to support communities across the state</td>
<td>Succession planning and staff capacity</td>
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<td>Supporting on-the-ground projects</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging elected officials</td>
<td>Reliance on Georgia Forestry Commission</td>
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<td>Recruiting other groups for membership</td>
<td>Confusion/competition between local tree advocacy groups and GTC</td>
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<td>City Planners and Engineers</td>
<td>Balancing interests of tree professionals and citizen advocates/concerned citizens</td>
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<td>Public Works</td>
<td>Generational membership trends</td>
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<td>Smaller tree care companies</td>
<td>Need to be state-wide with the challenging economics of state-wide support</td>
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<td>Concerned Citizen groups</td>
<td>Delicate balancing act of advocacy in Georgia</td>
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<td>Supporting smaller communities throughout the state</td>
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<td>Expanding CEU opportunities</td>
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<td>Partnering with other environmental organizations/programs</td>
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<td>Tree City USA</td>
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<td>Growing student engagement/membership</td>
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<td>Grow philanthropic support</td>
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Goal 1: Membership Growth: The Georgia Tree Council has a vibrant membership across the state.

Long-Term Outcomes:
- Increase membership by 30% (125) over the next three years.
- Increase retention to 85% over three years.

Intermediate Outcomes:
- By 2022, increase membership by 25 members.
- By 2023, increase membership by 40 members.
- By 2024, increase membership by 60 members.

Initiatives:
- Identify and implement an updated membership database system.
- Revise membership structure to increase individual membership fee to $50, add two business options for membership separated by business size – less than five employees $125 and over 5 employees $225, and multi-year membership option for governments.
- Update membership materials and collateral to highlight value proposition and discounts to educational events and conferences.
- Create the opportunity for members to become donors through additional donation option during membership renewals.
- Create a membership recruitment and marketing plan with a focus on SW GA and recruiting members from allied professions including engineers, planners, public works employees, and citizen advocates.
- Develop and engage a SW Georgia membership subcommittee with volunteer roles to recruit members in SW Georgia.
- Create a membership retention plan for membership. Implement auto renewal process. Engage board members and/or volunteers to reach out to lapsed members.
- Engage staff and board in pro-actively reaching out to other associations and organizations to speak at events. Target organizations could include Environmental organizations; Planning; Public Works; Parks and Rec; and Developers.
- Create a plan to partner with social justice and environmental justice organizations to increase the number of ReLeaf applicants and grantees from under-resources communities.
- Engage young professionals/emerging professionals’ group in supporting campus programming.
Goal 2: Financial Growth: The Georgia Tree Council has diversified funding support.

**Long-Term Outcomes:**
- Increase sponsorship dollars by 50% ($12,500) over the next three years.
- Grow foundation funding to $15,000 by 2024.

**Intermediate Outcomes:**
- Bring in $5,000 in grant funding by 2023.
- Bring in 4-7 new sponsors in 2023.
- Increase the number of donors by 50% by 2023.

**Initiatives:**
- Create a stewardship plan for current sponsors including building relationships with current board members. As a part of the plan create strategies to increase sponsorship amounts from current sponsors. Develop a calendar to plan sponsorship asks along with stewardship activities to strengthen relationships.
- Develop a target list of new sponsors that have ties to new membership groups including engineering firms, planning firms, equipment manufacturers.
- Grow sponsorship committee to include volunteer positions along with current board members.
- Create updated sponsorship collateral to include video and print. Focus on storytelling and impact of GTC’s work and impact around the state. Clearly outline the portion of sponsorship that supports planting and restoration efforts.
- Create a target list and outreach plan for Georgia based and regional foundations (including corporate foundations, community foundations, and family foundations).
- Develop a case for support that can be utilized in grant applications including outcome measures and success stories.
- Begin applying for foundation funding in 2022.
- Research additional government grant funding opportunities through partnerships with government entities or as a direct grant recipient.
- Implement a plan to grow donors by soliciting members for donations, continue to conduct a year-end appeal in conjunction with Giving Tuesday, and discuss adding additional appeal mid-year.
Goal 3: Grow the Organization: The Georgia Tree Council has the staff and board to achieve its mission.

Long-Term Outcomes:
- 85% of the board is engaged.

Intermediate Outcomes:
- Staff capacity doubles by 2023.
- 85% of staff and board rate the organization as prepared for a leadership transition by 2023.

Initiatives:
- Complete a board matrix and self-assessment to identify gaps and recruitment needs for future board members with a focus on continuing to diversify the board, develop fundraising and marketing expertise, and expand geographic representation.
- Formalize board roles and responsibilities through an annual board commitment and interest process.
- Implement an annual board-self assessment process to identify annual goals and identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Fully implement and activate committee structure to support the organization’s growth.
- Create and implement a departure defined succession plan for current Executive Director including identifying a search committee to lead succession planning activities and develop timeline for search and onboarding.
- Based on succession planning timeline, assess the need to hire additional staff to support Executive Director.
- Engage current board members in sponsor and partner relationships to ensure smooth leadership transition.
- Complete leadership transition in 2023.
- Investigate the potential for a young leaders/emerging leaders advisory group/committee to serve as a pipeline for governance board membership and focus on one to two recruitment projects per year.