

Virginia Headwaters Council

Strategic Plan 2026-2028

Our Vision is that, by December 31, 2030, the Virginia Headwaters Council will:

- Serve 3,000 youth members
- Strengthen, grow, and modernize fundraising to ensure long-term financial stability
- Evolve Camp Shenandoah into a facility fully capable of delivering a true *Camper First* experience
- Champion an organizational culture anchored in operational excellence, forward-looking strategy, and empowered leadership

This Strategic Plan sets forth a focused three-year roadmap for the 2026 to 2028 timeframe designed to drive measurable progress toward achieving our vision.

I. **MEMBERSHIP:** 3,000 by '30

- **Grow Membership:** Implement a comprehensive, year-round strategy to increase traditional youth membership with a focus on recruitment, retention, and renewal:
 - *Recruitment Strategy:* add at least 905 new youth members in 2026 to end the year serving 1,890 youth members. Achieve at least 12% growth in both 2027 and 2028.
 - *Retention Strategy:* exceed the average annual national minimum retention standard of 62% by at least 3 points in 2026 by offering high quality, innovative, and engaging council-level programs that are well-marketed to our units, youth, and volunteers. Strive for an annual retention rate of at least 70% by 2028.
 - *Renewal Strategy:* focus on expiring membership on a monthly basis by tasking monthly renewal responsibility to the District Committees with a goal of improving our annual average renewal rate of 61% by at least 4 percentage points by 2028.
- **Increase number of Units:** Add 14 new units in 2026 with a focus on starting new units in areas of the council currently without Scouting. Add at least 8 new units in both 2027 and 2028.
- **Improve Arrow of Light (AOL) to Scouts BSA Transition:** Increase current 75% AOL to Scouts BSA annual transition rate to 78% by 2028.
- **Focus on Join Events and Marketing:** Rebuild fall Join Scouting Night with coordinated effort from all units and improvement and better targeting of our membership marketing to youth prospects and parents. Launch new and creative Join Scouting events throughout the year.
- **Leverage Commissioners:** Rebuild and focus Commissioner staff on membership, prioritizing new unit support and tasking Commissioners with reducing the number of dropped units.
- **Boost Adult Engagement:** Highlight specific opportunities for adults to actively participate at the unit, district, or council level.

II. **FUNDRAISING:** strengthen, grow, and modernize to ensure long-term financial stability

- **Grow Fundraising:** strengthen Friends of Scouting (FOS), Special Events, and Popcorn & Peanuts (PNP) to ensure mission delivery and long-term success:
 - *Family FOS Strategy:* Strengthen the Family FOS campaign by ensuring annual presentations in every unit, expanding and training the presenter team, and ensuring that membership growth coincides with corresponding increases in Family FOS contributions.
 - *Community FOS Strategy:* Double the amount raised through the Community FOS campaign by 2028. Cultivate major gifts.
 - *Special Events Strategy:* Solidify the FOS Luncheon as the council's premier fundraising event, achieving gross revenue of at least \$100,000 by 2028. Increase revenue from the

council's three additional Special Events by a minimum of 25% by 2028. Develop standardized Playbooks for each Special Event by 2028 to ensure consistent execution, operational continuity, and reliable replication.

- *PNP Strategy*: Increase PNP participation by strengthening unit engagement, enhancing incentives, and adopting best practices from councils with strong PNP performance.
- **Modernize Systems**: Invest in CRM software and other cloud-based systems to support robust fundraising.
- **Ensure Financial Stability**: Produce consistent annual operating surpluses to achieve a cash reserve position of at least \$150,000 by 2028.

III. **CAMP SHENANDOAH**: fully capable of delivering a true *Camper First* experience

- **Eliminate Camp Debt**: Pay off Camp Shenandoah debt by 2027.
- **Better Maintain Existing Assets**: Allocate 10% of the annual council budget to Camp Shenandoah upkeep and improvement by 2028.
- **Invest in New Assets**: Direct half of the Easement Funds once realized to Camp Shenandoah Improvement Plan priorities and deposit the other half into the Endowment Fund's 'Camp Shenandoah Upkeep and Improvement' designated account.
- **Market Summer & Winter Camp**: Drive attendance growth by developing an annual marketing plan for our summer and winter camp programs, presenting it for Executive Committee review, and reporting outcomes to the Executive Board each year.
- **Distinguish Camp Shenandoah**: Explore, develop, and implement unique programs, elements, and experiences that set our camp apart from regional competitors.
- **Encourage and Enable Year-Round Use**: Promote year-round utilization of Camp Shenandoah by our Scouts and support it through targeted investments in camp facilities and infrastructure.
- **Prepare and Launch Capital Campaign**: Ready the council for a capital campaign to fund remaining elements of the Camp Shenandoah Improvement Plan by developing professional architectural drawings and compelling campaign materials, establishing firm anticipated costs to inform clear fundraising goals, recruiting campaign leadership, and securing anchor donor commitments. Launch the campaign once key readiness benchmarks are met.

IV. **CULTURE**: operational excellence, forward-looking strategy, and empowered leadership

- **Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness**: Cultivate a volunteer-driven, professional-supported operating model grounded in transparency across functions and decision-making.
- **Amplify Communication**: Enhance internal and external communication by improving clarity, frequency, and responsiveness to keep volunteers informed and demonstrate Scouting's relevance and impact to the public.
- **Improve Operations**: Strategically fill vacant positions that will advance our Strategic Plan objectives. Work towards a model of council volunteers having a clear, singular role. Proactively plan for succession and build bench depth. Align professional staff around functional areas and review and streamline expectations of districts for maximum effectiveness.
- **Build Tools**: Create resources such as event planning guides to strengthen volunteer effectiveness. Develop dashboards and other tools that enable the Executive Board to monitor progress and performance of the Strategic Plan.
- **Emphasize Training**: Prioritize and strengthen volunteer training and mentoring with a focus on developing unit-level leaders, especially newly recruited ones. Whenever possible, offer in-person training designed to meet adults where they are.
- **Optimize Events and Programs**: Deliver high-quality, innovative, engaging, and replicable programs that support desired retention outcomes. Calendarize events and programs at least one year in advance.
- **Enhance Executive Board**: Recruit Executive Board members with the skills, influence, and results-driven mindset necessary to advance the Strategic Plan and expand the council's reach.