



Ogeechee Riverkeeper 2026 Strategic Plan

Background and Approach

The Ogeechee River and its major tributary the Canoochee River are two of the major environmental cornerstones of Georgia. The water from these rivers drains a 5,540 square-mile basin that encompasses wetlands, forests, farms, and scores of towns and cities, including Statesboro and Savannah. ORK's mission is to protect, preserve and improve the water quality of the Ogeechee River basin.

From 2012-2015, ORK had embarked upon an exhaustive analysis of past and current trends, including soliciting input from external stakeholders, past and present board and committee members, regulatory agencies, educators, local citizens/landowners and corporations. This activity enabled ORK to develop key assumptions about its place in local environmental advocacy as well as its potential impacts in a wider sense (locally, statewide, regionally and beyond).

With these key assumptions identified, ORK was then able to identify the steps required to accomplish its larger goals. This effort enabled ORK to form measurable objectives, as well as identifying key initiatives that would need to be implemented.

In the process of revisiting the existing Strategic Plan in 2021, ORK found that while key assumptions, goals and objectives have evolved slightly, the structure of the Plan is applicable and workable as we move forward, i.e. new challenges can (and do) arise, but the structure for addressing them has proven successful.

The current revision of the Strategic Plan was accomplished by ORK's Board of Directors and its staff in 2021. While certain priorities have evolved – especially in the climate of a global pandemic and various political shifts on the state and national stage – the mission itself remains to ***protect, preserve and improve the water quality in the Ogeechee River basin.***

Our Future Environment

As population size increases, so does the number of people who rely on clean water in our state and beyond. With an increase in population, we have seen growth in every sector of business in order to support this growth, along with a political shift that has weakened regulatory agencies' will to enforce the laws on the books. As a result, we continue to see an increase of the pollution and waste that enters the rivers' water, as well as increased development. There seems to be an increased lack of concern for the well-being of our environment and the health of our rivers, and this combination of depleted natural resources and an increase in the industrial development along our rivers has continued to increase the demands on our water table.

Increased poverty along the river banks and the generational transition of our traditional supporters means decreased resources to support our effort to ensure the good health of our rivers. The last five years have borne out the assumptions made in 2015, and ORK has found that it is more important than ever that it be available to the various stakeholders of the river's future, from other organizations to political figures to educators and policymakers.

With this mission in mind, ORK continues on its journey to create a future supporting a clean and plentiful river basin, as well as ample support for the longevity of the Ogeechee and Canoochee Rivers from key constituents and stakeholders.

Our Strategy:

In developing our strategic plan, Ogeechee Riverkeeper utilized the balanced scorecard as the strategic framework for identifying a broad set of objectives and initiatives we must accomplish. The four perspective areas we focused on include the following:

Mission Perspective: In this perspective we have identified what success looks like externally to the community and our key stakeholders.

Internal Process Perspective: This perspective identifies what we must accomplish internally with respect to our key business processes if we are to be able to achieve the objectives in the mission perspective.

Organizational Capital Perspective: Objectives and initiatives within this perspective identify what our work force and technology capabilities need to be in the future if we are to efficiently run our key business processes and effectively communicate with the community.

Financial Perspective: This perspective identifies what financial resources we will need to operate ORK and strategically invest in the future of the organization. It also identifies how we must manage our resources if we are to be able to achieve the most value from our service to our stakeholders and supporters.

Key Assumptions:

Based on our analysis of the future, ORK has identified the following key assumptions to be used as the foundation of our strategic plan:

Mission Perspective

Water use (as well as water quality problems, pollution and waste water treatment) will increase, significantly reducing the availability of fresh water to feed the river.

There are at least one hundred thousand people in our water basin with limited understanding of the river. Negative news, indifference and apathy will continue to exist.

In five years, our professional climate will include other organizations with similar interests and goals.

Political change can and does significantly impact the protection of the river.

Internal Process Perspective

Effective communication/marketing is needed to best leverage limited resources.

Success will require a variety of board members to support ORK's strategic direction.

SOP/guidance for staff, board & volunteers will help drive strategic alignment and operational consistency.

A robust group of members will support the future growth of the organization.

Organizational Capital Perspective

The development of staff, board and volunteer capacity is needed to support our strategic direction.

Staff augmentation is needed for ORK to meet the operational and strategic needs of the organization (events, fundraising, etc.).

Continually improving communication efforts will better connect us to our constituents.

ORK needs to encourage passion, confidence and competence in staff and board.

Financial Perspective

ORK needs a balanced portfolio of revenue streams (more funders, corporate sponsors, board giving and planned giving, etc.).

ORK Vision Statement:

ORK developed goals that describe our future success against each key assumption. These goals helped describe a successful future organization and helped us create a vision for the future:

“Ogeechee Riverkeeper is recognized as the voice of the watershed, promoting the health of the river and its citizens through advocacy, education and action. We will maintain a healthy financial position, a highly effective staff, an active Board of Directors and an engaged membership”

Our Strategy Chart:

In the following charts we have laid out our strategy by key perspective to include our key assumptions, goals, objectives and initiatives:

Mission Perspective:

Key Assumption	ORK Goal	Key Objective	Key Initiative(s)
Water use (as well as water quality problems, pollution and waste water treatment) will increase, significantly reducing the availability of fresh water to feed the river.	ORK has advocated for the health and resiliency of the river basin to reduce the impact on the ground and surface water supply (we have educated/committed users).	<p>A. Increase monitoring activity and reporting</p> <p>B. Increase attention to major issues (pollution discharges-point and nonpoint sources)</p>	<p>A1. Expand the collection of water samples and compiled data from waterbodies in the basin</p> <p>B1. Expand the collection of water samples and compiled data</p> <p>B2. Create a process to ID sites that need further investigation</p>
There are thousands of people in our watershed with limited understanding of the rivers. Negative news, indifference and apathy will continue to exist (Fear will drive indifference).	ORK has exposed the community to the value of the river, incremental positive news	<p>Increase the number of citizens we engage in river dialogue and activities. (measurements from event attendance, web hits, emails, phone calls)</p> <p>Create an outreach program to get school-age children outside and introduce them to conservation concepts and opportunities to participate in citizen-science work</p> <p>Partner with like-minded NGOs (i.e. garden at GSU) for educational and outreach opportunities</p> <p>Increase visibility of volunteer & outreach coordinator</p>	<p>1. Calculate the baseline totals for event attendance, web hits, emails, phone calls and social media engagement</p> <p>2. Execute the communications strategy to educate the community, political figures and others who make an impact on the river's health.</p> <p>3. Provide education for all ages and demographics through school programs and community volunteer opportunities</p>

Make including other organizations with similar interests and goals a priority.	ORK has become the “go to” organization in the community and is recognized as the source of getting environmental things done (we have generated the awareness and have become the ‘disaster-relief experts’ of the region)	Identify ways to improve the information ORK provides to key constituents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revamp the ‘hotline’ for people to call when they have a concern or comment about the river to include publicizing its existence 2. Communicate the outcomes of the hotline through various social media outlets and other aspects of communications plan 3. Refine and host local ‘meet and greets’
Political Change has significantly impacted the protection of the river	ORK is a key influencer within the political discussion--We are the “go to” expert at the GA Capital for our basin	Increase impact with our legislative representatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build relationships between our staff and key politicians 2. Motivate grass roots efforts of encouraging people to contact legislators on key issues that affect the river 3. Support and monitor the political decisions and discussions over time

Internal Process Perspective:

Key Assumption	ORK Goal	Key Objective	Key Initiative(s)
Effective Communication/Marketing plans are needed to best leverage our resources	ORK has established a comprehensive, content driven publicity machine	Increase ORK’s external exposure	1. Develop, refine and implement a communications plan
Recruit a variety of board members to support ORK’s strategic direction	Board represents each geographic, social and economically diverse group of people and is strategically enabled to support ORK’s work	Increase the Board’s representation across all geographic and functional key success factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify gaps in geographic representation and strategic functional support needs 2. Create board recruitment plan to fill key gap areas 3. Prioritize diversity in board’s makeup
SOP/guidance for staff, board & volunteers will help drive strategic alignment and operational consistency	ORK brand is consistent and all players know their	Improve alignment to ORK’s established brand and standard operating	1. Establish SOPs along with staff and board expectations, including emergency procedures

	role and are aligned to achieve our goals	procedures (reduce identified variances)	<p>2. Set up mechanisms to determine key requirements/measurements</p> <p>3. Outline a communications strategy to educate the community, political figures and others who make an impact on the river's health</p> <p>4. Execute on the strategy</p>
Need a robust group of members to support the future growth of the organization	ORK has a larger, more informed and engaged membership	<p>Increase ORK membership and engagement</p> <p>Note: Need to properly segment our membership when recruited – look at background of members</p>	<p>1. Identify customer segments and develop volunteer recruitment campaign to attract targeted segments</p> <p>2. Create innovative ways for volunteers to engage with the organization (i.e. an App, social media, regional satellite offices, etc)</p> <p>3. Cultivate members and landowners</p> <p>4. Target people who are currently not members (church leaders, education, hunters/fishermen, landowners)</p> <p>5. Develop communication/marketing plan to focus on growing membership, perhaps through member-only events</p>

Organizational Capital Perspective:

Key Assumption	ORK Goal	Key Objective	Key Initiative(s)
The development of staff, board and volunteer capacity is needed to support our strategic direction	ORK staff receives adequate training to meet the strategic needs of the future of the organization	Increase leadership qualities, learning organization (encourage passion, confidence and competent staff & board)	<p>1. Identify and participate in staff, board and volunteer training to support strategic needs of ORK</p> <p>2. Develop skills, talents and knowledge of existing staff, Board and volunteers</p>

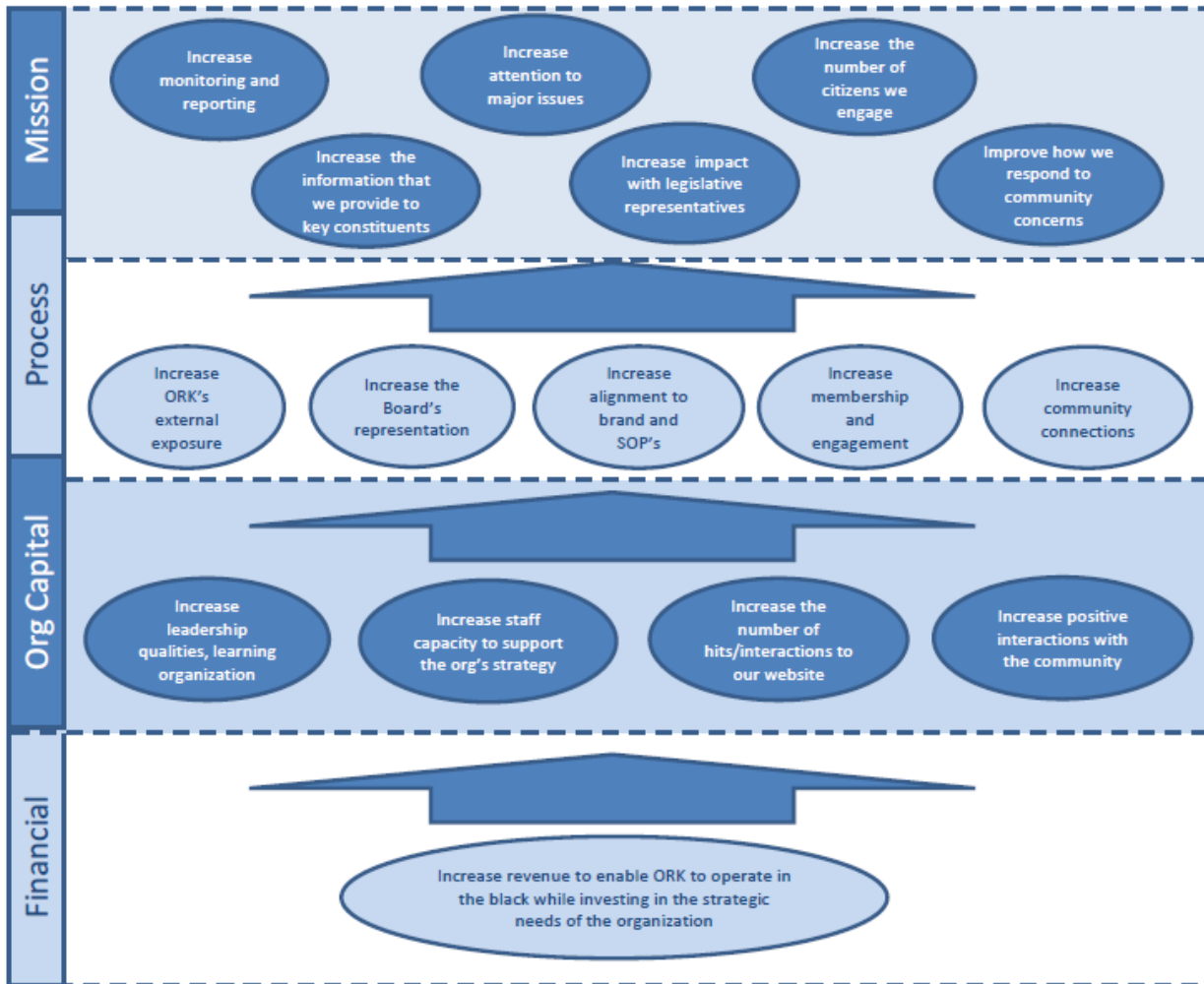
			<p>3. ID and participate in ORK programming and events</p> <p>4. Implement fully functioning Board committees</p>
Staff augmentation is needed for ORK to meet the operational and strategic need of the organization (admin, events, fundraising)	Internal staff is in place and capable to fully meet the strategic needs of the organization	Increase staff capacity to support execution of key strategic objectives	<p>1. Identify internal skills needed to effectively execute the strategy, identify gaps</p> <p>2. Recruit staff needed to close skill gaps (Need to track the percentage of identified key skills filled/unfilled)</p> <p>3. Identify and purchase technology and tools to support the business processes of the organization</p>
A website that effectively connects us to our constituents is needed	Website enables constant engagement with our membership and utilizes the best available technology to put out interesting data	Increase the number of hits/interactions to our website (that shows focused and innovative messaging and data that is disseminated)	1. Use available technology to connect appropriately
ORK needs to encourage passion, confidence and competence in staff and board	ORK team commands the respect of the community	Increase the positive interactions with the community	<p>1. An extra measure of care at time of hire pays off. Retain staff by offering/participating in trainings that will develop the staff and board of ORK to increase knowledge of the river, make best use of human resources</p> <p>2. Create criteria and a plan on how to present ORK in the community</p>

Financial Perspective:

Key Assumption	ORK Goal	Key Objective	Key Initiative(s)
ORK needs a balanced portfolio of revenue streams (more funders, corporate sponsors,	ORK has a balanced portfolio and is in the black with operational and reserve funds	Increase revenue to enable ORK to operate in the black while investing in the	1. Identify broad set of revenue sources to support ORK activities

board giving and planned giving)		strategic needs of the organization	2. Develop and implement fundraising plan
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Our Strategy Map:



ORK Strategic Plan Summary:

ORK looks forward to the future of the organization that is clearly and strategically crafted. Attention to each piece of the Balanced Scorecard will align ORK with the precise steps to become a successful organization of the future. Creating goals, objectives and initiatives in each area of mission, financial, internal processes and organization capital ensures that ORK monitors key performance indicators in every sphere of the organization.

ORK Strategic Participants:

ORK offers sincere thanks to all the staff, volunteers and external stakeholders who participated in the accomplishment of this 5 year strategic plan.