

YUKON RIVER MARATHON PADDLING
ASSOCIATION
2020 – 2025
STRATEGIC PLAN



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Overview

The Yukon River Marathon Paddling Association (YRMPA) conducted a strategic planning exercise consisting of a number of sessions from October 2019 – January 2020. The Yukon River Quest (YRQ) is a marathon, paddling race hosted by the YRMPA. The YRQ has been in existence for more than 20 years. The current focus of the YRMPA organization is the race and therefore the board of the association functions almost entirely as an operational board. The YRQ has grown significantly over the last 10 years and the needs of the organization are changing. With the growth of the race, the YRMPA board recognizes the need for the organization to evolve alongside the race by elevating the organization's profile and professionalism to ensure the safety and sustainability of the organization and ultimately, the YRQ.

A comprehensive understanding of the organization was developed via review of debrief documents provided by the Executive Committee, a series of initial meetings with members of the Executive Committee and a review of the website. Through this understanding and review, a customized approach for the larger group Board engagement sessions was developed and presented to the entire board for approval. A Strategic Planning sub-committee was struck to work through the strategic planning process with presentations back to the larger board for review and approval of recommendations along the way. Strategic planning sessions took place over a series of six separate sessions – an initial session with the entire board (post AGM) to provide an outline of the process and the proposed approach for approval – October 30th, 2019; one, evening session with the entire board of directors – November 13th, 2019; one full-day session with the entire board of directors and invited stakeholders – November 16th, 2019; and a series of three separate half-day sessions with the Strategic Planning sub-committee – November 22nd and December 18th, 2019 and January 10th, 2020. Homework questions were assigned at the end of sessions #2 and #5 for each of the groups (entire board and sub-committee, respectively) to review and bring/provide answers for discussion at subsequent sessions.

Work completed at each of the sessions, was outlined as follows:

October 30, 2019 (post AGM board meeting) – Sport Yukon

- At this meeting, the new board of directors ratified the proposed approach to the strategic planning process. A Strategic Planning Committee was struck, including Peter, Deb, Anne and Hank as the Committee members. Additionally, the next two planning meeting dates were set – November 13th for all board members and November 16th for all board members and invited stakeholders. All board members were assigned homework questions in preparation of the first meeting.

November 13, 2019 (all board members) – Sport Yukon

- At this meeting, the board walked through the answers to the homework questions:

- *2 Questions Exercise* (What is necessary for a strategic plan to be a success? How can the strategic plan be used more constructively/effectively?)
- *Vision Statement* (What do you want to achieve with your time on the board? What will make you proud? What does success look like for you?)

Additionally, each board member was asked to write their own vision statement for the YRMPA, and the board worked through a values exercise where they reviewed YRMPA's current values and answered the questions: What do you believe in? What is important to you? The board also completed a SWOT analysis.

November 16, 2019 (all board members and invited stakeholders) – United Church

- At this meeting, the entire group walked through a timeline exercise, charting experiences and significant events through the history of the YRQ and the YRMPA; how the race and the organization came to be. In addition, the mission statement was reviewed and everyone was asked to define the purpose of the YRMPA.

November 22, 2019 (Strategic Planning Committee) – Lutheran Church

- At this meeting, the strategic planning committee worked to finalize the vision, mission and values statements for the YRMPA. Final statements have been developed. The process and steps to show how the committee came to the finalized statements is outlined below. The guiding principle of 100% Commitment; 70% Agreement was followed. The session began by defining the mission statement as it often makes it easier to define the vision statement once the mission statement is set.

December 18, 2019 (Strategic Planning Committee) – Sport Yukon

- At this meeting, the strategic planning committee worked to identify the strategic priority objectives. The committee reviewed notes from the previous November 13th session (group brainstorms – Visioning Exercise and SWOT Analysis) and using a series of questions, filtered all of the activities and suggestions to reveal five main areas of focus. The committee was assigned homework at the end of this session.

January 10, 2020 (Strategic Planning Committee) – Sport Yukon

- At this meeting, the strategic planning committee worked to identify specific goals for each strategic priority objective. The committee reviewed the answers to the homework assignment from session #5. The homework assignment was to review the list of 32 projects previously identified by the board at the November 13th session and that were run through the filter at the December 18th session. From the list of the 32 identified and now filtered projects, the committee was asked to assign 3-5 goals under each of the five strategic priority objectives identified. Once the list of projects was reviewed and the top goals identified, start and end dates, success measurement metrics and suggested action plans were also identified. At the end

of the session, the committee reviewed the answers that the board provided to the “2 Questions Exercise” completed at the November 13th board session.

An initial draft strategic plan document was presented to the YRMPA board for review and comment at the January 2020 board meeting. Feedback and comments were reviewed by the Strategic Planning sub-committee and submitted for inclusion in the final strategic plan document included in this report. Summary documents for the SWOT Analysis, Timeline Exercise and Goals Homework Assignment have been attached to this report as appendices for background information.

The YRMPA is a member-based and volunteer-run association, governed by an operational board of directors and supported by a committed volunteer base. Recognizing the association is made up of volunteers who all have a passion for the annual race, the strategic planning sessions were conducted with the understanding that even though everyone is 100% committed to the YRMPA and the YRQ, there may not always be 100% agreement. For this reason, the following rule was initiated and followed throughout the strategic planning process – 100% commitment; 70% agreement. The following document outlines YRMPA’s five- year plan, developed and approved by the Board of Directors.

Two Questions

At the beginning of the strategic planning process, two questions were posed to the YRMPA board of directors:

- What is needed for the strategic plan to be successful?
- How can the strategic plan be used constructively?

They responded as follows:

What is needed for the strategic plan to be successful?

- Understanding that it is a framework that helps us grow and manage business effectively
- Honesty – no wishful thinking
- Addresses short and long-term goals/issues
- Acts as a useful reference tool
- Realization that we are not in “full” control of destiny – we need a Plan A and a Plan B
- Measurable
- Acts as a filter for everything we decide to do – it is a living/working document
- It doesn’t make extra work
- Has a life expectancy
- Is respectful

- Executable and allows for consistent and equitable decision making
- Feedback loops that allow for constant evaluation
- Buy-in and participation from all

How can the strategic plan be used constructively?

- Used to guide decisions
- Reviewed/evaluated frequently
- Ensuring document is available to those who need it
- Sharing the responsibility and processes

These answers were kept top of mind during the strategic planning process and used to help guide the discussion at the Board engagement sessions and the Strategic Planning sub-committee working sessions in conjunction with the 100% committed; 70% agreement rule.

YRMPA/YRQ Background, Vision, Mission & Values

Background

The Klondike Gold Rush of 1897/98 was a race to the gold fields and gold rush stampedeers, along with the help of local first nations guides who knew and understood the land and water of Alaska and the Yukon, blazed a trail to Dawson City from Dyea, AK.

The route that was followed to the Klondike gold fields, the wilderness challenge and the thrill of adventure from all those years ago sparked the idea for a marathon-paddling race. One hundred years later the Dyea to Dawson Centennial Race to the Klondike took place, following the same trail forged by the stampedeers, offering an exciting and challenging adventure for racers.

Time, distance and logistical challenges made the Dyea to Dawson race difficult to host every year so race organizers and other interested parties developed a shorter race now known as the Yukon River Quest (YRQ). The new race focused solely on paddling, still followed the same route – for the most part – to get to the Klondike...once on the Yukon River; and still promised a challenging race which satisfied the adventurous spirit of the racers. The Yukon River Quest operated along side the Yukon Quest Sled Dog Race from 1999 to 2002 when the Yukon River Marathon Paddling Association (YRMPA) was formed and took over the organization of the YRQ.

The Yukon (then and now) has an inherent remoteness – a small number of people in a vast landscape. Because of this wilderness reality, Yukoners knew they had to support and rely on each other; they watched out for one another and were friendly to anyone new from “outside”. They developed an unspoken level of trust, a sense of community and a sense of home among people who weren’t necessarily, family.

Now, over a century after the first rush to the Klondike, and over 20+ years of hosting an ever-evolving YRQ, the same sense of community that the stampedeers experienced on their way to the Klondike is still aspired to and displayed each year among YRQ race organizers, volunteers, racers, sponsors and the entire Yukon community.

2020 will mark the 22nd running of the YRQ with many of the original-founding volunteers remaining proudly dedicated to executing this successful annual event. Because of this dedication and the sense of camaraderie that this particular race brings, the YRQ is now a world-renowned, marathon-paddling event with racer representation from 13 different countries, and a waitlist for racer registrations.

Vision Statement (dream/aspiration)

To realize the full potential of an inspired and involved community, which provides an epic and world-class *paddling event in the Yukon*.

Mission Statement (mandate/purpose)

To host a marathon-paddling race on the Yukon River, providing an opportunity for personal challenge and accomplishment, in a unique, Northern wilderness setting.

Values (state of being)

The YRMPA has been in operation since 1998. We are made up of a solid volunteer base of people who are passionate about marathon paddling and hosting the longest annual marathon-paddling race, the Yukon River Quest.

We are:

- Adventurous, forward-looking and pro-active

We will:

Strive to instil trust with our stakeholders and within our community – by this we mean:

- We will do what we say we can do and what our community expects us to do
- Our actions will be predicable and un-wavering – our community counts on us to behave in a predictable manner
- We will act fairly, honestly and ethically; we will practice diplomacy
- **We will act in a sustainable manner** by building, managing and protecting our resources (**Yukon River**, time, money, locations, people, influence, etc.) to ensure we adequately address the needs of our stakeholders and our organization (environmental, economic, and social).

We value:

- Environmental stewardship
- Indigenous culture
- Yukon River history
- Youth engagement
- Camaraderie and community
- Physical and mental wellness
- Accomplishment and hard work

YRMPA Strategic Priority Objectives

During the strategic planning process, it was determined that there were five main areas of focus. These five areas of focus do not function independently and are specifically related to the development of the association and the Yukon River Quest race. Focusing on these five areas will allow the board to realize the evolution and elevation of the organization to ensure sustainability of the YRQ.

Strategic Priority

Objectives:

- Board Development & Governance
- YRQ Development
- Race Operational Development
- Dawson Development
- Partnership Development

Priority: Board Development and Governance – ensuring effective organizational leadership

GOAL	START	END	MEASUREMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Goal 1. Determine governance model for board	Year 1	Year 1	- Decision made on governance model	- Add to board agenda for discussion
Goal 2. Develop bylaws, policies and formal committee structures	Year 1	Year 3	- Bylaws passed at AGM - Policies approved by board - Committees in place and active	- Based on governance model, develop bylaws and policies - Strike governance committee - Develop committee list and terms of reference for each
Goal 3. Develop a board succession plan	Year 1	Year 2	- New board members ready to join at each AGM - People approaching us to join board - Demographic diversity on board, based on values	- Skills matrix - Develop recruitment procedure - Develop board onboarding and orientation process

Priority: YRQ Development – building the foundation for a long-term, sustainable race

GOAL	START	END	MEASUREMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Goal 1. Improve volunteer recruitment and appreciation	Year 1	Year 2	- Completed plans	- Develop volunteer recruitment plan - Develop volunteer appreciation plan - Complete volunteer job descriptions
Goal 2. Determine if and how to grow the race	Year 1	Year 2	- Feasibility plan completed	-Strike committee to develop or get money to hire a consultant to complete the study
Goal 3. Develop 5-10 year YRQ Business	Year 2	Year 2	- Finalized YRQ Business plan including: marketing,	- Strike committee to develop or get money to hire a

Plan (based on outcome of feasibility study)			- Sponsorship and financial plans for implementation	- Consultant to develop the plan(s) - Marketing plan Sponsorship plan Financial plan
Goal 4. Hire paid race support	Year 1	Year 1	- Hiring person – evaluation of success re: volunteers, smooth race operation	- Complete pilot project in year 1 - Evaluate effectiveness based on final report from hired person and race debrief
Goal 5. Increase sponsorship development opportunities	Year 1	Year 3	- Sponsorship agreements in place - Increased sponsorship money raised year over year - Happy sponsors/returning sponsors for sustained support - New, major cash sponsor(s) secured	- Develop sponsorship plan - Contract sponsorship professional to develop plan and secure sponsors

Priority: Race Operational Development – clear operational guidelines for all aspects of the race

GOAL	START	END	MEASUREMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Goal 1. Increase race safety	Year 1	Year 3	- Fewer race withdrawals/scratches - Positive racer evaluations	- Pilot 2020 safety protocol - Evaluate plan - Post racer prep guide - Implement racer prep panel
Goal 2. Ensure fair and transparent application of race rules	Year 1	Year 1	- Consistent penalties assessed - Fewer racer complaints about process	- Process clarified and communicated to racers - Keep a record of penalties assessed - Evaluation conducted post race
Goal 3. Develop inventory management system	Year 1	Year 2	- Clear understanding of what equipment we have and where it is - Damaged/lost equipment is replaced - Equipment is where we need it, when it's needed	- Research off-the-shelf systems - Implement new system - Evaluate after each race
Goal 4. Finalize a complete operations manual	Year 1	Year 2	- Complete race manual/guide in place - Manual is used/followed and easily updatable	- Complete volunteer manual - Update race timeline/duties sheet - Finalize safety protocol - Compile all manuals, guides, processes, procedures, protocols, compiled in one place with responsibilities assigned
Goal 5. Develop	Year 1	Year 1	- Registration is effective and	

manageable registration process			manageable - Racers and organizers are happy with process - More than one person understands and can manage process	
Goal 6. Long-term mandatory rest locations secured	Year 1		- Long-term location secured and plan in place for eventual move of 2 nd mandatory rest location from Kirkman/Coffee Creek - Long-term plan in place for 1 st mandatory rest location(s) in Carmacks	- Develop relationships/partnerships with appropriate First Nations to ensure support along river

Priority: Dawson Development – developing adequate supports in Dawson City to host the YRQ

GOAL	START	END	MEASUREMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Goal 1. Increase support in Dawson	Year 1	Year 5	- Effective local partnerships established - Dawson lead planner in place - Increased FN citizen involvement in YRQ - Adequate volunteers in Dawson	- Reach out to KVA and other local groups - Recruit a Dawson Planning rep - Reach out to T'rondek H'wechin FN
Goal 2. Develop options for accommodation	Year 1	Year 2	- Adequate amount of accommodation available for racers, support, board and volunteers	- Explore billeting option - Make block bookings in advance - Work with KVA - Explore other non-traditional accommodation options
Goal 3. Improve awards banquet	Year 1	Year 2	- Favourable feedback from racers - Sponsors approaching YRQ to be a part of banquet - Adequate resources to host banquet	- Develop/refine banquet plan - Research cost to bring in resources for support

Priority: Partnership Development – strong and stable support, inspired and involved communities

GOAL	START	END	MEASUREMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Goal 1. Develop strategic partnerships in Dawson	Year 1	Year 5	- See Dawson Development Strategic Priority Objective	- See Dawson Development Strategic Priority Objective
Goal 2. Develop relationships with FN along Yukon River	Year 1	Year 4	- Active relationships with 3-5 Yukon First Nations	- Work with well-known First Nation friends of YRQ to help facilitate and build relationships and create dialogue
Goal 3. Explore visibility with CCKA	Year 3	Year 3	- Decision to join CCKA (or not) is made	- Review CCKA requirements
Goal 4. Develop relationships with local, like-minded organizations	Year 2	Year 5	- Increased access to resources, sponsorships and support	- Make connections - Develop sponsorship plan - Share resources
Goal 5. Explore the YRQ as a SUP qualifier	Year 2	Year 3	- Decision to make YRQ a SUP qualifier race is made	- Review requirements - Consider pros and cons

Next Steps

- Board committee to develop work plans to help you achieve your goals. Some suggested actions have been included however building out more comprehensive work/operational plans may be required. **Suggestion:** Set deadline for when work plans will be finalized.

REMEMBER: Your work plans are the directions for how you will get to the landmarks (Goals) in each of the cities (Strategic Priority Objectives) on your map.

- Make a plan to revisit the strategic plan on a regular basis – this is a living document and should be reviewed and updated as goals are achieved – review results to determine if you were successful and set new goals for the coming year under each strategic priority objective. Build annual work plans based on the new/revised goals. **Suggestion:** place strategic plan update as a standing item on board meeting agendas; provide a quarterly report regarding update on strategic plan goals; develop annual report card as part of AGM package.