

DRAFT Michigan District Optimist Long Range Plan 2026-2028



Long Range Planning Committee
Linda Thompson, Chair 2024-2025
Cherryl Thames, SOAR Practitioner
Q4 Draft Date: 8/19/25

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Acknowledgments

The Michigan District Optimist acknowledges the support, commitment, and collaboration of the stakeholder teams and facilitators who enabled us to develop our Strategic Plan using the SOARTM (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) Framework.

Vision 2024-2025 Strategic Planning Committee

Immediate Past-Governor – Linda Thompson (Chair)

Past-Governor – Cherryl Thames

Governor-Elect – David Putt

Member at Large-Toni Gore

Advisory-Sean Mueller, Governor

LRP Committee Meeting Dates: 10/26/24, 1/18/25, 1/30/25, 2/26/25, 4/5/2025, 5/23/25,

Introduction

The Michigan District Optimist (*also referred to as the District*) was created by community leaders to provide operational and training support and growth to the more than 75 Optimist Clubs and its members in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Each Optimist Club provides support for the children in our communities.

The District strives to “bring out the best in youth, community and ourselves” through philanthropic donations to the children in our communities as well as through Optimist International Foundation (OIF) to larger causes such as Youth Appreciation, Childhood Cancer Campaign, Oratorical and Essay Contests, Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Junior Golf Championship.

The purpose of the Michigan District is to function as an administrative division of Optimist International in furtherance of the purposes of Optimist International, the Bylaws, and Policies as established by the International Board of Directors. The Michigan District shall provide service and support to Clubs for the purpose of enhancing growth, participation, administration, and youth service.

Optimist International

Mission

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in our youth, in our communities, and in ourselves.

To help clubs succeed by providing support and leadership to Michigan Optimist Clubs through strategic relationships, education, mentoring, resources, marketing, and effective and timely communication.

Vision

Optimist International will be recognized worldwide as the premier volunteer organization that values all children and helps them develop to their full potential.

Values Statement

OPENING STATEMENT At Optimist International, our Core Values represent the way we believe in the transformative power of hope, positive thinking, and action. Our commitment to bringing out the best in youth communities and ourselves is guided by four core values that represent our foundational beliefs. We utilize these to inspire and drive our mission.

Optimism

Respect

Integrity

Global Community

CLOSING STATEMENT Optimist International is dedicated to improving lives, together with respect, integrity, a sense of global community, and unwavering optimism, we can build a future filled with hope and positive vision for all.

The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself - -

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true

To think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

SOAR™ Analysis

Priority	Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
	<p>Intergenerational Leadership</p> <p>District Executive Committee and Chairs represent the age range of the membership</p> <p>District Executive Committee and Chairs represent a range of years and types of experience at the club, district, and international levels.</p> <p>District Leadership Academy includes Boomers, Millennials, and Gen Zs.</p>	<p>Attracting Millennials, the generation born between 1981 and 1996.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tech Savvy - Innovative <p>Attracting Gen Z, the generation born between 1997 and 2012. (Shaped by the COVID-19 era.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial Thinkers - Innovative <p>Benefitting from the wisdom, experience, and personal/professional networks of Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964.</p>	<p>Increase the number of Lt. Governors that fall in the Gen Z and Millennial generations to 30% over the next 5 years. (pathway to becoming Governor)</p> <p>Assist clubs in increasing the number of club presidents who fall in the Gen Z and Millennial generations to 20% over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Assist clubs in having their membership be comprised of 20% Millennials and Gen Z over the next 5 years.</p>	
	<p>Diversity in Leaders</p> <p>District Executive Committee and Chairs are diverse in age, race and ethnicity, gender, culture, social economic status, and faith communities.</p> <p>District members, clubs and leaders serve rural, urban, and suburban communities in four</p>	<p>New Ideas and Perspectives</p> <p>Transformative Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good to Great - Who Moved My Cheese - The Infinite Game-Sinek - The Challenge of Leadership-Kouzes and Posner <p>Become an intentionally inclusive</p>	<p>Best in the ... at being a "Friend of Youth"</p> <p>Build two clubs in communities whose constituents are primarily made up of traditionally underserved people over the next 5 years.</p>	

	regions of the lower peninsula.	District in terms of clubs, members, gathering sites, activities, scholarship programs, speakers, social-economic status, gender, faith.	Focus new club building in communities (both rural and urban) that are traditionally underserved.	
	Optimist Institute Members may access free online Leadership and Technical Skill Development Courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Officer Training - Motivational Items - New Club Series - Professional Development Plan - Personal Growth and Involvement Plan Club and District officer training is free and available online. Optimist International offers Webinars, Program and Activities guides, and an Annual Convention with learning sessions and inspirational and informative speakers.	Become a Learning Organization Club and District officers complete the Officer Training courses. Members participate in the Professional Development Plan and/or Personal Growth and Involvement Plan. Members, District Executive Committee, and Chairs attend the OI Annual Convention. Members, District Executive Committee, and Chairs attend the District Quarterly Gatherings and Summit.	Embracing the principles of the Fifth Discipline: By adopting continuous learning principles, we can explore systems thinking and group problem solving to achieve sustainable growth and results. 50% of clubs have 1 officer-elect trained by 9/30 80% have at least 2 officers trained by 12/30 80% of clubs have 3 officers trained by 3/30	
	Marketing and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active Communication Team - Designated Webmaster - Budget Allocation - Engaging Website - Posted Articles 	Communicate the power of Optimism and the opportunities of membership to external audiences, local, Michigan, and the world. Communicate the power of Optimism and the benefits of club and district involvement in service	Continue the great progress made in the past 3 years and take advantage of additional/new social media outlets to expand our exposure to a wider audience.	Marketing and Communication: Establish a frequency baseline and monitor the progress mid-year and before EOD.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Club Activities -Programs -Honors -District Business - Michigan Update and Governor's 3 by 3 - OptiViews-District member newsletter - Online registration and marketing for Gatherings, Events, and Summits. 	<p>to youth and community to members.</p> <p>Connect members and leaders to programs, services, committees, benefits, and leadership opportunities of Optimist International.</p>	<p>Encourage clubs to increase their participation in local events (parades, etc.) to generate more recognition for our brand name.</p>	<p>Lt. Governors establish a baseline and monitor the progress mid-year and before EOD.</p>
	<p>Succession Planning Active Past Governors Association - Candidates Qualifications Committee</p> <p>MIOLA- Michigan Leadership Academy develops Members' leadership potential.</p> <p>Past Governors and the Executive Committee identify and nurture potential District and International leaders</p>	<p>Become a Developer of Leaders organization.</p> <p>Become the "go-to" District for Optimist International leaders, chairs, and committee members.</p>	<p>With the help of the Lt. Governors and club presidents, identify and ask at least one member in every club to participate in MIOLA.</p>	<p>50% of clubs will have a member in a MIOLA Class each year.</p> <p>80% of clubs will have a member in a MIOLA Class over the next 5 years.</p>
	<p>Affordable Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased member attendance and engagement. - Discount registration for 1st 2nd Timers - Locations are accessible - Locations reasonable distance from clubs - Overall registration fee is discounted 	<p>Attract members to attend District Gatherings, Events, and the Summit.</p> <p>Attract potential Club and District leaders to attend District Gatherings, Events, and the Summit.</p> <p>Be the time and place where members belong, are included, inspired and energized.</p>	<p>Develop relationships with corporations and foundations to help underwrite some of the costs of our gatherings, summits, and special events to keep entrance fees low and enable more members and interested non-members to attend our events.</p>	<p>Establish a committee with a goal of engaging 5 sponsors during the first year.</p> <p>Goal over 5 years is 10 sponsors.</p>

	<p>Member Engagement Sharing our mission, vision, values, and our passion for making a positive impact on the world.</p>	<p>Creating meaningful connections and lifelong friendships among our members.</p> <p>Finding like-minded individuals who share our passion for service, optimism, and making a difference.</p> <p>Create an environment where everyone feels valued, supported, and motivated to contribute their best.</p> <p>Provide financial support for 1st five years for newly chartered clubs.</p>	<p>25% of Michigan Clubs participate in the International President's Incentive Program (as appropriate) by 3/31 annually.</p> <p>This 24-25 year is one of extraordinary growth, engagement, and joy!</p> <p>Develop a 3-year plan to build 6 clubs and support them for the first 5 years.</p>	<p>New clubs will be awarded annual incentives: Y1- \$500, Y2- \$400, Y3- \$300, Y4- \$200, Y5- \$100.</p>
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Critical Goals:

Critical Goal # 1: Intergenerational Leadership

Increase the number of club and district officers under age 50.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
Increase # of Lt. Gov's under age 50 to 20%	Year 1-3	Governor, Asst. Govs, Gov.-Elect		10/1/2025	9/30/2028	none
Increase # of Club Presidents under age 50 to 20%	Year 1-3	Governor, Asst. Govs, Lt. Govs., Gov.-Elect		10/1/2025	9/30/2028	none
Increase # of club members under age 50 to 20%	Year 1-3	Club Presidents & Lt. Governors;		10/1/2025	9/30/2028	none

Critical Goal # 2: Member Engagement:

Increase the support and engagement for clubs and members.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
Enroll >20% of clubs in an OI Member Engagement program	Year 1-3	Member Engagement Committee		10/1/2025	9/30/2027	none
Enroll >25% of clubs in SS Optimism or similar incentive program	Year 1	Member Engagement Committee		10/1/2025	9/30/26	none
Enroll >30% of clubs in SS Optimism or similar incentive program	Years 2-3	Member Engagement Committee		10/1/2026	9/30/2027	none

Critical Goal # 3: Diversity in Leadership

Focus on new club building in communities (both rural and urban) that are traditionally underserved.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
Develop a 3-year plan to build and support 6 clubs.	Year 1	New Club Building Chair/Committee and Governor	Donations and Sponsorship Committee	10/1/2025	9/30/2026	Provide new clubs annual (declining) support: Y1-Y5
Build one club in an underserved community (Indigenous Peoples)	Year 1	New Club Building Chair/Committee and Governor	Michigan Alliance for Families	10/1/2025	9/30/2026	Support for New Club Building and Recruitment
Build a second club in another underserved community (TBD)	Year 2	New Club Building Chair & Committee	Michigan Alliance for Families	10/1/2026	9/30/2027	Support for New Club Building and Recruitment
Build a third club in another underserved community (TBD)	Year 3	New Club Building Chair & Committee/	Community Foundations	10/1/2027	9/30/2028	Support for New Club Building and Recruitment activities

Critical Goal # 4: Succession Planning

Increase the number of members and clubs who have participated in MIOLA. (MI Optimist Leadership Academy)

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
15% of clubs have a member in MIOLA	Year 1	MIOLA & LD Committee		10/1/2025	9/30/2026	Materials and recognition
20% of clubs have a member in MIOLA	Year 2	MIOLA & LD Committee		10/1/2026	9/30/2027	Materials and recognition
25% of clubs have a member in MIOLA	Year 3	MIOLA & LD Committee		10/1/2027	9/30/2028	Materials and recognition

Critical Goal # 5: Communications and Marketing:

Expand District Communication and Marketing tool kit by adding Optimist podcasting.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
Demonstrate podcasting at a District gathering.	Year 1	Richard Paul/ Comm Team, Gov	Wider Circle	11/8/25 Q1 2/21/25 Q2.	9/30/2026	none
Offer a How to Podcast session at a least one quarterly gathering.	Years 1	Communications Team		11/8/25 Q1 2/21/25 Q2.	9/30/2028	none
50% of clubs have participated in a podcast	Years 2 to 3	Communications Team		10/1/2026	9/30/2028	none

Critical Goal # 6: Affordable Events:

Develop a Donor and Sponsor pool to support District needs.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
Create a District Donations/Sponsorship Committee to underwrite district expenses	Year 1	Governor-Elect		6/1/2025	11/1/2025	Increased donor and sponsor support.
Identify 5 new and/or continuing donors/sponsors	Annually	Donations/Sponsorship Committee	Business Community Chambers, Foundations	10/1/2025 10/1/2026 10/1/2027	9/30/2026 9/30/2027 9/30/2028	Increased donor and sponsor support.
Create one district event -fundraiser that occurs outside of a quarterly gathering.	Year 2 Year 3	Donations/Sponsorship Committee & District Events chair	Sponsors/Donors	10/1/2026 10/1/2027	9/30/2027 9/30/2028	Increased district fiscal resources.

Critical Goal # 7: Optimist Institute:

Increase the number/percentage of club officers who complete officer training.

Strategies/Actions	Timeline	Assigned To	Partnerships	Start Date	Due Date	Budget Implications
50% of clubs have 1 officer trained by 9/30 of each year	Year 1, 2, 3	Lt. Govs, LD Chair, Presidents		5/1/2025 5/1/2026 5/1/2027	9/30/2025 9/30/2026 9/30/2027	none
80% of clubs have 2 officers trained by 12/30 of each year	Year 1, 2, 3	Lt. Govs, LD Chair, Presidents		5/1/2025 5/1/2026 5/1/2027	12/30/2025 12/30/2026 12/30/2027	none
80% of clubs have 3 officers trained by 3/30 of each year	Year 1, 2, 3	Lt. Govs, LD Chair, Presidents		5/1/2025 5/1/2026 5/1/2027	3/30/2026 3/30/2027 3/30/2028	none