



STRATEGIC PLAN  
2023-2025

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ➔ FORWARD.....3
- ➔ MISSION, VISION, VALUES.....4-5
- ➔ THE PROBLEM.....7
- ➔ STRATEGIC GOALS.....8-12
- ➔ DECISION MAKING & EVALUATION...14-15



# FORWARD

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Dear Friends,

Climbing is hard. Yet the challenge of overcoming barriers fuels growth and feeds passion. To have success in overcoming the barriers requires tools, skill, dedication, grit, and partnership. Our journey as an organization mirrors any climber's evolution. We were created by a core group of climbers to fill a need in the greater climbing community. We took our first lead at creating technical systems and programs to reduce the barriers of climbing. In the process a passionate community was formed. The pandemic presented itself as a test piece. Rooted in our strong community and faced with challenges, we grew. Thank you for the partnership in our 'pitches' past and future. Climbing is an evolution and we push to grow and continue overcoming barriers and empowering our community. We look forward to sharing the proverbial rope with you as we rack up for our next chapter, our next project, our next wall.

As we embark on this new strategic plan, we want to acknowledge the many individuals within our community who have helped us identify our strategic commitments, priorities and tactics for achieving success. Our community of climbers, volunteers, ambassadors, board members, advisors, and the many more community members that support our mission came together to provide critical input on how we will ensure that our mission of transforming lives and communities through adaptive climbing opportunities that defy convention, continues to positively impact as many people as possible.

Our work of empowering individuals and communities by making climbing more accessible is more important today than ever before. Through our three distinct program areas of national rock and ice climbing trips, local indoor and outdoor programs and our adaptive climbing initiative trainings, we ensure all people, regardless of where they come from, how they climb or how they define success, have access to climbing opportunities across the country. This strategic plan ultimately focuses on providing a solution to the problem of limited access for individuals with physical disabilities by identifying four distinct strategic focus areas; investing in people, program growth, strategic partnerships and increased storytelling.

Our community is at the center of everything we do and that's why we are investing in people. We want to increase financial support for adaptive athletes, ensure our staff have every opportunity for professional development and ensure we have increased diversity and a better representation of the people we serve. We aim to grow programs and meet our community members where they are. This means more program offerings to increase skill development and to focus on the growth of adaptive leaders. We want to build strategic partnerships, which allow us to demonstrate how we transform lives and support community building, while exploring new programming opportunities. Lastly, we want to increase storytelling in order to communicate the power of what we do.

As we look forward to the next three years, we remain committed to our vision of a world in which everyone has access to adaptive climbing opportunities, which empowers individuals, builds communities, and honors the fact that ability does not prevent opportunity. We will continue to solicit input from our community to ensure we remain on target and are meeting the needs of the community. We thank all of you for your support.

Dave Elmore  
Executive Director

Jake Gaventa  
Board Chair

# MISSION

Paradox Sports transforms lives and communities through adaptive climbing opportunities that defy convention.





## VISION

Paradox Sports envisions a world with access to adaptive opportunities, which empowers individuals, builds communities, and honors the fact that ability does not prevent opportunity.

## VALUES

Paradox Sports recognizes the power of community engagement, personal growth, compassion, dignity, having fun and irreverence.

# PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

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Paradox Sports has been the industry leader in adaptive climbing since being founded in 2007. We set the standards for adaptive climbing and have increased access across the country. Our programs consist of three areas; Adaptive Climbing Initiative Courses, National Trips, and Local Programs (Colorado). Our programs are designed to be transformational and build inclusive communities.



## → NATIONAL TRIPS

Our National Trips have always been the heart and soul of our organization. These multi-day outdoor rock and ice climbing experiences are the best in the industry, and our participants join us year after year in some of the country's most spectacular and iconic climbing destinations.

Our core annual National Trips include:

Shelf Road | Rock Climbing | Colorado  
Yosemite NP | Rock Climbing | California  
Shawangunks | Rock Climbing | New York  
Rumney | Ice Climbing | New Hampshire  
Ouray | Ice Climbing | Colorado  
Smith Rock SP | Oregon  
Joshua Tree NP | California

## → ADAPTIVE CLIMBING INITIATIVE

In 2017, Paradox Sports launched the Adaptive Climbing Initiative (ACI), supported by the North Face. This comprehensive training program is designed to "train the trainers" - to get climbing facilitators, guides, students, recreational climbers, and volunteers the experience and equipment they need to offer quality adaptive climbing programs and to welcome people with disabilities into the climbing community.

## → LOCAL PROGRAMS

Our goal is to make every climbing gym and program in the country accessible to all abilities. Many people's first exposure to rock climbing is through a climbing gym. As climbing has recently grown in popularity throughout the United States, the sport is still not widely available to athletes with disabilities.

This is how we are able to grow our impact exponentially - by encouraging and empowering individuals and organizations who have completed an ACI Course to launch their own adaptive programs and establish frequent, recurring, local community events to expand opportunities with a grassroots approach.



## THE PROBLEM

Those who climb understand the transformational power of exploring wild places, pushing yourself, connecting with friends, and ultimately the personal growth that occurs. Not everyone has equal access to climbing. We aim to make climbing accessible to everyone.

## COMMUNITY INPUT

At the center of everything we do, is community. As we embarked on creating a new strategic plan, we engaged a wide representation of community members. We collected input from our current and past participants, volunteers, veterans, ambassadors, our staff members, board of directors and donors. We wanted to gather as many diverse perspectives as we could, and the result was amazing. There was an consistent alignment in the feedback received, helping create very clear themes. Thank you to all who contributed!



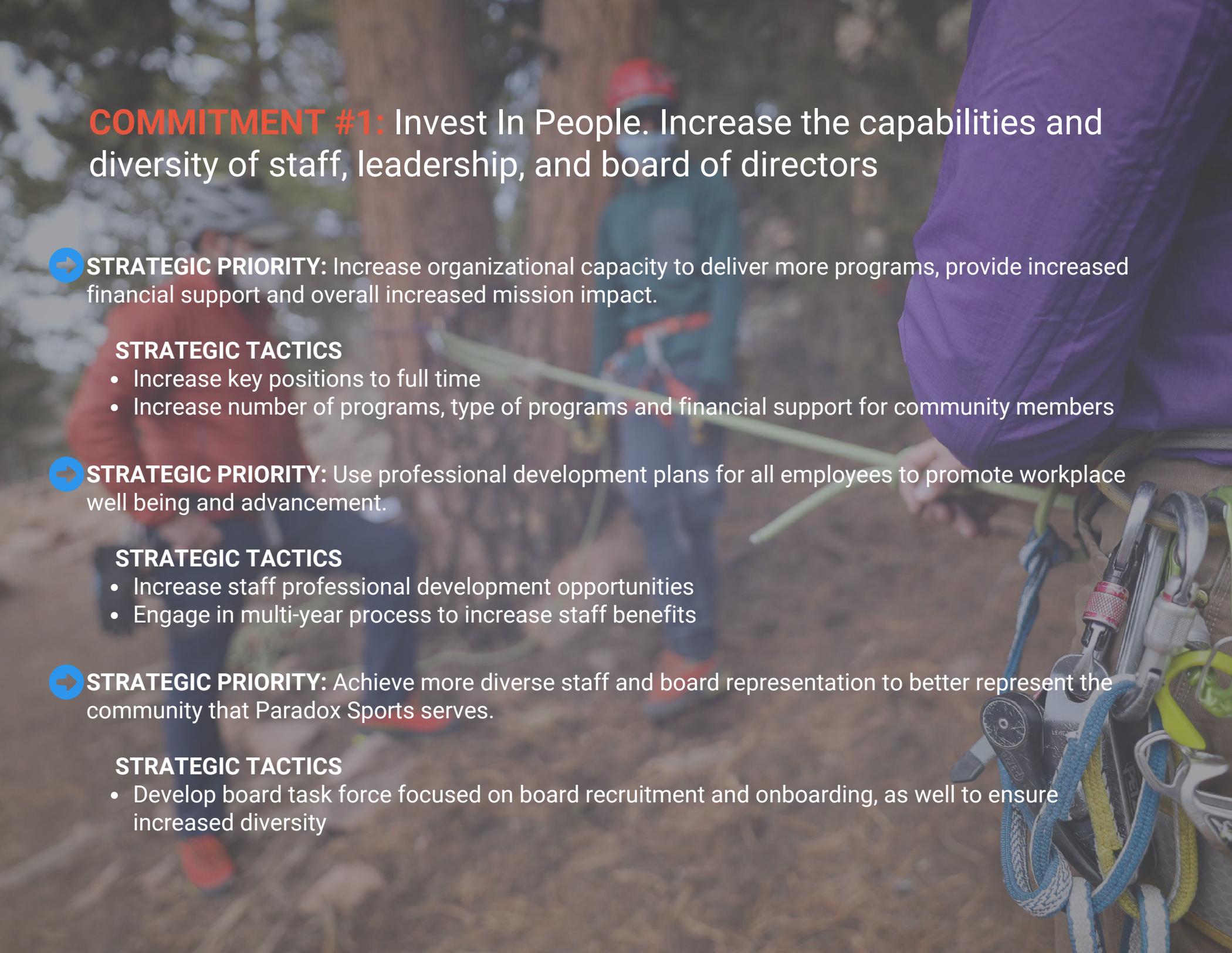
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# Strategic Goals

2023-2025

*Our commitments to our community*

- ➔ Invest In People. Increase the capabilities and diversity of staff, leadership, and board of directors.
- ➔ Invest In Program Growth. Increase program offerings to ensure increased access for a wider range of adaptive athletes, a greater geographical representation and opportunity for skills development.
- ➔ Invest In Strategic Partnerships. Develop strategic partnerships, which increase organization's impact and depth of services.
- ➔ Invest In Communications. Increase effectiveness of outreach & marketing through compelling communication and storytelling.



**COMMITMENT #1:** Invest In People. Increase the capabilities and diversity of staff, leadership, and board of directors

- ➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Increase organizational capacity to deliver more programs, provide increased financial support and overall increased mission impact.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Increase key positions to full time
- Increase number of programs, type of programs and financial support for community members

- ➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Use professional development plans for all employees to promote workplace well being and advancement.

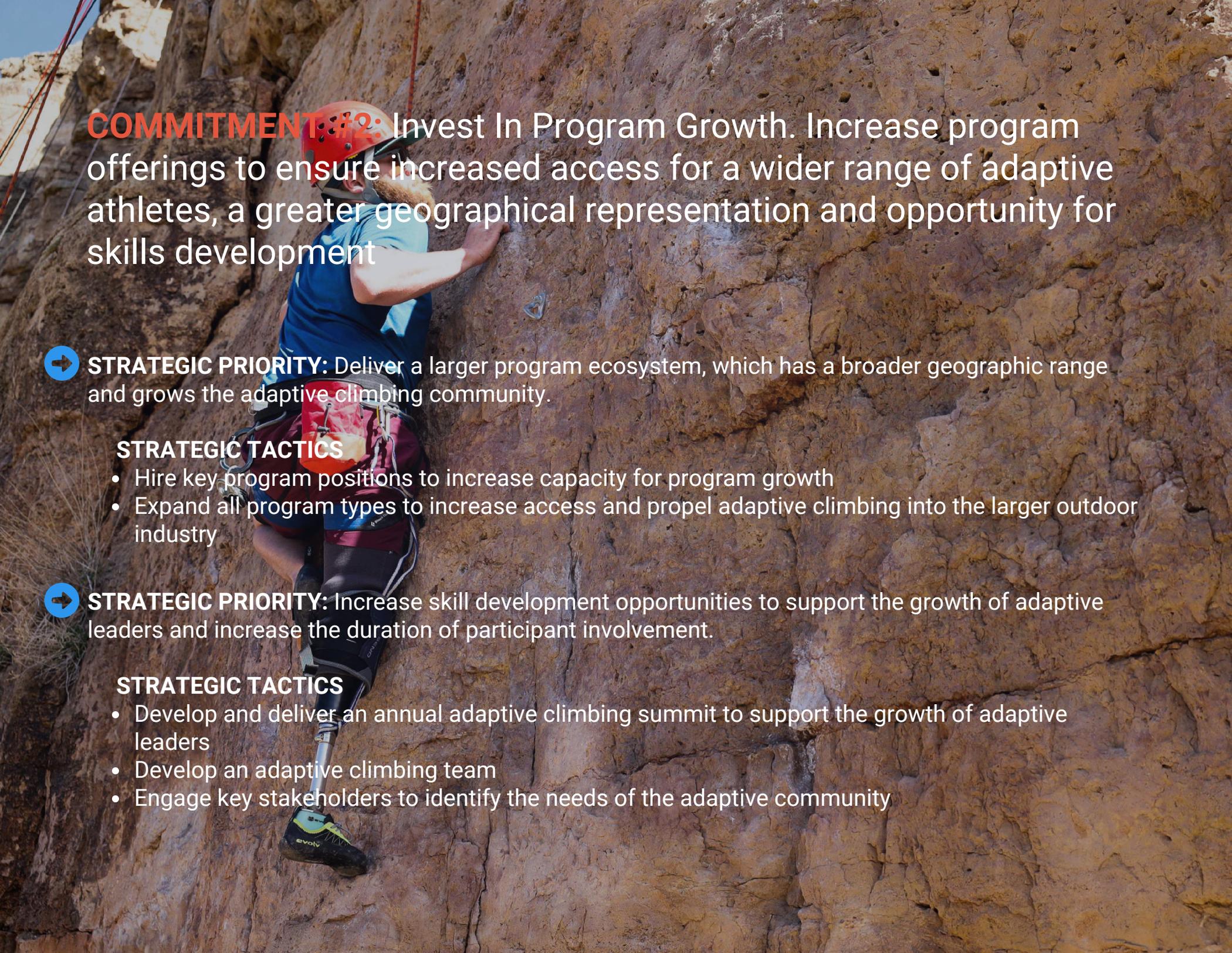
**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Increase staff professional development opportunities
- Engage in multi-year process to increase staff benefits

- ➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Achieve more diverse staff and board representation to better represent the community that Paradox Sports serves.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Develop board task force focused on board recruitment and onboarding, as well to ensure increased diversity

A person with a prosthetic left leg is climbing a brown rock face. They are wearing a blue t-shirt, a red helmet, and a climbing harness. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. The rock face is textured and has some cracks. A red rope is visible on the left side of the rock.

**COMMITMENT #2:** Invest In Program Growth. Increase program offerings to ensure increased access for a wider range of adaptive athletes, a greater geographical representation and opportunity for skills development

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Deliver a larger program ecosystem, which has a broader geographic range and grows the adaptive climbing community.

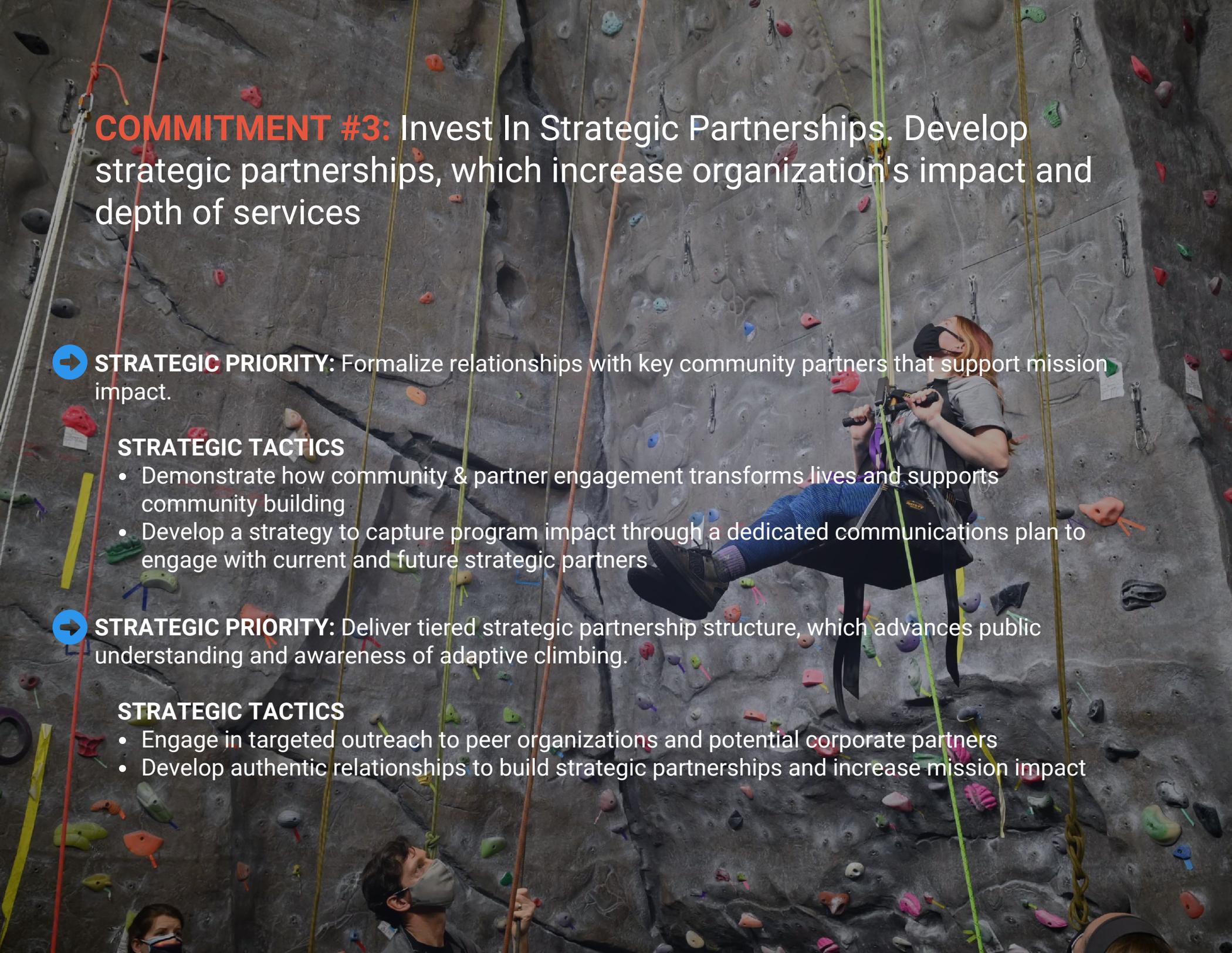
**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Hire key program positions to increase capacity for program growth
- Expand all program types to increase access and propel adaptive climbing into the larger outdoor industry

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Increase skill development opportunities to support the growth of adaptive leaders and increase the duration of participant involvement.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Develop and deliver an annual adaptive climbing summit to support the growth of adaptive leaders
- Develop an adaptive climbing team
- Engage key stakeholders to identify the needs of the adaptive community

A person with long hair, wearing a grey t-shirt, blue jeans, and a black face mask, is climbing an indoor rock wall. They are secured by a black harness and a yellow rope. The rock wall is grey and textured, with various colored climbing holds (red, blue, green, orange) scattered across its surface. Other ropes and climbing equipment are visible in the background.

**COMMITMENT #3:** Invest In Strategic Partnerships. Develop strategic partnerships, which increase organization's impact and depth of services

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Formalize relationships with key community partners that support mission impact.

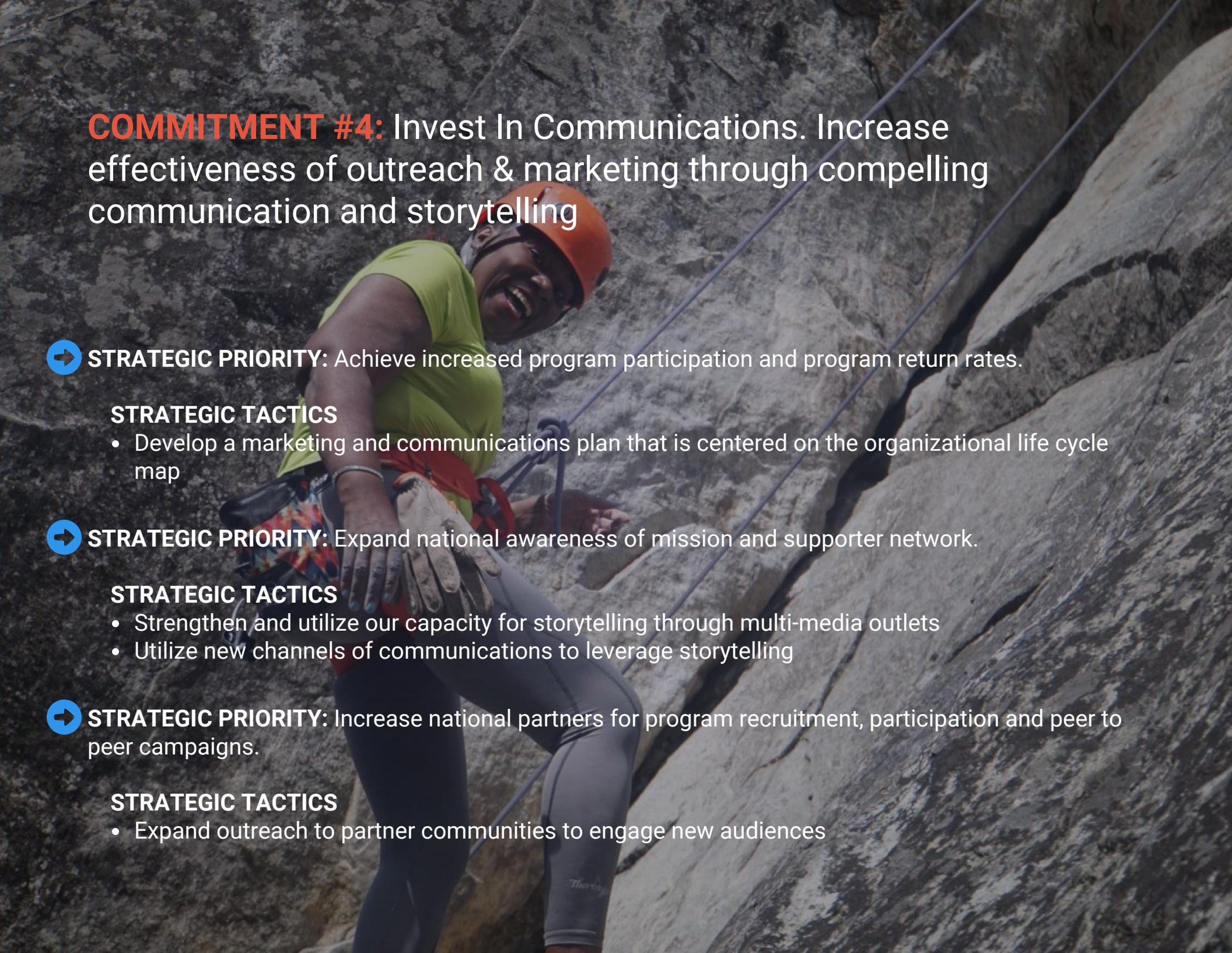
**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Demonstrate how community & partner engagement transforms lives and supports community building
- Develop a strategy to capture program impact through a dedicated communications plan to engage with current and future strategic partners

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Deliver tiered strategic partnership structure, which advances public understanding and awareness of adaptive climbing.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Engage in targeted outreach to peer organizations and potential corporate partners
- Develop authentic relationships to build strategic partnerships and increase mission impact

A woman wearing a bright green t-shirt, an orange climbing helmet, and a colorful climbing harness is climbing a grey rock face. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Several blue ropes are visible, securing her to the rock. The background is a textured, grey rock surface.

**COMMITMENT #4:** Invest In Communications. Increase effectiveness of outreach & marketing through compelling communication and storytelling

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Achieve increased program participation and program return rates.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Develop a marketing and communications plan that is centered on the organizational life cycle map

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Expand national awareness of mission and supporter network.

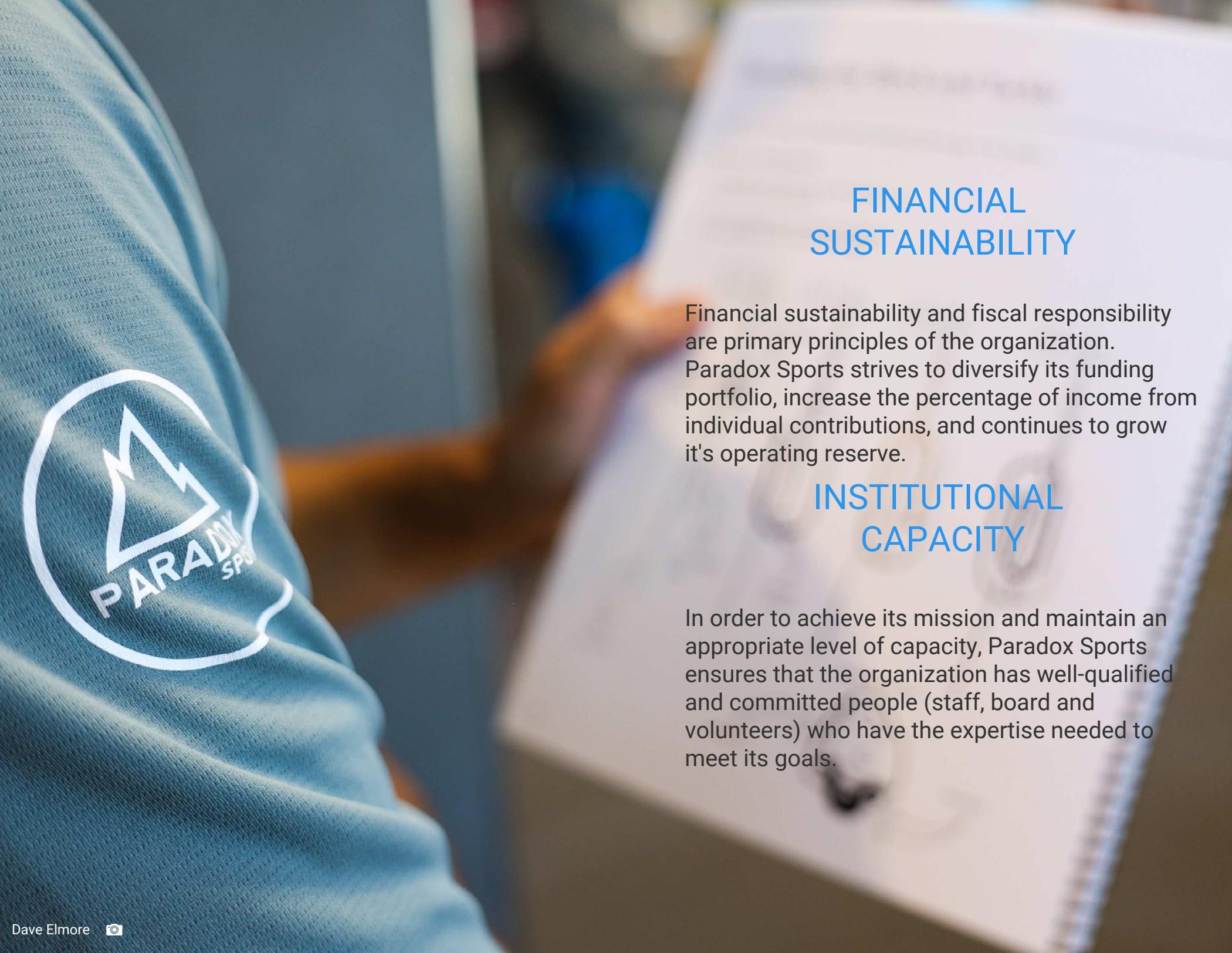
**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Strengthen and utilize our capacity for storytelling through multi-media outlets
- Utilize new channels of communications to leverage storytelling

➔ **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Increase national partners for program recruitment, participation and peer to peer campaigns.

**STRATEGIC TACTICS**

- Expand outreach to partner communities to engage new audiences

The background of the image shows a person's arm in a blue t-shirt with a white circular logo that contains a stylized mountain and the text 'PARADOX SPORTS'. The person is holding a white document with some text and a small graphic on it. The overall scene is slightly blurred, focusing on the text overlays.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability and fiscal responsibility are primary principles of the organization. Paradox Sports strives to diversify its funding portfolio, increase the percentage of income from individual contributions, and continues to grow its operating reserve.

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

In order to achieve its mission and maintain an appropriate level of capacity, Paradox Sports ensures that the organization has well-qualified and committed people (staff, board and volunteers) who have the expertise needed to meet its goals.

# DECISION MAKING CRITERIA

In order to remain responsive and focused on the strategies in this plan, Paradox Sports has created the following criteria as a basis to consider when making decisions regarding new programs or evaluating existing programs:

- ➔ Does the new program or initiative support an increase in mission impact?
- ➔ Will it make a significant impact toward meeting our strategic goals?
- ➔ Does the new program/initiative fit within the current area of expertise, or is it an opportunity to grow expertise?
- ➔ Is there a need clearly identified that Paradox Sports can fill?
- ➔ Is there a problem to solve?
- ➔ Are there other organizations working on the same issue?
- ➔ Is there room to collaborate?
- ➔ Do we have the resources needed to achieve success?
- ➔ Does the outcome support the resources expended?
- ➔ Will the program be implemented with a high level of safety and quality?





# IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

Paradox Sports has established a comprehensive annual action planning and evaluation process to ensure success in achieving the intended impacts of this plan. Periodic reports on overall progress are reviewed by the Board of Directors for alignment with the organization's mission, vision, values and stated goals.



📷 Will Strathmann

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