



O'CONNELL YOUTH RANCH

building young men of character since 1976

Strategic Plan

April 2021

Strategic Plan

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SECTION 1

Background

O'Connell Youth Ranch (referred to as OYR or 'the Ranch') was established in 1975 through a generous land grant from Mrs. Elsie O'Connell and her late husband, Dan. It is located on the east side of Lawrence, Kansas on 125 acres of beautiful farmland. The first Ranch house was opened in 1978 and two others have followed. OYR is a non-profit organization, fully licensed and approved by the Kansas Department for Children and Families. The case coordinators and house parents are dedicated professionals trained to help youth, ages six to eighteen. The impact of the services provided at the Ranch touches all of Kansas.

SECTION 2

Mission Statement

OYR is a home-like environment that gives young men with unique challenges a safe place to grow in their personal development, relational abilities, and foundational life skills so that they may engage positively with the world outside of the Ranch.

SECTION 3

Vision Statement

O'Connell Youth Ranch aims to be a leader in youth residential care, in terms of innovation, quality of care, and positive outcomes for children. OYR offers a safe, caring, Christian family environment where boys with unique challenges can develop strength and character, helping to prepare them for their futures. OYR offers an integrated blend of services and therapeutic modalities on its 125-acre property, including family-style living environments, passionate staff trained in evidence-based trauma-informed care and the family teaching model, and therapists and case coordinators who oversee individualized program plans to meet the needs of each resident. OYR also provides many opportunities for team building and recreation, including sporting activities, gardening, tending to ranch animals, participating in art and music, spiritual development, exploring the outdoors, and other activities on the property.

OYR provides care for children who have been placed in the custody of the Kansas Department of Children and Families due to abuse, neglect, or family discord. OYR supports children until they are prepared to move into an environment with a lower level of care, such as reintegration or placement with a relative, in a foster home, or another permanent planned living arrangement.

OYR is committed to maintaining and increasing the financial support it receives through state and federal programs, grants, donations, and other streams of direct income. This financial increase leads directly to an increase in quality of services and experiences young men living at the ranch are able to receive.

OYR is dedicated to increasing community awareness of the needs, challenges, and successes of the ranch and the young men residing there. It is also committed to finding new and exciting ways to engage community partnerships, donations, and volunteers.

SECTION 4

Values

- I. Ensure quality services that prepare emotionally challenged young men to succeed in any future environments where they will be given more autonomy and responsibility.
- II. Create innovative and engaging programming to meet the needs of OYR residents.
- III. Recruit, develop, support, and maintain an adequate number of quality staff members to provide the best care possible. Preventing occupational exhaustion and increasing staff retention rates will aid higher quality and consistent care for young men residing at OYR.
- IV. Ensure that financial aid and services continue to be available. Adequate and growing financial resources provide opportunities for increasing levels of care and connection to support young men residing at OYR.
- V. Steward the generous gift of land in a way that supports the young men at OYR, the financial needs of OYR, the larger community, and the land itself.
- VI. Increasing involvement of the community in the support of young men on the Ranch by increasing awareness, creating more volunteer opportunities, and extending donor opportunities and relationships.

SECTION 5

Internal and External Analysis

Strengths identified that are currently serving the organization well:

- 125 acres of land to develop and explore. Provides many options and opportunities for young men to engage in outdoor recreation.
- Current staff dedication and teamwork.
- Quality volunteers who are making a difference.
- Dedication to exploring and implementing many different therapeutic modalities, including recreation, physical activities, animal interactions, art, and music.
- Dedicated board with years of management, business, and nonprofit experience.
- Freedom and creativity to create highly individualized programs for growth and care of young men.
- Exceptionally versed Director with almost 30 years of serving at-risk youth.

Improvements and changes being made to better meet organizational needs:

- Working toward achieving CARF accreditation, resulting in increased standards and higher level of care, that would result in increased financial benefit for the Ranch.
- COVID challenged the ability to invest in staff training and development. These programs are being reinstated.
- Recreational opportunities on the land.
- Updating both technology hardware and software.
- Comprehensive policies and procedures.

- Quality assessments for staff members implemented.
- Succession planning and training starting.
- Focus on continued growth and improvement.

New opportunities to leverage to move the organization forward:

- Land provides opportunities for young men to engage in increased outdoor recreation.
- Land also provides the opportunity for development to create more streams of financial income for the Ranch and for the young men living there.
- Increased volunteer engagement – the volunteers are going to make OYR shine.
- Clinical Coach coming onsite to support staff members
- Opportunities to create paid positions for boys on the Ranch to provide additional support and reduce the need for young men to travel off the Ranch for work.
- Increased engagement with social media to increase awareness, community engagement, and recruiting.
- Increased contracting for services to bring additional expertise to the Ranch.

Challenges to meeting organizational needs:

- Non-competitive salaries and limited opportunities for growth or advancement in organization.
- Lack of competitiveness has traditionally challenged the Ranch's ability to recruit and maintain staff.
- Current ratio of house staff to young men, while meeting state and federal standards, is not ideal for optimal care and connection that would provide the highest level of care for the young men.

- Limited number of case managers and other leadership has challenged the ability to deliver a high level of oversight and care for the young men and their unique and complex needs.
- Staff workload and scheduling leaves little time for personal and professional development and rejuvenation.
- Previously no standardized way to track staff or resident success or happiness.
- Needed and desired improvements demand more finances, energy, and time than currently exists.

Future Aspirations:

- Supporting young men who have aged-out of the system but desire the continued structure of the Ranch. Creating positions and opportunities on the Ranch to support young men as well as the sustainability of the Ranch.
- Programing to include respite care and resources to families who are struggling and to help children avoid going into out-of-home care.
- Creation of a multipurpose facility that can be rented out and generate income for the Ranch.

SECTION 5

Action Plan

I. Programming

Value: Create innovative and engaging programming to meet the needs of OYR residents.

- **Goal #1: Create more opportunities for engagement and therapeutic modalities to support young men at OYR.**
 - Strategy #1: Continue and increase opportunities for young men to engage in the arts, including art and music experiences.
 - Strategy #2: Continue therapeutic interventions.
 - Strategy #3: Increase therapeutic coaching for staff.

II. Staffing

Value: Recruit, develop, support, and maintain an adequate number of quality staff members to provide the best care possible.

Preventing occupational exhaustion and increasing staff retention rates will aid higher quality and consistent care for young men residing at OYR.

- **Goal #1: Reducing staff workload, as budget allows.**
 - Strategy #1: Hire more house staff to reduce current and challenging 7:1 ratio in order to increase quality of care.
 - Strategy #2: Hire additional case manager to increase quality of care.
 - Strategy #3: Hire Director of Development in order to increase community awareness, recruit volunteers, and focus on fundraising to grow the financial support and resources of the Ranch. Including developing annual fundraiser.
- **Goal #2: Increase staff training, development, and support.**
 - Strategy #1: Engaging Clinical Coach to support therapeutic interventions with youth.

- Strategy #2: Increase of training and personal and professional development opportunities.
- Strategy #3: Training to increase continuity of care across all houses and staff members.
- Strategy #4: Continue with newly-implemented staff and resident young men satisfaction and quality-of-care assessments.
- **Goal #3: Increase quality of staff recruitment and retention.**
 - Strategy #1: Provide more competitive pay rate, as resources allow.
 - Strategy #2: Increase social media presence, such as Instagram, Twitter, etc.
 - Strategy #3: Provide opportunities for organizational and financial advancement.
- **Goal #4: Improve technology quality and access.**
 - Strategy #1: Implementing new software in order to keep up with industry practices in serving youth.
 - Strategy #2: Maintain comprehensive policies and procedures to guide practice and usage.

III. Finances

Value: Ensure that financial aid and services continue to be available. Adequate and growing financial resources provide opportunities for increasing levels of care and connection to support young men residing at OYR.

- **Goal #1: Continue and increase donor engagement.**
 - Strategy: Continue current donor engagement and relations.
 - Strategy: Look for opportunities for increased engagement.
 - Strategy: Increased social media engagement.
- **Goal #2: Continue and increase grants and government funding.**
 - Strategy #: CARF accreditation to increase standards of practice and financial resources.
 - Strategy #: Pursue more grant opportunities.

- **Goal #3: Continue and increase streams of income from land usage.**
- **Goal #4: Create opportunities for OYR to become a community destination and create new streams of income.**

IV. Land Usage

Value: Steward the generous gift of land in a way that supports the young men at OYR, the financial needs of OYR, the larger community, and the land itself.

- **Goal #1: Restore Mrs. O’Connell’s homestead. This would serve as a new office and provide new opportunities welcome young men, families, volunteers, and visitors to OYR.**
 - Strategy #: Pursue grants and other financial opportunities for restoration.
 - Strategy #: Use contractors who will Include the young men in the restoration process to provide recreation and increase life skills.
- **Goal #2: Increase recreational and engagement opportunities for young men.**
 - Strategy #: Pave drive to facilitate and increase running, biking, skateboarding, etc.
 - Strategy #: Maintain and increase usage of soccer field.
 - Strategy #: Maintain and increase playing time on basketball court.
 - Strategy #: Continue and increase- gardening opportunities-
 - Strategy #: Improve current lake to allow fishing and kayaking.
 - Strategy #: Install and maintain disc golf course.
 - Strategy #: Maintain and expand current walking trails.
 - Strategy #: Multipurpose barn, potentially including a workshop, industrial kitchen, indoor gym, and store front to sell goods grown, built and created by young men.

- **Goal #3: Maintain opportunities for direct interaction with Ranch animals.**
 - Strategy #: Increase financial resources to support the work
 - Strategy #: Engage committed and knowledgeable volunteers to monitor, aid, and educate young men on proper animal interaction and care.
- **Goal #: Continue and increase streams of income from land usage.**
 - Strategy #: Continue farmland rental agreement.
 - Strategy #: Consider increasing animal boarding opportunities.
- **Goal #4: Create opportunities for OYR to become a community destination and create new streams of income.**
 - Strategy #: Plant pumpkin patch and other fall-related amenities.
 - Strategy #: Plant Christmas Tree farm and other winter-related amenities.
 - Strategy #: Develop multipurpose barn to serve as wedding/event space, workshop, and store front.

V. Community Engagement

Value: Increasing involvement of the community in the support of young men at the Ranch by increasing awareness, creating more volunteer opportunities, and extending donor opportunities and relationships.

- **Goal #1: Increasing involvement of quality, knowledgeable, and dedicated volunteers.**
 - Strategy: Using social media and other marketing opportunities to educate and bring awareness of OYR and the services it provides.
 - Strategy: Leverage existing personal relationships of staff, volunteers, Board Members, and leadership to secure an increased number of knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers.
 - Strategy: Continue to foster current relationships with volunteers.

- **Goal #2: Create venue and amenities that turn OYR into a destination**

- Strategy: Multipurpose barn for wedding and event venue.

- Strategy: Multipurpose barn for a store front to provide community access to items grown, built, and created by OYR residents.

- **Goal #3: Increasing awareness and donor relationships.**

- Strategy: Using social media and other marketing opportunities to educate and bring awareness of OYR and the services it provides.

- Strategy #: Continue current fundraising efforts.