

Mapping OPIRG's Future

A Strategic Plan

2011 - 2015



OPIRG Guelph works to bring about greater environmental and social justice through research, education and activism.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall 2010, the Board of Directors at the Ontario Public Interest Group (OPIRG) in Guelph undertook a discussion to develop a 'Strategic Plan' for the organization for the next 4 years. As with any long standing organization, OPIRG felt it was necessary to reflect on its newly revised mandate and to develop goals and strategies that fit with this updated direction. Over the last year, the Board and staff examined its strengths, explored the challenges it faces and discussed opportunities that allow them to become a stronger and more effective organization. Some of the identified challenges were the result of internal factors; others from external forces.

This **"Mapping OPIRG's Future – 2011-2015"** document summarizes the discussions that were held with Board Members, volunteers, staff, students and community members. This planning process, for the first time in many years, established tangible, formal goals* and strategies that will allow us to be more effective and in our quest for greater environmental and social justice in our community and beyond.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is:

- to outline the issues OPIRG is currently facing and how best to manage them;
- to inform each member and the community of what actions the Board will take over the next four years to make its Mandate and Mission a reality;
- to provide the Board and membership with an accountability framework whereby the OPIRG membership can regularly monitor the success of the Board in implementing the Plan; and
- to provide OPIRG with ways to make the organization more accessible to new and prospective volunteers.

Along with this plan there are a set of "Workplans" that have been developed by Staff and Board members, that outline the steps that need to be taken to implement the Strategies we have outlined here and bring us to accomplish our Goals.

We have established a process for checking in on our progress and to assess our strategies. We will also be looking for ways to involve our members in the process of analyzing the effectiveness of our Strategies. A key responsibility of the Board will be to continually meet together and with Staff to evaluate the success in meeting the stated goals and regularly update this Plan to ensure relevancy.

* See page 5 for OPIRG's Mandate and Mission

LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greetings OPIRG volunteers, members and allies!

We are very pleased to share our Strategic Plan for 2011-2015 with you. This Plan is the culmination of several years of soul searching at OPIRG and reflects our revised organizational mandate and mission. As a “living document” we expect that some of it will need to be revised based on our circumstances but at the core of it are the strong foundations to turn our ideas and vision for a better organization and a better world into reality.

The Strategic Plan is the result of many hours of dreaming and brainstorming coupled with tough decision-making about realistic expectations. We think the result truly reflects how unique OPIRG is by highlighting our commitment to providing support, education, training and opportunities for action to our volunteers. It also reflects our commitment to honour the principles of anti-oppression and consensus.

What is our vision and mission? Our mission is to bring about greater environmental and social justice through research, education and activism. We’ve created a positive, accessible space for the sharing of skills and information, and access to resources and support – these are available for both campus and community activists, as well as those who are looking to deepen their political analysis. We rely on the creativity and dedication of our members to carry out our mission in cooperation with our team of capable staff and committed Board of Directors.

This Plan is organized around Six Goals that we feel best point to the areas we can improve, and the strengths which we should continue to build upon. A key part of creating this plan was doing an “Environmental Scan” of the organization. This meant trying to look from the inside-out and the outside-in at what we are doing well and what challenges we face. You can read about the Scan in this document too.

For each Goal in the Plan there is a series of strategies and someone dedicated to carrying them out. OPIRG Staff are primarily responsible for making sure this plan is taken from these pieces of paper and transformed into the living, breathing organization that we call OPIRG Guelph. In order to ensure that things stay on track we have devised a plan to review Staff work in relation to our Strategies and Goals at our Annual General Meetings and through our Annual Action Reports.

We also need your feedback to make sure this Plan is working. Suggestions on Strategies can be sent to the Board via their email address opirgbrd@uoguelph.ca to our main email address opirg@uoguelph.ca or through feedback sessions at our AGMs. We are all committed to bringing about greater environmental and social justice so let’s make sure that OPIRG can play a key role in that process.

ORGANIZATION, ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT

The success of OPIRG Guelph is largely driven by how it is organized - students and community members working together through consensus. Most OPIRG projects are coordinated by *Action Groups*, established by volunteer members to engage politically around a particular environmental or social justice issue. While Board members (7 student members and 2 community members) may identify priority political issue areas, projects and programs, their primary interest, along with the core Staff, is to support the work of the Action Groups and volunteers by providing resources, training, ideas and staff support. For example in 2010, the Board established 5 priority issue areas. This list shows some of the places where Action Groups and organizational priorities come together:

- Indigenous Solidarity (Priority Area)
- Activism in a Security State (Priority Area)
- Green Justice (Priority Area and Action Group)
- Students against Oppression (Action Group – in progress)
- Food Action (Action Group – in progress)
- Food not Bombs (Action Group)
- Speed River Restoration and Clean Up (Priority Area)

OPIRG also works with U of G students and community members to organize educational events and has coordinated research in collaboration with university departments, professors, and the community. These events include speakers, films, conferences, workshops, festivals, protests, information campaigns and classes and research opportunities.

Additionally OPIRG provides training, support, and opportunities to help people transform social and environmental concerns into effective action using the principles of anti-oppression and collective action. We offer access to resources including information, funding, and technology. Opportunities for skill development are available through activist skills workshops, volunteer opportunities, educational events, public campaigns, and partnerships with other organizations. As a result of their experiences at OPIRG many students go on to establish their own groups, like Guelph Students for Environmental Change, the Bike Centre and to become key members of movements for social and environmental justice around the world. OPIRG has an impressive alumni list that includes the current Mayor of Guelph, Karen Farbridge, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Gordon Miller, activist and co-writer with Derrick Jensen of “ Deep Green Resistance” and Hope Engel Co-Founder at Plume Native Writers and Artists Circle.

Currently, OPIRG Guelph boasts a membership of 18 000 members, more than 99% are students from the University of Guelph while the remaining are members of the communities of Guelph-Wellington. Funding to operate the organization and its activities comes from a levy provided by Full-time Undergraduate and Graduate students. The fee is approximately \$6.20 per semester. Community memberships are available for a donation of \$5-\$20 per person. The organization also seeks funding when needed through grants for special projects. Unlike many organizations OPIRG is very lucky to not be dependent on grants which often provide only sporadic funding for our work. This also allows us to have a much longer term focus for our work and to support initiatives that are often not valued by granting bodies.

OUR FOUNDATIONS

OUR MISSION:

To bring about greater environmental and social justice through research, education and activism.

OUR MANDATE:

OPIRG is an activist centre for research, education, training and action for social and environmental justice. Our office is a positive and accessible place where campus and community activists come together and connect to share skills and information, access resources and support, and deepen our political analysis.

We know that environmental degradation and social injustice are complex and interconnected issues that are the product of systems of domination and hierarchy. We expose and challenge the structures and institutions which perpetuate colonization, imperialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and other forms of inequity. We stand in solidarity with people around the world who are resisting social and economic oppression.

We recognize that there are many ways to initiate and support grassroots radical change, and that our strength as an organization lies in the diversity of our experiences, approaches and tactics. In order to be as effective and inclusive as we can in our activism we operate without hierarchy and uphold the core values of anti-oppression and consensus. We mobilize through a wide variety of methods such as research, creating awareness, lobbying, media, training, protest, and direct action. We are volunteer driven and rely on the creativity and dedication of our members.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

This scan presents the key issues and challenges facing OPIRG and creates the context we have used to develop our goals, strategies and performance measures are based.

In developing the environmental scan for OPIRG Guelph we explored its strengths, shortcomings and the potential threats to the organization. By discussing these we were able to focus on necessary changes and determine to seize opportunities to improve the organization. These opportunities will be discussed in the Strategies outlined in this *Plan*. We also had a chance to explore our strengths and make plans to continue the work that has made our PIRG a model for others across Canada.

Some of the identified strengths, weaknesses and threats are internal to the administration and governance of OPIRG - usually resulting from developments within the organization. Others are the result of external factors, primarily resulting from the student community traditionally supporting it or developments in society which require the attention of the organization.

Reputation

- OPIRG Guelph has been in existence since 1976 and has developed a good reputation for the work it has done.
- Traditionally we have received strong support from the City of Guelph, local and municipal candidates and student members.
- Continues to be one of the best funded OPIRG in Canada and a potential model for other OPIRGs.
- Is part of a network of organizations, including an Ontario network of PIRGs, and individuals with common goals on social justice and environmental issues.
- Some student members are comfortable using OPIRG for advice and as a place to address social justice and environmental issues they feel important – however, others are not.
- Advocating ‘activism’ can bring with it a negative connotation and can be intimidating to some.
- Media and members may be destabilizing organization over recent high profile issue
- Trust issue - concern by some that OPIRG is too focused on an ideology and may not be embracing all with an interest in social and environmental issues.

Mandate

- focuses on groups or individuals who are often marginalized
- provides members with access to resources, education, training and support
- tends to fund and take on politically controversial and/or spontaneous projects
- Often take on too many issues and ideas

Performance (Environmental Scan Continued)

- support in community largely around our environmental projects
- provides training to students on consensus building, facilitation and anti-oppression
- governance and human resource management issues impact our effectiveness

Infrastructure and Funding Support

- The organization is in the enviable position of having a facility that is used for staff, a library, research resources and an area for visiting students, members and Board members.
- OPIRG's achievements have largely been due to the stable funding it receives from student members.
- Ongoing concern about having to compete for future funding from student fees – de-funding.
- Many students are unaware of OPIRG's location on campus
- Some of the technology equipment is out-dated
- The current facility it occupies at One Trent Street is destined for demolition
- Facility needs renovation

Governance and Human Resources

- The Board of Directors, student volunteers, staff and community members are dedicated and enthusiastic
- Student volunteers and Board members are busy and are not always able to spend the essential time and energy to work on OPIRG activities - moves too fast or too slow
- Board of Directors has high turnover rate – students come and go in a university setting
- Provides for training and development, but does not always provide for needed continuity
- The Board benefits from the experience of graduate students, however the experience of alumni or long-term membership on the Board is required
- Lack of training may be contributing to lack of experience of Board of Directors in managing the overall organization, the issues and the work
- Consensus based decision-making with alternating facilitators appears to be a strength of the Board.
- Lack of clarity around the role of the Board of Directors and staff members - high work expectations of Board members combined with unclear staff roles and delegation
- Mistrust between Board of Directors and staff requires Board to manage conflict
- Significant time spent in Board meetings on administrative housekeeping items ('down in the weeds') and less on strategic issues, communications and policy on effective human resource and workplace management
- Staff roles in the organization is not well developed and requires review to make the organization more efficient and leaner
- Follow up with new student volunteers is lacking – is leading to decreased interest

Communications

- Responding to the media and campus community on issues can often be slow.
- From an issues management perspective, OPIRG's response to controversial or sensitive issues has been difficult to manage

- Messaging to the general population tends to be too ‘candid’
- Lacks a motto, logo or catch phrase that promotes OPIRG -Guelph’s mandate and work
- Growing concern around the organization’s future image (i.e. anti-establishment, violent, criminal)
- OPIRG’s name does not resonate with its members and the community
- Students are not always aware of OPIRG’s existence or mandate
- There is little or no communication with graduate students or alumni
- OPIRG does not have access to the student list from the CSA Association for outreach

Participation and Volunteerism

- Increased difficulty engaging students to participate in OPIRG’s activities (e.g. establishment of working groups) largely due to competition for a student’s time
- Follow up with new student volunteers is lacking – may be contributing to decreased interest
- List of volunteers is limited
- Targeting student volunteers to ‘general tasks’ associated with their interest may be preferable to assigning them to working groups
- (Environmental Scan Continued)
- Working groups are not always aware of their mandate – not always a clear history of the organization’s success with their priorities
- Number of clubs and groups evolving from OPIRG (e.g. Bike, Women’s Center) is competing with key priorities of OPIRG – need to explore partnerships with these groups

The Strategic Plan seeks to address these factors by answering these questions:

1. How do we articulate and communicate the mission, vision and core values of OPIRG in such a way that captures the importance of its role on campus, in the community and in society?
2. What measures should we use to demonstrate to our supporting community that we are in fact meeting the mission, vision and goals we have established?
3. How do we encourage a deeper understanding of social justice and the environment issues with students, members and our community so that they can more effectively share their conviction with others?
4. How do we better prioritize our work so the important needs of our society can be met?
5. How do we ensure the work environment at OPIRG provides for productivity, teamwork, and an understanding of roles?
6. How do we attract members and community citizens to volunteer?
7. How do we attract additional revenue to reduce our traditional reliance on student fees?
What measures need to be put in place to maintain stable funding?

GOALS

GOAL #1

1. Improve Board of Directors' Performance and Accountability

Strategies:

- 1.1. BOARD TRANSITIONING/MENTORING – Create regular process for capturing outgoing Board members' knowledge about the organization and specific Portfolios and opportunities for new Board members to work with experienced members. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator & Board – WINTER 2012)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- Conduct a “Board member Change-over Session” – late Spring
 - incentive honorarium for previous Board members to train/transition replacements
 - Exit interviews with Board members and/or digital summary of their tasks and resources
 - Alumni recognition – specifically relating to Portfolios
 - Ensure each new Board member is matched with a seasoned ‘buddy’ board member to assist in developing new members.
 - Create a Board workspace that includes a place for Board Resources and mailboxes
- 1.2. BOARD TRAINING plan for each semester. Trainings to include those that are required (consensus, anti-oppression) and those which will help Board in their specific portfolios. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – SUMMER/FALL 2012)**

ACTION IDEAS: Training areas could include: working in groups, leadership specifically, organizational oversight and governance, consensus building and increasing awareness of social and environmental issues.

- 1.3. BOARD ORIENTATION will be conducted for all new members through a “Board Orientation Session.” **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – WINTER 2012)**
- 1.4. Review and update existing terms of reference for the Board of Directors. Write and implement clear portfolio descriptions for Board members that fulfill all of the governance needs of the organization and develop systems for accountability to fulfill the responsibilities. (Also under Goal #5.9) **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator & Board – WINTER 2012)**

ACTION IDEAS: Terms of reference will include:

- general roles of Board members – including accountability and time requirements
- clear and specific portfolio for each Board member – balancing work requirements
- key procedures and processes
- description of key issues and current initiatives
- policy position statement(s) for the various issues and initiatives
- communication plan – managing key files for promotion; key communication messages media management

- role of working groups
- administrative policies
- criteria for prioritizing projects, initiatives and requests
- contact names and numbers
- role of staff
- strategic plan and annual review of performance measures
- Ensure opportunities for Board and Staff to interact one-on-one with members, volunteers and visitors
- Increase our members' knowledge of Board members by prioritizing attendance at OPIRG events

Using at least the above ideas create and regularly update a 'Board Information Kit' or reference guide that includes the above for Board of Directors that can be used for training board members.

1.5 Develop an effective financial system that is user friendly for Board members and which includes a clear budgeting process, including timelines and other necessary procedures. **(Kiran/Office Coordinator – WINTER 2012)**

1.6 Develop an annual work plan for the Board no later than April for the following school year. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator & Board – START WINTER 2012 – ANNUAL)**

1.7 Improve board accountability for staff performance by ensuring that staff have annual performance plans (work plans) in place for the following academic year by May of the previous academic year. **(Staff Liaisons – START FALL 2011 – ANNUAL)**

GOAL # 2

2. Develop an effective and accessible workplace environment for Staff, Board, Working Groups, Members and Visitors.

Strategies:

2.1. Develop and implement a plan to renovate existing facility. **(Kiran/Office Coordinator – STARTED FALL 2011, FINISH FALL 2012)**

The plan should take into account the following:

- visitors' easy accessibility to staff when entering office including, reception area with a dedicated greeter
- welcoming entrance along with staff and board photos and contact information
- a visible outline of what OPIRG provides in services and resources and a list of current projects, partnerships and working groups
- reduced clutter and improved storage and organization
- accessible refreshments
- extra workspace for non-staff to use
- effective and appropriate work spaces for all staff
- Board member resources centralized and accessible
- Signage in all areas of the office
- Consult with staff, board, members and volunteers about their space needs
- Improve overall air quality and comfort level (temperature, etc.) at 1 Trent Lane, the office
- Improve the usability of the OPIRG office for OPIRG volunteers by developing clear systems for maintenance, cleaning, supply ordering, maintaining records
- Encourage less formal use of the OPIRG space and encourage volunteers, members and working groups to be more comfortable in the space
- Host regular event/social in the office at a regular time and day, could be film, discussions, etc.

2.2. Develop 'New Facility Options Plan' and request University's assistance in securing a new facility in anticipation of the demolition of the current facility. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – START WITH MEETING FALL 2012 – COMPLETE 2016)**

ACTION IDEAS: Conceive a plan for an awesome new student Centre, work with the other Special Status Groups

2.3. Plan regularly for investments in in upgraded technology, furniture, equipment and software. **(Kiran/Office Coordinator – SUMMER 2012 – ANNUAL WITH BUDGETING PROCESS)**

2.4. Conduct annual training session for staff on "Welcoming and Accepting Visitors" and set out guidelines. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – FALL 2012 – ANNUAL)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- Make it a priority for staff to spend time with visitors, volunteers and members
 - Schedule staff, Board or volunteers to be greeters working out of the front room (turn the area into reception) so they can better schedule their time to guarantee they are available for walk-ins
 - Ensure that greeting is a shared responsibility amongst staff
- 2.5. Develop and maintain an archival system (OPIRG Guelph and Ontario PIRG), including making the digital archiving system (the Server) more user-friendly. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator with Library Portfolio – FALL 2013)**

GOAL # 3

3. Successfully promote and communicate with student membership and the Guelph community.

Strategies:

- 3.1. Develop a “Marketing Strategy” for OPIRG that includes a plan for staffing it with someone with appropriate skills. **(Marnie Eves/Organizational Coordinator – FALL 2012 TEST RUN, CAMPUS LAUNCH FALL 2013, COMMUNITY LAUNCH 2014)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- positioning OPIRG as the voice of environmental and social justice in Guelph
- an evaluation of marketing strategies currently employed – what’s working and what isn’t
- identification of strategies to manage gaps in current strategies
- recommendations for implementing a marketing campaign including costs and timelines over the next 4 - 5 years
- overhauling the logo, streamline promotions and re-brand the website
- Developing and implementing ‘Quality Standards’ for student, community and government requests and inquiries including turnaround times, quality of messaging, etc. Include timelines and standards in policies and procedures so they are easily accessible
- targeting specific audience(s) – Profs, Teaching Assistants, Grad Students, Undergrads in particular programs (sociology, politics, environmental studies/sciences, development, etc.)
- conducting an annual ‘promotion tour’ on campus and in community using staff and Board members
- conducting survey with OPIRG alumni and U of G graduates gathering ‘testimonials’– for advertizing
- using mailing list of U of G Student Association for regular OPIRG newsletters or bulletins
- strategies to increase membership from community
- promotion of the Library as a valuable resource
- encouraging other groups to utilize the space
- utilizing tabling judiciously by carefully evaluating the success of them and the cost of staff time
- Advertise effectively, appropriately and in a timely manner, including: speakers, volunteer opportunities, information about OPIRG, location of OPIRG’s office, options for our allies/partners to use our space and resources
- Create and implement a strategy to get ourselves known on campus and in the community for quality work that clearly reflects our mandate.

- Create a new brand for OPIRG Guelph that clearly reflects our mandate and easily communicates who we are and what we do
- Contacting Professors in particular fields to work collaboratively on research projects
- Classroom talks (sociology, women’s studies, environmental science and studies, political science, development, etc.
- Promote the library to Teaching Assistants to share information about it with their classes
- Talk to Grad students about using OPIRG as a quiet workspace
- Create a new sign for outside the office (to replace the old faded one)
- Contributing to publications like the “Ontarion” and “The Peak”
- Work with volunteers to develop an OPIRG zine
- Provide training and support to working groups so they can engage with the media
- Initiate the development of a “media” working group which could participate in the promotion of OPIRG campaigns
- Develop and disseminate new mission, logo, slogan, website
- Redesign OPIRG website, including new logo, mission, values and key messages including an ‘easy to find’ directions to OPIRG’s office, decide whether the site can/should be more interactive or should provide static information for users
- Examine need for graphic design training for staff
- Develop a strategy (and policies) for using social media (facebook, twitter, etc.) and discuss the kinds of information we want to share through those mediums
- Develop a user-friendly system for email that will ensure that it is easy for staff, volunteers, board members and allies to contact the organization and all staff members (including; Get all staff to use gmail using our own domain...opirgguelph.org, develop archiving systems within their email, clarify that email belongs to the position not to the individual staff member)
- Create and maintain a comprehensive list of how we communicate and to whom on various issues
- Ensure there is clear staff responsibility for maintaining an up-to-date, attractive and effective website and social media.
- make better use of RadiOPIRG
- make more links with the Community Service Learning program
- network with other like-minded organizations that have good reputations
- Do LESS, but do it BETTER! Plan events in a way that creates continuity from year to year, design marketing that can be used for multiple events and trainings. Help volunteers to understand the cycle of the organization and know what to expect
- Promote events well in advance of the date

3.2. Implement the approved “Marketing Strategy” for OPIRG. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – FALL 2012 TEST RUN, FALL 2013 CAMPUS LAUNCH, FALL 2014 COMMUNITY LAUNCH)**

3.3. Improve short-term visibility on the University of Guelph campus. **(All Staff & Board)**

3.4. Develop a communications strategy with clearly articulated POSITIONS on current issues which can help to promote a more consistent vision of who we are. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – WINTER 2012 – FOCUS AREAS, WINTER 2013 – STRATEGY).** With Strategy 5.1.

ACTION IDEAS:

- Create key messages for initiatives and policy positions (by targeted audience) for use in:
 - media
 - news releases
 - promotional material
 - OPIRG website
 - personal student communications
 - e-mail responses

3.5. Develop and implement staff training in marketing, communications and ‘dealing with the media.’ **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – WINTER 2012 ORC TRAINING RELATED TO DEVELOPING MARKETING PLAN)**

GOAL # 4

4. Develop stronger relationship with members and community - increase event participation and volunteer engagement.

Strategies:

- 4.1. Study and analyze the barriers to participating in the organization and OPIRG events. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – SUMMER 2013)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- Do a study of students and community members to determine barriers to embracing OPIRG's mission/mandate and a reluctance to volunteer or participate in OPIRG events and working groups.

- 4.2. Explore and implement at least **one well-resourced and well planned community initiative** within next two years that profiles the OPIRG's role in social justice and environmental sustainability, benefits a local community, promotes OPIRG's values/mission/mandate. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – START DISCUSSING – WINTER 2012 – COMPLETE - 2014)**

- 4.3. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – SUMMER 2014)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- Co-host, with Community Partners, a variety of small events in the community, which are open to the general public, (e.g. speakers, outdoor community concerts, local foods market on campus, etc.) with the aim of increasing community memberships.
 - Assess who we partner with in the community and on campus to increase our effectiveness and diversity. Link these partnerships to our annual areas of focus.
 - Explore and implement partnerships with other student organizations and community groups with similar mandates, interests and links to social and environmental causes – partner in events, activism, communications, etc
- 4.4. Develop an effective 'Volunteer *Interest-Skills-Tasks*' database. Tasks to include general tasks, events, working groups and board membership. Ensure appropriate staff involvement in the development of the tool and training in how to use it effectively. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – SUMMER 2015)**
- 4.5. Provide increased 'support' for working groups. Balance our need for recruitment of new volunteers with strong support for the ones we already have involved. Make sure that current volunteers are NOT neglected for the purposes of finding more people. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – STARTED 2011 - ONGOING)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- Increase the proportion of the Volunteer Coordinator job description that would provide this support
- Do callouts for working groups on OPIRG's areas of focus
- Assess and where necessary revamp the trainings for working groups
- Make the OPIRG office more inviting and user-friendly for these volunteers

- 4.6. Develop a suitable and inspiring process for electing Board members and increasing member participation in the elections. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator & Board – WINTER 2014)**
- 4.7. Design an Annual General Meeting format that inspires members to attend and participate in the process. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – WINTER 2014)**
- 4.8. Establish new expectations for working groups, including: regular commitments of time at the OPIRG office (office hours?), participation in required trainings and orientations, consequences for non-participation in required trainings and orientations. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – WINTER 2014)**
- 4.9. Design and distribute an attractive and comprehensive annual report. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – ANNUAL)**
- 4.10. Ensure all staff members utilize the opportunities available to them for one-time volunteers, where appropriate. Particularly on-campus resources like Student Volunteer Connections and community resources like the Volunteer Centre. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – WINTER 2014)**

GOAL # 5

5. DO LESS BUT DO IT BETTER! Deliver OPIRG's programs, projects and resources more effectively.

Strategies:

- 5.1. Develop clear 'policy and priority' criteria enabling board and staff to make informed decisions on: new or developing issues, new initiatives and events, funding requests, continuation of existing policies and initiatives, the development of new or continuation of working groups, the development of key messages. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – WINTER 2013)**
- 5.2. With Strategy 3.4 - Develop a communications strategy with clearly articulated POSITIONS on current issues which can help to promote a more consistent vision of who we are. (Review potential overhaul of 'elections' system for OPIRG governance structure and implement recommended changes.
- 5.3. Explore improved ways of increasing communications between staff and between staff and Board members. **(Staff Liaisons/Board – SUMMER 2012)**

ACTION IDEAS:

- regular staff meetings
 - regular staff reports to the Board of Directors
 - creating standardized forms of communication and archiving, ie, same email system, filing systems, reporting, etc.
 - work towards developing a clearer understandings of what others are working on within OPIRG.
- 5.4. Put in place a 'conflict resolution' policy and process for the workplace. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – FALL 2013)**
 - 5.5. Develop a 'Quality Standards' for student, community and government requests and inquiries including turnaround times, quality of messaging, etc. Include timelines and standards in policies and procedures so they are easily accessible. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – SUMMER 2014)**
 - 5.6. Implement "Quality Standards" plan that includes involving more people in the planning and work for events and organizational changes. This would include sharing with our membership our Annual Organizational Action Plan and accessing volunteers through other sources, like high schools, co-ops, work study, community service. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator – WINTER 2015)**
 - 5.7. Develop a process and then implement a regular evaluation and debriefing of projects and programs. **(Aundraya/Volunteer Coordinator -)**
 - 5.8. Ensure that all staff members are using clear job descriptions. **(Staff Liaisons – WINTER 2012)**
- These should be based on or include:
- Research into current workload within organization
 - priorities and requirements described in strategic plans
 - role of the Board and Board members' portfolios

- position skill requirements
- accountability factors
- appropriate levels of responsibility
- clear responsibility for maintaining an up-to-date, attractive and effective website
- Increasing our members' knowledge of staff members by prioritizing attendance at OPIRG events
- Coordinating efforts with other PIRGs, speakers, Board development, staff training, etc
- Record and recognize the contributions of staff, board and volunteers

5.9. Review and update existing terms of reference for the Board of Directors. Write and implement clear portfolio descriptions for Board members that fulfill all of the governance needs of the organization and develop systems for accountability to fulfill the responsibilities. (Also under Goal #1.4) **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – WINTER 2012)**

ACTION IDEAS: Discuss possibility of adding a Media/Propaganda portfolio.

5.10. Make a clean and organized office environment that is user-friendly. This includes: developing and maintaining clear systems for storage and use of resources and equipment (paper, markers, room bookings, petty cash, etc.) **(Kiran/Office Coordinator – STARTED FALL 2011, FINISH FALL 2012)** (Also under Goal #2.1)

5.11. Create more opportunities for staff and board to develop skills, through trainings, etc. Two areas that have been identified as being required are: communications and understanding the Collective Agreement. Ensure there are multiple opportunities for them to attend trainings. **(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator & Board)**

5.12. Develop and implement a performance management process (cycle) for each staff including an annual written plan (developed and approved no later than May of each year), year-end appraisals including results achievement, performance rating and expected learning and development strategies. This will replace the current 'work plan' for each staff. **(Staff Liaisons – WINTER 2014)**

GOAL # 6

6. To engage in relevant research that fits with our capacity as an organization.

Strategies

- 6.1. Assess types and amount of research currently conducted by OPIRG staff and volunteers.
(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – WINTER 2014)
- 6.2. Develop goals for “public interest research” and a plan for accomplishing them.
(Marnie/Organizational Coordinator – SUMMER 2014)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

By December 31, 2015, OPIRG will have achieved:

- ✧ Clear **communications** strategies
- ✧ Increased **volunteer** numbers
- ✧ Clear and **defined roles and accountability** for Board and staff
- ✧ Increased **number of inquiries** from students and community
- ✧ Definitive **policy and priority criteria** to respond to requests and funding
- ✧ Accessible, **comfortable and functional facility** for staff and visitor
- ✧ Increased number of **visitors** (from 2011-2012 baseline)
- ✧ An **initiative** which significantly increases our profile
- ✧ Added exposure in **student and community publications**
- ✧ Clear and timely **key messages** to respond to issues
- ✧ A plan on relevant and important **research**

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - OPIRG Provincial (Ontario PIRG)

MISSION

The Provincial organization of the Ontario Public Interest Research Group provides an opportunity for the members of individual PIRGs and OPIRG Organizing Committees to meet, exchange ideas, educate themselves and work together.

GOALS:

- To encourage diversity and social equality for all people by opposing all forms of oppression, such as sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism and ableism.
- To respect and encourage global diversity.
- To work in a co-operative and non-authoritarian way emphasizing consensual decision-making processes.
- To work in solidarity with other social movements.
- To recognize the interconnectedness and pursue an integrative analysis of social and environmental issues.
- To motivate civic participation and responsibility by encouraging students to become concerned, informed and active.