

Orienteering in New Zealand

Invitation to participate in setting our Strategic Direction – 2026-2030

Introduction

Orienteering NZ is undertaking a **strategic planning process**, to **agree the strategic direction for the national body and sport from 2026-2030**. This document sets out an early draft of thinking for this, undertaken by the ONZ Board.

We now **invite Clubs, Members, ONZ representatives and role holders, and other stakeholders, to input to this process.**

The **scope of the plan** is to set out the **direction for the sport of orienteering overall, and for ONZ**. The plan will focus on areas the national body will be able to prioritise and focus on in the coming years, using the resources, capabilities, and influence available to it. Some of the areas identified may have implications for clubs, so we encourage as much feedback and debate as possible around this, to ensure that what goes in the plan, reflects the interests of the wider orienteering community and sport as a whole.

How can feedback be given?

Club and Presidents Forums

There will be opportunity to participate in an open forum discussion on this, at the upcoming Club Forum on 9 October, and Presidents Forum on 30 October.

[Sign-up to the Club Forum here](#) – please sign-up by 7 October

[Sign-up to the President & Club Leaders Forum here](#) – please sign-up by 28 October

Links to the above Zoom meetings will be sent out to all those that register

Written feedback

We invite written feedback which can be sent by email to gm@orienteering.org.nz or sarah.osullivan@orienteering.org.nz

We would specifically like feedback on the following components:

- Future Perfect – what is your aspiration and vision for the sport in 2030?
- Culture and values – do these reflect the culture of orienteering which is healthy for the sport going forwards?
- Strategic Framework – do the strategic pillars and high level objectives under each make sense?

In each of the above areas, please feedback:

- 1) What you agree with,
- 2) What you disagree with,
- 3) What you believe is missing

Please note

- This is a draft document designed to prompt feedback. We hope and expect changes to be made to this as a result of feedback.
- The strategic plan is intentionally high level, and the annual business plan which falls out of the strategic plan, identifies more of the “how”. Over the years specific initiatives and activities supporting each strategic objective will shift and change as things progress.
- You will recognise some parts of the plan as similar to the current one, including the Vision, and ONZ responsibilities sections – whilst we are open to feedback on these, our current thinking is these are still relevant as written.
- We also include a PESTLE and SWOT analysis in the appendices – people are welcome to add to or comment on these, but they are tools used to help inform the plan, but not be literally in the final plan we come up with.

OUR VISION

To enrich lives through the fun, adventure, challenge, achievement, and community that orienteering provides

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ORIENTEERING NEW ZEALAND

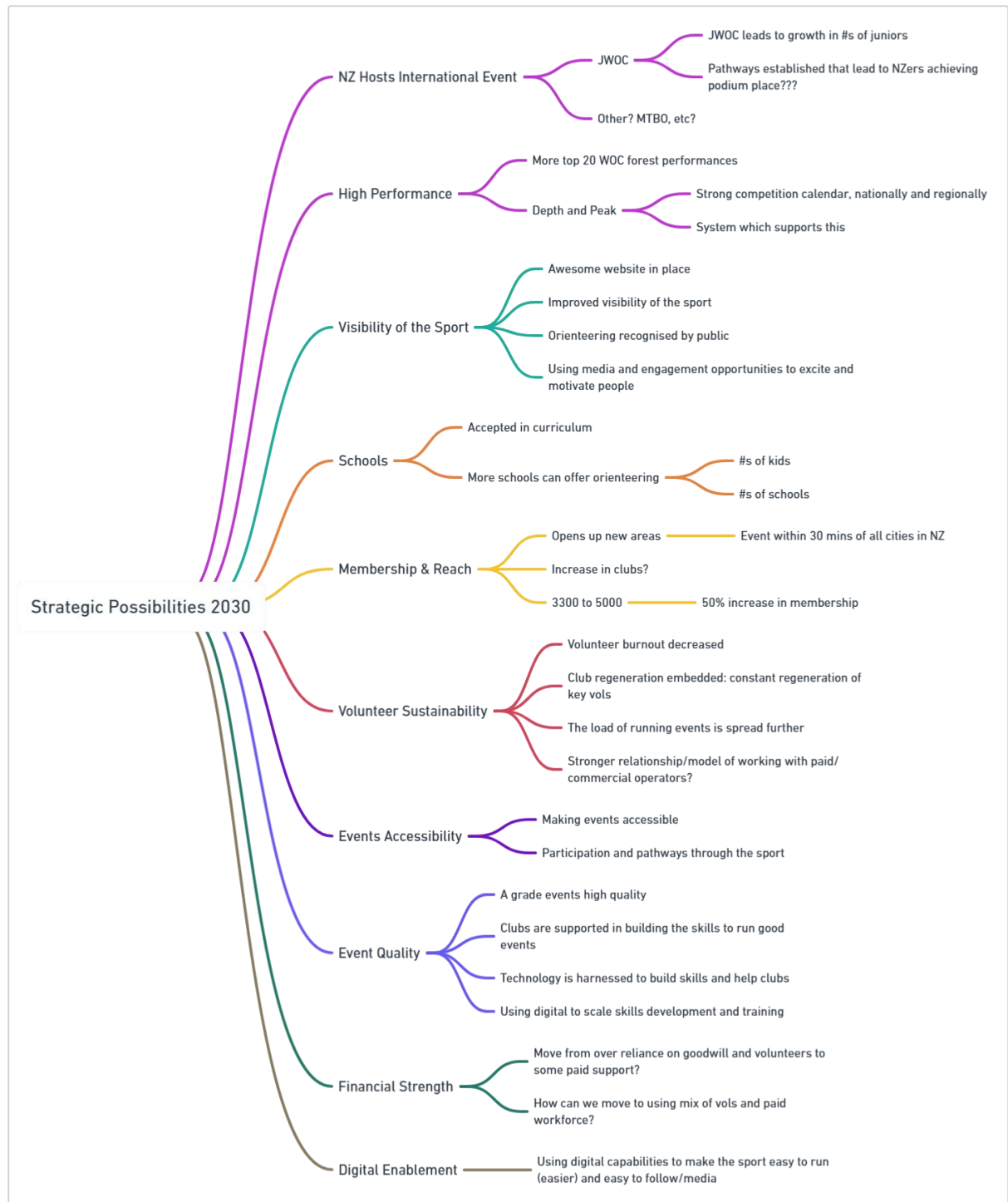
Our **mission** is to see orienteering enjoyed as a “sport for life” by New Zealanders of all ages and abilities, through enabling clubs to thrive, events to flourish, and where people can find their own sense of adventure, aspiration, community, and fun

We do this by:

- Promoting the sport at a national level which strengthens the brand of orienteering in New Zealand
- Building club capability through the provision of resources, knowledge, training, and advice
- Setting, promoting, and embedding the rules and quality standards which underpin the sport and form the foundation for fair and high quality orienteering events and competition
- Being advocates for the sport in NZ, ensuring orienteering’s interests are represented with external bodies and groups
- Developing systems and processes that make it easy for people to manage, administer, and participate in orienteering
- Coordinating the allocation and promotion of major events in the national Calendar, and international events happening on New Zealand soil
- Overseeing an effective High Performance programme that creates the conditions where athletes can be their best, and where age appropriate development opportunities are available to athletes.
- Selecting, coaching, managing and supporting New Zealand teams on the world stage
- Facilitating development pathways and training resources which enable athlete performance at Junior, Elite, and Age Grade levels, and which build coach capability, and technical expertise
- Forging relationships and connections with key stakeholders which strengthen orienteering in New Zealand
- Leading and facilitating progress with clubs on strategic issues of national importance
- Being socially responsible, and promoting good practices important for our communities, including environmental sustainability, inclusiveness, a greater awareness of Kaupapa Maori principles and relationship with Iwi
- Demonstrate responsibility in upholding the whenua and respect for the lands we orienteer on, and practices to strengthen relationship with landowners
- Championing the safety and wellbeing of participants involved at all levels of the sport
- Providing effective governance based on listening to and representing member interests, staying abreast of trends and issues impacting the sport, and through good leadership, decision making, and financial management.

FUTURE PERFECT – WHAT ARE OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE SPORT BY 2030?

By 2030, orienteering in NZ is visible, accessible, and thriving—powered by strong clubs and schools, a sustainable (partly professional) workforce, high-quality events, smart use of digital, and success on the world stage.



OUR CULTURE

Our values express the essence of the sport, what has made us successful and what will support success going forwards. We are proudly unique, with a strong culture that shapes the orienteering experience. Our club rooms are the outdoors; the parks, reserves, farms, forests, and urban areas that events happen in, and which influences a down to earth, authentic, fun and adventurous vibe.

These core values are at the heart of what makes orienteering special and unique:

- **Kotahitanga/Community** – volunteering, collaborative, greater good, unity, inclusive, family/whanau, relationships
- **Manaakitanga/Encouragement** – supporting, caring, welcoming, empowering, positive, growing, sharing, learning
- **Hauora/Wellbeing** – physical and mental wellbeing, positive sense of achievement, social connection, fun, excitement, solving problems, sense of adventure, striving, making things happen, confidence building, competition,
- **Kaitiakitanga** – environment, guardianship, respect for the land, sustainability

DRAFT STRATEGIC MAP 2026-2030

OUR VISION

To enrich lives through the fun, adventure, challenge, achievement, and community that orienteering provides

OUR MISSION

*Our **mission** is to see orienteering enjoyed as a “sport for life” by New Zealanders of all ages and abilities, through enabling clubs to thrive, events to flourish, athletes to perform, and where people can find their own sense of adventure, aspiration, community, and fun*

OUR VALUES

Kotahitanga/Community, Manaakitanga/Encouragement, Hauora/Wellbeing, Kaitiakitanga

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



1. SPORT GROWTH AND PARTICIPATION

Success Statement

Orienteering continues to grow in popularity, with more recognition of it as a sport of choice for people wanting a fun and accessible outdoor recreation option

Areas of Focus

- 1.1. Schools strategy** – increase numbers of schools, in more areas, with more juniors exposed to the sport through school years
- 1.2. Awareness and promotion** – increase awareness of the sport to the broader public, and reach more people
- 1.3. Grow participation** – work with clubs to encourage diversity, deliver events people want, and make it easy for people to participate
- 1.4. Grow club network and membership** – identify opportunities and enable new clubs to form that increase areas where orienteering is available

2. CLUB AND COMMUNITY CAPABILITY

Success Statement

We have a thriving community of capable clubs and passionate volunteers delivering awesome events

Areas of Focus

- 2.1. Technical standards and capability building** – reinforce and maintain technical standards and practices, and boost numbers of people with core capabilities; mappers, controllers, technology
- 2.2. Easy access to knowledge and resources** – continue to invest in and develop tools and resources clubs can access that make it easier to develop and grow the sport
- 2.3. Supporting clubs hosting major events** – establish stronger methods of club support, in major event delivery
- 2.4. Strengthen volunteer model** – work with clubs to establish stronger practices to encourage volunteer renewal and mitigate volunteer burnout

3. PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Success Statement

Orienteering offers opportunities for people to perform and achieve in different facets of the sport including; pathways for; high performing athletes, juniors, and coaches

Areas of Focus

- 3.1. High Performance Programme** – provides the pathways for athletes to be their best, provide best chances for performance on national, regional, and world stage
- 3.2. Junior Development** – enables age appropriate approaches to development and performance which balances wellbeing and achievement

- 3.3. Coach Development** – develop framework, training, and practices that enable great coaching to happen across the community

4. PLACES TO PLAY

Success Statement

We continue to grow, nurture, and protect the places where orienteering can happen, recognising that after people, this is the most important asset the sport has

Areas of Focus

- 4.1. Landowner relationships** – developing stronger practices that show long term commitment and respect of relationships with landowners, including iwi
- 4.2. Mapping capabilities** – ensuring clubs have access to the mapping capabilities which enable them to develop needed maps for their area
- 4.3. Innovating event formats** – ensuring we adapt to participant preferences around style and location of events
- 4.4. Upholding the whenua** – ensuring we have strong sustainability practices, and demonstrate respect and guardianship practices around the land we play on

5. STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Success Statement

Orienteering offers opportunities for people to perform and achieve in different facets of the sport including; pathways for; high performing athletes, juniors, and coaches

Areas of Focus

- 5.1. Positive leadership and governance** – Provide positive, transparent, and effective leadership that grows the sport, protects member interests, builds capability, and upholds the values of the sport
- 5.2. Sport advocacy and relationship development** – ensure the sport is properly represented with key external agencies and stakeholders, for the betterment of orienteering in NZ
- 5.3. Strong processes** – Continue to Improve processes, policies, and guideline documents that make it easy for people undertaking national orienteering work
- 5.4. Financial health** – strengthen and secure orienteering's financial future
- 5.5. Digital enablement** – invest further in digital technologies which improve efficiencies, better utilisation of data, user experience, and scaling of capabilities

APPENDICES

PESTLE

A PESTLE is used to identify external influences and trends we should be mindful of, impacting our sport and organisation. The following is not definitive, but offers some insight to factors we see impacting the sport.

Category	Key Trends & Insights
Political	• Social and political tension (e.g. non-binary, gender inclusion debates) • Gaming funding model under review (impacting sport grants) • Inclusion mandates tied to funding (e.g. Sport NZ, local authorities)
Economic	• Cost of living is a major constraint on family participation • Shrinking access to traditional funding (grants, gaming, etc.) • HP (High Performance) funding challenges • Increased compliance costs to run events • Ongoing digital cost creep (software, hosting, payment systems)
Social	• Shift toward participation and enjoyment vs. early competition (aligned with Balance is Better) • International trends (e.g. Sweden running untimed events) • More demand for family-friendly and flexible participation options • Growing awareness of equity, accessibility, and youth mental health • Challenge engaging younger generations used to instant, digital experiences
Technology	• Rapid AI evolution—future impacts on operations unknown • Growth of mobile-first tools like MapRun and digital punch systems • Expectation of modern event registration and results delivery • Use of CRM-style data systems for member tracking and analysis • Online learning tools and remote coach accreditation systems gaining traction
Legal	• Constant regulatory updates (e.g. changes in health & safety, inclusion, tax rules) • Landowners' responsibilities under H&S law now slightly eased • Clubs expected to have documented event safety plans • Increasing scrutiny on how participant data is stored and used (Privacy Act compliance) • Ambiguity around GST, honoraria and volunteer payments for clubs
Environmental	• Climate change disrupting events (fires, floods, storms) • Landowner sensitivity increasing (access less guaranteed) • More events at risk due to extreme weather • Environmental impact assessments and DOC/council requirements tightening • Risk and liability concerns around windfall damage, terrain use, and biodiversity zones

SWOT

The SWOT is used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats impacting the sport and ONZ organisation. In general weaknesses and threats can be turned into opportunities, and important ones may feature in the objectives in the strategic plan.

Strengths • Dedicated and talented people in the orienteering community • Clubs are financially strong • Inclusive, community-driven culture • Diverse terrains and wide event format options; strong technical standards ('system' of rules and practices) enabling quality events • Life-long participation model; health and wellbeing benefits • University clubs help bridge school-to-club transitions and promote the sport • ONZ does a lot with limited resource • National events structure and junior development programmes	Weaknesses • Limited ONZ resources (financial and operational) • Weak processes in some clubs; inconsistent knowledge-sharing systems • Low public awareness / brand visibility of orienteering • Limited participation from Māori/Pasifika • Accessibility barriers: need for travel/time/cost; reliance on parents for youth participation; demographic split (some groups cost/time poor) • Event delivery scalability constrained by club capacity • Underinvestment in digital infrastructure and innovation • Mixed club capability across the country
Opportunities • Innovate with local/urban and close-to-home event formats; more local events • Strengthen school engagement and curriculum alignment (incl. yrs 11–13) • Leverage JWOC and other elite events for profile; explore TV exposure (e.g., Sweden) • Collaborate across clubs and with associated sports (adventure racing, navsport); consider commercial delivery partnerships • Improve diversity and inclusion; target younger audiences; influencer-style marketing to reach broader demographics • Look offshore for ideas and best practice to develop and grow the sport • Use digital tools and data to modernize operations, training, and marketing	Threats • Climate change impacts (extreme weather) disrupting mapping and events • Increasing 'pay-to-participate' costs and broader cost-of-living pressures • Decline in club membership/public service ethos across sport • Rising competition from other sports and recreational activities • Volunteer burnout and lack of succession planning • Loss of land access due to regulation and landowner sensitivities • Aging technical workforce (mappers, controllers, timing/IT)