

Our Nawakwa Business Plan

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This plan approved by Our Nawakwa, Inc. Board of Directors on May 15, 2025. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually for at least Our Nawakwa's first five-years.

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Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Committee Leaders

2024 Board of Directors

President: Nicole Verdon, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Menomonie

Vice President: Sherry Jasper, Capital Campaign Co-Chair, Chippewa Falls

Treasurer: Carolyn Ede, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Mondovi

Secretary: Amanda Stephens, Menomonie

Violet Ibrahim, Eau Claire

Angela Overby, Cumberland

Jackie Sadler, Cornell

2025 Board of Directors

President: Sherry Jasper, Chippewa Falls

Vice President: Nicole Verdon, Menomonie

Treasurer: Carolyn Ede, Mondovi

Secretary: Amanda Stephens, Menomonie

Violet Ibrahim, Eau Claire

Open

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Advisory Board and Committee Leaders

Lori Geissler, Capital Campaign Co-Chair

Sherry Jasper, Capital Campaign Co-Chair

Heather Hunt, Legal Advisor

Nicole Verdon, Finance Committee Co-Chair

Carolyn Ede, Finance Committee Co-Chair

Josh Kohnke, Property Committee Chair

Nancy Felix, Property Committee Chair

Jodie Belknap, Outreach Committee Chair

Violet Ibrahim, JEDI Committee Chair

Executive Summary

Camp Nawakwa—derived from the Ojibwa language meaning “in the middle of the woods”—is a historic, 89-year-old youth camp situated on 75 scenic acres in northwestern Wisconsin. The property features a 26-acre lake nestled among rolling glacial hills. The north side of Picnic Lake (32 acres) is developed with key facilities, including three winterized lodges, a seasonal dining hall, 12 rustic sleeping units, a historic Boy Scout lodge, waterfront access, an archery range, and ample outdoor recreation space.

The remaining 21 acres on the south and east sides of the lake are protected by a conservation easement held by the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA), preserving the land in its natural state and preventing future development. This area is traversed by the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, a 1,200-mile hiking trail and National Park.

Our Nawakwa, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was founded in November 2022 with the mission to preserve Camp Nawakwa and its legacy as a place for youth and community to connect with nature. Our vision is to build a healthier, more connected community by nurturing leadership, environmental education, and wellness through nature-based programming and property rental.

We aim to achieve sustainability by forming strong local partnerships, cultivating a skilled volunteer base, and offering rental opportunities that serve both our mission and financial needs.

In January 2024, Our Nawakwa successfully purchased Camp Nawakwa. Remarkably, the full acquisition loan was paid off by December 2024—within just nine months—thanks to dedicated fundraising. Additional funds raised have secured operational and maintenance costs through 2028, allowing time for business development and strategic infrastructure improvements to ensure safety and expand access.

Our ongoing priorities include building financial capacity, strengthening organizational expertise, and exploring future staffing models to support long-term growth and mission fulfillment. With strong community support and strategic planning, Camp Nawakwa is poised to continue inspiring generations of youth and fostering a lifelong love of the outdoors.

Impact Plan

Our Mission:

To preserve Camp Nawakwa where we will support our youth and community by fostering continuing appreciation for the outdoors.

Meeting the Need

There is a growing demand for affordable, year-round outdoor spaces where youth can explore, learn, and grow. Within a 60-mile radius of Camp Nawakwa—spanning Dunn, Chippewa, Eau Claire, Barron, Rusk, and Clark counties—there are approximately 48,000 children ages 6 to 18 (2020 U.S. Census). Currently, fewer than one-third are served through major youth-serving organizations, including Scouts, YMCA, 4-H, and Boys & Girls Clubs.

At the same time, over 40% of families in this region live at or just above the federal poverty line (United Way's ALICE report), limiting access to many camp programs. Our Nawakwa provides a vital, local, and affordable option for these families and the organizations that serve them.

2024 Highlights: Rentals & Reach

Since launching rentals in February 2024, Camp Nawakwa has quickly become a valued resource:

- 80 rentals by 25 groups
- 370 youth and 200 adults served
- 2,000 camper days/nights (youth + adults x days at camp)
- Frequent usage: one group rented monthly; several returned multiple times
- One-week Girl Scout Camporee brought 120 girls for a volunteer-led experience
- Primary renters in 2024 include: Scouts (BSA and Girl Scouts), schools, athletic teams, and faith-based groups.

Expanding Access Through Partnerships

Our Nawakwa continues to build a strong network of organizations that rent, volunteer, and engage at camp. These include:

- Youth Group users: Altoona Student Council, Anthony Acres School, Boyceville Cross Country, Barron Four Square Church, Cub Scout Pack 50, and 22 Girl Scout troops
- Youth Service partners: McDonell High School Kolby Club, Chippewa Falls Green Team, NHS members, Anthony Acres Land Management Team, Dominic's CommUNITY Crew (At the Roots)
- Organizational collaborators: Chippewa Valley YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Power of Perception, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Royal Family Kids Camp, Chippewa County Human Services, and 4-H

Youth-led sustainability and service projects have included:

- Energy efficiency upgrade work led by the Chippewa Falls High School Green Team
- Maple Fest station creation & coordination by Chippewa Falls National Honor Society

- Service-learning with McDonell High School Kolby Club, Anthony Acres, and Dominic's CommUNITY Crew

Girl Scout Legacy

Camp Nawakwa has hosted Girl Scout camps, troops and programs since 1950—and continues to do so under Our Nawakwa's leadership. In 2024:

- 56 Girl Scout troops continued to rent the property year-round
- Rates remained consistent with prior owner pricing
- The annual Girl Scout Camporee hosted 120 girls for a full week of outdoor learning, leadership, and fun

Without Nawakwa, Girl Scouts in this region would have to travel over two hours to a council-owned camp—an often unreachable distance for families with limited resources.

Commitment to Safety & Quality

As a licensed Recreational/Educational Camp under Wisconsin State Code ATCP 78.16, Our Nawakwa maintains high standards. Requirements include:

- Proof of insurance and background checks for all renting organizations
- Child safety training for leaders
- Certified instructors for waterfront, archery, and kitchen use
- Collaboration with certified partners when needed

These practices ensure all experiences at Camp Nawakwa are safe, inclusive, and enriching.

Community Events & Environmental Learning

In addition to rentals, Our Nawakwa hosted community-wide events in 2024, including:

- Nawakwa: What's Your Story?
- Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting
- Summer Solstice Hike
- Seasonal Volunteer Workdays

Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI)

Our Nawakwa is committed to providing welcoming, affirming outdoor spaces for all. We are building intentional partnerships with organizations such as Power of Perception, ensuring that youth from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds have meaningful access to nature-based experiences and leadership opportunities.

Looking Ahead

As Our Nawakwa grows, we remain rooted in our mission and focused on impact. Future goals include:

- Expanding youth access through strategic partnerships
- Growing environmental education and service-learning opportunities
- Measuring progress through camper data and demographics
- Preserving the rich legacy of Camp Nawakwa for generations to come

Operational Plan

Our Nawakwa (O.N.) is managed by a team of volunteers, including its Board of Directors, who know the property from years of camp operational and policy experience. Volunteer subject experts in accounting, trades, volunteer management, legal, and youth development are working side by side, mentoring interested volunteers. A Camp Host Volunteer program is the face of Our Nawakwa at camp, for security, light maintenance, and assisting groups on the property. Working committees address business, property, and outreach needs. Committee Chairs report to the Board of Directors regarding the operational functioning of their groups. O.N. intends to remain an all-volunteer organization well into 2025, when part-time contracted employees may be added.

Our Nawakwa operates through four Standing Committees, each responsible for key aspects of the organization's success. Each committee has at least one board member serving as a liaison and may form sub-committees or task forces as needed. Committees review their mission and set goals annually by February 1st.

- Finance and Business Committee: Ensures financial health and sustainable business operations through budgeting, fundraising, grant management, and policy development.
 - Sub-Committees: Budgeting, Business Operations, Bylaws and Policy, Fund Development, Grants, Capital Campaign Task Force, Rental, Risk Management, Strategic Planning (future use).
- Property/Site/Facilities Committee: Oversees maintenance, improvements, and environmental stewardship of camp facilities and grounds.
 - Sub-Committees: Housekeeping, Conservation, Maintenance, Permits, Recreational Equipment, Rental, Capital Improvements.
- Community Outreach Committee: Builds community awareness, fosters partnerships, recruits volunteers, and coordinates events and communications.
 - Sub-Committees: Partnerships, Events, Volunteer Coordination, Service Providers, Communications and Marketing.
- JEDI Committee (Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion): Leads initiatives to create an inclusive culture, build partnerships, support grant applications related to cultural aspects, and provide DEI training and events.

Each committee selects a chair annually and maintains a membership list through its secretary.

Partnership Development Plan

Our Nawakwa, Inc. (O.N.) is committed to fostering strong relationships that support our mission of connecting youth to nature. We will leverage personal and professional networks, maintain communication with renters, and implement targeted marketing strategies to raise awareness of Camp Nawakwa and its offerings.

Our primary goal for 2025 is to increase camp rentals, enabling more youth groups to experience the transformative power of nature at Nawakwa. We understand that a positive experience at camp can spark a lifelong connection to the outdoors and to our mission.

We have an ongoing, valued partnership with the Girl Scouts and will continue to support and grow that relationship. In addition, we will actively pursue new partnerships with local youth-serving organizations. As these relationships develop, we will maintain consistent communication, sharing opportunities and updates to keep each partner engaged and informed.

Competitors and Collaborators

As we reimagine the future of Camp Nawakwa, we are also reaching out to other camps and organizations with a spirit of collaboration. Our goal is to learn from one another, share best practices, avoid unnecessary competition, and explore potential partnerships down the road. These conversations reflect a mutual respect for each camp's unique mission and an openness to working together for the benefit of all youth.

We are currently engaged in conversations with the following camps:

- Beaver Creek Reserve – Fall Creek, WI
- Luther Park – Chetek, WI
- Camp Kenwood – Chippewa Falls, WI
- Camp Manitou – New Auburn, WI
- Camp Phillips – Haugen, WI
- Scoutland – Cumberland, WI
- Arrowhead Camp – New Auburn, WI
- Christian Harbor Youth Camp – Lake Holcombe, WI
- Camp Birch Trails – Irma, WI
- Camp Little Notch – Fort Ann, NY
- The Brigade/Camp Onaway – Waupaca, WI

These relationships will continue to grow as we work together to support youth through meaningful outdoor experiences.

Financial Plan

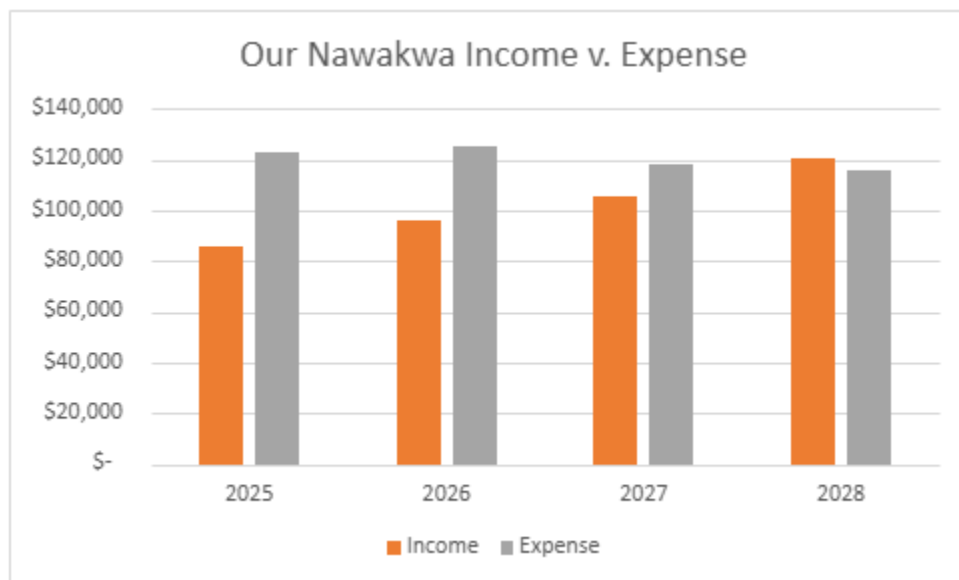
Initial Capital Campaign Information

Objective 1: Purchase Camp Nawakwa (purchase plus interest, closing, & fees) - \$785,000
ACCOMPLISHED

Objective 2: Operating/maintenance funds for five-year transition budget - \$460,000
ACCOMPLISHED

Objective 3: Critical Updates and Upgrades In Active Review - \$975,000 ON GOING

Objective 4: Increase the endowment to ensure organizational sustainability and community accessibility - \$900,000 (not part of capital campaign)



Critical Updates and Capital Improvements – 2024 Board Approved Plan

- Critical Needs: \$60,000- primarily electrical & plumbing
- Intermediate Needs: \$45,000 - primarily carpentry
- Dining Hall Winterizing/Remodel: \$720,000
 - Elevator/ADA Compliance \$70,000
 - Commercial Kitchen Appliances \$50,000
 - Hillside Stabilization: \$100,000
- Accommodation Upgrades: \$40,000
- New & Relocated Challenge Course: \$35,000 ((Project remains on the long-range plan and will require future design, staffing, and ongoing maintenance planning)
- Completed Capital Project -New Dock – \$35,000

Emerging Priorities & Capital Improvements—2025 Board Approved Priorities*

- Winterization of Commercial Kitchen and Appliance Upgrades
 - Estimated Cost: \$65,000-\$100,000
 - Note: Full dining hall winterization remains on the strategic radar.
- Energy Efficiency Improvements
 - Focus: Insulation and HVAC upgrades in Chalet Lodge, Hobbs Office/Basement, Honor House Lodge, and Vollhalla House
 - Estimated Insulation Cost: \$40,000
 - Solar Energy for Chalet: primarily grant funded
 - LED lighting upgrades have been substantially completed
- Truck Replacement
 - Used
 - Estimated Cost: \$15,000-\$25,000
- Latrine
 - Precast concrete vault
 - Two stools and urinal
 - Estimated Cost: \$20,000
- Challenge Course
 - New & Relocated Challenge Course
 - Requires design, staff training, inspection and ongoing maintenance planning)
 - Estimated Cost: \$15,000
- Lodge Construction to Replace Starview Cabins
 - Camp usage must increase to meet ROI
 - Design and specifics will depend on camp usage
 - Estimated Cost: \$75,000 – \$100,000

*Specific features and costs will require individual votes from the board

Accomplishments to Date

2023

- Formed nonprofit organization “Our Nawakwa, Inc” with 501c(3) IRS designation.
- Built an organizational Board of Directors and working committees.
- Signed an offer to purchase Camp Nawakwa with the projected closing date in early 2024.
- Raised \$405,000 to date plus \$50,000 in planned giving, including a \$220,000 major gift from a camp alum.
- Engaged with community youth partners and gained letters of support for collaboration.
- Designed a business plan to become financially sustainable & developed organizational policies & processes.
- Built a 5-year budget using previous owners' expenses & adding inflation and projected growth.
- Engaged with financing partners to obtain a loan for purchase of property.
- Committed to remembering Girl Scouts Autumn Helgeson, Jayna Kelley, Haylee Hickie, and her mom Sara Schneider, who were killed 11-3-18 while serving our community by picking up trash along the highway. Our Nawakwa, in conjunction with their families, will match an area of camp with their unique interests and personalities. They will be remembered on the waterfront, in the art studio, and baking in the kitchen.
- Contracted with the Community Foundation of Chippewa County for capital campaign pass-through services and restatement of a \$100,000 endowed fund to Our Nawakwa Camp Fund.

2024

- Closed on property and took ownership January 9th
- Raised \$1.3 million dollars in the capital campaign
- Fulfilled loan taken to purchase camp on December 9th
- Reached funding for basic operations and maintenance through 2028
- Created Financial Policies & Procedures Manual
- Established Rental Policies and Rental Agreement
- Began renting facilities to Girl Scout groups in February
- Established Camp Host Volunteer Position and Application Process
- Expanded the board from 3 to 5 and from 5 to 7
- Secured and met match pledge from L.E. Phillips Family Foundation
- Secured pledge from William J and Gertrude R Casper Foundation
- Intensive clean-up of camp property & facilities: all weekends in April, monthly
- Welcomed our first long-term Camp Host, Beaver
- Fiber Optic Wi-Fi installed
- Began renting facilities to other youth organizations in May
- Grand Opening Event in May (attendance around 300) with Media Coverage

- Events: History Center Event, Solstice Hike, Day of Caring, Birthday Celebration
- New waterfront dock, a gift from Jayna Kelley Foundation
- Archery range refurbished & equipment replaced, a gift from Wojcik family
- Passed Inspection for Licensing with Chippewa County
- Property Updates: Vollhalla garage, Shower House, Starview Tent Cabs, Mary E. Marshall basement, Pooh Corner Cabins, Bell, Trip Shed/Garage
- New Roofs: Chalet Lodge and Mary E. Marshall
- Energy Efficiency Upgrades: replaced fluorescent lights, shower heads, some toilets
- Pick-Up Truck, Small Engines assessed, repaired & tuned