

5-Year Strategic Plan

The American Legion Department of Minnesota (MNLegion.org)

Originally Approved: March 2025 | Revised: October 2025

Created and approved by the Strategic Planning Committee and Past Department Commander Carl Moon. Note: This version of the strategic plan includes the addition of the *Be The One* initiative to Year One, as requested by the current Department Commander, Linda Dvorak, in October 2025. In finalizing this version, we ensured that all current directives from National were reviewed and appropriately encompassed.

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Urgent Call to Action - Save Our Veteran Community:

Without immediate action and a bold new direction, our organization risks failing the veteran community we serve. Our posts face imminent closure, and our survival is at stake. Growth is not optional—it's essential. Projections indicate a membership decline of 10,600 individuals over the next seven years, decreasing our total from 52,763 to 42,163 members. By 2042, we anticipate a minimum reduction of 20%, with an average annual decrease of 6% (<https://mnlegion.org/membership-reports/>).

Let's prove to our veteran community we're serious about change. **Act now!** Vote **YES** for the plan.

Strategic Planning

Every successful business or organization has a plan and knows where it is heading in the future. Strategic planning is the ongoing organizational process of using available knowledge to document a business's intended direction. This process is used to create goals and prioritize efforts, effectively allocate resources, align members on the organization's goals, and ensure those goals are backed by data and sound reasoning.

Background

The American Legion Department of Minnesota is addressing several strategic challenges, including declining membership, an aging demographic, outdated branding, and inefficient communication and operational systems. To tackle these issues, this comprehensive strategic plan aims to modernize operations, improve marketing efforts, and attract and engage younger veterans and their families. The plan is structured into phases over five years, with paced and deliberate implementation to ensure alignment with the mission and goals.

Year 1 (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027)

| Year 1 Goals | Due |
|--|-------------|
| Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign: Recruit 300 new members under the age of 40. | End of Year |
| a. Official YouTube Channel Launch: Reach 1,000 subscribers and 500 new members. | End of Year |
| b. Pass a resolution to form a Marketing Committee. | End of Year |
| Post Mail Recruitment Campaign: Complete the first round of mailings. | End of Year |
| Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Formation: Survey launch, guidelines completed and published. Survey results analyzed. | End of Year |
| Be The One Initiative. | End of Year |

1. Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Using research and data, develop a targeted media campaign plan to recruit new Generation X, Millennial and Generation Z members focusing on social media and search engine advertising and channel search engine optimization (SEO). Run state-wide social media competitions with current members to gain more and younger public engagement.

a. Official YouTube Channel Launch

Specific: Launch an official Department YouTube channel to showcase veteran stories, family-friendly events from all levels throughout the state, volunteer opportunities and department and National marketing videos. Feature social media testimonials from younger veterans and family events to reshape public perception. The target audience is Generation X Millennials and Generation Z. There are two billion active YouTube users!

b. Resolution to form a Marketing Committee

Specific: The Strategic Planning Committee will draft a resolution to establish a department-level Marketing Committee. This resolution will be introduced at the post level and then progress through the appropriate channels for approval by end of Year 1.

2. Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Design and Launch the Mail Campaign. Develop a professional mailer showcasing the organization's accomplishments, current volunteer opportunities, and strengths. Include a QR code linking to the home page and YouTube channel or similar that highlight funding, program achievements, membership benefits, and veterans' resources and services.

3. Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Formation

Specific: Develop and publish comprehensive guidelines to identify toxic behaviors, including a checklist of red flags (e.g., bullying, harassment) and clear procedures for addressing issues through coaching or volunteer suspension and removal. Create and launch an online volunteer/workplace culture survey using SurveyMonkey to establish a baseline.

4. *Be The One*

Specific: The *Be The One* initiative will be embedded throughout the American Legion’s Strategic Plan as a central pillar of our mission to support and save the lives of veterans. This will be accomplished by integrating mental health awareness and suicide prevention into every level of Legion programming, training, and outreach. Departments and posts will receive resources and guidance to host *Be the One* events, provide peer-support training, and create safe spaces where veterans feel seen, heard, and valued. The Strategic Plan will outline measurable objectives—such as increasing the number of trained Legion members, building partnerships with mental health organizations, and expanding communication campaigns—to ensure accountability and lasting impact. By making *Be The One* a core part of our strategic priorities, the American Legion reinforces its commitment to ending veteran suicide and fostering a culture of connection, compassion, and proactive support.

Year 2 (July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2028)

| Year 2 Goals | Due |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign: Recruit 400 new members under the age of 40. | End of Year |
| a. Official YouTube Channel Expansion Reach 2,000 subscribers and 750 new members. | End of Year |
| b. Marketing Committee Formation. | End of Year |
| Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Campaign, Expand and Optimize Outreach. | End of Year |
| Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Reporting, Accountability Systems Launch: Further leadership guidelines training, reporting system launch, system training. | October, February, End of Year |
| Mentorship Program Reinstatement. | October |
| Family Engagement Program Formation. | End of Year |
| Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Plan Development. | End of Year |

1. Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Strengthen digital recruitment efforts by optimizing social media advertising and SEO strategies. Using research and data, develop a targeted media campaign plan to recruit new Generation X, Millennial and Generation Z members focusing on social media. Expand engagement through targeted social media competitions. Run state-wide social media competitions with current members to gain more and younger public engagement. Utilize SAL, Auxiliary and Junior Auxiliary to develop high school programs to educate students on what the Legion is and how and when to become a member.

a. Official YouTube Channel Expansion

Specific: Launch an official Department YouTube channel to showcase veteran stories, family-friendly events from all levels throughout the state, volunteer opportunities and department and National marketing videos. Feature social media testimonials from younger veterans and family events to reshape public perception. The target audience is Generation X Millennials and Generation Z. There are two billion active YouTube users!

b. Marketing Committee Formation

A resolution from Year 1 was presented and once approved, establishes a Marketing Committee responsible for developing and aiding in the implementation of strategies to promote the organization’s mission, programs, and volunteer opportunities.

2. Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Expand and Optimize Outreach

Specific: Refine the mailer design based on feedback and data from Year 1. Expand the campaign by targeting additional counties and leveraging new veteran data sources provided by a marketing consultant.

3. Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Launch Reporting, Accountability Systems

Specific: Design and implement an anonymous reporting system for the entire department to report complaints and concerns, ensuring a transparent follow-up process. Decide who will receive and respond; create a procedure for the process. Beef up training for department and district leadership on the guidelines at the Fall Conference.

4. Mentorship Program Reinstatement

Specific: Reestablish the mentorship program to pair new members of all ages with experienced members, fostering meaningful relationships and knowledge sharing. This initiative aims to enhance member engagement and retention by creating a welcoming environment for new recruits.

5. Family Engagement Program Formation

Specific: Partner with the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) to design and implement a statewide Family Engagement Program to involve the Sons of the American Legion (SAL), ALA, Auxiliary Juniors and Legion Riders, in creating family-friendly events and activities. This could be a joint committee or task force with members from Legion Family groups. The program will foster participation at all organizational levels, targeting younger members and their families to boost membership and retention.

6. Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Plan Development

Specific: Establish an independent auditing body tasked with evaluating the effectiveness, relevance, and performance of committees and groups.

Year 3 (July 1, 2028 - June 30, 2029)

| Year 3 Goals | Due |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign: Reach 3,000 subscribers and 1,000 new members. | End of Year |
| Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Integrate Digital and Local Engagement. | End of Year |
| Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Conduct Targeted Training Programs: Train membership base in person, electronic options, complete second survey. | October, December, End of Year |
| Mentorship Program Progress Review. | October |
| Family Engagement Program Development and Rollout. | End of Year |
| Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Establishment and Recruitment. | End of Year |

1. Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Introduce emerging platforms, enhance digital storytelling techniques, and optimize member engagement through interactive content.

2. Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Integrate Digital and Local Engagement

Specific: Enhance the mailer content with localized stories and photos of post-level successes. Include tailored calls to action for in-person engagement, such as open house events or volunteer drives.

3. Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Conduct Targeted Training Programs

Specific: Provide organization-wide training on bullying prevention, sexual harassment awareness, and proper responses to inappropriate behavior. Create future benchmarks for the reporting system. Launch second survey to gauge success.

4. Mentorship Program Progress Review

Specific: This initiative aims to enhance member engagement and retention by creating a welcoming environment for new recruits.

5. Family Engagement Program Development and Rollout

Specific: Finalize and fully roll out the statewide Family Engagement Program, using the Year 2 guide to standardize and promote family-friendly events across all posts and districts. Incorporate Auxiliary Juniors for childcare support at larger events to encourage young family participation.

6. Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Establishment and Recruitment

Specific: Form the auditing body by selecting and onboarding members as outlined in the finalized plan.

Year 4 (July 1, 2029 - June 30, 2030)

| Year 4 Goals | Due |
|--|--------------------------|
| Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign: Reach 4,000 subscribers and 1,500 new members. | End of Year |
| Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Refinement and Maintenance. | December and End of Year |
| Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Strengthen Oversight and Collaboration: Organizational audit, complete survey. | October, End of Year |
| Family Engagement Program Evaluation and Expansion. | End of Year |
| Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Implementation and Evaluation. | End of Year |

1. Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Scale digital recruitment efforts by incorporating AI-driven advertising and engagement tools.

2. Marketing Post Mail Recruitment Refinement and Maintenance

Specific: Conduct a comprehensive review of the mail campaign’s impact over the past three years. Refine the strategy based on membership growth data, engagement metrics, and feedback. Transition to an ongoing maintenance phase.

3. Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Strengthen Oversight and Collaboration

Specific: Evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives implemented over the previous three years and refine processes based on member feedback and outcomes.

4. Family Engagement Program Evaluation and Expansion

Specific: Evaluate the Family Engagement Program’s effectiveness using Year 2 and 3 data, refining strategies based on feedback to enhance impact. Expand the program by adding new event types (e.g., family workshops, veteran-family outings) and resources to address gaps.

5. Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Implementation and Evaluation

Specific: Begin operational activities of the auditing body, including committee evaluations and reporting.

Year 5 (July 1, 2030 - June 30, 2031)

| Year 5 Goals | Due |
|---|-------------|
| Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign: Reach 5,000 subscribers and 2,000 new members. Recruit 600 new members under 40. | End of Year |
| Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Maintenance and Refinement: Audit and review. | End of Year |
| Family Engagement Program Refinement and Maintenance. | End of Year |
| Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Implementation and Evaluation. | End of Year |

1. Marketing Electronic Recruitment Campaign

Specific: Establish a sustainable recruitment model with ongoing digital refinement and community-driven initiatives. YouTube Expansion: Implement an ambassador program for content creation and engagement.

2. Ethical Conduct Council (ECC) Maintenance and Refinement

Specific: Evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives implemented over the previous four years and refine processes based on member feedback and outcomes.

3. Family Engagement Program Refinement and Maintenance

Specific: Maintain the Family Engagement Program’s momentum, refining strategies based on Year 4 findings to ensure sustainability and adaptability to evolving family needs. Focus on consistent event quality and long-term engagement.

4. Committee Performance Audit Team (CPAT) Refinement and Maintenance

Specific: Refine the auditing body’s processes based on feedback from previous year’s evaluations and reports.