



# Strategic Plan

January 2026

## Chapter 1: Overview

This strategic plan is intended to guide Dharma Rain's activities and decision-making over the next 5 years. This plan takes into account an assessment of our current capacities and needs, broader situational factors, and feedback from the sangha. Ensuring that the sangha continues to thrive despite the volatility in these social, political, and economic times was one of the most commonly expressed sentiments among sangha members.

Dharma Rain programs are well-attended and well-regarded, across numerous domains. Our breadth of dharmic offerings, our volunteer capacity, our ethical track record, and our physical campus are all significant strengths. For most of this to continue, not much has to change; we can continue doing what we are doing. A significant portion of this strategic plan points to maintaining and improving what we already do well.

However, there are some weak points: We still have substantial debt associated with the development of the Siskiyou campus, and our physical capacity to meet the needs of retreatants, residents, dharma school and the Frog Song program is limited.

This iteration differs from past strategic plans in important ways. We are looking at a smaller scope in this version because we've accomplished goals set in past plans ahead of schedule. It is also a much more compact plan than previous versions: 6 instead of 11 chapters, and 10 instead of 61 pages. This version isn't attempting to show and justify the work, just share the conclusions. Finally, we have tried to present a more holistic approach. In particular, communication (both within and outside of the sangha), integration of youth and family programming, resiliency through economic and climate-related concerns, and DEI awareness are woven throughout the document as important to every aspect of temple life.

The plan identifies broad goals. Under each goal is one or more strategies, each of which has one or more tactics. Every goal has an outcome, a lead, and a timeline.

## Chapter 2: Dharma Practice and Study

The mission of the temple is to transmit the teachings and practice of Soto Zen Buddhism. We honor the ancestors and traditions of the past while we adapt to the needs of current practitioners and future generations. This is done through a variety of classes and study opportunities, in both formal and informal settings. We offer children's classes, beginners' workshops and classes on fundamental teachings of Buddhism through formal Seminary classes and advanced study. Teaching includes both academic and practice fields. The temple schedule follows a liturgical calendar, with six full sesshins each year as well as shorter events such as zazenkai, beginner retreat days, and term student retreats. Many practice events and retreats offer flexible entry times. There are many opportunities for members to train in various temple positions, including ceremonial roles. Leadership includes both monastic and lay teachers. Residential practice is available for both working and full-time residents, and monastic training is available to qualified students.

The sangha is growing and changing rapidly, and includes people across a wide range of experience, age, development, and commitment. This presents both challenges and opportunities. We want to offer an equally wide range of gateways into study and practice while protecting the depth and maturity of our teaching. We have the opportunity of expanding and deepening our teaching through the varied experience of our members and leaders. We have a large campus with both cultivated and wild flora and fauna; we want to encourage the membership to have a sense of responsibility to the property.

### **Goal: Strengthen and enhance Dharma teaching through a variety of gateways**

*Consistently offer study opportunities across a wide range of levels of experience and schedules.* We will add in at least one study opportunity online each year, and offer a senior-level practice opportunity during daytime hours each year. Our expected outcome is that Dharma teaching will be available at different levels and a variety of schedules. This strategy will be monitored by the Godo (Director of Teaching) and implemented by the end of 2027.

*Create opportunities to study root traditions and the teaching of our founders.* We will have an annual Dharma talk on root traditions, founders, and lineage, an annual study group for work written by lineage teachers, and an annual workshop on forms for all ceremonial positions. Our expected outcome is that the sangha will have increased

awareness of root traditions and will consistently embody correct forms. This strategy will be monitored by Dharma Rain Active Transmitted Teachers (DRATT) and implemented by the end of 2027.

*Provide consistent leadership through generational transitions of teachers, staff, and senior leaders.* We will schedule an annual Elders Council meeting, an annual Dharma Cloud Order meeting and a biannual Emerging Sangha Leadership Training (ESLT). The latter will include Dharma Rain senior members as one quarter of the total participants. Our expected outcome is that leadership skills and rapport are maintained through leadership transitions. DRATT will oversee this strategy and will implement it by the end of 2027.

*Consistently incorporate nature and place into teaching.* The Kanin (Director of Operations) will oversee the creation of a Founders' stupa by 2028. Our Youth and Family program will cultivate sacredness of space and nature at DRZC, including various art and interactive projects by 2030. DRATT will implement an annual Dharma talk addressing the living use of our campus by 2027. Our expected outcome is for the wider campus to be included as part of an enhanced teaching approach.

## Chapter 3: Community

The community is more diverse in demographic makeup than before. Our community includes groups that are not always visible in our regular schedule: children, aged, incarcerated persons, homebound or distant members, parents, and those of varied income levels. We have an open door for most events, and invite the public to join much of our schedule. We want to acknowledge and support peer-to-peer relationships and allow opportunities for people of different formal ranks to meet as peers. Dharma Council and Youth and Family Program Council have begun a collaboration on increasing times when adult and child sangha members interact. We want to strengthen a sense of identity and loyalty to the temple as a whole while honoring a wide variety of approaches to practice. The Board of Directors and Dharma Council offer open forums twice a year to keep the sangha aware of temple planning and needs. The Hand in Hand program offers trained companions for members who are chronically ill or dying, and includes a monthly meeting open to the sangha to discuss issues related to old age, illness, and death. We want to increase our awareness of hidden obstacles and biases that can affect a practitioner's sense of belonging. We have strong relationships, both formal and informal, with neighbors and neighborhood organizations.

Demographic changes could lead to destabilization or splintering. The community is large enough that many smaller affinities naturally arise. We want to acknowledge these alliances while encouraging a sense of identity with the temple as a whole. Even as

demographic changes can destabilize, they offer a great opportunity to strengthen and stabilize a community for the future. We have created a New Member Advisor position, but it is not yet robust. Dharma Rain is a welcoming community and invites participants who hold a variety of views. We also provide resources for members who are marginalized or threatened in our wider society.

**Goal: Enhance and strengthen sangha community**

*Support new participants.* We will offer the 'Taking Your Seat' program every other year, increase the breadth and depth of information in the e-bulletin, and have the New Member Advisor make contact with new members within a month. Sesshin forms will be modified if needed to allow elderly and disabled people to participate. Last, we will update our membership sign-up process so that we have more accurate and real-time information on members. Our expected outcome is that new members will be aware of opportunities and know whom to reach out to for support, and that 25% of new members either take a class, do a retreat, or hold a temple job in their first year of membership. The New Member Advisor will take the lead on this strategy and implement it by 2027.

*Increase membership by new participants.* Our New Member Advisor and Membership coordinator will work together to clarify the relationship between these roles and possibly merge them. In addition, the New Member Advisor will personally offer and make explicit the value of membership to participants. Our expected outcome is at least eight welcome conversations with attendees per year by 2030.

*Support cohort groups within the membership.* Dharma Council will provide clear guidelines and processes for approval of cohort groups, and will conduct an annual review of cohort groups. Our expected outcome is that cohort groups will function within these guidelines. This will be in place by 2027.

*Create opportunities for members from a variety of backgrounds and across generations to interact and share responsibilities.* At least once a year, we will have All-Sangha Day, a special Sunday service and brief Dharma talk that is appropriate for all ages. We will continue current tactics that encourage integration of youth and adult programs, such as Wesak, Sejiki, Annual Sangha Party, and regular community lunches. Our expected outcome is increased visibility and interaction of youth and families within the wider sangha. The Youth and Family Program Council will oversee this strategy, and it will be in place by 2027.

*Increase awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion in temple mission.* We will host an annual forum on inclusion and ensure Open Gate resources booklets are available in the Sodo. Our expected outcome is that the values of diversity, equity and inclusion are

transparent within sangha relationships and teaching. The Open Gate Committee will see this strategy implemented by 2027.

## Chapter 4: Physical Environment and Accommodations

Our 14-acre campus includes ponds, a ravine, orchard, vegetable beds, a playground and natural habitat for a multitude of creatures. Sangha members report valuing our outdoor space, and it is an important part of Frog Song Montessori Preschool's curriculum. However, indoor space is much more limited. Retreats, residency, Frog Song, Dharma School, and other programs are at capacity due to space limitations. Sesshin participation is exceeding pre-pandemic numbers, and overnight lodging is particularly difficult given the variety of accessibility needs and the wish to provide gender-segregated spaces. In addition, scheduling conflicts are frequent, with classes, workshops and meetings often occurring at the same time. This can lead to confusion for participants and added work and communication for event organizers within the sangha. The construction of a new classroom building at Dharma Rain Zen Center would alleviate some of these problems by providing an additional classroom space for Frog Song, and freeing up additional space for residents and retreat participants. Subgrade improvements for the new classroom building are in place, and we are awaiting funding to complete the building.

Regarding our existing structures, no substantial improvements or modernization has occurred on the dormitory buildings since the buildings were purchased in their original condition about eight years ago. Residency and sesshin lodging, and the Frog Song classroom space are uncomfortable for a growing period of time each year. The dormitory buildings have no air conditioning or ventilation. This is increasingly problematic with warming temperatures and air pollution from wildfires, etc. Improved amenities such as heating and cooling could help address comfort and health needs for program participants and increase Dharma Rain's climate resilience.

**Goal: Strengthen the impact of existing DRZC programming by improving and expanding physical spaces.**

*Improve comfort and modernize existing spaces.* We will assess the viability of installing heat pumps for heating and cooling and upgrading to high efficiency windows in the dorm buildings. The estimated cost is \$43,688 for heat pumps and \$30,384 for windows in both buildings. In addition, we will seek more consistent methods for addressing sesshin participant comfort. This could include ensuring the presence of tables and chairs during study breaks, and making the library a designated space for rest provided that lodging is expanded via the classroom building or the tent. Our expected outcome

is that participants are encouraged to attend events at Dharma Rain, and that their physical needs are met while attending programs at DRZC. The Kanin and Shuso (Head Trainee) will oversee implementation of this in 2026.

*Build new spaces.* We will construct a new classroom building. Our expected outcome is to double the capacity of our thriving Frog Song Montessori Preschool program, create additional spaces for Dharma School , and expand the number of beds available for residency and sesshin lodging. The Kanin will oversee this strategy, with renewed fundraising beginning in 2026 and the building completed by 2030.

## Chapter 5: Staffing

Dharma Rain's monastic staff, extensive volunteer base, and paid employees are a major asset. Strengthening Dharma Rain's people systems is important to sustaining the vitality of our sangha and the continuity of our programs. It is both logistically and dharmically sound to have clear, transparent and compassionate structures for staff rights, responsibilities and compensation. This chapter outlines an approach that reflects best practices and Dharma Rain's vision and values so that staff and sangha feel recognized, valued and aligned with the temple's mission.

### **Goal: Strengthen and enhance Dharma Rain's people systems**

*Support organizational resilience and continuity of programs through establishing clear human resources policies and procedures that are transparent about staff rights, expectations, compensation, and DRZC guidelines.*

We will create a human resources policy and employee handbook reflecting legal requirements and best practices as well as Dharma Rain's expectations, policies, and responsibilities to staff. Our expected outcome is increased transparency around employee rights, benefits, and expectations. The board will have an HR designee to oversee implementation of this goal. By 2026, documents will be established and communicated and put on a three year standard policy review cycle.

In addition, we will ensure reasonable compensation or non-financial remuneration (such as room or board) commensurate with staff duties and the priorities of the organization. Local market comparisons will take place at least every three years. Our expected outcome is that staff feel their contributions are appropriately recognized and valued from a remuneration standpoint. The board will have an HR designee to oversee implementation of this goal in 2026 for paid staff, and in 2027 for monastic/dharmic staff. Annual adjustments will take place thereafter with market reviews for the 2028-2029 school year.

For paid staff, we will hold two check-in conversations annually for bi-directional feedback on employee performance and job quality. Our expected outcome is to create both an organizational record and provide a more formal supportive feedback process for paid staff. The lead for this will be the direct supervisor for each employee, with completion ensured by Board HR designee. This will start in winter of 2026.

We will establish clear roles and responsibilities for paid staff along with clear supervisory authority, with job descriptions reviewed and updated at least every three years. Our expected outcome is greater clarity around paid staff expectations, and greater alignment on roles and responsibilities. The Board HR designee will see that this is communicated for the winter 2025-2026 school year, with a three year regular review for 2028-2029 school year.

## Chapter 6: Financial Health

In addition to being dharmically sound and programmatically robust, we aim to be financially healthy—good stewards of our financial resources for our community today, and sustainable for future generations of way seekers. Our budget—both revenue and expenses—has increased significantly over time. Last year our budget exceeded \$500,000. Our revenue comes from four primary sources: membership, programs, grants, and fundraising. Membership pledges are paid monthly or annually. Our programs that generate revenue include Frog Song, sesshins, classes, and workshops. Our fundraising revenue comes from grants we receive and donations from individuals at fundraising events such as our year-end campaign or capital campaigns.

At the end of our last fiscal year, we had total debt of \$1,099,000 comprised of the following: Semble: \$790,000 in loans from our members at 5% interest. Co-Housing: \$230,000 in loans from people who invested in our former co-housing initiative at 6% interest. Payroll Protection Program: \$60,000 in federal COVID relief funds we have to repay at 3% interest. In each of the last three years our debt service has averaged approximately \$56,000, including \$36,000 in interest and \$18,000 in principal. Paying down our debt faster will save us money long term and free up more of our cash for investment in other areas.

### **Goal: Generate More Revenue**

*Get more non-members who attend regularly or who use our programs to become members.* Our New Member Advisor will have welcome conversations with newer attendees about the value of membership. Our expected outcome is 10 additional members or \$7,200 annually. The New Member Advisor will have this in place by 2028.

*We will encourage members who are able to consider increasing their membership pledge.* Our New Member Advisor will have engagement conversations with existing members who have not increased pledge in recent years. Our expected outcome is that 10% of members will increase their pledge or an additional \$14,400 of membership fees annually. The New Member Advisor will see this strategy implemented by 2028.

*Grow Frog Song enrollment as space capacity allows.* A new classroom building will expand our capacity for Frog Song. Our expected outcome is a 100% enrollment increase in Frog Song, or \$55,000 annually. The Kanin will oversee the fundraising and construction of the new building by 2030.

*Retreat and residency income is increased via completion of a new classroom building.* A new classroom building will create more space for retreat participants and residents. Our expected outcome is a 20% increase in retreat and residency income. The Kanin will oversee the fundraising and construction of the new building by 2030.

*Increase current fundraising efforts and results.* We will enhance and increase collaboration with other organizations to improve our grant writing opportunities. We will actively promote the capital campaign, Brilliant Sea of Clouds, for our classroom building. And we will amplify ongoing/year-round visibility and promotion of Branching Streams. Our expected outcomes are that we will raise enough funds to build the new classroom building, and we will have 4 new Branching Streams members annually. The Board of Directors will see these tactics implemented by 2030.

### **Goal: Decrease Our Debt**

*Use additional revenue (above) to increase annual principal debt payment from \$18,000 to \$60,000.* With the exception of Frog Song, increases in membership revenue, programs revenue and fundraising revenue will go towards increasing our principal debt payment. Our expected outcome is a 30% reduction of principal debt by 2030. The Board of Directors will oversee this strategy.

## **Appendix: Strategic Plan**

### **Process**

The planning process used to generate this strategic plan was initiated by the last Plan Monitoring Committee, once all the goals outlined in that version were accomplished. A six-person Strategic Planning Committee was formed in January 2025. Members

included representatives from the Dharma Council, Board of Directors, and Youth and Family Program Council. Our approach was to work collaboratively, with at least two people working on each chapter.

The first eight months were largely spent clarifying our questions, gathering information, and soliciting input from the sangha. We had monthly meetings for the Strategic Planning Committee, two all-sangha sessions, and 6 different focus groups.

The strategic plan was compiled and reviewed as a whole by the committee in January of 2026. It was then approved by the Board, Dharma Council and Youth and Family Program Council and ratified by our membership. The final 2026 Strategic Plan is now posted in the Document section on the DRZC website.

## **Communication**

These are the steps for approval and communication of the plan:

1. Strategic Planning Committee will send a finalized plan to the Board, Dharma Council and the Youth and Family Program Council for review and approval when ready.
2. A link to an electronic version of the approved Strategic Plan will then be sent via email to Sangha members.
3. The sangha will be given two weeks to ratify the Strategic Plan via online survey. Approval by at least 50% of those responding is required for ratification.
4. Once the Plan is approved and ratified, it will be posted in the Documentation section of the website and a link included in the weekly e-bulletin. A printed copy will also be made available in the office.

## **Monitoring structure**

### **Plan Monitoring and Evaluation**

- **Ongoing Monitoring:** The Strategic Planning Committee recommends the formation of a 3-5 member Plan Monitoring Committee (PMC). This committee would be composed of members drawn from or delegated by the Strategic Planning Committee and include at least one member each from the Board, from the Dharma Council, and from the Youth and Family Program Council. Members should be willing to commit to meeting every three months for a minimum of the next five years. During meetings, PMC members are charged with reviewing plan recommendations and goals and determining whether satisfactory progress is being made. Meeting minutes should be kept, and after each meeting a plan

status report should be sent to the Chairs of the Board, Dharma Council and Youth and Family Program Council. At its annual retreat, these bodies should review the past year's strategic plan progress.

- Amending the Plan: In September of each year, after their annual retreat, the Chairs of the Board, Dharma Council and Youth and Family Program Council will meet to determine if any amendments to the plan are needed. If amendments are in order, the Board and Dharma Council will schedule a joint meeting to consider and discuss the amendments proposed. Amendments will be adopted based on the group consensus of this joint meeting. Amendments to the plan should be limited to one amendment (or set of amendments) per calendar year.
- Membership will be given occasional updates via sangha forums and a twice-yearly report in the e-bulletin.

**DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN, 2026-2030**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Completion Timeline</b>
<b>Dharma Practice and Study</b>					
<b>Strengthen and enhance Dharma teaching through a variety of gateways</b>	Consistently offer weekday and daytime study opportunities at all levels of experience	Offer at least one study opportunity online each term	Dharma teaching is available at different levels and a variety of schedules	Godo	2027
		Offer a senior level practice opportunity during daytime hours each year.			
	Create opportunities to study root traditions and the teaching of our founders	Annual Dharma talk on root traditions, founders, and lineage	Sangha will have increased awareness of root traditions and will consistently embody correct forms	DRATT	2027
		Annual study group for work written by founding teachers			
		Annual workshop on forms for all ceremonial positions			
	Provide consistent leadership through generational transitions of teachers, staff, and senior leaders	Annual workshop on forms for all ceremonial positions	Leadership skills and rapport are maintained through leadership transitions	DRATT	2027
		Annual Elders Council meeting			
		Annual Dharma Cloud Order meeting			
		Biannual Emerging Sangha Leadership Training (ESLT) to include Dharma Rain senior members as 1/4 of participants			
	Consistently incorporate nature and place into teaching	Create a Founders' stupa	The wider campus is included as part of an enhanced teaching approach	Kanin Youth & Family	2028 2030
Create an outdoor art project or interactive projects					
Annual Dharma talk addressing the living use of our campus					
<b>Community</b>					
<b>Enhance and strengthen sangha community</b>	Support new participants	Taking Your Seat program held every other year	New members are aware of opportunities and know who to reach out to for support. 25% of new members either take a class, do a retreat, or hold a temple job in their first year of membership	New Member Advisor	2027
		Increase breadth and depth of information in the e-bulletin			
		New Member Advisor makes contact within new members within a month			
		Allow modification of sesshin forms if needed to allow elderly and disabled people to participate			
	Update membership sign-up process so that we have more accurate and real-time information on members				
	Increase membership by new participants	Clarify the functional relationship between the new member advisor and the membership coordinator. Possible streamlining of roles.	8 welcome conversations with attendees per year	New Member Advisor	2030
Personally offer and make explicit the value of membership					

**DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN, 2026-2030**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Completion Timeline</b>
	Support cohort groups within the membership	Guidelines and process for approval for peer-led groups Annual review of peer-led groups	Peer-led groups function within guidelines	Dharma Council	2027
	Create opportunities for members from a variety of backgrounds and across generations to interact and share responsibilities	All-Sangha Day, a special Sunday service and brief talk at least once a year. Continue tactics that encourage integration of youth and adult programs, such as Wesak, Sejiki, Annual Sangha Party, and monthly community lunches.	Increased visibility and interaction of youth and families	Youth and Family Program Council	2027
	Increase awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion in temple mission	Annual forum on inclusion Open Gate resources booklet available in Sodo	The values of diversity, equity and inclusion are transparent within sangha relationships and teaching	Open Gate Committee	2027
<b>Physical Environment and Accommodations</b>					
<b>Strengthen the impact of existing DRZC programming by improving and expanding physical spaces</b>	Enhance comfort and modernize current spaces	Assess potential HVAC upgrades to dorms, address sesshin participant comfort via adequate comfort in the sodo during retreats.  Seek more consistent methods for addressing sesshin participant comfort. This could include ensuring the presence of tables and chairs during study breaks, and making the library a designated space for rest provided that lodging is expanded via the classroom building or the tent.	Program participants are encouraged to continue attending events, and their physical needs are met while attending programs at DRZC.	Kanin and Shuso	2026
	Build new spaces	Construct a new classroom building	Double the capacity of our thriving Frog Song montessori program. Expand number of beds available for residency and sesshin lodging.	Kanin	Fundraising 2026, Classroom built by 2030
<b>Staffing</b>					
<b>Strengthen and enhance our people systems</b>	Support organizational resilience through updated and transparent HR policies and procedures	Create an HR policy and employee handbook	Increased transparency around employee rights, benefits, and expectations	Board HR designee	Establish policy: draft, gain board approval, and communicate appropriately by 2026, 3 year regular review in 2029
		Ensure reasonable compensation or non financial remuneration commensurate with staff duties and the priorities of the organization	Staff feel their contributions are appropriately valued	Board HR designee	2025 for paid staff. 2026 for monastics and non-paid staff. annual updates. 2028 local market comparison for paid staff. 2029 comparison for monastics and non-paid staff
		For paid staff, create two check in conversations annually for bi-directional feedback on employee performance and job quality.	Creating both an organizational record and providing a more formal feedback process	Board HR designee	Beginning winter 25-26

**DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN, 2026-2030**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Leads</b>	<b>Completion Timeline</b>
		Establish clear roles and responsibilities for paid staff along with clear supervisory authority, with job descriptions reviewed and updated at least every three years.	Greater clarity around paid staff expectations, alignment on roles and responsibilities	Board HR designee	Communicated winter 25-26, 3 year review 2028
<b>Financial Health</b>					
<b>Generate more revenue</b>	Get more non-members who attend regularly or who use our programs to become members	Welcome conversations with newer attendees	10 additional members or \$7,200 annually	New Member Advisor	2028
	Encourage members who are able to consider increasing their membership pledge	Engagement conversations with existing members who have not increased pledge in recent years	10% of members increase pledge or \$14,400 annually	New Member Advisor	2028
	Grow Frog Song enrollment as space capacity allows	Build Classroom building	100% enrollment increase; \$50,000 annually	Kanin	2030
	Retreat and residency income is increased via completion of Classroom building	Build Classroom building	20% increase retreat and residency income	Kanin	2030
	Increase current fundraising efforts and results	Enhance and increase collaboration with other organizations to improve grant writing opportunities	Raise enough for classroom building	Board	2030
		Amplify ongoing/year-round visibility and promotion of Branching Streams	4 new Branching Streams members annually	Board	2030
		Actively promote capital campaign for Classroom building		Board	2030
<b>Decrease our debt</b>	Use additional revenue (above) to increase annual principal debt payment from \$18,000 to \$60,000	Membership revenue above Programs revenue (excepting Frog Song) above Fundraising revenue above	30% reduction of principal debt payment from \$18,000 to \$60,000	Board	2030