



## 2025-2028 Strategic Plan



# Conserve Southwest Utah

**MISSION** — Advocate conservation and stewardship of our area's natural and cultural resources and advocate for smart growth policies that enable conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

**VISION** — Southwest Utah grows in a manner that enables conservation and restoration of its natural and cultural resources.



## Communications

Goal 1: Our messaging is unified, clear, and reflects the principles of our work as a solution-orientated inclusive collaborator and thought-leader for the complex, multi-disciplinary challenges associated with growth.

SMARTIE<sup>1</sup> Objectives:

1. Develop and maintain CSU talking points by 2026 and update at least biannually to ensure clear, consistent messaging across outreach channels.
2. Create a CSU branding and messaging guide that includes visual identity, tone, accessibility standards, and guidance for inclusive language. Distribute to all team members and incorporate into staff/board/volunteer onboarding.

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<sup>1</sup> Where possible, objectives are "SMARTIE" = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

3. Integrate community input into CSU's messaging strategy by conducting listening sessions, surveys, and/or interviews with community members that reflect the full diversity of Washington County. Use insights to refine key messaging documents (talking points, branding guide, campaign language), and establish a process for ongoing community review at least annually.

## Goal 2: CSU is a go-to resource for understanding southwest Utah's conservation issues and taking action.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Publish a redesigned resources page on the CSU website featuring curated and categorized materials (e.g., studies, reports, toolkits, videos, citizen science links). Collaborate with local educators and/or community groups to ensure content is accessible, engaging, and usable for a range of audiences.
2. Expand educational content by creating and posting topical, informational videos and a blog series that features 10 posts annually from a range of CSU staff, volunteers, and board members. Track engagement metrics quarterly to evaluate reach, relevance, and opportunities to improve inclusion. Consider using interactive story maps.
3. Develop a protocol and workflow for timely or urgent conservation issues including clear internal decision-making steps, a content creation process, and public-facing action items. The protocol will outline how CSU shares rapid responses across channels (website, email, social media) in a way that is accurate, accessible, and actionable.

## Goal 3: Expand our audience/membership to represent the diverse demographic makeup of Southern Utah.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Grow and engage a diverse audience of 5,000+ social media followers and 10,000+ newsletter subscribers.
2. Implement email automation, A/B testing, and analytics across our communications platforms.
3. Design and distribute CSU-branded merch/swag to increase the awareness and visibility of CSU in the community.



## Program: Desert Livability

Goal 1: CSU has a seat at the table for local transportation and land-use planning.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Establish and strengthen relationships with a diverse network of planners, officials and community leaders whose work intersects with our mission to promote sustainable and equitable smart growth, specifically: Washington County planning and community development, Saint George land-use and transportation planning, Metropolitan Planning Organization, UDOT, Women's Influence Network, Housing Action Coalition and affiliated organizations.
2. Publish 1-2 research-based communications each year (blog entries, presentations, brief reports, etc.) that establish CSU as a complementary thought leader in sustainable and equitable Smart Growth.

3. Be an active and regular voice during key community planning processes by consistently advocating for Smart Growth principles, especially in cases where the plans threaten local public lands and water resources.

## Goal 2: Create an appetite for Smart Growth through education, and grassroots initiatives. Focus on the intersection of Smart Growth principles, conservation, and priority local issues like affordable housing.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Establish CSU's Strong Towns initiative as a diverse and inclusive initiative that fosters civic engagement within and beyond CSU's programs.
2. Formalize the Strong Towns leadership team as a diverse coalition of local leaders and organizations who work to promote thriving, sustainable communities across Washington County.
3. Organize one grassroots initiative per year that engages community members of diverse backgrounds.
4. Develop and grow a digital storytelling program that engages diverse audiences on the Strong Towns Conversations and our grassroots community initiatives.

## Goal 3: Secure funding for a sustained and expanded desert livability program.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Successfully fulfill the commitments of our grant from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, including documenting tangible community impacts.
2. Secure \$50k+ in reliable multi-channeled annual funding to support desert livability program goals by the end of 2026. (\$75k+ by the end of 2028).



## Program: Public Lands

**Goal 1: Ensure and uphold the integrity of local public land protections. Focus on balanced and reasonable solutions to the tough problems.**

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Develop response plans for anticipated impacts on public land protections to ensure coordinated, timely, and effective communication and action. Priorities currently include protecting the Greater Moe's Valley Area and the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Areas.
2. Continue building at least one relationship with all key local public land stakeholders and partners, including: BLM, US Fish and Wildlife Service, local land managers, elected officials, and advocacy coalitions.

3. Maintain consistent participation in critical meetings (HCP, Red Cliffs Coalition, Public Lands Coalition, etc.) and follow relevant public land issues to stay nimble and responsive on important issues.

## Goal 2: Strengthen and diversify our public lands champion base.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Establish CSU as a recognized public lands partner with groups/businesses in three priority areas—recreation users, political organizations, and under represented groups—to engage with, experience, and advocate for public lands.
2. Actively participate in at least one coalition committed to the preservation of open spaces and public lands specifically for recreation.
3. Launch a CSU Ambassador Program by the end of 2028 to train 10+ volunteers annually, who will engage community members through tabling, events, and presentations.
4. Establish an annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival by 2028.

## Goal 3: Educate and empower the community about the importance of local public lands and why they matter.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Cultivate a deep public connection to regional landscapes for diverse audiences through strategic storytelling, educational communications, and a clear articulation of the link between public lands protection and CSU's other program work.
2. Facilitate quarterly experiential learning opportunities (events, talks, hikes, presentations, community forums, etc.) for Washington County citizens, ensuring that there are focused opportunities for all ages and backgrounds.
3. Meet at least quarterly with local Indigenous partners to identify opportunities to strengthen, learn from, and partner with Indigenous communities. Use our reach to elevate Indigenous perspectives in Washington County.
4. Establish CSU as a recognized gathering place for nonpartisan civic education and engagement.



## Program: Stewardship

Goal 1: Focus on a multi-year initiative that attracts return (and new) volunteers and supports local public land management agency conservation priorities.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Conduct at least 12 stewardship activities each year on public lands and retain at least 50% of existing and attract at least 10 new volunteers annually.
2. Meet with 1-2 federal and state land and park managers quarterly to maintain and build relationships and to identify new and recurring meaningful and achievable volunteer project opportunities and robust funding opportunities.

3. Host an annual volunteer appreciation event to celebrate volunteer contributions and build community.
4. All board members volunteer at a stewardship event at least once annually.

## Goal 2: Secure funding for a sustained and expanded stewardship program.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Obtain a multi-year financial commitment from a grantor or foundation that allows us to make a significant, landscape-level impact on the local National Conservation Areas.
2. Establish an annual donation campaign targeting stewardship volunteers that secures \$30k+ annually by 2028 to support stewardship program goals.
3. Establish a business sponsorship program that secures \$10k+ annually for the stewardship program by 2028 to support stewardship program goals.



## Program: Water

**Goal 1: Build a water conservation culture to educate and empower local citizens to actively protect the Virgin River Watershed.**

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Be an active and regular voice for the Virgin River Watershed and for wise use of local water resources. Plan monthly communications on critical local water issues and quarterly water educational events (e.g. expert speakers, water-efficient gardening classes, etc.). Prioritize raising awareness for pressing local water issues that are not being addressed.
2. Be a guardian for the Virgin River Watershed. Closely monitor key water-related issues, projects, and developments in Washington County (especially the 90+ projects in the WCWCD's 20-year Water Supply Plan) and advocate for adequate protections for natural and cultural resources.

3. Continue building equitable, inclusive, and collaborative partnerships with diverse businesses, organizations, and agencies including the WCWCD and local city water managers.
4. Host the Parade of Gardens Southern Utah annually and grow attendance to 1,000 people by 2028 to motivate and encourage water-wise landscaping.

## Goal 2: Our water program is sustainably funded and staffed.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Increase our capacity for protecting local water resources by securing \$50k+ in reliable multi-channeled annual funding for the water program by the end of 2026 and hiring a water program manager. (\$75k+ by the end of 2028).
2. Grow the PGSU business sponsorship program: \$10k+ in 2025, increasing by 50% every year after that to \$35k+ in 2028.
3. Host an annual Parade of Gardens Southern Utah (PGSU) VIP event organized and led by the PGSU committee to expand major donor outreach and visibility, as well as steward business sponsors.
4. Continue building relationships with diverse water experts who can provide specialized knowledge and technical expertise on a variety of water issues.

## Goal 3: The Parade of Gardens Southern Utah (PGSU) event is streamlined and sustainably organized.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Create a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual for organizing the annual event that captures and communicates relevant institutional knowledge to new volunteer organizers.
2. Continue building a volunteer-run PGSU by recruiting new leadership from PGSU participants, attendees, and volunteers.
3. Systemize the PGSU planning committee with designated annual roles and responsibilities documented in a SOP manual. Include communications guidelines and workflows developed with CSU's Communications Manager.
4. Set up a volunteer management software system that integrates with CSU's other databases and communication systems.



## Organizational Governance (Board)

### Goal 1: Transition to a governance-focused board.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. **100% of board members meaningfully participate in fundraising.**
2. **Be ambassadors for CSU.** Emphasize the board's role as ambassadors and fundraisers to increase visibility, build strategic relationships, and generate financial support for the organization's mission.
3. **Reference and respect CSU's established roles and responsibilities.** Fundraising is a team effort. Board focuses on fiduciary responsibilities, governance (strategic direction and oversight), and outreach and relationship building. Staff (especially Executive Director) handles day-to-day operations, program and strategic plan implementation, and personnel management.
4. **Develop and implement a board mentoring program.** Create a mentoring program to support new and existing board members to enhance their understanding of governance best practices, fund development, and relationship building, while shifting away from day-to-day program work.

5. **Relevant board governance training is planned semi-annually by the Governance Committee in consultation with the Board Chair and Executive Director.** Encourage and budget for individual and/or full-team training and coaching opportunities to strengthen the board.

## Goal 2: Focus on succession planning to ensure a sustainable organization for the long term.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. **Expand the board to 11 members.** Recruit new volunteers who are passionate about conservation, influential in the community, and reflective of the community's political and religious diversity. Ensure diverse membership by including individuals with varied backgrounds, demographics, and professional expertise. Prioritize officer role needs and community influence.
2. **Create a board succession plan.** Create a succession plan to ensure stable, continuous leadership, preserve institutional knowledge, and support long-term organizational resilience and effectiveness. Include a recruitment plan to ensure leadership transitions at the officer levels. Identify training needs, especially to support current and future officers.

## Goal 3: Strengthen a positive and engaged board culture.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. **Host at least two fun, full-team events annually.**
2. **The Board Chair schedules bi-annual board member 1:1 check-in's.**
3. **Evaluate the board annually.** Use surveys and consultants where needed.
4. **All board meetings and communications are structured in a way that exudes professionalism and respect, facilitates efficient decision making, avoids burn-out, and allows for enjoyable participation.**
  - Follow Robert's Rules of Order and train all board members.
  - Intentionally create space for quieter board members to contribute.
  - Intentionally welcome dissenting ideas and respectful debate.
  - Be judicious in sending emails. Consider who/when/how best to share.
  - Set and hold ourselves accountable to meeting agreements, including start/stop meeting times and reading the board packet in advance.
  - Official board work takes place in committees and board meetings, not during informal "parking lot" meetings.



## Organizational Management

Goal 1: CSU's organizational culture is inclusive and supportive. We attract and retain staff, board, and volunteers with diverse backgrounds and ideas, and are prepared for turnover.

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Host monthly JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) team meetings open to all CSU team members to create programming and policies that strengthen a supportive organizational culture for everyone.
2. Encourage open communication through at least bi-monthly one-on-one check-ins with staff to discuss workload, satisfaction, feedback, professional development goals, and new ideas. Encourage dissenting opinions and challenges to the status quo. Ask specifically about what is (or may be)

needed to grow a supportive workplace in the face of changing societal circumstances.

3. Create Program Manager and Executive Director manuals with information about annual events/deadlines, contacts, guidance, links to key documents, etc. to capture institutional knowledge and improve our efficiency.
4. By 2027, create a citizen's advisory group led by the Executive Director that facilitates connections between CSU staff and non-board individuals with expertise in relevant areas. The advisory group also serves as a potential runway for qualified board candidates, future employees, and donors.

## Goal 2: Proactively create and implement clear internal communication between staff and board.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Invite each staff member to present at a board meeting at least annually.
2. Schedule and hold annual joint meetings between staff and board members to review strategic plan progress.
3. Conduct an annual communication survey of staff and board to evaluate communication clarity, consistency, and areas for improvement.



## Fundraising

**Goal 1: Build CSU's capacity to a budget of \$525,000+ by the end of 2028 to meet all strategic goals.**

SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Increase annual revenue by 20% year-over-year by developing a robust resource development plan each year focused on multiple reliable funding sources. Annual revenue goals:
  - a. \$300k in 2025.
  - b. \$360k in 2026.
  - c. \$435k in 2027.
  - d. \$525k in 2028.

2. Expand the board's donor connection program so that all recurring monthly donors and major donors (+\$1,000/year) receive one-on-one attention from a CSU staff or board member at least semi-annually.
3. Plan and execute a 20th anniversary campaign and integrate the celebration into CSU's 2025/2026 programming.

## Goal 2: Ensure all staff and Board are comfortable and confident regarding fundraising to support CSU's mission and strategic goals.

### SMARTIE Objectives:

1. Support comprehensive fundraising training/workshops for both staff and board members to improve their fundraising knowledge and skills.
2. 100% of the board and staff team participate in some kind of fund development throughout the year and 100% of the board makes gifts that are personally significant.
3. Foster a supportive and open fundraising culture where fundraising is seen as a team effort with open communication and support.



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