NEVER OFF DUTY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 – 2027

HAWAII

Oahu and Maui



RESCUE

NeverOffDuty.org

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BACKGROUND



Never Off Duty (NOD) is a nonprofit organization that was incorporated in Hawaii in 2017. Hawaii is where NOD began, and by the time of its 2024–2027 plan NOD had trained and secured employment for over 400 lifeguards.

On Oahu and Maui, NOD delivers American Red Cross CPR, First Aid, BLS, and Lifeguard training, open water and vessel crew rescue training, Junior Lifeguards, and the free Barefoot Brigade school program (coloring book, comic book, and animated video series).

This Strategic Plan 2026–2027 keeps NOD's five strategic priorities and makes them specific to Hawaii: the tour boat and vessel crew market, school and university aquatics, and the funders and sponsors who share our commitment to Hawaii's keiki, residents, and visitors.



OUR LEADERSHIP

Jason Bitzer

Founder, President and Chief Marketing Officer

Jason Bitzer is a retired professional bodyboarder with decades of lifeguard and training experience in New Jersey and Hawaii. He serves on advisory boards for the American Red Cross and multiple international water safety programs. In 2019, he was awarded the American Red Cross' National Lifesaving Merit Award for his rescue of professional surfer Jamie O'Brien at Pipeline, Hawaii. He has been featured in the publication *Surfline* as well as the television program HBO's *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*. Jason is also a certified Emergency Medical Technician and experienced safety manager for large-scale athletic events.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision

To become a nationally-recognized model for best practices in water safety education and emergency response job training.

Mission: Hawaii

To improve access and safety measures at Oahu and Maui's beaches, pools, and ocean waters by educating swimmers, training the vessel crews who carry visitors on the water, and delivering quality training and career coaching to lifeguards.



OUR VALUES

Core Values

Integrity We carry out our mission with honesty, responsibility, and respect.

Resilience We approach challenges with determination and a positive attitude.

Innovation We use creative methods to continually enhance our programs to meet the changing needs of our stakeholders.

Collaboration We welcome opportunities to share our knowledge and resources with community and industry partners.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is our conviction that safe swimming environments and effective water safety education are essential for all Hawaii residents and visitors, and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to support historically underserved populations across Oahu and Maui. We strongly believe that an organization is strengthened by meaningful input and contributions from individuals of all backgrounds and identities who bring with them a diverse range of perspectives and lived experiences. We foster an organizational culture of acceptance and belonging.

CURRENT DROWNING DATA, NATIONAL AND HAWAII

THE NEED

UNITED STATES

4,509

unintentional drowning deaths in the United States in 2022, an age-adjusted rate of 1.3 per 100,000 people.

Data year: 2022. Source: CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates … United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data.

#1

Drowning kills more children ages 1–4 than any other cause of death in the U.S.

CDC page updated 2026. Source: CDC, Drowning Facts (page updated Jan 27, 2026; WISQARS data).

54.7%

of U.S. adults reported never having taken a swimming lesson.

Survey year: 2023. Source: CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates … United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data.

HAWAII

475

fatal drownings in Hawaii from 2019 to 2023; 83% of them occurred in the ocean.

Data years: 2019–2023 (2023 provisional). Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Systems Section, I Palekana: Hawaii Water Safety Plan (Jan 2025).

No. 2

Hawaii ranks second in the nation for the resident drowning rate, an average of 32 residents per million from 2019 to 2023.

Data years: 2019–2023. Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Systems Section, I Palekana: Hawaii Water Safety Plan (Jan 2025).

51%

of ocean drowning victims were visitors, and visitors' ocean drowning fatality rate is about eight times that of residents.

Data years: 2019–2023. Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Systems Section, I Palekana: Hawaii Water Safety Plan (Jan 2025).

Ages 1–15

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children in Hawaii ages 1–15 (26 children, 2019–2023).

Data years: 2019–2023. Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Systems Section, I Palekana: Hawaii Water Safety Plan (Jan 2025).

County-level figures for Oahu and Maui are published in the same DOH plan by multi-year period; this plan cites the statewide figures above. Figures are reported as published; none are estimated. Full URLs are listed on the Sources page.

FROM NEED TO SOLUTIONS

Drowning is preventable. Layers of protection work: trained lifeguards, water safety education, swimming skills, and people ready to give CPR. NOD's programs in Hawaii build each of these layers.

- **Visitor education on the water.** The Hawaii DOH notes visitors need pre- and post-arrival education. Training tour boat and vessel crews puts trained responders where visitors snorkel and swim.
- **Lifeguards and aquatics reviews.** Qualified lifeguards and well-run school and university aquatics programs (Kamehameha Schools, UH) reduce risk where keiki and students swim.
- **Skills early.** Barefoot Brigade and Junior Lifeguards build water safety knowledge in Oahu and Maui schools.



STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Priority 1	**Expand Board of Directors and Advisory Council**	• Recruit Oahu and Maui board members • Review governance and bylaws for Hawaii • Seat a Hawaii Advisory Council
Priority 2	**Establish Local Partnerships with a Focus on Disadvantaged Communities**	• Submit Kamehameha Schools aquatics review bid • Propose UH aquatics services • Bring Barefoot Brigade to Oahu and Maui schools
Priority 3	**Reinforce the Organization's Financial Health**	• Hawaiian Airlines Foundation and Honolulu grants • Kaiser and corporate sponsorships • Lifeguard services margin of 25%+
Priority 4	**Streamline Branding, Communications, and Social Media Presence**	• Run the December tour boat booking push • Launch Hawaii web and social content • Apply the NOD style guide
Priority 5	**Focus and Refine the Program Portfolio**	• Make vessel crew training a signature program • Document curricula • Engage an external evaluator

PRIORITY

1

Expand Board of Directors and Advisory Council

Hawaii – Oahu and Maui

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Recruit more Hawaii-based members for the Board of Directors, with representation from both Oahu and Maui.
- Build on insight gathered from NOD's founding board members in Hawaii.
- Establish a Hawaii Advisory Council of subject matter experts in ocean safety, vessel operations, aquatics, and job training.

STRATEGIES

- Recruit from the maritime and tour boat, school aquatics, healthcare, and workforce communities.
- Create a Hawaii committee with defined objectives and action items tied to this plan.
- Update board governance and bylaws to reflect multi-region operations.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Oahu and Maui maritime and tour boat operators
- School and university aquatics leaders
- Founding Hawaii board members



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Hawaii board members added
Target: 2 by Q4 2027

Hawaii Advisory Council seated
Target: 5+ members by Q2 2027

Governance and bylaws review
Target: complete by Q1 2027

Hawaii committee meetings
Target: quarterly, with action items

PRIORITY

2

Establish Local Partnerships with a Focus on Disadvantaged Communities

Hawaii – Oahu and Maui

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Research Oahu and Maui communities that have historically been underserved and underrepresented.
- Form partnerships with schools and universities that reach keiki and young adults.
- Identify program partners who represent and reflect the communities we serve.

STRATEGIES

- Submit a competitive bid for the Kamehameha Schools aquatics review.
- Present an aquatics services proposal to University of Hawaii (UH) aquatics.
- Offer the free Barefoot Brigade program to Oahu and Maui elementary schools.
- Meet with community leaders to set Junior Lifeguards priorities.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Kamehameha Schools (bid)
- University of Hawaii aquatics
- Oahu and Maui public and private schools
- Community and youth organizations



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Kamehameha Schools bid
Target: submitted by the bid deadline

UH aquatics proposal
Target: delivered by Q1 2027

Schools receiving Barefoot Brigade
Target: 10 across Oahu and Maui by June 2027

Junior Lifeguards
Target: 1 cohort per island, summer 2027

PRIORITY

3

Reinforce the Organization's Financial Health

Hawaii – Oahu and Maui

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Create Hawaii financial plans and staffing goals for 2026–2027.
- Grow both restricted (grant) and unrestricted (earned and sponsorship) revenue.
- Research and engage grantmakers and sponsors with shared interests and values.

STRATEGIES

- Apply to the Hawaiian Airlines Foundation and Honolulu grant programs.
- Present a Kaiser sponsorship proposal, plus Medline, PRESTAN, and Heartstream proposals.
- Offer Barefoot Brigade as a sponsorable item (books, videos, school visits).
- Price all lifeguard services for a margin of 25% or more.
- Turn the December tour boat booking push into contracted crew training.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Hawaiian Airlines Foundation
- Honolulu grant programs
- Kaiser
- Medline, PRESTAN, Heartstream
- Tour boat and vessel operators



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Lifeguard services margin
Target: 25% or more on every contract

Grant applications
Target: Hawaiian Airlines Foundation + 2 Honolulu grants in 2027

Sponsor proposals
Target: Kaiser + 3 corporate proposals by Q1 2027

Barefoot Brigade sponsorship
Target: 1 sponsor secured by Q3 2027

Hawaii budget and staffing plan
Target: approved by Dec 31, 2026

PRIORITY

4

Streamline Branding, Communications, and Social Media Presence

Hawaii – Oahu and Maui

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Apply the organization-wide style guide to all Hawaii materials.
- Develop a Hawaii communication plan across web, email, and social media.
- Increase recognition of NOD's mission among Hawaii operators, schools, and families.

STRATEGIES

- Launch the December tour boat booking push with direct outreach to Oahu and Maui operators.
- Add a Hawaii section to neveroffduty.org with courses, crew training, and booking.
- Share program stories and water safety tips on social media using NOD's own photos.
- Feature sponsors on Barefoot Brigade materials.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Tour boat and vessel operators
- Schools and families
- Sponsors and funders



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

December booking push
Target: launched by Dec 1, 2026

Hawaii web section
Target: live by Q1 2027

Hawaii social posts
Target: 8 per month

Style guide compliance
Target: 100% of new Hawaii materials

PRIORITY

5

Focus and Refine the Program Portfolio

Hawaii – Oahu and Maui

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Identify and put emphasis on Hawaii signature programs.
- Create professional documentation of official program curricula, including training guides and materials.
- Gather feedback from program partners and participants.

STRATEGIES

- Signature programs: vessel crew and open water rescue training; American Red Cross Lifeguard, CPR, First Aid, and BLS; Junior Lifeguards; Barefoot Brigade; aquatics reviews.
- Hire an independent external evaluator for the signature programs.
- Revise programs according to partner feedback and evaluator reports.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Tour boat and vessel operators
- Schools and universities
- American Red Cross (training provider)
- External evaluator (to be selected)



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Vessel crew curriculum documented
Target: by Q2 2027

Participant satisfaction
Target: 90%+ rate courses good or excellent

Certification pass rate
Target: 90%+

External evaluator engaged
Target: by Q3 2027

ACTION PLAN

Q4 2026

Launch December tour boat booking push

Approve Hawaii budget and staffing plan

Begin board and advisor recruitment

Q1 2027

Submit Kamehameha Schools bid

Deliver UH aquatics proposal

Send Kaiser and corporate sponsor proposals

Launch Hawaii web section

Q2 2027

Seat Hawaii Advisory Council

Barefoot Brigade in 10 schools

Document vessel crew curriculum

Submit grant applications

Q3–Q4 2027

Run summer Junior Lifeguards

Engage external evaluator

Review margins and results

Share lessons learned with other NOD regions

Dates are targets and will be reviewed by the board each quarter.

SOURCES

CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates ... United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7320e1.htm

CDC, Drowning Facts (page updated Jan 27, 2026; WISQARS data)
https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/data-research/facts/index.html

Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention Systems Section, I Palekana: Hawaii Water Safety Plan (Jan 2025)
https://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/files/2025/04/Hawaii-Water-Safety-Plan_Final_25-0115.pdf

All figures are reported as published by the source, with the data year shown. No figures were estimated. Where a regional figure could not be found, this plan says so. Photos: Never Off Duty.





CONTACTS

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