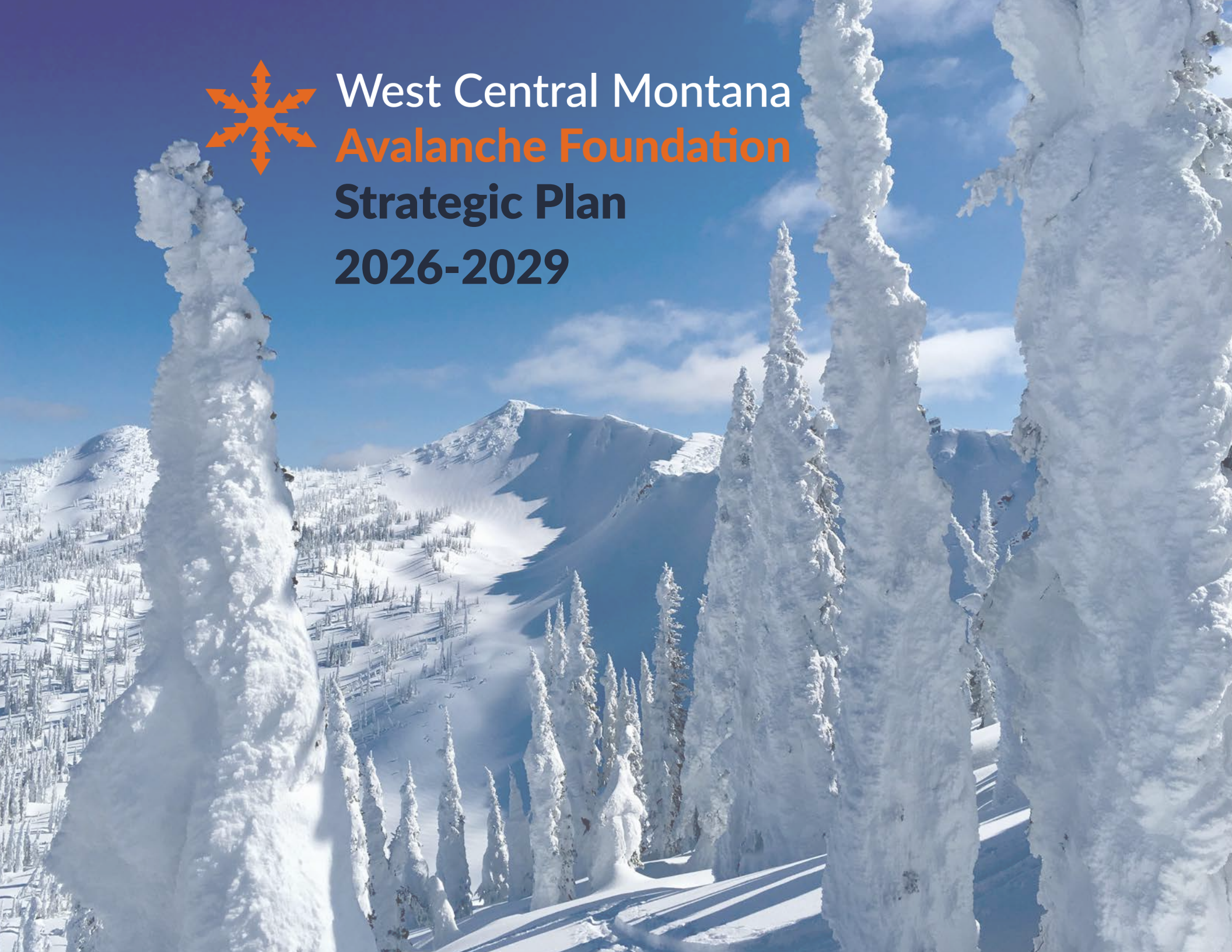




West Central Montana
Avalanche Foundation
Strategic Plan
2026-2029

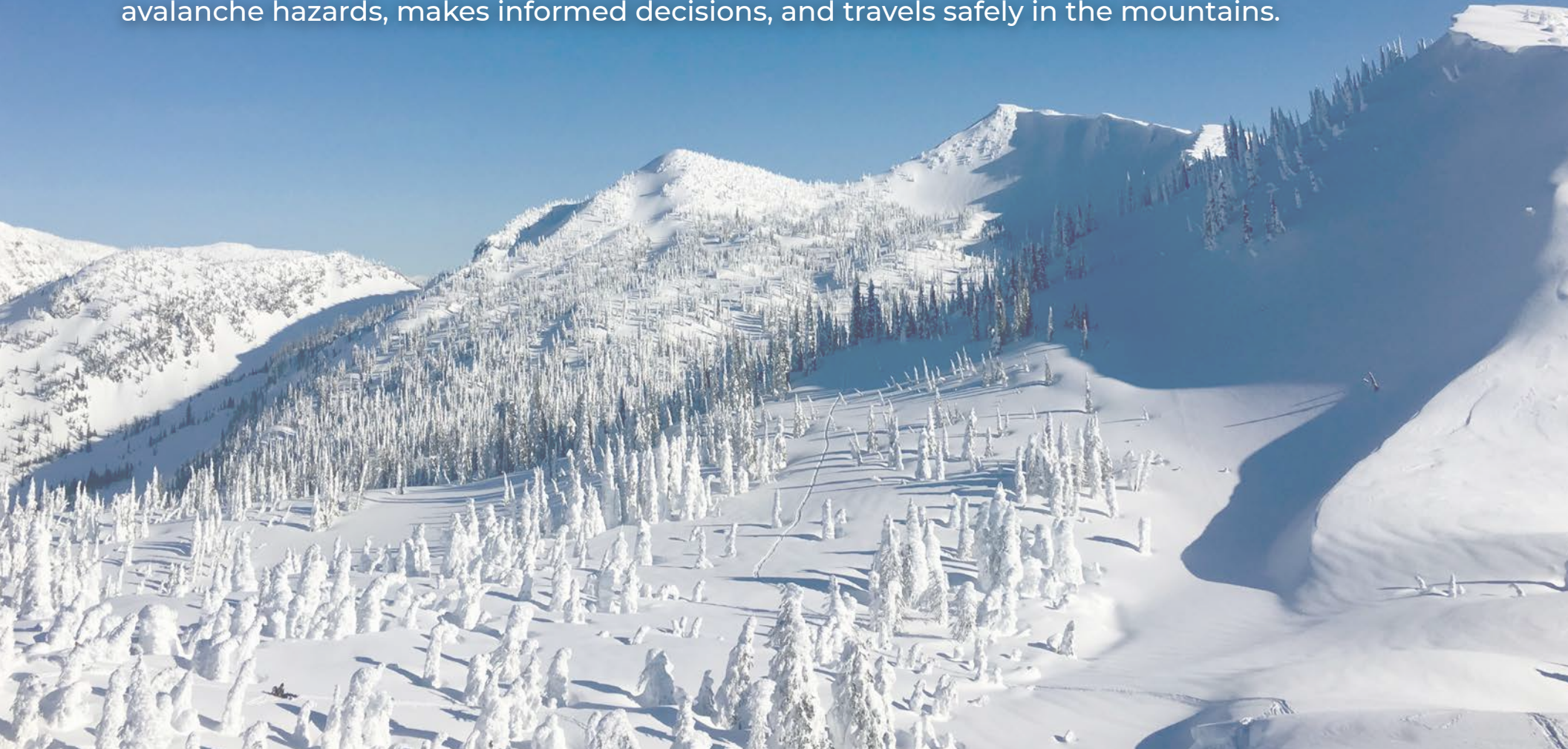


Mission

The West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation (WCMAF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting avalanche information and education for all backcountry users.

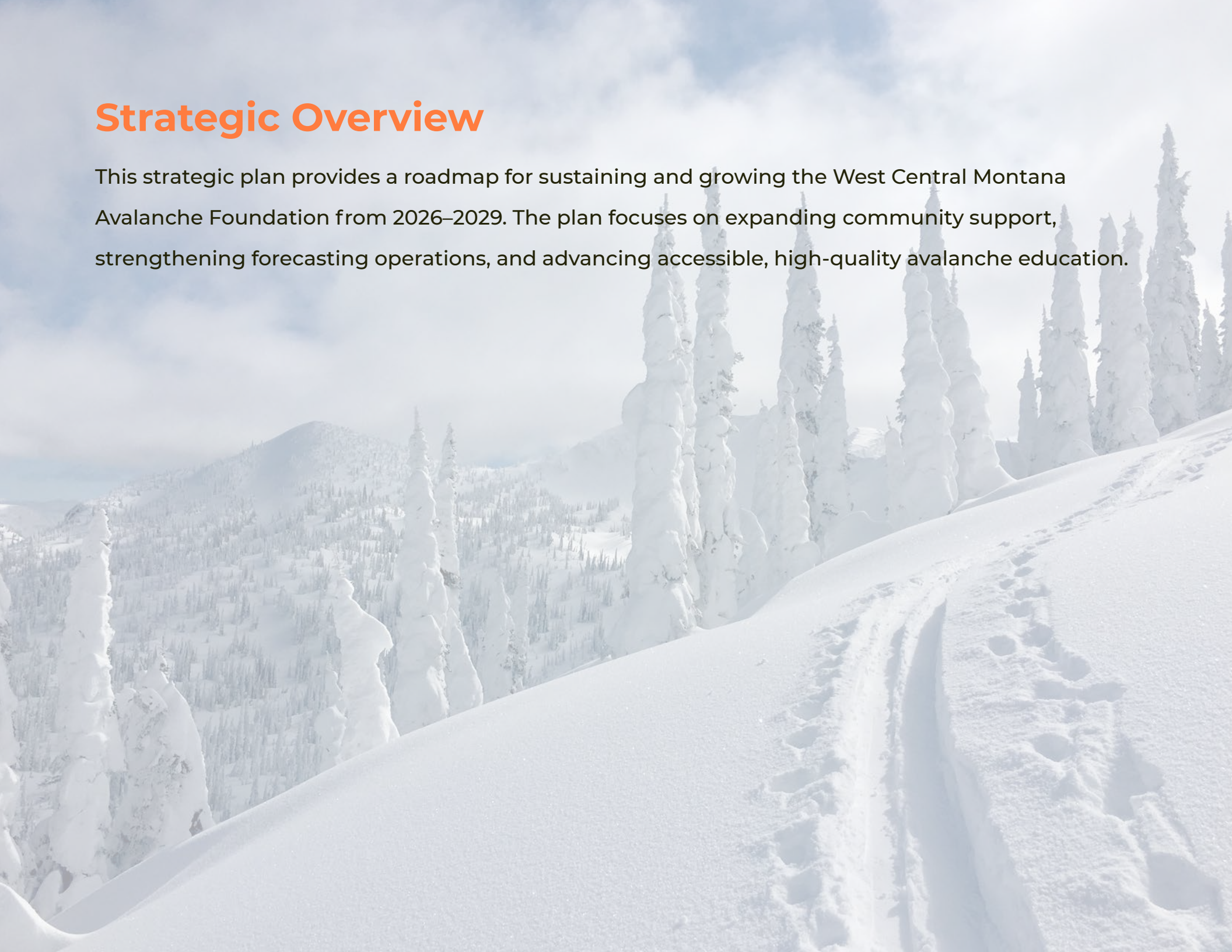
Vision

We envision a diverse and knowledgeable backcountry community that understands avalanche hazards, makes informed decisions, and travels safely in the mountains.



Strategic Overview

This strategic plan provides a roadmap for sustaining and growing the West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation from 2026–2029. The plan focuses on expanding community support, strengthening forecasting operations, and advancing accessible, high-quality avalanche education.



GOAL 1

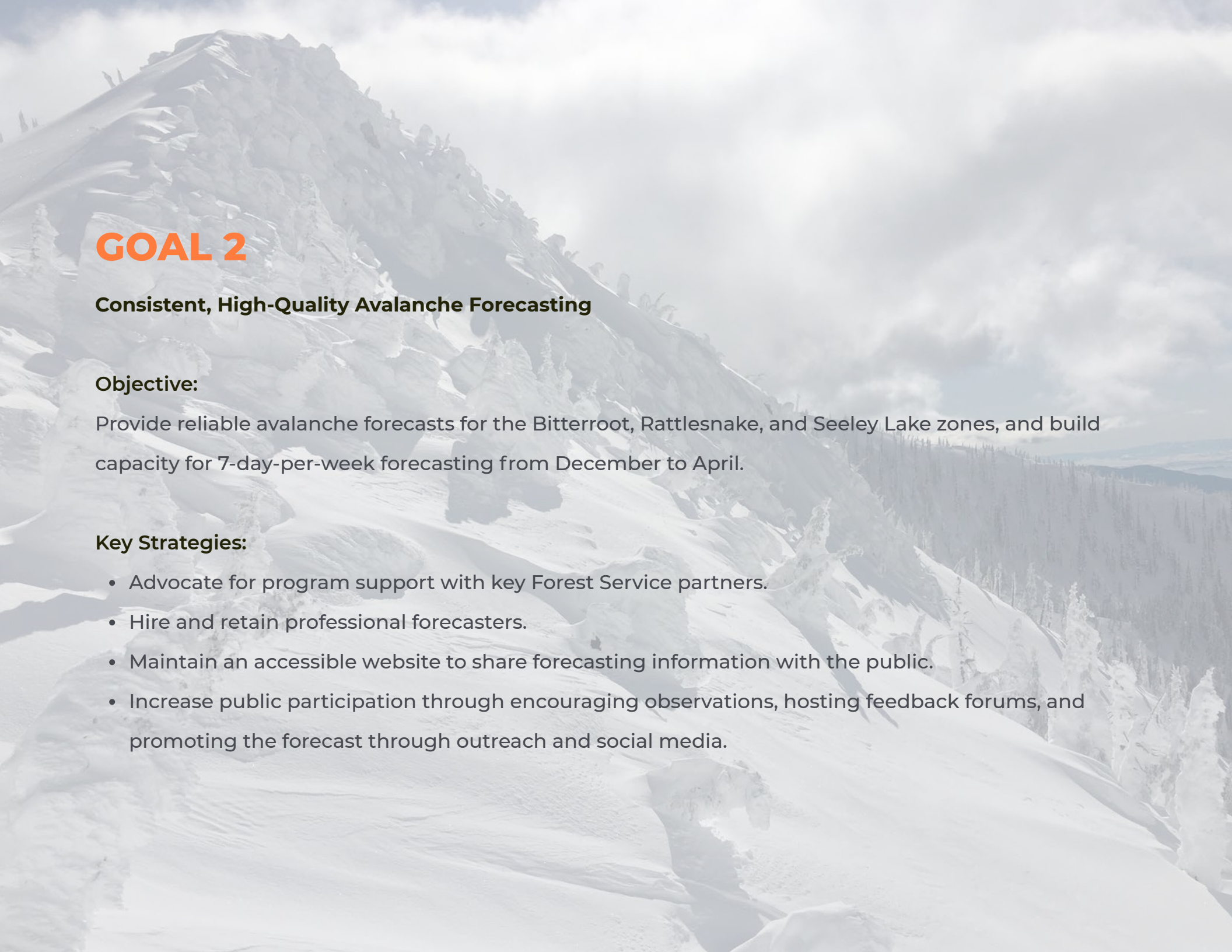
Sustainable Funding & Membership Growth (Fund Development)

Objective:

Establish a reliable, diversified funding model by implementing our fund development plan. The fund development plan includes membership, sponsorship, and fundraising. Maintain a years' worth of operating budget at all times through diverse revenue sources.

Key Strategies:

- Expand membership program
- Develop an online storefront
- Strengthen sponsor and donor relations
- Execute core fundraising events
- Maintain and develop public and private partnerships.



GOAL 2

Consistent, High-Quality Avalanche Forecasting

Objective:

Provide reliable avalanche forecasts for the Bitterroot, Rattlesnake, and Seeley Lake zones, and build capacity for 7-day-per-week forecasting from December to April.

Key Strategies:

- Advocate for program support with key Forest Service partners.
- Hire and retain professional forecasters.
- Maintain an accessible website to share forecasting information with the public.
- Increase public participation through encouraging observations, hosting feedback forums, and promoting the forecast through outreach and social media.

GOAL 3

Leadership in Avalanche Education

Objective:

Deliver high-quality, accessible avalanche education that reflects the diverse needs of backcountry users in our region.

Key Strategies:

- Promotion of courses to ensure that the public is aware of our offerings.
- Expand course offerings to reach more diverse backcountry users.
- Build and strengthen partnerships across user groups to extend educational reach and impact.
- Increase accessibility and visibility through offering free avalanche education and outreach.
- Maintain beacon parks at Snowbowl, Lost Trail, Lolo Pass, and Seeley Lake.

A letter from the WCMAF Executive Director

Change is a constant in the mountains of western Montana. Snowpacks evolve day by day, shaped by weather, terrain, and time. In much the same way, the West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation (WCMAF) and Avalanche Center continue to adapt within a landscape defined by growing recreation use, shifting public funding priorities, and an increasing need for reliable, locally grounded avalanche information.

The mountains remain as beautiful, complex, and unforgiving as ever. So too is the responsibility we share to help people travel through them with awareness, curiosity, and respect. This Strategic Plan outlines how we intend to meet that responsibility over the next three years.

The West Central Montana Avalanche Center is unique. Unlike many avalanche centers, we are not primarily funded through a single government agency. Instead, we operate as a locally run, community-supported nonprofit. That model presents challenges, but it also creates a direct and meaningful connection to the people who live, work, and recreate in this landscape.

Founded in 2001, WCMAF exists to bridge the gap between limited public funding and the true cost of consistent, high-quality avalanche forecasting and education. Community support has long made this work possible, and it remains essential today.

From 2026–2029, our efforts focus on three priorities: building sustainable funding and membership support, delivering consistent and high-quality avalanche forecasts, and leading accessible, inclusive avalanche education for all backcountry users.

Avalanche forecasting is a collaborative effort. Forecasters rely on field observations, education succeeds through participation, and funding works best when it is shared broadly across the community. The future of the Avalanche Center depends on this shared responsibility.

Thank you for being part of this community and for supporting avalanche forecasting and education in west-central Montana. The mountains inspire us, shape us, and demand respect. Meeting that demand, and enjoying all they have to offer, is something we can only do together.

With gratitude,

Patrick Black
Executive Director
West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation

A letter from the WCMAF Board President

The West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation (WCMAF) is supported by a volunteer Board of Directors. Our role is to provide governance, strengthen advocacy efforts and partnerships, and support fundraising and community engagement that sustain avalanche forecasting and education in our region.

Each board member donates their time and expertise because we believe deeply in the mission and vision of WCMAF. We developed this Strategic Plan to guide the organization forward and to provide transparency, accountability, and clarity to the community we serve. It reflects both the challenges ahead and the opportunities before us.

We stand firmly behind the goals outlined in this plan. At the same time, we recognize that achieving them depends on strong partnerships with our community. Your support, involvement, and belief in this work make our mission possible.

Thank you for standing with us and for investing in avalanche safety, education, and access to reliable information in west-central Montana. We look forward to working together to achieve these goals in the years ahead.

With gratitude,

Emily Jochem
Board President
West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation