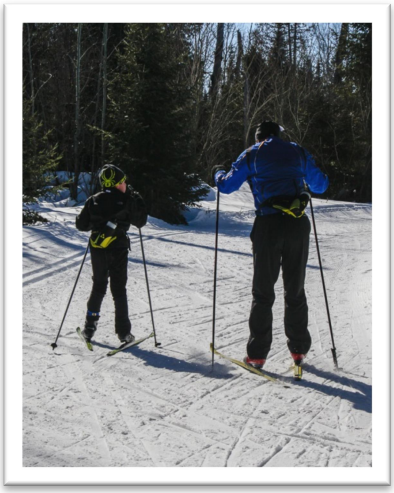
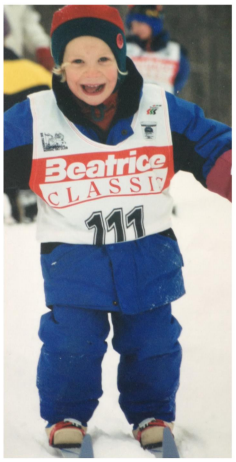
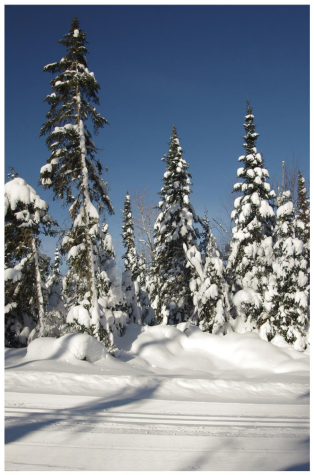
Cross Country
Ski Ontario

Strategic Plan 2016-2020







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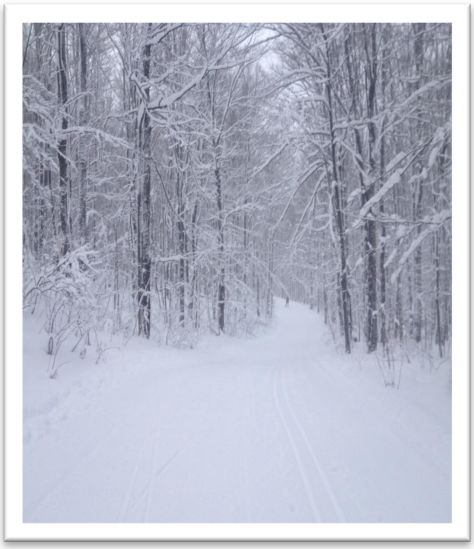
Message from the Cross Country Ski Ontario (XCSO) Chair, Steve Howard

It is with great pleasure that I share with you our strategic plan … the culmination of a year-long journey that had us connect with our members and key stakeholders through consultation, planning workshops and a provincial survey. This plan reflects our organization's desire to plan more strategically, with a view of casting a longer-term horizon upon which we can set and achieve the goals and objectives deemed important by our members.



This plan sets out an ambitious vision for Ontario's cross-country skiing enthusiasts. It paves the way for a promising future where more people enjoy the benefits of our sport and more athletes achieve their full high performance potential. It sets the tone for greater accountability where we look to make important investments in our capacity to deliver on our promises. It signals our desire to communicate proactively and to promote the countless benefits that our sport offers to people of all ages and ability.

We are proud of the care and attention that went into building this plan and the proactive engagement that provided our members with the opportunity to contribute to it. We hope that you will feel as inspired as we do after reading this plan and look to the future with a sense of increased belonging and a deepened commitment. Both are required to bring this plan to life.

Steve Howard
Chair, Cross Country Ski Ontario
April 2016

Strategic Planning Process

In November 2014, the Board of Directors met and determined to be more deliberate in our planning efforts. We identified the need to create a four-year strategic plan that would provide us with a compelling vision, re-affirm our mission and connect us to a core set of values that would guide our way forward. We wanted to meaningfully engage our members in determining the key areas that would allow the organization to prosper. We also wanted to create a plan that would be a model for our peers in Ontario and across the country.

In January 2015, we hired external consultants to support our planning vision. Guided by our Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), we designed an engagement process that connected us to our members through a number of different methods. The SPC met multiple times to deliberate, interpret, refine and make recommendations that are now reflected in this plan. The final plan was approved by the Board.

The following timeline captures the main highlights along our strategic planning journey:

Timeline

November 2014	Board meeting to affirm the need to develop a strategic plan
January 2015	External consultants were hired to support the process
April 2015	Strategic Planning Committee was struck and a Process Terms of Reference for the Strategic Plan was developed
May 2015	A planning workshop with 40 members of Ontario's cross country skiing community was held in Sudbury.
June/July 2015	The SPC reviewed the meeting notes from the planning workshop and created the draft foundational statements (mission, vision, values) and draft priorities. The SPC also agreed to further engage members through a survey.
July/August 2015	A survey was issued to all XCSO members with 142 respondents completing the survey. The questions provided respondents with the opportunity to comment on the draft mission, vision and values statement; to provide feedback on the goals identified at the planning workshop; to provide specific outcomes as evidence of success; and to share any further ideas that would help with the development of the strategic plan.
August 2015	A member of the SPC reviewed the survey findings and created a report summarizing the findings. The SPC reviewed the report and made changes to the foundational statements based on the survey findings. Goals were identified by the SPC to capture the key areas of priority over the next four years.
September 2015	The Board approved the foundational statements in principle and agreed that a smaller group should convene in November to create a set of objectives for each of the identified goals. Two members of the SPC were tasked with writing up the strategic plan, which would be used as an organizing framework for the upcoming workshop.
November/December 2015	A small group of experienced and knowledgeable volunteers and staff representing all Districts, and Committees came together in Duntroon to review and refine the key elements within the strategic plan and used this framework to create an operational plan for the 2016/2017 season.

To engage, inspire and involve Ontarians in cross-country skiing for life.

Our Relationships

Clubs	Districts - National Capital, Lake Superior, Northern ON, Southern ON	National Development Centre - Thunder Bay	Cross Country Ski Ontario	Cross Country Ski de Fond Canada
Skiers				
Volunteers				
Officials				
Universities				

Key findings during the consultation process

Through various engagement processes, we identified the following considerations that need to be addressed over the term of our strategic plan. These include:

Strengths

- XCSO identified a number of strengths in which it should continue to invest including:
  - The quality of its Skill Development Program for children, in particular the Jackrabbit program
  - The expertise and dedication of its key volunteers
  - Performance at Nationals
  - Financial stability
  - The quality of its coaches
  - The partnership between XCSO and the National Development Centre (NDC) Thunder Bay; and the willingness to work collaboratively.

Opportunities

- XCSO identified a number of opportunities that would strengthen the organization as it looks to achieve its vision. Some of the more compelling opportunities include:
  - Expansion of membership services and outreach including sharing of best practices, providing value for membership such as seminars and workshops, and a coordinated race calendar
  - Program development that targets new participants and the entire Sport for Life framework
  - Athlete development including recruitment to the Ontario Talent Squad and Ontario Ski Team and retention programs for transitioning athletes
  - Strengthening organizational structure and increasing capacity through enhanced coaching career opportunities
  - Conduct a human resources review of the current organizational structures of XCSO and NDC Thunder Bay
  - Improving overall communication including updating the website and promoting our sport to increase visibility

XCSO identified a few areas of concern that the organization needs to attend to over the duration of the plan which include:

- XCSO's governance model may be limiting its future growth. As a Board focused on running the organization, this limits the amount of time devoted to strategic thinking and future growth. There is also a risk that the current structure of the organization and its members is not aligned with expectations of members and needs of running a thriving sport business.
- There is little to no awareness of the XCSO brand and associated benefits among its members which can result in a lack of understanding of what the provincial body does and how it contributes to cross country skiing in Ontario. This includes the overall visibility of XCSO which can impact the ability to raise revenues beyond membership.
- There is a lack of succession planning to ensure the next generation of volunteers (coaches, officials, Board, committees) at all levels are recruited. This affects the organization's ability to think beyond the immediate to achieve longer-term goals.

In order to achieve the goals and objectives that the organization aspires to in the future, an increase in leadership capacity, including coaching leadership will be an important consideration moving forward. We have taken the key points above into account in the development of our strategic plan and are confident that these will be addressed in the implementation of the strategies created to meet our stated goals and objectives. The goal of this plan is ensure that we are aligned around the key priority areas of the organization and that we use this plan as a foundation upon which to base our decisions.

To engage, inspire and involve Ontarians in cross-country skiing for life.

Our Foundational Statements

When we met to discuss our intent to develop our strategic plan, we set out high expectations for ourselves as a committee and as an organization. We had a vision of developing a strategic plan that inspires the XCSO Board, our members and stakeholders to participate in and contribute to the organization over the next four years. An important aspect in achieving our intent was to review and renew our commitment to our mission and articulate our vision and values. Our foundational statements remind us who we are, why we are doing what we do, and how we work together to achieve our desired outcomes.

Mission

Cross Country Ski Ontario supports the development and fosters the enjoyment of cross-country skiing from recreational to international excellence through leadership, education, promotion and training**.**

Vision

To engage, inspire and involve Ontarians in cross-country skiing for life.

Values

Cross-country Ontario has identified and defined a core set of values that inspire us. We use these values to guide our decisions and strengthen our relationships:

INTEGRITY: We actively instill a culture of trust; we respect diverse perspectives; we foster fair play.

COMMUNITY: We welcome people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities; we create a sense of belonging; we recognize contributors to our sport

EXCELLENCE: We challenge ourselves to continuously improve; we envision ways to advance our sport; we strive to enhance our performance

ACCOUNTABILITY: We make transparent, values-based decisions; we collaborate with partners; we communicate proactively

ENJOYMENT: We create a safe environment for people to learn and grow; we strive to make it rewarding for people to contribute; we inspire a passion for skiing

WELLNESS: We instill appreciation for the outdoors; we promote a healthy and active lifestyle; we nurture a lifelong commitment to our sport

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives reflect what our members and the Board believe the organization should work to accomplish over the next four years. We believe these five goals will help us achieve our vision and fulfill our mission.

Goal: Engaged membership: Our members feel heard, supported and are an active part of the broader cross-country skiing community. Outcome: A more connected membership community for skiers.
Objectives:

- To develop a clear articulation of membership needs
- To facilitate members to take on leadership roles in the cross country ski community

Goal: Enhanced performance: We continue to be a top performer at all levels and consistently place athletes on National teams. Outcome: Top performing province in Canada
Objectives:

- To increase the capacity & number of clubs that offer High Performance development programming from Midget to Masters
- To increase the pool of coaches that have achieved Competition Development certification
- To increase the retention of athletes throughout the developmental pathway
- To increase the number of licensed skiers
- To increase the quantity and quality of age-appropriate race experiences throughout the province
- To increase the number of athletes achieving their respective International Performance Benchmarks

Goal: Proactive communications: We will have strengthened our communications and are proactively promoting the XCSO brand. Outcome: A more proactive and respected XCSO.
Objectives:

- To improve communications with stakeholders by updating our website and seeking opportunities to exchange information and ideas through a variety of channels
- To develop a strengthened, relevant and visible brand
- To develop an effective communication strategy to raise the profile of the sport and to target new sectors (New Canadians, Aboriginal people, other endurance sports, etc.)

Goal: Effective leadership: XCSO will have the capacity it needs to lead the organization with a modernized governance and organizational structure. Outcome: A more effective and efficient XCSO.
Objectives:

- To identify and acquire the required capability & capacity to lead the organization and ensure XCSO values and strategies are implemented
- To develop a governance model that is more relevant and continues to meet membership needs
- To ensure there is an effective and documented succession plan for Board members, key volunteers and staff
- To update and promote XCSO policies that reflect our values and current standards and develop a policy review plan

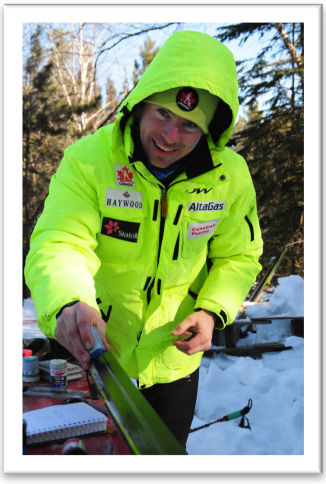
Goal: Sustainable funding: XCSO will have achieved financial stability by diversifying its funding sources and having a reserve fund in place. Outcome: A financially stable XCSO.
Objectives:

- To identify & establish diversified revenue streams
- To manage & grow reserves equal to a minimum of one year's operating budget
- To increase overall funding to meet program & operational growth projections

Monitoring our Success

XCSO is committed to learning from what works well and to adapt as required.. As we continue to progress through the scope of the strategic plan, key tasks will be developed based on the prioritized goals and objectives. A year by year operational plan is currently under development and identifies short and long term targets. These targets will be measured against key indicators and assessed and re-evaluated on a yearly basis. Ongoing review and reflection will help the staff and Board determine what changes need to be made in order to achieve our desired outcomes.

Goal	Target Areas
Membership	Value added membership Participant growth
Performance	Athlete performance • Nationally • Internationally •
Communication	Website • Design • Content Brand awareness
Leadership	Governance Organizational structure Policies review Human Resources and capacity
Funding	Sources of revenue Funding partnerships Sustainability



Concluding Remarks

We are very proud of the time and effort that went into creating this plan. We are also proud of the commitment shown by our incredibly dedicated volunteers and staff to implement the strategies required to achieve our vision. We have high expectations for this plan and look forward to collaborating with the many required to fulfill the expectations.

Special thanks to our photographers Martin Kaiser, Gord Kerr, Kelly Sinclair, Bois Wilson, Patti Kitler, Lois Nuttal.

Cross Country Ski Ontario Board of Directors

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Members of the Strategic Planning Committee

Richard Lemoine
Eric Bailey
Patti Kitler
Patricia MacDonell
Don Nixon
Liz Inkila

Cross Country Ski Ontario's Board of Directors and staff would like to thank the clubs, coaches, athletes and volunteers who contributed to the development of this plan. We believe this plan reflects the passion and commitment of the thousands of skiers who believe in the power of skiing to transform lives and strengthen community.