



STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023

Developed in December 2017 by



Introduction

The Halifax Rowing Club Strategic Plan sets the overall directions and priorities for the club's programs and operations over five years, from 2018-2023. This Strategic Plan was developed in December 2017 by the Halifax Rowing Club board of Directors, coaches and members through a one-day facilitated workshop with 20 participants.

This Strategic Plan is a guiding document for the Halifax Rowing Club's coaches, board of directors and members. It is a public document that lets our community know the values of the Club and how it seeks to fulfil its mission. It provides a transparent set of expectations against which to assess all of the Club's decisions and plans over the next five years, and provides an overarching framework for the Club's recreational and competitive rowing activities. The Strategic Plan will be realized through annual operational workplans that are to be developed and implemented by the board of directors and coaches.

Mission

To provide safe, affordable opportunities on Halifax's North West Arm for rowers of all ages and abilities.

Vision

Halifax residents have access to rowing as a life-long activity, promoting healthy living, friendship and sporting excellence.

Values

The Halifax Rowing Club is a volunteer-run non-profit organization focused on the sport of rowing and operating from the following values:

- Accessibility: providing rowing opportunities that are physically and financially accessible to HRM residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
- Athletic excellence: creating a training environment for those who strive to excel as elite athletes provincially, nationally and internationally.
- Health and wellbeing: providing low-impact recreational programs for all ages and abilities
- Mentorship and leadership: creating rowing opportunities for youth for personal development, and to build coaching capacity within the province.
- Sportsmanship: maintaining an ethos of fairness and respect in all our competitive and non-competitive activities

SWOT Analysis

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) involves looking at both internal and external factors, our capacities and the challenges. Internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) may include human resources, physical resources, financial resources, activities and processes, and past experiences. External factors (opportunities and threats) may include future trends, the economy, funding sources, demographics, the physical environment, and local, national or international events. The table below summarizes the SWOT analysis conducted by the Board of Directors, coaches and members during the full-day strategic planning workshop (Dec 2017).

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
INTERNAL	<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion and diversity of members (especially adaptive program) • Variety of programs offered • Location and setting (North West Arm as a central, sheltered, and long body of water) • Sense of community among members • Variety of equipment • Coaching knowledge, skills and sporting experience 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate funding for facility & equipment, accessibility adaptations • Member recruitment and retention; lack of diversity • Safety concerns • Volunteer burden and burn-out • Communications between programs, board, coaches and boats • Lack of competitive opportunities within Club • Limitations of space (boat club)
EXTERNAL	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location in the North West Arm – opportunity to build or expand • Partnerships & sponsorships (e.g., professional groups, other non-profit organizations, universities, companies) • Diversify member recruitment & outreach (e.g., police, firefighters, military, newcomers, other sport & social clubs) • Coalition with Dartmouth clubs • Professional development: coaching, umpiring • Health and wellness promotion • Competitive events • Funding grants 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical facility – boat club maintenance and accessibility lacking, potential loss of building (due to HRM decisions or rising water levels) • Membership: competition for members with Dartmouth clubs; lack of retention of Learn-to-Row participants • North West Arm – increasing boat traffic and hazards, no lanes, no patrolling • Governance: lack of support from provincial (Row NS) and national (Rowing Canada Aviron) bodies

Strategic Priority Areas



Membership

Strategic Direction #1: Recruit from HRM's diverse community to make full use of our facility and equipment.

Strategic Direction #2: Inspire all members to develop a passion for rowing through club participation, skill development and engagement.

A key priority for the Halifax Rowing Club is increasing our membership through two avenues:

1) **Recruitment**

It was noted that the Halifax Rowing Club has been very successful in recent years in recruiting junior rowers. The primary means for recruitment of young rowers is outreach to schools, and successful word-of-mouth referrals among school-aged youth. Many opportunities exist for expanding our membership through targeted outreach to adult groups such as:

- universities (Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, King's College, NSCAD, Mount Saint Vincent)
- corporations for staff team building or social events
- other sports for cross-training (e.g., curling, skiing, soccer, hockey, crossfit) through organizations such as the Halifax Nordic Club, the Waegwoltic Club, yacht clubs, gyms
- general public (e.g., slideshow, pamphlets, erg machine) in community venues such as markets, in parks and on the waterfront
- members' own social networks, encouraging members to advertise to their friends, family and co-workers (e.g., "bring a friend" events or promotions)
- community groups serving newcomers, people with mental illness, people with impairments or disabilities, cultural associations

2) **Retention**

There has been a downward trend of retention of individuals who have completed the Learn-to-Row program. Priorities for enhancing our retention of members include:

- more deliberately engaging first-year rowers so that they feel a sense of belonging and motivation to continue rowing, and experienced members should see themselves as mentors for novice rowers
- allocate some portion of Learn-to-Row fees to membership fees to encourage students to continue with Club
- more deliberately following up with individuals who participate in Come Try Rowing events to enroll in Learn-to-Row
- dedicated novice events or programs (e.g., Tues/Thurs evenings) or Row-All events with a core group of committed experienced rowers who would like to share their passion for rowing

Prerequisites:

There are several prerequisites that must be fulfilled in order to realize the strategic directions related to membership:

- A key consideration is the capacity (equipment, coaching, safety boats) of the Halifax Rowing Club to accommodate an expanded membership. One recommendation is for the Board of Directors to measure and assess the Club's optimum capacity.
- In order to increase the diversity of the membership, it was also recommended that the Club consider a modified fee structure to make participation more affordable for low-income members (e.g., bursaries, sliding scale fee amounts based on income).
- A plan should be developed for better integration between recent Learn-to-Row graduates or first-year rowers with more experienced rowers. A culture of mentorship, inclusion, sportsmanship and engagement should be encouraged and nurtured so that: 1) new rowers feel included and encouraged, and 2) experienced rowers don't feel frustrated about spending a disproportionate amount of time in boats with novice rowers.

Programming

Strategic Direction #3: Ensure progressive development of all athletes throughout the seasons, based on predetermined skill benchmarks, regardless of their age or ability.

There were many suggestions regarding the Halifax Rowing Club's programming, both in terms of maintaining successful elements, as well as introducing new programs. Ultimately, the goal is to provide rewarding and enjoyable opportunities for rowers of all ages, abilities, and levels of competitiveness. Suggestions included:

- Fun Club Regattas that are multi-age and multi-skilled to encourage fun and friendly competition among members
- Skill development clinics and drills to improve boat handling and safety practices
- Pursue the development of a Dalhousie varsity team
- Adaptive ("para") program should reach an optimum balance between integrated and dedicated programming. Adaptive rowers should not be made to feel isolated from other rowers, and this will require us acknowledge the accessibility constraints of our physical space. At the same time, we should have dedicated volunteers (e.g., "buddy program"), coaches and equipment that does not come at the expense of other programs.
- Dedicated programming for first year (novice) rowers, encouraging all experienced members to play mentorship roles
- Within each rowing timeslot, allow rowers to pick their own practice routine based on their personal goals (e.g., recreation, fitness, competition)
- Provide options for practices that group rowers by skill level and goals, rather than only by age

Facility and Equipment

Strategic Direction #4: Enhance or replace the Halifax Rowing Club's boathouse by exploring key partnerships.

Strategic Direction #5: Develop and implement a sustainable plan for maintenance, repair and replacement of shells, coach boats and safety equipment.

The Halifax Rowing Club has several challenging areas of focus with respect to maintaining and expanding its physical resources:

1) **Facility**

St. Mary's boat club places limitations for us in terms of storage space and accessibility. Some options for exploration include:

- Find a new boathouse, perhaps through partnership with one of the yacht clubs or the Waegwoltic Club
- Propose to the HRM that the Halifax Rowing Club takes over the management of St. Mary's boatclub
- Lobby the HRM to fix the cribbing and modify the entryway to the boathouse so that it is accessible for individuals with mobility impairments
- Invest in improved boat racks that could expand our boat storage without having to change facilities
- Rent/lease a pod or container to provide additional boat and equipment storage

2) **Rowing Equipment**

- Develop a plan and schedule for rowing equipment maintenance and repair
- Develop a plan and schedule for purchase of new rowing shells
- Create a succession plan and training program for the Equipment Manager
- Conduct a needs assessment for size of rowing shells to be replaced (single, double, quad, eights) based on regatta and club needs
- Explore sharing the personnel expenses of an equipment repair/management person with other HRM rowing clubs
- Train a corp of volunteers for equipment repair and maintenance
- Transition away from a volunteer Equipment Manager, to a paid position, or allocate funds to Head Coach to do equipment management as part of his/her duties

3) **Safety Equipment**

- Develop a plan and schedule for coach boat/motor maintenance and repair
- Ensure budget and clear policy re: lights, whistles

Coaching and Training

Strategic Direction #6: Create an effective, standardized method of communication between coaches and the Board of Directors.

Strategic Direction #7: Develop training models that align with the Halifax Rowing Club's programs, and which are designed to meet the needs of both athletes and coaches.

Three key areas were prioritized under Coaching and Training:

1) **Professional Development for Coaches**

It was generally recognized that the Halifax Rowing Club could be doing more to build the skills of its coaches through training camps and workshops. We also recognize that the coaches are at risk of burnout as they do not have the opportunity to take time off during the rowing season. It would be beneficial for the Club to have a training/mentorship program to develop members to become volunteer coaches and who could potentially provide relief for coaches to take vacation/sick days. The coaches should also be given regular performance evaluations and the ability to set personal goals.

2) **Alignment to Rowing Programs**

The coaches' strengths and interests should be more deliberately matched to the Club's programs (e.g., teaching Learn-to-Row, coaching juniors, adult recreational or fitness coaching, competitive or regatta coaching, Club management). In addition, coaches must have significant input into program design. Finally, it was noted that coaching resources must be used to maximum efficiency, such as avoiding having two coaches in a single coach boat.

3) **Coaching Model / Structure**

It was observed that there is a disconnect between the Board of Directors and the coaching staff in terms of developing the Halifax Rowing Club's programming. In many other clubs with a true "head coach", the programs are set and designed by the head coach. The Club would benefit from a long-term training program that develops members as athletes, with measurable benchmarks for athletes to gauge their fitness or competitive development. Another key question is to consider whether the Club would most benefit from a full-time manager position versus a full-time head coach who would have expanded responsibilities.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS for THE HALIFAX ROWING CLUB 2018-2023

Membership

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SD #2: Inspire all members to develop a passion for rowing through club participation, skill development and engagement.

Programming

SD #3: Ensure progressive development of all athletes throughout the seasons, based on predetermined skill benchmarks, regardless of their age or ability.

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