



athletics
ontario

2022 – 2027
STRATEGIC PLAN



Contents

President of the Board and CEO Messages	3
Who We Are	4
Athletics in Ontario	5
AO Vision & Mission	6
AO Values	7
Strategic Plan: The Purpose	8
Strategic Priorities	9
▶ Demonstrate Leadership for Athletics in Ontario	10
▶ Build Engagement with Ontario's Athletics Community	12
▶ Expand Athletics Ontario's Resources	14
Appendix A	16
Role and Obligations of Athletics Ontario and Athletics Canada	16
Appendix B	19
The Planning Process	19
Athletics Ontario Board of Directors	20



Message from the Chief Executive Officer

As proud as we are of what Athletics Ontario accomplished from the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, I am equally excited and proud to present the Athletics Ontario 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, a plan designed to bring out the best in the sport of Athletics and to create a world-class organization.

To say the past couple of years have been challenging would be an understatement. Athletics Ontario is ready to play a role - together with our partners - to ensure that Athletics continues to live up to its commitment of being one of the most inclusive and diverse sports, welcoming participants of all ages, abilities and genders. This diversity and inclusion is the strength of our sport, and are the cornerstone of its future success.

The success of Athletics is built on the community of athletes; the commitment of coaches; the dedication of officials; and the tireless work of volunteers. The sport of Athletics has the potential to build character in our youth, strengthen social connections in our communities, and increase opportunities for personal excellence - and this is the foundation of our new Strategic Plan, a plan that will guide and inform AO as it develops its annual work plans.

In the shadow of a rich history of success, the future of Athletics in the province is bright, and our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan will be the foundation of our achievements in the next five years and beyond, as we work collaboratively with our partners and the community at large.

On behalf of the entire Athletics Ontario team, thank you for your dedication to the sport of Athletics. With this plan and a commitment to work together, there is no limit to what we can achieve!

Paul Osland
Chief Executive Officer



Message from the President and Chair of the Board

It is with great pleasure that I present the Athletics Ontario 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Through the collective contributions of many stakeholders over a year-long process, we have developed a clear, new vision for our organization and sport.

While we are extremely proud of our accomplishments based on our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, our new Plan represents a shift of focus away from simply increasing our membership numbers to delivering enhanced value to the estimated 750,000+ Ontarians, of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, who already participate in this incredible sport. It is a roadmap that will guide our collective efforts, the evolution of our organization, and our successes over the next five years.

This is a fresh restart after a couple of years of a difficult global pandemic. But through perseverance, hard work and collaboration, we are now stronger, more resilient and better positioned than ever to pursue new strategic priorities.

The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document that can be adjusted from time-to-time to meet new challenges and future needs. The Plan identifies initiatives in three key areas of focus:

- Demonstrate leadership for Athletics in Ontario.
- Build engagement with Ontario's Athletics' community.
- Expand Athletics Ontario's resources.

With a Mission to play a leadership role in fostering and growing participation, development, equity, and excellence in Athletics in Ontario, we have a Vision where Athletics strives to be "For you. For all. For LIFE." To support our Mission and Vision, our Values – Inclusivity, Safety, Personal Satisfaction, Excellence, and Integrity – are the threads of the fabric that make up the Athletics community and AO is committed to upholding these values and fostering them on and off the field of play.

I thank our staff, athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, sponsors, family members, committee members, Board of Directors and our provincial and national partners for all that they do, each and every day, for the advancement of our sport. We believe this Strategic Plan provides clear objectives to our organization and the broader Athletics community that will inspire participation and contribution that will lead to tremendous success.

On behalf of Athletics Ontario, thank you for your continued support and we look forward to working collaboratively to implement our Strategic Plan.

Dean Hustwick
President and Chair Of The Board

Who We Are

As an independent not-for-profit corporation, AO is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors. The team also includes a full-time staff (currently seven), and several part-time staff, who conduct the day-to-day operations as well as manage the initiatives during the indoor and outdoor seasons.

AO is recognized as the Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) for Athletics – track and field; cross country, road and other running and walking; para-Athletics; and any other events sanctioned by Athletics Canada – by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As the PSO, AO is the governing body for Athletics in Ontario, and plays an essential role in developing the sport and encouraging participation across all ages and abilities in both the recreational and competitive streams.

- *Appendix A sets out the role and obligations of AO and Athletics Canada.*





Athletics in Ontario

Athletics is one of, if not the, most popular sports in Ontario and is one of the most diverse and inclusive sports. It includes a wide range of events, providing participation possibilities for people with different skills, strengths and interests. AO's activities impact all of the over 750,000 Ontarians who make up the province's Athletics community.

This community includes **athletes, coaches, officials** and **volunteers** from schools, colleges and universities; recreational and competitive clubs; and individuals who engage in Athletics on their own.

Key areas of activity originating from or through AO include advocacy on behalf of participants and the sport; coach and official education and certification; sanctioning of meets and events; developing a pathway for athletes; setting competition rules; connecting organizations involved in Athletics; and **setting leading-edge policies to better the sport**, such as safe sport and diversity and inclusion.

VISION

**Athletics.
For You. For All.
For LIFE.**

MISSION

**Play a leadership role in fostering
and growing participation,
development, equity
and excellence in
Athletics in Ontario.**

Focus on all aspects of recreational and competitive Athletics.

Go beyond the field of play to emphasize the importance of long-term physical and mental well-being and fundamental physical literacy for all participants.

Encourage participation in Athletics to create an extraordinary foundation of life skills including goal setting, a strong work ethic, teamwork, overcoming challenges and having fun.



AO Values

These values are the threads of the fabric that make up the vibrant Athletics community. **AO is committed to upholding these values and fostering them in the sport of Athletics in Ontario and beyond.**

INCLUSIVITY

Leave no one out

AO welcomes people of all different abilities, ages, economic and social situations and of all racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and sexual identities.

SAFETY

All participants must be and feel safe

AO believes that all participants in Athletics have the right to participate in a physically and personally safe environment where support and respect are the governing principles – and that all participants must have an effective way to raise safety concerns.

PERSONAL SATISFACTION

Positive experiences, achievement and health

AO believes that participation in Athletics should be a positive experience involving fun, challenge and achievement – and is an important lifetime pursuit leading to better physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

EXCELLENCE

Always strive for excellence

AO pursues excellence in all it does, from the performance of athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and its member clubs, to care for the environment, to its own governance and stewardship of its resources and people.

INTEGRITY

We do as we say

AO believes that honesty and ethical behaviour are the cornerstones of proper and successful participation in Athletics.





Strategic Plan: The Purpose

AO follows many strategies and engages in many varied activities designed to support Ontario's Athletics community, to meet its responsibilities as the PSO for Athletics in Ontario and to successfully achieve its Mission. In recent years, AO has achieved considerable success in this regard.

Many of these strategies and activities involve significant use of AO's resources and staff, and are core to AO supporting the Ontario Athletics community and achieving its Mission. It is imperative these activities be continued. Examples

include encouragement of increased participation in Athletics; management of coach and official training and certification systems; organizing provincial championships; selecting provincial teams; and sanctioning meets.

The identification of strategic priorities in this strategic plan is not intended to imply that AO stop or de-emphasize other current effective strategies and activities. Rather, the purpose of this strategic plan is to **identify key strategic priorities to guide AO's thinking**

over the next period of time as it develops its annual work plans.

In the implementation of these strategic priorities, it must be recognized that AO currently has limited resources and staffing. It is not possible for AO to undertake all the activities that would add to the pursuit of its Mission. Allocating limited resources too thinly may result in ineffectiveness. The goal is to continue to meet all its PSO responsibilities while prioritizing certain key areas that are the most likely to have the greatest impact on achieving its Mission.

Strategic Priorities

- Demonstrate Leadership for Athletics in Ontario
- Build Engagement with Ontario's Athletics Community
- Expand Athletics Ontario's Resources





Demonstrate Leadership for Athletics in Ontario

There are many different organizations involved in Athletics in Ontario. Many are small and many are dependent on significant volunteer support. Organizational and management matters and priorities are a constant challenge. **AO has an important role to play in assisting and supporting these organizations, and showing leadership in developing and adopting best practices.**

Be A Strong Advocate and Expert Voice

Leverage the solid experience and capabilities of its staff and volunteers to become the leading advocate and expert voice of and for Athletics in Ontario – and a leader in policy development and execution. Explore and advocate for ways to reduce the environmental impacts of Athletics activities.

Promote New and Enhanced Athletics Facilities

With its position of influence and expertise, encourage and support community groups to advocate for new and enhanced Athletics facilities and encourage municipalities, schools, colleges and universities to provide more access to their sports facilities when not in use internally.

Online Hub

Develop online resources to become “the” online hub of information for and about Athletics, including policies; best practices; governance; coach and official educational materials and certification requirements; participation information; event descriptions and rules; and performance statistics.

Discipline and Dispute Resolution

Refine the discipline and dispute resolution policies and procedures, taking on a leadership role for best practices – and advocate for the adoption of similar procedures by other Athletics and sports organizations.

Upgrade Coach and Official Certification

With a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, increase efforts in recruiting new coaches and officials – and encourage existing coaches and officials to upgrade their qualifications and levels of certification.



Build Engagement with Ontario's Athletics Community

Athletics includes a large number of activities organized by many different groups, some of which are connected to AO and many of which are not, creating a challenging maze to navigate. **It is critical that AO build solid working relationships with these various groups to support and help coordinate efforts for the benefit of Athletics and its participants.**



Build Positive Relationships

AO will continue to build positive relationships and identify partnership and collaboration opportunities with NGOs (Non-Government Organizations), sport funding partners and organizations involved in Athletics in Ontario, including Athletics Canada, municipalities, educational institutions, clubs, race organizations and other groups. As a voting member of Athletics Canada, AO will assist Athletics Canada and the other Athletics PSOs to play a leadership role in developing Athletics across Canada.

Promote Inclusion and Safe Sport

Continue to create and maintain a diverse and safe sport environment, where support and respect are the governing principles, and where there is an emphasis on the importance of long-term physical and mental well-being of all participants. Safety in this context means physical and personal safety including protection from bullying, harassment, discrimination and other inappropriate behaviour, including inappropriate sexual conduct.

Promote a Positive Environment

Focus equally on recreational and competitive Athletics, continually seeking ways to ensure participation in Athletics is a positive, fun experience; and emphasize participation over results, with the goal to encourage coaches and officials to share this strategy which underpins AO's Vision of Athletics being **"For You. For All. For LIFE."**

Enhance the Spectator and Volunteer Experience

Work with meet and race directors to encourage them to be aware of the need to enhance the experience for spectators and volunteers - and provide suggestions to achieve it.

Enhance Opportunities for Underserved and Remote Communities

Explore and build opportunities for increased engagement in Athletics in underserved and remote communities, including encouraging participation and promoting regional competition.



Expand Athletics Ontario's Resources

The AO mandate is very broad. More resources would allow AO to focus – or focus more deeply – on additional strategic activities. **AO also requires additional resources to develop and maintain a competitive compensation program to be able to successfully recruit and retain highly-qualified, committed and skilled staff.**



Develop a New Alum Program

Develop a new Alum Program to reconnect with former Athletics participants to build enthusiasm, develop new partnership opportunities and support and expand AO's development and advocacy efforts.

Seek Sponsorships and Partnerships

Leverage the experience and expertise of volunteers and the AO Alum to create innovative events and programs to establish strong long-term sponsorships and funding partnerships, e.g., encouraging funding participation in providing Athletics opportunities for schools in remote and underserved (including Indigenous) communities.

Public Relations and Fundraising Events

In collaboration with volunteers and Alum, organize public relations and fundraising campaigns (in-person and virtual) such as an enhanced annual fundraising and Awards Gala and Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

Increase AO Membership

Review/revise the AO membership structure to continue to enhance the value proposition, particularly in road, trail and mountain running – and in schools, colleges and universities – and leverage the opportunity to develop and refine insurance coverage possibilities for Athletics activities.





Appendix A

Role and Obligations of Athletics Ontario and Athletics Canada

The Ontario government has adopted a “sport plan” designed to be athlete-centered and results-oriented. The plan focuses on three priorities for amateur sport: **participation, development and excellence.** The sport plan was adopted in an effort to ensure that sport activities in Ontario are offered by organizations that:

1. **Operate in a safe and effective manner.**
2. **Follow national standards.**
3. **Provide high-quality programming.**

Appointing Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) for various sports is a key element of the sport plan to achieve the foregoing goals and to assure the public that the PSOs:

1. **Have certified coaches and officials.**
2. **Have risk management policies including discipline, harassment, anti-doping and screening for volunteers.**
3. **Work to promote participation from under-represented populations in Ontario.**



As a PSO, AO's primary function is the development of athletes, coaches and officials. AO must follow the requirements of Ontario's Sport Recognition Policy for Provincial and Multi-Sport Organizations. This Policy requires AO to:

- **Encourage participation in recreational and competitive Athletics.**
- **Develop Athletics in Ontario.**
- **Provide a competitive pathway for athlete development.**
- **Select provincial Athletics teams.**
- **Recruit and train coaches, officials and volunteers.**
- **Conduct provincial championships.**
- **Operate within Athletics Canada rules.**

In order for an athlete or coach to compete or participate on the field of play in an AO-sanctioned meet, compete or participate on an Ontario team, or represent Ontario at national or international competitions in Athletics, the athlete or coach must be a member of AO.

As a recognized PSO, AO is eligible to apply for government funding programs.



AO is a voting member of Athletics Canada, the National Sport Organization for Athletics, along with the other provincial and territorial Athletics governing bodies. AO and the other voting members elect the Board of Directors of Athletics Canada and approve Athletics Canada policies.

As the National Sport Organization for Athletics, Athletics Canada is the governing body for Athletics in Canada. As such, AC serves many important functions, including:

- **Governing all aspects of Athletics in Canada.**
- **Managing the AC high performance programs.**
- **Selecting and managing national Athletics teams.**
- **Implementing national initiatives to develop and promote Athletics.**
- **Sanctioning national level meets and competitions.**
- **Providing professional development opportunities for coaches and officials in Athletics.**
- **Proposing and supporting bids for international competitions in Canada.**



Appendix B

The Planning Process

This Strategic Plan is the product of a lengthy, detailed strategic planning process involving many stakeholders. The process began early 2021, with a view to finalizing the plan by the AO Annual General Meeting in Fall 2022.

At the beginning of the process, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee was assembled to work with AO staff and an experienced outside strategic planning facilitator. The Steering Committee established the planning process and played a central role in the implementation of the process and the creation of the draft plan for consideration by the AO Board of Directors.

The Steering Committee invited a large group of individuals, with varying backgrounds in Athletics, to participate in the Strategic

Planning Working Group. The Working Group met nine times between April 2021 and May 2022 to reflect on AO's Vision, Mission and Values; to discuss various aspects of AO's activities; to consider possible additional activities; and to prioritize activities over the next five years.

On July 27, 2022 a draft Strategic Plan was presented to the AO Board of Directors, and the final Plan was approved by the Board on October 22, 2022.

Each individual (listed on the next page) made valuable contributions to the creation of this Strategic Plan. All were volunteers, other than the AO staff. AO is grateful to all participants for their thoughtful input in the creation of this plan.

Athletics Ontario Board of Directors

Dean Hustwick
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Robin Campbell
Vice Chair

Scott Currier
Treasurer

Brian McClelland
Secretary

Dayna Ward
Director

Meshell Lynch-James
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