



Fiscal 2023 Standardbred Canada Strategic Plan

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“The idea is there, locked inside. All you have to do is remove the excess stone”
- Michelangelo, sculpture

1.0 Executive Summary

The Fiscal 2023 Strategic Plan has been developed by the Standardbred Canada (SC) management team in association with the Strategic Planning and Process (STPP) committee utilizing and referencing the current Five-Year Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan supports the roadmap with a sharp focus to staying on point to the overall direction that the Board of Directors has provided SC management.

The 2023 Strategic Plan includes some carry over projects (e.g., Direct Deposit, Membership Recruitment, etc.) and includes new exciting and progressive services and initiatives for the Association.

A “red flag” that the SC management team and STPP committee identified this year was the highly volatile economy. Negative news and downbeat sentiment are problematic for the Association and overall health of the industry. Financial Experts have stated that Canada has a recession in the making with; sharply rising interest rates, a decelerating economy, rising inflation, geopolitical turmoil, disappointing corporate profits, and trouble in China's real estate market. All key components of a truly challenging environment that is “likely to get worse”. This has been factored and considered in the development of the F23 Strategic Plan.

While SC believes it was a productive and positive year in 2022, the Association needs to remain flexible and willing to meet the ongoing challenges and changes that the industry may see because of the economy and come to the service of the industry wherever and whenever it can. The following details the process and development of the 2023 strategic plan along with underscoring the key tactics that have been identified and committed to delivering for the Board, the Association, and the membership.

“The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne” - Chaucer

2.0 Mandate, Mission, Vision and Value Statements

Mandate

Standardbred Canada supports the standardbred breed and the persons who breed, own and race standardbred horses through;

- a) The registration and identification of standardbred horses and keeping of pedigrees;

- b) The maintenance, preservation, and dissemination of records regarding the breeding and racing of standardbred horses; and
- c) Providing a platform for communication that creates interest, awareness and support for the standardbred industry.

Mission Statement

Standardbred Canada is the national leader that records and communicates information about standardbred breeding and racing.

Vision Statement

Standardbred Canada is an essential support for the standardbred horse industry in Canada.

Core Values

“...it’s about the HORSE of course...”

Honesty & Integrity –

Two simple words that make the world of difference in a person, team, or an association’s character. Standing behind the words we say, the work we do and being known for doing the right thing, will always create a bond between our members, partners, and ourselves.

Own It –

Whether it's the job you do, decisions that you make, or actions that you take. At the end of the day, you own it. Be accountable. Be responsible. Lead the way.

Respect –

Respect comes from within. Give respect, get respect. It's that simple.

Service to Others –

We serve our members, horses and industry to the highest standards. We don't build services to make money, we make money to build services for our members.

Excellence –

Excellence is about striving to be the best that we can be, in the work that we do, and the services that we offer. Never settle for anything less.

"If you don't know what you stand for, the marketplace is an expensive place to find out"
- Adam Smith, Economist

3.0 External Assessment

Standardbred Canada began the process of the F23 Strategic Plan by conducting an external assessment of the market, the regulatory environment, membership, competition, and technological changes. A breakdown of this analysis is provided below and are considered high priorities for the 2023 plan.

Market

In the "market assessment" it was noted that horse population and field size remain ongoing concerns across the country which is deemed negative for the industry and should be addressed in the new Strategic Plan in some way, shape, or form. This coupled with the fact that an increasing number of Canadian horses are being sold in the United States may compromise the growth of the Canadian horse racing sector overall. It was also discussed that there doesn't appear to be enough incentives for Breeders to breed and there is ongoing difficulty in getting horses into a race card.

The marked increase in horse sales this past year may suggest an increase demand for horses and horse owners which bodes well for the industry going into F23 and it appears that shared ownership (fractional ownership) of horses is more appealing than ever. The standardbred's

popularity continues to grow with standardbreds participating not just in racing events but in other breed shows.

Another market trend noted was the lack of human resources in our industry as associations, racetracks, stables, and farms are having trouble attracting new and young talent to the industry. This is also fueled by the “great pre-tirement” and remote working conditions being offered in the post pandemic era.

It was also noted that SC membership has increased marginally year over year and ongoing discussion and awareness regarding animal welfare continues to be an area of focus and priority.

Regulatory

Standardbred Canada continues to have a positive working relationship with the regulating bodies across all jurisdictions allowing for more opportunities to assist in moving the industry proactively and positively forward.

There is an understanding that there is a high probability that the federal government will roll out a national traceability and identification equine program. The Association continues to prepare for this and continues and work with the Canadian equine industry in other initiatives including the National Economic Horse Racing study that SC and CTHS are conducting to promote a united front to government to demonstrate the important value that the horse racing sector contributes to the national economy.

Competition

Some may think that SC is a monopolistic Association with no direct or indirect competition. At SC, we believe otherwise. We believe that organizations such as ours play heavily in our future planning. Whether it be Harness Racing Australia or USTA – SC needs to know and be aware of the value, services, and opportunities available to remain competitive, progressive, and collaborative.

The Association needs to be acutely aware of the opportunities that other horse racing services offer our members. From online auctions to staking to horse rating programs, there is no limit to ideas and opportunities; however, the Association is always limited by time and necessary resources.

Membership

The membership trends identified for the F23 plan include a marginal increase in membership year over year, continued positive increase in Fractional Ownership licenses, and an overall increase of members conducting their business transactions on e-Shop. The above instances were all areas that the Association focused on in the F22 Strategic Plan and the Association remains hopeful that these positive trends with further promotion and focus will continue.

Other trends noted that are not as positive include the continued aging demographic of SC members, a large percentage of members that are not moving towards online transactions, and slow to low growth of young drivers in the industry.

Technology

Data analytics will continue to play a big role for the decision makers of the industry. The uptake and positive response that the National Quarterly Horse Racing Statistics report that SC released this year is an indication that the industry needs and wants valid and credible information.

In addition, the familiarity and general acceptance of video conferencing has allowed the Association to network and partner with members and stakeholders across the country and around the globe and further opportunities to connect, and network will continue to evolve.

The industry is slowly moving and adopting new software programs to promote the sport like Catch Driver Two, Off and Pacing, Dark Horse, Horse Ratings program, etc. The gradual movement and acceptance of these initiatives is an encouraging trend that SC can further support and endorse moving into the future.

Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there"

- Mark Twain, author

4.0 Internal Assessment

SC Internal Assessment

An internal review of the Association's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats provided the following:

Strengths

- People
- Knowledge
- Data
- Financially sound
- Commitment and dedication
- Customer Service
- Expanding Services
- Communication Platforms (Website/TROT)
- Positive Stakeholder Relations

Weaknesses

Areas of perceived weakness includes:

- Aging Demographic
- Too many projects, not enough time
- Limited staffing resources
- Having a difficult time recruiting
- Keeping up with IT and Technology
- Lack of electronic integration (still reliant on paper)

Opportunities

- Increase in online services (Direct Deposit, eShop)
- Data Analysis
- Succession Planning/Future State
- Attracting younger demographic/new talent

Increasing membership

- Increase awareness of Animal Welfare
- Self-Promotion
- Promoting SC TrackIT
- TrackIT enhancements

Threats

- Technology is moving faster than what the Association/membership needs are
- Decline in revenue due to loss of membership
- Other industry organizations are better poised to invest in technology and deliver more quickly to market
- Stagnant growth within the younger demographic
- Ongoing horse and welfare issues surfacing in the horse racing community garnering negative attention of the public and government
- SC reliant on number of members/horses
- Economic instability, decreasing revenues and increasing costs
- Trending of early retirement/leaving for work/life balance

“If you fail to plan, you plan to fail”
- Anonymous

5.0 Opportunities Shortlist

Upon conducting an external and internal assessment, management identified opportunities that the Association should consider for fiscal 2023. The management team then filtered the opportunities to ten tactics that are in alignment of the long-term objectives in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

The Long-Term Objectives of the Five-Year Strategic Plan are:

1. Communications

Objective:

- Design and provide effective communication platforms focused on creating interest, awareness, and support for the standardbred industry.

2. Data Management

Objective:

- Through the development and implementation of a data management strategy that will focus on capitalizing on existing and new technologies to better serve the needs of our members, industry & Association.

3. Financial Sustainability

Objective:

- Focus on maximizing the potential of existing and new income revenue streams and identify and execute on ongoing operational efficiencies.

4. Membership/Customer Service Value

Objective:

- Continued innovation and implementation of enhanced and new member focused initiatives.

5. Stakeholder Relations

Objective:

- SC will represent membership at industry meetings and events and champion improvements for our members by facilitating and articulating their concerns, issues, goals and needs to industry and stakeholders.

The Short-Term Tactics identified for F23 to support the Long-Term Objectives are as follows:

2023 Strategic Short-Term Tactic	Long-Term Objective
Purse Earning Conversion	Communications
Partnership Opportunities for Industry Growth	Communications
Development of Job Bank/Career Opportunities	Communications
Traceability/ID Project	Data Management
Release Ratings Program	Data Management
Direct Deposit Roll Out	Financial Sustainability
Employee Retention/Engagement	Financial Sustainability
Standardbred Incentive Program	Membership/Customer Service Value
Grooms Recruitment	Membership/Customer Service Value
Process Improvements	Membership/Customer Service Value
Release and Develop Government Economic Strategy	Stakeholder Relations
Development of After Life Program	Stakeholder Relations

“Organizations will have to be flexible, fast, focussed and friendly to succeed in the future”

- Rosabeth Moss Kanter, former editor, Harvard Business Review

6.0 Tactics: Overview and Milestones

Purse Earning Conversion

Overview:

Approved by the Board at the July 2022 Board meeting, the initiative requires IT programming and a detailed communication strategy. This tactic will be completed with a national launch in January 2024.

1. Partnership Opportunities for Industry Growth

- a) **Partnership Development** - Capitalize on opportunities and work with identified partners to further promote the sport (e.g., Fractional Ownership and emerging business ventures)
- b) **Breeders Incentive Program** - Work with Industry to provide leadership and recommendations for an effective Breeding Incentive program based on key findings and recommendations of the industry
- c) **Driver's License Review** - Work with commissions and associated stakeholders to discuss the opportunity to lower the age and time it takes to obtain a Driver's License in the standardbred horse racing sector

2. Development of Job Bank/Career Opportunities

Overview:

The STPP committee identified that SC could assist the industry in better promoting job opportunities within the industry. This will involve developing a "Classified Job Posting" service focused on the professional needs of the industry by utilizing the highly viewed website and monthly magazine.

3. Traceability/ID Project

Overview:

The Traceability Project is entering its second year of a multiyear project to assist members with conducting business transactions online and be in a state of readiness for the possibility of a Traceability/ID program rolled out by the federal government.

4. Release Ratings Program

Overview:

Release a Ratings program to racetracks to assist in creating competitive race fields and assist with horse supply, resulting in stronger wagering.

5. Direct Deposit Roll Out

Overview:

SC will begin to roll out the Direct Deposit service to racetracks that have expressed interest.

6. Employee Retention/Engagement

Overview:

Launch the established Rewards & Recognition program to management and employees in 2023. Schedule employees for skills-based and leadership training and Work with management to further High Potentials for Succession Planning

7. Standardbred New Member Program

Overview:

Board approved SC to launch a new member category for standardbred owners who are not racing their horses but are participating in other event competitions. The new category will recruit standardbred owners and provide a points-based platform to acknowledge the standardbreds participating in disciplines other than racing. The overall objective of this tactic is to encourage and promote Life After Racing, increase membership, and create further awareness of the breed and of Standardbred Canada.

8. Grooms Recruitment

Overview:

SC will work to promote that Grooms in the industry have insurance coverage while working at racetracks

9. Process Improvements

Overview:

a) *ACCPAC Upgrade (November 2022 – February 2023)*

-Completion of the ACCPAC upgrade for Finance and Accounting

b) *Charter Training Program: (January 2023 – October 2023)*

Review and redesign a training program for racetrack charters and provide the training to new Charters designated by the racetrack and provide a refresher course for current Charters at racetracks.

c) *Listing of Completed Draws (September 2023)*

Working with racetracks, racing commission and the SC communications department, begin to post Draw results and note any changes to the Draws with a rationale and explanation of the change as approved by the commission and race secretary.

d) ID Tech Job Review (November 2022 – January 2023)

Review the ID Tech position and work schedule to determine efficiencies for the department and membership.

10. Release and Develop Government Economic Strategy

Overview:

To coincide with the release of the Economic Survey to industry. This will involve working the Government Relations Committee and CTHS in developing a Government Relations strategy to allow both organizations to work jointly with government on creating awareness and improvement for the horse racing industry.

11. Development of Standardbred After Life Program

Overview:

The Breeders Committee and Board have asked SC management to develop a program that will focus on creating a fund to promote and assist equine welfare after racing. This is a long-term project that requires stakeholder engagement and contribution.

*“The journey of life is a very happy one, as long as I am willing
to accept change and responsibility”*

- Anonymous

7.0 Summary

The fiscal 2023 Strategic Plan is a great example of how much work the Association is expected to do by not only the senior management team, the Board of Directors, but also by our membership and stakeholders.

We have formulated this plan by underscoring our vision of ensuring SC is an essential support to the horse racing industry.

Management is accountable and responsible for the execution of the plan with a defined execution strategy to specify accountabilities and responsibilities and provide greater context internally of each tactic.

As stated in the Executive Summary, 2023 will be a year of concern from an economic standpoint and the Association is prepared to change as the industry and economy dictates by remaining flexible and adaptable to new challenges as they arise.