

BC Seniors Games Society Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020

1. Introduction

This strategic plan covers a five year period beginning in 2015, the same year in which British Columbia's senior population is projected to outnumber children for the first time in history¹. Going forward, this segment of society will drive many aspects of British Columbia's collective lifestyle and will continue to shatter old notions of what it means to age in a province that offers boundless opportunities to remain physically and socially active in one's community. There are growing expectations among all British Columbians that they will continue to live active, healthy lifestyles during their senior years. The BC Seniors Games Society is uniquely positioned to serve this population as an organization created to promote physical, social and creative achievement through participation in friendly competition.

2. Background

The BC Seniors Games Society (BCSGS) was founded in 1987 as a registered charitable organization serving all British Columbians aged 55 and over. The primary focus of the Society is the staging of the annual 55+ BC Games, a five day, province-wide multi-sport event hosted by a different community each year. The 55+ BC Games feature a mix of over 25 competitive sport events and activities. Membership in the BCSGS Society is mandatory for anyone wishing to participate in the Games.

The Society is comprised of 12 Zones which host local competitions to determine the eligibility of participants for the annual provincial games. The Society is headed by a seven member Executive Committee. The Society's Board of Directors is comprised of the Executive Committee plus one representative from each of the 12 Zones.

The BCSGS is an important member of the provincial sport sector, supporting the *Active for Life* stage of the *Canadian Sport for Life* model in British Columbia by championing life-long participation and by providing zone and provincial level competitive opportunities that are distinct from the Masters' level sport competitions offered by Provincial Sport Organizations.

¹ www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Demography/PopulationProjections.aspx

The BCSGS has carved out a unique niche within the sector by offering a multi-sport event “designed for seniors by seniors”. The annual Games are widely recognized for being:

Friendly – offering lively competition in the spirit of fun and camaraderie.

Welcoming – presenting competitive opportunities that are inclusive of all levels and abilities.

Supportive - featuring modified competition rules, where appropriate, to accommodate 55+ participants.

Transformative - participants, volunteers and host communities come away from the Games experience with an inspiring image of what a healthy, active 55+ lifestyle can be in British Columbia.

Each year the 55+ BC Games attract over 3,500 participants and 1,500 volunteers and leave behind well over \$2 million in economic benefits for the host community.

3. Our Strategic Foundation

The development of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan has been guided by the overarching direction for the Society as set out in our vision, mission and values.

Our Vision:

Communities across BC are transformed by the inspirational lifestyles of 55+ BC Games participants.

Our Mission:

The mission of the BC Seniors Games Society is to improve the health, lifestyle and image of British Columbia’s 55+ population.

We do this by:

1. Organizing the annual 55+ BC Games as an opportunity for the 55+ population of BC to participate in physical and social activities.
2. Promoting community awareness of the contemporary image of the 55+ population as physically active and socially engaged.
3. Encouraging year round participation at the zone level.

By defining the unique needs of this participant group, our organization serves as a bridge between the 55+ population and provincial and local organizations and recreation departments.

Our Values:

The BC Seniors Games Society is committed to and will actively promote the following fundamental values.

The Values that Drive What We Do:

- We champion the idea of life-long activity and friendly competition
- We celebrate British Columbians who are 55+ as valuable role models
- We believe in the health and social benefits of participation.

The Values That Guide How We Operate:

- We model the principles of openness, honesty and democracy in the governance of our Society
- We work on the basis of trust and mutual support
- We act ethically in everything we do
- We value volunteers highly and honor all contributions
- We believe in the team effort.

4. Core Business Components

The BC Seniors Games Society fulfills its mission through activities in five core areas of work:

Member Benefits: Members are supported with regular web-based and newsletter communications as well as negotiated group discounts from retailers throughout BC.

Fundraising: Financial support for the 55+ BC Games is generated through membership fees, government grants, corporate sponsorships, and charitable donations.

Event Support: The BC Seniors Games Society provides Host Societies with financial support, insurance coverage and standardized policies and procedures. Support for event management and online registration is also provided through a partnership with the BC Games Society.

Society Operations: Long term direction for the Society is set through strategic planning, policy and procedure development; Games bid package preparations; provincial branding of BCSGS and 55+ BC Games, and volunteer management strategies.

5. Building On Success

The BC Seniors Games Society has much to be proud of. In addition to staging consistently successful Games year after year, the organization continually strives to enhance its operations and the services it provides to its members. Recent achievements include:

- Development of an updated volunteer orientation program
- Introduction of a membership benefits program
- Updated registration program and guidelines
- Improved bid document and community selection criteria
- Updated sponsorship program
- Production of pamphlets, posters and other materials for use by Zones to promote local Games
- Enhanced partnerships with host communities, funding partners and stakeholders
- Updated website
- Production of an email newsletter, distributed to members three times per year.

6. The 55+ BC Games Experience

Participants travel from across BC to compete in the 55+ BC Games and many return year after year, building strong bonds of friendship with the people they meet. Volunteers for the Games come from all walks of life, many are family members of the competitors; others are students or local residents looking to give back to their community. Those who get involved often express great pleasure in the entire experience of the Games which goes well beyond the competitive playing field. In particular, participants appreciate:

The **travel**; many participants view the 55+ BC Games as an opportunity to explore new parts of the province and to experience local attractions before and after the Games.

The friendly **small town feel** of the Games, regardless of the size of the host community.

The **inter-generational connections** between participants and volunteers.

The **social interactions** and sense of camaraderie among participants.

The **motivation to stay active** year round in anticipation of next year's Games.

The **inspiration to try new activities** (or return to 'old' ones) in a supportive, inclusive environment.

In addition to the personal experiences of participants and volunteers, Host Societies also report on the immensely positive impact the Games have on their entire community, often transforming the image of, and attitudes towards, the 55+ population among residents of all ages.

7. Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

In reviewing the social, demographic and economic factors impacting British Columbia, as well as operational challenges for the organization, several key themes emerge as areas of focus for the BC Seniors Games Society in the years ahead.

Volunteer Recruitment

As the population of 55+ citizens in British Columbia continues to grow, the pool of potential new members for the BC Seniors Games Society will expand, broadening the base of Games participants and volunteers. At the same time, the busy, active lifestyles of this generation are resulting in changing attitudes towards long term volunteer commitments. Many people in the “Boomer” age group choose to continue working past the age of 55. Others find themselves in the “sandwich generation”, caring for their aging parents as well as their own children, and have limited free time to volunteer in their communities. Others simply wish to “keep options open” and desire shorter term, flexible volunteer opportunities. Under closer examination, the current volunteer structure within the Society may reveal innovative opportunities to restructure some volunteer roles to make it easier for Games participants to “give back” to the Society in ways that are appealing and fit within their busy lifestyles.

Succession planning for volunteers at the Executive and Zone levels is of particular concern for the Society as these positions currently involve significant time commitments and the transfer of knowledge between outgoing and incoming incumbents is not managed in a consistent way, often resulting in a loss of valuable knowledge and expertise about the Society and its operations when long time volunteers step down from their positions. Redistributing the duties of key positions may help alleviate the time burden of these roles and a standardized approach to knowledge transfer could ease the transition for incoming volunteers. Further clarification of the role of volunteers versus the responsibilities of partner agencies and contracted service providers may also help address Board members’ workloads and provide better value for services contracted by the Society.

Optimizing the Size and Location of the Games

One of the biggest challenges for the Society going forward will be achieving the right balance for the Games in terms of size and location. The 55+ BC Games will need to be big enough to

offer a sufficient array of events to attract 55+ participants while still small enough to allow rural communities to be successful hosts. The Games will also need to balance the goal of serving all areas of the province while still making it easy and affordable for participants, volunteers and officials to travel to host communities from year to year.

The 55+ population is showing interest in new sports that have not previously been included in the 55+ BC Games, such as pickleball and triathlon. These growth sports present an opportunity for the Society to attract new participants, however rural communities often have limited sports facilities and smaller populations from which to draw volunteers. This means that with every new sport that is added to the Games roster, others may need to be dropped. Developing a clear selection process for sport inclusion would assist the Society in managing this challenge.

Host Societies are also challenged by increasing costs related to accommodations, transportation and event officials. At the same time, it should be noted that no Host Society has posted a deficit in the 27 year history of the Games. On occasions where cost overruns have been encountered, local governments have stepped up with financial support for sport and recreation infrastructure resulting in tangible Games legacies which go on to support active living for all age groups within host communities for years to come. Increasingly, however, access to, and competition for, local resources (funding, volunteers, facilities, etc.) makes it even more challenging to meet budget and operational obligations, particularly in smaller communities or those that host many events in a year.

Rebranding and Marketing the 55+ Image

Members of the 55+ generation of today do not describe themselves as seniors. As one 72 year old Games participant put it “When you talk about seniors, I think of my Dad”. This supports the Society’s recent decision to rebrand the BC Seniors Games as the 55+ BC Games beginning with the North Vancouver Games in 2015.

By exploring options for rebranding other aspects of its operations, the BC Seniors Games Society could align itself more closely with the new, more contemporary image of the 55+ population. Rebranding the Games also opens up new avenues to work with corporate sponsors who are looking to affiliate their products and services with active, healthy citizens.

Other opportunities exist to raise the profile of the contemporary image of British Columbia’s 55+ population through increased coverage of the 55+ BC Games via radio, TV, newspaper and web broadcasting sponsorships. Endorsements of the Games by some of British Columbia’s prominent high performance athletes could also help promote the Games to new audiences,

young and old. Aligning the 55+ BC Games with the Canada 55+ Games may also present an opportunity to enhance the scope and involvement of BC 55+ population.

Partnerships

One of the key partner groups in the successful delivery of 55+ BC Games are Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs). These organizations provide valuable expertise and resources to Host Societies in terms of technical requirements, event scheduling and officials. For many PSOs, their primary “clientele” has been children and youth, and those heading along the pathway to higher level competitions. While they often serve their 55+ members by supporting Masters level competitions, PSO interests tend to be in “high performance” sport. This is not always consistent with the 55+ BC Games goals of supporting friendly competition in the spirit of fun and camaraderie.

BC Activity Reporter data indicates that membership levels for the 55+ demographic in Provincial Sport Organizations are proportionately smaller than other population cohorts. For PSOs, British Columbians in the 55+ age range represent an “untapped” source of participants, coaches and volunteers. At the same time, the BC Seniors Games Society is one of the leaders in the provincial sport sector at finding innovative ways to accommodate mobility restrictions and other constraints faced by aging athletes, an area of expertise that will have growing importance in BC in the years to come. There may be opportunities for the BCSGS to work closely with PSOs and other members of the sport and recreation sector to find opportunities to mutually support each other’s objectives. This might be addressed through a more formalized partnership with ViaSport, the agency which provides strategic oversight to the sector.

Operational Efficiency

When a community successfully wins the bid to host the 55+ BC Games, a local Host Society is formed to manage the delivery of the event. Currently each Host Society creates its own web site, negotiates contracts directly with suppliers of everything from equipment to Games souvenirs and establishes partnerships with Provincial Sport Organizations for the provision of technical support, scheduling and officials. There is great potential for the Society to enhance operational efficiency by centralizing these functions at the provincial level, making it easier for Host Societies to administer the event while at the same time maintaining a standard “look and feel” of Games from year to year. Exploring the feasibility of offering an on-line registration and payment infrastructure at the Zone level is another area of potential efficiency gains.

Event management support is currently provided to Host Societies through a combination of contractual and service level agreements between the Province, the BC Seniors Games Society and the BC Games Society (BCGS). At times this structure leads to overlaps in accountability

between the BCSGS and BCGS which can be confusing for Host Societies, leading to inefficient planning and operational processes for the Games. Streamlining these partnership agreements would provide clarity for all partners and enhance efficiency in the delivery of the 55+ BC Games.

As a volunteer based organization, the BC Seniors Games Society has limited capacity for strategic planning, operations management and partnership development. With the 55+ Games delivered on an annual basis, at any given time in the calendar year the Society is fully engaged in event planning, either in preparation for an upcoming set of Games or in the preparation of bid packages for subsequent Games. This leaves little time for volunteers to engage in long term planning and strategic relationship building. Several seniors games societies in other jurisdictions across the country have adopted business models which include paid staff to support these strategic aspects of their operations. This may be an option for the Society to explore as it positions itself for the future.

Enhancing the Economic Impact of the Games

The annual 55+ BC Games generate over \$2 million in economic benefits for each host community. This is considered a conservative estimate as annual economic impact assessments are conducted by volunteers under the direction of each Host Society and the scope of each assessment varies from year to year. Potential exists to manage the economic impact assessment process centrally to establish a consistent and reliable data set from which to tell the story of the Society's impact on the British Columbia economy. From there, the Society would be well positioned to explore opportunities to partner with tourism based organizations such as Destination BC to promote and enhance the tourism potential of the Games.

8. Strategic Goals and Objectives

The following goals, developed in response to emerging opportunities and challenges, will guide the efforts of the BC Seniors Games Society over the next five years as it continues towards the fulfillment of its long term vision.

Goal 1: Refresh the image of the Society, the Games, Host Societies and participants.

Objectives:

- a) Complete the transition to the 55+ BC Games provincial brand
- b) Refresh the image of British Columbia's 55+ citizens
- c) Define the unique 'Games Experience'
- d) Reflect the 'Games Experience' standards in bid documents
- e) Develop a marketing strategy aimed at attracting new participants and volunteers
- f) Partner with ViaSport for the production of marketing materials and resources for use by Zone Directors, Host Societies and others.

Goal 2: Realign the operating structure of the Society.

Objectives:

- a) Establish a 55+ BC Games Advisory Committee to:
 - i) Renew partnership agreements in alignment with the BCGS vision and mission
 - ii) Develop new partnerships to address operational gaps
 - iii) Partner with ViaSport and Provincial Sport Organizations to explore innovative ways to accommodate the unique needs of 55+ BC Games competitors
 - iv) Explore strategies to increase the efficient organization of the Games
- b) Develop a provincial fundraising strategy to pursue new funding sources and maintain existing ones
- c) Explore the potential for a paid staff position to direct provincial operations.

Goal 3: Implement succession planning for volunteer resources.

Objectives:

- a) Develop a volunteer recruitment strategy for BCSGS (at the provincial and Zone levels) to address changing attitudes towards long term and short term volunteer commitments:

- Consider establishing minimum volunteer expectations for all 55+ BC Games participants to “give back” to the Society
 - Standardize volunteer expectations across Zones
 - Redistribute workloads for BCSGS Board and Executive members through revised and updated job descriptions
- b) Partner with ViaSport to develop volunteer recruitment materials and resources for Zone Directors
- c) Develop a knowledge transfer plan and resources to share information:
- between Host Societies, and
 - between incoming and outgoing Executive Committee and Board members

Goal 4: Ensure the long term sustainability of the Games.

Objectives:

- a) Review the Games model to determine optimal mix of event size and regional locations
- b) Revisit sport selection processes and criteria (including new/demonstration sports)
- c) Revise advisory processes and protocols to support incoming Host Societies with effective knowledge transfer from previous Games
- d) Explore options to enhance processes to track the economic impact of Games to ensure comprehensive, accurate and consistent reporting from year to year
- e) Develop a proactive strategy to encourage communities from all regions of the province to submit bids to host the Games.

Goal 5: Support expansion of friendly “gateway” events at the regional level.

Objectives:

- a) Establish a 55+ Advisory Committee to lead the coordination of Zones and Provincial Sport Organizations in connecting with the 55+ population across BC
- b) Facilitate increased participation at the community level based on:
 - Zone needs/interests
 - Expertise available in each Zone
- c) Develop guidelines for Zones to provide financial support to local events/organizations
- d) Address inconsistencies across Zones in the level of competition and numbers of participants in particular sports.



9. Performance Measures and 2015-16 Targets

Goal/ Objective	Performance Indicator	Baseline	2015-16 Target	2016-17 Target	2017-18 Target	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target
1) Refresh the image of the Society, the Games, Host Societies and participants.	▪ Sponsorship of the Society:	2	4	6	TBD	TBD	-TBD
	▫ Total number of sponsors	\$5 K	\$30 K	\$40K	TBD	TBD	TBD
	▫ Total financial support	\$20 K	\$30 K	\$40K	TBD	TBD	TBD
2) Realign the operating structure of the Society.	▪ Percentage of Games events formally supported by a PSO (where applicable).	35%	50%	70	80	90	100%
	▪ Percentage of Executive/Board positions with written and active succession plans in place.	0%	30%	45%	60%	80%	100%
		▪ Number of candidates in Executive/Board volunteer bank.	0	20	25	30	35
4) Ensure the long term sustainability of the Games.	▪ Host Society net assets.	0	+\$20,000	+\$20,000	+\$20,000	+\$20,000	+\$20,000
	▪ Economic impact of Games.	\$2.0 M	\$2.2 M	\$2.4 M	\$2.6 M	\$2.8 M	\$3.0 M
	▪ Number of communities bidding to host Games in each bid cycle.	4	6	6	6	6	6
5) Support expansion of friendly “gateway” events at the regional level.	▪ Number of “gateway” events supported in each Zone.	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
	▪ Total financial support by Zones for local events and equipment purchases.	N/A	Set baseline	TBD based on 2015-16 baseline	TBD	TBD	TBD