



United States Curling Association

Strategic Plan 2008-2010

➤ **The Process:**

During the spring of 2008, the USCA Officers, key staff and the Executive Committee embarked upon a strategic planning process for the USCA. The planning horizon was set as the May 2008 thru June 30, 2010 to coincide with the Olympic quadrennial planning process. The team members individually were asked to go through a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). See Appendix I for an outline of the prioritized SWOT Analysis. The data was then analyzed for high frequency comments and gaps. In addition, a key assumption going in was that the existing strategic plan, which expires on April 30, 2008, was generally still valid and so we did not embark on a “clean slate” approach to developing the strategic plan.

The SWOT analysis as well as the expiring strategic plan were used as key inputs into a one-half day workshop of the planning team on April 17, 2008. The team started with some discussion of the raw SWOT data and prioritizing those components the team felt were most critical to address in the strategic plan. This was followed by each of the officers and an AAC representative discussing what they saw as the top High Priority Objectives for the planning period.

This paper reflects the above, but also includes important ongoing initiatives that may not be unique to this planning period, but nonetheless are critical for the success of the organization. This is considered the Strategic Framework. It is meant to be a working, dynamic and flexible plan that will change as the environment changes and the demands on the organization change.

The Strategic Framework will serve as overall business guidance for the budget and staff allocation planning that will take place June 6-8 with the officers and key staff. Once these resource allocations are completed, the Strategic Framework will need to be filled out to include metrics, timeframes and success measures.

➤ **Mission:** *(Why does the USCA Exist?)*

“As the NGB for the sport of curling, the USCA strives to grow the sport and to win medals in world championships and Olympic and Paralympics Games.”

➤ **Vision:** *(What do we want to be known for?)*

“The USCA will be a strong membership network with more curlers, more dedicated ice sheets, and more arena rental ice sheets. The USCA will operate with effective and efficient governance and management. The USCA will facilitate educational and developmental programs that lead to greater recreational enjoyment of curling and sustained competitive success. The USCA will facilitate more extensive television coverage of the sport, in turn generating more fans and potential members.”

➤ **High Priority Objectives**

The overriding and fundamental objective that drives everything the USCA is doing is to grow the sport of curling. The expansion of curling in terms of the number of people enjoying the sport at whatever level is appropriate for them; in terms of the number of clubs and sheets of curling ice available in the United States as well as the popularity of the sport with the public and sponsors is what the USCA is all about. This can be accomplished in several different ways. The planning team agreed that the SWOT analysis we had done as well as the exercise to identify the HPOs validated that the broad objectives that were the cornerstones of the old strategic plan are still valid and provide an appropriate Strategic Framework to guide the 2008-10 Strategic Plan. In the detailed listing of objectives and strategies that follow some objectives were designated by the planning team as High Priority Objectives are indicated by the blue initials HPO. Other important and supporting objectives are included in the plan as well.

The broad cornerstone objectives are:

To Grow the Sport of Curling Through:

I. Sustained Competitive Excellence

Success, measured by winning medals in World and Olympic Competition, promotes the sport to the general public and sponsors. It is a key engine that drives television and internet coverage of the sport which leads to growth in popularity and membership across the U.S. as well as the USCA's capacity to develop meaningful sponsorships. Funding from the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) to build and sustain competitive excellence is directly correlated with our success in winning medals.

The USCA needs to build on past successes to at a minimum keep pace with the rapidly growing competitive position of other areas of the world, especially Asia. Staff has been added in the past few years to support further development of High Performance plans and programs, to redesign our Coaching development and certification programs and to develop and expand elite Wheelchair Athletes for success in the World Championships and Paralympic Games.

II. Increasing Total Revenue

The USCA today is highly dependent upon the USOC for about 50% of its funding. Most of the USOC funding goes directly to athletes, training and development, coaching and other high performance programs. If the USOC funding were to be reduced substantially or eliminated all together, the USCA could scale back its operations accordingly. However, the engine that drives much of the grass-roots growth momentum in the U.S., that is sustained competitive success, would be lost. In addition, staff resources would have to be reduced which would have an impact on grass-roots member services.

Accordingly, it is imperative that the USCA increase the proportion of funding from non-USOC sources. Currently, the largest source of non-USOC funding is member clubs and individual curlers through dues, donations and playdown fees, totaling about 30% of the USCA's total revenue. Other non-USOC sources include several cash and value-in-kind sponsors, the Chicago Community Trust and the World Curling Federation make up the remainder of the USCA sources of funds.

Continued development of revenue sources to increase and diversify funding is critical to the long-term success of the USCA. A high priority for this planning period is to develop a comprehensive revenue development plan to include marketing strategies, new sponsor development, revamping and revitalizing the donation and merchandising programs, capitalize on the evolution of our National Championships to realize value from these events and market the sport's elite athletes.

In addition, for the long-term stability of the organization another high priority will be the development of planned giving programs. The sport enjoys a long history with many curlers having been involved for decades in the sport. Many of these loyal curlers are looking to give back to the sport in ways that they can direct through capital programs to help clubs get established and grow, via charitable donations as part of their estate planning and/or annual giving plans.

III. Supporting Club/Curler Programs

At the heart of the foundation for all that the USCA does is the network of some 140 curling clubs and over 13,000 individual curlers throughout the United States. Without the continued nurturing and attention to the needs of these, our most important constituents, there would be little reason for the USCA to exist.

The USCA already offers and provides to clubs and individual curlers a rich array of programs and services to help establish, grow and support Club programs. These include multimedia tools such as access to CurlTV, training and instruction materials on the website, on-line registration and dues payments as well as on-line playdown registration. A variety of instructional tools (e.g., videos on How to Curl) as well as train the trainer and instructor certification programs are available. Junior camps are held throughout the country. Many members have gotten involved in officiating locally or in World and Olympic competition starting with USCA provided officials

training and experience. The variety of USCA sanctioned Championships provide opportunities for individual curlers to compete at a level appropriate for them and provide opportunities for clubs to host exciting events to raise awareness in their communities about the sport and the club.

Fundamentally, the USCA as an association of associations (the State and Regional Curling Associations) and is a network that can leverage resources at an economy of scale that brings benefits to all members that none could afford alone. However, there are limits and so the USCA must be diligent about investing in member services and programs that will result in the greatest return on investment and address the ever changing needs of the member associations. So opportunities exist to enhance some programs, develop new ones and at the same time reduce or eliminate low-value added programs from the members' perspective.

IV. Maximizing Stakeholder Satisfaction

The USCA has a wide range of stakeholders including: Member Associations and Clubs; individual curlers; the USOC; other funders and sponsors; the World Curling Federation; employees; other staff; directors and volunteers.

As is the case with any organization, not every action results in the same directional impact on all stakeholders' satisfaction. In other words, an action that may increase satisfaction for one set of stakeholders may actually decrease satisfaction for another. So the challenge is to balance these effects to achieve the optimal overall stakeholder satisfaction.

This all starts with some notion of what drives satisfaction for various stakeholders. The USCA has not done a comprehensive stakeholder satisfaction survey of clubs and curlers for some time. The USCA receives fairly regular and direct feedback from the USOC through the annual planning and resource allocation process. So opportunities exist over this planning period to refine our understanding of which stakeholder satisfaction levels are most important to the USCA's overall success and how to measure them.

V. Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Governance and Management

Given the USCA's limited resources, it is all the more important that the organization operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Governance structure for the USCA is quite unique and presents many advantages as well as drawbacks.

On the one hand, the strength of the network of many state and regional associations, the 140 clubs and physical assets to deliver our product and the hundreds of volunteers that help make the many programs and services of the USCA work is extremely valuable yet hard to quantify. The value of this network is not reflected on the USCA's financial statements, but is evident in the quantity and quality of services delivered.

On the other hand, representatives come to USCA duties as directors, officers committee members and volunteers from many different perspectives. The USCA has an obligation by its very organizational nature to ensure that the interests of individual states and regions, as well as the athletes, are represented. However, this can result in a Board size and committee structure perhaps larger than might otherwise be the case. In addition, because other than a small permanent staff of employees in the USCA office, the organization is driven by volunteers who come and go.

All of the above demands continued attention to governance and management. In the last planning period improvements were made in the governance structure to streamline and programs were put in place to improve on director and volunteer education and orientation. More remains to be done to continue on this momentum.

Key: **HPO**- These are High Priority Objectives identified by the Executive Committee for the planning period. Objectives not designated with the HPO are important, generally on-going, initiatives.

(CH)- These are indicators of the officers responsible for the objective. **CH**= Championships
CP= Competitive Programs **MS**= Member Services **MO**= Marketing and Operations **P**=
President **T**= Treasurer **S**= Secretary **COO**= Chief Operating Officer

I. Sustained Competitive Excellence:

- a. **HPO-** Sustain High Performance in World and Olympic Competitions **(CP)**
(See also the USCA FY2009 High Performance Plan submitted to the USOC)
- i. Win Medals in World and Olympic Play. **Ongoing**
 - ii. **HPO-** Improving/maintaining relative competitive level vis a vis World teams. **Ongoing**
 - iii. Develop and Implement an Elite Athlete Performance Model and Elite Coach Performance Model. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - iv. Develop a high performance philosophy and methodology for athletes and coaches. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - v. Implement a new athlete training model and better year-round training plans and opportunities. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - vi. Increase the interaction with the USOC Sportfolio team to better utilize resources for achieving high performance, such as sports science and competitive success analysis. **Ongoing**
 - vii. **HPO-** Develop and Implement a Long-term strategy for Sports Science. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - viii. **HPO-** Develop and Implement a Long-term strategy for the Junior ADD Program. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - ix. **HPO-** Strengthen World Team Prep Procedures. Develop written procedures covering all administrative aspects of World Team Preparation for every World Championships addressing travel reimbursement, coaching expenses reimbursement, uniform policies, etc. **Deadline: Fall 2008 Board Meeting.**
 - x. **HPO-** Strengthen the Team Leader Program and Procedures. Develop written procedures regarding when Team Leaders will be used, specifically what the duties of the TL will be at each World Championship and a long-term strategy for the development of a pool of qualified Team Leaders. **Deadline: Fall 2008 Board Meeting.**
 - xi. **HPO-** Provide access to World quality ice for selected World teams whenever possible. **Deadline: 2009 World Championships. (CP, CH)**
 - xii. **HPO-** review the feasibility of a permanent training center for each quadrennium (with icemaker). **Deadline: Fall 2008 Board Meeting.**
 - xiii. **HPO-** develop a U.S. Player's championship. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - xiv. **HPO-** Improve athlete accountability for use of stipend and world team Prep money. **Deadline: Fall 2008 Board Meeting.**

- b. **HPO-** Enhance and continuously improve National Championships **(CH)**
 - i. **HPO-** Enhance the coordination with host sites re: expectations, standards, logistics, including basic things like care of sensor handles. Develop written procedures. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**
 - ii. **HPO-** Improve ice conditions at all championship sites, at all levels (Qualifer, C.R., etc.). **Ongoing**
 - iii. **HPO-** Investigate the feasibility of USCA owned Championship rocks. Provide a recommendation to the USCA Board **no later than the Spring Board 2009 meeting.**
 - iv. **HPO-** Improve the marketing of championships and playdown events including testing of holding M/W championships in an arena setting/ vacation destination. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - v. **HPO-** Enhance the quality of officiating by improving the system for training, advancing, certifying and continually evaluating officials. **Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - vi. Develop a written policy regarding the generation of revenue and the use of funds for Field of Play Expenses. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**
 - vii. Develop written policies and procedures for the use of Ice rental, Officials and Ice Technicians at championship events, including stipends and/or reimbursement for expenses. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**
 - viii. Develop a written program for officials- how many do we need certified at each level, update the certification criteria, formalize the evaluation process, consider continuing education/experience criteria to maintain certification levels. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**
 - ix. Develop a transition strategy to turn over the USCA Ice making program to the USCA Head Ice Maker for the 2009-10 season. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**

II. Increase Total Revenue:

- a. **HPO-** Develop an overall Revenue Development Strategy coordinated with a Planned Giving Strategy that takes into account and leverages the following work already done or under contract **(MO): Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
 - i. Mercury Communications Group,
 - ii. VOX Global Mandate Key Messages Study
 - iii. The Javelin Group Branding Project
 - iv. the Sports Marketing Research Institute data 1Q07,
 - v. the USOC Content License Agreement,
 - vi. the work with Curling Zone and opportunities with CurlTV
 - vii. The Pros Consulting Business Performance Plan 1Q06
- b. **HPO-** Develop a Planned Giving Strategy and Program. The final program should be presented to the **Board at its April 2009 Meeting for approval.**
- c. **HPO-** Hire Marketing staff or engage a consultant/agency to sell sponsorships. **Deadline: Fall 2008 BOD Meeting.**
- d. **HPO-** Obtain Sponsors for Major Championships. **(MO, CH) Ongoing**

III. Supporting Club/Curler Programs:

- a. **HPO-** Continue to enhance and broaden the programs and services available to USCA Member Associations and their member clubs and curlers **(MS) Ongoing**
 - i. Develop a Catalog of Services available.
 - ii. Enhance the Web-site as a source of information and resources, including templates, “how-to,” “who to talk to” and links to other available resources.
 - iii. Revise USCA instructional programs and materials for USCA clubs.
- b. **HPO-** Improve communication with clubs/states regions. **(MS) Ongoing**
 - i. **HPO-** Use Member Services “visits.” To gather input and feedback from stakeholders regarding satisfaction.
- c. Develop a program to pro-actively support emerging Arena Clubs. **(MS) Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**
- d. Continue to review partnership opportunities with the United States Women’s Curling Association. **(MS) Deadline: Spring 2009 meeting**

- e. Estimate demand for rocks for now thru just after the Vancouver games and make a recommendation regarding possible purchasing additional rocks from the WCF to augment our loaner pool. (MS) **Deadline: December 31, 2008**

IV. Maximizing Stakeholder Satisfaction:

- a. HPO- Survey stakeholders regarding satisfaction. (MO)
- b. Actively manage and improve relations with the United States Olympic Committee (P, COO, CP) **Ongoing**
- c. Actively manage and improve relations with International Curling and Sports bodies such as The World Curling Federation and the Canadian Curling Association. (P, COO and WCF Reps) **Ongoing**
- d. Host a World Championship at least every other year (MO) **Ongoing**

V. Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Governance and Management:

- a. HPO- Provide adequate staffing at USCA office (MO) **Ongoing**
- b. Continue to monitor and implement, as appropriate, the recommendations from the Pros Consulting Business Performance Plan (January 2006). Specific priorities regarding Governance and Management for 2008-2010 include (P, S, COO): **Deadline: various per Pros report**
 - i. Continue producing an Annual Report as of June 30 that is useful with outside constituencies, particularly potential donors and corporate sponsors
 - ii. Continue to involve independent Board members who have no previous connection with the sport; and expand the number of non-constituency-based positions on the Executive Committee
 - iii. Maintain an independent audit committee and establish an ethics committee
 - iv. Revise strategic plan, with broad participation and consensus-building, emphasizing better development of strategies and tactics, as well as accountabilities, resources, and time lines
 - v. Institute comprehensive evaluation of programs and services that enable improvement and viability
- c. Maintain Financial Soundness (P, T, COO) **Ongoing**
 - i. Utilize “Critical Success Indicators” and “Financial and Operating Ratios” to develop ways to plan, monitor, and assess financial viability and organizational stability, with suggested targeted outcomes in the Pros Consulting Business Performance Plan or other goal developed by the Finance Committee or Executive Committee.

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- ii. Maintain at Net Worth of at least \$250,000
- iii. Maintain liquid assets, including access to lines-of-credit equivalent to at least six months of minimum operating expenses.

➤ **Appendix I: SWOT Analysis**

I. Strengths:

- a. USCA Staff
- b. Existing external relationships (media, WCF)
- c. Athlete performance – Qualify for Olympic Games 2010
- d. Volunteers

II. Weaknesses:

- a. Fiscal resources – available revenue
- b. Staff quantity & workload
- c. Communication/information/brand identity
- d. Membership's buy-in to mission and vision. Understanding of finances, identification w/USCA

III. Opportunities:

- a. Internet, online media to build awareness of Game, e-commerce.
- b. Strategic partnerships & sponsorships
- c. Events (Denver Trials, Vancouver Games, U-18, Youth Olympics)

IV. Threats:

- a. Limited USOC Funding (3-5% annual increase)
- b. Limited external revenue generation
- c. Club satisfaction level w/USCA is waning