



Strategic Plan

2015 to 2020

April 2015

With appreciation to all who contributed to its creation, we are pleased to present the new Strategic Plan that will guide the activities of the Health Sciences Association of BC for the next five years.

HSA has much to celebrate, looking back on the accomplishments we have achieved over the term of our previous strategic plan. Just a few of our current strengths include:

- Our labour relations staff understand members' work and the challenges we face
- We have forged a co-operative working relationship with employers
- Members across the province are actively involved in Union work
- We have a secure asset base

Our professional membership speaks with one voice and remains committed to the union's values, and so we approach implementation of this new plan well equipped to deal with the challenges that face us going forward including:

- Changing demographics
- Constant organizational change in our members' workplaces
- Undermining or even hostility to labour rights and values
- Economic pressures on the health care and social services systems

In the face of such complex threats to our members, there's never been a more important time to collaborate on a strategic plan and to ensure that everyone across the organization is aligned and working towards the same goals.

We thank every member who participated in the strategic planning process, and thank the members of the HSA Board of Directors, and the Expanded Management Team for their contributions to this document.

This plan lays out our priorities and objectives for the next five years. Our aim is to be stronger and more focused than ever before, to achieve our members' goals in the next round of collective bargaining, and to ensure that we deliver on our mission and move closer to our vision:

OUR MISSION:

HSA is a collective voice, proudly advancing and defending members' rights and interests in our workplaces, communities and society

OUR VISION:

Respectful workplaces where our members provide health care and social services with professional pride

HSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS, April 2015

Background

The Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSA) represents more than 18,000 health science and social services professionals working at more than 250 hospitals and agencies in acute care, long-term care and community health, including hospitals, child development centres, and transition houses. In addition to negotiating collective agreements for the union's members, HSA is active on many other fronts of critical importance to the membership, including health care policy, labour issues, occupational health and safety, wage equity, women's issues, and the solidarity movement.

HSA also works to preserve and promote public health care in Canada through campaigns, and through affiliations with like-minded organizations. As a component of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), and an affiliate to both the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the BC Federation of Labour, HSA works to improve conditions for all working Canadians by advocating for better working conditions, better pay, improved benefits, and public pensions.

HSA's most recent strategic plan guided activities 2009 through 2012, and with the establishment of five-year collective agreements for the vast majority of our members, it is timely to revisit, revise, and refocus activities to support future success. Accordingly, in 2014 the union's leadership agreed to engage in a consultative and collaborative process culminating in endorsement of a new, multi-year plan for presentation to the membership at the May 2015 Convention.

The Context for Planning

During autumn 2014, an extensive information-gathering process was undertaken to assist HSA's leadership to better understand the context for the union's strategic planning.

The major activities involved were:

- One-on-one interviews with members of the HSA Board of Directors (September 2014)
- One-on-one interviews with members of the HSA Expanded Management Team (September 2014)
- Focus groups with activists conducted by HSA Education staff as part of regional meetings across BC (September and October 2014)
- An anonymous online survey of the union's membership (September and October 2014)¹
- An anonymous online survey of the union's staff (September and October 2014)

¹ At the time of the environmental scan, the entire membership numbered approximately 18,770. This is the total population of potential respondents to the online survey. Emailed invitations were sent to 13,873. The balance – 4,897 – are members for whom HSA has no email contact address.

A total of 13,873 HSA members received an email invitation to participate (all those for whom valid email addresses were available). A total of 1,416 responses were received, of which the majority (1,204) provided answers to all questions in the survey. The balance of responses, a further 212, were incomplete, with only some questions answered, resulting in a final sample size of 1,416.

These numbers reflect a response rate of 8.7% to 10.2%, which results in a margin of error of 2.5%, 95 times out of 100. Assuming a random sample, the views reported for all responses together can be understood to reliably reflect the views of the HSA membership overall.

These activities reflect the fact that, as a member-driven organization, it is essential for HSA to employ a strategic planning process that understands members' priorities and reflects these priorities in the resulting plan. Because HSA's employees will be tasked with implementing many of the activities guided by the strategic plan, their views are also seen as important to the process.

With the exception of the Focus Groups, all the information-gathering activities were undertaken by an external consulting firm, independent of HSA employees or governors. Findings from the entire process were reviewed, analyzed, compared by the consultant and summarized in reports circulated to the HSA Board and senior management team. In order to report back to those who participated, summaries were also circulated to union members and staff.

HSA Today

The face of the Union is changing, and as we plan for the future it's important to know about those we serve. The following data provide some insights into the diversity of HSA's 18,770² members:

- 15,359 are women (approximately 82%)
- 3,411 are men (approximately 18%)
- More than 100 professions are represented amongst HSA members
- In response to a survey question, "Do you self-identify as a member of a cultural or ethnic minority?" 18.8% of member respondents said yes. Of those who provided further information, most specified Chinese, then South Asian/Punjabi, then First Nations, Aboriginal/Metis.³
- The average age of members is 40.5 years

To serve these members, a combination of activists (Regional Directors and Stewards) and staff provide support across the province:

- More than 1,100 members serve as stewards and/or as members of Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees
- The average age of stewards is 46 years
- HSA is organized into ten regions across the province. Region 9 (Cranbrook, Kootenays and Rockies) currently represents 437 members, while Region 7 (Surrey and Fraser Valley) serves 3,092
- HSA negotiates on behalf of members in four public sector collective agreements (community health services and support, community social services, health science professionals and nurses) as well as three private sector workplaces.
- 45 members are currently actively involved in the Constituency Liaison program, an important element of HSA's government relations program

² All membership data as of November 2014

³ Membership survey conducted for Strategic Planning, winter 2014.

Vision to Plan to Action

The Board and senior management team of HSA met twice in facilitated workshops to learn about the priorities, opportunities, barriers and challenges identified through information-gathering and developed the high level components of the strategic plan.

The “strategic plan at a glance” on the next page summarizes the results of this work, and the balance of this document provides further details for each component in the plan.

Following the presentation of the five-year Strategic Plan to Convention Delegates in spring 2015, this document will inform annual operating plans and budgets to guide activities in the years ahead. The goal is to establish targets, and then operate and make decisions based on key performance indicators derived from the strategic plan.

Strategic Plan at a Glance



Strategic Plan in Detail

Strategic Priority: **SERVICE**

Improve service to members

The 18,000 members of the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) are a diverse group of smart and well educated professionals who are passionate about the quality of their work. They play an integral role in service delivery to clients and patients across the province.

The surveys and interviews undertaken for this survey confirmed what the union's leadership and staff have heard anecdotally: the majority of members are satisfied with union services and the scope of their benefits package, but seek more and better communication, leadership and staff visibility, enhanced service, and negotiation that results in better contract terms.

Endless changes in employers' organizational structures have contributed to unacceptable delays in dispute resolution. Growing workloads serve to limit the ability of the union's professional staff – the Labour Relations Offices (LROs) – to have a regular onsite presence in all regions, and increasing and more complex caseloads mean staff feel overextended and less able to be proactive.

Just as staff resources are taxed, so are stewards. There was complete agreement that the number of stewards on the ground supporting members, particularly in rural and remote regions and worksites, needs to increase. HSA needs a strong steward network to build capacity, and to enhance recruitment, retention, mentoring, and leadership development so that the support for members is strong and accessible.

This Strategic Priority details our commitment to improve services to members across the province, in keeping with Article 3(c) of our Constitution, which states that one of the union's purposes is "to provide a high level of representation for the members and generally promote the interests of the members". We will do this through activities targeting four key areas, described in the objectives below, and enhancing our practices to ensure improved tracking of file progress.

Service Objectives:

A. Ensure responsiveness and continuity in member service

Our members should know where to turn with a safety issue or grievance and understand who is responding to their needs. They must have confidence that they have current information on the status of their concern and that it will be dealt with in a timely manner. Through regular member surveys we will track progress in these areas.

B. Improve communication to and from members

With more than 18,000 members province-wide, in more than 340 workplaces, it's a big job to ensure that we communicate effectively with each and every one of our members. We will focus on enhanced communication with our members.

C. Grow the capacity of the steward network

Workplace stewards are the front line of support and response for our members. In a province as big as B.C., and for our members in hundreds of worksites province-wide, we rely on a network of volunteer stewards to provide robust links between HSA and our members.

Playing such a crucial role can be a demanding, but rewarding, task. To ensure that our stewards are well supported, we commit to providing them with the resources and skills they need to support members' requests.

D. Remove barriers to being effective stewards

We know anecdotally that stewards experience barriers to feeling confident in representing members. The barriers may be different for different stewards. In order to support stewards to feel and be more effective, we need a much clearer understanding of what the perceived barriers are and what the options are to remove those barriers. Only then can HSA take action to address the barriers and improve satisfaction and confidence in HSA's steward network.

Strategic Priority: **ENGAGEMENT**

Enhance member engagement

A union is at its strongest when it speaks with and for its members, based on their active engagement and participation. Lack of regular member involvement, even if it reflects the relative contentment and satisfaction of members, remains a challenge for HSA. This priority asserts our belief that members will benefit if they share a better understanding and appreciation for the value of the rights and protections offered through HSA membership.

We believe that by engaging and mobilizing our members, we can develop and strengthen a shared sense of common values, direction, identity, and understanding across the diverse professions in HSA's membership. This in turn will be a crucial means to increase solidarity, mutual support, and appreciation, particularly across worksites and sectors.

We establish this priority with the full knowledge that our members are busy people. Many are young professionals just starting families and careers; others are part of the "sandwich" generation, with aging elders as well as children to care for. Many combine demanding jobs with volunteer contributions to their union, recreational activities, and other community causes. We recognize that busy people may not prioritize union activism. Nonetheless, we will employ best efforts to make the union more relevant to them, and to maintain our links with them in a constantly changing working environment.

Engagement Objectives:

A. Make the union relevant to members

We will focus on efforts to make the union more relevant to members, so that more people better understand and appreciate the value of the rights and protections offered through HSA membership. This will be accomplished via more orientation, communication and education to inform new members. We will pay special attention to generational differences, targeting communication among younger members who may lack awareness of what unions have achieved for workers in recent decades. For some of our members, seeing our union get involved in campaigns such as the Fairness Express, or realizing they can be supported to work on other grassroots campaigns, has convinced them of the relevance of our union and has caused them to get involved internally as well as with those outside opportunities. Recognizing that they are the future leaders of HSA, we will make special efforts to reach out to younger members to engage them in union activities and causes.

B. Maintain links to our members in a constantly changing landscape

Regionalization, consolidation, changes in jurisdiction and staffing – an unprecedented number of realignments and reassignments across the public sector challenge us to maintain strong and effective service and communication links with our members. This objective reinforces our commitment of resources and time to ensuring that we know where our members work, the issues they face, and the support they need in the workplace.

C. Increase member activism and mentorship

As more members recognize the value and relevance of union involvement, we believe more of them will choose to be activists. We will engage those new activists by providing education and support, to

provide a valuable pool of experience and information for new and developing stewards. This will include developing stewards as mentors.

Strategic Priority: **RIGHTS**

Defend and strengthen the collective agreement and representational rights

Unions like HSA work to provide better working conditions for their members: as stated in our constitution Article 3(b), one of our purposes is “to regulate relations between employees and employers through collective bargaining, and to establish and maintain the best possible standards of pay, benefits and other working conditions.” We use the collective power of all members to create a more equal playing field with employers. Given the current political and socio-economic environment, it has never been more important to defend and strengthen our members’ rights through hard-won representational rights and collective agreements.

Surveys undertaken as part of this strategic planning process confirmed what HSA has long recognized: Member workload is seen by all as a significant threat, contributing to stress, lack of job satisfaction, lack of recognition as a professional, and increasing negative impacts on health and well-being. The increasing complexity of workplace issues, continuing reorganizations, and funding cuts make the delivery of services to clients and patients more challenging and complex.

The survey told us that, while the majority of members are satisfied with union services and the scope of their benefits package, they also expect us to engage in negotiations that result in better contract terms. Priorities identified are improvements to wages, improvements to benefits, flexibility of benefits plans, support for professional development, and a classification system responsive to our members’ needs for career advancement as well as remuneration.

Interviews with union leaders and staff undertaken in anticipation of this plan suggested that they believe, in the face of many years of ongoing and significant pressures, HSA has maintained its integrity, worked through issues and negotiations together, been responsive and developed new skills. This experience has led to confidence in the organization for future success, even in the face of significant challenges. From this base of confidence, our objectives comprise our intended focus within this strategic priority, combining the need to build on past strength with the importance of anticipating future challenges.

Rights Objectives:

A. Defend collective agreement rights

Cost containment pressures in the public sector make it more important than ever for HSA to protect, while trying to enhance, the hard-won rights our members enjoy through their collective agreements. Our planning consultation confirmed that wages, benefits, working conditions, classification, and workload are top priorities for our members. This objective reflects our commitment to defending and improving the respective sections of our collective agreements that protect those rights.

B. Prepare resources and identify bargaining objectives for next round

In 2013, HSA led the way as the first public sector union in BC to reach a collective agreement with the employer. This leadership position meant that we did not settle for terms negotiated by another, larger union with different interests than ours. HSA looked for innovative solutions as a means to control risk and made protection of benefits a priority. All collective agreements with HEABC and CSSEA, which cover the vast majority of our members, expire at the end of March, 2019.

Sufficient resources must continue to be allocated to ensure that the Union is fully prepared for the next round of bargaining.

We will work to ensure that communication lines between Union leadership and membership are open and effective over the term of the current collective agreement, leading to identification of priority areas that require amendment or improvement at the bargaining table.

C. Protect the integrity of bargaining units and address jurisdictional issues

In recent years, HSA has fought hard and successfully to protect the integrity of our bargaining units in the face of raids from other unions. In representing our membership, HSA has only one agenda: to promote the collective agreement issues that matter to the more than 100 diverse professions represented in our membership. For more than 40 years, HSA has been successful in getting recognition for members' specialized training, and is committed to continuing to speak out to ensure visibility for their unique contributions to their workplaces and communities.

In addition to threats due to hostile raid campaigns, the union is also at risk of losing membership as a result of employer restructuring that results in assignment of members to other unions in the bargaining association.

The Union is engaging in analysis to track movement of HSA work between employers and commits to maintaining these positions as HSA positions.

D. Respond effectively to priority organizing and growth opportunities

As stated in the HSA Constitution, Article 3, the objects and purposes of the union include "to seek recognition as a bargaining agent" and "to provide a high level of representation for the members and generally promote the interests of the members." Organizing wherever new opportunities present themselves will be part of our ongoing work, based on continuing analysis to identify locations and programs where services are being delivered in the health science and community social services professions.

We will develop criteria for prioritizing organizing targets, and then focus activity on these targets

Strategic Priority: **RELATIONSHIPS**

Effectively manage our essential relationships

The power of collective action is at the heart of the union philosophy, and much of HSA's recent success and stability is grounded in effective identification and management of partnerships and relationships with those who share our values and goals. This is consistent with the HSA constitution Article 3, which states that the following are among the Union's objects and purposes:

- To promote progressive legislation – particularly in the areas of health care, labour relations, labour standards and human rights – without affiliating to any political party; and
- To cooperate with professional associations on matters of common interests and concern; and
- To cooperate with unions and organizations of unions in order to promote all our other objects and purposes.

We are proud to demonstrate the HSA-wide philosophy of taking a collaborative, professional approach when possible and appropriate, while always being prepared to defend when necessary. This strategic priority underscores the importance of our efforts to communicate the value of HSA members' work to our members, the general public, our peers, partners, and government.

Over the life of this strategic plan, we will continue to provide a collective voice to advance and defend our members' rights and interests in their workplaces, communities and society. Together with our partners we will challenge negative public perceptions of and attitudes toward unions. We will focus efforts on increasing respect, recognition, and influence, and we will inspire members by promoting their invaluable contributions as professional partners in health care and community social services.

Relationships Objectives:

A. Raise our profile with labour organizations to further our priorities and agenda

As a member of the National Union of Public and General Employees, the Canadian Labour Congress, and BC Federation of Labour, HSA is a recognized and respected voice in the broader labour movement. HSA staff are regularly called upon to participate as experts in training other union members, and providing input and expertise on policies and strategic campaigns important to the trade union movement. HSA members' contributions and participation are valued on central labour bodies' committees, including labour councils, and in various labour functions, including conventions and campaigns.

B. Increase our influence with decision-makers

We will continue and enhance our very successful Constituency Liaison program and Lobby Day program. These programs have proven effective in developing respectful relationships with government representatives and raising awareness of HSA's value with elected officials regardless of party affiliation.

C. Collaborate with professional organizations and associations on common issues

Professional Associations are key partners for HSA. We share members with professional associations and have common interests and objectives for member representation and public profile.

D. Increase public awareness, public profile and understanding of HSA members' value

As HSA's profile increases, and decision-makers and the public have a better understanding of the role of HSA members and the work they do, issues important to HSA members will gain prominence and

traction. We will continue public advertising activity and involvement in high profile events to ensure accurate and positive representation for our members' professional contributions.

Strategic Priority: **RESOURCES**

Match organizational needs with resources

HSA's long term financial position is sound, with our new headquarters building in New Westminster representing both a functional, well-equipped home and a substantial tangible asset that insures us against future financial instability. Within that building are the talented, dedicated staff who provide high quality service to members. The offices also house the training and meeting facilities where our volunteer activists and Board members convene in their "home away from home" to make their contributions to the union's success.

This strategic priority focuses on ensuring that we have the right mix of staff, managers and governors to deliver for our members, supported by appropriate infrastructure and tools.

To date, we have developed strong systems for education, financial management, information technology, health and safety, legal issues and negotiations. Excellent communication is also central to an effective organization, and this plan commits to a renewed focus on both the philosophy and infrastructure required to improve internal communication and collaboration among HSA departments so that the organization functions effectively and efficiently.

Resources Objectives:

A. Plan for effective succession in key roles

Like many other organizations, we are experiencing the wave of retirements that come with the aging of the "baby boom" generation. More than ever before, we must invest in leadership development and maintain our capacity to be a modern, healthy, and desirable employer. We must invest in succession planning, so that as Board members retire we have up and coming activists who are ready and willing to step into a governing role.

B. Align resource deployment with identified organizational goals

One of the most important benefits of having a comprehensive strategic plan is that the organization can link annual operational plans and budgets to multi-year priorities and goals. Board members and management alike will use this strategic plan as a roadmap for a shared vision, meaningful directions, shared goals, measurable outcomes, and a more strategic approach to addressing issues. Budget planning and resource deployment will be guided by the priorities of this plan, supporting identified organizational goals. One key part of this process is to ensure that HSA continues to have the flexibility and resources to respond quickly when our members' interests are at stake.

C. Take a continuous improvement approach to governance development

A strong, visionary and strategic governing body is an invaluable asset for any union. At HSA, our Board of Directors strives to provide sound leadership in the four key areas of governance accountability:

- Stakeholder Relationships: ensuring effective and productive two-way communication between members, partners, peers and HSA.
- Operational Oversight: ensuring that all major operational activities of the organization are designed and run to meet strategic goals
- Fiscal Oversight: ensuring that staff make effective, efficient use of resources, that budgets are balanced, and all fiduciary requirements are met (e.g. withholding taxes, government filings)

- Vision and Strategy: ensuring that the organization has a compelling, engaging mission and vision, and a current strategic plan that will guide future success, and that these foundational elements are well-known across the union

To fulfill these duties, Board members need to be familiar with their own roles and responsibilities; with the division of authorities and accountabilities between governance and management; and with the political and legal functions inherent in their roles. This objective recognizes that the Board requires ongoing attention to governance development in order to maintain high standards of effective leadership.