



Healthy Dancer Canada Strategic Plan 2024-2029

Introduction

The Board of Directors of Healthy Dancer Canada (HDC) recognized the importance of undertaking a review of the organization and engaging in a strategic planning process to determine its future direction. The board had developed HDC's vision, mission and values in 2016. Since that time, various political and economic changes had begun to impact the arts community in general and the dance community in particular. HDC was committed to examining all aspects of the organization in order to focus on offering programs and services that are valued and needed by the members and the dance community, and set a direction for the future of the organization.

A grant from Canada Council for the Arts was secured to support the strategic planning process. Marlene Stirrett-Matson was hired as a consultant to design and facilitate the process. The board of directors and committee chairs traveled to Calgary for the weekend of May 5-7, 2023 for a strategic planning retreat. At the retreat, research was presented to the group to provide a foundation for deliberations and information for analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. New vision, mission and values were drafted, a new structure and priority areas were determined and goals were developed. Committees then worked for the next ten months on creating logic models in order to define outcomes, and developing clear and concise action plans with tasks and timelines clearly laid out.

Current State of HDC

History of HDC

The Dance Health Alliance of Canada operating as Healthy Dancer Canada is an organization formed in September 2008 to help strengthen the national voice of dance health promotion, prevention and treatment in Canada. The mission was: *to create a dance health organization to meet the needs of Canadian dancers who learn and practice dance in both urban and rural settings*. HDC aspired to be the Canadian leader in facilitating communication and collaboration between the dance community and health professionals to enhance the health and well-being of all dancers.

On June 10, 2010, the organization incorporated provincially in Ontario with the intention of creating a solid foundation to grow Healthy Dancer Canada nationally. HDC incorporated federally on October 18, 2012 the first logo was designed. In 2016 HDC revised its mission and articulated vision and values for the first time.

Vision (2016):

Healthy Dancer Canada envisions a dynamic community of dancers, dance educators, health professionals and researchers dedicated to promoting dancer health and wellness, optimizing performance, understanding and addressing the unique challenges facing the dance community, and creating a culture of healthy dance practice in Canada.

Values (2016):

Healthy Dancer Canada is committed to:

- **Advancement:** Advancing the health, well-being, fitness and performance of dancers in Canada, grounded in current, evidence-based information.
- **Community:** Building community by
 - Fostering respect, understanding and knowledge-sharing among members of the dance community, including dancers and their families, dance educators and other dance professionals, dance researchers and health professionals.
 - Offering networking, leadership and volunteer opportunities.
- **Education:** Providing accessible and current evidence-based research, continuing education and professional development to the dance community and health professionals.
- **Expertise:** Being the leading experts in the health and wellness of Canadian dancers.
- **Leadership:** Supporting and promoting healthy approaches to dance in Canada through ongoing initiatives.

Mission (2016):

Healthy Dancer Canada’s mission is to foster and facilitate communication and collaboration among the dance community, health professionals and researchers. We endeavour to enhance the health, well-being and performance of all dancers and to be the Canadian leader in this effort.

Revenue Streams:

Prior to 2021, HDC’s main sources of revenue have been membership dues and conference fees. In 2021 HDC received its first grant from the Department of Canadian Heritage to translate the website. In 2022, HDC received a grant from Canada Council to undertake this strategic planning process.

Programs and Services:

In 2009, the first HDC conference was presented in Toronto with the theme of *A Million Healthy Dancers*. The conference became an annual event offered in various locations across the country, with the exception of 2020 when it was cancelled due to COVID-19.

2010	Toronto	HDC Conference 2010
2011	Vancouver Toronto	HDC Western Conference 2011 HDC Eastern Conference 2011
2012	Vancouver	Dance Myths and Facts
2013	Toronto	Dancer Health & Wellness: The Art & Science Revealed
2014	Vancouver	A Focus on Health & Wellness in Dance

2015	Quebec City	[trans]Forming Dance / [trans]Former la Danse
2016	Saskatoon	Dancing Through Life
2017	Calgary	Science to Studio to Stage
2018	Toronto	10 th Anniversary: Create, Communicate, Collaborate
2019	Montreal	Partnership with IADMS – A Day for Teachers
2021	Virtual	Access, Adapt, Advance/Accessibilité, Adaptation, Avenir
2022	Virtual	Participation, Performance, Personal Wellness / Participation, performance, bien-être personnel
2023	Virtual	Next steps? / On passe au prochain pas?

In addition to the annual conference, HDC quickly became a leader in developing and delivering valuable resources for the Canadian dance community. In 2013 HDC published the *Health Concern Communication Form; Suggestions for Discussing Health Concerns*; and *Translating the Language of Dance and Science*. In 2016 HDC published its first pre-professional dancer screen for healthcare professionals, followed by a version of the pre-professional dancer screen for dance educators in 2018.

HDC also focused on supporting dancers financially, by establishing the Financial Assistance Program in 2017. In 2022 the BIPOC Emerging Dance Artist Scholarship was created and the Dancer’s Necessity Fund was established in 2024.

Structure:

Since its inception, HDC governed itself through a volunteer Board of Directors. Over the years, HDC developed the following committee structure:

- Conference
- Dancer Screening
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Outreach and Communication
- Resources
- Financial Development
- BIPOC Advocacy Working Group
- Long Term Development Framework for Dance Working Group

Research for the Strategic Plan

Research for the strategic planning process focused on three key areas: environmental scan of dance in Canada; results from a survey of members; and a presentation on equity in dance.

Environmental Scan:

The environmental scan, conducted by Allyson Lui, revealed a range of interesting data:

- Dancers comprise 6% of the artists in Canada (2019), with a high female population.
- Diversity: 15% from racialized groups, 3% Indigenous, 16% from the immigrant community, 17% Francophone.
- 35% of dancers are self-employed and 76% teach dance. Only 8% of respondents are in dance companies, which may reflect a decline in dance companies.
- Across Canada, the greatest concentration of dance activities is southern Ontario, followed by Vancouver, the prairies and Montreal. The highest rate of dance attendance is in BC, whereas the highest number of dance organizations is in Ontario.
- Females: dancers, admin, marketing, costumes.
- Males: technical staff, producers, directors, choreographers.
- Dancers are the lowest paid artists at average \$16,000/year; most are self employed and the work tends to be seasonal or contact to contract.
- Limited support systems, inadequate facilities, no social safety net.
- Racial and disability barriers: exclusion of Black audiences and BIPOC artists income gap.
- COVID-19 impacted the dance community with reduced work and increased uncertainty.
- Health challenges affect dance participation.

The full Environmental Scan presentation can be found in Appendix A.

Member Survey:

HDC's planning team prepared a survey for members to ensure that their input was considered in the development of the strategic plan. The Membership Committee administered the survey, and Meghan Critchley, the Membership Coordinator, presented the results. The survey affirmed the value of HDC in providing resources and educational opportunities for both dancers, dance educators and for health care professionals who may be unfamiliar with dance. Respondents also expect HDC to provide the latest research on healthy dance practices.

Respondents expressed interest in more opportunities to network and be connected with others members, and encouraged HDC to collaborate with similar organizations in countries around the world. The importance of accessibility, inclusivity, equality and diversity was highlighted and respondents suggested that language about this be included in the vision and values, and highlight the need to equally respect all genres of dance.

Respondents shared ideas of how to attract more members including professional dancers, and recommended increasing marketing efforts and community initiatives to enhance engagement between conferences. Members rated most HDC programs and services as very or extremely important, and provided thoughtful suggestions that helped the planning team to prioritize.

Members appreciated being asked for input and feedback. The detailed presentation on the member survey can be found in **Appendix B**.

Fostering Equity:

The importance of considering equity in the strategic planning process was emphasized in a presentation by Andrea Downie. Andrea challenged the planning team to think about how health and social inequities are increasing and impacting marginalized groups across Canada; and how dominant narratives and ideologies maintain the status quo. Research on oppression in dance was examined in depth and HDC was challenged to work towards meaningful and ethical approaches to redress, cultivate and sustain equity for dancers in Canada.

The presentation on Fostering Equity can be found in **Appendix C**.

SWOT Analysis:

The planning team participated in a detailed analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The detailed SWOT Analysis, transcribed from the flip chart notes, can be found in **Appendix D**.

Strengths included openness to learning and feedback; willingness to share wealth and resources; hard working, high functioning board and volunteer committees; expertise, knowledge and experience; and reach across the country. Weaknesses included a lack of operating funding and being completely volunteer driven with no paid staff. The planning team also recognized weaknesses in not knowing its own diversity in membership as well as recognition in underrepresentation from dancers and some geographic areas of Canada.

The team envisioned opportunities by collaborating with other organizations; by embracing and learning from different dance forms and different ways of knowing; and by recognizing that wellness includes spirituality. Threats included the geographic vastness of the country; the rapid pace of change; access to and the rapid pace of change of technology; limited funding; and bias or attitudes towards dance and dancers.

Future State of Healthy Dancer Canada

In developing the future state of the organization, the planning team considered all of the research that was presented, and the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the organization, as well as opportunities and threats impacting the organization from outside. The strategic planning team brainstormed new vision, mission and values, which were finalized and adopted by the Board of Directors and membership at the HDC Annual General Meeting on November 5, 2023.

Vision

Healthy Dancer Canada envisions a dynamic culture that welcomes everyone to experience and share the art of dance in all its significance and greatness. We imagine a movement in which healthy practices honour and support the diverse roots, forms, and expressions of dance.

Mission

Healthy Dancer Canada's mission is to empower dancers and all who engage with the art of dance by nurturing a culture of wellness within a vibrant dancing community.

Values

With a dancer-centered and sustainable approach, HDC values:

- Wellness, safety, and care
 - We promote approaches, activities, and processes that protect and encourage the ongoing holistic health and wellbeing of individuals and groups.
- Equity, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility
 - We celebrate the many ways of being, knowing, learning, and dancing.
 - We are committed to positive experiences and outcomes for all. We strive:
 - to fairly distribute the organization's material and non-material opportunities;
 - to create welcoming and supportive interactions, programs, policies, and practices that recognize, respect, and leverage diversity;
 - to remove barriers to participation in dance, our organization, and its endeavours.
- Community and collaboration
 - We foster ecosystems that bring people together to share knowledge and resources as we address current issues and opportunities.
- Integrity, accountability, and transparency
 - We recognize the importance of:
 - being open and honest;
 - being responsive and responsible to our dance community;
 - exposing complexities that underlie the decision-making of our organization.

Structure

A new structure was developed in order to deliver on the mission of the organization, promote and live the values and work towards the vision. The new structure includes a strong board of directors and the following [Committees](#):

1. Continuing Education Committee, which includes Conference, Resources, and Dancer Screening
2. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee, which includes BIPOC Advocacy Working Group
3. Membership Committee
4. Outreach and Communications Committee, which includes Social Media, Newsletter, and Website Committees
5. Sustainability Committee, which includes Financial Development and Long-Term Development Framework for Dance Working Group

Strategic Priorities

The following strategic priorities were defined by the organization as the key areas to continue or further develop over the period of this strategic plan.

Governance of HDC:

Goal:

- To govern the organization with transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness to the needs of the community.

Objectives:

- To review vision, mission, values annually to ensure alignment.
- To develop and implement a specific and targeted evaluation process to measure committee and Board effectiveness.

Continuing Education:

Goal:

- To share evidence-informed knowledge and practice with HDC members and the global dance community.

Objectives:

- To organize continuing educational activities tailored to the needs of dancers, educators, researchers, and healthcare professionals originating from diverse dance milieus.
- To offer accessible and diversified research-based publications and tools on dance health and safe practices.
- To identify effective strategies to make our services known within the dance and healthcare community across Canada and abroad.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility:

Goal:

- To champion equity within the organization and broadly within the dance community.

Objectives:

- To form an EDIA committee.
- To conduct an internal equity review.
- To make connections with currently underrepresented and equity-deserving communities.

Membership:

Goal:

- To increase, manage and retain membership within HDC's organization.

Objectives:

- To promote membership to current and future members.
- To connect current members together.
- To increase representation and sociocultural diversity within HDC's membership.

Outreach and Communications:

Goal:

- To present and communicate HDC initiatives and those of our partners to our members; promote the growth and membership of HDC; and create a presence at nationwide events via outreach initiatives.

Objectives:

- To activate social media development training.
- To build upon communication and collaboration with HDC committees and working groups.
- To build upon relationships with Canadian organizational partners, i.e. festivals, competitions, service organizations.

Sustainability:

Goal:

- To transition the HDC Board from a working board to a governing board.

Objectives:

- To diversify HDC's revenue streams through fundraising, donations, sales and sponsorships.

Logic models were developed for each area that defined outputs and outcomes that HDC can use to report on results to the members and stakeholders, or for future grant applications. Detailed action plans were then developed to guide the work of the committees, with specific action steps and timelines.

The logic models and action plans can be found in **Appendix E**.

Appendices

- A. Environmental Scan Presentation (Allysan Lui)
- B. Membership Survey Results (Meghan Critchley)
- C. Fostering Equity Presentation (Andrea Downie)
- D. SWOT Notes (Marlene Stirrett-Matson)
- E. Logic Models and Action Plans:
 - Governance of HDC
 - Continuing Education Committee
 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee
 - Membership Committee
 - Outreach and Communications Committee
 - Sustainability Committee