

RESPONSES FROM WEB SURVEY SEEKING INPUT ON STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	1
INPUT FROM GENERAL MEMBERSHIP	2
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR ORGANIZATION	2
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR MEMBERS AND SERVICES	4
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR VOICES	6
INPUT FROM ACTIVITY GROUP LEADERS	9
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR ORGANIZATION	9
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR MEMBERS AND SERVICES	10
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OUR VOICES	11

Introduction and Overview

The GWSA Board of Directors, with input from staff and City partners, engaged in extensive discussions about the GWSA’s desired direction at Board meetings held during the months of September, October, November and January. In February, we published the results of those discussions, and three strategic priorities we identified, to *The Sentinel*; the *GWSA Email Update* and the GWSA website. We shared this information with Activity Group Leaders and all Committee Chairs.

Also in February, we published two identical web-based surveys seeking member input about the identified priorities. One survey was intended for general membership and the other for Activity Group Leaders. This report summarizes the input we received from the 63 members and 6 activity group leaders who responded to those surveys. Each section of this report includes a strategic goal; the rationale for that goal; and proposed objectives as presented in the surveys. There is also a pie chart reporting levels of agreement as well as any comments submitted by respondents. With one exception, the comments are recorded here exactly as submitted by members.

Input from General Membership

Strategic Priority: Our Organization

Goal

To strengthen the staff and volunteer infrastructure to support the effective achievement of the future organizational goals.

WHY?

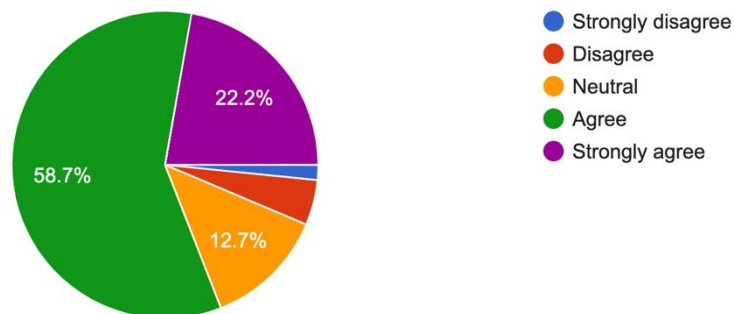
- Organizational operations are the responsibility of a few dedicated staff and volunteers.
- Staff and volunteers are at capacity.
- Current organizational infrastructure will not support expansion of programs.

Objectives

- Develop a succession plan for board members and other leaders.
- Complete an organizational review to establish the necessary staff structure to support the organization.
- Increase staff responsibility and accountability for the day-to-day matters that will allow the board to focus on strategic and governance matters.
- Increase staff responsibility to accountability to conduct operational matters that will support program and other leaders in the organization.

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Organization?

63 responses



Hire a paid administrator to run day to day operations.

Develop more for variety of backgrounds, new to Canada, etc.

Having fun and socializing are my priorities.

I am somewhat confused with exactly who is a staff member. While volunteering at the front desk, staff was official paid city people. I assume you are talking about volunteer staffing of the organization.

Advertise at the Village in the Arboretum.....pay staff more with increased responsibilities.

Comment: Ensure salary reflects increased job responsibilities & accountability

We need to approach any increase in the number of paid staff cautiously. Too often organizations tend to forget that volunteers run this type of organization and over inflating the need for paid staff can have a deleterious impact on the affordability of the organization to people on fixed incomes.

Hopefully Activity Leaders will be made aware of changes, improvements, etc., in all priorities as they are proposed.

I marvel how well organized it all seems to someone who just comes once or twice a week to play games. But it does take staff to do all the behind-the-scenes work. Thank you to all of them!

A good part of the success in early years was due to the expertise of the groups that banded together to form the GWSA. Activities were self-directing and tended to be well run. A top-down organization just cannot compare because of lack of expertise in each activity. A number of Clubs that I belong to have started buying executive liability policies. Perhaps the GWSA could do this for the Clubs associated with it and ease their (the GWSA executives) concerns about legal responsibility.

Communication and discussion sharing ideas - this applies to all other questions about communication

"Senior Staff Leaser" - paid position or volunteer?

I feel there is a need to start with an organizational review to determine existing roles, and what needs to change. Right away there is a problem if the Board needs to be involved in day-to-day matters. If, as you said, staff are already working at capacity, the review should point out gaps and will determine if there needs to be a restructuring with adjustment of job descriptions, including the addition of a senior staff leader.

Staff accountability is not listed in the SWOT analysis.

Unless the city has allotted funds to hire more GWSA staff, I don't think it's reasonable to expect the City Staff to increase their responsibility and accountability. I'm sure that they are already working hard and doing what they can.

Unless the City has funding to provide more staff for the GWSA, I don't think it's reasonable to expect the City Staff to increase their responsibility and accountability. I'm sure that they are already working hard and doing what they can.

Strengthening infrastructure is always a good thing. How you plan to do it is nonsensical.

The plan has many generalized objectives and does not have specifics to achieve those objectives.

Strategic Priority: Our Members and Services

Goal

To ensure that everyone involved in GWSA, not only reflects our diverse community but that programs and services are diverse and equitable.

WHY?

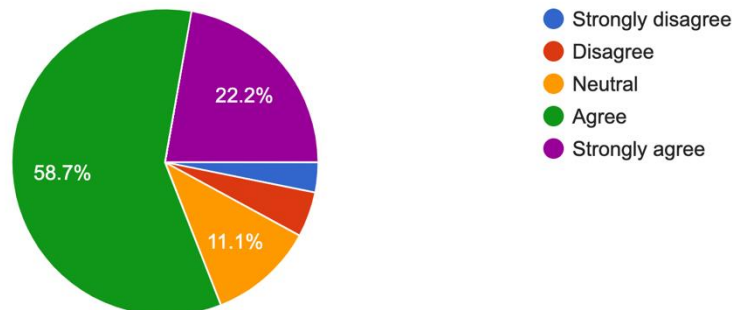
- GWSA programs are currently, primarily offered in Guelph.
- GWSA membership does not reflect the cultural diversity of the geographical area.
- Programs do not reflect the interests of our diverse community.

Objectives

- Seek engagement from members and non-members about improvements required to create more diverse program offerings.
- Complete a gap analysis of all programs offered for older adults within the Guelph Wellington area.
- Develop a multi-year business plan to expand and improve programs.
- Create a culture of growth, innovation, and improvement.
- Develop partnerships with like-minded organizations to support development and expansion of programs and activities.

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Members and Services?

63 responses



There was no spot to make a comment about members and services, so this is a comment: I am not sure if you mean racial or economic diversity, or both. I suspect both are important. How to provide some of the activities to those that struggle to come up with \$50 or whatever a fee is for some of the clubs. IS there a special fund available?

One of the major problems with membership is that the working seniors are mainly locked out because the services are offered during normal working hours. Perhaps some sort of partnership between groups in GWSA's Guelph locations and similar groups in Wellington county (I think of the Seniors Centre in Fergus's bridge players groups, for example).

Share ideas.

Excellent objectives.

Create a list of languages spoken within membership to help explain who and what GWSA is and does. This will help with verbal and written communication. For Objective 'Develop a multi-year business plan to expand and improve programs', this would be difficult because we work on donations.

Already, programs are full. Program expansion including culturally diverse programming cannot evolve unless staff are working efficiently. Start there. Do you know for sure if the diverse population's needs are not being met? How will you engage more volunteers?

Mission statement: To be a leading provider of programs for older adults across Guelph and Wellington County. A statement like this sets a direction for future growth and stretches targets to develop services with a larger audience in mind.

"Programs do not reflect the interests of our diverse community." Have these interests been identified? If the public is not aware of GWSA, how do we know what their interests are?

I agree that it would be beneficial to the Community to have GWSA programs that reflect the cultural diversity of the area, in order to attract more members of various cultures. It's important to be welcoming to all races and cultures. However, except for the area of cultural diversity, I don't see a need for a huge plan to expand programming. The Objectives listed in this section aren't clear and concise in relation to initiatives which would be implemented.

I agree that it is beneficial to the Community to have GWSA programs that reflect the diversity of the area, in order to attract more members of various cultures and to be inclusive. It's important to be welcoming to all races and cultures. However, except for the area of cultural diversity, I don't see a need for a huge plan to expand programming beyond the improvements that continually happen. I find the wording of the objectives not very clear and concise, in relation to plans for expanding programs.

How can you plan changes based on interviewing and surveying an incredibly small number of members?

The plan should be more detailed to address the issues

Strategic Priority: Our Voices

Goal

To build momentum and support for GWSA through communication to all GWSA stakeholders and our community that is clear and transparent.

WHY?

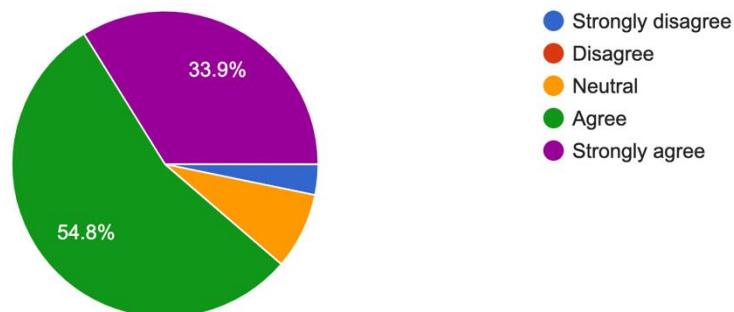
- Do not have up-to-date contact information for all members which is necessary to communicate more effectively.
- Need to modernize GWSA communication systems.
- Public is not aware of GWSA, especially people who are new to the area.

Objectives

- Develop direct communication pathways to membership.
- Update GWSA technology to ensure it creates efficient and effective ways to communicate.
- Develop a communication plan to aid in understanding of older adult needs for social, recreational and education programs and to inform the community about GWSA.

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Voices?

62 responses



Strengthen tools available. Privacy concerns about contact info for members. Also, previous section seems too ambitious for the present mandate of a volunteer organization.

Unsure about receiving large number of emails.

I agree with the priorities.

As always, strategies are nice - implementation is harder. That demands clearly enlightened, experienced authorities with creativity, resources and clout. Past history of staff not consistently great - ego struggles at various levels. Limited resources. Huge reliance on dedicated volunteers. That's my observation over 20 yrs. Very difficult being a not-for-profit these days dependent on donations. Let's remember - the GWSA performs a valuable service

for seniors - saving money for the province by promoting seniors' health. GWSA needs to lobby for more provincial financial support.

Let's hope that all of those university students studying gerontology could even understand how to bridge the gap there is between them and today's 80-year-old.

Put a flyer in the advert envelope or 1/2 page in the Mercury Tribune periodically

Yes! To updating technology. Re: Develop direct communication pathways to membership. Comment: We have the Sentinel. Question: What were you thinking?

Re: Develop a communication plan to aid in understanding of older adult needs for social, recreational and education programs and to inform the community about GWSA. Comment: Ask the membership what they need, especially during COVID.

This must be tempered with the member's desire to be contacted. We have seen that opening this level of communication can result in unwanted and unsolicited levels of communication. The membership must have the ability to opt out and not feel obligated to communicate unnecessarily.

Our diverse community is more visible in some clubs than others. Communication is vital and needs attention. I believe we need to optimize our effectiveness with current members before we incorporate a more diverse community.

This relates to this issue and membership services which you didn't provide the option to make a comment. Rainbow Senior's (gay, etc.), is an under serviced community. We are lost even in our own community sometimes. I would like to see the GWSA reach out to us and also open a dialogue with both staff and membership regarding understanding, acceptance and dealing with issues that are exclusive to the Seniors in this catchment area.

Make all communications, to and from, the Council public.

Must be heard.

Voices should be heard.

In our group, we have had difficulties in the past with communication with the office. For example, when we changed leaders for our group, I and the past leader had to fill out the same forms multiple times and the office kept losing them. The former leader's name STILL pops up on messages despite her efforts for over a year to get off the list. It must be possible for better organization!

Regarding goal 'communication to all GWSA...that is clear and transparent.' First budget/costs for new communication equipment. Is it to be purchased in pieces or chunks or all at once? Problem is everyone is looking for more money. Check out grants and larger businesses for donations? Possible donor sources - Linamar, Skyjack, Condo developers, Costco, Bell, Rogers, Chamber of Service Clubs, Commerce, Banks, Danby.

Effective communication, with contact information, also needs to happen sooner than later. Start with up-to-date information on all members. Can the gathering of this be assigned to a contract worker with volunteers? Modernization of the system is a must. Advertise in the papers, at the library, etc., that we exist. Organizational review and communication upgrades are needed before any of your other strategic plans can possibly be met.

Due to the broad base of members that are not all technically proficient, communication systems will need to accommodate multiple methodologies.

1. Yes, communication system needs to be updated to meet the needs of the users. 2. Who are the stakeholders?

Most of the planning and discussion of the Strategic Plan was done "in camera", which didn't allow for discussion by and input from members. Some of our members do not use computers, and no allowance was made for them to be able to read and respond to the Strategic Plan. The Plan in general has a good deal of jargon which doesn't necessarily explain how concepts will be implemented.

I understand that most of the planning and discussion of the Strategic Plan was done "in camera", which didn't allow for discussion from members. Some of our members do not use computers, and I understand that no allowance was made for them to be able to read and respond to the Strategic Plan. The Plan on the whole has a lot of "jargon" which doesn't necessarily explain how the concepts will be implemented.

The first step to transparency to all GWSA stakeholders would have been to not take most of the discussions about the Strategic Plan "in camera" at Board of Directors meetings. Another way to increase transparency is to be clear and concise. GWSA members that I've talked to about the draft Strategic Plan have called it ambiguous, vague, frustrating and hard to understand. One of our GWSA Badminton Leadership Group members commented that "Perhaps the board members did not want to commit to any clear statement."

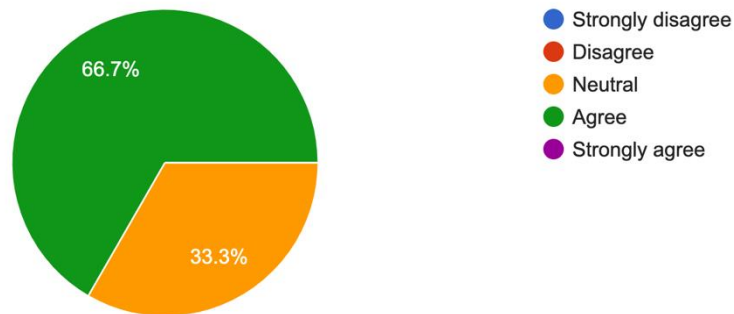
Again, too much generalization, no specifics, no details as to who is going to lead or how all of these objectives are to be put into place. Is this a Board issue, will committees be developed? It has been stated that volunteers are stretched. How is this to be alleviated, especially if the strategic plan has all of these projects? Being more specific and having less generalized objectives might encourage more participation.

Input from Activity Group Leaders

Strategic Priority: Our Organization

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Organization?

6 responses



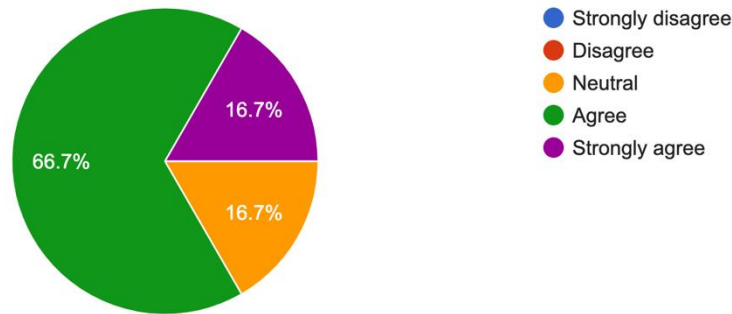
I think there can be a process to yet grow our volunteer component. The increase of City staff responsibility suggests more staff which is obviously constrained by financial factors. In badminton, the fun quotient and the friendliness factor needs to grow. We rarely obtained a quorum at AGM meetings, so a concerted effort has to be made to address what are the barriers and how do we overcome them. Succession planning will always be a problem if your members (and potential members) don't feel welcome, aren't having fun, and don't see a way to connect through events, like fun competition and skill training, etc. And therefore, good candidates for succession planning may drift away as they are not sufficiently stimulated. It is one thing to be stale but quite another when an activity could possibly be harmful to its members and possible members. Without some technique for assessment and possibly oversight, I worry about the health and prosperity of some groups and activities.

In the past, many issues arose because roles and responsibilities were either not clearly defined or understood. Clarifying who is responsible for what/when would facilitate processes and derail conflicts.

Strategic Priority: Our Members and Services

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Members and Services?

6 responses



NOTE: The following extended comment came from one person. I (Becky) formatted it to make it easier to read.

It is extremely important for our association to really reflect our society in its diversity of people and ensure that it always does as our city and county will be ever changing. In this diversity aspect, our facilities don't allow persons with visual, hearing or mobility issues to function well and freely. For example, using the hallway for table games.

- Lighting is insufficient most days and is not task or table oriented.
- The use of the nearest wall for Art Display will most likely deter the improvement of the lighting.
- Persons wearing hearing aids have the constant noise of the ventilation fans operating so they turn their aids off and so strain to hear table mates.
- The conversations of residents coming and going to the condos brings in another 'noise' to try and cancel out. What an utterly exhausting socialization opportunity this becomes.
- When the fire drill goes off in the hallway (not in the rooms), it is ear piercing for those people wearing their hearing aids.
- Those of our members who use walkers must sit and/or park their walkers on the 'hall side' of the table in order to leave access to the other three chairs. That makes a total of 5 tables or spots for people with walkers or wheelchairs. If we were to increase the tables by lining the other side of the hallway, it becomes too narrow to meet fire safety evacuation standards, as well as it interferes with condo residents' foot traffic or mobility aids traffic.
- Temperature control of the hallway is understandably not easy with our automatic front doors and the extensive amount of glass in the fire exit doors and library located at the end of the hallway. In the winter, it is too cold to be comfortable to sit for 3 hours.
- We believe we are maximizing space but are we overlooking what a person's aging bodies require at stages and phases of life?

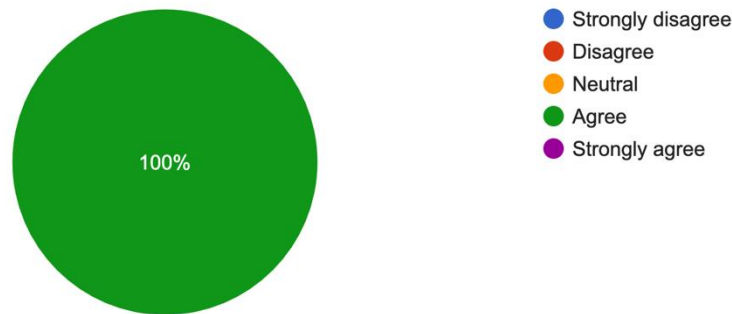
So, in our pursuit of diversity of Membership and Board, we must include those persons who reflect our full society.

It was only by reading the draft plan that I understood what the full scope of the GWSA originally was - including Seniors homes as well as organizations. Why not consider having representatives from the Senior homes as part of Board and 'Joint Activity Leaders'. It seems once a person moves into a home, they stop coming to the Centre. Is it a lack of transportation (many aren't new bus routes), conflicting Residence activity time, or meal times are inflexible and already paid for, despondency, or a combination of any of these things that causes them to stop meeting up with their longtime friends and activity groups?

Strategic Priority: Our Voices

How do you feel about the strategic priority relating to Our Voices?

6 responses



Please stop assuming that seniors are not staying up with the technology. Yes, we do miss out when we don't use the technology. Internet costs and device costs are expensive. Many of us live on a fixed income and may not have any pension to top up our government CPP and OAS income. Shelter, heat/cooling and food come before the cost of one form of communication. Then there is the money required to maintain health. If you continue to approach communication via technology as the main or preferred method, you risk turning away the very people who could use our services the most.

It is vital to the GWSA to have open communication with ALL members, regardless of the individual's access to technology. All avenues of contact must be available. Also, the public profile of our group must be more visible.