



Our Strategic Plan 2021-2024

January 2021

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How We Started

The GWSA arose from roots dating before 1970, when many seniors clubs were organizing activities for themselves. In 1972, a downtown Centre opened at the Old Governor's residence behind the jail on Douglas Street. In 1975, the Guelph Senior Citizens Council (GSCC) started as the brain child of the then Mayor Norm Jary. The Sentinel newsletter was born in 1976 from a New Horizon grant, with articles from sixteen seniors organizations. The GSCC moved from Douglas Street to the Delhi Recreation Centre in 1980. A monthly "Evergreen Report" appeared in the Guelph Mercury. By 1983 the GSCC represented ten Seniors Clubs plus ten seniors residences across Guelph.

After the seniors and the Rotary Club of Guelph made a presentation to the Guelph City Council, a Senior Citizens Advisory Board recommended a new Centre serve as a focal point and administrative headquarters for seniors programming.

The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) was adopted as a new name in 1988 with 600 members, was incorporated in 1989, and obtained charitable and not-for-profit status.

The Victoria Recreation Centre and the former Bowlerama sites were considered as possible locations for a new centre, and the promise became possible when the City purchased the latter site. A buy-a-brick fundraising campaign was launched, and seniors raised \$1.2 million as their contribution to building the \$2.8 million Evergreen Centre. \$450,000 was contributed by the local Rotary

Foundation which included an amount from the Estate of local businessman, Jack Skov for \$350,000. The balance came from City funds, other grants, and major corporate and personal donations.

The Evergreen Centre opened on February 19, 1992 as one of Canada's finest seniors facilities. Since the opening, the GWSA and the City purchased adjacent retail space which was converted into additional room space.

The GWSA remains true to its member-driven base and continues to evolve through strong partnerships to address the needs of seniors across the community.¹

The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) is one of the largest seniors' organizations of its kind in Canada, providing diverse programs, activities, and services to Guelph and Wellington County. They currently have 2,800 members who participate in over 55 programs. This is the result of the dedication and hard work of over 500 volunteers, 13 board members and six staff.

¹ <https://gwsa-guelph.ca> Accessed January 21, 2021.

Strategic Planning Project

Over the years, the organization has listened to their members and the list of activities and programs have grown to meet their needs and interests. The Board of Directors has decided to pause and reflect to ensure that the organization continues to meet the needs of older adults. Moreover, in September 2020, the Board of Directors embarked on a Strategic Planning Project in order to have bold conversations about the future of GWSA. The project included stakeholder interviews, an environmental scan and surveys. That work has culminated in the development of the Strategic Plan 2021-2024. GWSA has looked back at their accomplishments for the last 30+ years and looks forward to embarking on the next phase of their journey.

The Vision, Mission and Values were reviewed to ensure they still articulate the realities of who the organization is and what they want to accomplish. The GWSA continues to be committed to the vision of **a future that is progressive, accountable, and innovative in providing services to the older adult community.** The mission that helps them achieve that is to **enable older adults to be active, involved, make friends and age with dignity.** The core values of **involvement, innovation, integrity, and inclusiveness** were determined to be foundational to every aspect of the organization and used to inform all that they do in pursuit of a community where older adults can *Be active. Get involved and Make friends.*

The three GWSA strategic priorities are:

Our Organization.

Our Members and Services.

Our Voices.

GWSA has always known that *Our Organization's* core strength is the dedicated and committed volunteers, staff, and board members at GWSA. Building on the current staff and volunteer model that supports all GWSA activities, will ensure that a strong infrastructure is in place to continue delivering the excellent services and programs for which they are known. *Our Members and Services* reflect our community however, we recognize that our community is growing and changing. GWSA will ensure that the social, recreational and wellness programs are diverse and equitable while helping to improve the lives of older adults. And, *Our Voices*, whether those of the staff, volunteers and participants, and ultimately the community, all deserve to be heard. A variety of stakeholder perspectives and experiences will be used to help improve the organization and to reflect the needs of their community.

Thank-you to those who participated in the development of this plan. It provides the roadmap which will guide GWSA into the future with confidence.

GWSA VISION

A future that is progressive, accountable, and innovative in providing services to the older adult community.

GWSA MISSION

To enable older adults to be active, get involved, make new friends and age with dignity.

GWSA CORE VALUES

Involvement

We will provide meaningful social activities and educational opportunities based on the interests and well-being needs of our members. Active participation by our members, volunteers, and staff in all aspects of GWSA will ensure that together we will achieve our goals.

Innovation

We will ensure our programs are designed to meet the ever-changing needs of older adults in our community. We will be open minded to new ideas and new approaches to be responsive to the emerging interest and needs of our members.

Integrity

We will treat each other with respect and ensure we fulfill our individual and collective responsibilities and accountabilities. We will be honest, trustworthy, and consistent in all our interactions with each other.

Inclusiveness

We will invite all people in our community to be members, share their interests and take on leadership roles in our organization. Everyone connected to GWSA, will have a sense of belonging, feel respected, valued and have a sense of supportive energy from leaders, staff and fellow members.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Volunteers are dedicated Large membership Building/facility Programs/activities Brand Partnerships Leadership Financial practices Policies and procedures Affordable for members	Diversity in all areas of the organization Communication systems Succession planning for leadership Limited space Volunteers are over extended Programs at capacity No senior staff leader Funding structure and dependency Infrastructure needs to be modernized
Opportunities	Challenges
Increase in number of older adults in the area. Increase in geographic scope. Technological advances Increased partnerships GWSA is respected and well positioned to advocate for growth in programs. GWSA can grow from current hub model. GWSA can build relationships in the county.	Diversity of programs to attract diverse population. Reliance on one funder Reliance on volunteers Not all seniors are keeping up with changes in technology. Space requirements Impact of COVID Few people doing majority of the work.

Strategic Priorities Overview

The following Strategic priorities are based on the themes that emerged during the strategic plan project.

Strategic Priorities are:

Our Organization Sustainable and viable organizational structure and resources (human, physical, technical, and financial) needed to support the future needs of the organization.

Our Members and Services Transformation and growth are needed in GWSA services to address changing need and growing population in both Guelph and Wellington.

Our Voice Communication needs to be widespread and available in a variety of formats to members and the community.

Below, each strategic priority has a stated goal as well as the reasons identified to establish that strategic priority. Objectives will help to identify focused activities required to assist in the achievement of the goal.

Strategic Priority #1

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.

Strategic Priority #2

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.

Strategic Priority #3

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.