



STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

Preamble

This document provides a draft of the Toronto Council on Aging (TCA) Strategic Plan for 2019-2021. It updates the 2015-2018 strategic plan approved by the TCA Board of Directors on June 23, 2015. This draft Strategic Plan was approved by the TCA Board on August 27th, 2018, and is being presented to the public and TCA general membership in September 2018 and in-person to TCA general membership at the Annual General Meeting in December 2018.

The 2019-21 Strategic Plan development steps were guided by the *Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee* comprised of: Committee Co-Chairs and TCA Board Members Samantha Biglieri and Malcolm Stewart; TCA Board Members Rebekah Churchyard and Jane Szilvassy; and community members Julia Chew and Shahira Ishak. The non-profit consulting organization, Management Advisory Services (MAS), was retained by the TCA Board for planning process support. MAS provides pro bono consulting services to not-for-profit organizations.

The planning process included varied consultation efforts including:

-) A collaborative Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis with membership of the TCA present at our Annual General Meeting (December 2017);
-) A TCA Board of Directors Retreat (May 2018);
-) Individual interviews with Board members (June 2018); and
-) Review of the past strategic plans and various external policies.

The next step in this process will be development of an Action Plan (2019-21) detailing implementation steps, accountabilities and goal metrics for individual committees. The *Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee* will work with various TCA Committees to develop their individual Action Plans. The Action Plans will be reviewed by the Board of Directors in January 2018 with progress reports provided to the Board annually. The Action Plans will also be posted online.

About the Toronto Council on Aging

The Toronto Council on Aging's (TCA) original mandate was to bring together older adults from across the newly amalgamated City of Toronto - to represent and work on behalf of Toronto's seniors. Throughout the years, this focus on listening and gathering the stories and needs of seniors across Toronto has earned TCA a reputation for having the pulse on what matters the most to older Torontonians.

This reputation has supported TCA's work with older adults, grassroots organizations and community organizations. TCA has consulted to all levels of government over the years - for example by supporting policies in newsletters (like a national pharmacare plan or province-run 'Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities', NORCs), helping older adults during election season by creating a 'What to ask your local candidate' guides, sitting on the City of Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table and collaborating with others to implement age-friendly neighbourhood programming.

While the TCA commitment to listening to the experiences and stories of older adults from every corner of Toronto is an established one, it is commitment that TCA must build upon to achieve sustained success as an organization. TCA's financial structure has historically impeded the organization's ability to move ahead with its mission of providing education and fostering leadership among Toronto's older citizens, to improve their social status and quality of life in the City. The unrestricted, core funding¹ of the organization currently consists of: 1) annual membership dues from individual and corporate members, and 2) individual charitable gifts. The membership funding source has decreased each year due to diminished membership. With the attainment of charitable status in 2014, the possibility of attracting tax-deductible charitable donations was achieved. However, TCA has not yet fully realized this potential.

Past efforts to raise unrestricted operating funds have included: conducting on-site assessments requested by local businesses and institutions, and certifying as Age-Friendly those that meet defined standards and offering 'Friendly to Seniors lunch-and-learn' sessions to older adults on the challenges of aging and promoting self-advocacy. Building sustainable funding for TCA is a core component of this Strategic Plan. Another key potential issue for TCA is its visibility within a city that has diverse sets of organizations representing the interests of older adults. This continues to be one of the biggest areas of opportunity for TCA.

A number of factors contribute to TCA's relatively low visibility at this time: competition in a broad field, sufficient funding to establish impact, relatively short reach outside of older adult community, a need for increased self-promotion, incentives for membership and establishing a clear niche for TCA. While TCA has run successful age-friendly collaborative community programs in Scarborough and Midtown Toronto, the organization must promote inclusivity with a Board of Directors that mirrors the diversity of Toronto. In serving Toronto, TCA will need to engage with a variety of geographic neighbourhoods, ages, ethno-cultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, gender identities, members of the LGBTQ2+ community and by considering languages other than English.

Finally, the TCA also defines itself as an organization that provides leadership and education to enhance the experience of aging and encourage age-friendly policies and practices in Toronto's communities.

¹ Core funding includes: staff, office facilities, equipment and supplies, telephonic and digital communications equipment and services, insurance, etc. We are fortunate to have found a rent-free physical location with SPRINT Senior Services at 140 Merton Street, although the long-term continuance of this arrangement is uncertain. We have hired a part-time Office Coordinator, and maintain a website.

Education was identified as one of the main pillars to the makeup of the organization and a focus on education excellence would allow the organization to ensure that one of its core values is continually refined. Education excellence involves ensuring that relevant persons and topics of information are included. Many Board members interviews indicated that success meant inclusion of more diverse and larger groups of the older adult community in Toronto.

TCA's Vision, Mission, Values + Strategic Directions

Our Vision

Our community respects, values and empowers its older adults.

Our Mission

The TCA is led by the grassroots wisdom of older adults. We are committed to educating widely, representing and serving diverse populations, providing leadership, and aiding in the development of an age-inclusive city by building collaborative networks.

Our Values

Collaboration: The development of cross sector relationships with others is the “operating philosophy” of TCA

Leadership: We are led by the wisdom and experiences of older adults

Action-oriented: We are focused on the outcomes, utilizing an independent voice for change and accountability for our actions

Respect: We recognize the lifelong contribution of older adults to society

Inclusive: We strive to represent the diversity of older adults in our programs and practices

Our Strategic Directions

Optimize Visibility: We will build and grow the visibility, awareness and reputation of TCA

Build Financial Health: We will establish stable and sustainable funding sources for TCA

Foster Policy Engagement: We will foster grassroots engagement with specific policies in support of older adults (e.g. transportation, housing, healthcare)

Enhance Diversity: We will engage with older adults and their communities from diverse neighbourhoods

Ensure Educational Excellence: We will educate our community on best practices, current research and other timely topics

TCA's Strategic Directions + Goals

1.0 Optimize Visibility:

We will build and grow the visibility, awareness and reputation of TCA

During the SWOT analysis the TCA's lack of visibility was identified as a significant weakness - and is therefore one of the biggest areas of opportunity for the organization. Though a strong leader in Age Friendly Education, optimizing and increasing visibility relies heavily on all aspects of the strategic development activities in order to become a reality.

GOALS:

- 1.1 Build awareness and grow affinity for the TCA as a leader in older adult education through engaging, innovative and relevant programming that is subsequently supported and advertised to both the older adult community and the general public. Self-promotion through these activities will establish the TCA as a go-to for education and information on aging in Toronto.
- 1.2 Innovate online presence through an update of the website and content with regular web updates and regular email newsletters to TCA online membership and community.
- 1.3 Continue and enhance awareness of TCA activity through social media reach on platforms such as twitter (existing), Instagram (new). Introduce paid media to encourage membership applicants and volunteers to build a diverse community.
- 1.4 Grow TCA reach organically by engaging partners and creating 'ambassadors' in different organizations to cross promote the TCA and raise awareness of educational programming.
- 1.5 Host one large scale event a year to members and community at large, that serves as a fundraiser, information gathering/sharing event and chance to promote the TCA to potential new members in order to bring the community together and showcase the organization's role in the community.

2.0 Build Financial Health:

We will establish stable and sustainable funding sources for TCA

TCA members who participated in the SWOT Analysis at the 2017 AGM identified 'funding issues' and 'lack of steady, basic administrative funding' as areas of weakness. This theme was reinforced by interviews with individual Board members in May:

"We are doing well for contribution to programs, it is pretty solid. But funding and fundraising is very weak. There is no Membership Committee. (We) need a strong Committee specifically for fundraising and recruitment." "Our membership is quite low at the moment. Purchasing a database to target potential members would be a good idea. It would also increase our funds." "Priority should go to funding, public relations and membership."

More recently the Education Programs committee has offered a Speaker Series on 'Living with Dementia' to professionals and caregivers. However, we have not yet been successful in scaling these programs up to be self-sustaining, nor contributing to core funding. While TCA has been reasonably successful in acquiring project grants from governments to carry out government-defined projects, we have not been

able to raise sufficient funds to provide and maintain the infrastructure needed to apply for and efficiently manage grant income, nor to fund projects defined by the organization itself according to the needs of its constituents.

In 2016 TCA enrolled for the first time as a participant in the City's 'Toronto Challenge', a 5 km walk-and-run event organized each spring to assist over 40 charitable organizations that provide services to older people raise operating funds. It is a well-publicized and well-attended event. TCA's participation of volunteer walkers and runners – and donors -- increased modestly in 2017 and 2018.

GOALS:

- 2.1 Create a Membership Committee responsible for increasing individual members by 50% in each of 2019, 2020 and 2021 and corporate members to 25 in total.
- 2.2 Increase individual donations by 50% in each of 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- 2.3 Apply for membership in the Toronto Foundation.
- 2.4 Establish a list of 'shovel-ready' projects, so that when funding becomes available there are a list of projects to start with (complete with potential partners outlined).

3.0 Foster Policy Engagement:

We will foster grassroots engagement with specific policies in support of older adults (e.g. transportation, housing, healthcare)

As one of the TCA Board members stated during the interviews:

"To me, success means zoning in on issues of importance to our older people in Toronto and proposing creative and realistic solutions to those issues. This requires an extensive process of dialogue with older Torontonians, seeking consensus on what the key issues are, then communicating with funding bodies, social and health service agencies, businesses and political leaders to promote positive change."

That is what we hope to do through this Strategic Plan - to get a pulse on the experiences and stories of older adults from every corner of the City and begin to help older adults communicate those needs to decision-makers, institutions, businesses and society at large.

GOALS:

- 3.1 Engage with the municipal, provincial and national elections processes. The TCA will do this through a variety of ways including the production of 'Question Sheets' and other educational materials to help older adults engage with their candidates in their communities; and the hosting of at least one Candidate meeting per election cycle to gather the concerns of older adults and then communicate them to candidates for their feedback.
- 3.2 Host at least one Town Hall meeting every year, in different locations, as well as an online and mailed survey to understand what the needs of older adults across the city are. These findings will be compiled into a Report available on the TCA's website.

- 3.3 Seek out other advocacy organizations working on issues identified through the Town Hall meetings, and seek to partner with them to publicize their work. For example, giving them space on our website to create a blog post, or be published in the newsletter.
- 3.4 Create a section on our website for older adults to submit editorials on how municipal, provincial and federal policies affect them. TCA will post these on our website, and/or the newsletter.
- 3.5 Create a section on our website which has a database of organizations in the City of Toronto working on certain advocacy issues (e.g. housing, public transportation). These organizations would be invited to provide a short summary as to how older adults can get involved with them. This would also be published in the newsletter.
- 3.6 Write at least one position paper per year, based on the most prevalent topic of concern identified through Town Hall meetings, and to be published in the newsletter and online.
- 3.7 Write a summary document of the issues identified through Town Hall meetings each year, and to be published in the newsletter and online.

4.0 Enhance Diversity:

We will engage with older adults and their communities from diverse neighbourhoods

TCA strives to promote inclusivity with a board of directors that mirrors the diversity of Toronto. In serving Toronto, TCA seeks to engage with a variety of geographic neighbourhoods, ages, ethno-cultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, genders, members of the LGBTQ2+ community and by incorporating languages other than English. TCA aims to partner with different organizations representing diverse groups, as well as to hear the stories of older adults from all backgrounds, understand their needs and represent their perspectives with decision makers. TCA seeks to address the disparities that exist across the City through collaborative engagement and education. To date TCA has run successful and collaborative age-friendly community programs in Scarborough and Midtown Toronto.

GOALS:

- 4.1 Research and define a set of non-English language, ethnic and LGBTQ2+ organizations and groups that presently exist in the Toronto area. This will include an exploration of internal memberships with existing board and committee members.
- 4.2 Determine a mechanism to prioritize reaching out to several organizations promoting diversity and seniors with the intention of collaborative age-related initiatives.
- 4.3 Through building relationships, the Toronto Council on Aging will explore how the needs of older adults from non-English language, ethnic and LGBTQ2+ backgrounds are being met.
- 4.4 Board of Directors recruitment shall address diversities in terms of: age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, minority status, LGBTQ2+ community and welcome individuals with a range of experiences and backgrounds.
- 4.5 Commit to understanding and representing intersectional experiences of aging in the City of Toronto (i.e. intersecting of social identities contributing to oppression).

5.0 Ensure Educational Excellence:

We will educate our community on best practices, current research and other timely topics

The Board Retreat indicated that TCA desired to be an innovative educator in other areas of the city. The SWOT analysis also noted that one of TCA's weaknesses was lack of visibility, and engagement with all levels of politics. One Board interview indicated that speaker series could be more inclusive to older adults within the community. Enabling older adults to share the wisdom they possess is key to the success of the TCA.

GOALS:

- 5.1 Provide education on the political process in Canada for marginalized groups who wish to become more engaged in their communities.
- 5.2 Work with our community to determine desired key topics for education, and organize these topics around a similar theme.
- 5.3 Engage educational event speakers/facilitators/workshop leaders from the community (not limited to traditional "experts") and deliver these events in diverse neighbourhoods and accessible locations across the City.
- 5.4 Increase visibility of TCA's educational offerings with a focus on communications including its website.
- 5.5 Improve internal communications by appointing one liaison position in each committee that is responsible for responding to inquiries and requests from other committees.