

Executive Summary

Introduction

Standardbred Canada (SC) moves into the fourth year of its Five-Year Strategic Plan with a focus on our core long-term objectives. Communications, Data Management, Financial Sustainability, Membership and Customer Service Value, and Stakeholder Relations remain front and centre. The Association developed its 2025 Strategic Tactics with SC's long-term objectives in mind, along with a focus on industry and Association development.

Performance Overview of 2024

In the past year, SC went through a significant leadership change. Part way through 2024, a new President & CEO, and new Senior Director of Finance and Administration were in place. Through the leadership change, management focused on a smooth transition and a focus on strengthening organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Several goals and objectives from the 2024 Strategic Plan were achieved.

- The launch of the Single-Sign-On initiative establishes the framework required for the development of a comprehensive membership dashboard.
- Two major new membership recruitment initiatives were launched in the "I Love My Standardbred" Equestrian Membership category, and SC's new Junior Membership category.
- The National Economic Survey was completed and will be retained by SC as a resource in ongoing dialogue with government.
- The Artificial Intelligence Roadmap was completed and sets a course for how SC can use AI in current and future initiatives.
- A five-year Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan was delivered, setting a course for the vital technology requirements that SC will need into the future, including a major transition from hardware to cloud technology.

In addition, a number of tactics set out in the Strategic Plan will continue to be an operational or strategic focus in 2025. Those include Regulator and Racetrack Relations, the ongoing development of an enhanced Stallion Directory, the continuing development of a National Breeder Incentive Program and efforts to expand the use of Direct Deposit payments across Canada.

Strategic Planning Process for 2025

To prepare for the upcoming year, the SC management team and the Strategic Planning and Process Committee (STPP) conducted an external analysis. This analysis examined current trends in the marketplace, industry shifts, consumer behavior, technological advancements, and regulatory environments.

Combined with an internal look at the organization, SC was able to identify several key areas of focus for the upcoming year.

Priority Areas for 2025

As in previous years, the management team and committee identified areas where the organization can make the most impact for the betterment of the industry and the Association. Encouraging youth to participate, generating incentives for breeders and focusing on areas of improvement for horsepeople, stakeholders and customers, SC was able to create a plan that aims to address several key priorities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With 2025 being the fourth year of a five-year plan, SC will continue with its current long-term objectives, working to advance the industry and the organization through several forward-thinking initiatives. At the same time, work will begin on the direction for SC's next five-year-plan, one that must ensure the organization is well positioned to take on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Shortlist

Long-Term Objective: Communications

Tactic: Instructional How-To Series & Video Library

Description: A series of videos will be created utilizing the knowledge of industry experts to provide concise, educational videos that are easy to watch and available on YouTube. Videos will be promoted and released on the SC website, via the quarterly newsletter, and promoted in TROT Magazine and through social media channels. Over time, the intent is to build a digital library of videos on subjects that are relevant and education for the membership and for those who may be starting up in the industry. Topics will include subjects relating to horsemanship, breeding, owning horses, stable operation and more.
Reason: There is a shortage of high-quality video materials on subjects specific to those in the Standardbred racing and breeding industry. Helping new and prospective participants gain knowledge is an important way that Standardbred Canada can serve its membership and educate those who are thinking about entering the industry.
Timeline: Set for launch in Q3, 2025.
Internal Resources: This will require the involvement of the Industry Programs and Stakeholder Relations Department, along with staff from the Communications Department. Editing and filming will primarily be done internally.
External Resources: The time and contributions of the experts involved and start-up costs for video and editing software.
Cost: \$2,500

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Data Management

Tactic: Categorize Stakes and Implement a Graded Stakes Program

Description:
Stakes are to be categorized in coordination with USTA, graded by committee and then stored, organized and displayed on pedigree pages, in TrackIT and as needed for other purposes.
Reason:
Sale companies and stakeholders in the US and Canada want more defined categories of stakes. USTA announced a plan to move forward, and SC has agreed to participate. Computer resources must be developed to coordinate with the planned launch.
Timeline:
Once definitions and parameters have been established, approximately 16 weeks of work are required to store and display information on Gaitway, TrackIT and on pedigree pages. Implementation will ensure that Graded Stakes can be integrated into 2025 Yearling Sale pedigrees.
Internal Resources:
Internal IT staff.
External Resources:
This initiative will rely on the work of the Graded Stakes Committee and coordination with industry and USTA.
Cost:
In house staff and management – 16 weeks of work. No external costs.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Data Management

Tactic: Build a Platform to Prepare for Industry Data Distribution (Tentative)

Description: Based on information received by SC, there is a real possibility that a major partnership will end that would significantly change how data, race programs, entries and wholesale information is sold and distributed across North America and globally. This change would affect bookkeeping software and other relationships and networks. If this occurs, SC would need to begin building a distribution platform and contractual relationships for the distribution of data. Because of the current uncertainty, developing a work plan and next steps would require a great deal of work internally, and utilizing external resources. Currently this tactic is tentative, and efforts are underway to determine whether or not this tactic will be required.
Reason: A major data contract between two third parties may be coming to an end. If this happens, SC must develop an alternative to continue to provide services and data to its customers.
Timeline: The third-party contracts end on December 31, 2025 – so work must be done prior to that. Estimated work is approximately 36 weeks. Therefore, a decision on this program must occur by early Q2 to allow the planning and work to be completed by the end of the calendar year.
Internal Resources: Internal IT staff, internal industry development staff, CEO.
External Resources: External IT services, external contractors and cooperation and negotiation/work with third parties.
Cost: \$30,000 for external IT services and contractors.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Data Management

Tactic: ID Tech App

Description:
Develop a tablet-based app for data collection by ID technicians that can be used both online or offline. The tablet-based app would need to retrieve horse information online when available and assist ID technicians and all staff in the process of identifying horses.
Reason:
The current process for ID Techs is extremely labour-intensive. All of the work done by Techs is by hand. Forms are scanned and sent in. Data is entered by hand and information sent for processing. Hundreds, if not thousands of hours of time can be saved if ID Techs are able to provide information directly using tablets and a technology platform.
Timeline:
Approximately 12 weeks of work – scheduled for the Summer 2025. Four additional weeks of work required internally after third party completion in Q4, 2025. Once developed, training will be required. Full implementation expected for Technicians in 2026.
Internal Resources:
Will need related work on the Gaitway system.
External Resources:
Third party to create the App.
Cost:
Third party cost approximately \$18,000. Gaitway changes by internal SC staff.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Data Management

Tactic: Membership Dashboard on the SSO Platform

Description:
Single Sign-On enhancements have been developed and put into place. The intent of developing SSO was for security and for the purpose of building a dashboard to enable members to log in and do all business with SC through a secure location.
The development of the Dashboard is a long-term project and a major IT focus of 24/25. Services include changes to stable members, validation of transfers of ownership, leases, request duplicate registration, address, phone, email changes, delinquent reports for trainers, securely changing bank account information, make invoices and payments available to be paid on e-Shop from the Sage server, etc.
Reason:
The membership dashboard is the critical next step in allowing members to do all meaningful transactions in one secure online location. This is essential for membership business and will be vital in the traceability of horses in the future.
Timeline:
Approximately 40 weeks. Full development of the dashboard will continue with new additions being made well into F25/26.
Internal Resources:
Internal SC staff
External Resources:
Third-party consultant
Cost:
Third-party consultant fees – \$72,000 (\$8,000 per month x 9 months)

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Financial Sustainability

Tactic: Develop a Plan on Mixed Breed Registration

Description: Prepare a business plan on the possibility of creating a registration for horses that are Part-Standardbred. This includes evaluating demand, details, potential long-term revenues and costs, and the requirements for by-law changes.
Reason: Other breed registries register mixed bred horses including the USTA. Many partial Standardbreds in Canada either have unreputable papers, or no papers at all. This should create revenue opportunities, better track the offspring of registered Standardbreds, and help with the traceability of horses.
Timeline: • Business plan to be developed Q2, F25 for presentation to the Board in April 2025 • If approved by the Board, this will require Breeder Member approval for a By-Law change by December, 2025. • F26 rollout and implementation once approved by the Ministry.
Internal Resources: • Member Services staff & Registrar to create business plan and to prepare By-Law amendments. • IT staff once approved, for Gaitway update.
External Resources: Animal Pedigree Act and additional consultation.
Cost: Staff time only for F25.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Financial Sustainability

Tactic: Complete a Strategic Assessment on SC's Fiscal Year

Description: To complete a strategic assessment of SC's current fiscal year of November 1 to October 31 and determine if a plan to alter the fiscal year is a course of action worth pursuing, and what steps would be required to make a change.
Reason: Currently, the budget for the fiscal year is approved in November, a month after the fiscal year-end. This delay is largely due to the challenges in scheduling as the timeline falls during the peak sales and stakes racing season for the industry. As a result, the organization operates without an approved financial plan for the first one to two months of the fiscal year. A strategic assessment will carefully examine the possibility of a change in the fiscal year, with a report to be presented to the Board and a recommendation on whether to proceed or not on a change, along with details of an appropriate course of action.
Timeline: The Strategic Assessment will be presented to the Board by Q3, 2025. If changes are recommended, there would be a number of important checkpoints including Committee consultation, Board approval, By-Law changes, a membership vote, Ministry approval, Audits, etc. If a change is recommended and approved in a timely manner, the earliest a change would be implemented is likely 2027, but the work must begin in 2025 to meet that timeline.
Internal Resources: Finance Department.
External Resources: Auditors, Sage team.
Cost: Consulting from Auditors and Sage team: \$5,000

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Membership/Customer Service Value

Tactic: Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Junior Membership Growth

Description: To research, develop and begin the early stages of implementation on a comprehensive program for Junior Membership growth, retention and participation in the industry.
Reason: Concerning trends indicate an aging demographic in harness racing. In 2024, SC introduced the Junior Membership program with the intention of lowering the hurdles for young people to get involved in the industry. The program is now in place and SC will now set its sights on the growth of Junior Membership numbers and develop programs that encourage involvement of young people in the industry.
Timeline: Present a Junior Membership plan in summer 2025 with initial implementation steps beginning in late summer 2025, and then developing a budget for further implementation the following year.
Internal Resources: Industry Programs & Stakeholder Relations Department.
External Resources: Insights and data from junior membership programs in other jurisdictions. Industry experts and mentors to guide the development of the junior programs
Cost: \$10,000

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Membership/Customer Service Value

Tactic: Breed Incentive Program

Description: Create a formalized document for a National Breeding Incentive Program to present to the Government for funding and support. The SC National Breeding Incentive Program will aim to bring funds back into the hands of Breeders of successful Canadian racehorses to address the decrease in breeding activities and to ensure long-term supply of racehorses in the country. The program would also be a starting point for an Aftercare Program.
Reason: The creation of a National Breeding Incentive Program is very important to maintain proper racehorse supply in the country, supporting producers from coast to coast who are faced with rising costs and increasing challenges.
Timeline: - November 2024, present formalized National Breeding Incentive Program to Board - Socialize with Government and industry - January to July 2025 - Finalize program with funding proposal to the Board, August 2025 - If approved, incorporate release of the program into the F26 Strategic Plan and budget (September and October, 2025).
Internal Resources: Member Services Staff – Registrar - CEO IT Staff (if program is approved)
External Resources: Board Breeders Stakeholders
Cost: \$30,000, primarily for Government Relations and some initial IT expenses.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Stakeholder Relations

Tactic: Develop a Plan for Equipment Cards

Description:

We propose to modernize the Equipment Card system by transitioning to an electronic format from the current hard copies. We believe that further enhancements can be made in other years to make it even more user-friendly.

Reason:

The primary goal of this initiative is to generate comprehensive reports detailing all horses scheduled to race, along with the specific equipment each horse is wearing. This digital approach will facilitate a more efficient and accurate process that benefits the horse, the industry, horsepeople, customers, and SC as the official record keeper.

Implementing this electronic system will not only enhance efficiency but also improve compliance and transparency in equipment management.

Timeline:

We already have a basic Electronic Equipment Card program successfully operating in the Maritime provinces and Alberta. If minor changes are required to the program, the IT Department estimates that they would need approximately 2 weeks.

Stakeholder dialogue and program design will take place throughout the fiscal year. Implementation in jurisdictions will initially be determined by buy-in.

Internal Resources:

Racing Services team.
Internal IT Staff.
A small group of internal staff members to participate in a working group.

External Resources:

We will seek input from key external stakeholders, including Racetrack Management, Race Secretaries, Racing Commissions, Judges, Paddock Judges, and Equipment Inspectors to form an external focus group to help to discuss the potential of this program.

Cost:

There are no external costs as this work will be handled internally at this stage.

F25 Strategic Tactics – Cont'd

Long-Term Objective: Stakeholder Relations

Tactic: Review of All Licensing Exams and Accreditation Programs

Description: Review and update all licensing examinations, accreditation and training programs. The review will include a review of online exams and consider mandating electronic examinations across the country. This review will also include exams and training for officials, including evaluating the changes being made by Racing Commissioners International regarding the Racing Officials Accreditation Program.
Reason: All exams are getting outdated as rules change often. The previous association that held the accreditation program for Officials will no longer be hosting an accreditation program and SC has been identified to be the association to host accreditation sessions for Canadian Officials. In addition, the review will determine if there are other gaps or opportunities that exist in accreditation and testing.
Timeline: A full review will take place with licensing requirement changes to be presented to the Board in Q4, 2025. The intention is to meet with Regulators in Q4, 2025 to discuss the implementation of changes.
Internal Resources: Member Services Staff
External Resources: USTA Regulators
Cost: \$10,000.

Summary

Standardbred Canada's 2025 Strategic Plan establishes a meaningful path, taking necessary and important steps for the future of the organization, and the broader standardbred industry. By focusing on technology, youth and education, breeding and aftercare, this plan aims to strengthen SC's position, enhance stakeholder engagement, and work towards ensuring the long-term success of the industry across Canada.

As with past Strategic Plans, the intent of the 2025 Plan is to build on the work that has been done previously and to take on new and important goals that align with the larger five-year objectives of the organization.

Through collaboration and proactive leadership, Standardbred Canada is working to meet the evolving needs of its members, while preserving the rich legacy of standardbred racing and breeding in Canada. There are numerous challenges facing the industry, but SC is well positioned and steadfast in its determination to achieve long-term and meaningful sustainability for the organization and for the industry.