



Sovereign Lake Nordic Club – 2024-28 Strategic Plan

Revision: October 29, 2023

1. BACKGROUND

Sovereign Lake Nordic Club (SLNC, or Club) is one of the largest Nordic ski clubs in North America. Like most clubs, operating conditions have evolved significantly over the past 5 years. This strategic plan serves as an update from SLNC's 2018-23 strategic plan and reflects feedback obtained from a member survey and in-person focus groups. This updated strategic plan addresses the growth, objectives, and anticipated needs of the Club for the next five years.

SLNC operates under certain fundamental principles and beliefs, or values, that serve as implicit criteria guiding all actions and decision-making. The Club is community-driven, collaborative, inclusive, accountable, and promotes accessibility, affordability, wellness, and regional benefit. Information on the Club's values can be found on the SLNC website (www.sovereignlake.com).

SLNC enjoyed a strong and steady count of about 1,700 annual memberships between 2014 and 2018. Thereafter, membership leapt to 3200 during COVID and has since dropped to 2860 (in the 2022-23 season). The Club has seen approximately 50,000 visits per season over the past three years, with January seeing about 400 visits per day, representing significant demand on resources and infrastructure. In parallel, SLNC pursued significant growth in its program offerings to provide a wide variety of opportunities to all members. Total (youth and adult) seasonal program registrations grew from 137 in 2013-14 to 477 in 2022-23, driving further demand for staff, coaches, volunteers, and facilities.

2. VISION STATEMENT

A world-class centre for Nordic sport and recreation.

3. MISSION STATEMENT

In cooperation with BC Parks, we provide outstanding Nordic experiences that are inclusive and accessible, in an environmentally responsible manner.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

SLNC's strategic priorities span from the user experience to the importance of internal operations, and involve both short and long timeframes. Our strategic objectives fall into the following four categories and are supported by 13 priorities.

1. Improve club infrastructure (lodge renewal, instal a paved multi-use trail),
2. Strengthen operations (Programs, financial stability, volunteerism, event planning, communications, governance),
3. Optimize third-party relationships (BC Parks, community, indigenous peoples, etc.), and
4. Enhance our environmental sustainability (reducing carbon footprint).

4.1. Infrastructure

SLNC maintains significant physical infrastructure that is required to support operations. Machinery, equipment and facilities need to be maintained, replaced and even upgraded over time to keep up with the growing needs of the Club and members. On-site physical infrastructure includes the day lodge, tech building, maintenance shed, old lodge, biathlon hut, race office and other ancillary buildings and is supported by roads and parking lots, as well as electrical, water, and sewage infrastructure.

As a matter of priority, and recognizing the importance to the community and significant effort involved, the overarching infrastructure priority is:

Priority #1: Renovate or replace the existing lodge to ensure it meets the needs of all members and visitors to SLNC by 2026.

In tandem, the following infrastructure projects will be undertaken:

Priority #2: Develop a paved multi-use trail to support the off-season needs of ski programs and to expand park accessibility to the community.

Priority #3: Purchase a new (or near-new) trail groomer by 2028.

4.2. Operational Excellence

Upholding the Club's values requires strong performance in day-to-day operations, while retaining an eye to the future. The strategic priorities in ensuring premier levels of operations are described below.

4.2.1. Programming Excellence

A priority of the SLNC Board has been to grow recreational and competitive Nordic programming over the past three years. To meet the challenges of the expanded Programs offerings, the Club's overarching priority in this area is to:

Priority #4: Advance a range of Programs that encourage children, youth and adults to increase their skills and enjoy outdoor recreation for life. This entails the following:

- Restructure Program committee membership to enhance engagement and planning between coaches, volunteers, parents, and athletes.
- Enhance the stability and quality of Programs, before pursuing material increases in enrollment numbers.
- Advance programming through coach and volunteer development and enhanced program infrastructure.
- Measure the quality of programming through annual surveys and modify Program offerings to meet the needs of members while ensuring the successful long-term growth of the Club.

4.2.2. Enhanced Financial Positioning

The Club will ensure careful budget monitoring to ensure that it meets its financial goals and maintains an appropriate reserve for contingencies to ensure long-term viability, while retaining a balance between affordability and the needs of the membership. In addition to annual budgeting and related controls, the Club will:

Priority #5: Implement a 3-year financial planning cycle to identify and fulfill longer term capital, operational, and programming financial needs.

The Club envisions a greater and more structured role for fundraising to allow the Club to grow. The Club will:

Priority #6: Establish fundraising priorities and centrally coordinate fundraising activities for annual and long-term strategic needs.

4.2.3. Volunteers

Volunteers perform critical roles at SLNC. Volunteers are involved in every aspect of the club's operations, from board members, program coaches, events, charity initiatives, and site maintenance.

Priority #7: Establish a volunteers committee and a formal volunteer recruitment, retention, and reward program.

4.2.4. Events

SLNC will host events at a variety of levels that provide opportunities for the SLNC membership to participate or compete, have a positive experience, provide revenue/financial gain, while raising the profile of SLNC. Events will span high profile races, local and participant-oriented races and activities (skiing, biathlon, snowshoeing, skijoring, etc.) aimed at engaging community, and other social events.

4.2.4.1 Competitive Events

Priority #8: Establish a multi-year plan for anticipated Provincial, National and International events. This entails the following:

- Maintain a current officials database, and grow the skillset of officials and key volunteers as necessary to ensure officials succession for future competition hosting.
- Ensure critical officials' positions (e.g., Chief of Race, Chief of Competition and Chief of Timing) are in place prior to setting of the schedule.
- Ensure events are planned in a cost-positive way, unless otherwise approved by the Board.

4.2.4.2 Recreational/Social Activities

Priority #9: Establish a calendar to capture recurring activities designed to engage with the community.

4.2.5. Communications

Effective communications are key to strong operations and Club member, community, and stakeholder engagement. While the Club regularly communicates on important topics, other achievements such as benefits of hosting events, athlete successes, and community-oriented activities are not widely celebrated.

Priority #10: SLNC will commit to excellence in internal and external communications, and community-driven outreach. This entails:

- Create a task force to develop a communication strategy encompassing internal communication, as well as eblasts, website, lodge posters, social media, staff and local media
- Implement and continually improve the communication strategy on an ongoing basis, through measurement of effectiveness via survey feedback.

4.2.6. Organizational Advancement

The best organizations continually review and update their practices, and actively incorporate long term planning into operations.

Priority #11: SLNC will commit to excellence in organizational advancement through continuous improvement and best practices in governance, planning, and evaluation.

4.3. Partner, Stakeholder, and Indigenous Consultation

The Club can benefit from interfaces with a multitude of external organizations, such as government organizations (e.g., BC Parks, City of Vernon), sponsors, sports organizations (e.g., Nordiq Canada, local ski clubs, local event organizers), commercially-oriented organizations (Chamber of Commerce, Silver Star Mountain, Destination Silver Star), First Nations, and community groups (school programs, Spirit North). To enhance these benefits, the Club will:

Priority #12: Establish a committee that formalizes collaborative strategic partnerships with organizations and companies for the net benefit of members and SLNC.

4.4. Environment Sustainability

The Okanagan continues to see climate-related events such as significant wildfires, while the Nordic industry has seen worsening variability in snow conditions around the world. The Club will:

Priority #13: Become an industry leader in continual reduction of resource consumption and environmental emissions on the path of becoming a zero emissions operation, while preparing for anticipated threats to operations. This entails:

- Establishing site consumption and emission baselines and benchmarks.
- On an annual basis, take actions to reduce environmental impacts.
- Manage a list of future opportunities to reduce emissions.
- Achieve certification as a Biosphere Sustainable destination.
- Work with industry members to share experience in actions undertaken to reduce environmental footprint and preserve operations under challenging climate conditions.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The Board of Directors will assign responsibility to committees (or smaller task forces for shorter-term needs) to advance each of the strategic priorities. Each committee/task force shall include a member of the Board of Directors and shall prepare a Terms of Reference and its own strategic plan detailing the tasks to be undertaken by the committee/task force in the upcoming operating year. The most recent Terms of Reference and committee/task force strategic plans will be available on the SLNC website (www.sovereignlake.com). Progress on underlying tasks will be reported on SLNC website and through membership communication channels on a quarterly basis.