

STRATEGIC



PLAN

2025 - 2030

SOFTBALL ONTARIO





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a new Plan with a new Vision



Tom Buchan • Board Chair, Softball Ontario

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Softball Ontario and its four provincial member associations, welcome to Softball Ontario's new strategic plan!

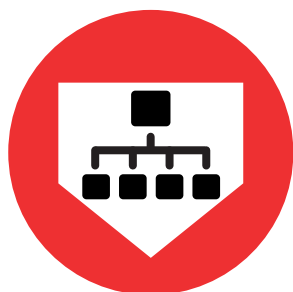
Over the course of 2024, we have worked closely with our Executive Director and the sports management consultancy Capitis Consulting to craft a renewed vision for softball in Ontario. This plan is built upon an ambitious foundation and reflects a fresh identity that highlights the vital role our sport plays in fostering community life across the province.

At Softball Ontario, our vision is clear: softball is a cornerstone of community life in Ontario. For many, ball diamonds have always been hubs of fun, camaraderie, and activity, uniting people in both rural and urban settings. Our sport fosters a sense of belonging — a family that welcomes participants from childhood through to their senior years. Softball is a way of life. However, the Covid-19 pandemic underscored how fragile this foundation can be and reminded us of the need to cherish, nurture, and sustain this vital aspect of community life over time.



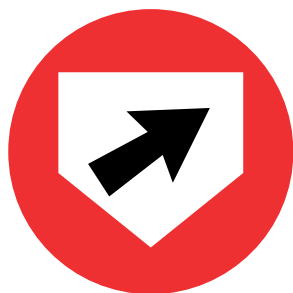


In this strategic plan, we outline our commitments through 2030. Our efforts target three core priorities:



Organizational Effectiveness

We aim to enhance Softball Ontario's capacity to deliver meaningful support to our four provincial member associations and to ensure that players, coaches, umpires, and volunteers receive the assistance they need to thrive.



Growing the Game

By fostering participation and broadening outreach, we will ensure that softball continues to be a sport that unites diverse communities across Ontario, attracting people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels.



Driving Performance

We will strengthen pathways for athletes, coaches, and officials, creating opportunities for development and celebrating excellence at all levels of play.





Softball Ontario is fortunate to have four highly capable provincial member associations that deliver the day-to-day activities that make our sport thrive. This strategic plan focuses on how we can amplify their efforts, support sport-related public policy initiatives, and meet the expectations of our government funding partners.

Equally, we recognize the importance of improving our own organizational structure and processes to ensure that we deliver maximum value to the softball community. By doing so, we aim to provide the tools, resources, and vision necessary for success.

We encourage you to take a few moments to read through our plan and explore the goals we've set for the future of softball in Ontario. We hope you share our excitement about what lies ahead.

One thing is clear: we cannot achieve these ambitious goals on our own. Softball Ontario represents just the tip of the iceberg in a vibrant and passionate softball community. Your involvement is essential, as the real work takes place on the ball diamonds across the province, not just in corporate offices.

There's much to do, and we are eager to get started. Together, let's solidify softball's place as a cornerstone of Ontario community life. At Softball Ontario, we are committed to this vision—and we hope you are too!

See you out on the field!





At Softball Ontario, we recognize the profound role that sports play in building vibrant, connected communities. As we step into a new chapter, we are proud to present our renewed vision and strategic plan, anchored in the belief that “Softball is a cornerstone of community life.”

As part of developing our new strategic plan, we took the opportunity to reflect on and refresh our vision and mission statements, as well as the core values that define who we are and who we aspire to be as an organization.

This review led us to deeply examine the role of our sport across the province of Ontario — what it represents, its

significance in Ontarian life, and the impact it has on our communities.

We also considered the evolving world post-COVID-19 and reaffirmed our commitment to fostering greater inclusion, diversity, safety, and respect, especially for our youth participants.

We are thrilled to share the statements we’ve carefully crafted—expressions that capture the essence of softball’s importance to community life across Ontario.

We look forward to embodying these principles in everything we do and invite you to join us in this exciting journey!

VISION

“Softball is a cornerstone of Ontario community life.”

MISSION

“To give everyone in Ontario the opportunity to enrich their lives through softball.”

VALUES

“Inclusivity, safety, respect, accountability, fairness, fitness, fun”



ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



Align the operating systems of Softball Ontario and its Member Associations

1

- a. Create a standardized system of operational planning, budgeting and management reporting across all Member Associations and Softball Ontario, in line with Ontario Ministry of Sport requirements.
- b. Move to consolidation of all member registration data across Softball Ontario's four Member Associations under one Softball Ontario-centralized data management platform.
 - i. Gather full registration data for all participants engaging in Softball Ontario sanctioned events anywhere in Ontario.

Establish a group marketing and communications function within Softball Ontario, serving all Softball Ontario Member Associations

2

- a. Invest in the marketing capacity and expertise needed to drive these activities.

Enhance the documentation of operational processes within Softball Ontario

3

- a. Review and expand Softball Ontario's HR manual, to include all policies and procedures with respect to staffing and volunteers at Softball Ontario.

Establish clarity of role and responsibility with regards to complaints and issues management in softball in Ontario

4

- a. Clarify Softball Ontario's precise role here vis-à-vis its Member Associations, their affiliates, or higher levels of dispute resolution management.

GROWING THE GAME



Incentivize unsanctioned, unaffiliated softball leagues and/or teams (particularly at select level) to affiliate with Softball Ontario.

1

- a. Implement policies that connect registered membership to the exclusive benefits of being affiliated with Softball Ontario.
- b. Implement policies and rules that protect umpires and officials by encouraging them to officiate only Softball Ontario-sanctioned games and events.

Take a more proactive approach to 'telling our story', promoting the positive experiences people currently have participating in softball activities.

2

- a. Target special interest stories that support the execution of Softball Ontario strategies and activities/outcomes sponsored by Softball Ontario's funding agents.
- b. Promote the success of Ontario softball athletes and teams at the national and international level.
- c. Position softball as a generational activity, that people participate in from childhood through adulthood and into parenthood.

Provide greater support to Softball Ontario-affiliated clubs/leagues to help them grow the game.

3

- a. Provide greater marketing and communications support to Member Associations and their clubs/leagues.
- b. Re-introduce the 'club in a box' development toolkit or develop a similar turnkey management kit for clubs to follow.
- c. Re-introduce the Softball Ontario Summit, to drive networking, peer-to-peer based club development initiatives and coach/umpire development clinics.
- d. Continue to drive the CanPitch program through affiliated clubs across Ontario.



GROWING THE GAME



Drive better opportunities for people to pursue coaching or umpiring careers in softball.

4

- a. Target players in late youth, teenage years to look beyond a playing career in softball.
- b. Provide better opportunities for females in coaching and umpiring, with clear pathways for them to develop.
- c. Foster the early development of existing coaches and umpires, minimizing early attrition rates.

Integrate Slo-Pitch Ontario's adult membership base more deeply into other softball activities in Member Associations.

5

- a. In particular, focus on coaching, umpiring and other volunteer activities and opportunities.
- b. Target the children of slo-pitch players to play, participate and remain in the Ontario softball family.

Target partnerships with local indigenous groups across Ontario to increase accessibility to softball for these groups.

6

- a. Build on existing partnerships and local activities within Softball Ontario's Member Associations.
- b. Explore alternate means of grant funding for these development activities, outside of the Ministry of Sport.

DRIVING PERFORMANCE



Provide the best opportunities for Ontario's top softball talent to be the best they can be.

1

- a. Drive improved communication and partnership with Softball Canada with respect to vertical advanced performance development programs within Ontario.
- b. Continue to provide excellence in the delivery of provincial competition and Ontario representation on Canadian national teams.

Enhance Softball Ontario's coaching support to its high-performance program.

2

- a. Enhance the volume of coach facilitators in Ontario, to drive stronger capability in Softball Ontario's coach education program.
- b. Move to establish minimum coaching standards at all levels of softball play, including necessary Safe Sport education for all.

Strengthen Softball Ontario high performance umpiring development, to complement a three-pronged approach (athlete, coach, umpire) in high performance development in the sport in Ontario.

3

- a. Identify high level umpiring leadership across the province to manage the program.
- b. Establish high performance umpiring talent identification, targeting Level 3-5 umpires, and bespoke development pathways for these individuals.
- c. Align high performance initiatives closely with Softball Canada's national umpire development program.





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