

**ONTARIO**   
**ARTISTIC**   
**SWIMMING**

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: HOW WE GOT HERE

Ontario Artistic Swimming (OAS) is the recognized Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) responsible for the leadership, governance, and development of artistic swimming across Ontario. In this role, OAS provides provincial-level direction, standards, and system oversight that support athletes, coaches, officials, clubs, volunteers, and partners throughout the province.

As a PSO, OAS's responsibilities extend beyond program delivery. OAS is accountable for establishing safe sport environments; aligning provincial pathways with national frameworks; supporting club capacity and governance; stewarding public funds responsibly; and contributing to the long-term health and sustainability of the sport system. This includes balancing the needs of grassroots participation, athlete development, high-performance pathways, and sport-for-life opportunities within a diverse and geographically large province.

OAS fulfills its mandate by working collaboratively with member clubs, Canada Artistic Swimming, municipal and facility partners, and the Ministry of Sport, while maintaining a clear distinction between provincial leadership responsibilities and local club delivery.

## SYSTEM PRESSURES & OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The 2024-2028 strategic period reflects a time of both opportunity and increasing complexity for provincial sport organizations. Artistic swimming in Ontario has experienced sustained growth in participation, programming, and event demand, placing new pressures on provincial systems that were not designed for the current scale and scope of activity.

## PARTICIPATION GROWTH AND SYSTEM DEMAND

OAS continues to support a large and diverse membership base across competitive, recreational, adapted, and masters programming. Growth has been particularly notable within early developmental stages and Adaptive participation. While this growth reflects the strength and appeal of the sport, it also increases demands on competition structures, technical oversight, coaching capacity, and provincial coordination.

## FACILITY ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS

Access to appropriate aquatic facilities remains a significant system pressure. Pool availability, cost escalation, scheduling competition with other aquatic sports, and regional inequities in facility access all directly affect athlete development, program delivery, and competition quality. While OAS does not control facilities, the organization plays an important advocacy and coordination role in securing predictable access for provincially delivered programs and events.

## WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY

Like many sports, artistic swimming faces ongoing challenges related to coach and official recruitment, retention, and burnout. Increasing expectations related to training, administration, Safe Sport compliance, and competition delivery place additional strain on a largely part-time and volunteer-driven workforce. Addressing workforce sustainability requires system-level understanding, evidence-based planning, and realistic pathway design rather than isolated short-term solutions.

## SAFE SPORT AND GOVERNANCE COMPLEXITY

The Safe Sport environment has evolved significantly in recent years. Provincial sport organizations are now expected to manage increasingly complex policy frameworks, independent complaint processes, trauma-informed responses, and education requirements for a wide range of stakeholders. These expectations are essential for participant well-being, but they also require deliberate system design, clear role definition, and ongoing governance capacity at both the PSO and club levels.

## FUNDING ENVIRONMENT AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The Ontario Amateur Sport Fund (OASF) provides critical operational support to Provincial Sport Organizations and is delivered through a multi-year funding framework. This provides greater planning stability, but also places increased emphasis on strategic clarity, demonstrated delivery, and organizational maturity.

At the same time, the broader high-performance funding landscape continues to evolve. Changes at the national level, including shifts in Own the Podium and high-performance sport priorities, have downstream impacts on provincial programming expectations and resource allocation. Provincial sport organizations must therefore balance high-performance alignment with sustainable development models that serve a broader athlete base and reflect provincial realities.

Within this context, OAS must demonstrate not only what it intends to do, but how it prioritizes limited resources, manages risk, and sustains delivery over time. This requires a strategic plan that is focused, realistic, and aligned with both Ministry expectations and the organization's demonstrated capacity.

## WHY STRATEGIC FOCUS IS REQUIRED

Given the complexity of the operating environment, OAS has intentionally adopted a focused strategic approach for the 2024-2028 period. Rather than attempting to address every opportunity or challenge simultaneously, this Strategic Plan concentrates on areas where provincial leadership is most impactful and where OAS can demonstrate clear value, accountability, and results.

### **This plan emphasizes:**

- Clear provincial roles and responsibilities
- System-level outcomes rather than isolated activities
- Alignment between strategy, operations, and funding accountability
- Sustainability over expansion for its own sake

The Strategic Plan sets direction and priorities, while a separate, annually reviewed Operational Plan outlines the specific initiatives, timelines, and resources used to deliver on these priorities. This structure allows OAS to remain responsive to change while maintaining strategic consistency and organizational discipline.

Through this focused approach, Ontario Artistic Swimming aims to strengthen the provincial sport system, support its members effectively, and position the organization for long-term success within an evolving sport and funding environment.

# ARTISTIC SWIMMING IN ONTARIO

Artistic swimming has a rich history in Ontario. The sport, which combines elements of swimming, dance, and gymnastics, first gained prominence in the early 20th century. The roots of artistic swimming in Ontario can be traced back to the 1920s when water ballet performances began to captivate audiences in local swimming pools.

By the 1940s, the sport had evolved, with formal competitions being organized. The Ontario Section of the Canadian Amateur Synchronized Swimming Association (CASSA) was established in 1948, marking a significant milestone in the development and governance of the sport. Ontario quickly became a hub for artistic swimming, producing talented athletes and innovative routines that set the standard nationally.



*Performers in water show, Maple Leaf Gardens | Toronto, circa 1947*

The 1970s and 1980s were pivotal decades for the sport in Ontario. During this period, the province's athletes achieved remarkable success, dominating national championships and representing Canada on the international stage. Coaches and clubs in Ontario played a crucial role in developing training techniques and choreographies that influenced the global artistic swimming community.



*Team Ontario 2023 Summer Provincial Teams | Markham, July 2023*

In the 21st century, Ontario continues to be a leader in artistic swimming. The province boasts numerous clubs, dedicated coaches, and a vibrant community of athletes. Ontario's artistic swimmers have consistently excelled at national and international levels, contributing to Canada's reputation as a powerhouse in the sport. Today, artistic swimming in Ontario is celebrated for its creativity, athleticism, and the strong sense of community it fosters.

# OUR STARTING POINT IN 2023

**21**

MEMBER CLUBS

**269**

CERTIFIED COACHES

**789**

AQUAGO! & REC  
PARTICIPANTS

**10**

YEARLY COMPETITIONS

TOTAL  
MEMBERS

**3171**

# OUR PROGRESS - 2026

**21**

MEMBER CLUBS

**292**

CERTIFIED COACHES

**839**

AQUAGO! & REC  
PARTICIPANTS

**11**

YEARLY COMPETITIONS

TOTAL  
MEMBERS

**3374**



# CREATING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

## OUR MISSION

*Empowering athletes to achieve their full potential through a safe and inclusive community, innovative programs, and commitment to athlete well being.*

## OUR VISION

*Uniting our community through inclusive and innovative opportunities allowing every athlete to reach their full potential.*

## OUR VALUES

- Excellence*
- Empowerment*
- Health & Wellbeing*
- Sport for Life*

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PILLARS

In response to the operating environment outlined in the Executive Summary, Ontario Artistic Swimming has structured its 2024-2028 Strategic Plan around three interrelated Strategic Pillars that reflect the organization's core provincial responsibilities. These pillars define where OAS will focus its leadership, resources, and system oversight over the four-year period. Together, they balance athlete development and performance pathways, safe and inclusive sport environments, and organizational sustainability and club capacity. Each pillar articulates clear strategic intent and outcomes, while a separate Operational Plan outlines the specific initiatives, timelines, and accountabilities required to deliver on these priorities.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY I

# ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT & PERFORMANCE PATHWAYS

## STRATEGIC INTENT

Ontario Artistic Swimming will lead and sustain a development-first, provincially coordinated athlete pathway that prioritizes early-stage skill development, athlete retention, and clear, benchmark-driven progression across all stages of the Long-Term Development (LTD) framework.

This system will ensure athletes across Ontario experience consistent, high-quality, and accessible development opportunities—regardless of geography— while supporting continuous talent identification and preparing athletes for transition into national performance pathways.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS (2024-2028)

OAS will focus its leadership on:

### 1. Development-First Pathway Design (L2T & T2T)

- Prioritize 12U and early-stage athlete development as the foundation of the system
- Establish clear, standardized athlete benchmarks aligned with LTD and NSO expectations
- Ensure competition and assessment structures reinforce skill acquisition over early specialization

### 2. Integrated Provincial Talent Identification System

- Implement continuous, season-long talent identification using existing provincial competitions
- Utilize regional scouts and standardized evaluation criteria
- Establish a provincial athlete monitoring pool to track emerging talent

### 3. Team Ontario Program as the Central High-Performance Entry Point (T2T & T2C)

- Consolidate existing T2T and HP Academy programs into a re-branded Team Ontario program structure
- Focus on preparing athletes for Youth and Junior National Team selection
- Deliver targeted, resource-efficient programming (reduced centralized volume, increased in-club support)

### 4. Alignment with National High-Performance Pathway

- Align athlete development priorities with Canada Artistic Swimming technical direction
- Transition summer high-performance competition responsibility to CAS, with OAS focusing on development and selection
- Integrate national talent ID and selection opportunities into provincial systems

### 5. Club-Integrated Development Model

- Shift toward a hybrid delivery model:
  - In-club technical support
  - Rotating provincial experts
  - Limited centralized camps
- Strengthen club-PSO partnerships to co-deliver athlete and coach development

### 6. Sustainable and Accessible System Design

- Reduce unnecessary travel and program costs
- Ensure programming is scalable and financially sustainable
- Maintain accessibility across regions while focusing resources where impact is highest

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

### By 2028, Ontario Artistic Swimming aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- A clearly defined, benchmark-driven athlete pathway understood across all clubs
- A fully implemented Team Ontario program serving as the primary bridge to national pathways
- A province-wide talent identification system with consistent evaluation standards
- Improved athlete readiness for national team selection at Youth and Junior levels
- Increased consistency in quality of athlete development across regions and clubs
- Sustained athlete retention through early and mid-development stages
- Sustained or increased contribution of Ontario athletes to national development and high-performance pipelines
- Expanded and visible pathways beyond the high-performance stream, supporting sport-for-life participation.

## STRATEGIC MEASURES OF SUCCESS

**Progress under this pillar will be assessed using high-level indicators that reflect system-wide impact, including:**

- % of athletes meeting provincial benchmark standards by age group
- Athlete retention rates between Learn-to-Train and Train-to-Train stages
- Number and Regional and club representation of athletes identified through provincial talent ID system
- Participation and progression data across competitive, recreational, and Adaptive pathways
- Number of Athletes who progress into Team Ontario and national pathways
- Club participation in provincial development and scouting systems
- Documented athlete progression into advanced provincial and national development streams

## STRATEGIC ROLE OF ONTARIO ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Within this pillar, OAS's role is to lead, coordinate, and set standards for provincial athlete development. OAS will provide direction, frameworks, and system oversight, while working collaboratively with clubs, coaches, officials, and Canada Artistic Swimming to ensure alignment, consistency, and long-term sustainability across the athlete pathway.

**In this role, OAS will act as:**

- The provincial system architect, responsible for establishing clear athlete pathways, development benchmarks, and performance standards
- A coordinator of talent identification and progression, leading provincial identification processes while enhancing—rather than duplicating—daily high-performance training environments
- A provider of technical resources and expertise, equipping clubs and coaches with the tools, guidance, and support required to deliver high-quality athlete and coach development
- A connector to national pathways, ensuring alignment with Canada Artistic Swimming and facilitating athlete progression without replicating national high-performance structures

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY II

# SAFE SPORT, INCLUSION, & SYSTEM READINESS

### STRATEGIC INTENT

Ontario Artistic Swimming will ensure that artistic swimming in Ontario is delivered within a safe, inclusive, and operationally ready sport system that prioritizes participant well-being, reduces organizational risk, and supports consistent program delivery across clubs, regions, and competitions. This pillar establishes Safe Sport, equity, and system readiness as foundational standards for all participants and stakeholders.

### STRATEGIC FOCUS (2024-2028)

**Over the 2024–2028 period, OAS will direct its leadership and system oversight toward the following priority areas:**

- Embedding Safe Sport principles and participant well-being as core organizational and system-wide standards
- Advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) across policies, programs, and leadership practices
- Strengthening club readiness and compliance, including governance, risk management, and legal obligations
- Ensuring system and event readiness, including reliable access to appropriate facilities and operational infrastructure

### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

**By 2028, Ontario Artistic Swimming seeks to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Safe Sport principles are consistently understood, implemented, and reinforced across all levels of the provincial system
- Clubs demonstrate increased confidence and capacity in governance, compliance, and risk management responsibilities
- Participants experience artistic swimming as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment
- Greater stability and predictability in facility access for training and competition
- Expanded access to artistic swimming programming for athletes of all abilities and backgrounds

## STRATEGIC MEASURES OF SUCCESS

**Progress under this pillar will be assessed through system-level indicators that reflect both compliance and cultural change, including:**

- Completion and adoption of Safe Sport and EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) training across the provincial system
- Club compliance with governance, policy, and risk-management standards – ONCA
- Accessibility and inclusion metrics across programs and competitions
- Evidence of proactive risk identification and mitigation within PSO operations
- Stability of facility access for provincially delivered events and programs

## STRATEGIC ROLE OF ONTARIO ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Under this pillar, OAS serves as the system leader and standard-setter for Safe Sport, inclusion, and organizational readiness. OAS is responsible for establishing policies, frameworks, and expectations; supporting clubs in meeting required standards; and ensuring provincial programs and events reflect best practices in participant safety, inclusion, and operational integrity.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY III

# ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLUB CAPACITY

## STRATEGIC INTENT

Ontario Artistic Swimming will operate as a stable, transparent, and resilient Provincial Sport Organization that provides effective governance, strong leadership, and meaningful system support to its member clubs. This pillar focuses on ensuring OAS has the organizational capacity, financial sustainability, and workforce stability required to deliver high-quality programs and services over the long term.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS (2024-2028)

**Over the 2024–2028 period, OAS will direct its organizational leadership and resources toward the following priority areas:**

- Strengthening governance and organizational effectiveness, including clear roles, accountability, and decision-making structures
- Building club capacity through guidance, education, and system-level supports that enable sustainable local delivery
- Supporting a stable and qualified workforce, including the recruitment, development, and retention of coaches and officials
- Enhancing financial sustainability and risk management, reducing reliance on single funding sources
- Strengthening brand presence, partnerships, and sector leadership to support long-term growth and visibility of artistic swimming in Ontario

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

**By 2028, Ontario Artistic Swimming aims to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Strong alignment between governance, strategy, and operations across the organization
- Increased organizational and club capacity to deliver safe, compliant, and high-quality programming
- A more stable and supported coach and official workforce across the province
- Improved financial resilience through diversified and predictable revenue streams
- Enhanced visibility and credibility of OAS as a leader within the Ontario and national sport system

## STRATEGIC MEASURES OF SUCCESS

**Progress under this pillar will be assessed using system-level indicators that reflect organizational strength and sustainability, including:**

- Governance compliance and effectiveness indicators at both PSO and club levels
- Coach and official recruitment and retention trends
- Proportion of organizational revenue derived from non-government sources
- Financial performance and reserve stability
- Growth in brand reach, partnerships, and sector engagement

## STRATEGIC ROLE OF ONTARIO ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Under this pillar, OAS serves as the system steward and capacity builder for artistic swimming in Ontario. OAS is responsible for setting governance and operational standards, supporting clubs and volunteers, stewarding financial and human resources responsibly, and representing the sport through effective partnerships, advocacy, and leadership.