



Strategic Planning 2015-2020

Exploration Phase Fall 2014: Report on Findings

Prepared by: Patricia Evans & Associates Inc., December 2014

HSA's Strategic Planning process began with an exploration phase in September and October, 2014. This phase focused on information gathering, conducted through:

- An online Member survey
- One-on-one interviews with Directors
- One-on-one interviews with Extended Management Team members
- Focus groups with activists conducted by HSA Education staff
- An online staff survey

This report summarizes the overall findings of the process.

In reviewing the results overall, the consultant found a good deal of congruence across all stakeholders. There were some issues specific to a given group, and as noted below, the results also reflect a notable degree of contradictory opinion on a few issues.

Strengths and Capabilities

The following were agreed by all respondents to be the strengths and assets of HSA; overall, a great sense of pride was expressed in the Union's:

- Experienced, committed and knowledgeable staff
- Dedicated, active, professional members
- Infrastructure and processes to support member service
- Constituency Liaison Program
- Maintaining integrity in the face of significant challenges over recent years

Challenges and Barriers

The following were agreed by all respondents to be among the greatest challenges and barriers facing the union at present:

- Lack of active member support including insufficient number of stewards
- Disengagement, member apathy and lack of mobilization
- Public and government opinions of unions
- Members' workload, related stress and OHS impacts

Internally, interviews and staff surveys revealed the following concerns:

- Internal communication ("silos")
- Workload pressures particularly for LROs
- Unacceptably long time to resolution of grievances
- Need for governance development and enhanced relationships between the Board and the Membership

Service to Members

The majority of questions in the online member survey asked about members' views on the union's service. With respect to satisfaction with service to members overall, survey results found that:

- 57.1% of respondents were "somewhat or very satisfied"
- 17.5% of respondents were "somewhat or very dissatisfied"

When asked for specific suggestions for improvements to member service, the following were the most common response themes:

- Better contract terms, higher wages, improved benefits
- Faster service including faster resolution of grievances
- Improvements in steward performance
- More local service support and more resources for stewards
- LROs: Improved continuity and more communication; more consistency in assignments, and more access to and more visibility at worksites

Including the member survey, and taking into account the staff survey, interview and focus group results as well, across all groups consulted the following were seen as priorities for attention:

- Union visibility and need for increased member support
- Improved contract terms and enhanced communication with members during bargaining
- Need to improve Website (navigation, content, issues, education, bargaining goals, contract, policies, strategic plan)

Some member survey questions asked about members' familiarity with their benefit entitlement. Most survey respondents appear to be familiar with and satisfied with their benefits:

- 77.3% reported they are familiar with their benefits plan, and of these, 83.9% "somewhat or very satisfied" with benefits
- HSPBA members were more likely to be "somewhat or very satisfied" with benefits (85.7%) compared to those covered by all other collective agreements (62.9%)

When asked about improvements desired with respect to benefits, survey respondents expressed a desire for a broader range of entitlements and more flexibility in applying their entitlement value (i.e., a preference for a "cafeteria style" plan).

Some member survey questions asked about members' views on matters of occupational health and safety (OHS). Just 17.2% of survey respondents reported contact with HSA regarding OHS (last 3 years). However of those, only 5.8% reported being somewhat or very dissatisfied with the OHS services provided by HSA.

Those who had been in contact reported much higher satisfaction rates (68.1%) than those who have not (35.7%). For those who had not been in touch with HSA regarding OHS in the last three years, two reasons were most often cited:

- Hadn't been concerned with any OHS issues at work (56.6%)
- Reported OHS concerns elsewhere (28.9%) including to employer or WCB

Whether or not they have contacted HSA regarding this topic, survey respondents were able to provide us with feedback on what they see as the most urgent OHS concerns on which HSA should focus education and prevention efforts. Topics most often mentioned were:

- Staffing levels/workload and related injuries
- Concerns related to abuse, bullying, violence and respectful workplace
- Concerns related to aging or inappropriate/inadequate workplace facilities and related resources
- Workplace risk exposures
- Risk factors related to patient population factors

Some member survey questions asked about members' participation in union education and development activities. Just 15.9% of survey respondents reported contact with HSA regarding union education and development opportunities in the last three years. For the rest, the reasons they had not been in touch were most often described as:

- Not aware of offerings
- Lack of interest (not applicable to my job; haven't felt the need; took part in the past, no new offerings)
- Don't have time; scheduling conflicts; employer will not provide time; can't take time off work
- Not interested in union-related education; more interested in professional development offerings
- HSA offerings not available nearby/too far to travel

Future Priorities

The findings from all the consultation and information-gathering activities point to the following shared priorities for attention:

- Engage and mobilize members
- Demonstrating HSA's value
- Ensuring common direction
- Communication and education
- Internal communication
- Succession planning (for both Board and HSA staff)

The view was also expressed that creating and operationalizing the new strategic plan is a potential asset to be leveraged to address these priorities.

Dichotomies and Contradictions

There was not agreement on all issues across information sources or even within a given group consulted. The five items noted below are of particular relevance given the frequency and/or forcefulness with which they were mentioned during the consultation:

- 1. The BCNU Raid:** The significant financial and membership loss risks associated with this activity were noted by the Board and some of the management team as a major threat facing HSA. But there was not full agreement from the members. The issue ranked lowest amongst all significant threats to the union in the member survey. Amongst focus group respondents, some said that although HSA

handled the recent BCNU raid well, round two will be another huge pressure. Some members expressed pride that HSA does not initiate raids, but instead takes a respectful, professional approach. And other focus group participants urge HSA to consider joining or creating a larger, merged union to increase power in negotiations.

2. **Social activism and philanthropy:** Three of the consultation processes (with the Board, focus groups and membership) identified the shared view that the HSA's commitment to the broader community (e.g. with grants to service agencies) is a strength of the union. Many activist members who participated in focus groups cited their pride in being part of a respectful and inclusive organization that cares for members and the broader community.

Many survey participants also advised the union to continue to engage in advocacy and political activity, particularly on topics beyond the health care system e.g. the environment, social and political issues. Focus group participants expressed pride that HSA stands up for progressive social issues (e.g. through the Committee on Equality and Social Justice and the BC Health Coalition) and values activism and philanthropy. However, many other members also advised the union to 'stay focused on members' workplace and contract concerns', and not broader issues beyond the scope of what they see as the union's business. Several said that HSA should stop spending dues on 'things that don't serve members'.

3. **Reputation:** While the Board and Expanded Management Team believe that HSA has a positive reputation and is respected in the BC labour movement, focus group participants and member survey participants differed. Some cited pride that HSA is perceived as a reasonable, intelligent and moderate voice in the union movement, while others expressed the view that the union needs to negotiate more aggressively on contract terms and "stand up to government" more firmly. Focus group members expressed the view that HSA has achieved respectful relationships with employers and government, and many member survey respondents agreed. However a number of member survey respondents also encouraged the union to negotiate more aggressively and enhance contract gains for members, even if strike action is required.
4. **Leadership Reflecting Membership:** Overall, responses indicate very mixed views on the question of whether the number of members on the HSA Board (currently 55%) should reflect the same proportion as the number of members who are women (currently 80%). About 25% of those who responded to this question) ranked the priority as relatively or very low, compared to 32.7% who ranked it as relatively or very high. The balance (42%) ranked it "about the same priority as other issues". Thus there is little consensus.

Moreover, health science professionals (HSPBA collective agreement members) were much less likely to consider this issue a relatively or very high priority compared to survey respondents from other collective agreement groups (30.2% HSPBA members compared to 58.8% of all others). And men and women expressed very different views in response to this question. Women were more likely to see this issue as a relatively or very high priority (36.4%) compared to men (16.6%).

What happens next?

On December 2, the HSA Board and Expanded Management Team met to receive the results of the exploration phase of planning. At that workshop, they also began to develop the first draft of the new strategic plan. That work continues in a second workshop at the end of February. The plan will be finalized and approved by the Board in March and April, with the results to be presented to the membership at the Annual Convention in May 2015.

To find out more

If you have any questions about the strategic planning process, please contact Miriam Sobrino, Director, Communications (MSobrino@hsabc.org).