Alberta College of
Speech-Language Pathologists
and Audiologists

2023 – 2025
Strategic Plan

Approved, November 2022

Contents

Background

In May 2022, ACSLPA's Council met in person with senior staff for a facilitated 1.5-day strategic planning session. The aim of this session was to lay a foundation for a College Strategic Plan that would start in 2023.

During the retreat, Council was given opportunities to engage with staff and each other on a wide range of topics, looking at matters through many lenses and perspectives.

Council was provided with information on the current and projected state of the College's operations, the political and legislative environment, and the professional practice environment in which members work.

This planning session did indeed result in the formation of a new strategic plan. Discussion also covered the *Mission, Vision, and Values* of the College, and it became clear that this document would also benefit from an update to align it with the new strategic plan. Finally, several key ideas arose that were determined to be important topics to keep in view but would not be addressed as unique strategic priorities within the timeline of this strategic plan.

The new *Mission, Vision, and Values* statements, the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, and keep in view topics are reported herein.

MISSION

Our purpose: the reason we exist

ACSLPA regulates the practice of speech language pathologists and audiologists on behalf of all Albertans by establishing, maintaining, and enforcing standards for competent, safe, and ethical practice.

VISION

Our aspirations: the 'ACSLPA' we are trying to create

ACSLPA is recognized as being a proactive, engaged, and solution-focused regulator.

VALUES

Our ideals: required behaviors and characteristics

In delivering on its mission and mandate ACSLPA demonstrates the following values:

Collaboration – ACSLPA engages meaningfully, respectfully, and proactively with the public, regulated members, government, volunteers, and all stakeholders.

Equity – ACSLPA recognizes the importance of diversity in backgrounds, experiences, voices, and perspectives, and supports and promotes equity and inclusion through its policies, practices, and requirements.

Continuous Improvement – ACSLPA adapts, learns, and grows to meet the evolving needs and expectations of the public, regulated members, government, and all stakeholders.

Transparency – ACSLPA works to ensure that processes, decisions, and requirements are clear and accessible to affected parties and to all stakeholders.

Accountability – ACSLPA takes responsibility for its actions and decisions, and is answerable for them, just as it holds regulated members accountable for their actions as professionals.

Proactivity – ACSLPA identifies and mitigates risks, taking actions and making decisions proportionate to the risks and appropriate in the circumstances.

Fairness – ACSLPA is committed to the procedural fairness of its policies, processes, and practices.

Strategic Priority 1
Regulatory Effectiveness

Ensure that regulatory systems are targeted, proportionate, proactive, and accessible, and that our regulation serves and protects the public interest and advances skilled professional practice.

Current Situation

- Albertans from all walks of life want to be satisfied that rules affecting them are fair, reasonable, meaningful, and logically connected to an outcome they feel is meaningful.

- People and businesses desire minimal government/ regulatory intervention in their personal, professional, and business lives. Perceived overreach or excessive cost are not well tolerated.

- The College has limited resources to address the many needs that arise from serving a diverse public and a diverse population of practitioners. Resources must be directed to where they will have the greatest impact.

- Government wants satisfaction that colleges are balancing public safety with other interests including workforce access for practitioners, procedural fairness, and enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of the health system.

What Success Looks Like

- Establish a regulatory framework for ACSLPA that incorporates essential elements of *Right Touch Regulation, Just Culture, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI),* and *administrative fairness* to be used across regulatory functions.

- Review admissions and registration communications and requirements to ensure procedural fairness, transparency, and accessibility.

- Review and update practice guidelines as needed, particularly with respect to English language learners and alternative therapies.

- Update mandatory jurisprudence materials to ensure current and accurate content, conformance to the regulatory framework, and a modernized user experience.

- Continue to monitor the evolving situation with virtual practice and enhanced interprovincial mobility and make changes to standards, guidelines, and requirements as the situation requires.

Strategic Priority 2
Enhanced Governance

Enhance the way Council functions and interacts with staff to strengthen their ability to make decisions, sustain effort, assess outcomes, assure accountability, and build sustainability.

Current Situation

- Governance is understood here to mean "*the way rules, norms, and actions are structured to allow a group of people to make decisions, sustain effort to achieve outcomes, and ensure accountability.*"

- As is common for smaller organizations, ACSLPA's governance systems have historically been more ad-hoc than structured and its successes have often been attributable more to good people doing good work than to good governance design.

- The College continues to become more complex, and its systems are becoming more sophisticated. At the same time, Council's knowledge of and connection to what staff and committees do day-to-day is becoming more remote (transition from operating board, to managing board, to governance board).

What Success Looks Like

- Articulate the role of the modern ACSLPA Council and its relationship with staff in the current context of the organization and its needs.

- Establish a current Council Code of Conduct and processes for its enforcement.

- Review and update the recruitment and selection processes for Council, incorporating required council member skills/competencies and the current role of Council.

- Review and update the council meeting structure and norms to ensure it meets the current needs of Council, staff, and the organization.

- Clarify Council's expectations of ACSLPA's role with respect to
  - *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI),* and
  - the relationship between ACSLPA and Government.

- Conduct a feasibility study exploring options to ensure the sustainability of the College in the face of increasing costs, increasing public/government/practitioner expectations, and flatlining revenues.

Strategic Priority 3
Improved Communication

Improve the clarity and accessibility of the information ACSLPA provides for its increasingly diverse stakeholder groups, including the public, regulated members, applicants, employers, and the government.

Current Situation

- Perception is reality for most people, so, no matter how good the College might be at regulating, treating people fairly, and fulfilling its role, ACSLPA's effectiveness will be judged by how it is perceived by the public, by practitioners, and by stakeholders.

- Much of what the college does is either invisible to external stakeholders or poorly understood and there continues to be misunderstandings about the role of the college particularly with respect to association vs. regulator roles.

- ACSLPA's communications can seem bulky, complex, or difficult to navigate because we are conveying regulatory messages that are unfamiliar to the audience. We recognize that we need to balance accountability, fairness, and transparency, with clarity and accessibility.

- ACSLPA has a social media purpose that is not well understood by stakeholders.

- ACSLPA would benefit from additional tools to measure the effectiveness of its communications.

What Success Looks Like

- Modernize the design, navigation, and content of the ACSLPA website to improve clarity, accessibility, and sustainability.

- Add updated jurisprudence modules to the website and make them accessible when they are ready.

- Implement an overarching communications strategy and ensure that metrics/data are available to measure outcomes and guide decision making.

- Enhance and implement a communications content and style guideline to improve consistency, clarity, accessibility, and sustainability across departments/areas of the organization.

Keep In-View Items

While delivering on the three strategic priorities, ACSLPA Council and Staff will keep in view the following themes and will seek to incorporate these matters into their work when it is feasible.

Theme 1: **Relationship with Government**

- An ever-increasing number of staff and volunteer effort is being directed towards addressing and adapting to legislative changes and changing government expectations (which includes reporting out and engaging with Ministries and Offices reporting to Ministers).

- Government effort, and therefore in many cases College effort, is not consistently directed towards the pressing practice and legislative challenges that are holding back effective and efficient professional regulation in areas such as interprovincial mobility, virtual care, and scope of practice.

- An effective relationship between ACSLPA and Government enables both to achieve their policy objectives and serve the public as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Theme 2: **SLP & Audiology Workforce**

- Regulated practitioners, their employers, and the public they serve have been wracked for 2-3 years by the unprecedented pandemic, an economic crisis, and a drastic shift in government funding for the health, education, and social services sectors.

- The public's need for professional services is increasing (population growth, aging, immigration, public expectations, catching up on services delayed or exacerbated by the pandemic) while the number of practitioners, particularly in SLP, is flat or declining.

- Practitioners feel burned out, therapy assistants and others have taken on expanded roles in service delivery due to funding changes, and the mental health of practitioners and the public is more fragile than before the pandemic.

- Change, excessive workload, and burnout are known to increase the risk of unskilled practice or harm in healthcare settings.

Theme 3: **Clinical Practice / Virtual Care**

- SLP and Audiology services have historically been delivered person-to-person in a "brick and mortar" environment. The pandemic accelerated the previously slow adoption of virtual care.

- Clients/patients and practitioners have varying expectations and levels of comfort with virtual services, with some agitating for more access to virtual services and others agitating for less.

- ACSLPA's governing legislation was not developed with virtual care in mind. In particular, it is not optimized to address many issues related to cross-border practices and complaint management when the care is delivered across boarders.

- Virtual care can help remove barriers such as geography but limits to technology access/internet access can also create new barriers.

- Virtual care has the potential to lower some costs significantly.

- Technology, tools, and platforms are changing rapidly, and "standards", by definition, are not necessarily nimble or able to adapt quickly to cutting edge change.

Theme 4: **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

- Society's perceptions of disability/ability, culture, race, gender, "normal", "acceptable", etc. continue to evolve. The evolution is, as it always has been, unequal with some people acting as early adopters, others working to preserve existing norms, and others still either uncertain or uninformed one way or the other.

- The concept of diversity continues to evolve, and neurodiversity is emerging as an important consideration.

- ACSLPA requirements, practices, processes, use of terms and words, etc. play a part in shaping dialogue and clinical practice so there is a need to navigate this space with care and respect for all.

- Cultural and racial diversity in Alberta continues to increase, and providing effective care today requires greater cultural awareness.

- It is now well-established that cultural and racial factors affect health outcomes.

- There has been a significant rise in awareness of racial and systemic discrimination in recent years (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

- Language can be a barrier to providing effective care and/or services to non-English or ESL clients.

- Words that are seen as agenda-laden or off-putting to a portion of the audience are unlikely to change perceptions or actions in the desired direction.

Theme 5: **Sustainability**

- Annual College expenses exceed annual revenues by approximately 10%, which is sustainable at the current rate until approximately 2026 using excess invested savings (unless revenues or expenditures change).

- Inflation is running high and operating costs are expected to increase considerably as the College continues to react to changing legislation and government expectations.