



# NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2025

DATE 1 July 2020

TO: Members: Board of Directors

FR: Richard L. Hayes, Chair, WLO Strategic Planning Committee

RE: Strategic Planning

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... strategic planning is a process by which we can envision the future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to influence and achieve that future.

Clark Crouch<sup>1</sup>

This document extends a process begun nearly two decades ago that resulted in the production of WLO's Strategic Plan titled *A World Fit for Living: World Leisure Priorities for People 2004-2008*. This plan identified four priorities for the organization including: (1) heightening the awareness of leisure benefits; (2) improving policy and legislation; (3) strengthening leadership; and, (4) expanding international cooperation. Each of these priorities was supported with a list of action steps. In turn, the results of the work of the organization was evaluated in terms of the progress made in achieving identified activities.

In 2008, another strategic planning initiative was undertaken resulting in a document titled *Leisure: Enhancing the Human Condition ~ Priorities and Strategies, 2009-2014*. Building on the previous strategic plan, this initiative identified six (6) goals, or priorities, including: (1) linking to UN Millennium Goals (MDGs); (2) enhancing research and scholarship; (3) advocating for leisure; (4) expanding educational opportunities; (5) strengthening partnerships and collaborative relationships; and, (6) expanding membership. These goals and priorities were then, in turn, supported by an extensive list of action steps.

In 2013, the WLO BOD established a strategic planning process that included Board members, professional staff, and key stakeholders that identified a set of priorities and goals that were focused on a variety of concerns, <sup>1</sup>including: programs and services; resource development/management; the status or stature of the organization; the building of partnerships, affiliate relationships and cooperative/collaborative relationships; governance activities; and organizational infrastructure. Action steps were created to support these goals, and priorities were established to provide a detailed work path that resulted in the *World Leisure Organization Strategic Plan 2015-2020*, which was adopted in December 2015 by voice vote of the Board of Directors meeting in Atlanta, GA. That plan set out the Mission for the WLO and set priorities in seven (7) strategic areas addressed to realizing its Vision "to provide leadership in advancing leisure as a central force in enhancing the human condition through advocacy, research, and education that promotes socio-cultural development, encourages sustainable economic growth, and improves the quality of life for every person worldwide:" (1) governance; (2) marketing; (3) membership; (4) partnerships; (5) products and services; (6) profitability; and, (7) technology.

Beginning in July 2018, the BOD re-established the strategic planning process and undertook a performance review based on the current plan according to the timeline presented below:

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://crouchnet.com/planning/strategic-planning-quotes/> June 25, 2020.

- July 2018** **WLO Establishes Strategic Planning Process** to include Board members, professional staff and key stakeholders.
  
- August 2018** **Review of current Plan and Strategic Mission/Vision/Values** to ensure alignment of basic philosophy, programs, services and structures;
  
- August 2018** **Future Forecast/Environmental Scan** including SWOT Analysis and identification of key issues, questions and challenges to be addressed.
  
- March-May 2019** **Importance/Performance Analysis of WLO Programs, Services and Structures** by COO to evaluate the importance and performance of programs and services, financial initiatives and other factors.
  
- May- July 2019** **Draft of new Vision document** (*WLO Future: Brainstorm Vision WLO in 2023*) by Treasurer and Secretariat and review by Board of Directors.
  
- July-Aug 2019** **Review Vision document** and prepare grid for analysis by Board of Directors at Expo in Hangzhou.
  
- October 2019** **Board Develops Actions Steps** to achieve the goals and priorities that can be used to provide a detailed working path for a new strategic plan.
  
- Jan-Feb 2020** **Writing of Strategic Plan as a Planning/Promotions Document** to guide the work of the organization over a specific period of time, detailing priorities, goals and actions to be taken and to serve as a promotional publication aimed at advancing a greater understanding of the organization and its intentions.
  
- Mar-Apr 2020** **Review and Revision by the Strategic Planning Committee** for submission to WLO Board of Directors for review and comment.
  
- May 2020** **Board of Directors Reviews and Recommends** necessary additions, revisions, modifications and deletions from draft strategic plan and forwards recommendations to Strategic Planning Committee for preparation and publication of the final Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
  
- June 2020** **Strategic Planning Committee** submits revised plan to Board of Directors for approval.
  
- Sept-Oct 2020** **Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Reviewed for Final Approval by Board of Directors.**

In October 2019, the Board, COO, and selected staff met to review the Mission and Vision statements in preparation for evaluating a list of strategic priorities and proposed a set of action steps to be used to provide a detailed working path for a new strategic plan. The resulting *Conclusions* (see *Strategic Planning Meeting 19 October 2019* attached) were used to inform the draft of a new strategic plan. Consistent with the planning timetable outlined above, necessary reviews and revisions were undertaken to prepare the *World Leisure Organization Strategic Plan 2021-2025* for final approval by the Board of Directors in September 2020.

# World Leisure Organization Strategic Plan: 2021-2025

**MISSION:** To promote leisure as a means to enhance the human condition

**Identity:** The World Leisure Organization is the world's leading advocate for leisure as a means to enhance the human condition.

**Values:** WLO supports the right of all people to positive, quality leisure experiences while recognizing that many have special requirements related to disability, gender, age, social status, poverty, domicile or level of education.

**Activities:** Through research and educational outreach of its global membership, WLO promotes leisure as integral to social, cultural, economic, and sustainable environmental development.

**Scope:** In carrying out its mission, WLO is committed to working with all sectors of society – the public, non-government and intergovernmental organizations, and private sector commercial enterprises – to advance leisure as a human right in order to enhance the quality of life for all persons worldwide.

**OUR VISION** is to position WLO as the leading global organization for leisure by offering a global platform for national associations and agencies and by providing leadership in advancing leisure as a central force for enhancing the human condition through advocacy, research, and education that promotes socio-cultural development, encourages sustainable economic growth, and improves the quality of life for every person worldwide.

## Key issues to be addressed in realizing OUR vision

### Mission and Vision

Reexamine mission and vision statements to reflect our contemporary understanding of the organization's identity, values, activities, and the scope of its outreach.

- Create opportunities, programs, events, and collaborations that position WLO globally and that create the potential for such a platform.
- Align mission with vision to integrate a focus on the individual with organizational leadership world-wide.
- Address planning process to meet the challenge of reaching the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which provide "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future."

## Governance

Restructure governance to be more inclusive, responsive and transparent while sustaining the culture of mutual trust that has developed in recent years among the Board of Directors, Chief Operating Officer, and the Secretariat:

- Focus on managing change in the face of persistent yet planned growth by being transparent about our intentions, collaborative in our actions, and accountable for the results.
- Develop a streamlined management system supported by operational communications that positions the members of the Board for meaningful involvement in the affairs of the WLO.
- Create a leadership succession plan that creates a diverse portfolio of leaders as a natural outcome of an objective, unbiased identification process that relies upon the effective use of data and organizational input and provides enhanced career development opportunities for emerging leaders.

## Finances

Secure the financial resources to support the activities necessary to ensure continued growth and prosperity:

- Develop multiple contingency plans that identify existing vulnerabilities and address possible consequences of continued global pandemic and shifting political realities.
- Develop a robust financial plan that decreases our current reliance on a few sources (e.g., Games, Expos, Festivals), reduces reliance on few sponsors (e.g., China), accurately assesses recurring needs, identifies alternative courses of action, and establishes financial goals tied to the strategic plan.
- Explore fundraising opportunities with sports enterprises (e.g., NIKE, adidas, Reebok) and hotel groups of the world (e.g., InterContinental Hotels Group, Marriot International, Hilton Hotels, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, global Hyatt).

## Membership

Create a well-structured membership initiative that serves present members, recruits new members, and provides tangible services that add value to their work.

- Expand and diversify our membership (to further include practicing professionals, academicians and researchers, policy makers and officials, community leaders, students and other interested individuals representing a broad international audience).
- Offer differentiated membership options (e.g., courtesy/free, student, retiree, life, institutional memberships) and expansion of benefits (e.g., access to publications, reduced fees for global events, mentoring, consultation).
- Explore the need, viability, governance, and financial support necessary to establish branch offices in key regional centers that can promote WLO while addressing local issues with global consequences (e.g., pandemics, financial crises, war, natural disasters).

## Marketing

Refine the use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, email, eNewsletter, website) in communicating with members, partners, and targeted audiences about services (e.g., consultancy) and global events (e.g., including congresses, conferences and summits, WLO Games, and WLO Festivals).

- Focus advocacy activities on creating and disseminating policy statements, model legislative acts, educational materials, and consultative services that promote WLO's mission.
- Position WLO, its products, and its expertise as the leading advocate for leisure worldwide by engaging in collaborative research, promoting its Centers of Excellence, and partnering with key inter-governmental bodies, universities, affiliated professional organizations, leisure associations, the business community, and the public and private foundations that are seeking to be our partners.



# Long-Term Objectives

## Research

- To explore the relationship of leisure to key aspects of our vision to promote socio-cultural development, encourage sustainable economic growth, and improve the quality of life for every person worldwide (e.g., individual identity, social justice, civic engagement, development).
- To examine the ways in which leisure contributes to enhancing the human condition.

## Education

- To offer educational opportunities through different programs, specifically targeting a variety of groups and audiences, reflecting the different profiles within our membership and wider family.
- To capitalize on the education opportunities brought by our membership's expertise.
- To offer opportunities for student and faculty exchanges between board members' affiliations and to assist in developing the MOU among these universities.

## Knowledge Transfer

- To disseminate the research outcomes through different educational events and publications.
- To provide opportunities for exchange for academics, professionals and the wider public.

## Advocacy

- To position WLO as an advocate for leisure by creating and disseminating policy statements, model legislative acts, and information regarding the benefits of leisure as well as the potential drawbacks of some recreational practices (e.g., gambling, binge drinking, dieting).
- To respond to national and international policy and related matters that are deemed incongruous with WLO's vision of leisure as an inalienable right of all peoples.
- To support the inclusion of leisure in governmental structures and public policies as a human right for the entire population.

## Development

- To develop programs and initiatives that contribute to spreading WLO's mission and enlarging the network.

# Strategic Outcomes

## Research and Knowledge Transfer

### *Special Interest Groups (SIG)*

- Leading leisure scholars from across the world are gathered together.
- Topics cover timely and relevant issues and reflect the latest trends in the field of leisure studies, which is reflected in high citation of articles on these topics and of authors working on them.
- Basic guidelines have been established for members to work together on joint initiatives (e.g., research projects, papers, *World Leisure Journal* and other journals' special issues, forums, workshops, and policy papers).
- Minimum membership thresholds have been established that all SIGs are expected to meet.
- Members are regularly updated by the SIG's (co-)chair(s) on their roles, resources, and publishing opportunities in the WLJ.
- The page on WLO website is updated quarterly in multiple languages with SIGs initiatives for increased visibility and progress-tracking.
- Forms of support as approved by the Board of Directors have been consolidated and provided to the SIGs by WL Secretariat.
- The role of the Board of Directors in supporting members is enhanced, defined, and has been published in the Board of Directors' *Handbook*.

### *Events*

- WLO has published a consolidated calendar of scheduled events (e.g., conferences, workshops, training) on the website that are consistent with the mission and vision of the WLO in addition to those events routinely offered by WLO (e.g., Congresses, Expos, Games).
- *Young Peoples' Concert Group (YOUPECO)* is established and is being promoted through the *Youth Ambassadors Committee*.

### *World Leisure Journal*

- Citations show steady increase annually as determined by the *Social Sciences Citation Index* of the Web of Science (WoS) to 25% by 2025.
- An online community has been established and projections set for annual increase in followers on the WLJ's Twitter account @worldleisurej.
- Board members are more visible, more diverse, and more engaged in the activities of the WLJ.
- Special issues have been identified, editors selected, and a tentative schedule of submissions and publication has been created.

### *Newsletter – WL News*

- Subscriptions to the newsletter show steady increase annually to 30% by 2025.
- The newsletter is regularly evaluated in its content and layout (e.g., through a survey targeting representatives of key stakeholders), and improvements are introduced.
- Special issues are published linked to major WL events and translated into the local languages of the countries hosting the event.

### *Other WL Publications*

- Special publications with ISBN number are published in the main languages of the world/languages of members of WLO on the occasion of specific WL events or activities.

### *Awards*

- WLO has a series of awards for both academic and industry practitioners that recognize excellence and innovation in relation to the mission and vision of WLO.



# Education

## *World Leisure Centers of Excellence*

- The WLCE network has been expanded to include as many as 10 Centers with the addition of new geographical areas, in particular: Africa, Middle East and Asia (in addition to China).
- Students and scholars play a leading role in the organization, development, and follow-up of the WLCE Field Schools.
- Strong points or “niches” within each WLCE are identified, promoted, and updated regularly.
- Possible joint Ph.D. supervision opportunities have been identified and potential for implementation has been explored.
- There are special programs for visitation and exchange among WLCEs to include students, researchers, visiting professors, and post-doc positions.
- A joint 1-year master's program is developed between WLCEs NHTV Breda (Netherlands), Vancouver Island University (Canada) and University of Otago (New Zealand).
- A call for scholarship is designed to support study at a WLCE, by which 5 students are selected annually according to fixed criteria to be financed by the WLO.
- The WLCE network provides training and advice for the *Global Network of Leisure Studies* on request.

## *Field School*

- Stable financial support for the *Field School* by the WLO is continued and potential sources of external support have been identified.
- Organized in conjunction with the WL Congress for one week approximately with a regular attendance of at least 30 students.
- The legacy of the *Field School* is consolidated with tangible products, acknowledged by the community, and monitored for impact and legacy for the hosting community and in terms of the connections developed and maintained between participants.

## *World Leisure Congress*

- Ph.D. students and junior scholars are involved in the Early Career Researchers Session during the WL Congresses.

## *Study Tours*

- Target groups are identified (e.g., leisure professionals, graduate students, policy makers, interested public), criteria are established, and an annual plan is in place effective 2021.
- Study Tours are organized to promote the WLO consistent with its strategic goals, to learn about best practices as exemplified by the Communities of Excellence, and to introduce participants to leisure policy makers globally.
- A plan of Annual Study Tours has been organized and published in connection to the SIGs.

## *The Young People's Leisure Network (YPLN)*

- A network of young people is established among different universities and students who are committed to learn, to research, and to give their skills for leisure development.
- An organizational structure is developed to coordinate the network and projects that involve youth coordinators and adult supervisors that is supported by the WL Secretariat.
- *Young People's Book on Leisure (YPBOL)* has been consolidated as a series of books on the topic of Leisure and Safety.
- The *WL Youth Ambassadors Program* is established with emerging leaders that have been exposed to WLO experiences (e.g., field school, study tours, YPBOL) to provide college and university students with an opportunity to connect on a local-to-global basis while gaining a broader perspective of trends, issues, strategies and advancing leisure worldwide.
- WL Secretariat offers communication and promotional support to the organization of *Youth Camps*.

- The *Forum of Young Global Leaders (YGLs)* is established as an independent, not-for-profit foundation under the Swiss Government as an integral part of the World Economic Forum and members under age 40 have been selected through a qualified nomination process and assessed according to rigorous selection criteria that creates a diverse and representative body.

## Advocacy

### *World Leisure Academy*

- Aims, activities, and designation process of the *WL Academy* members are reviewed by the Board of Directors, updated and shared, in accordance to the new Strategic Plan.

### *Charter for Leisure*

- The new *Charter* is published in 2020 in the main languages of the world/languages of members of WLO and updated version published in 2030.
- The *Charter* is presented to leading intergovernmental organizations (e.g., UN, UNESCO, UNWTO, among others).

### *Position Papers*

- WLO SIGs publish position papers in the main languages of the world/languages of members of WLO on current topics in society and where leisure (can) play(s) a role contributing to the mission and vision of WLO.

### *Intergovernmental Relationships*

- WLO's reports linked to UN consultative status are approved and WLO participates in UN NGOs annual meetings.
- WLO holds the status of official partner of UNESCO.
- WLO's active participation in UNWTO working groups (e.g. on the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) is notable and publicly acknowledged.
- WLO links up with the SDGs and a position paper is articulated that identifies our stand and relevance in the pursuit of the SDGs.
- Regular channels of communication and cooperation are established with the World Health Organization (WHO).
- High representatives of these international organizations are invited and take part in WLO events.
- Regular face-to-face meetings are held between representatives of these international organizations and WLO's Chief Operating Officer (COO), the Chairperson, and selected members on the occasion of these or other events.

### *World Leisure Day*

- Committee appointed to explore establishing World Leisure Day aimed at raising awareness of this important dimension of life with goal to engage over 50 communities/institutions all over the world.
- Necessary documentation is developed, in possible collaboration with UNESCO, to lobby the UN to declare an *International Year of Leisure*.

## Development

### *Network Relations*

- The Chief Operating Officer (COO) has maintained face-to-face or virtual meetings with representatives of WL Chapters, Affiliates, national Leisure Studies organizations, as well as other associations and governments (at national and local level).
- New collaborative initiatives are explored with regional and national associations that contribute to the mission and vision of WLO.

- A panel has been organized about common needs and challenges for leisure studies at the New Zealand 2022 and Netherlands 2024 WL Congresses preceded by joint work with regional and national leisure associations.

#### *Communities of Excellence*

- This program is revisited in the framework of the WL Cities Initiative.
- By 2025, WLO will have designated 30 communities of excellence, spread globally as members of a network to exchange information about best leisure practices and challenges.
- The *C of E* Committee in coordination with the Secretariat will identify strategic partnerships globally to encourage potential applicants and establish a network of awardees.
- A follow-up system is developed to monitor the status of WL *Communities of Excellence* awardees on a recurring basis.
- Committee members are recruited and trained to evaluate applications for awarding the designation.

#### *Strategic Priority Grants (SPG)*

- Program is supported financially by the WLO and renewed annually with sustained increase in the number and quality of applications received.
- Opportunities for, and results of, SPGs are widely disseminated through our media and social media channels and at events.

#### *WLO Ambassadors*

- Ambassadors have been identified who represent a country or a specific subfield within leisure studies and are responsible for promoting WLO's image during national and international events.
- Ambassadors create synergies with national leisure operators.
- Ambassadors increase WLO membership in their country, promote WLO as a partner for transnational projects at national and international levels, and serve as contact points for members in their area.

#### *Membership Development*

- A new membership model is in place.
- Membership, and in particular institutional membership, targets have been established that show incremental growth annually.
- New forms of communication and engagement are defined by the Membership Committee and implemented by WL Secretariat, including, for instance, an improved members area online, enhancing networking opportunities.
- Products and services have been reviewed for value added for our members, new products and services have been identified and tested for implementation, and members satisfaction monitored biannually.

# Emerging items for further consideration

Although not currently strategic, several clusters of possible initiatives to be undertaken by the WLO respond to trends that are emerging but as yet unclearly defined or to actions that were judged to require too many resources or to be too difficult to accomplish. Beyond the host of issues that currently affect the leisure community world-wide due to the global pandemic created by COVID-19, many of these proposals lack sufficient information to make their planning a reality. Nonetheless, they are provided here as a set of initiatives worth monitoring and demanding further investigation in the near future.

## Research

### *The World Leisure Observatory*

- Observatory is established and collects existing statistics, putting them together and providing an analytical reading.
- Observatory becomes a reference point for leisure data and analysis.
- Observatory contributes to the WLO to better relate and position itself with key stakeholders from the leisure field at a global level.
- Main trends in the field of leisure and leisure studies are identified, compiled and analyzed in the yearly *WL Trends Report*.
- Key stakeholders have been identified in a fundraising plan.
- Specific indicators are developed by the WL Observatory and local organizers to measure the place-specific impact of WLO-sponsored events in three main areas: economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

### *Consultancy Projects*

- Consultancy services have been identified for offering to institutions, companies, and government agencies.
- Potential clients are identified in a fundraising plan that identifies the specific services and/or areas of expertise we are prepared to offer.

## Education

### *Global Network of Leisure Studies*

- A global network of universities offering undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in Leisure Studies is formed to be the global platform for leisure studies and related fields.
- A database of the universities involved in this network is developed, and the degrees that they offer are classified.

### *Executive Courses for Professionals*

- Specific training for professionals is offered by faculty of WLCEs as well as members of the WL Academy in the form of online executive courses.
- Training is connected to the findings of the WL Observatory's research, or in the areas of expertise of WLCEs and Academy members.

# Knowledge Transfer

## *Articles in Partner Media*

- Articles on WLO's events and programs as well as opinion pieces by its members are regularly published in media partners like *Leisure Media* (UK), *Australasian Leisure Magazine*, or the Chinese magazines *Leisure and Travel* and *Leisure Magazine* and could be positioned to appear in *The Conversation* or tracked in *Academe* or *ResearchGate*. Joint collaborative efforts with our partners (e.g., LSA, ANZALS, WLCEs, etc.) should be encouraged that capture the interest of our diverse membership.

## *Early Career Researchers Colloquium*

- Colloquium is organized to promote collaboration among the next generation of scholars and professionals on leisure studies.
- Organizers gain insights about the needs and expectations of .
- Organizers bring young researchers closer to the network, its action lines, programs and products.

## *Global Leisure Debates*

- Debate is consolidated as a side event of the WL Congress.
- Conclusions serve as input for the identification of trends in the evolution of the Leisure Studies field.
- A series of webinars is developed to provide a learning and networking platform for different targets – including but not limited to academics, practitioner, *pracademics*, students – from different geographies.
- A supporting archive of educational resources is built as legacy of the webinars.

## *Leisure Experience Research Opportunity*

- Linked to the biennial WL Expo and Forum in Hangzhou.
- WLCEs students engage in a fieldwork educational project and report on their visitor experience as a tourist in the host city.

## *WLO Seal*

- Design of *Seal* is explored to use as a trademark in endorsing specific events organized by the WLO and its affiliates.

## *WL "Think Tanks" – Knowledge-sharing and networking experiences on leisure*

- Online discussion groups are organized encouraging dialogue as well as the generation and discussion of innovative ideas in order to bring actors together to share research findings and initiatives in the context of leisure.

## Advocacy & Development

### *Global Network of Leisure Authorities*

- A global network is formed of national and local leisure authorities to be the global platform for leisure public policies studies.
- A database of the national and local leisure authorities is developed, and the status, national and local leisure structures and plans are classified.

### *WL Cities Initiatives*

- A global network of cities is formed with four areas of works: advocacy work on leisure and cities; consulting and advising on leisure policies in cities; capacity building and knowledge, and recognition of excellence.
- The WLO develops into a partner for cities and supports them to design, monitor and evaluate policies, activities and facilities in the field of Leisure.