

Report to the CQHA Board of Directors

Subject: Impact of AQHA's New Strategic Operating Plan on CQHA and the Affiliate Engagement & Transition Task Force

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Executive Summary

AQHA has released its new **Strategic Operating Plan**, which sets the direction for the association's global operations. This plan focuses on four strategic pillars: **membership growth & engagement, competition excellence, financial sustainability, and organizational effectiveness.**

The most significant shift for affiliates is the transition to a **grant-based Business Plan Funding (BPF) model effective October 1, 2026.** This change eliminates automatic stipends and requires affiliates to apply for funding with measurable goals and outcomes.

CQHA's Affiliate Engagement & Transition Task Force, launched in July 2025, is well positioned to prepare Canada for these changes. The task force mandate directly aligns with AQHA's new priorities, providing Canadian affiliates with the tools and support they need to succeed, while allowing CQHA to re-focus on national-level leadership, advocacy, and long-term strategy.

Key Elements of AQHA's Strategic Plan

1. **Membership Growth & Engagement**
 - Focus on expanding AQHA's reach and ensuring stronger youth and international involvement.
 2. **Competition Excellence**
 - Investment in show quality, judging standards, and improved participant experiences.
 3. **Financial Sustainability**
 - Shift to grant-based BPF; affiliates must demonstrate outcomes in order to secure funding.
 4. **Organizational Effectiveness**
 - Greater accountability, measurable results, and streamlined operations.
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Implications for CQHA

1. Alignment with AQHA's Pillars

CQHA's task force already mirrors AQHA's priorities:

- **Youth & Young Adult Subgroup** → Membership growth.
- **Show Managers, Secretaries & Judges Subgroup** → Competition excellence.
- **Funding Innovation & Transition Subgroup** → Financial sustainability.

- **Inclusive governance & rotating facilitation** → Organizational effectiveness.

2. Funding Transformation

- Canada's affiliates must prepare to apply for **competitive, business-plan style grants** starting in 2026.
- Affiliates will work **directly with AQHA** on applications, eliminating CQHA's past role as a financial middleman.
- The **grant-preparedness toolkit** being developed by the task force will be central to building affiliate confidence and readiness.

3. International Lens

- AQHA has emphasized the need for **distinct international engagement models**.
- Canada's **grandfathered multi-affiliate structure** is unique within AQHA and could be recognized as a test case for international collaboration.
- By demonstrating strong affiliate independence supported by CQHA's national-level coordination, Canada can position itself as a **model international partner**.

4. Metrics & Accountability

- AQHA will require affiliates to provide **data-driven reporting** on membership, competition, and engagement outcomes.
- CQHA's role will be to **equip affiliates with shared tools, templates, and training** so they can meet reporting expectations.
- This allows CQHA to shift its focus toward **advocacy, international representation, and national programs** rather than duplicating affiliate administration.

Risks and Opportunities

Risks

- Provincial affiliates remain siloed, limiting Canada's ability to secure competitive funding.
- AQHA could pressure Canada toward a single-affiliate model if coordination and accountability are weak.

Opportunities

- Task force recommendations can position CQHA as a **capacity-builder** rather than a gatekeeper, equipping affiliates to apply directly to AQHA for BPF funding.
 - By focusing on **training, tools, and best practices**, CQHA strengthens the ability of each affiliate to succeed while freeing CQHA to prioritize **national-level initiatives** such as advocacy, Canadian-bred recognition, international representation, and cross-provincial collaboration.
 - A **unified Canadian voice** on policy, youth development, and international relations ensures Canada is recognized as a strong partner without duplicating administrative responsibilities.
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Conclusion

AQHA's new Strategic Operating Plan confirms the importance of the work already underway through the **CQHA Affiliate Engagement & Transition Task Force**. By aligning with AQHA's four pillars, preparing affiliates for the grant-based funding model, and strengthening national coordination, CQHA can ensure Canada secures funding, protects its grandfathered status, and demonstrates leadership within AQHA's global community.

Most importantly, the grant-based model allows affiliates to take direct ownership of their funding relationships with AQHA. This shift relieves CQHA of the administrative burden of acting as a financial conduit and enables the association to focus on **advocacy, program innovation, and building national-level initiatives that serve all Canadian members**.

The next three months of the task force's work will be pivotal in setting Canada up for success under this new operating framework.

AQHA

AMERICAN QUARTER
HORSE ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

To record and preserve the pedigree and integrity of the American Quarter Horse, while protecting its welfare, promoting its versatility and encouraging lifelong enjoyment of the breed.

VISION

To be the global advocate for the American Quarter Horse, celebrating its legacy, uniting a passionate community and leading the equine industry.

CORE STRATEGIES

- Invest in Human Capital and Leadership Development
- Enhance Data Capture & Data Management Capabilities
- Explore Future Genetic Tools, Technologies and Issues
- Expand AQHA's International Presence
- Deliver Enhanced Member Value to Drive Membership Growth
- Strengthen Affiliate Relationships, Alliance Relationships, Shows and Events



OCTOBER 2025

Q INVEST IN HUMAN CAPITAL AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



OVERVIEW

AQHA recognizes that its people are the organization's greatest asset. This strategy focuses on recruiting, developing and retaining top talent while strengthening leadership and maintaining the positive culture cultivated in recent years. AQHA is committed to proactive succession planning and leadership development to ensure long-term organizational success.

ACTIONS

- Recruitment, Training and Performance Management
- Talent Assessment and Development
- Employer Branding and Culture Enhancement
- Board Leadership Development
- Succession Planning

Q ENHANCE DATA CAPTURE AND DATA MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES



OVERVIEW

The American Quarter Horse Association aims to enhance its data capture and management capabilities to increase the value of registered American Quarter Horses and support breeders and owners in proving their horses' worth. This strategy outlines prioritized initiatives to improve data collection, storage and monetization in a scalable and sustainable manner.

ACTIONS

- Assess Current Data Landscape and Gaps
- Build Data Operations Capacity
- Establish Data Collection Processes and Partnerships
- Continue to Invest in Technology and Tools
- Pursue Strategic Acquisition Opportunities
- Develop Data Monetization Strategies

Q EXPLORE FUTURE GENETIC TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES AND ISSUES



OVERVIEW

AQHA is committed to protecting the integrity of the American Quarter Horse registry. This strategy focuses on proactively evaluating rapidly evolving genetic technologies, emerging tools and their implications for breeding, genetic diversity and responsible ownership. AQHA aims to preserve breed standards and adapt to innovations that may impact the breed's future through leadership, research, education and collaboration.

ACTIONS

- Reinstate Genetic Advisory Council
- Develop Transition Plan from Microsatellites to SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms)
- Prioritize Genetic Research and Seek Funding
- Explore Advanced Animal Identification Technologies
- Continue Education on Genetic Tools and Technologies
- Collaborate with Other Breed Associations and Leverage Artificial Intelligence

Q EXPAND AQHA'S INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE



OVERVIEW

International members are a growing and important part of AQHA's total membership. This strategy focuses on leveraging funding sources, simplifying digital engagement, strengthening international relationships and expanding staff resources to enhance AQHA's reach and influence.

ACTIONS

- Leverage USLGE Funds for International Involvement
- Promote Ease and Simplicity of Digital Platform to Increase International Memberships and Registrations
- Engage International Affiliates in the Value Proposition of their Affiliate Status
- Re-evaluate and Expand Staffing to Support International Growth

Q DELIVER ENHANCED MEMBER VALUE TO DRIVE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH



OVERVIEW

AQHA must continuously innovate to deliver compelling value to members. This strategy aims to increase membership through enhanced benefits, focused messaging and targeted programs. Growing membership will amplify AQHA's attractiveness to sponsors, partners and advertisers and strengthen loyalty programs, securing long-term organizational success.

ACTIONS

- Enhanced Member Benefits & Tiered Membership
- Brand Messaging & Member Value Promotion
- Cash Award-Incentives for Members
- Data Collection Program to Increase Horse Value
- Youth Lead Generation Programs
- Bundled Membership Opportunities
- Member-Referral Program
- Shared Ownership Programs

Q STRENGTHEN AFFILIATE RELATIONSHIPS, ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIPS, SHOWS AND EVENTS



OVERVIEW

Affiliate and alliance organizations, together with AQHA events, play a critical role in driving demand for American Quarter Horses. This strategy focuses on leveraging modern marketing channels, enabling flexible show models, strengthening partnerships and enhancing affiliate value to ensure sustainability and growth for AQHA.

ACTIONS

- Leverage Social Media Influencers for Promotion
- Enable Creation of New Shows with Flexible Business Models
- Review and Engage on World Show Qualifying Requirements
- Cultivate Alliance Relationships and Data Sharing
- Evaluate Leveling Program and Define Success Metrics
- Rethink Value Proposition for Non-Showing Affiliate Members
- Cultivate Alliance Organization Involvement and Mutually Beneficial Programs