Rowing Canada Aviron
High Performance Athlete Development Pathway:

Next Generation Athlete Strategy
Update 2017 To 2024
Overview
Following the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games, Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) underwent a significant shift in its organizational and high performance leadership. This organizational shift created the opportunity to review many components under the umbrella of High Performance.

In the category of ‘Development’, key stakeholder consultations took place to critically evaluate Rowing’s High Performance Athlete Development Pathway, including the Row To Podium – Talent Identification Program.

The consultation process affirmed the need to direct more focus towards the Next Gen rowers trending five (5) to eight (8) years from an Olympic/Paralympic podium performance. The shift will result in enhanced programming at a targeted stage in the pathway. This enhancement will not impede on programming in other pathways.

The fundamental revision required within RCA’s NextGen program, is a move from sequestered Talent Identification Programming, to talent identification conducted as an activity within a
systemic approach to re-engaging and supporting Canadian ‘rowing’ universities and high performing club programs.

This engagement will come in the form of enhanced technical coaching capacity embedded within NextGen training environments located within identified Canadian universities and high performing clubs.

At the Junior or U19 level, the NextGen strategy looks to support and strengthen the roles of Clubs and Schools in developing athletes on the pathway through engaged programs and initiatives.

As a critical conduit of athletes to the Canadian National Team, it is essential that post-secondary institutions (particularly Canadian universities) and high performing rowing clubs are once again empowered as high performance partners within rowing’s pathway. Historically the highest multiple Olympic rowing podium performances (1992 [5], 1996 [6], and 2008[4]) were generated by athletes and underpinning coaches that were active student-athletes or graduates of university rowing programs. This trend of university affiliated Olympic rowers continues (Fig. 1.0); however, it is imperative the delivery of the pathway shifts back to recognize and empower these institutions that have played and are required to play in the growth and success of Canada’s Olympic and Paralympic Rowing Teams.

**Figure 1.0**
Canadian Olympic Rowing Athletes Affiliated with Post-Secondary Institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CAN</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Unaffiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next Generation (NextGen) Strategy**
To positively impact and enhance up to five (5) strategically selected NextGen performance environments. These environments will be selected in September 2017 based on a Request for Proposal - NextGen Hub Criteria, encompassing identified/targeted NextGen Olympic and Paralympic athletes supported with a critical mass of athletes (training groups) underpinning the daily performance environment. Working in close alignment, these partnerships will generate the critical elements required to convert these Daily Training Environments (DTE) to NextGen Performance Hubs with the capability of stimulating the growth and progress of targeted rowers five to eight years from an Olympic/Paralympic podium performance.
2017-2024 Shift in NextGen Strategy

- Alignment of validated Podium Pathway.
- *Row To Podium* testing methodology utilized as a basis for athlete identification initiatives as well as ongoing HP athlete development monitoring rather than isolated all-encompassing program.
- Support and promote sustainable and accountable regional partnerships (institution, club & school) and programs, where vibrant and competitive atmospheres are recognized
- Integration of additional high performance coaches into RCA’s High Performance Athlete Pathway, focused on progressing rowers five (5) to eight (8) years from an Olympic/Paralympic podium performance.

NextGen Hubs

NextGen Hub environments will provide NextGen athletes access to an uncompromising culture of excellence, supported with optimal coach to athlete ratio and performance planning derived from individual and systemic gap analysis aligned from RCA’s Gold Medal Profile (Figure 2.0). NextGen programming represents the concept of delivering the appropriate resources for the appropriate spot in the pathway through a monitoring and assessment strategy.

NextGen Hub environments, programming and coaching activities will be closely monitored and held accountable through the engagement and integration of targeted performance partners (i.e. Universities, Clubs, Provincial Sport Organizations, Own The Podium and Canadian Sport Institutes) as members of the NextGen Hub Management Committee. These committees will provide leadership and direction to each NextGen Hub operating within a specific province.

On a functional level NextGen Hub’s will be the Daily Training Environment (DTE) of the [NextGen Coach](#), where they will work with identified athletes to elevate the quality and quantity of athletes progressing on the podium pathway. This will capture athletes who are based within the Hub host program, athletes within the region in an existing program and available to do additional training, or athletes who are outside the official host program, but the optimal training environment for them is to be aligned with the Hub host for some or all of their training.

The NextGen Hub will further host the monitoring and outreach activities within a particular region. Using a periodized strategy, monitoring camps will look to elevate the abilities of identified NextGen athletes on a regional basis against the learning and performance metrics within the Gold Medal Profile. Monitoring camps will occur on a monthly basis.

NextGen Hubs will utilize their selection as a NextGen Hub to elevate the Sport Science Sport Medicine (SSSM) support that currently exists within the host DTE. Sport specific leadership, strategies and targeted Gap strategies will come from the Canadian Sport Institutes’ (CSI) expertise that exists within the sport. It is expected that within the NextGen Hub DTE, RCA
strategies for athlete monitoring, strength & conditioning, nutrition, health and wellness are delivered.

NextGen Hub Criteria:
- Targeted NextGen athletes;
- Embedded full-time NextGen Coach;
- Prime access to primary and auxiliary training facilities/equipment/training group; and
- Access to appropriate SSSM through leveraging CSI leadership and University opportunity.

Management Committee
Roles and Responsibilities
- Meeting monthly, as coordinated by Rowing Canada. These bi-monthly meetings will ideally take place in face-to-face within the NextGen Hub environment. Other meetings may be organized as required.
- Establishment of annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the NextGen Hub.
- Overall development and strategic management of the NextGen Hub program.
- Development and approval of annual multiparty NextGen Hub program budget by July 1st of each year.
- Support the coordination of all contractual and lease obligations as directly related to the NextGen Hub program.
- Conducting an annual review of the NextGen Hub program.

NextGen program Key Performance Indicators
- NextGen Hub athletes achieve predicted performance benchmarks annually.
- The number of opportunities for NextGen Hub athletes to compete and train in high performance environments continues to grow annually.
- The number of NextGen athletes meeting or exceeding Gold Medal Profile elements for their stage of development.
- The number of NextGen athletes named to National Team Programs continues to progress and increase in numbers.
- NextGen Hub Coaches and/or Coaches within the ‘Host’ NextGen Hub environment are expressing their interest and nominated to National and/or Provincial Teams.
- 2-3 Olympic/Paralympic/World Championships Medals are sustainable annually throughout the quadrennials.

Key Hub Activities

Enhanced Daily Training Environment (DTE)
The primary role of the NextGen Hub Coach is supporting and enhancing the DTE within the Hub location, specifically for developing athletes who have been identified within the athlete
pool. The NextGen Hub coach is positioned to complement the host’s existing coaching structure during the competitive season. They will provide leadership and direction to developing athletes and leverage RCA and CSI resources into the host program throughout the year.

**University/Club DTE**

Within the university/club context, the NextGen Hub Coach’s objective is to elevate the quality and quantity of athletes progressing to the varsity program and would represent itself as full program immersion during the competitive season. During the summer racing season, the NextGen Hub Coach and the Varsity Coach would be expected to develop a strategic approach to involvement in taking on responsibility with National or Provincial level programming while maintaining a summer development squad out of the Hub. This could include hosting a training group for a specific competition project.

**Talent Identification (TID) & Recruitment**

In conjunction with local clubs and schools, the NextGen Hub Coach will support the delivery of TID and recruitment within the region. After being directed to a club or school, identified athletes are monitored and directed using RCA’s existing TID and development protocols (playbook).

**Regional Athlete Pool**

Provide a central location in the monitoring of identified athletes within the region. The Hub coach plays a key role in monitoring identified athletes and new talent within the region. Leadership and Engagement will be provided to the clubs and schools appropriate for their stage within the high performance athlete pathway. The athlete pool and list of targeted athletes will be a key driver of resources and planning to support Provincial and National excellence programming and provide enhanced programming at a regional level.

**Monitoring Camps**

A planned NextGen strategy is to deliver programming that enhances the technical, tactical, physical, emotional and lifestyle skills of regionally targeted athletes. Monitoring camps will be hosted out of the Hub, utilizing the Hub resources and expertise to facilitate the gathering and training of targeted athletes and coaches within a region on a regular basis around an aligned strategy. Camps will be hosted at Hubs using host equipment and identified athletes from the athlete pool. Some camps may be aligned with a strategy (i.e. selection preparation) and/or aligned with a specific demographic (i.e. U21 or U19).

**Next Gen coach**

The NextGen Coach position will have two core objectives. The first being to provide the required resources and on-water coaching support within a NextGen HUB location to elevate the quality and quantity of athletes within the HUB, appropriate for their stage of development. Critical elements to these required resources will be athlete monitoring practices, the identification of individual performance gaps and performance plans to address the gaps.
The second objective is to play a regional technical management role centred around a targeted high performance athlete and coach list within a given regional catchment. This can include facilitating Talent Identification (both Para and Able-bodied) activities with partner clubs, contributing to a regional athlete recruitment strategy with schools, clubs and institutions, hosting performance monitoring camps, liaising with Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) and Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) staff for coaching development strategies and, driving an enthusiasm around engaging in performance outcomes regionally.

**NextGen Para-Rowing**

The three main objectives of RCA’s NextGen Para-Rowing Program are: (1) Recruit; (2) Identify Talent; and (3) Integration. These key elements must remain consistent year over year to ensure a healthy and sustainable future. Although the recruitment of Para-Rowers may occur in specific environments outside of the traditional rowing pathway, a large proportion of the Para-Rowing NextGen practices and processes have significant similarities and therefore initially stand-alone positions of NextGen Athlete Pathway Lead and NextGen Para-Rowing Lead are required with the intent of having these positions gradually falling under the same title of NextGen Athlete Pathway Leads, responsible for all NextGen athletes within rowing’s high performance athlete pathway (i.e. U19, U23, Senior and Para).

**Coach and Technical Leadership**

- **Director Athlete and Coach Pathways** – Adam Parfitt
  - Program oversight and leadership
- **NextGen Athlete Pathway Lead** – TBD
  - Planning and process for Monitoring Camps, RBC Training Ground and Talent Identification Activities.
- **NextGen Para-Rowing Lead** – TBD – Recruitment Underway
  - Planning and process for Athlete Recruitment and Talent Identification Activities.
- **NextGen (East & West) & U23 Program Lead** – TBC (up to 2)
  - Recruitment and connection with Next Gen athletes at US schools and performance planning for U23 Teams. Linkage with NextGen Programing and Senior National Team Coaches.
- **NextGen Coach** – TBC (up to 5)
  - Establishing and monitoring the DTE for NextGen Hub athletes, plan and lead monitoring camps, outreach/recruitment initiatives (i.e. club, schools and other institutions) and Talent Identification activities.
Provincial Sport Organizations
Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) feed into the NextGen strategy through programming alignment opportunities and coordinated efforts in providing support to identified athletes progressing along the High Performance Athlete Development Pathway. PSOs play a leadership role with RCA in maintaining an aligned targeted athlete lists across the country and ensuring appropriate resources are supporting athletes and coaches to performance outcomes nationally or internationally. Programming alignment presents opportunities in utilizing the same processes, camps and initiatives in order to identify athletes to where provincial representation is a key objective such as NRC or Canada Games.

Clubs, Schools and Non-Hub Universities
A key objective of the NextGen strategy is to enhance and support coaches and athletes on the High Performance Pathway within a region. The outreach and engagement opportunities are closely linked to monitoring of the: Gold Medal Profile metrics; development/implementation of performance plans; and performance outcomes.

Events as outcomes
It is important that as athletes and coaches progress along the pathway, there are regular assessments and competition opportunities appropriate for the stage of development. In a successful NextGen strategy, the depth and quality of athlete monitoring will present opportunity for competition regionally, nationally and/or internationally. As part of an athletes’ individual performance plan, it is important that appropriate events are included early in the season and a strategy is coordinated to realize a successful outcome. While initial evidence indicates an increasing correlation on performance at World U23 Championships to success at Olympic Games, Junior Worlds, CanAmMex, Canadian Henley, US Nationals, Dual Meets, and British Henley are competitive options.

**Implementation Timelines**

- September 2017 Criteria finalized
- September, 2017 Request for Proposals circulated
- September, 2017 Selection of institutions/clubs
- September/October, 2017 Hiring of Coaches
- November, 2017 Program fully operational

Those looking to submit an expression of interest in being considered for a Hub can contact Adam Parfitt (parfitt@rowingcanada.org) for more details.

**Coaching Professional Development**

Recently Rowing Canada initiated a program called the RCA High Performance Coach Mentorship Program. It is a program to support up-and-coming Canadian coaches with opportunities to improve their skills, knowledge and experience both on and off the water. The program is run annually and includes face-to-face sessions with coach mentors and real-world experiences in high performance rowing. The program is being coordinated by former national team coach Al Morrow, working in conjunction with Colleen Miller, Manager of Coach Education and Development and Adam Parfitt, Director of Coach and Athlete Pathways.

NextGen Performance Coaches will be automatically part of the coach mentorship program as a mandatorily element of their professional development strategy. A secondary element of their professional development will be the integration of the NextGen Hub with National Team programming. Within the Hub agreement, on a yearly basis, the NextGen Performance Coach or the lead coach of the Hub’s host environment will be actively coaching a crew and a part of the coaching team at a provincial, national, or international event. This will elevate their performance awareness and coaching competencies.

**Gold Medal Profile**

In 2015 Rowing Canada completed it’s Athlete Development Pathway document with contributions from internal sport and system experts. The pathway outlines the Technical, Tactical, Physical, Mental and Lifestyle skills from Learn to Train to Train to Win 2 stages of the LTAD model. In practical senses, Rowing’s Gold Medal Profile reporting to date has had a solid foundation of Talent Identification metrics based around physicality markers and will be enhanced with the implementation of resources compiled within the Athlete Development
Pathway project. Work has begun in analyzing the Athlete Development Pathway skills list to identify metrics for the Gold Medal Profile, the current draft being:

**Figure 2.0**
Rowing Canada’s Gold Medal Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSIOLOGICAL</th>
<th>TECHNICAL</th>
<th>TACTICAL</th>
<th>LIFESTYLE</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2km Erg*</td>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Pacing</td>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Coachability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6km Erg*</td>
<td>Bladework</td>
<td>Race Plan/Strategy</td>
<td>Sleep/Recovery</td>
<td>Motivation/ Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 min Test</td>
<td>Posture</td>
<td>Compatibility</td>
<td>Injury prevention/ Management</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak Power</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Small boat speed vs World Best Time*</td>
<td>Life balance</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Load</td>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Fight</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body composition</td>
<td>Ratio/Rhythm/Sequence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps:
- Scoring and Scaling: August 2017
- Reporting Tool: September 2017
- Education and system role out: Fall 2017
- Updated NextGen Athlete Pool List: December 2017

**National Monitoring**
A National level monitoring strategy exists and includes 2 national level on water assessments (Speed Orders National Selection Regatta and National Rowing Championships) and 2 national level physical assessments (RADAR). The on-water assessments and RADAR are the events where athletes can complete the Gold Medal Profile metrics for their personal profile, and determine where they rank on a national level. The Speed Orders National Selection Regatta, National Rowing Championships and RADAR assessments will be the formal process for National Training Centre invites, Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Plan (carding) intake, camp invitations (including selection) and other National Team Programming strategies.

Speed Orders National Selection Regatta and National Rowing Championships – These are the primary on water monitoring and assessment events for the athlete pool. These events are small boat focused where all entrants will receive a final ranking of their performance nationally. Participants at these events will include National Team hopefuls

RADAR - Rowing Athlete Development and Ranking is a program designed to identify, track and monitor athletes physical output through the rowing ergometer. Quite simply, RADAR is a
battery of tests that provides a simple strength and weakness assessment of the specific fitness traits required by rowers. This battery of tests is achieved without the need to undertake laboratory tests or time out from the routine training environment. Within the national monitoring strategy additional distance specific assessments will be published for monitoring purposes through the training cycles.

**Next Steps:**
- Confirmation of RADAR and distance specific assessment dates: September 2017
- Confirmation of Speed Orders NSR 2018 date and location: October 2017
- Confirmation of selection process for National Rowing Teams (all): October 2017
  - Note Junior integration with Speed Orders NSR is under review with the objective of confirming in October 2017.

**Podium Pathway**
An extensive amount of work was done in conjunction with Canadian Tire Sport Analytics Unit and Own The Podium to scrape existing performance history of the Rowing’s 2004, 2008 and 2012 Olympic Medalists. Within the NextGen framework, the question of importance of performance at U23 World Championships within the Podium Pathway as a benchmark was put to the test. The following points were contained within the March 2nd, 2015 update:

*Since its inception in 2005, the U23 Championships have become crucial to future Olympians:*
  - 38% of men and 20% of women that won their first medal at the 2012 Olympics participated in the U23 World Championships three years before the 2012 Olympic Games
  - Every first time 2012 Olympic medalist who competed in the U23 Championships two years before the Olympic Games placed in the top 6

**Next Steps:**
Engage Canadian Tire Sport Analytics Unit to review and update data of 2016 Olympic Medalists, to validate the trends that presented after the 2012 Quadrennial including determining the importance of World Juniors and World U23 Championships as benchmarks and conversion rates from benchmark events.