

Environmental Scan Summary for AEF Board Session

CONFIDENTIAL: For Board members and ED only

Purpose: This scan is designed to provide a snapshot of the environment in which AEF operates, highlighting trends, risks and opportunities that may affect the strategic priorities.

This is not a deep dive into operations but an overview to support Board discussion and consideration of strategic directions at the governance level.

Key Environmental Themes

1. Organizational and Financial

- Need for increased unencumbered money.
- Value of the Economic Impact Study in demonstrating AEF's contributions. And, it needs to be updated, now and regularly.
- Shrinking volunteer pools across not-for-profits.
- Funders demanding more transparency, reporting, and measurable outcomes.
- Competition for grants and donations is intensifying.
- Pressure/need to expand revenue beyond grants and donations.
- Growing need to strengthen sponsorships, merchandising and other earned income.
- Pressure on existing staff and volunteers to deliver beyond current resources.
- Outdated technology infrastructure and reliance on external systems (e.g., US-based subscriptions) present financial and operational risks.
- Cybersecurity and data management are growing areas of vulnerability.
- A draft reorganization will be reviewed with staff in October before being finalized, with potential for modest cost savings.

2. Membership and Community

- Need to continually demonstrate the benefits and value of membership.
- Past issues with the membership database and website affected members, but the new systems are a significant success and will be important in rebuilding trust in the AEF.
- Aging membership base, fewer youth riders entering the sport.
- Rising costs and inflation are making horse ownership, AEF membership and participation less accessible, forcing difficult choices for some members.
- Newcomer and urban audiences are less connected to equestrian culture.
- Uncertainty about the financial sustainability of the membership model, with feedback from some members favouring anniversary memberships over annual renewals. This shift may improve satisfaction, reduce administrative pressure and stabilize revenue flows

3. Equestrian Sector

- Growth of recreational riding vs. competitive riding.

- Rising expectations around equine welfare and training practices.
- Ongoing resistance from coaches on certification requirements, which are largely outside AEF's control.
- Perception of Equestrian Canada affects trust in equestrian organizations, including AEF.
- Increasing regulation in health, safety and animal welfare is creating new compliance demands, often without additional resources or funding.

4. Government Relations

- Increasingly being consulted by the Government of Alberta on trails, land use, equestrian issues, emergency management etc.
- Recognition as a leading voice creates expectations for influence and leadership.
- Limited staff and volunteer capacity to meet consultation demands.

5. Environmental

- Wildfires, drought and hay shortages/prices affecting Alberta horse owners.

6. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Resistance to DEI within parts of the membership, despite government requirements and political sensitivities.
- Public expectations for governing bodies to model inclusivity and belonging.
- Membership is primarily female.

7. Opportunities

- Growth in memberships, partnerships and sponsorships, including potential with corporate and community organizations and board connections.
- Expanding storytelling about members and showcasing multidisciplinary competitions can strengthen AEF's visibility and relevance.
- Opportunity to lead in Safe Sport and equine welfare by marketing Safe Sport starting this fall.

Things for the Board to think about:

- What are the implications for AEF because of this environmental scan?
- Is important information missing or incorrect?
- Which of these trends most affect AEF's ability to deliver its vision and mission?
- Which trends could present the biggest risks if ignored?
- Where are the opportunities to lead and differentiate AEF?