

**Morrison, Kristen**  
**University of Waterloo**  
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*Developing a typology of strategic approaches to membership growth in community sport*

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Community sport organizations (CSOs) are non-profit, membership-based organizations that provide pathways for children, youth, and adults to participate in affordable and accessible sport programming in their local communities (Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014; Sharpe, 2006). Examples of CSOs include local soccer and volleyball clubs, minor hockey and ringette associations, and softball leagues. CSOs are typically governed by a volunteer board of directors responsible for managing both the day-to-day operational tasks as well as long-term strategic direction of the organization (Hoye et al., 2019). While a growing body of evidence suggests that CSOs are engaging in professional management practices (e.g., Nichols et al., 2015; Seippel, 2019; Tiusanen, 2018), CSOs have been criticized for using a problem solving style that is reactive and pragmatic, rather than proactive and strategic (Taylor, 2004).

The role of CSOs is particularly important to the health and wellbeing of Canadian communities in a time when sport participation is declining (Statistics Canada, 2013). While CSOs provide critical access to recreation and competitive sport opportunities, much like other grassroots nonprofits, they also face multiple capacity challenges, such as rising cost of infrastructure, competition for funding and access to quality facilities, and reliance on volunteers (e.g., Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014; Wicker, Breuer, & Hennigs, 2012). Given this complex environment, a greater understanding and application of strategy is necessary so that CSOs can effectively grow their membership and meet their mandate of providing local sport programming opportunities in their communities.

This study is part of a multi-phase research program that seeks to uncover and understand the variety of strategic approaches to membership growth among CSOs. A prior phase of the research program uncovered various environmental factors that drove CSO leaders' decision to engage in strategic planning in order to achieve the purported purpose of membership growth. The results from the second phase of the research program will be highlighted in this year's poster. The second phase of the research program seeks to develop a typology of strategic approaches for membership growth among CSOs and was guided by the following three research questions: (1) What are the strategic imperatives (i.e., elements that are important for organizations to consider when developing their strategies)?; (2) How can CSOs' strategic approach to membership growth be classified based on these factors?; and (3) What are the organizational characteristics of CSOs in each type of strategic approach?

In order to answer these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with presidents, or their representatives, of CSOs that self-identified as having a strategic plan that sought to address membership growth (N=15). The CSOs represented a range of sports (team and individual, summer and winter), sizes (small, medium, large), and membership trends (declining, stable, increasing). Thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted (Merriam,

2009), and the findings revealed four strategic approaches to membership growth, including Trailblazers, Enhancers, Maintainers, and Carers. These approaches will be highlighted in further depth in this year's poster, and the strategic imperatives and the organizational characteristics of CSOs in each strategic approach will also be discussed. Implications for practice and future research on organizational strategy in the community sport sector will be included.