Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028

Vision

A place where people of all abilities can access the benefits of equine-assisted programs, enriching lives, building community, and creating lasting positive change.

Mission

To empower individuals with disabilities through equine-assisted activities that foster confidence, independence, and joy in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Values

Community | Inclusion | Excellence | Respect | Achievement

Why RDAV

RDAV is a cornerstone of equine assisted activities for people with disabilities in Victoria, with a 50-year legacy of impact. Our programs harness the unique calming effect of horses and enhance mobility, self-esteem, and life skills through tailored opportunities with our specially trained horses. Our riding, groundwork and carriage driving are all delivered by accredited coaches and dedicated volunteers.

RDAV's inclusive, grass roots approach across 34 centres, creates a family-like community where riders, volunteers, and families unite to celebrate ability and achievement, making a lasting difference in lives across Victoria.

Executive Summary

Riding for the Disabled Victoria (RDAV) is committed to empowering people with disabilities to find freedom, confidence and joy through equine-assisted programs. This three-year strategic plan (August 2025–August 2028) builds on our strengths while addressing critical challenges identified in our Risk Register, including funding instability, horse welfare, and operational capacity. By refining our strategic pillars—Resource Sustainability, Financial Growth and Community Engagement, Care, and Risk Management and Operational Integrity—we aim to ensure program sustainability, expand reach, and maintain high standards of safety and governance. Key priorities include diversifying revenue, strengthening centre, volunteer and coach support and enhancing horse welfare. This plan mitigates risks while fostering inclusive, impactful programs that align with our mission.

Strategies and Initiatives	**Detailed Actions**
Volunteer and Coach Recruitment and Retention	Develop a Volunteer recruitment and mentoring program with recognition and incentives (eg. Recognition events, training credits)
	Implement a Coach recruitment and training strategy, including scholarships
	Review coach pay rates against award
	Deliver annual centre development training to enhance skills and compliance
Centre Management	Explore ways to increase capacity at current centres or explore other facilities to expand venue access (to reduce waitlist)
	Develop a succession plan for centre management, RDAV staff and board roles, including strategies for internal capability building and leadership development.
	Review the operational model to ensure it meets the needs of program delivery (eg. Hub model pilot, paid centre managers)
Horse Supply	Establish a program to partner with key equine partners, rescue organisations to ensure a healthy, horse supply
	Identify key partners/foundations to fund horse purchases and re-training
Strategies and Initiatives	**Detailed Actions**
Fundraising	Launch a fundraising strategy targeting grants, bequests, events and build/manage donors
	Develop an e-commerce strategy (eg merchandise sales)
	Identify and create an annual plan to engage with key Foundations and Funding Networks
Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorship	Create tailored sponsorship packages for corporations, allowing them to support specific aspects of RDA programs
	Collaborate with equine suppliers for discounted horse care
	Identify and engage with key corporate partners for event sponsorship
	Design an acknowledgement program to publicly recognise partners at events and in our communication channels
Community Engagement	Create a year round communication plan, including social media, community newsletter, and events to keep stakeholders engaged

	Launch awareness campaign to spotlight the impact of RDAV's work highlighting success stories and participant achievements quarterly
Program Expansion	Unlock the potential for adaptive horsemanship (non-riding) activities
	Create an annual inclusive Gala Day
	Provide more direct engagement with centres to support their programs
Additional events	Create regional events (eg fun days) and 1 or 2 competition days per annum
Strategies and Initiatives	**Detailed Actions**
Horse Welfare	Establish and communicate horse welfare fund with clear policy and criteria/guidelines
	Develop a state trainer program and conduct centre consultation
	Develop online education series to promote, educate and support horse welfare best practice
	Maintain incident reporting and data collection (including of aging horses) to understand recurring themes and mitigate issues related to horse welfare
	Develop and implement new horse acceptance process, pre-start check list and annual evaluation of current horses in program
	Create retirement planning and decision-making guidelines supported by a communication and education plan for centres
	Explore options to support re-training and transition of RDAV horses into the program
Safety Measures	Draft a reputational management plan (as per risk #2) - draft form exists
	Roll out self-assessment against Centre Accreditation Standards to align with RDAA directive (ensure centre input/consultation)
Strategies and Initiatives	**Detailed Actions**
Risk Management	Update the risk register quarterly
	Review and update the RDAV centre manual, including centre committees,
	Seek transparency and inclusion in the renewal process for our annual insurance with RDAA
	Align child safeguarding, member protection and compliance management with national/state standards
IT Improvements	Engage an IT expert for a cybersecurity audit
	Formulate an IT roadmap for the CRM system including a review of the volunteer and participant registration process
Governance	Complete the Australian Sports Commission 'Sport Governance Standards' self audit to identify gaps and priorities.
	Engage constitutional lawyers to review and provide a recommendation on the membership categories within our constitution.
	Evaluate how the financial instability of RDAA affects our operations and programs. Consider the potential loss of resources and support.
	Consult with legal/governance advisors to understand how we would need to adapt if we had/want to move to a more independent operation.
	Detailed Actions

Current activities	Centre-based riding sessions, regional events and limited competitive opportunities
New Initiatives	Consider development of new programs involving horses that provide benefit to participants and revenue for RDAV helping to maximise the utilisation of existing infrastructure not used to its full capacity. Potential programs may include: ● Adaptive horsemanship (non-riding) programs ● School holiday programs ● Programs targeted at emerging new retirees/ageing population who may seek non riding interaction with horses for their physical and mental well-being. ● an annual inclusive Gala Day
Stance	Focus 90% of resources on centre-based riders' needs, with 10% allocated to competitive pathways, ensuring equitable opportunities without overstretching capacity