



Project Excel is a national initiative focused on accelerating the performance of Canada's high performance ski racers.

ACCELERATING PERFORMANCE

The primary focus of Project Excel is on racers, who are within the high-performance pathway and graduated through U21, but outside of the Canadian Alpine Ski Team.

While Project Excel is lead by ACA, its strength comes from the strong collaboration and expert guidance provided by the Provincial Ski Associations. As such, the Project Excel Working Group is comprised of technical experts from across the country including both the National Ski Team and National Ski Cross Team. This Working Group has been formalized and will continue to generate new ideas, develop action plans, and consult with coaches and technical leaders from across the country moving forward.

Project Excel's Action Plan has four areas of focus:

FOCUS AREA

Use national benchmark standards to guide athlete development.

1

FOCUS AREA

Identify competitions where athletes can develop and be tested.

2

FOCUS AREA

Implement gap-analysis with PTSOs/clubs to drive continuous improvement.

3

FOCUS AREA

Identify creative solutions, programs, and partnerships for athletes on podium pathway.

4

KEY ACHIEVEMENT FROM 2023/24 ACTION PLAN

Launch of CAST Development (D) Team

The #1 recommendation put forward by key stakeholders such as National and Provincial Team coaches was the need for a national development team.

The Working Group prioritized this recommendation and worked together last winter to create the business case which ACA, the Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations, and the athletes and their families could all support.

The CAST D team was approved last May, coaches and athletes were selected (see list to the right), and the first camp was held in August.

Women

Amélie Bourgeois (St-Bruno, QC/Mont-Avalanche)
Andreea Nicolici (Ottawa, ON/Camp Fortune Ski Club)
Anne-Catherine Théberge (Lac-Beauport, QC/Stoneham Ski Club)
Estelle Martin (Outremont, QC/Sutton Ski Club)
Kendra Giesbrecht (St. Albert, AB/Banff Alpine Racers)

Men

Jesse Kertesz-Knight (Jasper, AB/Banff Alpine Racers)
Kyle Blandford (Oakville, ON/Toronto Ski Club)
Pierick Charest (Blainville, QC/Tremblant Ski Club)
Sascha Gilbert (Whistler, BC/Whistler Mountain Ski Club)

Coaches

Marie-Eve Boulianne (Head Coach Women)
Katjat Kacc (Assistant/Technician)
Urban Planisek (Head Coach, Men)
Cam McKenzie (Assistant Coach)
Lenart Voegler (Assistant/Technician)
Miha Dolinar (Ski Service Technician)



The 2023/24 Project Excel Action Plan consists of eight key recommendations.

2024/2025 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

1 Increase the opportunity for Canada's top athletes to enhance their FIS ranking by running a FIS race series in spring of 2024 season that includes CAST members.

STATUS | ON TRACK

Benefits

1. Provides a domestic, low penalty event, spring and/or fall, that includes members of the CAST and all HP athletes identified on ACA's performance pathway.
2. Provides head-to-head competitive races for Canada's top athletes.
3. Will lower athletes' points in the system which will improve their start position at upcoming events.

Current Activities

- a. Finalizing details for upcoming FIS races planned for Panorama, Mt. Norquay, and National Championships (Note: dependent on snow conditions and NorAm schedule).
- b. Finalizing policies to support the prioritization participation of low point holders and providing an equitable quota structure across provinces.
- c. Looking to integrate coach professional development opportunities into events.

2 Increase early exposure to ski cross discipline by scheduling mixed gender events in 2024/25 season – open to all (target U14-U16).

STATUS | NEW

Benefits

1. Provides early exposure to ski cross skills and competitions.
2. Motivates Canada's top alpine skiers to consider the transition to ski cross.
3. Provides coach education of ski cross skills progression.
4. Increases awareness of resort operators to the construction requirements of a ski cross course.

Current Activities

- a. Soliciting interest and support from various sites.
- b. Scheduling events on the national calendar.
- c. Developing a plan and timeline to promote, prepare and run events.
- d. Looking to integrate coach professional development opportunities into events where appropriate.

3 Develop a national Gap-Analysis tool to strengthen high-performance athlete development.

STATUS | NEW

Benefits

1. Standardizes the type of feedback Canada's top clubs are receiving on the programs they offer to their high-performance athletes.
2. Provides the ability to compare programs being offered across the country leading to the creation of best-practices.
3. Allows participating clubs to use information obtained to increase their club's brand in terms of elite athlete development.

Current Activities

- a. Reviewing a cross-section of clubs (West, Central, East) to contact and discuss their approach to assessment.
- b. Considering the creation of different tools for U14, U16, and FIS that incorporates best practices.
- c. Discussing the type of communication plan needed to support the implementation of a national gap-analysis tool in 2025/26.

4 Improve the competitive readiness of all U14/U16 racers through continued use of randomize start order (RSO).

STATUS | ON TRACK

Benefits

1. Creates stronger and more well-rounded athletes by developing key skills and competencies needed when they graduate to FIS.
2. Provides real-life experiences as to what the next step will be like – start positions, snow conditions, technical and mental adjustments needed for success.

Current Activities

- a. Finalizing White Paper to describe approach and benefits of RSO for national distribution in November.
- b. Establishing and communicating guidelines to be used at U16 Regional Championships (East & West) in 2025.
- c. Continuing the monitoring and evaluation of RSO format through the 2024/25 season to provide further refinement.



2024/2025 ACTION PLAN UPDATE *cont.*

5	Establish a high-performance coach development pathway.	STATUS NEW
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Enhances the talent pool of Canadian coaches.Provides a specific pathway for Canada's elite ski coaches that compliments existing NCCP programming.	Current Activities
		<ol style="list-style-type: none">Considering a targeted HP coach development pathway taking into consideration the NCCP/COPSIN Advanced Coaching Diploma.Connecting with HPD and PTSO leads to establish a depth chart of Canadian coaches who have potential to work with high-performance athletes at both the provincial and national level.Creating a communication plan for the program.
6	Leverage NorAm competition opportunities through increased communication and planning with NorAm, CAST and PTSO Coaches.	STATUS ON TRACK
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Enhances collaborative training opportunities for Canada's top athletes at NorAm venues.Reduces expenses related to accessing NorAm venues in advance of competitions.Assists Canadians to optimize their performance at NorAm events.	Current Activities
		<ol style="list-style-type: none">Contacting all World Junior long-list athletes regardless of program location.Improving the coordination and communication with coaches in advance of NorAm competitions to ensure access to training opportunities for selected athletes from across the country.
7	Align ACA's developmental system through improved communication of performance / fitness and skills progression data by age group to broader racing community.	STATUS ON TRACK
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Assists in standardizing how Canada's coaches coach, as well as establish the right expectations for athletes and their parents.Provides an alternative evaluation tools to identify Canada's top athletes - U16 and up – rather than relying solely on ACA's national point system.	Current Activities
		<ol style="list-style-type: none">Collecting, organizing, and analyzing performance (ongoing).Designing, developing and communicating Major Games performance curves to ski community.Communicating information via ACA LTAD site by end of November.
8	Become the world's fittest ski nation through the national implementation of benchmark standards contained in ACA's Fitness Combine.	STATUS ON TRACK
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Improves overall performance by raising the physical fitness of athletes on the podium pathway.Aligns fitness performance standards from grassroots to high-performance teams to better ensure athletes are prepared for the stresses of high-performance training and competition later in their careers.Provides clear performance standards for provincial and club level athletes on the podium pathway.	Current Activities
		<ol style="list-style-type: none">Adopting ACA Fitness Combine across all levels within the Canadian HP framework (CAST / PTSOs / Clubs).Implementing ACA Fitness Combine results / scores as a requirement for athlete inclusion on all 2024/25 Excel Projects.Updating U16 Skills Combine to include fitness element; awarding the fittest U16 at Regional Championships as part of the U16 Regional Skills Combine overall podium.Developing and distributing user friendly materials to elevate awareness and understanding of fitness benchmarks.



THE PROJECT EXCEL WORKING GROUP

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WHAT'S COMING UP

- Monitoring CAST D team progress and update plan as required.
- Implementation of 2024/25 Project Excel Action Plan
- Initiating the collection of information on how provinces and Canada's top clubs are assessing the development of skiers on the podium pathway.
- Planning for the 2025/26 season

The Project Excel Interval Report will be published periodically to report on activities, outcomes and milestone achievements of the Project Excel Working Group.

