

## Strategic Development Plan for the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL): Consolidating Five Decades of Experience and Moving Forward on a Global Platform

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change” – *Charles Darwin (1809-1882)*.

We live today in a constantly metamorphosing “VUCA” world – a world fraught with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The challenges associated with such circumstances were further aggravated with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Entire nations had to rethink their policies and revamp their public health organizational setup in record time to deal with a calamity of these proportions. To remain afloat in such uncertain times, not just countries but organizations and even individuals must learn to constantly evolve. A strategic shift in the focus of an organization may enable it to not become obsolete and stay relevant. A case in point is the dramatic decline of Nokia, which had become the world’s largest cell phone maker by 1998. At its pinnacle in 2007, Nokia had more than half of the global market share, while Apple’s iPhone had a mere 5% share; however, in under 6 years, the company went nearly bankrupt and was eventually acquired by Microsoft in 2013. Resistance to change, lack of vision, and inability to keep pace with the dynamic, competing world were the major factors held responsible, factors that could have been detrimental for any company even today. Professional organizations can also be considered “companies” because of their structure and budget – they have stakeholders towards whom they are accountable, and they need to be financially profitable as well.

The Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL),

the second-largest representing society of more than 15000 Indian dermatologists, was formed in 1973 and recently celebrated its 50 years of existence, or Golden Jubilee, in 2022. Its purposes are to provide quality skin health for the community, continue medical education to its members, and advocate for the welfare of its members, specialty, and patients. Healthcare societies today are faced with frequent regulatory modifications, demographic changes with better-informed and more demanding patient populations, and the need for ensuring economic viability. The IADVL had revised its vision and mission statement in 2018 [Table 1] but did not have a strategic development plan, and hence the National Executive Committee (EC) 2022 decided to develop such a plan to cement the current position of the IADVL and plan out the strategy for the next 3–5 years while providing a blueprint for the future.

The objectives of the strategic development plan were:

- To enable the understanding of key aspects of strategy and imbibe the management essence of strategy in action.
- Build a final strategy document for IADVL for alignment and implementation in the long term.

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The IADVL Strategic Development Program was conceptualized by the IADVL Leadership Pipeline Committee along with the EC and was attended by IADVL office bearers and Working Committees chairpersons and conveners. One of the authors, RS, had participated in similar programs held by the Women's Dermatologic Society (USA) and Skin of Color Society (USA) and proposed a similar program for IADVL. Thirty-two of the 70 (45.7%) members participated in the proceedings. IADVL engaged the services of a globally acclaimed leadership coach and consulting firm to guide discussions. The program was held on the online Zoom meetings platform in the form of online didactic discussions during the months of March and April 2022 [Figure 1]. It aimed at gathering objective data, analyzing strengths, and examining the current strategy, followed by reviewing the needed changes to create a customized strategic development process.

The program pre-work included an audio course on strategy for an initial understanding to ensure smooth execution and adequate speed of the strategy development process. The sessions were objectively planned out, as depicted in Table 2. For the purpose of the program, the term "stakeholders" included all individuals/associations that contribute to or

are benefitted/impacted by the IADVL and included IADVL members, health care organizations, patients and patient associations, pharmaceutical and cosmeceutical companies, health care authorities, ancillary health care workers, the media, and the population of the country.

Strategic development refers to the process of researching and identifying strategic options, selecting the most promising one(s), and deciding how the resources will be allocated across the organization to achieve the objectives. Some healthcare organizations have utilized strategic development programs to further their development and for the betterment of their stakeholders.<sup>[1-7]</sup> The IADVL strategic development program focused on the current and evolving roles of IADVL with respect to the prevailing circumstances, with an eye to the future.

Online polling was done for the vision, mission, and values, and the degree of agreement was then arrived at in the next session. A revised mission statement and values statement were prepared, as depicted in Figure 2. All attendees were encouraged to give their input on the formulation of these and existing terms that were modified/removed or retained. Additional items were discussed and incorporated into the draft. Additionally, two surveys were conducted as part of the program.

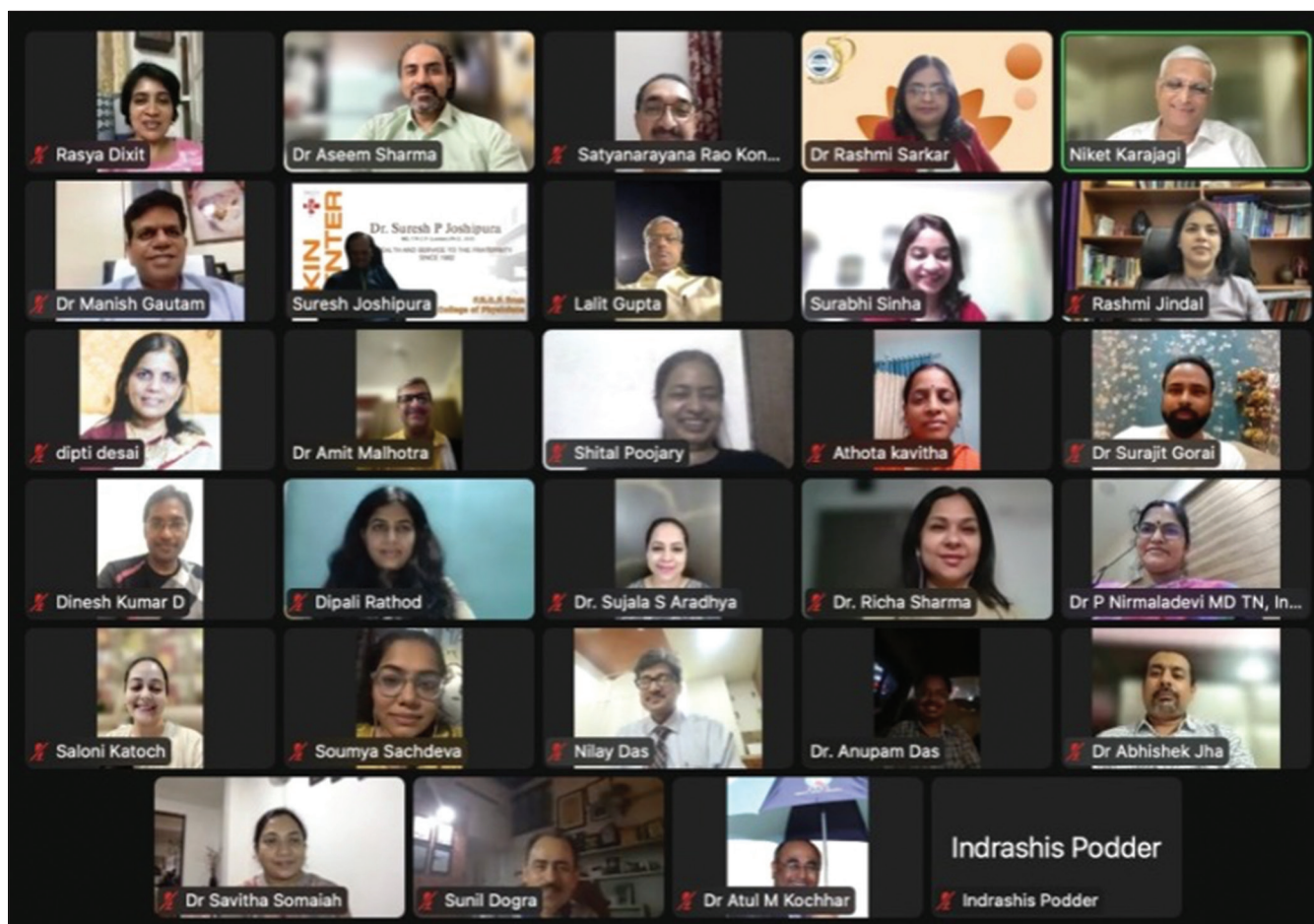


Figure 1: Still from the online sessions

**SURVEY 1:** A survey was conducted among the panel of experts, who were asked to rank the characteristics that best describe IADVL from the best to the worst. Among the respondents, the top three responses that scored the highest were dynamic, empowering, and educational. The characteristics that were least favored included catalyst, enricher, and astounding, in that order.

**SURVEY 2:** The panel of experts were asked individually their views by means of a survey, whether they agreed with the mission, vision, and values of IADVL, put forth during the program, on a scale of 1–10. It was found that the average score of 34 respondents was 7.5. Around 61.76% strongly agreed with the mission statement, 57.58% strongly agreed with the vision, and 70.59% strongly agreed with the values.

**Appreciative Inquiry:** An appreciative inquiry (AI) approach utilized questions and dialogues to help the attendees uncover existing strengths, advantages, or opportunities in IADVL to help build a strategic development plan. AI can be defined as a constructive way to get hold of and espouse organizational change on the modest assumption that each organization has an aspect that works right. It considers organizations as social systems and not entities, so they can be taken apart and repaired or improved.<sup>[8]</sup>

AI was preferred to a Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis by the leadership coach since a SWOT analysis has low levels of engagement, whereas AI asks questions to all stakeholders regarding all issues at hand, thus increasing participation. The AI approach was also beneficial since it encompassed a process of breaking out into smaller teams to carefully discuss each question in a detailed manner and arrive at some conclusions, which were then discussed by the entire group, thus ensuring more thorough brainstorming. In contrast to a SWOT analysis, which focuses on the failures of the organization, the AI approach attempted to determine how IADVL could restructure challenges into opportunities. The discussions in AI started with an analysis of elements that IADVL members perceived as successes, where IADVL was most effective,

and strategies to build those up. The discussion in the AI approach involved a logical sequence popularly known by the *four Ds: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny*.<sup>[8]</sup>

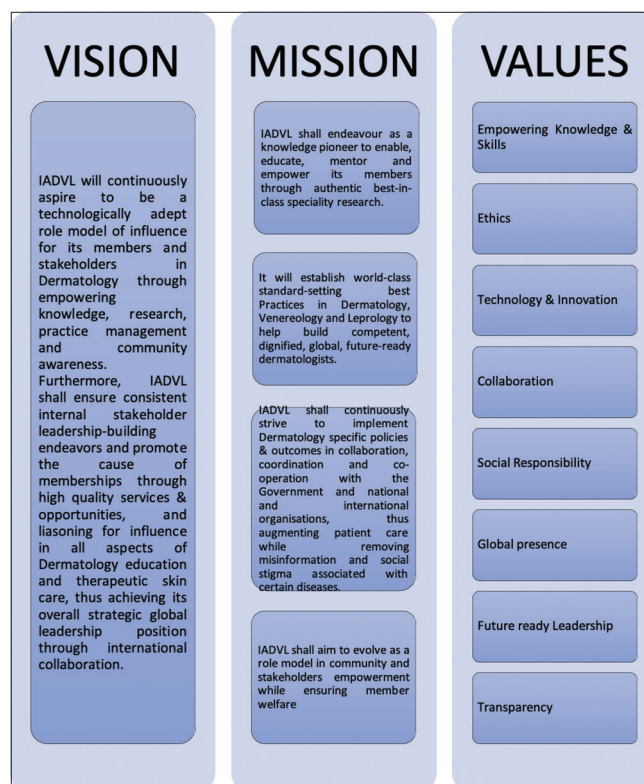
1. **Discovery:** The discussing authorities studied previous as well as current positive experiences by sharing their thoughts and experiences about what they thought was valuable, and a note of things members put forward was made. This was mutually analyzed to get a clear picture of the factors that were responsible for success in the past.
2. **Dream:** The group of attendees constructed a mental picture of how the positive points could be converted into the team’s strengths. The intense brainstorming sessions among the members were the key strategy adopted to come up with the creative ideas.
3. **Design:** Was the strategic tool used to create a practical plan of action to implement the “dreams”. Thus, team members decided, finalized systems, and devised processes to clarify the methodology to implement ‘dreams.’
4. **Destiny:** The attendees concluded the Discovery, Dream, and Design phases and propelled the creation of an “appreciative learning culture.”

Figure 3 depicts the points that constituted Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny at the conclusion of the appreciative inquiry.

**ROADMAP:** A visual representation of the strategic plan was created, which linked together the strategy, the work that will be done to achieve the organization’s goals, and a timeline for completion was established. The following points were adopted as the roadmap of the organization:

**Table 1: IADVL vision and mission statement (2018)**

Vision
The vision of IADVL is to provide quality skin health for the community, continue medical education to members, and advocate on behalf of the specialty and patients.
Mission
To strive and work for the welfare of members and provide them with opportunities for continuing medical education and research
To enhance the quality and delivery of patient care through medical and surgical modalities and education in the fields of dermatology, venereology, and leprology
To collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate with the government and national and international organizations to improve skin health in the community



**Figure 2: Revised vision, mission, and values of IADVL**

**Table 2: Detailed session-wise plan for the strategic development program**

Session No.	Session-wise plan
Session 1	Overview of the Strategic Development Process: We understand the process and components in its detail
Session 2A	Strategic Development Modular Conversation 1 Understand the concept of mission Group work on revisiting the mission, vision, and values live with faculty Shaping the mission, vision, and values for the current environment and challenges over the week by the teams
Session 2B	Strategic Development Modular Conversation 2 Understand the concept of the vision Group work on shaping 3–5 year vision Statement Work on the exactness of vision statement over the week with the group
Session 3	Strategic Development Modular Conversation 3 Understand the concept of the values Group work on revisiting the values and shortlisting values through polls Ascertain the values post polls
Session 4	Integrate the mission, vision, and value statements as a strategy in action Understand the concept of a balanced score card Group work on facets of a balanced score card Aligning the committee to mission, vision, and values through key performance indicators (KPIs) finalization over the week by the coach and teams
Session 5	KPI as a strategy in action Determine and finalize the KPI at the individual level Create work designs for each role in the committee for actioning the strategy Finalize the work designs over the week
Session 6	Controlling the Strategy Brainstorm in a group on initiatives to accomplish the strategy Determine the final initiatives with a project plan Build the project plan over there week
Session 7	Present the final strategy in an action template Present the final templated strategy in an action document Discuss and align the final key aspects of the strategic plan Adopt the strategy and control its final implementation

- Empowering international liaison
- Set up the Presidency council and the Secretary council
- Key actionables:
  - Hold team-building activities
  - More virtual general body meetings of members and hybrid academic activities
  - Enhance mentorship, share knowledge, and innovation
- Key focus areas for a year:
  - Streamline organization's finances and investments (financial advisor)
  - Organization design (CEO)
  - Leadership and mentorship
  - Branding
  - International participation

## Grand Strategies

The grand strategies for the long term were designed during the group discussion among the experts. These strategies were aimed at the organization's choice in regard to the direction that it has to adopt and achieve the set objectives to achieve national interests. The master strategy involved the decision of choosing the long-term plan from the set of available alternatives during the panel discussion among the experts.

The grand strategies that were deduced to be executed over the long term were as follows:

- Market development
  - Dermatologists Venereologists and Leprologists Welfare Trust
- Product development
  - National Accreditation Board for Hospitals certification and accreditation of stand-alone dermatology clinics
- Innovation
- Joint ventures
  - Strategic alliances: ILDS and other professional associations

To conclude, the key to successfully navigating this challenging 'VUCA' world would be adaptability and continuous upgradation. The IADVL strategic development program was aimed at developing a plan to enable IADVL to cement its position globally while attempting to remain relevant in the future. It was the first-time initiative ever taken by any Indian medical organization of any specialty. It was a well planned and well executed program that was received favorably and widely appreciated by IADVL office bearers and members alike. It is recommended that such programs be held in the

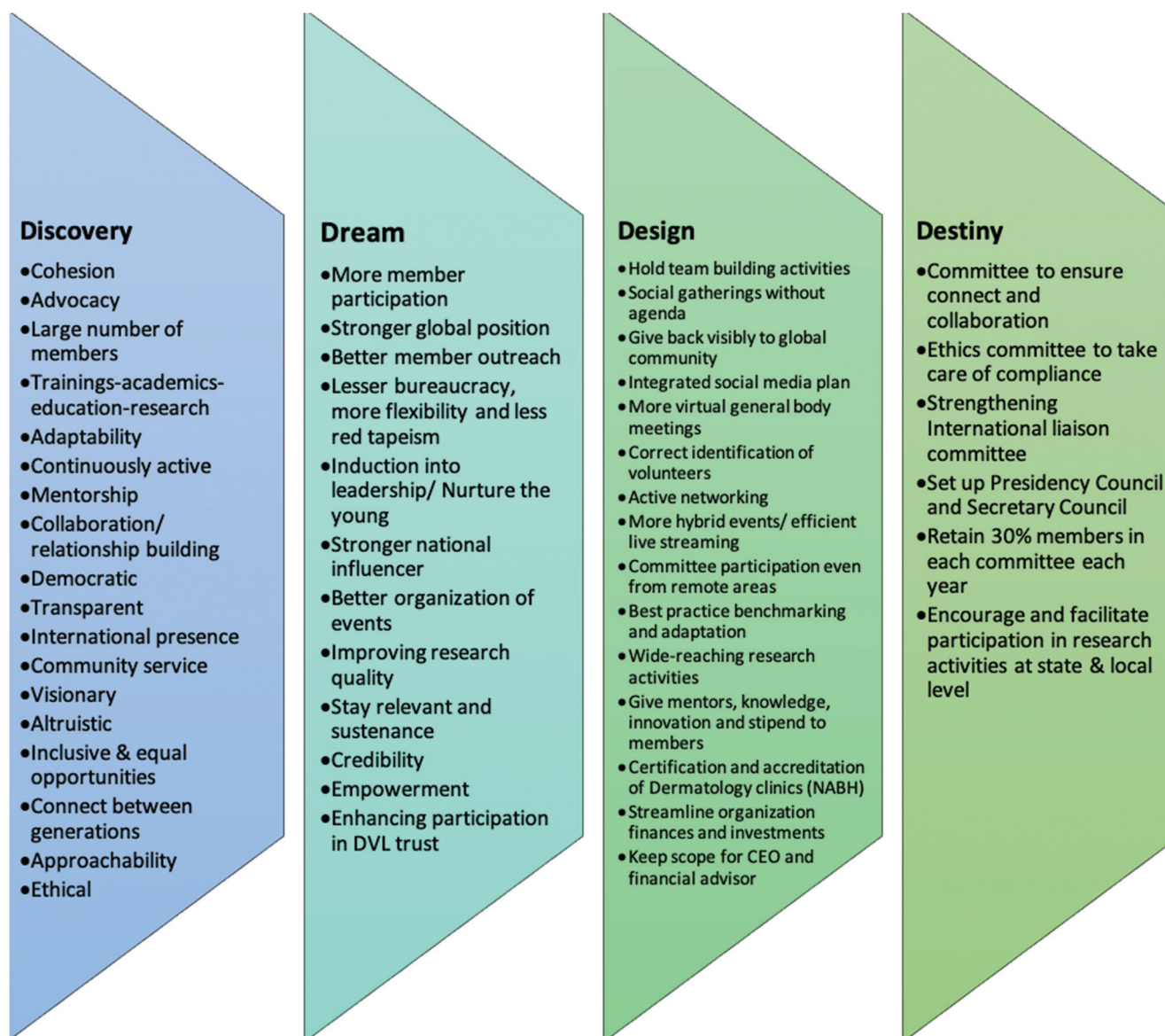


Figure 3: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny toward a strategic development plan for IADVL

future for future generations of dermatologists, and could be emulated by other dermatology societies to embrace change and deliver optimum skin care to patients while keeping member-centric activities, future leadership, and international collaborations in mind.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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