

# Aurora Research Institute

## Strategic Plan

### 2016-2026





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## Background

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### About the Aurora Research Institute

The Aurora Research Institute (ARI) is the research division of Aurora College, and its authorities and responsibilities stem from the *Aurora College Act* and the *Northwest Territories Scientists Act*.

ARI has a rich history that dates back more than 50 years. During that time, the Institute has evolved from a modest federal research laboratory, to a modern post-secondary research institute with tri-council funding eligibility, a key licensing role, and services that are valued by Canadian and international members of the northern research community.

The GNWT Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has ultimate responsibility for Aurora College. The College Board of Governors provides overall direction to ARI, and is responsible for approving and implementing decisions affecting the Institute. The Research Advisory Council, a standing committee of the Aurora College Board of Governors, has guided the development of the strategic plan and advises on the establishment of an annual research agenda for ARI.

Today, ARI has research centres connected to the three main Aurora College campuses:

- the Western Arctic Research Centre (WARC) in Inuvik, which acts as the headquarters for ARI, provides accommodation and logistics support for researchers, and supports Aurora Campus programs;
- the South Slave Research Centre on the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith; and
- the North Slave Research Centre on the Yellowknife North Slave Campus.

ARI's key functions and services include:

- licensing and coordinating research in accordance with the *NWT Scientists Act*;
- providing logistics support for the research community, primarily out of the WARC facilities;
- delivering research programs, either as a principal investigator or as part of a research team;
- teaching Aurora College post-secondary courses;
- providing college-wide support for the administrative processes required for tri-council funding eligibility;
- administering the Research Fellowship program and the Research Assistant program;
- coordinating and delivering various science outreach activities for youth and the community; and
- building capacity in science and research.

### The Aurora Research Institute as Part of Aurora College

ARI has been part of Aurora College since 1994, and has collaborated with College staff to conduct research, review research applications from staff and students, teach College courses, provide operational support, and provide logistical support to staff and students conducting research.

In 2014, ARI played a key role in helping Aurora College achieve eligibility for funding from two of the federal tri-council funding agencies (the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), and took on the administration of College-wide committees such as the Research Ethics Committee and the Animal Care Committee.

The position of ARI within a post-secondary institution gives opportunities to the Institute, the College, the NWT, and the northern research community. This includes eligibility to hold funds from large federal research granting agencies, and the ability to award research associate positions to collaborators and partners.

## **Developing a Strategic Plan for the Aurora Research Institute**

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In 2015, ARI began the process of developing its first strategic plan with the support of a consultant. The planning process proceeded in four main phases.

- 1) The first phase included historical research on the institution and a full literature review. A number of existing documents and reference materials were reviewed, and the consultants met with ARI staff to better understand the history and current state of ARI.
- 2) In the second phase, a program review was conducted. A total of 15 interviews and nine focus groups were conducted to obtain input from a wide range of stakeholders.
- 3) In the next phase, the consultants worked with the Research Advisory Council of Aurora College (RAC), a project steering committee, and ARI staff to develop and refine a draft strategic plan.
- 4) In the final phase, all stakeholders involved in interviews and focus groups were provided a draft of the strategic plan for review and feedback.

Once approved by the RAC, the final draft strategic plan for ARI was recommended to the Aurora College Board of Governors and was approved at their October 2016 meeting.

It is important to note that Aurora College will embark on a college-wide strategic planning process in the fall of 2016. ARI will be an active participant in this process and will look for opportunities to align with, and support, the College's overarching strategic plan.

The vision, mission, principles, goals, and objectives described on the following pages will guide the Aurora Research Institute over the next decade.



# The Aurora Research Institute Strategic Plan, 2016-2026

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## **Vision**

The vision of the Aurora Research Institute is to be a leader in generating and sharing knowledge in the Northwest Territories. The Aurora Research Institute will use its expertise to build strategic partnerships that expand the territory's research capacity, helping to ensure that research in the NWT produces meaningful outcomes for its residents while contributing to issues of global concern.

## **Mission**

The Aurora Research Institute facilitates and conducts research in the Northwest Territories, and acts as a hub of northern knowledge. The Aurora Research Institute advances the territory's research capacity through discovery, outreach, and education.

## **Principles**

The Aurora Research Institute is guided by six principles that form the foundation of our organization.

***Leadership:*** Leaders bring people, ideas, and resources together. We identify shared interests and find opportunities to maximize northern research capacity.

***Dedication:*** The energy, enthusiasm, and dedication of our staff are key factors in our success. We are committed to maintaining a positive, team-based research environment that optimizes the use of our skills, strengths, and interests.

***Inclusiveness:*** Research should integrate all ways of knowing, including Indigenous and local knowledge. We actively incorporate different perspectives and knowledge in our work.

***Collaboration:*** ARI seeks opportunities to build partnerships at the local, territorial, national, and international levels. We work with our partners to advance shared priorities, exchange ideas, and optimize the use of resources.

***Discovery and innovation:*** ARI strives to be a place of learning and discovery, where innovation is encouraged and supported.

***Communication:*** Research must be shared to have value. We look for opportunities to communicate the process and outcomes of research, and encourage others to do the same.

## Goals and Objectives

ARI has identified five strategic goals to guide the institute over the next ten years. Each is further defined by supporting objectives.

### **GOAL 1      Strengthen the leadership of the Aurora Research Institute within the northern research community.**

#### **Objectives**

- a. Raise the profile of ARI as a research institution.
- b. Foster the development of new and existing strategic partnerships.
- c. Improve ARI's capacity to carry out, support, and direct research.
- d. Enhance ARI's strategic value to the NWT research community.

### **GOAL 2      Develop research capacity within the Northwest Territories.**

#### **Objectives**

- a. Increase participation of NWT residents and communities in all aspects of research.
- b. Foster the development of post-secondary research within the NWT.
- c. Increase opportunities for NWT-led research.

### **GOAL 3      Conduct and support research that builds northern knowledge in ways that respect and benefit the people of the Northwest Territories.**

#### **Objectives**

- a. Conduct and facilitate research that addresses issues and questions that are relevant to the people of the NWT.
- b. Ensure that research respects local and Indigenous knowledge, culture, and practices.
- c. Encourage research practices that benefit the people of the NWT.

### **GOAL 4      Provide high-value research products.**

#### **Objectives**

- a. Increase the quantity, quality, and availability of research products.
- b. Increase the utility of ARI's research products for NWT stakeholders.

### **GOAL 5      Ensure the sustainability of the Aurora Research Institute and enable future growth.**

#### **Objectives**

- a. Secure ARI's long-term sustainability.
- b. Build ARI's capacity for expansion.

## Assessment Criteria

In order to support an effective decision-making framework, this strategic plan includes a series of assessment criteria that will be used in the development of the core strategies, as well as decision-making in a range of other areas.

Goal	Objectives	Assessment criteria
<b>1. Strengthen the leadership of the Aurora Research Institute within the northern research community.</b>	a. Raise the profile of ARI as a research institution.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide an opportunity for ARI staff to publish or present research (<i>yes/no, type of publication</i>)</li> <li>○ Demonstrate ARI's capacity to be a successful research partner (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
	b. Foster the development of new and existing strategic partnerships.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide the opportunity for ARI to foster strategic or long-term partnerships to support capacity building and growth (<i>yes/no, which partners, what is the strategic value</i>)</li> <li>○ Provide a meaningful position for ARI in the partnership (<i>high: ARI lead, med: equal role in collaboration, low: logistics or other supporting role</i>)</li> </ul>
	c. Improve ARI's capacity to carry out, support, and direct research.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide an opportunity for ARI staff to conduct research (<i>PI, co-PI, supporting role</i>)</li> <li>○ Increase ARI's in-house research capability (<i>high-med-low-no</i>)</li> </ul>
	d. Enhance ARI's strategic value to the NWT research community.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leverage the funding and partnerships available to ARI to strengthen its role in research initiatives (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Allow ARI to leverage its existing services and expertise into a larger role in a project or initiative (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>



Goal	Objectives	Assessment criteria
<b>2. Develop research capacity within the Northwest Territories.</b>	a. Increase participation of NWT residents and communities in all aspects of research.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include opportunities for NWT residents to participate in research activities (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Help communities and residents better understand the research process and its outcomes (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Create an opportunity for NWT residents and organizations to participate meaningfully in research initiatives (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
	b. Foster the development of post-secondary research within the NWT.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Build the research capacity of Aurora College (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Create an opportunity for ARI staff, College staff, and students to do research (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
	c. Increase opportunities for NWT-led research.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide an opportunity for NWT researchers to conduct research (<i>PI, co-PI, supporting role</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>3. Conduct and support research that builds northern knowledge in ways that respect and benefit the people of the Northwest Territories.</b>	a. Conduct and facilitate research that addresses issues and questions that are relevant to the people of the NWT.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Preserve or enhance existing northern research data or knowledge sources (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Address an issue or question that is relevant to an NWT community, organization, or government (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
	b. Ensure that research respects local and Indigenous knowledge, culture, and practices.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Demonstrate respect for local/Indigenous knowledge, culture, and practices (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Involve a local or Indigenous organization (yes/no, organization, describe)</li> </ul>
	c. Encourage research practices that benefit the people of the NWT.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide an opportunity to encourage best practices when engaging with NWT communities and residents (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Provide local employment or business opportunities (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Provide other benefits to local people (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Include a commitment to communicate results back to the community (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>

Goal	Objectives	Assessment criteria
<b>4. Provide high-value research products.</b>	a. Increase the quantity, quality, and availability of research products.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Encourage or facilitate information sharing by researchers (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Strengthen ARI's information management capacity (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Develop new knowledge translation tools or approaches (<i>yes/no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
	b. Increase the utility of ARI's research products for NWT stakeholders.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allow ARI to make its research products and information easier to use (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Increase the likelihood that researchers will use ARI's research products (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Increase the likelihood that communities will use ARI's research products (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Increase the likelihood that decision-makers will use ARI's research products (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>5. Ensure the sustainability of the Aurora Research Institute and enable future growth.</b>	a. Secure ARI's long-term sustainability.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allow ARI to use existing funding more effectively (<i>high-med-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Provide an opportunity for ARI to share costs with partners (<i>net value to ARI, duration</i>)</li> <li>○ Have a neutral or positive financial impact (<i>revenue vs. cost to ARI, duration</i>)</li> <li>○ Maintain or improve the stability of ARI's staffing situation (<i>maintain/improve, net value to ARI, description</i>)</li> <li>○ Allow ARI or Aurora College to maintain or improve the availability of its facilities and equipment (<i>maintain/improve, net value to ARI/College, description</i>)</li> </ul>
	b. Build ARI's capacity for expansion.	Does this initiative/action/strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide a new source of funding for ARI (<i>net value to ARI, duration, constraints</i>)</li> <li>○ Allow ARI to leverage additional funding from other sources (<i>value, source, duration, constraints</i>)</li> <li>○ Create additional long-term positions at ARI (<i>number and type of positions, duration</i>)</li> <li>○ Enhance or expand ARI infrastructure, including equipment (<i>high-medium-low-no, describe</i>)</li> <li>○ Enhance ARI's presence outside of Inuvik (<i>high-medium-low-no, describe</i>)</li> </ul>

## Core Strategies

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Four core strategies will be developed in the first phase of strategic plan implementation that will enable ARI to make progress on its goals.

Each strategy will be a multi-year planning tool that is informed by the goals, objectives, and assessment criteria set out in this strategic plan. They will be drafted by ARI staff, in consultation with Aurora College, the Research Advisory Council, and partners. The strategies will then be reviewed and approved by the Research Advisory Council, and will be updated as needed.

The four core strategies that will anchor the strategic plan will be the:

- 1) ARI Research Plan;
- 2) ARI Partnership Plan;
- 3) ARI Outreach and Education Plan; and
- 4) ARI Knowledge Management Plan.

Together with the goals, objectives, and assessment criteria set out in this strategic plan, these four documents will inform ARI's approach to annual planning and on-going decision making, specifically:

- human resource planning, staffing actions, and decisions;
- annual budgeting and funding decisions;
- infrastructure planning;
- communications and marketing plans; and
- evaluation activities such as surveys.

### **1) ARI Research Plan**

*Complete by: June 2018*

*Update: annually*

ARI does not currently have a process to determine its research priorities, nor does it have a vehicle to communicate the kind of research it wants to support and conduct. As a result, ARI is often determining what research to pursue in response to the proposals and interests of staff or outside researchers.

Through the development of a research plan ARI will review its own research strengths and interests, as well as the opportunities in its external environment, to determine what kind of research it wants to pursue.

### **2) ARI Partnership Strategy**

*Complete by: June 2017*

*Update: after 3 years*

ARI works with many researchers, post-secondary institutions, communities, and governments; however, it does not have a defined approach to these partnerships that ensures that ARI gets value from its investment of time and resources. Given limited resources and a requirement to



ensure sustainability and growth over the long term, ARI needs to take a more strategic approach to partnerships.

Through the development of this strategy ARI will review its current partnerships to better understand how they support ARI's goals and objectives, what works well, and what could be improved. It will also look at what partnerships it should be nurturing and pursuing.

### **3) ARI Outreach and Education Plan**

*Complete by: June 2018*

*Update: annually*

ARI staff at all three centres actively deliver outreach and education activities. ARI also communicates with the public in a number of ways, including publications, media interviews, the ARI website, and social media tools.

While these activities are appreciated and valuable, they also require a significant investment of time and resources. By developing an Outreach and Education Plan, ARI can clearly articulate what its outreach and education objectives are, what activities it will focus on, and how these activities support its broader strategic objectives.

### **4) ARI Knowledge Management Plan**

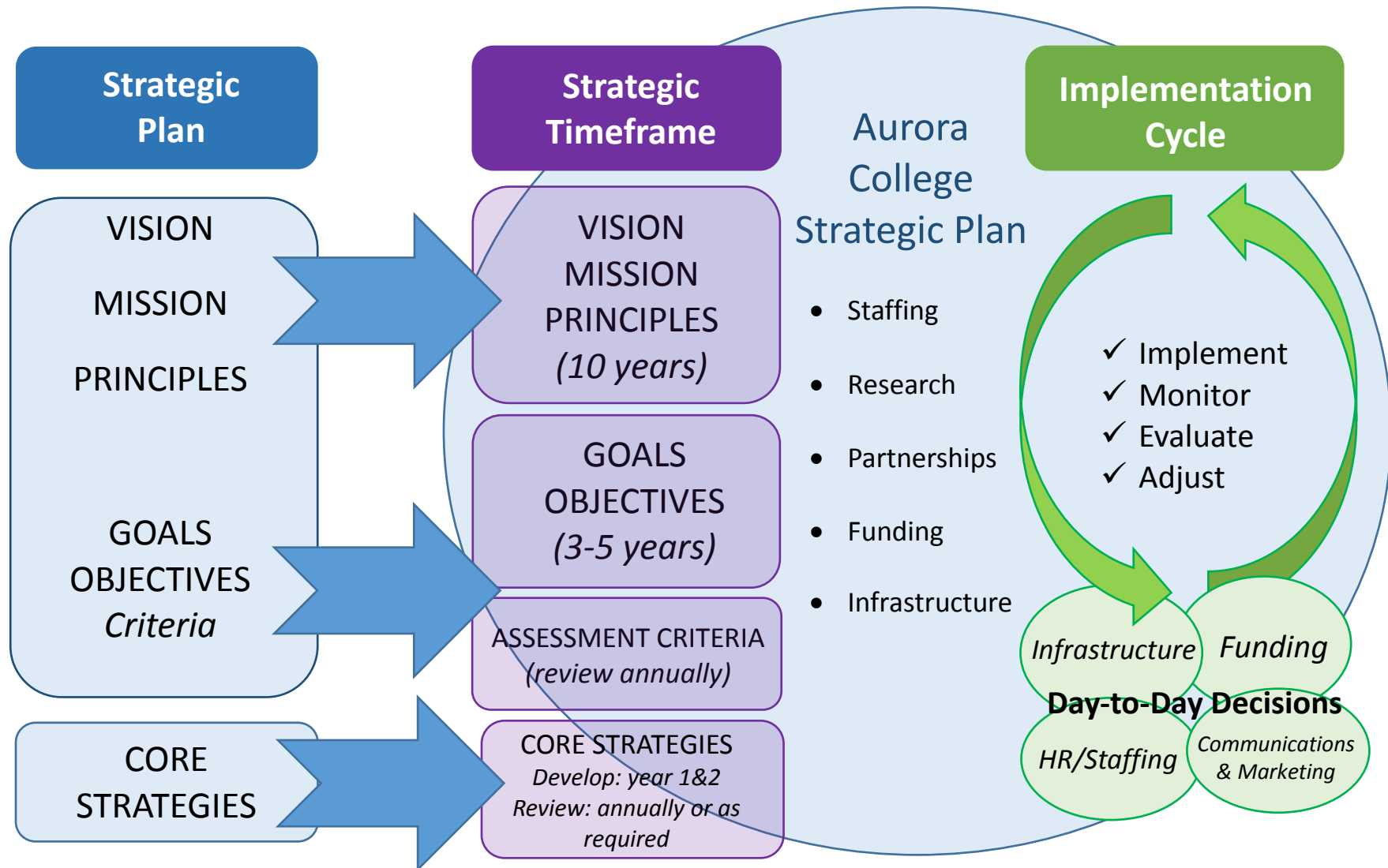
*Complete by: June 2018*

*Update: as required*

ARI's NWT Research Database contains over 4,000 licences spanning 40 years, with 100 to 200 licences added each year. ARI also produces the NWT Compendium of Research, and has worked hard to digitize older documents in its possession. Despite the time and effort ARI invests in maintaining these and other resources, knowledge management was identified as a current shortfall because there is tremendous potential for research products to benefit northern communities, researchers, and decision-makers. This is an issue on which ARI can demonstrate leadership within the northern research community.

## Implementation

Implementation of this strategic plan will be led by the Vice President, Research and ARI managers, with the guidance of the RAC. The following diagram helps to explain how the plan will be staged, and how some elements will evolve over time.



# Implementation Phases

## ***Phase 1: Establishing strategic foundations (July 2016 to June 2018)***

- Approve Strategic Plan and communicate to stakeholders.
- Apply decision-making framework to annual planning and operational decision-making.
- Participate in Aurora College strategic planning process to align efforts on shared interests.
- Development of core strategies;
  - ARI Research Plan (draft by December 2017, approval by June 2018).
  - ARI Partnership Plan (draft by December 2016, approval by June 2017).
  - ARI Outreach and Education Plan (draft by December 2017, approval by June 2018).
  - ARI Knowledge Management Plan (draft by December 2017, approval by June 2018).
- Integrate strategic plan and core strategies into organizational planning decisions on:
  - human resources and staffing;
  - budget development;
  - funding decisions and strategies;
  - infrastructure planning;
  - communications and marketing; and
  - evaluation activities such as surveys.

## ***Phase 2: Core strategy implementation (July 2018 to June 2022)***

- Implement core strategies.
- Monitor implementation.
- Evaluate performance of strategies against objectives.
- Review and update assessment criteria as needed.
- Review and update ARI Partnership Plan (2020).
- Propose revisions to other core strategies as required.
- Identify any new strategic initiatives required to meet objectives.
- Provide annual updates to the RAC and Board of Governors.
- Engage the RAC for advice and the Board of Governors for decisions, as appropriate.

## ***Phase 3: Mid-term review (July 2022 to June 2025)***

- Schedule review of strategic plan to review progress against goals and objectives (2022).
- Update goals, objectives, and supporting strategies.
- Implement revisions to strategic plan.
- Monitor and evaluate performance; adapt as required.

## ***Phase 4: Initiate development of next strategic plan (July 2025 to June 2026)***

- Comprehensive review and evaluation of progress.
- Full environmental scan.
- Initiate development of new strategic plan.



