



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CENTRES DE SCIENCES

2020-2022

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES

STRATEGIC PLAN

Building a Science & Innovation Culture through

- ▶ National leadership.
- ▶ Cultivating ecosystems.
- ▶ Advancing science engagement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 ▶ Science and Innovation Culture in Canada
- 14 ▶ Introduction: CASC 2020-2022
- 16 ▶ Who is CASC?
- 19 ▶ Our Vision
- 19 ▶ Our Mission
- 20 ▶ Core Beliefs & Values
- 22 ▶ 2019-2022 Strategic Priorities
- 23 ▶ National Leadership
- 24 ▶ Cultivating an Ecosystem
- 25 ▶ Advancing the Future of Science Engagement



MAKING THE CASE

The need for science centres and science museums has never been so great.

By 2050, the world population is expected to surpass 9 billion people. Science and innovation will be more important than ever to address the challenges we face as our world continues to grow, ranging from ecological disruption to digital transformation, as we work towards a sustainable future. Rapid changes require us to continually learn, design, and innovate for societal needs.

“Science Centres, museums and related institutions... are a central component in the system of organizations that support science culture, and Canadians benefit from access to many such institutions.”

– *Council of Canadian Academies*

There is a growing body of research that demonstrates that people with an interest in science have developed “science capital” through exposure from school, informal engagement (like science centres), family connections, community connections and media consumption.

The CASC network helps our society develop a nuanced understanding and appreciation of the myriad ways in which science and innovation are deeply ingrained in society and essential to our collective well-being.



Leveraging this network of science and innovation engagement leaders, is a vital factor to increasing interest in science and inspiring the next generation of young adults to pursue a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).



A recent scientific literacy survey showed that **75% of Canadians** think we need science and tech to solve problems of the future. The same people think **54% of society** is turning away from science.

(OSC Science Literacy Survey, 2018).

39% of Canadians would have a greater interest in science if the impact of science was communicated to them in a way that was more relatable.

(GM’s State of Science Index, 2019)

This lack of interest contributes to **32% of adult Canadians** being skeptical of science and it is one of the reasons that **25% of Canadians** choose not to learn about science.

(GM’s State of Science Index, 2019)

CASC member organizations use best practices such as **making science approachable and relatable on a local scale, and providing accessible places for people to fuel their curiosity about science.**

They use powerful approaches such as **learning interactively through inquiry and play.** With a proven track record, Canadians are more likely to visit a science and technology museum than citizens of any other country except Sweden (Science Culture: Where Canada Stands, 2014).

In fact, a longitudinal study recommended that one of the key ways to increase youth interest in sciences and engineering is to develop programs aimed at increasing the comfort level of the entire family. (Archer, Dawson, DeWitt, Seakins, & Wong, 2015)



Our members bridge the formal and informal science learning environments. We all know that learning does not end when we leave the classroom. It is part of our lives outside of school, with our families, and as part of our culture.



Over **90%** of our science centres and science museums members have school programs.
(CASC Benchmark study, 2016,).



Over **75%** offer outreach and community engagement within local and regional communities.

INTRODUCTION: CASC 2020-2022

The Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC) has created a three-year strategic plan that outlines priorities through to 2022. **This plan is designed to support our members to succeed and to help cultivate a Science and Innovation culture in Canada.** As part of the strategic plan development process, the Board of Directors reviewed the organization's Mission and Vision Statements and decided to revise these statements to reflect an impact-driven approach. The Board also added a description of our core beliefs and values, which guide our operations and help direct the daily activities of the association.

Through Strategic Planning Committee Sessions and Member Surveys, we explored aspirations, challenges, and what our members value. We conducted listening sessions at the 2018 and 2019 CASC Annual Conferences, four (4) full-day Board strategic planning sessions, and reviewed stakeholder surveys that addressed senior staff of CASC full member organizations, data from our annual membership survey, as well as a phone survey with other informal learning organizations.

What we heard from every group was:

- ▶ an interest in defining our mission and vision in relation to social impact,
- ▶ an ambitious appetite for collaboration - specifically an interest in increased connection with each other, stakeholders, and with other science engagement organizations and networks across Canada,
- ▶ a desire to connect the public more deeply to challenges facing our sector and society - technology disruptions, environmental disruptions, and misinformation, a recognition of the challenge in remaining relevant
- ▶ to our respective communities in a changing science communications landscape,
- ▶ a need for a strong national voice to advocate for the informal science learning and public science engagement sector.

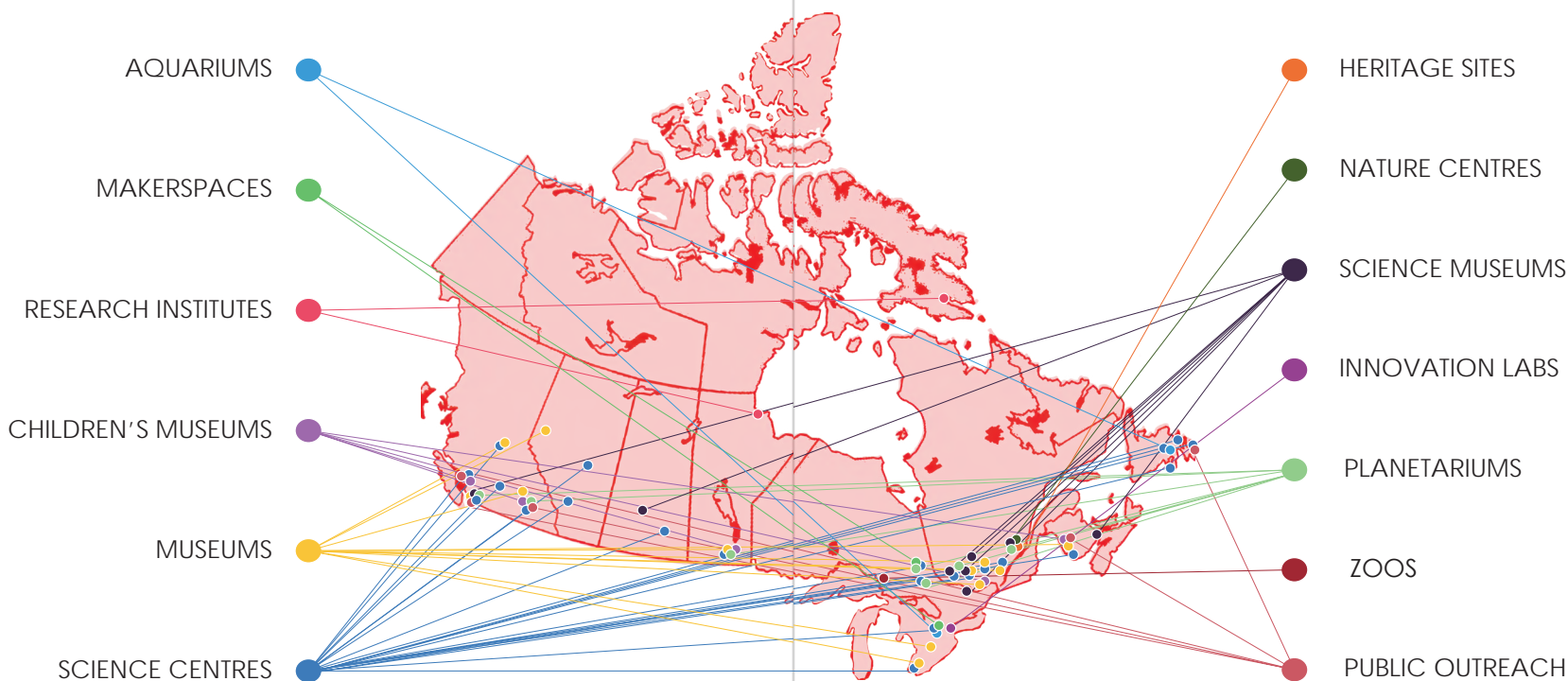
This feedback helped shape the strategic priorities outlined in this document. We are excited for our journey ahead and are proud to work with and support a network of incredible Science Champions.

WHO IS CASC?

The Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC) is a network of trusted organizations who represent a critical component of our science, technology, and innovation engagement landscape in Canada.

CASC is one of the largest membership-based associations of informal science learning organizations in Canada, collectively reaching more than 8 million citizens per year. We bring together more than 70 organizations committed to a thriving future through science and technology engagement.

Our members include not only science centres and science and technology museums, but also outreach and research organizations, as well as companies and nonprofit organizations that offer commercial products and services that support informal science learning environments.



The CASC network is the heart of a dynamic science and innovation culture support system in Canada. As a snapshot in time, a 2011 inventory of science culture and communication initiatives in Canada identified over 400 initiatives related to museums, science centres, zoos, or aquariums (Science Culture: Where Canada Stands, 2014). These numbers are projected to increase over the next decade.



Our members link science and innovation to society. Science and innovation engagement has the power to ignite curiosity, deepen learning, and empower collective action. But over the last decade, studies showed that increasingly society is turning away from science. This trend has profound implications for Canada's role as a science and innovation leader and of the future of our planet.

OUR VISION

Canada has a thriving science and innovation culture of engaged citizens.

OUR MISSION

We empower a national network of organizations who champion Science and Innovation by making science approachable, relevant, and accessible.

We do this by sharing best science engagement practices, cultivating an ecosystem approach, help scale innovative initiatives, and helping to drive policy change to recognize and value the informal science learning and public engagement sector.

CASC will honour our core beliefs and values while pursuing our strategic goals.

OUR BELIEFS:



Lifelong learning is fundamental for a thriving science and innovation culture.



Informal science engagement is critical to improving science literacy and promotes critical thinking.



Diverse participation and representation are essential and encouraged.



Social relevance and trust are foundational to effective public science engagement.



Collaboration is necessary to tackle global and local challenges.

OUR VALUES:



Motivation

We find inspiration in the organizations we work with and missions we support.



Inclusive

We thrive in an inclusive culture where people feel respected and valued for who they are as an individual or group.



Collaboration

We flourish when we bring people with different perspectives, ideas, and backgrounds together.



Innovation

We make things better in ways that benefit everyone through consultation, testing, and iteration.



Improvement

We encourage continuous inquiry, learning, and practice.



Impactful

We grow our impact through evidence-based decisions.

2020-2022 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As a national membership association, we **provide knowledge, representation, support, connectivity, and services for our members to thrive**. As a national platform, we advocate on behalf of the broader science centre and science museum sector to communicate the value of informal science, technology, and innovation engagement, raise professional standards, and inform policy. Our network includes members such as STEM/STEAM education and outreach organizations, companies and universities; and collaborators from government agencies and departments, foundations, and media.

Over the next 3 years, our work to support and empower our network will help build a thriving Science & Innovation Culture in Canada, by focussing on the following three priority areas:

- ▶ **National Leadership**
- ▶ **Cultivating an Ecosystem**
- ▶ **Advancing the Future of Science Engagement**

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Embrace a leadership role in helping to advance Science and Innovation Culture in Canada through collaborations on a national stage.

Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 Be a national voice for our members and raise their visibility on a national stage.
- 1.2 Advancing diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility within the informal science learning sector.
- 1.3 Addressing Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recommendations within the informal science learning sector.
- 1.4 Foster coalition-building, alliances, and collaborations with other national organizations and associations to advance Science and Innovation culture in Canada.

CULTIVATING AN ECOSYSTEM

Enhance connections and sharing within our network, between members and collaborators, opening our doors wider and leveraging relationships and partnership opportunities. The CASC network will apply an ecosystem approach to fostering collaboration across our members.

Strategic Objectives

2.1 Build capacity of our members through professional development opportunities. (e.g. Annual CASC Conference). Foster a learning culture by providing a platform for sharing and connection among members. Explore new ideas for increasing participation.

2.2 Increase member base and participation.

2.3 Raise the visibility, attendance, and impact of our events and actions (e.g. annual conference).

ADVANCING THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Apply a future lens grounded in data and trends to understand the changing landscape of science engagement. Major issues facing our planet are of a magnitude that no one institution or organization can address on its own. They require cooperation and the pooling and sharing of knowledge across institutions, across disciplines and across the country, coast to coast to coast.

Strategic Objectives

3.1 Partner with research institutions to gather data about the sector to produce benchmarking studies as well as advance the field of science learning and engagement.

3.2 Be a platform for inclusive approaches and innovative thinking. Include fresh, new ideas and perspectives in our annual national conference.

3.3 Be a resource for members regarding societal and global trends affecting the future of education, science, and culture and facilitate opportunities for members to participate in national and international high priority challenges and discussions.

In a time of global change, CASC is a foundational network that can be leveraged to fuel movements and empower collective action across intergenerational audiences.

Together, our network is creating a Science and Innovation Culture of engaged citizens.



Thank you to those you contributed to the development of this strategic plan:


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