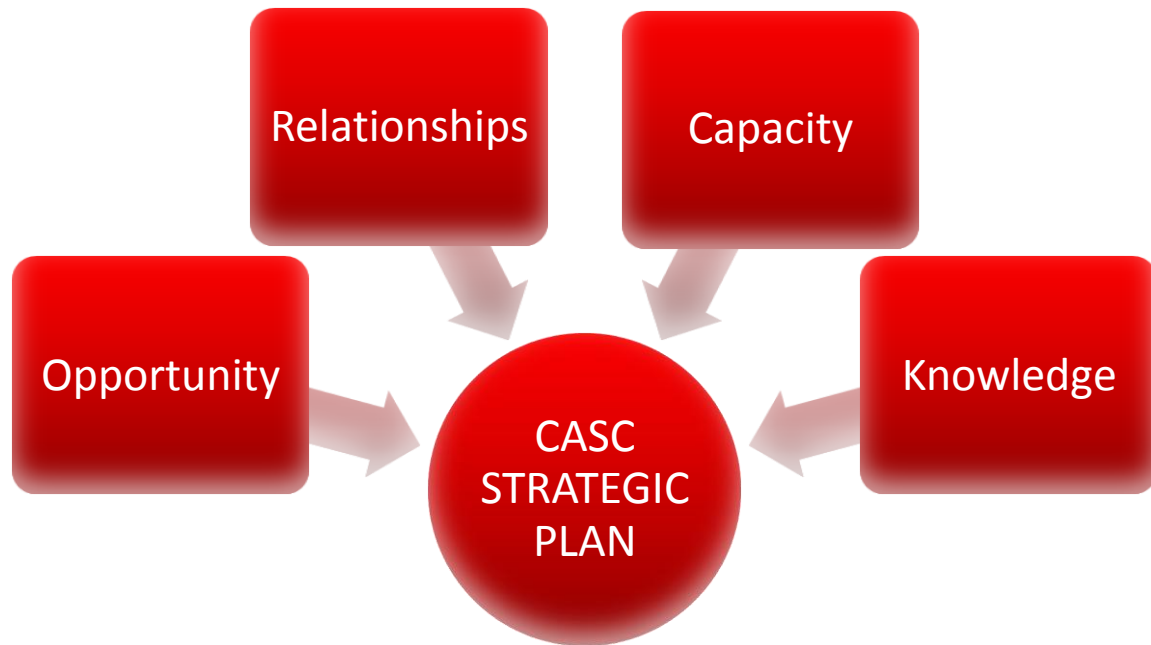


Canadian Association
of Science Centres



Association canadienne
des centres de sciences



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STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Canada's science centres¹ are more than fun places for families to play. They are a critical component to creating a science literate society that encourages scientific investigations to improve daily life.

A strong culture of science literacy has far reaching impacts. It allows individuals to make better decisions about their own lives, including personal health decisions that affect the entire population. Many policy debates require understanding of science and technology to ensure effective decision-making. There is also a positive co-relation between a strong science culture, innovation and a strengthened economy.

A December report from Industry Canada, *Seizing Canada's Moment: Moving Forward in Science, Technology and Innovation 2014*, indicates that growing Canada's talent by encouraging youth to pursue education and choose careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is a priority. Our member science centres reach millions of Canadians of all ages each year and are poised to deliver on the promise to inspire youth to consider STEM careers. In addition, our members are already in place to work with educators to address the persistent under-representation of women and aboriginals in these disciplines, and provide enhanced learning opportunities and instructional resources to educators at all levels.

THE CHALLENGE

In its recent report, *The State of Science Culture in Canada*, the Council of Canadian Academies identified that science centres play a predominant role in supporting Canada's science culture, providing informal science learning opportunities to people of all ages. In addition to offering publicly accessible spaces across Canada that welcome local citizens and tourists alike, many science centres operate other events and activities, like Science Festivals, Fairs, Camps and Outreach programs to reach beyond the physical boundaries of their institutions.

¹ "Science centres" refers to institutions that provide interactive and informal science engagement, including museums, planetariums, aquariums, etc.

As reported by the Council of Canadian Academies, Canada ranks 1st out of 35 countries with an estimated 42 per cent of the population able to demonstrate a basic level of scientific literacy. However, Canada ranks 19th out of 29 countries with only an estimated 20 per cent of first university degrees in science and engineering and 22nd out of 37 countries with an estimated 30 per cent of total employment in science and technology occupations. In fact, 51 per cent of individuals holding science, technology, engineering and mathematics degrees in Canada are immigrants.

Science and technology-based careers may have exploded in recent years, yet Canada's youth have little interest in studying science after they graduate from high school. According to an Angus Reid *Vision Critical* survey, only one in three (37 per cent) Canadian teens aged 16 to 18 are interested in taking a science course at the post-secondary level – and these are teens that are already enrolled in at least one high school science course.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Science Centres reach Canadians of all ages with informal science engagement, including parents and tots programs geared to early science introductions for the critical 0-6 years, school programs to reinforce school STEM curriculum, and adult-based after-hours events that present current science research. These programs are delivered in many formats like demonstrations, outreach, lectures, citizen science and so on. In addition, many of our members work closely with educators to create instructional resources in critical STEM programs.

Currently, the Canadian Association of Science Centres is creating a three-year strategic plan that outlines priorities through 2018. This plan is designed to support our members to deliver programs to increase science literacy nationally.

STRATEGIC PLAN

As part of the strategic plan development process, the Board of Directors reviewed the organization's Mission Statement and decided that it remains relevant and didn't require a change, but did decide to add a purpose statement that directs the daily activities of the association.

Mission

The Canadian Association of Science Centres builds capacity for its members to inspire a creative and prosperous Canada through science and technology engagement.

Purpose

We accomplish our Mission by facilitating and assisting in leveraging opportunities, relationships and knowledge sharing.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve our mission, CASC has established two strategic priorities:

Raise our member profiles and value to the community by

- Increasing CASC profile among members, professional organizations and individual professionals
- Enabling a collective celebration of success

Millions of people visit Canadian science centres each year, yet broader populations aren't aware of the impact they have on our nation's science culture. By increasing the CASC profile to key stakeholders, awareness of the Canadian science centre industry as a whole is raised and our members will be in a better position to reach their goals.

Develop an enhanced learning and sharing network by

- Initiating and supporting new and innovative ways of sharing knowledge and best practices
- Increasing connections of individuals and organizations
- Leverage relationships internally and externally
- Coordinate efforts to expand capacity to participate in conferences and other events through a variety of initiatives

Canada is a vast geographic region with a relatively small population. Science centres are spread out across the country, which makes networking more difficult. This priority exists to increase opportunities for science centre professionals to develop relationships within the industry, learn from each other, increase professional development opportunities and enable participation from all members.

ACTIONS

CASC has established several actions that we will undertake to achieve our goals throughout the next three years.

Strategic Priority #1 Raise our member profiles and value to the community

Increase CASC profile among members, professional organizations and individual professionals

ACTION 1 Develop a plan to fund and implement a program to celebrate Canadian Science & Technology innovation as part of the Canada 150 program.

Building on the work started by the Canada Science and Technology Museum, CASC will work with a key stakeholder group to create a cross-Canada program of celebrating local, regional, provincial and national achievements in Science and Technology through our nation's first 150 years.

ACTION 2 Leverage the findings of the International Science Center Impact Study and the report on Science Culture in Canada

In 2014, two reports were issued that are significant for Canada's informal science engagement community: The International Science Center Impact Study² and Science Culture: Where Canada Stands³. CASC will summarize and disseminate the information, highlighting opportunities in each report and distribute to members.

ACTION 3 Develop and implement a benchmark study

Based on the metrics important to CASC members, the association will develop a Canadian science centre benchmark study and provide a report to members that will be useful in their operations.

ACTION 4 Develop and implement a multi-year stakeholder engagement strategy

Millions of people visit science centres each year, which means our members are well-placed to help partner organizations, like governments, for profit and not-for-profit businesses, universities and research institutions, reach their science communication goals. CASC will develop an engagement strategy to communicate the benefits of working with science centres and, in some cases, develop collaboration opportunities such as new funding programs like the Science in Canada's North program.

Enable collective celebration of success

ACTION 5 Explore opportunities to leverage events on behalf of the members

CASC will research and leverage national events and activities that showcase members and/or their science communication staff to the greater Canadian community.

² John H. Falk Research

³ Council of Canadian Academies

Strategic Priority #2 Develop an enhanced learning and sharing network

Initiate and support new and innovative ways of sharing knowledge and best practices

ACTION 1 Develop a new website that is functional for webinars and other communications for members.

The CASC website has aged and cannot support some of the new functions required to meet the needs of our members. A new website will ensure there is enough functionality to meet current and future needs.

ACTION 2 Develop webinars and webcasts that meet the professional development needs of the members.

Using information received from a recent member survey and conference sessions, CASC will host a series of webinars and webcasts that meet the professional development needs of members.

Increase connections of individuals and organizations

ACTION 3 Research and implement online discussion groups/communities of practice.

CASC will implement online discussion groups similar to the Communities of Practice (CoPs) hosted by ASTC. These will not duplicate the ASTC CoPs, but will meet the unique needs of Canadian science centres.

Leverage relationships internally and externally

ACTION 4 Research additional benefits for members

CASC will research members' needs for additional benefits that can be purchased in bulk, such as health benefits, pensions, payment systems, etc.

Coordinate efforts to expand capacity to participate in conferences and other events through a variety of initiatives

ACTION 5 Research and implement a conference grant program

CASC will seek funding for a conference grant program that enables conference attendance for those members that normally wouldn't have the financial capacity to do so.