



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028

Ottawa Art Gallery Strategic Plan: Continuing the Conversation on a Unique and Community-Driven Vision

Our last strategic planning process at the Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG) cemented our commitment to a continuous, iterative, and connected approach to strategy. While we are guided by our values, particularly our commitment to community, and will use the pillars outlined in this document as guideposts, we have adopted an open and curious posture. This allows for dynamism and opportunism, but also grounds our ongoing efforts in engagement and connection, which is at the heart of our very existence as a public gallery.

This strategic plan again is rooted in its commitment to a continued conversation in the face of an ever-changing landscape, something that continues to bear out in new and unexpected ways. We also recognize that this openness, this curiosity, and this commitment to meaningful and real connection is at the very heart of who we are. This allows us to produce programs, services, and a culture that is path-breaking, at a caliber well beyond expectations – often at a national or even international level, or hyper-local in a way that is truly first in class.

As we noted in our last plan, we acknowledge that the work, and our road ahead may change, but the conversation will continue to evolve through the pillars, objectives and actions outlined below. More than ever, we commit ourselves to further amplifying and nurturing this unique approach, by remaining open and responsive, and thereby highlighting the special value we believe we can bring to art, to community, and to connection. Our reach and role continues to grow, and we commit to codifying this relational and extraordinary capacity, and to pushing and providing the capacity for the OAG to meet its full potential.



Pillar 1: Inclusive Lens

Adopting an Inclusive, Equity-Seeking and Anti-Racist Lens

Objectives and Actions:

1.1 Recruit and Retain:

The OAG has made important strides in ensuring its board and staff represent the full diversities of the communities we serve. Having been one of the earliest cultural institutions to adopt and meet the 50/30 Challenge, this strategic plan commits to maintaining and enhancing these efforts. This will include a continued focus to recruit and retain staff and board members from the Black, Indigenous, racialized, francophone, 2SLGBTQ+, and disability-identified communities, conduct annual equity training, and continue efforts to build an organizational culture that celebrates and amplifies diverse voices and fosters an inclusive and respectful environment.

1.2 Annual Audits:

The OAG recommits to an annual audit of our collections, programs and operations to identify gaps, systemic barriers and challenges in order to prioritize decision making around resource allocation (i.e. annual acquisition priorities). The continued effort will further dig into qualitative and quantitative measures that help surface the ways in which diversities intersect with our work in all facets.

1.3 Shared Platform and Continued Dialogue:

A commitment to partnership development, collaboration, on-going engagement and in some cases shared authority with members of the BIPOC, francophone, disability-identified and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We further embrace our responsibility to nurture and advocate for an ecosystem where all diversities, particularly those too often under- or unrepresented, can thrive.



Pillar 2: Fueling the Love of Art and Artists

Sustaining, Propelling, and Generous

Objectives and Actions:

2.1 Support for Artists:

Building on the expansion of both the artist support and donor engagement continuum of the last plan, the OAG redoubles its commitment to supporting artists across their life cycle, with specific approaches for emerging, mid-career, and mature artists. Moreover, the OAG commits to ensuring that its supports meet and celebrate artists where they are at, employing the full spectrum of strategies and resources including mentoring, exhibition support, and profile building to enhance an artist's continued evolution.

This action includes honouring the foundational artists who have built our ecosystem, and whose careers bring character and beauty to our region. This action also means being a propellant in the careers of regional artists, working to ensure that collaboration with the OAG can be viewed a substantive and significant boost for an artist's career.

2.2 Acquisition Growth:

The OAG commits to continuously and substantially growing our acquisition budget, through a mix of annual budget allocation, gifts, acquisitions-specific fundraising, annual donations, grants and endowments. We commit to a thoughtful and engaged approach to fueling support for artists, fostering and stewarding a generosity of spirit and resources that propels the cultural ecosystem of the region.

2.3 Expanding Audience and Deepening Partnership:

The OAG commits to finding new ways to broaden our reach and impact, and to learning and engaging with our communities about the roles, possibilities, and manifestations of art. Specifically, this means a continued commitment to art education and a particular focus on demystifying 'art' and 'the gallery', and shedding the elitism often associated with it, without shying away from complex, challenging, and important works. We also commit to expanding our outreach in intersectional ways, linking art and access, wellness, and inclusion. This includes creating space and opportunity on-site, in the community and online for shared authorship or partnership on exhibitions, programs, events and projects, and engagement that broadens our reach, and connects to our mission as a cultural and relational hub.

2.4 Growing Philanthropy and Support:

To enable these commitments, we commit to growing a major gift and planned giving structure that is ethical, democratic and properly scaled to support and enhance OAG's mission. This will see the continued build-up of funds (contingencies, endowments, restricted, planned giving) to fuel our commitment to our role as a cultural centre, including enhanced financial agility and resiliency.



Pillar 3: Centering People, our Sustainability, and Longevity

Empathetic, Resilient, and Considered

Objectives and Actions:

3.1 People at our core

We are and will remain committed to the people who make up our community. Our conception of this is broad, including our staff, our board, the region's artists and the many connected to our work, our broader networks, our patrons, and the communities who we engage and hope to engage. This commitment means we put people first, acting with a spirit of community and openness that seeks to engage, empathise, and connect. We do this concretely through our efforts to understand needs and views, supporting ongoing development and growth, and fostering supportive and respectful initiatives and environments.

3.2 Commitment to the long view

We aim that our work be sustainable – recognizing that our impacts will continue long beyond the present. This builds on the commitment to our people, ensuring we are stewarding an institution that can serve people now and into the future. We commit to understanding our short- and long-term impacts, particularly on our planet, our people, and our communities. And we commit to growing our resilience – including our ability to sustain ourselves in multiple potential futures that may test our financial, organizational, and human resolve.

3.3. Advocacy, alliance-building, and awareness

We recognize that our unique vision – one that minimizes barriers to access, is inclusive and collaborative by design, and that centres people and connection, is increasingly challenging to maintain as resources are strained. We therefore commit to ensuring a commitment to the sustainability of our efforts – advocating and raising awareness for our work and building alliances that ensure we can reach outcomes beyond the sum of the parts. In addition to fostering new revenues and opportunities as noted previously, we will foster a strong voice for our institution and the sector, to ensure our commitment to people can remain possible.



Pillar 4: Placemaking and City Building

Anchored, Connected, and Celebrated

4.1 OAG as a Destination and Community Anchor

With the 5th anniversary of our landmark building, the OAG has come to realize and take up the incredible space we have been offered, including the diversity of uses and communities it serves. We also recognize our role as a committed neighbor, providing safety, respite, and refuge for many. We commit to further embracing and expanding this space – working in and outside the building to reach and engage the many around us. We commit to the development of an arts corridor, situating the area and the OAG as a landmark destination for tourists and our communities. We also commit to being an active partner in increasing the safety and vibrancy of our locality.

4.2 Stewarding A Civic Treasure

We have been fortunate to maintain a strong and critical relationship with the City of Ottawa, who played a principal role in our founding by bestowing on us the stewardship of the Firestone Collection. We seek to redouble our partnership and to recognize the growing and essential role we play as a civic asset, including the innovative and fundamental mandate we still have for the Firestone. We also commit to increasing our presence, visibility, and function as we continue to act as a cultural steward and leader in all parts of the city and region.

4.3 Cultural Diplomacy

Art is often understood as a universal language and a powerful communicator – bridging gaps and provocatively expressing and exposing our stories. Building on our regional, national, and international relationships and platforms, the OAG commits to continuing to build out this platform, and to acting as an ambassador – for art, for Ottawa, for the region, and for the unique and important stories we seek to tell.



Pillar 5: Wellness and Social Cohesion

Healing, Helping, and Human

5.1 Connecting Art and Wellness

The OAG has already established itself as a leader in seeking to understand, foster, and document the connections between art and wellness. We have done this through the path-breaking Trius Prize, through our partnerships with the Royal, and in our ongoing and expanding collaboration with the Ottawa Hospital. With this plan we seek to dramatically build on this important foundation. We commit to assuming a leadership role in convening the communities, researchers, and patients who need and see this meaningful connection. Furthermore, we seek to embed wellness as a guiding effort in our work, recognizing it as a pillar in our evolving education and outreach functions.

5.2 Letting Art Do Its Work

We have already seen and been participant in the power of art in providing solace, comfort, and therapy. In our work with seniors, with palliative care patients, and those in mental distress, amongst others, we know that art can work to provide healing and care. We commit to finding new opportunities to making this happen, and to bringing the power of art to new communities and groups. We also know that art can seek to build connectedness, and we will continue to act, and to let art act, as a galvanizing force for cohesion.

5.3 The OAG as a Social Connector

We also know that art can seek to build connectedness, and we will continue to act, and to let art act, as a galvanizing force for cohesion. Inspired by our commitment to inclusion, equity, and anti-racism, we will seek to continue be a living room and safe space for communities to engage, connect, and feel seen and supported. We know that engagement and connection fuel wellness, and we seek to be a force for good in this regard.

In all we do, we will seek to listen, to engage, and to allow the stories and artistic excellence of our communities inspire, provoke, and connect.