



reimagination
og 2018-2023

Art Gallery of Guelph
Five Year Strategic Plan





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FORTY YEARS STRONG

NEW DIRECTION

The Art Gallery of Guelph is at a critical juncture. Celebrating our 40th anniversary in 2018, the organisation has taken this opportunity to articulate a bold new direction with an expanded imagination of its future as a vital creative space locally and nationally that contributes to significant dialogues on an international stage. This means AGG will advance the arts globally as a leader in innovative, impactful, and inclusive programming. This is our vision.

Our strategic plan outlines this new vision and asserts the gallery's priorities that will advance this goal – our commitment to offering leadership in artistic development, our desire to build engagement and create social impact. It affirms our focus on inclusive programming that reflects and engages our increasingly diverse communities, including reconciliation with Indigenous communities. This responsiveness extends to explorations of our relationship to our environment itself, speaking to our location in Guelph, with its historic, social, and economic links to the land and to agriculture, while connecting us to wider conversations around the world.

Through this plan, we will cultivate innovation through interdisciplinarity and interactivity, including digital directions for the gallery, transforming how we work and providing the public with unprecedented access to our important and unique resources. The gallery's collections represent over three centuries and more than 10,000 artworks with a strong focus on Indigenous and contemporary Canadian art, and is also entrusted with a broad collection of European prints. It is home to the Donald Forster Sculpture Park as well, the largest outdoor sculpture collection at a public art gallery in Canada. Innovation will extend to new opportunities for public engagement with all of our programming, and with digital artistic practices.

Finally, we will strengthen our governance and administration to support our capacity to meet these goals as well as future challenges, and to take advantage of emerging opportunities. In doing so, we will ensure the AGG is engaged in mutually beneficial relationships with leading local, national and international arts organisations, community partners and financial supporters. Strengthening our connection to community, yet focused on a sustainable future in a global context, the evolution of artistic vision and organisational capacity serve as the core for this document and speak to the next phase of the Art Gallery of Guelph's strategic vision and direction.





CONTEXT | The Institution

The past five years have been a period of transformation and momentum for the Art Gallery of Guelph. In 2014, the Province of Ontario renewed the Gallery's enabling legislation; the Art Gallery of Guelph Act received royal assent on December 11, 2014, through which the institution's name change and rebranding was achieved. Our partners – the University of Guelph, the City of Guelph and the Upper Grand District School Board – put in place a new Sponsor Agreement the same year. This was followed by the appointment of a new Executive Director; in 2016, Shauna McCabe was entrusted to articulate the next steps in the Gallery's renewal process by revitalizing the Gallery's organisational strategy and artistic direction. In 2017, Andrew Hunter was appointed as Senior Curator to lead the creation of stimulating new programming.

Today, the Gallery is an indispensable creative presence in our community and the surrounding region, visited by more than 40,000 visitors each year. We have become more diverse and creative in our artistic practices and presentation, cultivating collaborative partnerships locally, nationally and internationally, and investing in the development of artists and the sector more widely. The gallery sets the highest standards for artistic excellence and inclusive programming, which has resonated with the public, educators, researchers, and artists alike. We are thrilled that our audiences have embraced powerful exhibitions such as *150 Acts: Art, Activism, Impact*, explored the bounds of artistic risk in performances such as *The Mush Hole*, and celebrated emerging talent in forms such as the Middlebrook Prize for Young Canadian Curators.

As the Art Gallery of Guelph dares to reimagine our horizons, ongoing commitment to artistic excellence at every level extends from involving the best artists locally and nationally, to making efforts to build an environment that nurtures, supports, and encourages creativity. As we embrace and pursue the strategic priorities of this 5-year plan, we recognize that the outcome of these programs and initiatives will also shape the gallery and its requirements for the future. We are committed to the evolution of artistic content, community engagement, social impact, and innovation as it drives our future definition of the art gallery itself.

Financially, our team has proudly increased AGG's financial capacity, increasing revenues from both private and public sources that are reflected in our annual operating budget. While the recent economic downturn has challenged fundraising efforts throughout the sector, we feel confident that as we look toward the next five years, including our 40th anniversary and beyond, we are well-positioned to be one of Canada's most innovative, engaging, and inclusive art institutions.

CONTEXT | The Field

Visual art, by nature, is a constantly evolving form, adapting to shifts in culture, technology, economics, and our changing society. Art museums as institutions are also in a constant process of transformation. There are core issues and questions facing artists and art museums in Canada today that will be critical to the development of the sector in the future. Foremost among these are:

- Diversity and inclusion – we must ensure that our galleries are home to artists, creative practices, and stories that include and reflect the diversity of our community and country
- Audience and community engagement – in order to expand our connections to our communities, we must find ways to both involve diverse publics and extend our reach beyond our walls through new forms of engagement that reflect shifts in both art practice and audiences
- Innovation in practice and presentation – in order to remain a vibrant and relevant force of artistic expression, we must embrace new and original forms of research, creation, and presentation reflecting developments such as interdisciplinarity and interactivity

The future of the Art Gallery of Guelph artistically will be closely related to these ideas and we have already made tremendous inroads in these three areas. Cultivating heightened social impact, the AGG has been rethinking exhibition practices to support our social responsiveness, as well as ensuring cross-platform access to diverse forms and sources of content as a vital contemporary knowledge institution. As Guelph continues to grow and become increasingly diverse economically, socially and culturally, the gallery has an extraordinary opportunity to become a principal focus for participation in the arts, a reflection of our diverse publics within the city and beyond.



CONTEXT | Engagement

In the arts today, engagement is perceived as the “pinnacle step” in the relationship between individuals and institutions – a goal that unifies artistic, educational, marketing and development activities within a common vision of maximizing impact. Across funders, collaborators, and audiences, success as an arts organisation is measured by an institution’s role as an artistic catalyst as well as its impact within its community, industry, and social context more broadly.

As well as the excellence of the work we produce and present, the Art Gallery of Guelph is focused on the social value of our work – its wider, measurable impact on our community and its priorities such as health and wellbeing, social inclusion, education, and innovation. This has taken shape as a deep consideration of the gallery’s responsiveness to its context and its roles and responsibilities in regards to environmental sustainability and landscape change in the region, for example, as well as our relationship to diverse audiences and Indigenous communities and organisations, with the goal of achieving real dialogue with existing and potential audiences.

As we explore new ways to make experiences meaningful for our audience and supporters, AGG continues to develop approaches to content, public programs, learning experiences, and fundraising initiatives in non-traditional and innovative ways. We are beginning a new era of community engagement, increasingly extending the gallery beyond our walls to increase opportunities to participate, experience, appreciate, and be inspired by artists’ stories as part of everyday experiences. This goal has become part of our organisational strategy to strengthen the connection to our community and build audiences for the future. Purposefully and thoughtfully reaching out to new collaborators and audiences is an integral strategy to deepen our relationships with them.



BOLD NEW DIRECTIONS



WHO WE ARE

The Art Gallery of Guelph is a partnership of the University of Guelph, City of Guelph, and Upper Grand District School Board. The Gallery is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the partners in consultation with the Gallery, as well as from the general membership. Established in 1978 as the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, the gallery was renamed the Art Gallery of Guelph (AGG) in 2014.

WHAT WE DO

Our Mandate

The AGG is a platform for artistic practice and participation in the arts for the City of Guelph and the wider region. The Art Gallery of Guelph sets the highest possible standards for excellence, relevance and sustainability, fostering the visual arts locally, regionally and internationally by means of a rigorous exhibition, publication, education and collection program that advances the artistic field.

Our Mission

To stimulate, provoke and inspire through artistic experiences that nurture creative excellence, strengthen community, and inform public discourse, contributing to positive social change.

Our Vision

To advance the arts globally as a leader in exceptional, impactful, and inclusive programming, cultivating and interpreting artistic practices that ignite engagement with important issues of our time.

WHAT WE VALUE

EXCELLENCE

Setting the highest standards of best practices in our artistic programs, audience engagement, partnerships, and governance.

INCLUSIVENESS

Striving for diversity in programming, exhibitions, staffing, and governance in ways that engage and reflect our increasingly global communities and deepen empathy and cross-cultural understanding, taking measures to eliminate all barriers to accessibility in the arts.

RELEVANCE

Facilitating opportunities for dialogue and exchange that effect positive social change through artistic practices that are engaged, inspiring, and bold.

COLLABORATION

Developing mutually beneficial relationships with leading local, national and international artists and arts organisations, exemplary community partners, as well as funders and financial supporters through meaningful experiences and dialogue.

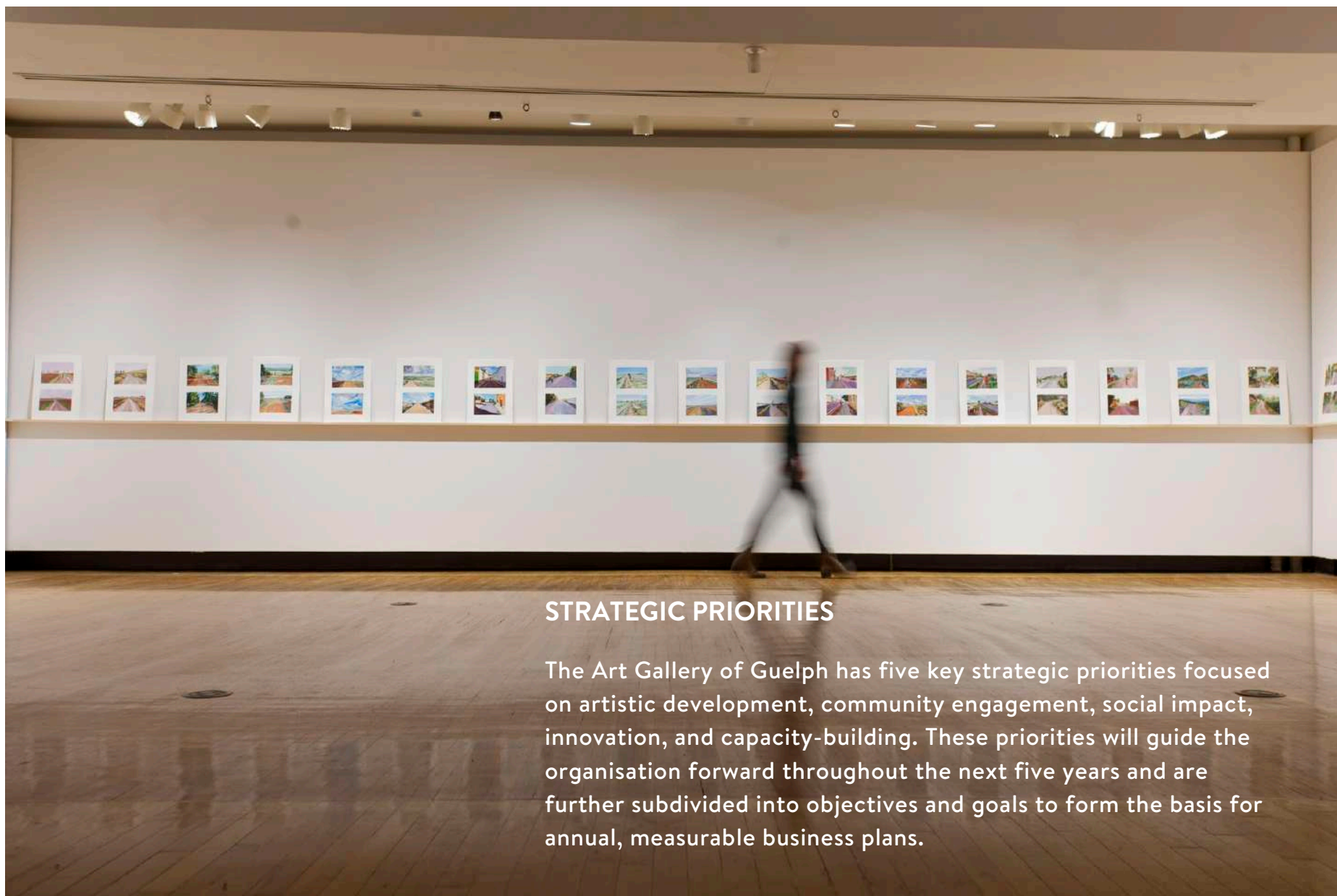
SUSTAINABILITY

Embracing transparent organisational practices and relationships with stakeholders in order to build creative, organisational, and financial capacity.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Fostering interdisciplinary and interactive practices that stimulate creativity and fuel innovation and new knowledge, transforming our relationship with audiences as well as our ways of working.





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Art Gallery of Guelph has five key strategic priorities focused on artistic development, community engagement, social impact, innovation, and capacity-building. These priorities will guide the organisation forward throughout the next five years and are further subdivided into objectives and goals to form the basis for annual, measurable business plans.

PRIORITY | Artistic Development

The creative sector operates within a global economy characterised by its increased flows of ideas and people, giving rise to new opportunities for cultural leadership. AGG aims to stand among the most dynamic and important arts institutions in Canada that are recognised worldwide as leaders in artistic development. From an artistic perspective, this means that we must advance our position as a national leader in innovative and diverse programming that explores the visual arts and their impact on audiences and our community. Through our work with Canadian art and artists, the AGG will position Canadian visual art practices in an evolving global cultural landscape.

Objective

Undertake programming that advances artistic practice and the field

- Support artistic residencies for artistic creation and production
- Recognise and reward artistic excellence
- Engage in generative partnerships with art galleries and museums nationally and internationally to present the work of emerging, mid-career and senior artists with relevance to our community and the country

Objective

Advance our role as a leading force behind the creation of new works and artistic voices in Canada through creative development

- Facilitate commissions of new work
- Offer a platform for emerging and inclusive practices
- Support educational partnerships locally, nationally, and internationally that encourage mentorship and training
- Encourage and facilitate innovative creative collaborations and partnerships and the hybrid practices that result
- Partner with interdisciplinary arts organisations locally, nationally, and internationally
- Collaborate with artists and artist collectives



PRIORITY | Strengthen Community Engagement

Public galleries are thinking more expansively about how to position themselves in relationship to the communities they serve. Many members of the public perceive a lack of access to cultural activities that they feel are not relevant and inclusive, or reflective of their age, diversity and cultural backgrounds. In serving the public good, the AGG ensures inclusivity, offering opportunities for diverse interests and participation, reducing barriers of access. This includes collaborating with community organisations and supporting the artistic development of a wide range of artists.

The recognition of the historic diversity of Canadian society locally, provincially and nationally is profoundly reshaping Canadian culture and identity. Amongst Canadian provinces, Ontario is the most diverse: a quarter of Ontarians identify as visible minorities, more Indigenous people live in Ontario than any other province and are the fastest growing group of any Canadians. Over 40% of all immigrants to Canada settle in Ontario. In this context, providing inclusive experiences is critical to remaining relevant and engaging the public in the visual arts.

Ontarians also value the arts and the vast majority believe the arts can enrich the quality of their lives. This presents public galleries with a critical opportunity to connect with and engage their audiences. We will do this in two ways: building new creative partnerships with members of our community and larger arts networks; and facilitating inclusive programming that supports dialogue and exchange on important issues.

Objective

Enhance community engagement through greater collaboration with the public

- Develop creative partnerships with schools, community organisations, associations, and universities within the city and wider region
- Invite diverse publics to participate in committees that support the direction of gallery activities
- Promote dialogue and exchange through our approach to exhibition, education and public programming

Objective

Enhance community relevance by prioritising diversity in programming

- Develop programming involving youth, seniors, new Canadians, visible minorities
- Develop programming aimed at reconciliation with Indigenous communities by working with Indigenous creative practitioners
- Integrate diverse community perspectives in programs
- Work with artists that represent diverse communities, genders, and generations across Ontario and beyond
- Continue to create programming with artists who are d/Deaf or living with disabilities to heighten awareness of disability arts and Canadians living with disabilities
- Update collections policy to reflect the Gallery's desire to be more inclusive and relevant to the community
- Establish the AGG as a recognized leader and contributor in the community in regards to social issues through our presence in community forum and the media and our role within official committees in association with the community, City of Guelph, University of Guelph, and Upper Grand District School Board

PRIORITY | Social Impact

A focus on impact ensures that the gallery's primary interface with the public – our collections and exhibitions – have a real life in various communities and that the gallery is a catalyst for social change. Social impacts encompass improvements in health and wellbeing, understanding and tolerance of others, community identity and pride, social cohesion and identity, social regeneration, decrease in social isolation and the development of local enterprise. Recognizing its real world context, the gallery will continue to build partnerships that enhance the impact of our artistic activities through participation in initiatives that complement and extend our strategic goals.

Objective

Create impact through socially engaged programming

- Cultivate the work of socially engaged artists
- Develop strategic initiatives that situate art at the heart of public discourse
- Offer socially engaged public programs that stimulate questioning, discussing and engaging in important issues
- Partner with other sectors that advance ideas, fuel innovation and engage wider national audiences

Contribute to civic life, connecting local issues to global dialogues through the gallery's programs

- Support the integration of art practices in the public sphere locally, nationally and internationally through our exhibitions, collections and programming
- Focus on land and sustainability as priority content, exercising leadership in international partnerships and networks to engage with local environmental change through art and creative research
- Bring art to diverse publics through our leadership roles in initiatives such as the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership, Bodies in Translation, Black Heritage Society, and Guelph Community Health Centre



PRIORITY | Cultivation of Innovation

With connectivity, data consumption and digital production growing at exponential rates, public art galleries have increasingly engaged with the question of what their own role might be in the digital age. This transformation has changed artistic practice as artists increasingly integrate digital tools that we present and collect, as well as the work of the institutions themselves – their goals and strategies – through new expectations related to access to resources, forms of engagement, and the integration of cross-platform approaches to content. Institutions have unprecedented opportunities to connect with visitors both locally and globally, playing an important role as trusted sources of information. We also have the opportunity to build on this online trust to share our collections, and enhance the profile of Canadian artists, and truly engage our online users. Low barriers to entry to cultural production also supports wide public participation in creative practice and ongoing possibilities for new forms of creative participation in gallery programming. The AGG embraces the innovative use of technology for artistic and organisational purposes as a means of engagement, conversation, dissemination and creation.

Objective

Continue the digital transformation of the gallery

- Invest in digital technologies to support programming and operations, ensuring adequate technological capacity to support strategic goals
- Collaborate with and collect the work of artists who work with digital technologies
- Continue to digitize the collection and create digital assets for use online and in programming
- Leverage digital assets to enrich the content on the gallery's website

Objective

Continue to innovate and develop accessible learning experiences shaped through digital innovation

- Continue to focus on fundraising and development efforts to support digital outreach initiatives
- Provide opportunities for the public to engage with the Gallery's content on social and mobile platforms
- Expand programs to enrich the lives of youth and educators through creative, impactful, high touch and high tech experiences in efforts to build audiences for the future



PRIORITY | Strengthen Organisational Capacity

The Art Gallery of Guelph will focus on strengthening our financial, governance, and human resources to support our capacity to meet these goals as well as future challenges. Traditionally, public art galleries and art museums have relied heavily on government support; 49% of all revenues to public art galleries and art museums funded by the Canada Council for the Arts were from government sources in 2011-2012. However, over the years public funding has remained largely stagnant, resulting in significant declines in the real value of public funding as a result of inflation. There are new investment opportunities emerging: the federal government recently increased its commitment to funding the arts, promising to double the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts to \$360 million by 2021. The Gallery's new direction was validated when the Canada Council used its new resources to increase the Gallery's operational funding effective 2019.

Private sector donations are a key source of additional new revenues. According to statistics developed by the Canada Council, private sector revenues, driven by donations, accounted for one-quarter of revenues in 2011-2012. Federal tax incentives may stimulate greater giving to registered charities in the arts. The Gallery is well positioned to attract private sector support: stakeholders value organisations able to foster social cohesion, decrease social isolation and encourage a strong community identity. For their part, businesses that contribute to the arts are motivated by the possibility for community impact and enhanced quality of life.

Organisational capacity is also supported by effective human resources in regards to both governance and staffing.

Objective

Increase financial resources

- Create a fundraising subcommittee of the Board of Trustees with a mandate to attract new private sector funding
- Continue to increase public funding within a context of limited staff resources
- Develop a five-year financial plan to support the goals of the Strategic Plan
- Develop a positioning document that articulates the value of the gallery for use in attracting additional public, philanthropic and business support

Objective

Support governance renewal to ensure best practices related to administrative policies and community representation

- Update corporate by-laws and collections policy
- Develop functional policies for conservation, risk management, human resources and financial management
- Increase the diversity of the Board and staff composition to reflect the communities served by the AGG
- Ensure professional expertise represented on the Board of Trustees: legal, financial, artistic, fundraising, and marketing and communications
- Consider coordination of Trustee appointments to better align to the Gallery's needs for both continuity and change at the Board level

Objective

Build human resource capacity to meet sector best practices, supported through increased public and private funding as well as partnerships:

- Define and refine key roles related to key areas of activity in need of support:
 - Educational services – to facilitate professional educational programs and school access
 - Development – to support access to sustained financial resources, meeting standards in regards to financial models for public galleries, by developing and implementing a robust development program
 - Collections Management and Registration – to ensure effective oversight, care and access to object collections as well as increased focus on digital assets
 - Marketing – to address lack of profile and support public awareness and community engagement
- Identify sources of financial support and partnerships to support human resource development in these areas
- Embrace a positive, inclusive, and creative environment in order to retain and attract leaders in our field



EXPECTED RESULTS AND INDICATORS

Priority	Expected Results
Priority 1: Position the Gallery Nationally as a Leader in Artistic Development	<p>The Gallery is recognized nationally as a leader in artistic development.</p> <p>Individual artists whose work is acquired, exhibited or published by the Gallery enjoy a greater national profile.</p> <p>Artists enjoy greater opportunities to develop, produce and disseminate their work.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gallery is covered in the national visual arts press, featured in professional publications, festivals, and other professional forum (i.e. awards, etc.)
Priority 2: Enhance Community Engagement and Relevance	<p>Community and educational organisations enter into creative partnerships with the Gallery.</p> <p>Members of the public are actively engaged with the Gallery through participation in committees and programming.</p> <p>Different communities see themselves reflected in the Gallery's programs.</p> <p>Users of the Gallery perceive the Gallery's programs as relevant to them.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity of Gallery users Participation by members of the public and community/educational organisations in committees and programming
Priority 3: Create Social Impact	<p>The Gallery is a catalyst for social change.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of impact by users of the Gallery Perception of impact by sponsors and donors
Priority 4: Cultivation of Innovation	<p>A fully digitized collection shared with the public.</p> <p>Greater access by the public to gallery programs and content online.</p> <p>The public has access to enriched gallery content on its website and social and mobile platforms.</p> <p>The public has opportunities to discover the work of visual artists who work with digital technologies.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online usage metrics Number of exhibitions featuring artists working with digital technologies
Priority 5: Strengthen Organisational Capacity	<p>A strong and effective organisation, well-regarded in the community and positioned for growth.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated governance by-laws and policies Staff hires and functional planning in core areas of development, collections, marketing and education Greater diversity and functional expertise amongst Board of Trustees Greater diversification and higher overall value of revenues



BY 2023, the Art Gallery of Guelph will:

- Continue our commitment to the highest levels of artistic creation and innovation by placing our artists and audiences at the core of our priorities
- Advance our role as a leading force behind the support of new work and artistic voices in Canada through commissioning and creative development
- Have established collaborative relationships with leading local, national and international artists and artistic organisations as a means of creative exchange with our artists and audiences
- Build on our past and current financial capacity by increasing public, corporate and private revenue streams supporting growth in artistic and audience expansion activities
- Have a staff, audience and board member base that reflects the diversity of citizens of Guelph
- Embrace global leading practices in order to extend our reach to a wider and more diverse community
- Establish a digital strategy which embraces the innovative use of technology for artistic and organisational purposes as a means of engagement, conversation, dissemination and creation
- Expand programs to enrich the lives of youth and educators through creative, impactful, hands-on experiences in efforts to build audiences for the future
- Pursue meaningful residency and learning programs and opportunities for emerging and established artists in order to be leaders in the advancement of our field
- Develop our private, corporate, foundation and government investors in the AGG
- Embrace a positive, inclusive, and creative environment in order to retain and attract leaders in our field

Territorial Acknowledgement

The Art Gallery of Guelph acknowledges the Attawandaron people on whose traditional territory the gallery resides and we offer our respect to our Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Métis neighbours as we strive to strengthen our relationships with them. Today, this landscape is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging them reminds us of our important connection to this land where we live, work, and create.

ARTGALLERYOFGUELPH.CA

519.837.0010

info@artgalleryofguelph.ca

358 Gordon Street

Guelph, ON N1G 1Y1

Gallery Hours

Tuesday to Sunday 12 – 5 pm; closed Monday

Office Hours

Monday to Friday 9 am – 5 pm

/AGGuelph



@agguelph



@agguelph



@AGofGuelph



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