

The Visual Arts Centre  
of Clarington  
Strategic Plan 2009—2011

❖ **encouraging  
the creative  
impulse**



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# introduction

••• The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington (VAC) has developed significantly since our inception in 1974. Over the years, we have expanded and upgraded our programming, transformed our exhibitions to become a forum for contemporary art, and have been recognized by the Ontario Association of Art Galleries as a public gallery.

Our community linkages are strong and vital to the mission and health of our organization. With broad based community input and support, we continue to innovate and improve what we do and how we do it to better fulfill our mission and bring art to life in our community.

This strategic plan sets out our directions for the next three years.

It has been developed by the board and staff of The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington through consultation with artists, community organizations, instructors, members, other galleries, students, teachers, the Municipality of Clarington and volunteers from across the community.

The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington acknowledges and appreciates the financial support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation in developing this plan.

## who we are

### MISSION



For close to 35 years, the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington has been providing quality arts education and exhibitions to the people of Clarington.

Our mission has been to promote the creation, display and appreciation of the visual arts in the Municipality of Clarington.

*Our services fall into five areas:*

**Exhibitions:** We provide curated exhibitions and catalogues, artist showcase exhibitions, exhibitions in the Clarington Gallery in the Municipal Building, and art on public lands outdoor sculpture.

**Educational programs:** Our education programs include art classes and workshops for adults, youth and children; summer camps and March break programs, workshops and instruction in local schools, and professional development workshops for artists and teachers.

**Publications and information:** We contribute to documented artistic practice through the production and distribution of exhibition catalogues and brochures. We also develop and disseminate newsletters, web-based information, and publicity materials to members and the general public.

**Community services and events:** We also serve the community through lending library and art rentals, studio rentals, providing space for local clubs, renting space for birthday parties, weddings, meetings, and by supporting local arts festivals and community events.

**Recognition programs:** We recognize and support artists through high school bursaries, a professional artists bursary, high school commencement awards, and a fund to assist persons with special needs to access the programs offered by the VAC.



## who we are (CON'T)

### ACTIVITY



We are an active and productive organization, generating a significant volume of activity within each of our five service areas.

**Exhibitions:** In 2007 we mounted 8 curated exhibitions, 4 artist showcase exhibitions, the art on public lands outdoor sculpture exhibition, and 11 exhibitions at the Clarington Gallery in the Municipal Centre.

**Educational programs:** Over the course of the year we offered 24 weeks of sessional classes for adults, teens and children, 10 full weeks of summer camps, 35 curriculum connection and other special classes, educational and professional development workshops, and open studio for high school students.

**Publications and information:** In 2007 we produced 6 exhibition catalogues, 6 newsletters, and a host of publicity and general information materials.

**Community services and events:** We were extensively involved with the community in 2007, spearheading or participating in 20 community services and special events.

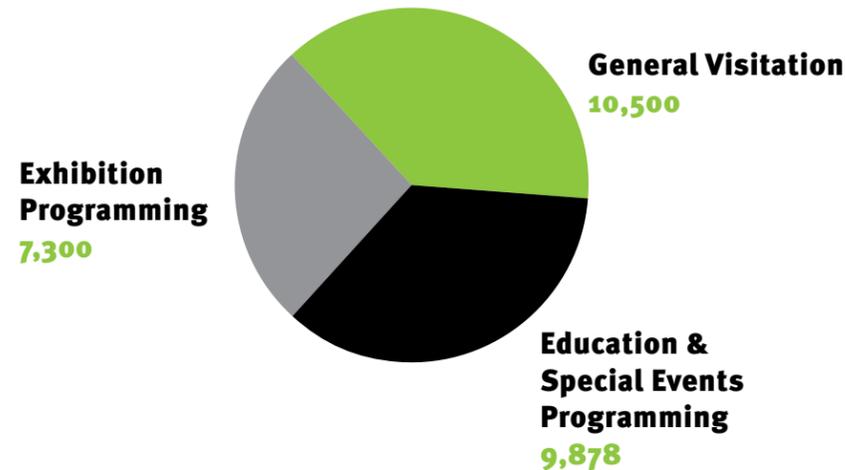
**Recognition programs:** Our recognition program in 2007 included 2 high school bursaries, 1 professional artist bursary, and the high school commencement awards.



**PARTICIPATION**

Total Participation & Visitation for 2007

27,678



The programs and services of the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington generated close to 28,000 visitations to the facility in 2007.

Participation/visitation levels have been growing steadily over the past five years. While the majority of participants/visitors are from Clarington, we draw people from across and beyond Durham Region.

**ORGANIZATION**



The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington is a not-for-profit, charitable organization governed by a 12 person, volunteer board of directors. Currently we have a membership of 650 individuals and organizations.

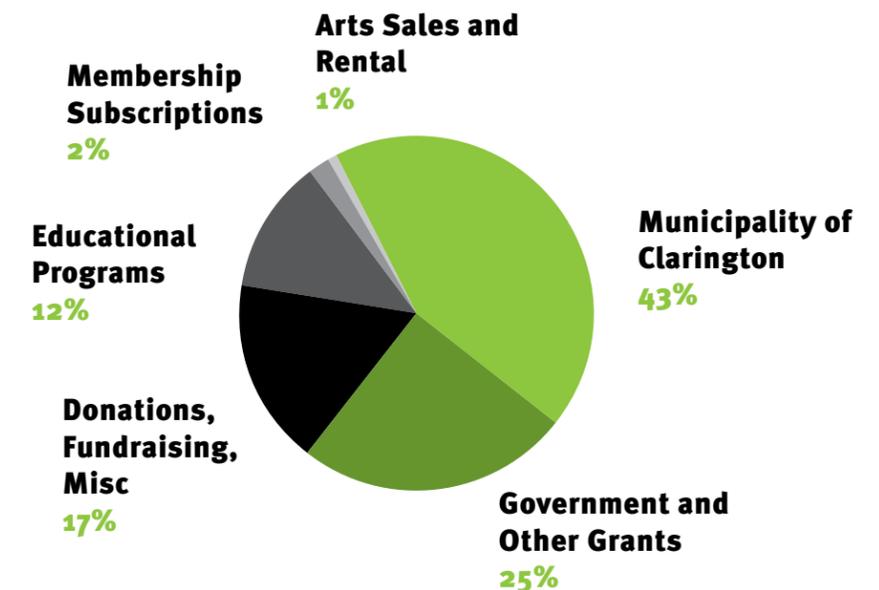
Staff include a full-time Executive Director, a part-time Curator, a part-time Installer, and a full-time Office Coordinator.



**FINANCES**



The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington is financially supported by its membership, programming and other earned revenue, donations, and operating grants from the Municipality of Clarington and the Ontario Arts Council. On occasion, the VAC obtains special project grants from other government agencies and foundations. The Municipality of Clarington is our single largest funder, supplying 43% of our total revenue in 2007. The Municipality has been a sustaining source of operating funds and owns and maintains our facility, the Cream of Barley Mill. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has provided funds for facility improvements and for the development of this strategic plan.



**FACILITIES**



The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington operates out of the historic Cream of Barley Mill on Soper Creek. This was made possible by the foresight and generosity of the Rotary Club of Bowmanville in acquiring the building for the municipality, and through the ongoing support of the Municipality of Clarington.

Built in 1905, the facility includes the Mill Gallery on the main floor, a basement darkroom and pottery studio, a second story painting and drawing studio, and a third floor exhibition space.

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of Rotary and the Cream of Barley Mill, the Rotary Centennial Garden project added gardens, walkways, parking areas, an amphitheatre, and outside sculpture areas to the grounds.



## COMMUNITY GROWTH AND CHANGES

Our strategic plan recognizes and responds to the changing environment. The most significant realities and trends that have shaped our planning for the next three years are listed below.



Clarington's population is expected to grow significantly – a 30% increase from 2006 – 2016, adding roughly 23,500 new residents

Clarington is a younger community than most with a median age of 36.9 years, compared to the provincial average of 39 years

Growth rates will vary by age cohort, with the number of seniors and younger adults expected to grow most rapidly over the next ten years

Clarington is not experiencing the same growth in ethnic diversity that the Province and Region are

Clarington is home to several very large employers, including St. Marys Cement and Ontario Power Generation, Darlington Site

Significant employment growth will occur in the energy sector with the recently announced expansion of the Darlington Site

The three largest employment sectors in Clarington as of 2006 were:

- *Sales and service occupations* (22%)
- *Trades, transport and equipment operators etc.* (18%)
- *Business, finance and administration* (17%)

A majority of the workforce (63%) travels outside of Clarington to work

There are fewer university graduates in the population (11%) than the Ontario average, but a higher percentage (25%) with a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma than the provincial average.



## CULTURAL SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY



There is growing demand for cultural opportunities within the community – 31% of households surveyed as part of the Community Services Department strategic planning process for the Municipality of Clarington requested additional arts and cultural programming

The VAC is the only independent, incorporated organization dedicated to the visual arts in the community. It is seen as a dynamic, high quality community organization by those who have been involved with us

It is important that the VAC sustain a high quality of exhibitions and programming in order to challenge, enrich and educate, thus, increasing the profile and awareness of the VAC in the community

Opportunities exist to build partnerships with other established cultural organizations in the community (e.g. Clarington Public Library, Clarington Museums)

There are a number of emerging performing arts groups and arts festivals in Clarington, yet, there is no organizational focus or network for the arts or cultural sector in Clarington

## EDUCATION SECTOR



Clarington is home to a total of 20 elementary and secondary schools in the public, catholic and private systems, and school enrolment is forecasted to grow over time

Post secondary institutions exist in neighbouring Oshawa. Durham College has a School of Design and Communication Arts and programming is expanding at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) and includes a partnership with Trent University.

There are opportunities to expand the VAC's already strong partnerships with the education sector.



**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**



The Municipality of Clarington regards the VAC as an important and valued partner in the community

The Municipality of Clarington will continue to look to and support arms-length community organizations such as the VAC to provide cultural services to the community

The VAC has the potential to contribute to many of the Municipality of Clarington's strategic objectives listed under the six business focuses of the Municipality identified in its corporate strategic business plan:

- *Economic development*
- *Community planning and improvement*
- *Citizen engagement*
- *Growth management and transportation*
- *Infrastructure and asset management*
- *Recreation opportunities*

**PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS**



The overall budget allocations of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council have been increasing over time, but so has the number of groups and artists and requests for funds

There are a number of special project grant programs at the provincial and federal levels that help arts organizations build capacity and undertake special initiatives; these are potential sources of project funding for specific initiatives that may be undertaken by the VAC

**ARTS AND CULTURE**



Arts and culture are recognized for their contribution to the economic growth and vitality of communities. In North America, arts and culture are the focus of a growing number of municipalities' economic development strategies.



The arts are becoming increasingly multi-disciplinary, both in terms of the integration of traditionally independent art forms and through collaborations with designers and other disciplines

There is a growing trend towards on-site installations, often with the use of multi-media

**OUR ORGANIZATION AND RESOURCES**



The VAC generates a large volume of programs, exhibitions, and activities with limited resources

The existing facility, while a strategic asset to the organization due to its historic quality, setting, and atmosphere, also presents significant constraints:

- *the building is not fully accessible to people with disabilities*
- *the amount and layout of space constrains the amount and nature of programming and exhibitions which can be mounted*
- *there is inadequate storage and office space*
- *the lack of appropriate climate controls limits exhibition possibilities and creates risks*
- *the building is in need of a higher level of ongoing maintenance and repair*

The VAC's staffing model is fragile with only a part-time curator, a part-time Installer, and two full-time positions responsible for administration, educational programming, community exhibitions, marketing and publicity, facilities, finances, fundraising, membership and volunteer support

The compensation and working conditions we offer staff are not competitive; wages are comparatively low, we do not provide benefits, and staff invest significant numbers of unpaid hours in carrying out their roles

Enhanced staff capacity and more effective and increased engagement and use of volunteers will be critical to our future success

While the VAC has a long history of on-budget performance, the organization has not been able to generate and sustain reserve funds



Through the strategic planning process we have redefined our vision and mission as an organization:

## OUR VISION



Arts education and appreciation fosters the development of creative thinkers, problem solvers, and visionaries, strengthening society's ability to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

## OUR MISSION



The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington nurtures the cultural development of our community by encouraging the creative impulse through arts education, exhibition, and promotion.

## PRINCIPALS OF OUR APPROACH



*All of our work as an organization will continue to be guided by the following key principles:*

**Inclusive and accessible:** We will work to build community and be part of the community. Our programs, exhibitions, and facilities will reflect a diversity of ideas, engage the broader community, support established and emerging artists, and will be accessible to all.

**Outstanding Quality:** We will offer high quality programming that challenges, enriches, and educates, while retaining a character and environment that is welcoming, friendly and reflective of the community.

**Visionary and profound:** We will be forward thinking and innovative as an organization, demonstrating knowledge and insight that triggers reflection and thought.

**Aesthetic sensitivity:** Our work will model a deep-rooted belief in the importance of aesthetics and ideas.

**Stewardship and Accountability:** We will be good stewards of the funds, facilities, and other resources entrusted to us. We will earn public trust and community support through ethical and socially responsible actions.



## STRATEGIC THEMES AND GOALS



*Three themes and eight related goals will be the focus of our strategy for the next three years.*

### Theme: Engaging our community

#### Goals:

1. Increased visitation to exhibitions
2. Expanded, integrated educational programming
3. Viewed as an essential cultural service by the municipality

### Theme: Strengthening our organization

#### Goals:

4. Improved facility accessibility and functionality
5. Increased staff capacity
6. Greater volunteer engagement

### Theme: Ensuring our financial sustainability

#### Goals:

7. Increased non-governmental revenue
8. Strengthened financial management



# our strategic directions

## ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY



Our strategic directions as an organization will address the goals identified under each of our three themes.

*We will respond to the growing population and demand for cultural services and continue to build on our strengths as a community-based, accessible, and welcoming organization. In this area, our goals and directions are to:*

### **Goal 1: Increased visitation to exhibitions**

- 1.1 Maintain the current quality of exhibitions
- 1.2 Define curatorial goals and principles
- 1.3 Develop a 3-year exhibition plan
- 1.4 Develop a 3-year marketing plan

### **Goal 2: Expanded, integrated educational programming**

- 2.1 Develop a comprehensive program curriculum
- 2.2 Build linkages between exhibitions and programming
- 2.3 Promote the value of our educational programming to the community
- 2.4 Explore potential partnerships to gain program recognition from other organizations

### **Goal 3: Viewed as an essential cultural service by the municipality**

- 3.1 Enhance working relationships with municipal council and staff
- 3.2 Demonstrate the linkages between VAC and Clarington's strategic priorities
- 3.3 Identify opportunities for the Municipality of Clarington to use VAC as an asset in community, economic and tourism development initiatives
- 3.4 Facilitate the development of the arts community in Clarington
- 3.5 Develop a strategy for broader engagement of the community



## STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATION



*We will work to strengthen our organization to allow increased access to our services in the community.*

### **Goal 4: Improved facility accessibility and functionality**

- 4.1 Clarify municipal and VAC responsibilities under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- 4.2 Develop a plan to fulfill our responsibilities under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- 4.3 Negotiate a longer lease for the building with the Municipality of Clarington
- 4.4 Develop a construction plan for Phase 1 of our building renovation program
- 4.5 Obtain funding support for Phase 1 renovations of the building

### **Goal 5: Increased staff capacity**

- 5.1 Identify current and future staffing needs and gaps
- 5.2 Develop a long-term staffing plan
- 5.3 Prioritize and secure funds for a staff person for educational programming
- 5.4 Develop a plan to achieve competitive levels of staff compensation

### **Goal 6: Greater volunteer engagement**

- 6.1 Develop a Friends of VAC volunteer advisory council
- 6.2 Identify opportunities and a structure for meaningful volunteer engagement
- 6.3 Develop and implement a volunteer program

## ENSURING OUR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY



*To accomplish our goals we must increase our level of financial support by sustaining and building upon existing sources of funding while increasing revenue from non-governmental sources.*

### **Goal 7: Increased non-governmental revenue**

- 7.1 Develop a fundraising strategy (feasibility, case for support, fundraising plan)
- 7.4 Identify new opportunities to generate earned revenue

### **Goal 8: Strengthened financial management**

- 8.1 Develop a three-year financial plan
- 8.2 Establish a reserve fund target and policies
- 8.3 Integrate reserve funding into the financial plan and budgeting process

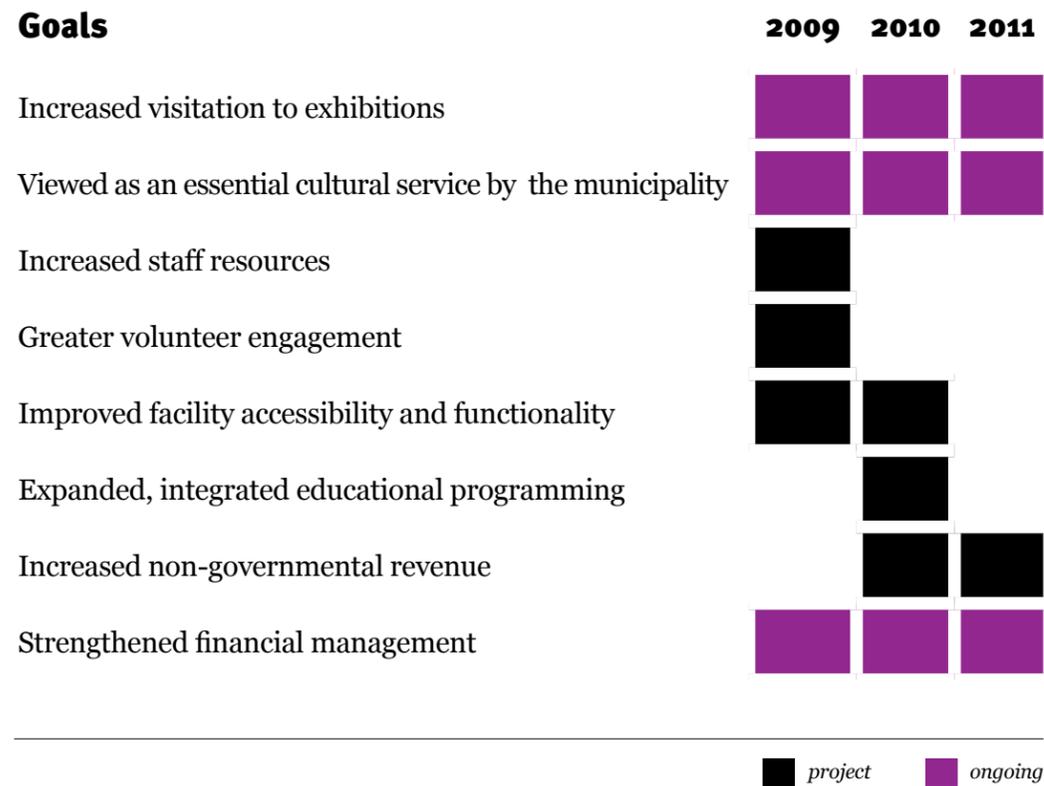


# implementation framework

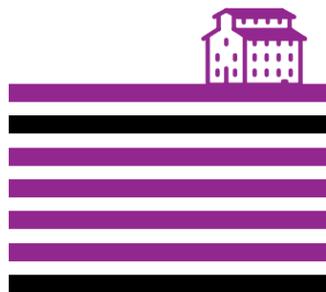
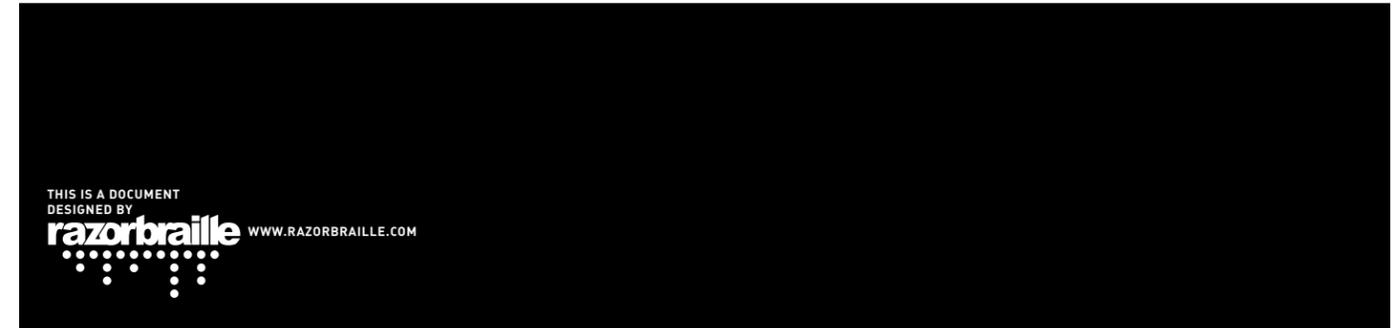
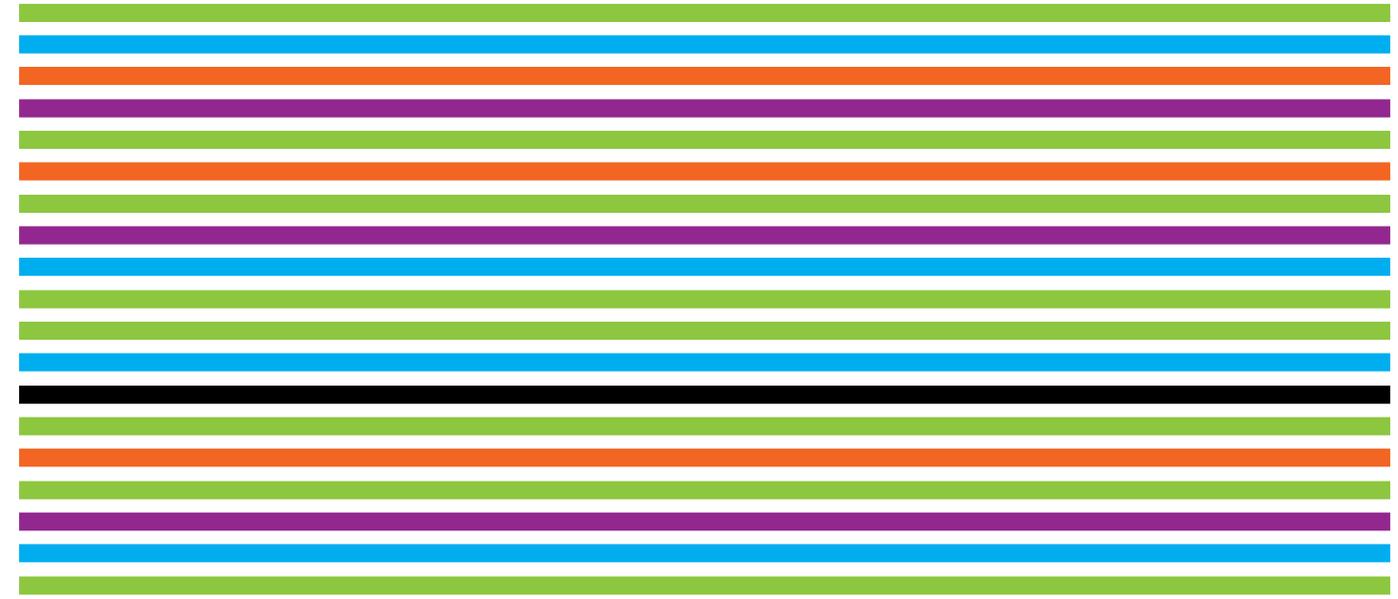
The plan provides the blueprint for the future work of The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington. The plan will come to life through the detailed business plan and associated programming, marketing, organizational, financial and fundraising plans.

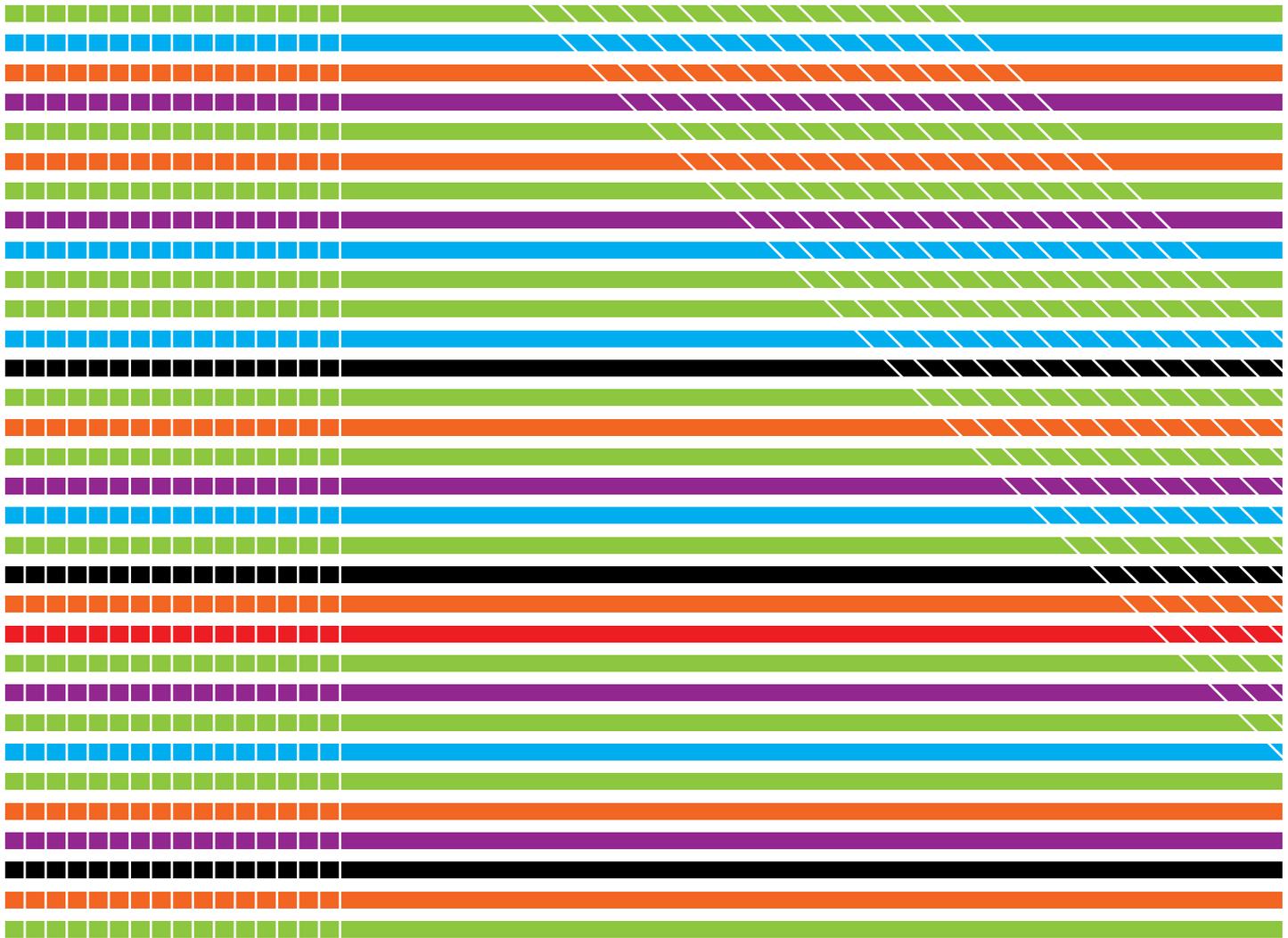
## SEQUENCE AND PRIORITY

 The board and staff will create working groups and acquire funds for external consulting assistance where required to pursue each of the goals and directions in the plan. The overall sequence of priorities over the next three years is shown below:



The board will use the plan in its budgeting process and will monitor and review progress in implementing the plan at its regular board meetings. The plan will be modified by the board in response to any major shifts in the strategic environment.





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