

BUILD BACK POWER

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023



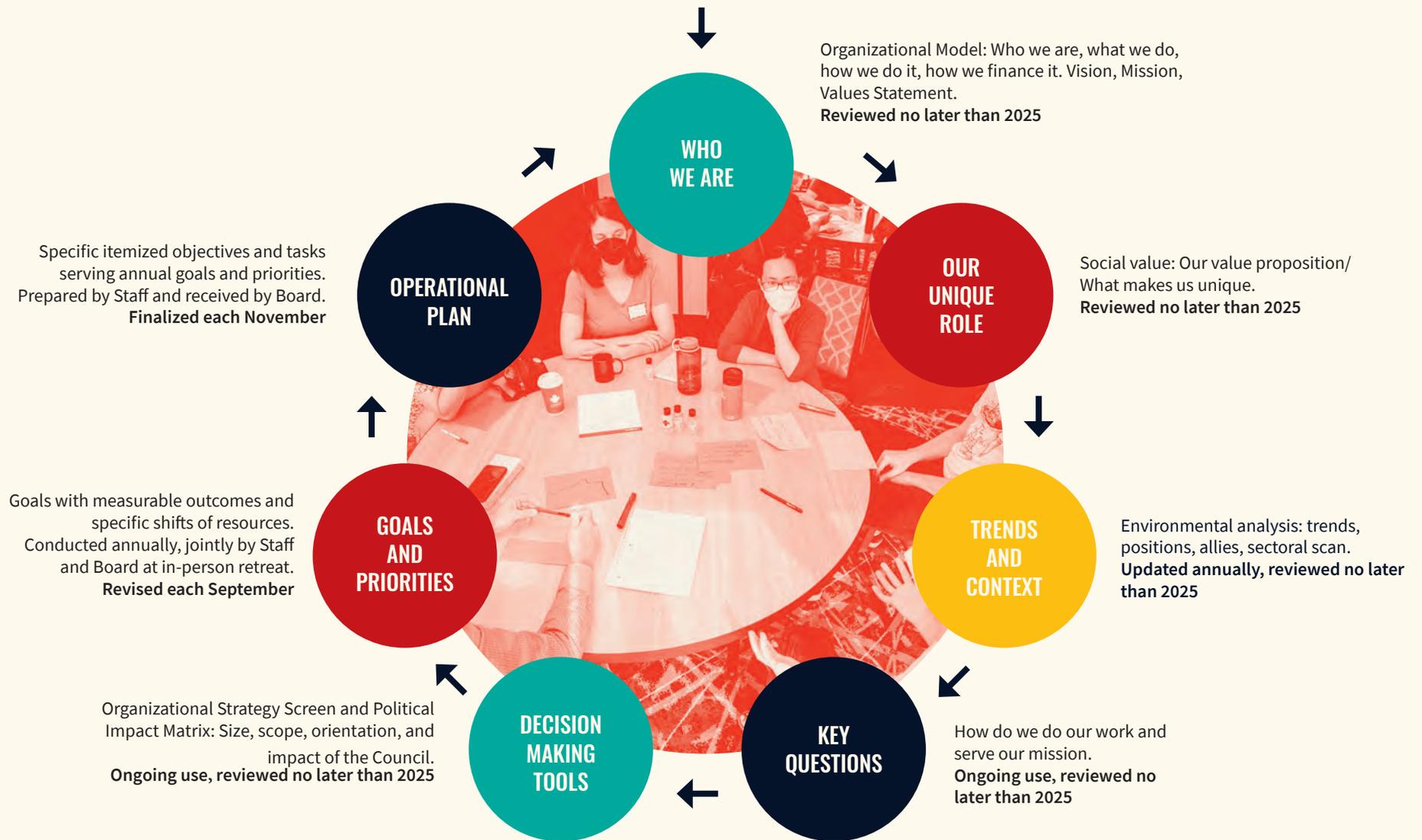
ABOUT THIS PLAN



The Council has adapted its strategic framework from the “Real-time Strategic Planning” model developed by David La Piana. The strategic direction of the Council has been developed through a participatory process across our board, staff, and chapter base, including at an in-person retreat.

Rather than setting a rigid timeline of tasks for the coming three years, the Council has adopted a planning framework that steers its strategy and goal-setting on an annual basis. This framework recognizes that the world is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous – in other words, the political context and lived reality of our communities are always changing and our work to address social justice issues within this changing world must be flexible enough to respond. With that understanding, this strategic plan lays out decision making tools we will use in the next three years to respond to our changing world while staying on a path towards our goals of protecting people, the planet, and democracy. From there, The Council will set annual goals which will directly inform our operational plan.

ABOUT THIS PLAN



WHO WE ARE

For more than 35 years, the Council has fought for values based on fair and sustainable trade, clean water, climate justice, democracy, and stronger public health care. We are a registered non-profit organization and do not accept money from corporations or governments.

The Council's political work is carried out through the ongoing work of our valued members and chapters, with coordination, support, and leadership from the staff and board of directors. Since its inception, the Council of Canadians has built its strength and credibility with powerful grassroots activists in communities across Canada. We support local volunteer chapters, members, and supporters who take action on the Council's local, regional and national campaigns. These grassroots groups act as local watchdogs, and promote social and economic justice on a day-to-day basis.

The Council has a unionized staff team that designs and implements campaigns with political goals relating to our issue areas in collaboration with our chapters, members, and board of directors. Staff create communications plans and materials to drive those campaigns, organize and train chapters and members to participate and lead in these campaigns, and fundraise to make all of this work possible. Staff are supervised by a management team including two Co-Executive Directors who report to our Board of Directors. This board is elected by a combination of members and chapters, and provides the governance, oversight, and accountability needed to enable Council to fulfill its strategy, mission and mandate.

The Council operates predominantly in English and also supports communications and organizing with Francophone Canadians. We understand the lands that Canada occupies are the traditional territories of its original Indigenous stewards, and as such the Council of Canadians has a responsibility to contribute to decolonization and reconciliation.

OUR MISSION

We build political power for people, planet, and our democracy. Through grassroots collective action, we organize against the influence of corporations over our governments and communities.



OUR VISION

We advocate for a society built on democracy, justice, and care for each other. We believe we can learn from the perspectives and struggles of others as we work together for a more just world.



THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS BELIEVES WE ALL DO BETTER WHEN WE:

- Expand and improve our public services and programs that serve people's basic needs.
- Guarantee the human right to water and sanitation is respected, and we stop water privatization.
- Place the interests of people and communities above corporations and the ultra-rich.
- Ensure everyone lives with dignity, respect, and equitable treatment and care regardless of who they are or where they live.

WE DO THIS BY...

Bringing people together to take collective action and build grassroots community power. With our members, supporters, and chapter activists, we learn, organize, and act together as we fight for clean water, fair trade, strengthened public health care, climate justice, and democracy.

- We challenge the power and influence of large corporations to strengthen our democracy.
- We protect the Commons – ecological, social, and cultural resources shared by all – from privatization and exploitation.
- We work for social, economic, and environmental justice.

OUR VALUES



WE WORK FOR JUSTICE

Most governments put the profit and unlimited growth of large corporations above the vital needs of people and the planet. We believe in transformative social and economic change based on the principles of justice and democracy.



WE BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

We work in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and people who are racialized, regardless of their status, and those who face social, economic, and environmental injustices.



WE ARE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN

We operate without a penny of corporate or government money. Our work is sustained by the generous donations of our supporters and members. This financial independence allows our advocacy work to be direct and uncompromising.



WE ARE DEMOCRATIC

We are a grassroots organization built on democratic principles. These principles provide an open membership and give all members a voice and vote in our organization. We are accountable to the groups we work with and to the frontline activists and communities we support.

OUR UNIQUE ROLE



The Council of Canadians staff, chapters, and board of directors reflected on the role the Council has played as an organization within social justice movements in Canada, and what we uniquely bring to the table amidst current political trends. This is how we understand our unique role as an organization now and in the future:

- We take action to protect the things we all share in common – like the climate, water, and public services – from privatization and powerful corporations, and expand the influence of people and communities.
- We continue to foster a national political home for hundreds of thousands of people brought together by shared values, working toward bold common goals, with clear political gains along the way.
- We support political action in people’s communities through training, relationship-building, and collective action in the tradition of community organizing.
- We are funded by donations from tens of thousands of our members and supporters. We don’t accept corporate or government money.
- We inspire people to take action by welcoming them into campaigns that impact their daily lives.

In the coming years, we will build on our key strengths in these specific ways.

TRENDS AND CONTEXT



Since 1985, the Council has challenged the agenda and policies of corporate Canada that put shareholders' and CEOs' interests before those of people and communities.

Today, we are witnessing the rise of hate-groups and the ultra-right, widening inequality, the spread of disinformation—all of which divide people across Canada and the world, and strengthen the position of the already-powerful.

We believe our democracy is under threat from the increasing consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of the few.

From our origins, we have defended and advocated for the expansion of 'the Commons'. Today, we are planning our work in response to these trends:

- The deepening climate crisis and its growing impact on all communities.
- Increased privatization and erosion of public services, especially in our public health care system, and attacks on workers' rights.
- Ongoing marginalization of Indigenous people, and the continued undermining of Indigenous rights and sovereignty.
- The increasing power of big business and its grip on governments and public institutions.
- Ongoing systemic marginalization of racialized and people of colour in Canadian society.
- The rise of hate, disinformation, echo chambers, and politics of division, made worse by manipulation of public opinion by social media companies and partisan interests.

From this, we have resolved to build back the power of people and communities.

KEY QUESTIONS

This strategic plan was developed as a collaboration within our community of board, staff, chapters, and members. We asked our Staff, chapters, and Board to draw from surveys, workshops, personal experience, and conversations to create a series of key questions about how we do our work of protecting people, planet, and democracy at this particular time. These questions inform the decision-making tools we will use to guide our work in the next few years.



HOW DO WE BUILD LONG-TERM POWER? HOW DO WE BUILD SUPPORTS FOR CHAPTERS, AS WELL AS MEMBERS NOT AFFILIATED WITH CHAPTERS? HOW DO WE SERVE CLEAR AND DIRECT WINNABLE GOALS? HOW DO WE IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP LEADERS? CAN WE SUPPORT PEOPLE'S BASIC NEEDS WITH MATERIAL IMPACTS? HOW CAN WE BE PRESENT IN-PERSON AND IN THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION? HOW DO WE ENSURE WE ARE LISTENING TO, AND AMPLIFYING, PEOPLE WHO ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTED? HOW DO WE CULTIVATE GRASSROOTS ACTIONS? HOW DO WE MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT, AND MAKE OUR WORK EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPROACH? HOW DO WE TAKE THE RIGHT RISKS? HOW DO WE ADDRESS COMPLEXITY AND STILL ENSURE OUR WORK IS ACCESSIBLE? HOW DO WE ENSURE OUR OWN EFFECTIVENESS AT CHANGING POLICIES, BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER? HOW DO WE ENSURE COMMUNITY OUTREACH IS CLEAR IN EACH OF OUR CAMPAIGNS? HOW DO WE SAY NO WHEN THERE IS NO CLEAR CONNECTION TO OUR SET GOALS? HOW DO WE PUT FORWARD WHAT WE'RE FOR, NOT JUST AGAINST? HOW DO WE FOCUS ON OUR ACTIVE CAMPAIGNS, BUT SERVE A BROADER CONVERSATION? HOW DO WE INVEST IN LONG-TERM STABILITY AND GROWTH IN OUR ORGANIZATION? HOW DO WE RESPOND TO CRISIS MOMENTS THAT NEED RAPID RESPONSE? HOW DO WE SET GOALS WITH CLEAR ROLES AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE FOR THOSE INVOLVED?

OUR DECISION-MAKING TOOLS

Using these Key Questions raised by chapters, staff, and board members, we have created an Organizational Strategy Screen, which will guide us in making big decisions about our overall strategic direction and organizational structure, and a Political Impact Matrix that will help us make operational decisions about more immediate political goals and opportunities. These tools will be used to guide conversation between the staff, the board, the chapters, members, and allies when we need to make major decisions about organizational shifts, responding to major political moments, and new campaigns. Each of these tools sets out questions the organization will discuss when making decisions:

We will use a range of tools within our staff, board, chapter and membership base to evaluate whether we achieved our goals, what we're learning about the political context and structures of power, and how to improve our approach as we go forward.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY SCREEN

DOES THIS STRATEGIC DIRECTION...



1. Support our mission?
2. Enhance our unique role?
3. Fit within our capacity?
4. Build long-term political power through community leadership development?
5. Ensure the Council is visible at a national and grassroots level, with a message that is unique, accessible, enduring, and relevant?
6. Effectively raise funds in both the goal and method of work toward our long-term stability?
7. Provide tangible, accessible support to a new community on issues they care about, through both chapter and non-chapter engagement?
8. Have clear roles and goals developed by those who will be responsible for and impacted by the work?

POLITICAL IMPACT MATRIX

DOES OUR PROPOSED WORK...



1. Have a clear, winnable goal with defined timelines that are in line with the Council's mission, vision, and unique role?
2. Include an organizing strategy and goal that builds long-term organizing capacity for the organization and those participating?
3. Effectively incorporate financial giving into the power-building work of the campaign?
4. Have explicit on-ramps and broad appeal for chapters, new audiences, and the broader membership?
5. Fit within our capacity and do we have the existing resources necessary to complete it?
6. Deepen our practice of listening to and supporting directly impacted groups?

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

POLITICAL IMPACT:



1. Keeping Canada accountable to its climate goals and shrinking fossil fuel industry influence on our governments to defend our communities and shared planet amidst the climate crisis.
2. Challenging healthcare privatization and Big Pharma's grip on Ottawa to protect and expand access to good public health care for all.
3. Confronting the privatization of water sources and infrastructure to defend the human right to water across Canada.
4. Ensuring communities most affected by the multiple converging crises are organized and empowered to take political action so they can influence politics that affect them at all levels.
5. Investing in relationships with Indigenous movements and communities to continue our shared journey towards decolonization and reconciliation.

Our Board and Staff, in consultation with our members and chapters, will conduct an annual review of these priorities beginning in the fall of 2023.

IN 2023 WE WILL...



ADMIN AND FINANCE

Continue to align our financial operations with our values and ethics.

Improve our financial reporting to communicate with our donors in a meaningful way.

Invest in the skillset of our staff.

Manage our finances to provide stability and future growth.

CAMPAIGNS

Operationalize an improved campaign planning process that engages staff, board, chapters, members, allies.

Listen to and incorporate the experiences of people who are most impacted by the issues we focus on into our campaigns.

Focus on tactics that spotlight people's experiences of injustice and build power around them.

Regularly reflect on and evaluate our work to understand and grow our impact.

DEVELOPMENT

Incorporate fundraising in digital campaigns and actions.

Increase sustainable, long-term funding by building a broad base of recurring donors.

Deepen relationships with long-time, committed Council supporters.

Diversify revenue generation streams and strategies to meet operational needs while building long-term financial sustainability.

ORGANIZING

Expand training to make the Council an action-oriented learning hub for our movements.

Invest organizing capacity in engaging more people in our national and regional campaigns and building our members' and supporters' leadership within their communities.

Expand our use of technology in our organizing to have a bigger political impact.

COMMUNICATIONS

Strengthen the relevance and impact of the Council's identity with our supporters.

Build compelling and persuasive public-facing communications and materials to support our political demands and on the ground organizing.

Improved earned media profile through hard-hitting, campaign-relevant research and analysis.

Emphasize compelling storytelling of our activism and work to reach new supporters.

Build on and strengthen existing tools, systems, processes, and content.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS PLAN

Make a multi-year gift to the Council of Canadians, become a member, or sign-up for organizing training to join or deepen your engagement in this growing movement.

Questions? Comments? Let us know.

The Council of Canadians

200-240 Bank Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1X4,

Tel.: 613-233-2773, 1-800-387-7177

inquiries@canadians.org

