


# 2026 AND BEYOND – A PATHWAY FORWARD

The Air Cadet League of Canada





*“The goal may be defined as the creation of a nation-wide body of our finest youth, educated in the mysteries of flight, with clear minds and strong bodies, eager and trained in cooperative effort yet possessing the qualities of leadership; courageous, devoted to their country, and of such a calibre that their success in any walk of life, whether military or civil, will be assured and Canada will be infinitely better for their existence.”*

**-Extract From the Air Cadets of Canada Administration  
Basic Training Manual 1941**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Air Cadet League is at a pivotal place in time and is endeavouring to reassess its strategies, and operational models to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. As we move forward, we will take the opportunity to self-reflect and develop an evolution process that is inclusive and thorough so that we may align with our mission and vision statements. The pages that follow identify the key areas to be assessed. Some of these areas include evaluation of our program and activities, focus on diversity and inclusion, seek league industry partnerships, adapt a program model of delivery, development of communication strategies, training and development for our leaders, and implementation of feedback mechanisms.

By systematically addressing these key areas, The Air Cadet League of Canada can create a comprehensive strategy that aligns with its mission and vision, ensuring it remains relevant, engaging, impactful, and supportive of the youth it serves. Consistent evaluation and adaptation will be crucial as we evolve and respond to the changing needs within the community and society at large. Engaging all stakeholders in this process will foster a collaborative environment that enhances ownership and commitment to the organization's goals.

By taking a thorough and inclusive approach through self-reflection and planning, The Air Cadet League of Canada can position itself for a sustainable and impactful future. The Air Cadet League of Canada (ACL) stands at an exciting crossroads. This document is intended to guide BOG decision-making and serve as the foundation for program-based organizational transformation.

## 1.1 Objectives

Setting clear and measurable objectives is essential for the Air Cadet League as it embarks on this evolution process. The Framework will clearly identify the key objectives.

- 1. Modernize ACL's structure to focus on program-based delivery.*
- 2. Design, develop and deliver innovative programs that align with the ACL's mission in aviation, leadership, citizenship, and service.*
- 3. Build capacity through comprehensive volunteer training and development initiatives.*
- 4. Strengthen partnerships with communities, aviation, industry stakeholders, and educational institutions to broaden ACLs reach.*
- 5. Implement evaluation frameworks to ensure continuous improvement.*
- 6. Develop strong communication strategies.*
- 7. Secure diversified funding sources to sustain and grow programs.*
- 8. Advocate nationally and locally for youth development and aviation programming.*
- 9. Establish robust governance structures to manage, deliver and grow programs.*

## 1.2 Linking Present and Future State

Linking The Air Cadet League of Canada's present status to its future aspirations requires a clear strategy that integrates current assessments with planned initiatives. This approach ensures that the ACL understands where we stand today and allows us to develop a roadmap identifying our long-term goals. Several steps will be needed to effectively connect our present state to the future. Our future state will feature:

- 1. A program-based operational structure.*
- 2. Stronger youth voice and engagement.*
- 3. Expanded programming accessible to all youth aged 12-25.*
- 4. Greater national consistency supported by provincial/territorial collaboration.*
- 5. Integrated communication, and evaluation frameworks.*

The shift will be gradual, deliberate, and inclusive, ensuring the preservation of our legacy while embracing innovation.

## 1.3 Audience

When considering the audience for The Air Cadet League of Canada's evolution process and communication strategies, it's important to identify and segment the various groups that play a role in or are impacted by the organization. Members of our audience include our membership at all levels, parents/guardians, alumni, community members, local businesses and sponsors, government and regulatory bodies, industry partners current and new/potential and CAF.

Identifying and effectively communicating with these diverse audiences is essential for the success of the ACL's evolution process. By understanding their unique needs and interests, the organization can foster stronger relationships, enhance participation, and ensure its strategies resonate within the broader community.

## 1.4 Principles/Core Values

Our principles and core values remain the same.

### ***Core Values***

*Integrity – Volunteerism – Support – Dedication – Respect*

### ***Guiding Principles***

1. **Youth-Centric Focus:** Every decision prioritizes the needs and aspirations of youth.
2. **Innovation and Adaptability:** Embrace change and creative thinking in programming and operations.
3. **Inclusivity:** Create welcoming environments that respect diversity and accessibility for all youth.
4. **Excellence:** Commit to delivering high-quality, meaningful experiences, volunteer support, and organizational practices.
5. **Collaboration:** Work closely with partners, communities, and stakeholders.
6. **Accountability and Transparency:** Maintain the highest standards of integrity and reporting.
7. **Volunteerism:** Value and invest in the vital role volunteers play in program success.
8. **Resilience:** Adapt to challenges and changing environments with strength and flexibility.
9. **Respect for Heritage:** Honour the League's proud history while proactively shaping its future.

## 1.5 ACL Vision and Mission Statement

### ***Mission Statement***

To promote and encourage the nation's youth to develop and maintain an interest in aviation, leadership, and citizenship in partnership with the Canadian Forces and other organizations.

### ***Vision Statement***

An aviation focused organization preparing youth to be engaged citizens of Canada.

## 1.6 Addressing our Current State

In presenting the current status of The Air Cadet League of Canada, it will be important to be honest and transparent, acknowledging both strengths and areas needing improvement. The current status assessment will serve as a valuable reference point for stakeholders as the ACL embarks on its evolution process, facilitating informed decision-making and strategic planning to achieve its future objectives.

This assessment will engage all stakeholders to foster a sense of collective understanding and ownership over the evolution process, ensuring everyone is aligned and committed to moving forward together.

# 2. ACL'S PATHWAY TO THE FUTURE

The Air Cadet League of Canada (ACL) is committed to evolving its structure and programming to better fulfill its mission of preparing youth to be engaged citizens and to foster interests in aviation, leadership, citizenship, and the Canadian Armed Forces. The League's future direction is intended to strengthen its commitment to the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Program, building on decades of service and partnership. This evolution represents an amplification of The Air Cadet League of Canada's long-standing commitment to the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Program, not a departure from it. The League's role in supporting the Cadet Program, its partnership with the Canadian Armed Forces, and its dedication to cadets, squadrons, and volunteers across Canada remain unchanged.

To achieve these aims, the ACL will be implementing change towards a program-based operations and organizational structure. Over the coming months the ACL will focus on:

## 2.1 Program Development

- Focus on identifying and creating diverse and engaging programs that align with the mission of promoting aviation, leadership, and citizenship. Consider incorporating aviation experiential learning opportunities such as workshops, and community service projects.
  - Programs will remain National initiatives with support from the provinces and territories as required.
  - Retaining and/or expanding current programs that can reach all youth between 12-25 years of age. For example, the ACL IACE/Interprovincial exchange program.
  - Engage youth in the planning process to ensure programs are relevant and appealing.

## 2.2 Volunteer Training and Development:

- Invest in training for volunteers and leaders within the organization to equip them with the necessary skills to deliver effective programs. This could include leadership workshops, program management training, and first aid certification.



## 2.3 Community Engagement

- Foster partnerships with educational institutions, aviation organizations, and community groups to enhance program offerings and increase outreach.
- Organize community events or aviation-related activities that allow youth to showcase their skills and engage with the public.

## 2.4 Program Evaluation and Feedback

- Establish a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of our programs. Collect feedback from participants and stakeholders regularly to identify areas for improvement and adjust programs accordingly.

## 2.5 Communication Strategy and Products

- Develop a communication plan that highlights the new direction of the ACL and its commitment to youth development. Use various platforms, including social media and newsletters, to share success stories and event information.

## 2.6 Funding and Resources

- Identify potential funding sources and grants that align with the new programming focus. Create a fundraising strategy utilizing the ACLs League Industries Partner committee.
- Tracking of funding and expenses tracked separately from regular ACL monies that fund the current support for the Air Cadet program by setting up separate bank accounts and reporting for each program
- Program financial status reported out on separate financial statements from current published financials of current core ACL operations

## 2.7 Advocacy

- Advocate for the value of the new programs at local, provincial/territorial, and national levels to influence public perception and attract support.

## 2.8 Networking and Collaboration

- Collaborate with other organizations that share similar goals to enhance program offerings and resource sharing. This could also lead to increased visibility and support for the ACL's initiatives and programs.

## 2.9 Governance

- Collaborate with other organizations that share similar goals to enhance program offerings and resource sharing. This could also lead to increased visibility and support for the ACL's initiatives and programs.

# 3. GOVERNANCE MODEL

By focusing on these strategies, the ACL can effectively transition to a program-based organization while remaining committed to its foundational mission and vision of promoting youth engagement and development in Canada and its commitment to the Royal Canadian Air Cadets.



# 4. ASSUMPTIONS

Key assumptions related to The Air Cadet League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Program. Key assumptions include:

## 4.1 The Air Cadet League of Canada

- **National Leadership:** The initiative will be led at the national level, with support from provinces and territories as needed.
- **League Delivery Model:** There will be a transition to a national league delivery model to maintain/sustain current and enhance future program offerings.
- **Existing Structure Utilization:** The ACL will leverage its current organizational structure and implement required change for implementation.
- **Defined Mission and Vision:** The ACL's mission and vision statements will guide its future direction.

## 4.2 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Program

- **Government Funding:** The Royal Air Cadet Program remains funded by the Government of Canada.
- **Adherence to Agreements:** The ACL will maintain its responsibilities under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian Armed Forces.
- **Local Implementation:** Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding will not adversely affect local-level operations.

### Futures Roadmap

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

Using established performance indicators, change management protocols, and qualitative and quantitative techniques to monitor and evaluate

#### Engagement and Feedback

Conduct consultations across all levels of the ACL.  
Approval of the framework, conduct.

#### Planning and Development

Develop the Futures Framework

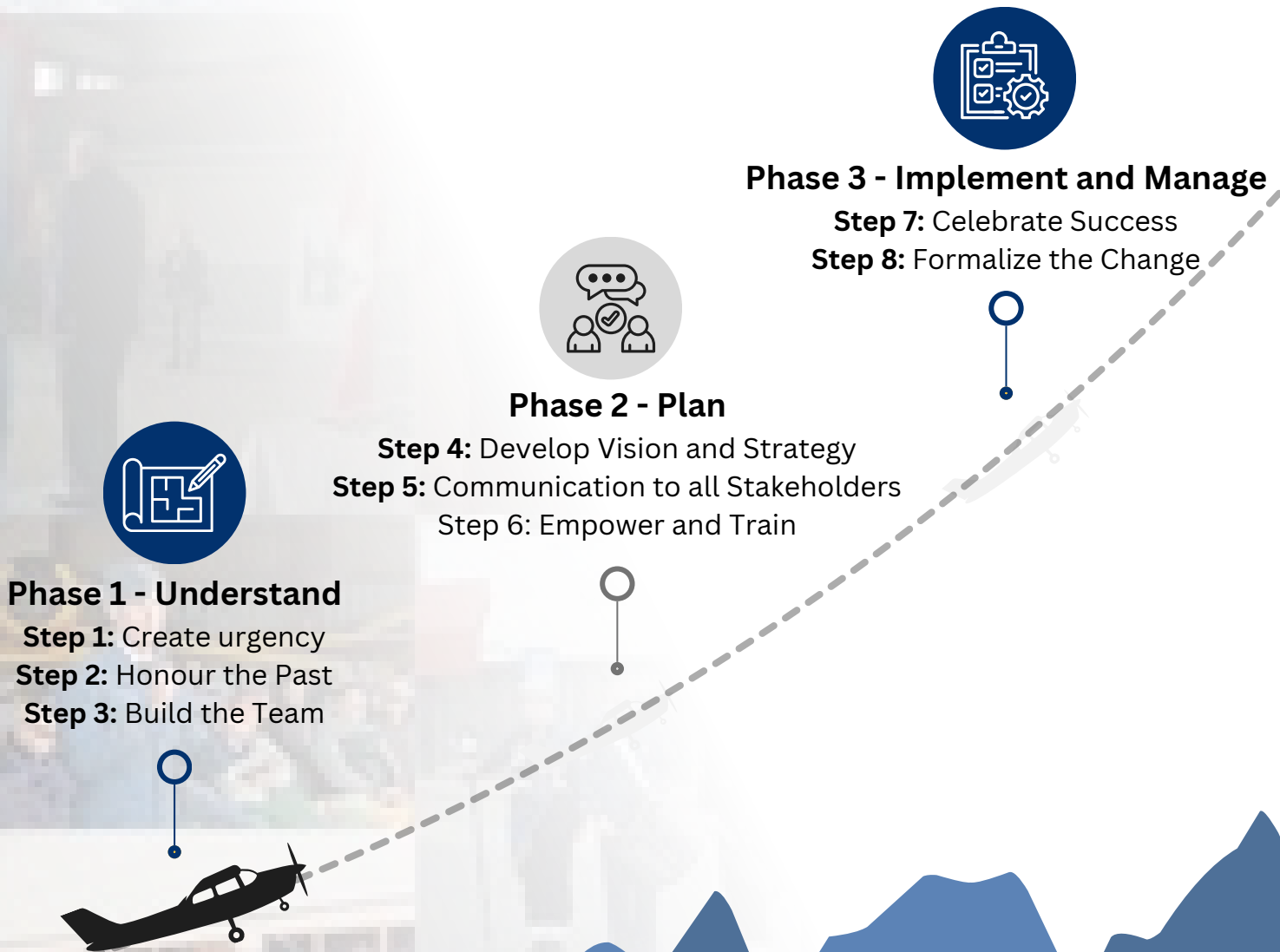
#### Implementation

Establish the required sub-committees to develop the desired programs/partnerships/training.

# 5. MANAGING CHANGE

To ensure the success of such a complex undertaking, the ACL will prioritize and sequence its activities effectively and integrate them into a coherent framework. The actions below identify the initially identified action items structured into phases for clarity:

## Engagement/Managing Change



# 6. PROCESS/ACTION (HOW)

## 6.1 PHASE 1: Understand

**Objective:** Create urgency, honour the past, build buy-in

- **Step 1: Create Urgency**

- Hold town halls and focus groups to discuss community needs unmet by a support-only model.
- Present data or stories to highlight the need for change.
- Ask: What will happen if we don't adapt?

- **Step 2: Honour the Past**

- Acknowledge the investment in the current model.
- Create a “legacy reflection” - celebrate past milestones and contributions.
- Stakeholder Communication and Feedback: Engaging stakeholders and adapt based on input. This will include both internal and external stakeholders, for example PTs and current league partners.
- Policy and Bylaw Review: Ensure alignment with organizational goals and compliance with regulatory standards.

- **Step 3: Build the Team**

- Recruit project team members, influential volunteers, and staff as change champions.
- Ensure diversity of voices: age, tenure, and role variety.
- Communications Plan: Develop a strategy to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
- Engage Stakeholders through League Industry Partnerships: Collaborate with industry experts and gather input early in the process.

## 6.2 PHASE 2: Plan

**Objective:** Roll out new programs, empower people, keep momentum

- **Step 4: Develop Vision and Strategy**

- Define what being “program-based” means clearly: program types, goals, beneficiaries.
- Create new mission/vision statements that reflect this shift.
- Environmental Scan: Identify programs and initiatives that align with the ACL's mission and vision.

- **Organizational Review:** Analyze current structure, roles, and processes for efficiency and alignment with goals
- **Assess Current Support Services:** Review existing support mechanisms to determine what is effective or requires improvement
- **Risk Assessment:** Identify potential risks associated with the change and develop mitigation strategies
- **Obtain Legal Opinions:** Ensure legal compliance for any proposed changes or new initiatives.
- **Conduct Insurance Review:** Verify coverage adequacy and identify any gaps due to changes.
- **Establish Funding Model:** Develop a sustainable financial strategy to support the change process.
- **Develop Business Model:** Define how the ACL will create and deliver value post-change.
- **Communications Model:** Build an approach to promote the new initiatives or structure effectively.
- **Communications Products:** Package and market the value proposition (benefits and value added) (e.g. Turning values into virtues). To convince stakeholders, donors, or customers that a company or its products or services are worthwhile. (Three parts – valuable, differentiated, and substantiated. Each component helps the target audience understand how a product or service not only meet end user needs but also enhance the perceived value.)

#### **Step 5: Communicate Consistently**

- **Share updates in multiple formats:** emails, short videos, in-person briefings.
- **Reassure volunteers of their continuing value.**
- **Emphasize “this is a new beginning, not a rejection of the past.”**
- **Knowledge and Skills Assessment:** Evaluate the competencies of team members to identify gaps and training needs.

#### **Step 6: Empower and Train**

- **Provide training for volunteers/staff to shift into new roles or skills.**
- **Offer small leadership opportunities in new programs.**
- **Pilot one or two small programs and adjust based on feedback.**
- **Organizational Review:** Analyze current structure, roles, and processes for efficiency and alignment with goals.
- **Knowledge and Skills Assessment:** Evaluate the competencies of team members to identify gaps and training needs.
- **Assess Current Support Services:** Review existing support mechanisms to determine what is effective or requires improvement.
- **Risk Assessment:** Identify potential risks associated with the change and develop mitigation strategies.

## 6.3 PHASE 3: Implement and Manage

**Objective:** Reinforce new culture and programs

- **Step 7: Celebrate Early Wins**
  - Stakeholder Communication and Feedback (preparing for change): Continue engaging stakeholders and adapt based on input.
- **Step 8: Institutionalize the Change**
  - Update bylaws, policies, job descriptions, volunteer handbooks.
  - Embed program-based values in onboarding and orientation.
  - Conduct regular reviews to assess program effectiveness and morale.

The above phases break our process into manageable phases and allow for systematic tracking, accountability, and alignment with our mission and vision.



# 7. PROGRAMS

## 7.1 Program Design and Development

To effectively evaluate program areas for further investigation, a structured framework will assist the ACL. The below is an outline of the process to be used:

### 7.1.1 Program Scope

- **Objective:** Will clearly articulate the purpose, goals, and boundaries of the program.
- **Deliverables:** Identify the expected outcomes or results of the program.
- **Stakeholders:** Determine who will benefit from or be involved in the program.

### 7.1.2 Conduct a Feasibility Study

- **Market Need:** Assess the demand or area the program aims to address.
- **Alignment:** Ensure the program aligns with the ACL's mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- **Risks:** Identify potential risks and challenges, along with mitigation strategies.

### 7.1.3 Consider Delivery Methods

- **Options:** Explore various delivery models (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid, partnerships).
- **Effectiveness:** Evaluate which methods best suit the program's goals and audience.
- **Scalability:** Ensure the delivery method can adapt to future growth or changes.

### 7.1.4 Estimate Costs

- A program funding model template will be used to estimate both income and expenses to deliver each program and will review the items listed below:
- **Startup Costs:** Include infrastructure (if applicable, e.g., could be a rental) materials, and initial staffing needs and/or any item that must be sourced.
- **Operational Costs:** Factor in ongoing expenses like maintenance, salaries, and supplies.
- **Contingency:** Account for unforeseen expenses.
- **Determine Personnel Requirements**
- **Roles and Skills:** Identify the expertise and number of personnel needed.
- **Training Needs:** Assess any required training or skill development.
- **Recruitment:** Plan for hiring or reallocating existing staff and/or contracting out.
- **Explore Funding Opportunities**
- **Grants:** Research grants applicable to the program area.
- **Donations:** Engage potential donors or sponsors.
- **Internal Funding:** Allocate existing organizational funds or propose a budget increase.

### **7.1.5 External Sponsorship**

- Identifying organizations as potential sponsors of ACL individual programs

### **7.1.6 Identify Partnerships**

- Potential Partners: Identify utilizing League Industry Partners committee to discover and implement potential partners.

### **7.1.7 Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Key Performance Indicators
- Outcome Indicators
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Monitoring and Evaluation Tools
- Annual Report of Outcomes/Results

## **7.2 Program Implementation**

Program implementations translate approved program designs into operational delivery in a controlled, consistent, and accountable manner. Implementation will follow a structured approach to ensure readiness, manage risk, and support continuous learning.

### **7.2.1 Implementation Planning**

Prior to launch, each program will complete an implementation plan that includes:

- Roles and responsibilities for program delivery
- Timeline and key milestones
- Resource allocation and budget confirmation
- Required training and orientation for staff and volunteers
- Communications and participant engagement approach

### **7.2.2 Pilot and Phased Rollout (Where Applicable)**

New or significantly revised programs may be introduced through a pilot or phased approach to:

- Test program design and delivery methods
- Validate assumptions and resource requirements
- Gather early feedback and performance data

### **7.2.3 Risk Management and Compliance**

Implementation will include proactive identification and mitigation of operational, financial, reputational, and safety risks. Programs will comply with:

- ACL policies and governance requirements
- Insurance and legal considerations
- Establish risk assessment and approval processes

## 7.2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Clear and consistent communication will support successful implementation by:

- Informing stakeholders of program goals, roles, and expectations
- Engaging partners, sponsors, and participants appropriately
- Sharing progress updates and early successes

## 7.2.5 Operational Oversight

During delivery, programs will be monitored to ensure:

- Activities are delivered as planned
- Resources are used responsibly
- Issues are identified and addressed promptly
- Adjustments are made where necessary to improve effectiveness

## 7.2.6 Transition to Ongoing Delivery

Following implementation (and pilot evaluation where applicable), programs may be refined and prepared for sustained delivery, scaling, or integration into the League's ongoing program portfolio, subject to governance approval.

# 7.3 Program Evaluation and Improvement

Evaluation is an integral component of program implementation, ensuring that outcomes are measured, lessons are captured, and programs evolve to remain effective and relevant.

**Each program will incorporate an evaluation approach that includes:**

- Performance Measurement: Establishing clear indicators aligned with program objectives (e.g., participation rates, stakeholder satisfaction, outcomes achieved)
- Data Collection and Analysis: Gathering quantitative and qualitative data throughout implementation to assess effectiveness and identify trends
- Feedback Mechanisms: Soliciting input from cadets, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders to inform program improvements
- Post-Implementation Review: Conducting formal reviews following pilots or major delivery cycles to evaluate success, challenges, and lessons learned
- Reporting and Accountability: Documenting findings and reporting to appropriate governance bodies to support transparency and decision-making

**Findings from evaluation activities will be used to:**

- Refine program design, delivery methods, and resource allocation
- Inform decisions on program continuation, scaling, or discontinuation
- Strengthen consistency and quality across the League's program portfolio
- Support a culture of continuous learning and evidence-based improvement

Evaluation will be ongoing, ensuring programs remain responsive to the needs of cadets, communities, and stakeholders while aligning with the League's strategic priorities.



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