



# OPPI STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

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Three-year strategic plan for 2022, 2023, and 2024

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**INSPIRE OPPI**  
Professional Planners in the Public Interest

# Message from OPPI President, Paul Lowes

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On behalf of the OPPI Council, I am pleased to share this update to our strategic plan, which we're calling **INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025**. This work comes at an extraordinary time. The research phase took place during the third wave of the **COVID-19** pandemic, and the plan was finalized as the province began to cautiously open up in summer 2021. However, it is anticipated that the pandemic and related conditions will continue to evolve through the implementation of this plan.

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During our last strategic planning process in 2016, we comprehensively reviewed our strategic statements, refreshed our vision, mission, and core values, and updated our strategic directions and goals. Then in spring 2020, with the advent of COVID-19, we put together a resiliency plan and laid out a roadmap to help us take a future-oriented approach to weathering the pandemic.

Now in fall 2021, this work was envisioned as an updated strategic plan, rather than a wholesale renewal. The intention was to look ahead to what professional planning will/might/should look like in 2025, and how OPPI can advance the profession while creating a robust, responsive, and actionable strategic and tactical plan to guide the OPPI Council and staff.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's strategic planning process. We conducted sessions with the OPPI Council, Executive Committee and full staff team to discuss the process and

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gather perspectives on both the context for OPPI and its membership, as well as OPPI's performance in terms of the previous strategic plan. We conducted sessions with OPPI internal groups, including District Leadership Teams, the Planning Issues Strategy Group, the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force, the Indigenous Planning Advisory Committee, and the Student Liaison Committee. We also conducted an online survey and interviews with members, as well as related organizations like the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025 is not the end of the process, it's the beginning. OPPI will continue to engage members and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis as we put this plan into action. Thank you for your participation and commitment to the planning profession in Ontario.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Lowes', written over a horizontal line.

**Paul Lowes, MES, MCIP, RPP**

President, Ontario Professional Planners Institute



**Ontario  
Professional  
Planners  
Institute**

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is the recognized voice of Ontario's planning profession with over 4,600 members working in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. Our student members attend undergraduate and graduate planning programs at six accredited Ontario universities. Members must meet quality practice requirements and are accountable to OPPI and the public to practice ethically and to abide by a Professional Code of Practice. Only full OPPI members are authorized by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, to use the title Registered Professional Planner (or RPP).



# Overview

Strategic planning for the INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025 was undertaken in three phases.

## PHASE 1 DEVELOPING A FACT BASE

- Review of internal and external materials.
- An online member survey.
- Telephone research interviews with members and key informants.
- Discussions with the Executive Director, full staff team, OPPI Council, Executive Committee, as well as other key internal groups, including District Leadership Teams, the Planning Issues Strategy Group, the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force, the Indigenous Planning Advisory Committee, and the Student Liaison Committee.

## PHASE 2 STRATEGY-SETTING

- Findings from phase 1 were summarized along with answers to key strategic questions.
- Strategy sessions with the OPPI Council and staff team were held to consider findings and validate or amend strategic directions
- Vision, mission, and values were reviewed, resulting in some updates within this plan
- Existing strategic directions were revised and augmented

## PHASE 3 TACTICAL PLANNING AND REFINEMENT

- Ideas regarding the vision, mission, values, and strategic directions were refined by the OPPI Council and staff team
- The full strategic plan was developed, including tactics, metrics, and implementation considerations
- The final strategic plan was reviewed and approved by the OPPI Council (August 2021)

# Wider Landscape

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Research conducted during the strategic planning process painted a picture of an increasingly challenging context for planners. While planners are called upon to address broad societal issues such as climate change and housing affordability, they are also challenged by regulatory changes, political pressures, succession planning, local development issues, workload pressures, and more.

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## **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR:**

Planners work across Ontario in a wide range of contexts, domains, and situations. While those in the municipal sector are often expected to deal with an extraordinarily wide – and increasingly complex – range of issues as they arise for their community, those in private practice are more likely to be able to specialize in a particular area.

## **EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:**

Equity and social justice go right to the heart of the work of planning and what it means to be a planner. Some planners link these issues together, seeing planners as being in the position to be a constructive force in tackling these important issues - and having (or sometimes needing) the capabilities to do so.

## **PANDEMIC EFFECTS:**

Planners have concerns about succession planning, workload, and managing the volume that accompanies growth, as well as the pandemic itself. In particular, it is clear that the pandemic has a significant impact on this cohort of students, graduates, and early-career planners, who are experiencing challenges in finding internships, jobs, mentors, and sponsors. Even if they are working, they are likely working remotely, without informal interactions with colleagues to support learning and professional development.

# Objects, Vision, Mission, and Values

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## OBJECTS:

The objects of the Institute are, as identified in the Act which applies to OPPI, Bill PR-129, 1994:

To **promote, maintain and regulate** high standards of professional planning practice and ethical behaviour

To **further the recognition** of the planning profession in Ontario

To promote the **value, use and methods** of planning

To **improve the quality** of Ontario environments and communities by the application of planning principles

To **encourage participation and co-operation** among those persons, associations and groups concerned with improving the quality of Ontario environments and communities

To **stimulate the generation, development, dissemination, and discussion** of ideas on planning

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## VISION:

With foresight, leadership and professionalism, Registered Professional Planners create and manage change in the built, natural, and social environments for the common good.

NOTE: Through the strategic planning process, the vision remained unchanged.

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## MISSION:

The mission of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute is to leverage knowledge, resources, and relationships to facilitate excellence in planning by professional planners.

NOTE: Through the strategic planning process, the mission was edited slightly. The word “member” was taken out of the phrase “leverage member knowledge” to remove the narrow connotation that was possible, but not intended. It was noted that the mission does define the “who” (professional planners) so there is still specificity.

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## VALUES:



**Professional** — Protecting the integrity of the practice of planning and its obligation to serve the common good



**Accountable** — Meeting our commitments with openness and transparency



**Future-driven** — Looking forward and being agile and innovative in response to opportunities and challenges



**Collaborative** — Sharing our knowledge and working with others to achieve excellence



**Equitable** — Embodying diversity of all kinds within the profession and the communities we serve

NOTE: Through the strategic planning process, there was an interest in identifying a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the values. There was already “Progressive” as one of the values which was seen as being related to this idea, but not being as clear or going as far as desired (and potentially seen as reflected in the “Future-driven” value). So “Progressive” was replaced with “Equitable.” This word is used in the sense of real equal opportunity, including removing barriers – as opposed to using the word “Equality.” In the description of the value, “embodying” was chosen to indicate that this value would be actively incorporated into OPPI and what the organization does, while “diversity of all kinds” would include diversity not just in terms of demographic characteristics, but also of viewpoint.

# OPPI's Strong Foundation

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## **PEOPLE AND LEADERSHIP:**

OPPI will continue to strive to be a great place to volunteer and work so that we attract and retain high quality people. We will continue to support strong active Districts. Good governance is critical to the success of any organization. The OPPI Council and its committees will strive to govern in a manner that reflects excellence.

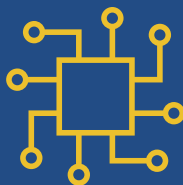
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## **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES:**

We will continue to monitor, evaluate and improve our operations, making the most of our resources, and acting efficiently and effectively across the organization. The OPPI Council will continue to oversee the responsible management and stewardship of the organization's finances.

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## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:**

OPPI will seek to utilize information effectively for organizational and project management purposes and strive for efficient and effective processes using the most effective technology.

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## **INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:**

OPPI will seek to be an active participant and leader in collaborative relationships that contribute to the advancement of the profession, significantly advancing our goals and maximizing our potential. We will collaborate with the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) and other Provincial or Territorial Institutes or Associations (PTIAs) for solutions to provincial and national issues. We will seek to engage related stakeholder and inter-disciplinary organizations and the provincial government to address planning system challenges where our work can contribute.

# Strategic Directions

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- 1. Promote** professionalism in planning practice, in the public interest
- 2. Build** RPP as a trusted professional designation to planners, decision-makers, and the public
- 3. Position** OPPI as the voice of the planning profession
- 4. Facilitate** the exchange of knowledge and expertise for the betterment of planning in Ontario
- 5. Enhance** member experience to foster community

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Each strategic direction is outlined further on the following pages, along with the tactics that support it. For each strategic direction, there is one “audaciously ambitious goal” which is a highly ambitious, inspirational marker of what enormous success might look like. There are also metrics, both qualitative and quantitative, that will be used to assess OPPI’s progress.

NOTE: Through the strategic planning process, the strategic directions were edited slightly. In #1 and #2, emphasis was added on “the public.” A new strategic direction, #3, was added to position OPPI as the voice of the planning profession. And #5 was reworded to focus on the member and community “experience” as opposed to the previous version which was “member ownership.”

# Strategic Directions with Tactics and Metrics

## 1

### Promote professionalism in planning practice, in the public interest

This strategy focuses directly on the regulatory role that OPPI plays. This is both in terms of upholding current professional standards, as well as maintaining the register of members. OPPI will continue to work on legislation for greater oversight of the profession and will work closely with provincial and national planning organizations to ensure competencies, standards, and membership best practices are upheld and continue to evolve in the public interest.

#### **AUDACIOUSLY AMBITIOUS GOAL:**

Legislation is enacted for greater oversight of the profession. Barriers to participation in the planning profession are substantially reduced.

#### **TACTICS:**

1. Continue to diligently perform the functions of the registrar to safeguard the public interest, including continuing member education on ethics and professionalism, and overseeing the complaints and discipline process.
2. Communicate with the public regarding planning professional standards and the role of planners.
3. Advance the profession by continuing to influence curriculum, competencies, membership standards, and certification processes to advance the profession, including addressing systemic barriers to participation.
4. Sustain efforts to get legislation enacted for greater oversight of the profession.

#### **METRICS:**

1. Effective, respectful, and timely response to members and the public in OPPI's role as regulator.
2. Meaningful progress toward reducing systemic barriers to participation in the planning profession.
3. Membership categories, standards of practice and Code of Conduct that embody an equitable lens and best practices for a regulated profession.
4. Evidence of usage (e.g., website visits, downloads, references from external sources, requests) of public-facing resources.

# Strategic Directions with Tactics and Metrics

## 2

### Build RPP as a trusted professional designation to planners, decision-makers, and the public

Given the evolving role of planners, as well as overlaps with other professions, it is important to bolster the RPP for greater recognition, status, authority, and trust. With this strategy, OPPI will elevate and promote the RPP designation across a broad spectrum, including those who might pursue it, and those who work with, employ, or engage with RPPs in various ways, including the public.

#### AUDACIOUSLY AMBITIOUS GOAL:

RPP is broadly recognized as a professional designation, similar to a P. Eng.

#### TACTICS:

1. Promote pursuit of the RPP designation among working planners and current post-secondary students, incorporating the recommendations from the ABRIP TF and IPAC regarding barriers to participation.
2. Advocate for recognition of, and greater authority for, RPPs.
3. Build relationships with employers to broaden support for RPPs, OPPI membership, and professional development.
4. Promote the distinctive value of the work of RPPs in the planning process to the public.

#### METRICS:

1. Increased penetration of RPP designation among planners (baseline data to be gathered).
2. Increase in RPP requirements in job postings (metric to be set based on baseline; data being gathered now).
3. Achievement of advocacy goals for increased RPP authority and recognition.
4. Increase in awareness of the value of RPPs within the local community.
5. Demographics of RPPs begin to shift to a more diverse community of planners.

# Strategic Directions with Tactics and Metrics

## 3

### Position OPPI as the voice of the planning profession

OPPI will strive to be recognized as the go-to source for perspectives on, and from, the planning profession by all key stakeholders and the media at the municipal, provincial, and federal level. OPPI will be part of the important discussions that affect the future of Ontario communities, where we live, work and play. It will articulate the role and value of the planning profession to the public, both directly and by supporting the work of members in public engagement.

#### AUDACIOUSLY AMBITIOUS GOAL:

OPPI is invited to all strategic and relevant conversations as the voice of planning, and legislative and policy decisions/changes are a result of OPPI's influence.

#### TACTICS:

1. Build relationships/capacity for influence with municipal, provincial, and federal government, to ensure OPPI is consistently present in important policy and legislation conversations.
2. Ensure OPPI is seen as a key participant in meaningful topical conversations related to the future of communities (e.g., DEI, Indigenous reconciliation, climate change, sustainability, housing accessibility, local development issues, etc.).
3. Explain the role of planners and the planning process, and OPPI as a regulator, to the public through OPPI communications channels, broad engagement with media and other organizations, and planners themselves.
4. Ensure the broader planning community recognizes OPPI as a trusted and reliable source of valued, high-quality content distributed via knowledge communities.

#### METRICS:

1. OPPI is invited to strategic and relevant conversations as the voice of planning, as a matter of course.
2. Planners recognize that OPPI is their voice, and seek out OPPI as an authority (e.g., use resources provided; provide engagement and input on key issues).
3. Media seeks content from OPPI on a regular basis as the known source for quality planning content related to the legislative and policy changes and the future of Ontario's communities.
4. Evidence of usage (e.g., website visits, downloads, references from external sources, requests) of public-facing resources.

# Strategic Directions with Tactics and Metrics

## 4

### Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise for the betterment of planning in Ontario

With this strategy, OPPI will support the lifelong learning of planners, enabling their access to content from the best experts available locally, provincially, and globally. Along with technical planning content, OPPI will become the source for broad-based skills and leadership training to meet planners' current and future needs. The profession overall will be advanced through a renewed focus on research, as well as viewing offerings through a lens that accounts for diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous perspectives.

#### **AUDACIOUSLY AMBITIOUS GOAL:**

OPPI members credit their professional success to OPPI.

#### **TACTICS:**

1. Deliver a full suite of continuous professional learning content mapped against core competencies of the planning profession as well as current and future member needs.
2. Assess and adapt educational activity delivery methods, seeking to match platform to purpose, encourage engagement, and ensure accessibility.
3. Sustain and grow Planners Connect for knowledge exchange among members.
4. Explore potential for activities, including collaborations, to create, adapt, share, and promote planning research.
5. Develop and implement a framework for all educational offerings, to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous planning topics and lenses are incorporated.

#### **METRICS:**

6. A full suite of content is available, addressing a wide range of member segments and needs, and deployed on platforms that enable accessibility and participation.
7. Educational programs meet the goals that are set for levels of participation and satisfaction.
8. Development and implementation of a research agenda which may include sourcing, funding, compiling, and editorializing research as a key component of OPPI's Learning Strategy.
9. Framework for diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous planning topics and lenses for OPPI's educational offerings is continuously implemented.

# Strategic Directions with Tactics and Metrics

## 5

### Foster member experience to enhance communities

This strategy focuses on nurturing the vitality and power of the OPPI community provincially and locally, enabling members to support and connect with each other as colleagues whether they have shared affinities, or their practice areas are divergent. It is important because members are the foundational strength of OPPI, and it is through community that the organization remains connected to the work of planning.

#### AUDACIOUSLY AMBITIOUS GOAL:

Planners across Ontario in all specialties have deep and broad connections with each other through OPPI, which they support with their time, expertise, and funds throughout their career.

#### TACTICS:

1. Support the Districts as a venue for planners to come together to build relationships, engage with the local community, and create linkage between province-wide OPPI activities and planners on a geographic basis.
2. Develop Planners Connect as the home base for collegial networks based on interest or affinity (e.g., types of practice, areas of interest, career stage, etc.).
3. Support planners along their professional journey, with a special focus on those in early-career stages.
4. Address recommendations (e.g., from IPAC, ABRIP TF) to encourage an inclusive OPPI community, including ways to engage non-RPP planners within Indigenous and other communities.
5. Build volunteer development and support – leadership programs, and with specialized skills/knowledge.

#### METRICS:

1. OPPI total membership increases by 2% per year throughout this strategic plan.
2. Districts are strong local communities, with engaged volunteers, high participation in programs, and ongoing innovation.
3. There are thriving province-wide knowledge communities enabling planners to connect with like-minded colleagues using a variety of methods (e.g., Planners Connect, in-person networking, annual conference).
4. Early-career planners identify support from OPPI as helpful in moving into their next career stage.
5. Meaningful progress is made toward increasing the inclusiveness of the OPPI community.
6. Volunteer positions are filled, with succession planning in place.



# Implementation and Considerations

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Operational plans will support this strategic plan with greater detail on how OPPI will achieve its goals and fulfill our refreshed vision and mission. In this dynamic environment, the OPPI Council will review this strategic plan annually and update it as necessary.

This plan was developed while the COVID-19 pandemic had been underway in Canada for over a year. There are a number of elements of the external context which should be monitored for changes as the plan is implemented to determine whether strategic directions, tactics, or metrics should be adjusted.

Significant uncertainty remains about the path of the pandemic and its ongoing and durable impacts on society in general, operations of OPPI itself, and planners both professionally and personally.

We are also seeing the increasing impacts of climate change, such as fires, floods, and extreme weather, and these will also have enormous and uncertain implications for planners and for OPPI. Therefore, the plan should very much be treated as a living document, subject to amendment and adjustment, particularly at the tactical level.

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## KEY POINTS TO MONITOR OVER THE COURSE OF THE PLAN:

- A federal election took place in September 2021, and provincial and municipal elections are scheduled for 2022, which may result in changes that have an impact on the planning profession overall as well as OPPI.
- If legislation for oversight of the profession is passed, its impact on the strategic plan should be assessed.
- The economy is expected to continue to grow coming out of the pandemic, and governments continue to spend on various programs and initiatives. Should these conditions change, this could have an impact on OPPI's business model.
- The broader public discussions related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation have been evolving significantly over the past several years and may continue to do so. This may have an impact on both the work of planning as well as OPPI itself.
- There are significant changes for OPPI embedded in this strategic plan. This plan sees OPPI taking a more public-facing and assertive posture with the strategic direction to be the voice of the profession. This plan also signals OPPI's commitment to addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation. This necessarily means organizational learning. Therefore, the plan may need to be adapted as OPPI, as an organization, and the people involved (volunteers and staff) learn and develop new perspectives.
- Some of the work is ongoing, while other work is more project-based.
- Annual operating plans and budgets aligned with the strategic plan will be approved by the OPPI Council annually to ensure we are working towards the tactics and metrics established for each of 2022, 2023, and 2024.
- Tactics related to addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation are being undertaken within each strategic direction, starting in the first year and continuing from there. These include implementation of the recommendations of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force as well as the Indigenous Planning Advisory Committee.



# Conclusion

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This strategic plan is the result of a disciplined and consultative strategic planning process. It reflects the OPPI Council's confidence about the future of planning in Ontario and the important role our members will play.

OPPI is passionate about working with all stakeholders to ensure Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) are empowered to take their essential place in multi-sectored planning systems – so that Ontario develops in ways that serve its citizens' well-being, protect vital resources, and sustain healthy sustainable communities and environments.

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As we look to the future, this strategic plan builds upon OPPI's strong foundation arising from the mandate set out in the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act and our role as a professional association. Going forward, we will align activities to support this strategy ensuring that we make the best use of our resources to perform at a consistently high level.



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