

Tri-Community Adult Learning Association

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2024

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Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

There are so many words to describe the last year, but none will totally convey what we have experienced in the offices of TriCALA, at the Board table, and in our personal lives. We started the year with excitement and didn't dwell on the negative challenges of the pandemic but remained excited and resilient at the year's conclusion.

As a Board we have used the opportunities presented to us this past year to enhance our governing documents and move forward with stronger policies, procedures, and Bylaws. This comprehensive review has strengthened Board relationships and enhanced TriCALA's approaches to its work. With a fresh perspective on its Vision, a greater understanding of what we do well, and a renewed commitment to the strengths of the organization, we are excited to present a strong and vibrant Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 to guide that focus.

Donna Smith

Donna Smith
Board Chair

Brenda Adams

Brenda Adams
Executive Director

OUR VISION

A vibrant learning community where all learners in the Tri-area are participating fully and are actively engaged in lifelong learning.

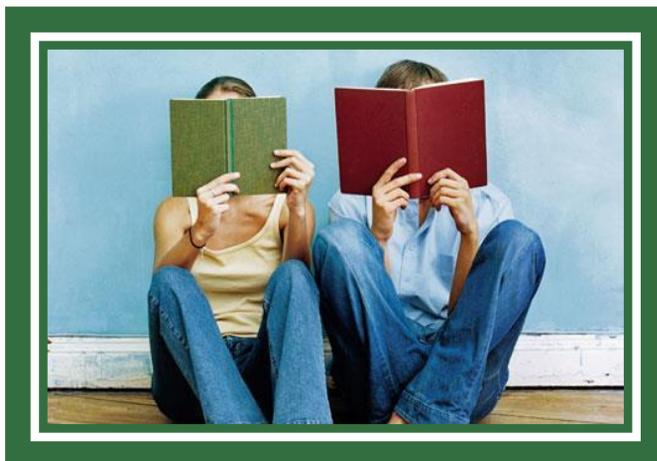


OUR VISION

In developing the Strategic Plan, we heard that a vibrant learning community:

- Commits to inclusive, diverse, and open learning
- Helps people gain skills and employment
- Creates a foundation for lifelong learning
- Champions literacy development
- Reduces barriers for learners
- Increases literacy and numeracy levels
- Embraces multiple learning formats and learning styles

TriCALA is excited to work towards this vision and strengthening our vibrant learning community.



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

We are proud to have been part of the Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Parkland County communities since 1979. Our community and our learner needs have changed over time. However, we have a legacy of success that we can leverage to continue to support our development as a vibrant learning community.

Some of the things we are most proud of include:

- Offering a broad range of learning opportunities
- Increasing our presence in the rural areas
- Commitment and dedication of staff, Board, and volunteers
- Supporting community projects
- Ensuring a flexible and adaptable approach
- Helping learners and their families to grow



SERVICE DELIVERY

As a regionally-based Community Adult Learning Program, we provide service and support to learners throughout the Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County communities.

The population of the region is over 80,000 people. We know that 14% of Albertans have serious difficulty with reading or writing and 26% of Albertans have difficulty reading or writing according to 2003 IALSS - International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. Using this information, we can extrapolate that our potential client base is somewhere between 11,000 and 20,000 learners. Serving only 10% of these learners gives us a target client base of 1,100 to 2,000 learners. In 2019/2020 we served 50 learners. We know we have to shift how we do things in order to reach more learners.

The geographic area is large and can pose barriers both in planning programming and ensuring learners can access locations. Through partnerships with other community agencies, we gain more insight into the needs of both our partners and learners. We extend our reach by ensuring learners receive holistic supports which increases their likelihood of success.

In 2020, we relocated to a more central, storefront location. This new location provides increased visibility to our services and provides a space that allows more flexible programming options. The location is close to a bus stop on the Stony Plain Transit route which is scheduled to launch in Spring 2021.

We know that our learners include people from all walks of life such as job seekers, working professionals, newcomers, and retirees. Each learner has different needs from TriCALA and understanding those needs requires active listening skills and a commitment to using various learning strategies. We know that word of mouth is a key way that learners come to TriCALA.

Continuing to enhance our service delivery excellence will ensure former and current learners help us to connect with future learners. By putting measures in place throughout this strategic plan to increase our visibility, develop community understanding of the importance of literacy, and generate learner registrations, we will move closer to realizing our vision of a vibrant learning community.

AREAS OF FOCUS

We strive to balance our service delivery with competing community needs to ensure that we address literacy and foundational learning priorities.

With a small staff, our team members must adjust priorities, work collaboratively with community partners, and leverage volunteer time, including Board member support. This allows us to efficiently ensure that we provide positive impact for both our learners and our community.

Setting key areas for focus was considered an important step in the Strategic Plan development. The areas of focus identified are:

- Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs
- Partnership and Relationship Development
- Building Awareness of Learner Needs
- Sustainability and Revenue Development



Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs

Delivering a comprehensive suite of programs at the foundational learning level forms a core part of our strategic approach. We know that learners who feel supported in one area of learning, continue with learning in other areas.

We commit to:

- Delivering basic literary and numeracy programs
- Enhancing digital learning skills and access
- Providing support for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and newcomers
- Supporting navigation of learning options within the community



AREA OF FOCUS

Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs

We will:

- Deliver a minimum of 5 literacy and foundational learning programs annually
- Increase tutoring supports by 10% annually
- Support 25 sessions for ESL learners and newcomers annually
- Refer a minimum of 50 learners to other community supports annually



Partnership and Relationship Development

Strong partnerships are essential to delivering services to learners across TriCALA's service area. Partnerships support our network of supports for learners and ensure that we can effectively refer learners to opportunities and that other community agencies can refer learners to TriCALA for learning supports. Developing and strengthening relationships with community partners, businesses, community leaders, and other learning agencies allows us to create a foundation for further partnership development.

We commit to:

- Developing referral and client flows with partners
- Understanding partner needs and opportunities for collaboration
- Defining and launching an engagement strategy with the business community



Partnership and Relationship Development

We will:

- Develop, test, and refine a referral and client flows pathway with partners
- Consult with a minimum of 25 community partners to clarify their needs and the needs of their clients
- Identify and implement 3 new collaborations on an annual basis
- Define and launch an engagement strategy with the business community which will reach 40 business owners on an annual basis



Building Awareness of Learner Needs

One of the challenges TriCALA experiences is understanding what learners need and how to address those needs in the most direct, but supportive way possible. Moving ahead over the next 3 years, we will explore learner needs from a variety of angles. Understanding both the gaps which employers and community partners are seeing in learning options and the challenges which employees and clients face in the workplace, will help us to develop a cohesive understanding of learner needs and a path forward.

We commit to:

- Discussions with the business community and employers
- Analyzing learner profiles and demographics
- Sharing learner stories to reduce stigma and generate conversation



Building Awareness of Learner Needs

We will:

- Discuss and develop specific strategies for a minimum of 5 employers on an annual basis
- Analyze learner profiles and demographics and publish an annual community update report
- Develop a minimum of 3 learner stories on an annual basis
- Share learner profile and learner stories in a minimum of 10 presentations on an annual basis



Sustainability and Revenue Development

Organizational sustainability is critical to ensuring we provide the programs and services learners need and continue to develop our community as a vibrant learning community. With a history dating back to 1979, we have strong roots within the community. Reviewing and revising our governance practices will support our long-term sustainability.

Our annual budget is approximately \$134,000. Our funding sources include funding from the Province of Alberta through the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Town of Stony Plain, project-specific partnership contributions, and registration fees. To develop our services, exploring additional revenue options is required.

We commit to:

- Board participation and review of governance documents including policies related to health and safety and risk management
- Exploration, development, and launch of revenue generation models for program delivery
- Development and launch of sponsorship models



Sustainability and Revenue Development

We will:

- Review and update governance documents including policies related to health and safety and risk management on an annual basis
- Explore, develop, and launch gaming licensing approval, program funding, and industry revenue generation models
- Develop and launch sponsorship models such as Gift of Learning and corporate sponsorship



Key Deliverables

Year One

Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs

- Minimum 5 literacy and foundational learning programs with a minimum of 20 learners
- Increase tutoring supports by 10% to a minimum of 1 new tutor and an additional 30 hours of tutoring support
- 25 sessions for ESL learners and newcomers
- Refer a minimum of 50 learners to other community supports

Partnership and Relationship Development

- Develop and test a referral and client flows pathway with partners
- Consult with a minimum of 25 community partners to clarify their needs and the needs of their clients
- Identify and implement 3 new collaborations
- Define and launch an engagement strategy with the business community which will reach 40 business owners

Building Awareness of Learner Needs

- Discuss and develop specific strategies for a minimum of 5 employers
- Analyze learner profiles and demographics and publish a community update report
- Develop a minimum of 3 learner stories
- Share learner profile and learner stories in a minimum of 10 presentations

Sustainability and Revenue Development

- Review and confirm governance documents and policies requiring creation or updating and establish priority schedule. Create or update top 3 priority documents
- Explore and apply for gaming licensing approval, develop and pursue program funding options
- Develop and launch Gift of Learning program

Key Deliverables

Year Two

Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs

- Minimum 5 literacy and foundational learning programs with a 10% increase in learners over year one
- Increase tutoring supports by minimum of 10% over year one
- 25 sessions for ESL learners and newcomers, minimum 10% increased total learner numbers over year one
- Refer a minimum of 50 learners to other community supports

Partnership and Relationship Development

- Refine referral and client flows pathway with partners
- Partnership check-ins with key community partners to clarify their needs and the needs of their clients
- Identify and implement 3 new collaborations
- Review engagement strategy and connect with 40 business owners

Building Awareness of Learner Needs

- Discuss and develop specific strategies for a minimum of 5 new employers
- Analyze learner profiles and demographics and publish a community update report
- Develop a minimum of 3 learner stories, but target 5
- Share learner profile and learner stories in a minimum of 10 presentations, but target 12

Sustainability and Revenue Development

- Follow governance and policy review schedule as identified in year one
- Maintain gaming license requirements (if approved), pursue program funding options, and develop industry revenue generation models
- Maintain Gift of Learning program and develop and launch corporate sponsorship program

Key Deliverables

Year Three

Literacy and Foundational Learning Programs

- Minimum 5 literacy and foundational learning programs with a 10% increase in learners over year two
- Increase tutoring supports by minimum of 10% over year two
- 25 sessions for ESL learners and newcomers, minimum 10% increased total learner numbers over year two
- Refer a minimum of 50 learners to other community supports

Partnership and Relationship Development

- Evaluate and refine referral and client flows pathway with partners
- Partnership touch-ins with key community partners to clarify their needs and the needs of their clients
- Identify and implement 3 new collaborations
- Review engagement strategy and connect with 40 business owners

Building Awareness of Learner Needs

- Discuss and develop specific strategies for a minimum of 5 new employers
- Analyze learner profiles and demographics and publish a community update report
- Develop a minimum of 3 learner stories but target 7
- Share learner profile and learner stories in a minimum of 10 presentations but target 15

Sustainability and Revenue Development

- Follow governance and policy review schedule as identified in year one
- Maintain gaming license requirements (if approved), continue program funding options, and launch industry revenue generation models
- Maintain Gift of Learning program and continue corporate sponsorship program

Strategic Plan Development Process

The Strategic Plan development process began in Fall 2020 with a Board retreat and exploration of the environment in which TriCALA works. The Board and Executive Director considered the impacts of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors. Key highlights were shared with members and a discussion took place regarding their relevance to TriCALA's work.

The Board and Executive Director explored themes related to the work of TriCALA and identified areas for action. A survey was shared with community partners to explore their thoughts on a vibrant learning community and how TriCALA could support further development. Finally, a focused conversation took place to conduct a deeper exploration of ideas.

Throughout the process, the key themes continued to emerge. After vetting the findings with the Board, the plan was developed. It is expected this plan provides a high level direction for the organization with the Executive Director developing detailed work plans to implement the priorities.

Environmental Scan Findings

Political

Includes government policy, political stability, tax policy, labour laws.

Positives	Challenges
COVID-19 – public health measures – successful at adapting to online delivery.	Ensuring that TriCALA will be seen as a worthy resource for the community.
Economy will recover eventually, able to move towards virtual at least for some learners, staff understanding of political system (but risk if there are staff changes).	Funding levels are an ongoing threat from all levels of government.
Tri-CALA needs to continue to support the work of the Community Learning Network as this is another avenue to secure vital information.	Potential for provincial cuts. Uncertain about the status for programming review.
Keeping abreast of the ever-changing landscape of policy, labour laws and new funding directions. We have a small staff to keep up with all the changes and can use Board expertise.	Not clear that the whole community sees the long-term political and economic implications of low literacy levels.
Government cuts have not happened to adult learning councils. Consider an advantage that Councils work for 'grassroots' learning which can only happen on a community-based level.	Demand on TriCALA's services will increase but funding support will not be there.
Municipal elections in 2021 and chance to promote literacy as an issue.	Concerns of government priority on business to the detriment of education, including for those who are forced to make job/career changes.

Environmental Scan Findings

Economic

Includes economic growth, disposable income, unemployment rates.

Positives	Challenges
Economy will recover slightly in 2021, but not to any great extent until 2022, mainly due to COVID's effect on business.	As the cost of everything is going up and unemployment rates are growing, concerns that people will not be able to afford enrollment in TriCALA programming. Cost of the classes must remain reasonable for participants and this will vary for everyone.
Commercial space vacancies will probably increase and might be a lower cost because of increased vacancies.	Unemployment rates up and could go up again with a second "shutdown".
Demand for TriCala's services will be very high for the next two to three years until the economy recovers further and more work opportunities open up.	Community space – Difficult to find free community space to program. Many places are charging fees for space or are not open to bookings/rentals due to COVID.
People who intentionally change jobs/careers are not the ones who traditionally use TriCala. It is those who are forced to, and the need will only increase as so many industries change, and companies close down.	Costs of things may determine value/perception of value. What if we charged more and drew more people? People may feel there is limited value if they don't pay (is the presenter qualified?).
	Lack of income diversity for TriCALA.

Environmental Scan Findings

Social

Includes population changes, age distribution, career attitudes, lifestyle attitudes, cultural barriers.

Positives	Challenges
Improved 2-way communication between ED and Board.	Our service area is quite large and the prevailing attitude is one of ready employment without strong education.
Increased interest in learning during 'vintage' years. The mindset of people who retire has changed over the years and they still want to stay busy and learn.	How do we find out what the needs are? (small staff, small budget, how to understand needs?).
Explore other organizations currently programming in the Community Adult Learning Program core competencies in the Tri Region. Partner and increase impact.	Who does Alberta Ed think our target audience is? Do we really know? Do we have conversations about this with them?
Those with poor education will always be there whether for environmental or cultural reasons or learning disabilities. Whatever we can do to make it seem safe and good step to approach TriCALA will be needed. Reaching out to people to make safe and de-stigmatize learning (lessons learned from mental health and reduce stigma).	There will be a greater demand on TriCALA to help people, especially middle aged who must find new work and must improve their education. The stigma of a poor education is felt and may stop some from seeking help, so TriCALA should attempt to address stigma in their advertising and promotional materials to make it easier for people to make that step.
	Are we able to meet the needs of the different cultures? Do people know we exist and can we be culturally sensitive, how do people find us, many cultures to consider. As our demographics change, are we able/willing to change?

Environmental Scan Findings

Technological

Includes technological change, technological awareness, level of innovation.

Positives	Challenges
Ability to garner community need and explain why/how connectivity is so important.	<p>Clients not having devices and access to internet. No way to connect to online world.</p> <p>Although improvements to connectivity have increased, Parkland County still remains a rural population and there is a large percentage that does not have internet access and many do not have access to devices and therefore are not comfortable using digital media.</p>
Access to reliable devices that are ideal for learning (e.g. laptop vs. smart phone) need to have these, and find the balance on the budget.	It may become more and more difficult to bring clients up to a level of basic high school since it seems the gap in knowledge seems to be growing as the pace of increasing reliance on technology and technical knowledge increases.
Google for Non Profits – Tech Soup options (non profit tech with reduced rate). Make sure we're up to date.	So much online so what do we do if the internet goes down? Longer-term? Technology glitches frequently and yet are so reliant on it.
	Security of technology trust of online learning and security, us as an organization versus our clients. Google with servers outside Canada.

Environmental Scan Findings

Environmental

Includes environmental policies, pressure from other organizations to adjust/include policies, weather.

Positives	Challenges
The new location makes a huge difference on accessibility as well as on personal safety of staff, volunteers and clients. Town of Stony Plain’s new public transit will be of great help in that there will be a bus stop close by.	Long-term COVID disruption but longer it goes, the easier to adjust, COVID vaccines in 2021.
Should be looking to adapt or mitigate climate change with our efforts. Look at initiatives through three lens – environment, economy, and social sustainability.	Increased natural disasters as a result of climate change mean that organizations need to be resilient to various potential disasters/economic challenges in the future.
TriCALA is always adjusting whether it be weather, adjustments to other community organization mandate or new government policy surrounding community adult learning. What remains constant is that nothing is constant. We are always flexible.	Programs in the dead of winter may not go because of the weather, but, this may be a different picture in the future as we have gained skills in online/dual delivery.

Environmental Scan Findings

Legal

Includes employment laws, consumer protection laws, copyright and patent laws, health and safety laws.

Positives	Challenges
Continuing to provide a safe place to learn as we live through the pandemic. New space passed fire and environmental inspections and COVID procedures were reviewed, certified safe.	Shifting expectations around legislation and our ability to stay on top of changes. (E.g. privacy, OHS, labour laws).
Connections to Community Learning Network for information sharing. Experienced Board members with management experience to share changes and potential impacts.	Business continuity plan needs to be developed and shared with Board.
	What if there is a breach? Hackers, info compromised, what do we collect from clients and why? Do we have effective back-up process and know how to keep data safe during process?
	Consider insurance for business-like identity theft. We try not to keep client info but have our entire organizational history.

Survey Summary

Survey Questions and Responses

1. How would you describe what a vibrant learning community looks and feels like for the Tri-Region? Please consider what resources are needed and what assets our region has which support learners.

Responses focused on the need for accessible learning, reduced barriers, a community working together, increased coordination, importance of lifelong learning, multiple formats for learning, foundational areas addressed.

2. How can our community work together to meet the learning needs in the region? Please consider possible barriers to working together, how organizations engage with one another, and what elements of effective partnering include.

Responses included advertising collaboratively, reducing duplication, agency meetings for information sharing, role for TriCALA to coordinate offerings, building partnerships, involve organizations in identifying roles, honesty, and trust building.

3. What learning supports are needed to address social and economic changes taking place in the Tri-Region? Please consider the barriers that learners may face and how the region can address these barriers.

Responses included online opportunities with support for equipment, transportation, variety of course options and delivery methods, childcare, programs that support addressing needs such as employment, connectivity.

Survey Summary

Survey Questions and Responses

4. What actions can you or your organization take to meet the needs of learners and build a vibrant learning community in the Tri-Region?

Responses included supporting employers, variety of learning methods, needs assessment, promotion, space, partnering, supporting governance development, increasing inclusivity.

5. How can TriCALA help support your organization and learners, clients, or staff?

Responses included opportunities for upgrading, more tutoring, professional development, spreading the word about programs, offering foundational courses, openness to partnerships, flexibility.

6. Please share any other comments or ideas you have about enhancing learning within the Tri-Region.

Responses included programs beyond the foundational like diploma, partnerships with NorQuest College, computer software teaching, monthly newsletters, do more with NorQuest College, keep doing what you are doing.

Focused Conversation Summary

Focused Conversation Questions

1. What does a vibrant learning community mean to you?
 - a. How does vibrant learning community make you feel?
 - b. Do you think other people you know, friends, family, or employees would feel differently? Why/Why not?
2. How do people in the community find out about learning opportunities?
3. How do we increase awareness of the impact that literacy has on employment, health, and social connection?
4. What can the community do to increase literacy levels?
5. If we consider a focus on foundational learning and literacy as including literacy, numeracy, English as a Second Language, high school upgrading or technology and digital skills, how can employers facilitate or support employees to access the learning opportunities in the community?
6. How will you know we have a lifelong learning culture in the community?
7. Is there anything we have not touched on that is important for us to know about supporting our community to become a stronger vibrant learning community?

Focused Conversation Summary

Focused Conversation Responses

1. What does a vibrant learning community mean to you?
 - a. How does vibrant learning community make you feel?
 - b. Do you think other people you know, friends, family, or employees would feel differently? Why/Why not?

Responses included a need to be inclusive and diverse in learning opportunities, different communication approaches to support newcomers, removing barriers, accepting and tolerant, interconnecting between words and actions, working with others such as teachers to ensure people stay connected.

2. How do people in the community find out about learning opportunities?

Word of mouth emerged as the main source of information and the discussion centred on the importance of ensuring people had a positive experience. Provide good education and supports and people will come back when they need to and share with family and friends. Cross programming with other organizations was suggested and being accessible for people to ask questions.

3. How do we increase awareness of the impact that literacy has on employment, health, and social connection?

Responses included sharing stories and explaining the statistics. Discussions with employers to understand their needs emerged as they are likely to encounter employees who struggle with literacy.

4. What can the community do to increase literacy levels?

Emphasize the importance of learning at all stages. People may take learning for granted and not recognize the impact it has on employment opportunities for the future. Include flexible learning options and reduce stigma but focusing on skill development (literacy as a continuum).

Focused Conversation Summary

Focused Conversation Responses

5. If we consider a focus on foundational learning and literacy as including literacy, numeracy, English as a Second Language, high school upgrading or technology and digital skills, how can employers facilitate or support employees to access the learning opportunities in the community?

Building empathy and showing the impact of how learning can help with skills. Look for ways to increase understanding such as an interactive literacy exhibit. Face to face opportunities are important. Employers need to know opportunities are available for their staff. Challenge with availability of devices and connectivity. Could support by having information on free wifi available. Need to stimulate conversation between people such as a Human Library idea.

6. How will you know we have a lifelong learning culture in the community?

Number of people learning, literacy rate increases, people using services, network of people engaged in services and supports, referring learners. Range of opportunities from online to in-person to blended. People aren't limited by what is offered locally but can get some support with tutoring or discussion groups. Partnership with institutions (NorQuest) and other community groups. Consider measurement and evaluation along the lines of AUMA's inclusion scale to establish targets.

7. Is there anything we have not touched on that is important for us to know about supporting our community to become a stronger vibrant learning community?

Nothing at this time.