



Life's a Conversation.

Aphasia Institute

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2026
Extended and Refreshed from 2018- 2022

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Aphasia Institute Strategic Plan 2018 – 2026

This Strategic Plan reflects our understanding of the needs of people with aphasia, their families, and people who work with them. The plan takes into consideration, rapidly changing social and economic trends, particularly in regard to technology and the resulting impact on health care and the field of communication.

The Aphasia Institute is committed to extend the current strategic plan of 2018 – 2022 by four years which now includes a new health and safety objective to support the efforts of the organization to manage the ongoing impact of COVID-19, to provide appropriate transition time for our new Executive Director (effective April 1, 2023) and to facilitate the time and budget required to recruit a consultant to work with us on the development of a new strategic plan.

Throughout the course of 2023-26 we will continue the mandate to find innovative solutions to address the changing needs of our clients, as well as the needs of the broader aphasia community locally and beyond. As well, we will address the newly added enabling objective under the Enabling Goal, Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Sustainability to: ***Enhance the health and safety work of the organization with a focused commitment to client, staff and volunteer safety.***

In the next four years, we challenge ourselves to continue to find innovative solutions to address the changing needs of our own clients, as well as the needs of the broader aphasia community locally and beyond.

Aphasia and the Aphasia Institute

Aphasia is caused by an injury to one or more of the language areas of the brain – most commonly as a result of stroke. It dramatically affects conversational interaction (talking and understanding) and the ability to read and write. Without the ability to participate in conversation, every relationship, every life role, and almost every life activity is at risk. Individuals usually experience a loss of self-esteem, and feelings of social isolation.

People living with aphasia may also face barriers to health care and other services. Meeting that challenge is about ensuring individuals gain “communicative access” so they can receive service, give and get information and make informed decisions.

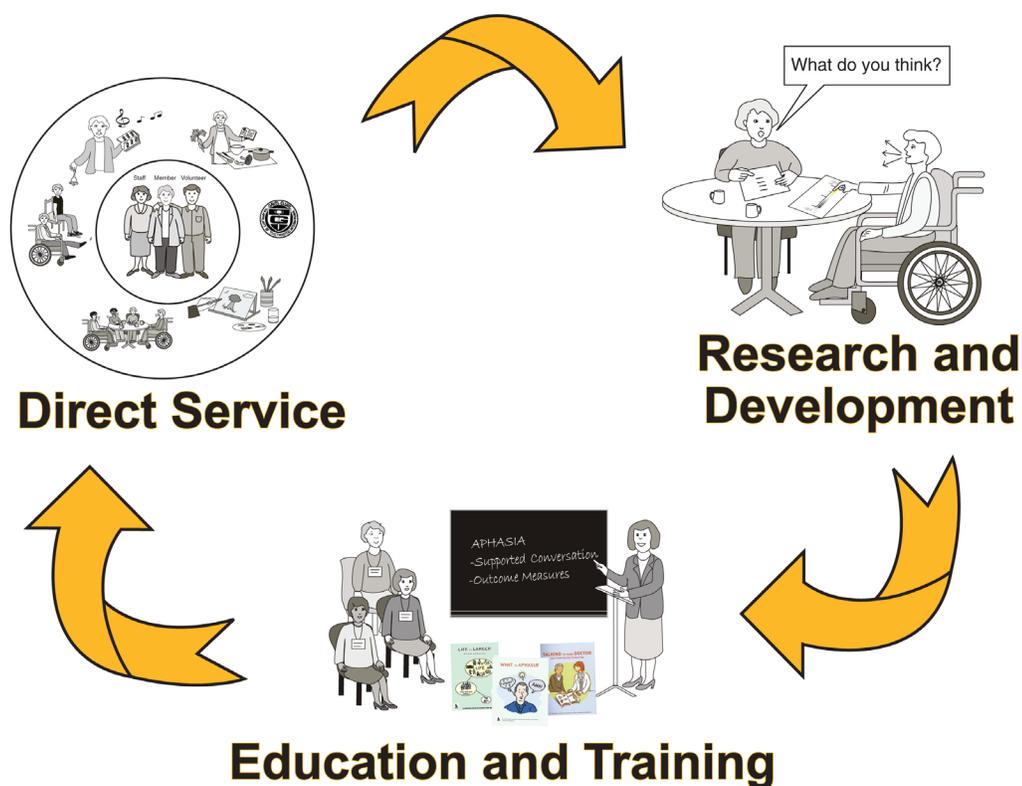
The Aphasia Institute’s activities are in those areas where we can make the most difference. We provide direct service, offer education and training, and carry out research. We work with individuals living with aphasia, their families, individual health care professionals as well as their teams and institutions, and the wider community. Our programs strengthen the services in the health care system that most support people with aphasia and their families. In addition we strive to increase public awareness of aphasia.

The Aphasia Institute relies on different sources of funding. In 2023, our funding moved from Ontario Health Central to Ontario Health Toronto (formerly known as Central LHIN and Toronto LHIN). Ontario Health Toronto provides core funding to deliver direct services, as well as education and training opportunities for health care providers and families across Ontario. Other sources of funding include the City of Toronto, donations, earned revenue from social enterprise, and research grants.

The Synergy of Our Work

A framework guides the professional work of the Institute in supporting people with aphasia. It is *Living with Aphasia: Framework for Outcome Measurement (A-FROM)*.¹ This framework focuses on progress that makes a difference to the everyday experience of individuals with aphasia and their families. It affirms the client as best able to judge what is a “meaningful” life change for him or her.

Three core activities dynamically relate to one another. This ‘synergy’ enables the Institute to make the broadest possible impact.



¹ Kagan, A., Simmons-Mackie, N., Rowland, A., Huijbregts, M., Shumway, E., McEwen, S., Threats, T., & Sharp, S. (2007). Counting what counts: A framework for capturing real-life outcomes of aphasia intervention. *Aphasiology*, 22(3), 258-280.

These core activities entail the following:

Direct service: The Institute seeks to provide exceptional client service to members with aphasia and their families. Beginning with initial assessment and then communication support and training, we help individuals with aphasia achieve their "life participation" goals. This means emphasizing their re-engagement in life by strengthening their daily participation in activities of choice.

Research and Development: What we learn from the lived experience of our clients with aphasia and their families is the foundation upon which solutions are developed, evaluated and shared. The Institute's research projects aim to advance understanding of what is effective in aphasia communication support. We pursue our own research initiatives, conduct research and consult with others. Research projects test new approaches, tools and products that better enable us to evaluate our own programs. These tools and products are then shared with the broader aphasia community and used in organizations all over the world. The Institute is committed to using evidence both in our direct service work and organizational decision-making.

Education and Training: The Institute trains families, health professionals, and others in how best to work with people with aphasia to help them overcome communication barriers. We teach health care professionals -- particularly in the area of stroke care -- how to increase their clients' ability to access their services. We show them how they can apply our techniques in clinical situations such as assessment, counselling, and group therapy. Resources, materials and manuals are provided in many of the workshops. All sessions are accredited courses as approved by the Continuing Education Board of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

Building on Strength

Our previous Strategic Plan set out our priorities at that time: a focus on stroke issues, increasing our capacity for knowledge exchange, building our network, strengthening our sustainability, and developing social enterprise activities.

We have been successful in achieving these strategic goals. For example, our relationship with the stroke care community is strong. By offering communication solutions to local health care providers, we have made the continuum of care more effective for people affected by aphasia.

The Institute is a recognized source of expertise on communication and aphasia. We enjoy a provincial, national and international reputation, and are part of many knowledge exchange networks.

Since the formulation of the last Strategic Plan, we have integrated social enterprise opportunities into our work. We have developed and sustained a strong team culture. Our staff and volunteers learn, contribute and are recognized for their talents. Our organization is governed by a dedicated board of directors who together have the competencies and perspectives to provide wise financial and organizational stewardship.

The Aphasia Institute is an innovative leading organization in the field of aphasia. We draw strength from our experience even as we recognize that the context is changing and the challenge is great.

The Context of Our Planning

In 2018 the following trends were identified in our environmental scan and continue to remain current. They form the backdrop of our planning as they will influence our clients, our partners, and our organization in the future. The most salient issues include:

Trends in Stroke and Aphasia

As noted above, aphasia is associated with stroke. By 2038, it is predicted that the prevalence of stroke survivors living with disability will as much as double in some regions of Canada.² It is estimated that one in three stroke survivors are affected by aphasia. Trends indicate an increase in a younger stroke population. Should trends hold, more, and tailored, aphasia-related services and education will be needed in the coming years.

Increasing Population and Diversity

The Aphasia Institute is home to people of many ethno-racial, social, linguistic and religious backgrounds -- and different economic circumstances. As growth continues, these populations will need culturally and linguistically-appropriate community care services. In addition, the aging of the population will continue to have significant impact on planning and delivery of health services. Seniors (65 years and older) are the fastest growing age group in Ontario. In 2016, 16.4% of Ontario's population was 65 years or older. By 2041, it is projected that 25% of Ontario's population will be 65 years or older, increasing from 3 million seniors in 2016 to 4.6 million seniors.³

² Prevalence of Individuals Experiencing the Effects of Stroke in Canada: Trends and Projections, Krueger et al., 2015.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26205371>

³ From Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, December 2017
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/aging-confidence-ontario-action-plan-seniors>

Health System Changes

In February 2015, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care released *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*⁴ setting out a further phase of Ontario's plan to transform Ontario's health care system. The framework focused on four objectives: increasing access, connecting services, informing patients and protecting the health care system. In 2019, the government passed new legislation, the *People's Health Care Act*, which supported the establishment of a new Crown agency, **Ontario Health**. This also marked the reorganization of Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and their functions and established regional Ontario Health teams.

Digital Technology

Developments in communications and computing technologies are multi-faceted and fast-moving. New mobile technology, social media and cloud computing platforms are transforming the way people and organizations function and communicate. Organizations in every field and sector, for profit and not for profit, are adjusting to the new reality of an inter-connected, faster world.

With this context in mind, the Board of the Aphasia Institute sets out this extended Strategic Plan for 2018-2026.

⁴ Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, February 2015, http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/ecfa/healthy_change/docs/rep_patientsfirst.pdf

Aphasia Institute Strategic Goals 2022 – 2026

The mission of the Aphasia Institute is to give hope to people with aphasia and their families by developing and sharing innovative solutions that reduce language barriers to full life participation.



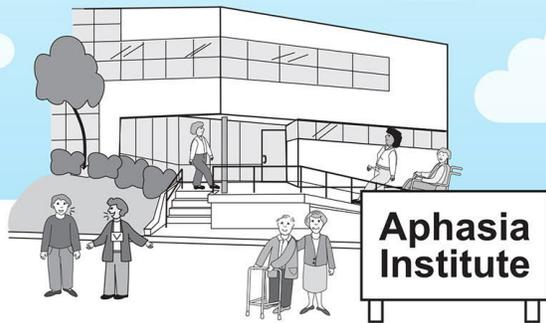
Anticipate changes in the service needs of people with aphasia and their families locally and across Canada.



Share expertise and facilitate professional learning so as to increase communicative access to health care services in Ontario.



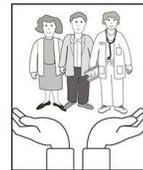
Champion communicative access for people affected by stroke and aphasia provincially, nationally, and internationally.



There are no barriers to living successfully with aphasia



Enabling Goals



Strengthen organizational capacity and sustainability



Communicate our work



Leverage technology and information

RESPECT

COMPASSION

COLLABORATION

CREATIVITY

EXCELLENCE

Vision

Our vision is our ultimate destination – the impact we want to create:

There are no barriers to living successfully with aphasia

Our Mission

Our mission, what we do, is to:

Give hope to people with aphasia and their families by developing and sharing innovative solutions that reduce language barriers to full life participation

Our Values

Values are our foundation and govern our actions. We strive to reflect them daily. They shape our culture:

- **Respect:** Believing our clients, families, partners, volunteers and employees have capability and competence; recognizing that people with aphasia and their families know the most about living with aphasia; listening to learn; valuing diversity of background and perspective; acting with honesty, candour and in ethical relationships with others
- **Compassion:** Creating a welcoming environment; acknowledging clients' needs and aspirations; demonstrating empathy; striving to empower individuals and families; seeing and appreciating the whole person to better help them to develop their potential and resourcefulness
- **Collaboration:** Working internally and externally towards shared goals knowing results are better when we work together; recognizing that because we are privileged to learn, we are obligated to share; believing that a diversity of perspectives leads to a deeper understanding of issues and enriched knowledge for decision-making
- **Creativity:** Not settling for the status quo; always looking for new ideas; open to trying new solutions; enthusiastic about the creative process to bring value to our clients and to apply our knowledge
- **Excellence:** Believing and demonstrating that “being okay” is not good enough when we have the resources and means to be better and even the very best; creating an excellent organization that inspires trust, a sense of community, personal responsibility, and well-being.

Strategic and Enabling Goals

Strategic Goals are the priorities that will move us closer to realizing our vision and mission. Enabling goals are the supports and processes required organizationally to be successful in achieving the Strategic Goals.

Each Strategic and Enabling Goal requires measurable objectives. These are the key dimensions of the goals, each requiring multi-year effort to achieve. These objectives will be integrated into annual operational plans. Because we know future initiatives will advance more than one objective - - a desirable synergy - - we present this plan with continuous numbered objectives.

Note: This Plan takes into account unique opportunities to share our methods and resources across the province, afforded by special funding in this period from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Strategic Goals

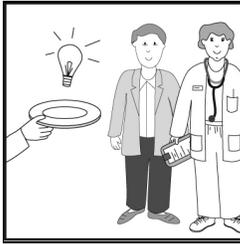


Anticipate and respond to changes in the service needs of people with aphasia and their families locally and across Ontario

The Aphasia Institute will continue to respond to the needs of the people we serve. We will also deploy innovative methods, resources and partnerships to facilitate increased access for clients and families to our expertise and resources. Partners in these efforts are expected to include individuals or organizations involved in workplace training, university education and research, inter-professional education, telehealth, and possibly technology companies.

Our objectives are to:

1. **Deepen and extend client engagement to inform and shape our work**
2. **Address the specific needs of younger individuals with aphasia and those with primary progressive aphasia – including their families and communication partners**
3. **Increase reach and access to our services and resources for people with aphasia and their families through new technology and partnerships with diverse communities and institutions**
4. **Leverage our direct service experience to develop, or host the development, of innovative solutions that enable people to live more successfully with aphasia.**

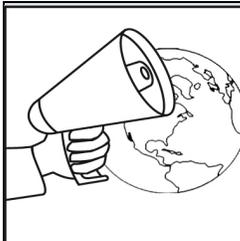


Share expertise and facilitate professional learning so as to increase communicative access to health care services in Ontario

As noted above, to make the impact we intend, and especially in Ontario, we will work *through organizations* as well as directly with health care professionals. We will facilitate learning and knowledge transfer to health professionals, other organizations, and international peers. We will find new ways to support a variety of professionals and partners -- health professionals delivering services along the continuum of care, organizations doing workplace training, researchers in university settings seeking to better understand aphasia and its effects, educators providing professional education and promoting inter-professional collaboration, and others.

Our objectives are to:

- 5. Maintain and develop relationships with organizations and service-providers so as to build their capacity to better work with people with aphasia and their families**
- 6. Develop multiple ways for education, training, consultation and resources/tools to be accessed.**



Champion communicative access for people affected by stroke and aphasia provincially, nationally, and internationally

As a recognized leader, we will increase the awareness of aphasia and influence system change. This involves prioritizing key target audiences to focus our efforts and shape our messages accordingly. We will strengthen connections with policy and decision-makers to advance system-level changes related to communicative access in the stroke community, government, and healthcare organizations. As opportunities arise, we will partner with other organizations, healthcare professionals and the broader community to reduce language barriers along the pathway of the continuum of care.

Our objectives are to:

- 7. Increase awareness by key communities of the impact of aphasia and increase recognition of our solutions (directly and through network partners)**
- 8. Demonstrate the value and impact of our work through research, outcome measurement and stories.**

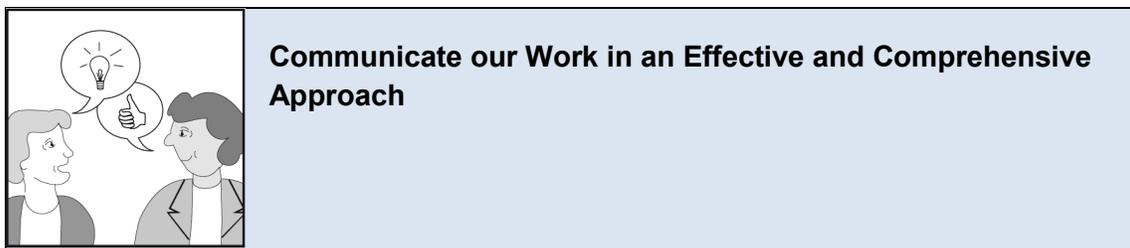
Enabling Goals



The Institute will continue to strive to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to personal, professional and organizational growth, performance, and staff, volunteer and student well-being and satisfaction. To support our continuous quality journey, we will undertake to work on accreditation in this time period. We will continue to demonstrate accountability and fiduciary responsibility.

Our objectives are to:

9. **Develop the leadership, knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers to fulfil the strategic goals**
10. **Work to diversify and build revenue sources**
11. **Prepare for formal accreditation.**
12. **Enhance the health and safety work of the organization with a focused commitment to client, staff and volunteer safety [newly added, 2022].**

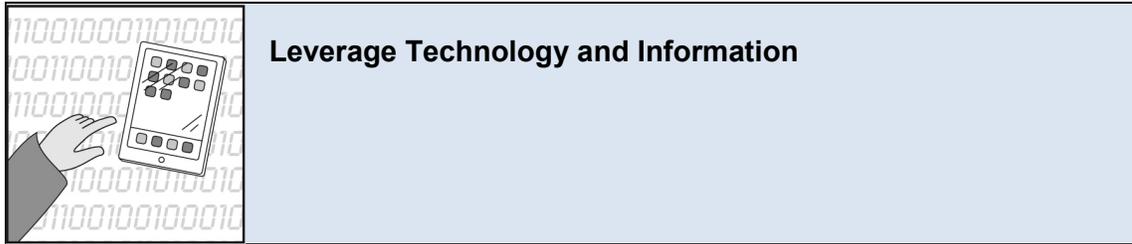


We have multiple audiences who need to learn about aphasia and what we do. We will increase our focus on communications. Our communications will be two-way so that we listen to the needs of our stakeholders and their expectations.

Our objectives are to:

13. **Develop and execute a communications strategy to support the goals of the Strategic Plan**
14. **Develop or access marketing expertise and capacity**

15. Increase reach to potential donors and supporters.



Fundamental to execution of this plan is the successful deployment of current and emerging technologies in support of service, education, research, operations, and communications.

Our objective here is:

16. Utilize technology and platforms to support the internal and external aspects of the strategic plan.

Conclusion

This Strategic Plan responds to client needs and builds on our strong foundation as an innovative organization. In this next phase our goal is to reach and serve more people with aphasia, their communication partners, and the professionals who work with them locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.

We will multiply our impact by building the capacity of others and creating online supports in order to reach and engage. As a leading-edge organization, we will share our expertise. And by championing and influencing, we will help build awareness and promote system change.

This Strategic Plan will be stitched into the fabric of what we do and inspire our work. We will work together with our clients, their families, health professionals, other organizations, donors and volunteers. We will set annual operational plans to move things forward and report our progress to the Board and funders.

We look forward to this exciting journey.