

Creating a Culture of Opportunity

Science  Atlantic
connecting science education and research

Science Atlantic Strategic Plan

2018 - 2022

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Thank you to our Strategic Planning Committee

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Background

Organization

Science Atlantic is a federally incorporated and registered charitable association for scientists, university faculty, and science students in Atlantic Canada. Originally named the Atlantic Provinces Inter-university Committee on the Sciences (APICS), and then the Atlantic Provinces Council on the Sciences, the organization has been operating since 1962.

Membership in Science Atlantic is on an institutional basis, which is currently comprised of 13 institutions and 16 campuses (Acadia University, Cape Breton University, Crandall University, Dalhousie University, Dalhousie University - Agricultural Campus, Memorial University, Memorial University - Grenfell Campus, Mount Allison University, Mount Saint Vincent University, Saint Mary's University, St. Francis Xavier University, St. Thomas University, Université de Moncton, University of New Brunswick - Fredericton, University of New Brunswick - Saint John, and University of Prince Edward Island).

Science Atlantic activities include annual conferences in ten disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields, lecture tours by notable scientists, student awards recognizing research and science communication skills, travel assistance for students to attend conferences, and managing the Atlantic Facilities and Research Equipment Database (AFRED.ca).

Staffing includes a core team of Executive Director, Science Communication Officer, Program and Membership Support Officer, and Software Developer, as well as support from various contract employees, students, and consultants in various roles depending on need and funding availability.

Science Atlantic is governed by a Board of Directors that includes the Chair, Chair Elect or Past Chair, Treasurer, three Directors representing the Institutional Representatives, three Directors representing the Committee Chairs, and two Directors representing the broader community. In addition to the Board, there are ten science committees in the following disciplines: Aquaculture & Fisheries, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth Science, Environment, Mathematics and Statistics, Nutrition, Physics and Astronomy, Psychology. Operational committees include the Policy Oversight and Strategic Planning. Additionally, the AFRED Advisory Group brings in stakeholders from the broader Atlantic research community. Two committees, Animal Care and the Research Working Group, are currently inactive.

Mission

To advance post-secondary education and research in Atlantic Canada by:

- Providing opportunities that foster and enrich students;
- Supporting and inspiring researchers and educators; and,
- Using our collective voice to address important regional issues.

Values

Inclusivity	Collaboration	Respect
Communication	Leadership	Opportunities
Connection	Discovery	Diversity

Strategic Planning

Background

In 2010, Science Atlantic, then APICS, underwent strategic planning sessions led by facilitator Jodi Asbell-Clarke, resulting in two key outcomes. First, a discussion of whether the organization was still needed resulted in confirmation of its importance to the members and the scientific community in the region. Second, participants expressed interest in expanding from student- and teaching-focussed activities to addressing current research issues, including compiling a list of significant research equipment in the region.

In the years following, the organization experienced a period of growth and several major changes. The current mission statement was established, APICS was rebranded as Science Atlantic in time for its 50th anniversary in 2012, and the organization was incorporated with an updated governance model in 2015. Additionally, rededication to current member engagement, as well as new dedication to researcher support, resulted in the formation of the Research Working Group and the Nutrition and Foods Committee. Two new services were also developed: Conference-In-A-Box (CIAB) planning resource and registration system (2013) and the Atlantic Facilities and Research Equipment Database (AFRED) (2014). Both services continue to develop.

As the organization has come into its own as Science Atlantic and these changes established into the organizational culture, it became time to reflect and assess the accomplishments of the previous seven years, as well as determine a new strategic direction and the next steps in the organization's progress. These next steps were discussed during the November 2017 Annual Members Meeting, in strategic planning sessions led by facilitator Lisa Tilly of *Uprise Consulting*. The results of these sessions are outlined in the following document.

2017 Strategic Planning

During the November 2017 meetings, a review of the mission found that while current programs meet the mission, some have fallen behind. The organization's ability to support and update CIAB and AFRED as well as the need for increased engagement with committee Chairs and members were identified as areas needing improvement for the mission to be successfully met.

It was determined that funding and lack of perceived value were the biggest challenges facing the organization, while student conferences and organizational structure were identified as the biggest strengths. Participants identified four key priorities to develop these strengths further and overcome the challenges: a) A communication strategy to grow the Science Atlantic brand in the broader community as well as to increase member engagement, b) Diversifying and expanding membership to include non-university members, c) Diversifying funding to include sources outside the post-secondary sector, and d) Diversifying programs to expand beyond academic research to include commercial science and science leadership, education, communication, and literacy.

Strategic Planning Committee

Following the November 2017 meetings, Science Atlantic members and staff formed a Strategic Planning Committee with a mandate to develop an actionable strategic plan for the organization.

The Strategic Planning Committee met several times, both in person and virtually, from March through August 2018. During these meetings, the Committee reviewed the four strategic priorities and proposed goals. The original four priorities were refined down to three, while keeping the spirit of the original priorities identified in the November meetings.

In addition to refining the proposed priorities, the Committee used the information and ideas that emerged from the November meetings to develop 12 goals and 34 objectives that would, once achieved, result in the organization achieving the three priorities.

Creating Our Vision

In addition to identifying strategic priorities, goals, and related objectives, the Committee worked to create a vision statement and value proposition for the organization. The vision statement helps us keep in mind the future we see for ourselves, while the value proposition demonstrates the benefits of the organization to the greater community.

The Committee also addressed an issue identified during the November sessions regarding the mission statement. The proposed changes below are inclusive and are believed to more accurately reflect the current activities and direction of Science Atlantic.

Organizational values were also reviewed. Six values identified in the November 2017 meetings as well as three inherited from the 2010 strategic planning process were consolidated to three core values that reflect the motivations of the mission, organizational activities, and members.

Vision Statement

Our member-inspired organization creates opportunities for students, researchers, and others to build long-lasting collaborations and partnerships that provide the foundations needed to improve science education and scientific research, enabling the scientific community in the Atlantic region to flourish.

Value Proposition

Using our resources as a vehicle, Science Atlantic brings together the regional science community to share knowledge that helps shape and advance science and supports the next generation of scientists.

Mission Amendment

To advance post-secondary education and research in Atlantic Canada by:

- Providing opportunities that foster and enrich students;
- Supporting and inspiring researchers, educators, and the broader scientific community; and
- Using our collective voice to address important regional issues

Values Amendment: Top Three

Inclusion	Connection	Promotion
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Strategic Priorities

* Please note that numbering system is for organization only and does not reflect ranking of the priorities

** Please note that dates are approximate and may be changed due to time and funding resources available

1. Sustainable and Inclusive Governance

Maintain a sustainable and inclusive governance that embraces an engaged and diverse community and includes the resources needed to ensure the organization's future.

1.1. Secure Staffing

1.1.a. By September 2019, employ requisite staff to adequately support all core activities

1.1.b. By January 2021, put into action an adequate budget to maintain a stable, engaged, and equitably compensated core staff

1.2. Strengthen AFRED to become an integral part of the organization

1.2.a. By 2022, have AFRED generating at least \$150,000 per year

1.2.b. By the end of 2022, have at least one instance of the "AFRED Lite" widget on all applicable member institutions' websites

1.2.c. By the end of 2022, be able to demonstrate a marked increase in use of AFRED at member institutions

1.3. Ensure we have a clear understanding of who we are as an organization

1.3.a. By early 2019, create materials that define the organization, value proposition, and benefits for current and new members

1.3.b. By summer 2019, have the Science Atlantic website become the main source of information for organizational activities

1.3.c. By the end of 2019, create and promote a centralized information source for staff, members, and the greater Science Atlantic community

1.4. Increase operating budget through diversified funding streams

1.4.a. By early 2019, have a designated person or committee (maximum 3 members) responsible for non-membership funding

1.4.b. By August 2020, create funding plan that will increase the current operating budget of Science Atlantic through external funding including grants, sponsorships, fundraising, and alumni donations

1.5. Renew Science Atlantic's relationship with our members at an institutional level

1.5.a. By 2020, have a Memorandum of Understanding with each university signed by upper administration (President and/or Vice President Academic and/or Vice President Research)

2. Partnerships and Community

Cultivate partnerships inside and outside the organization that will strengthen the regional scientific community and provide opportunities for our various stakeholders.

2.1. By the end of 2022, AFRED will be expanded to include more non-member and non-academic institutions and/or organizations

2.1.a. By June 2019, have 1000 pieces of equipment in AFRED

2.1.b. By 2020, have all Atlantic colleges involved in AFRED

2.1.c. By 2021, AFRED will have the support of 5-10 government, hospital, and industrial organizations

2.2. Expand partnerships and broaden community

2.2.a. By summer 2019, begin to develop and expand relationships with organizations that provide student opportunities (such as [ASRJ](#) and [PLoSabilities](#))

2.2.b. By 2020, develop “Friends of Science Atlantic” partnership program with clear benefits for groups such as graduate schools, government, professional organizations, and those who support the general cause of science

2.3. Strengthen our internal community

2.3.a. By autumn 2019, have channels in place for recognizing member contributions to Science Atlantic (other than the Hall of Fame)

2.3.b. By 2021, have systems in place to recognize members’ contributions to the scientific community

2.3.c. By end of 2022, be able to demonstrate increased engagement with member institution faculty (non-voting/community members) on a large scale

3. Leadership and Empowerment

Empower our membership community, students, and alumni to become leaders both within the organization and in the greater community.

3.1. Evolve Science Atlantic conferences to become a national standard of student academic conferences

3.1.a. By 2019-2020 conference season, develop and implement system to share conference best practices among organizers

3.1.b. By 2020, begin leveraging conferences as networking events to connect attendees to professional associations, graduate schools/potential supervisors, and employers

3.1.c. By summer 2020, develop conference metrics such as student evaluations, global and discipline specific metrics, to be shared with organizers and used for the analysis and improvement of conference support, marketing, statistics, etc.

3.1.d. By summer 2020, begin organizing value-added activities for faculty attending conferences and education workshops

3.1.e. By 2021, have conferences increase attendance and participation by diverse audiences of students and faculty from various interdisciplinary and minority groups

3.1.f. By 2021-2022 conference season, recognize broader types of contributions of student presenters (for example, those who are active in advocacy, literacy, and communication of science)

3.1.g. By 2021-2022 conference season, make conferences relevant to the broader community

3.2. Advance AFRED such that it becomes the go-to source for research infrastructure in the region

3.2.a. By spring 2019, have a marketing plan in operation for AFRED.ca

3.2.b. By June 2019, have a system in place to track metrics and partnerships created through AFRED

3.2.c. By 2020, have the AFRED logo appear on partner and supporter websites

3.3. Enhance visibility of the organization and promote the brand

3.3.a. By 2019-2020 conference season, have an increased Science Atlantic branding at conferences

3.3.b. By 2019-2020 conference season, create systems to nurture publicity about student research at conferences

3.3.c. By 2021, expand all speaker tours to include public lectures and increased Science Atlantic branding

3.4. Coordinate advocacy campaigns responding to regional science issues using our collective voice

3.4.a. By 2020, develop policy for publicly addressing issues that affect all member institutions

3.4.b. By 2021, create media channel for individuals at member institutions (commentaries such as blog posts, opinion pieces, or podcasts)

The \$5 million question

What would we do if money were not an issue?

- We would encourage/enable increased bilingual services for our activities (e.g. conferences, speaker tours, AFRED) and collateral (newsletter, website, etc.)
- We would purchase a branded vehicle whose main purpose would be science outreach. Undergraduate students involved with Science Atlantic would travel to underrepresented areas (first nations, rural, and primary schools) to promote and educate.
- We would provide support for student research by providing sponsorships, scholarships, or endowments.
- We would host annual Science Atlantic gatherings in each province to celebrate the organization, provide networking opportunities, and engage with alumni community.
- We would provide faculty training workshops focused on science education methods, as well as career development opportunities for faculty and students.
- We would partner with organizations that provide high schools with science teaching toolkits to help better prepare students for post-secondary study.
- We would have speaker tours or lectures featuring high-profile speakers.
- We would have a plan to increase indigenous outreach.
- We would commit to becoming a green organization.
- We would export the Science Atlantic model to other regions, faculties, and disciplines, encouraging these other areas of academia to have inter-university and inter-departmental relationships that support students and faculty.
- We would help in matching university departments to those in less developed countries and participate in international exchanges.
- We would be leaders in stewardship and responsible care of animals.
- We would have physical offices that would support use by members for meetings and gatherings.