

Pathways
to Education

Passeport
pour ma réussite

Impact by Design

Evolving our community-driven approach to supporting Pathways youth

Strategic Plan 2025-2028



This is an impact-first plan. The work outlined below will deepen and strengthen the unique impact of the Pathways Program in existing Pathways communities across Canada. It will ensure we continue to remain responsive, relevant and effective in supporting the changing needs of youth in low-income communities as they overcome barriers, graduate from high school and plan a rewarding future.

Secondly, this plan paves the way for intentional future expansion and sustainable financial growth. Through expert research, data-driven program evaluation and long-term financial modelling, we will better understand the changing and growing need for the Pathways Program, and how we may adapt and evolve to meet this demand in the future.

About Pathways to Education

Pathways to Education is a national, charitable organization breaking the cycle of poverty through education. The award-winning Pathways Program creates positive social change by supporting youth living in low-income communities to overcome barriers to education, graduate from high school, and build the foundation for a successful future. Through the collective power of partnerships, our innovative program is preparing youth for tomorrow.

The Pathways Program

The Pathways Program is proven to promote positive youth development by meeting the needs of youth during the critical years of high school. The program is delivered through four core areas of support:

- Academic:** Supports such as tutoring, homework help, digital literacy development, and language skills help students stay on track with their school work.
- Financial:** Students are eligible to receive targeted financial supports such as transit fare and lunch vouchers, as well as a scholarship for post-secondary education or training.
- Social:** Through mentoring and other social activities, students are equipped with the skills and competencies required to help them succeed beyond high school.
- One-on-one:** Staff and volunteers work with students to map out a tailored support plan that is focused on helping them achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This three-year strategic plan marks a key moment in Pathways to Education Canada's journey.



This three-year strategic plan marks a key moment in Pathways to Education Canada’s journey. Through this plan, we will deepen and strengthen our impact in a rapidly changing world. We will remain responsive and relevant to the shifting needs of youth in low-income communities across Canada through the lens of education and community-based support.

Since its founding, Pathways to Education has served over 25,000 high school students across Canada. Today, the Pathways Program supports more than 9,600 students annually through a network of 29 Program Partners across 31 Canadian communities. The Pathways Program sees tangible, proven results annually: in the 2023-2024 school year, the average graduation rate in the communities Pathways serves was 79 per cent, and 69 per cent of Pathways students successfully transitioned to post-secondary education or training. What’s more, every dollar invested in Pathways creates a \$24 social return on investment¹.

As the program approaches its 25th anniversary, we celebrate the successes we’ve achieved in close collaboration with our Program Partners, donors and alumni. This is also an opportune time to reflect on how we ensure continued impact for the next 25 years and beyond.

We believe that excellence is achieved through evidence. This strategic plan is grounded in evidence gathered from the communities we serve

and the wider global context in which we work. Our initial research underscores the potential to reach more young people in low-income communities across Canada but also highlights that expanding our reach and impact must be done in the context of communities’ evolving needs, economic uncertainty, technological disruptions, and a changing philanthropic landscape. Across Pathways communities and beyond, we know that young peoples’ needs have significantly changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. These needs will continue to evolve—raising challenges such as increased mental health challenges, declining academic skills, and growing financial insecurities—and continue to disproportionately affect youth living in low-income communities.

Pathways to Education Canada is uniquely positioned to support young people facing these challenges, building on deep-rooted community partnerships and 25 years of experience and expertise. This strategic plan aims to truly understand the challenges and opportunities of today, setting the stage for sustainable growth, maximizing impact over three years, and positioning the organization for long-term success.

Through this plan, we will deepen and strengthen our impact by balancing sustainable growth with relevant, effective support for the changing needs of today’s youth.

¹ Boston Consulting Group (2011). Social Return of Investment Analysis of the Pathways to Education Program.



Higher Education

69% of Pathways students successfully transitioned to post-secondary education or training



Graduation Rates

2023-2024 school year, the average graduation rate in the communities Pathways serves was 79%



Canadian Society

Every dollar invested in Pathways creates a \$24 social return on investment



Program Support

Pathways Program supports more than 9,600 students annually through a network of 29 Program Partners across 31 Canadian communities



To do this, we will centre the voices of our communities and the youth we serve. Drawing on insights from recent evaluations and wider community input, we will ensure ongoing programming excellence, impact, and relevance. This includes collaborating closely with Program Partners to co-design an updated program model that remains nationally aligned and locally responsive.

To better understand and communicate the full scope of our continued impact, we will also expand our measurement of program effectiveness beyond a focus on high school graduation rates. This evaluation plan will track broader outcomes—such as emotional well-being, resilience, sense of belonging, and adaptability—providing a more comprehensive understanding of the program's long-term value, informing continuous improvement and shaping funding strategies. This will allow us to capture a broader picture of our impact on youth, both during high school and in the critical years that follow graduation.

Addressing shifting youth needs will require increased investment in our Program Partners. With this as a continued priority, we will evolve and



strengthen our fundraising and financial model. In addition, by further developing existing internal financial controls and technological efficiencies, we will ensure our organization is positioned to increase direct funding to partners. Our aim is to balance innovation with long-term stability for our national office and network of Program Partners across the country.

We will also focus on amplifying our collective voice and impact through a thought leadership strategy that elevates youth and community perspectives and needs, shares best practices, and shapes public discourse. This initiative will grow our audiences, build brand awareness, and ensure lead generation in support of our wider strategic goals.

Alongside this work, we will continue to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles across our culture, governance, and operations. This includes developing a comprehensive EDI strategy that ensures inclusive partnerships, responsive programming, and equitable service delivery.

2025 - 2028 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

GROWING THE IMPACT OF THE PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION PROGRAM.

This strategic plan is the result of a comprehensive, participatory planning process that included strategic foresight to explore long-term trends and scenario planning. It centres youth and community voices, commits to investing in our infrastructure and partnerships, and embraces innovation. Through this plan, Pathways to Education is positioning itself to thrive in a complex and uncertain future—while continuing to support and champion the needs of high school students and low-income communities across Canada.



HOW WE'LL GET THERE

Evolving With Communities

We will work with partners, youth, and communities to design and support adaptive and evolving programming that meets the changing needs of youth, and deepens our collective impact.

Enhancing Impact Measurement

We will refine and develop new mechanisms to measure and communicate the impact of the Pathways Program.

Enabling Financial Sustainability

We will evolve and strengthen our fundraising and financial model to meet the challenges of the changing environment and maximize our impact.

Expanding Thought Leadership

We will communicate and champion the needs of Pathways communities, drawing on unique data and amplifying youth voices to raise funds, build awareness and grow our network of supporters.

Embedding Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

We will formalize principles of equity, diversity & inclusion across our culture, governance, systems & practices, ensuring our approach continues to meet the complex needs of the communities we serve.

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OVERVIEW

After almost 25 years of meaningful impact, it is time to reflect, renew, and lay the foundation for the next chapter at Pathways to Education Canada.





After almost 25 years of meaningful impact, it is time to reflect, renew, and lay the foundation for the next chapter at Pathways to Education Canada. This plan focuses on deepening and strengthening the impact of the Pathways Program in a changing world. It is also a pragmatic roadmap for strengthening the systems, structures, and relationships that are essential to future growth. This plan sets the stage for sustainable growth and maximizing impact in three years—and positions the organization to thrive for the next 25 years.

In the wake of a global pandemic, with increasing economic uncertainty and rapid technological advancements, the future is uncertain—especially without deeper analysis into broader societal shifts. Social, technological, economic and political factors have the potential to impact the future of Pathways to Education. Emerging changes, such as advancements in artificial intelligence, and shifting government and funding priorities, could significantly alter the trajectory of Canada’s education and social service ecosystem, disproportionately affecting the communities we serve.

Similarly, the needs of underserved youth are becoming broader, more complex, and shaped by a rapidly changing social, economic, and technological landscape. Many young people are navigating rising mental health challenges, shifting labour markets, systemic barriers, and increasing economic uncertainty.



It’s becoming clearer that, while high school graduation once stood as a primary benchmark of success, it is no longer sufficient on its own.

In this context, Pathways to Education is uniquely positioned to evolve to better support and measure not only educational attainment, but also the social, emotional, and practical development of Pathways youth as they chart their own thriving futures. Building on deep-rooted community partnerships and 25 years of experience and expertise, the next three years mark a transition period, positioning the organization for maximum impact and potential future growth, as well as remaining a relevant, youth-focused, and sustainable organization.

Overall, Pathways to Education must embrace agility and innovation, continuously adapting to the rapidly changing needs of youth in low-income communities and the evolving social, economic, and political landscape.

We must maintain committed to listening and engaging with Pathways youth and communities, take calculated risks, and push beyond the status quo to remain resilient and relevant.

This strategic plan is the result of a highly collaborative process. We would like to thank our Program Partners, alumni, Pathways Canada staff and wider network of supporters for their input and expertise throughout the planning process.

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STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2025-2028

Pathways to Education is focused on deepening and strengthening the impact of the Pathways Program over the next three years.





Pathways to Education is focused on deepening and strengthening the impact of the Pathways Program over the next three years, through the following five strategic focus areas:

1. *Evolving with Communities*

We will work with partners, youth, and communities to design and support adaptive and evolving programming that meets the changing needs of youth and deepens our collective impact.

What will we be doing?

This focus area ensures Pathways to Education remains nationally aligned and locally responsive to the changing needs of youth across the country, adapting to the current challenges they are facing. It is an opportunity to ensure continued program excellence, create space for innovation, and lay the foundation to sustainably scale both the value and, in time, the reach of our collective impact.

We will achieve this by drawing on learnings from our recent Impact Plan, which included a Program Review, market analysis, global environment scan, and three-year plans created by Program Partners. In collaboration with partners, youth, and communities, Pathways to Education will evolve our program design to meet the current and future needs of young people. This plan will

be co-created with communities and will include updated programming content as well as delivery approaches. This plan also includes the full rollout of Connex, a platform designed in-house to support the management and delivery of program services. This platform will allow better data collection and ensures a significant reallocation of staff time from manual administrative work to direct student support.

This focus area sets the stage for sustainable growth, maximizing impact in three years and positioning the organization to thrive for the next 25 years.

Why now?

The Pathways Program was founded in Regent Park in 2001. Its inception was community-driven and responsive to the direct needs of youth at that time, in that community. As the program was replicated across the country, all locations, including Regent Park, have evolved to remain responsive to the needs of youth and worked within the constraints of funding or other local limitations such as space. The core elements of the model remain consistent—academic, social, financial, and one-on-one support, rooted in a community- and youth-centered approach and the creation of safe spaces. The objectives of the program have also remained relevant, as

demonstrated in the recent Program Review. Yet while the program has adapted over time, the scale and nature of current challenges call for a deeper understanding of how we meet youth where they are, both now and in the future.

Since its founding, Pathways to Education has served over 25,000 high school students across Canada. Today the program supports more than 9,600 students annually through a network of 29 program partners across 31 Canadian communities.

A 2024 market analysis indicates significant need in many more communities. The recent Program Review highlighted how needs have grown or changed since the pandemic, and the environment scan identified opportunities for us to amplify impact. Approaching the Pathways Program's 25th anniversary, it is a critical time to reflect on the impact we hope to realize and explore future avenues that balance sustainable growth against the shifting needs of youth in increasingly uncertain and changing times.

What impact will this have?

At the end of the three years, we will have worked in collaboration with partners, youth, and communities to evolve the program design to meet the current and future needs of students. We will evolve our programming to better respond to community and youth needs, creating a sustainable model for scaling impact in both depth and breadth as appropriate.

Flagship Initiative: A program development plan that lays the groundwork for continued program excellence, evolving with community needs, ensuring program effectiveness through technology, and investments in our Program Partners.



2. Enhancing Impact Measurement

We will refine and develop new mechanisms to measure and communicate the impact of the Pathways Program.

What will we be doing?

This plan reframes our definition of impact to include how the Pathways Program helps youth navigate their high school years and life after high school. We will develop a new performance measurement framework to reflect this approach, implementing it in collaboration with partners to tell a more comprehensive story of the program's impact, and inform program improvements, continuous learning, and funding opportunities.

We will also review our data collection processes in collaboration with Program Partners and refresh our market analysis using 2026 census data to better reflect and understand the communities we serve.

Why now?

While the organization has a strong reputation for demonstrated impact, our current focus on graduation rates, while clear, is not telling the whole story. To truly communicate the social and economic return on investment delivered by the Pathways Program, the organization must refresh the existing performance measurement framework to be comprehensive and include the extensive short- and long-term impact created by the program.

What impact will this have?

To scale impact, we need the evidence to back it up. Through this plan, we will develop a more comprehensive overview of the program's effectiveness, informing program improvements and continuous learning. In addition, funders increasingly require demonstration of medium-to-long-term impact, which will be supported by this new framework.

Flagship Initiative: A new Performance Measurement Framework and Evaluation Plan that capture additional relevant short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes indicators related to factors such as health, family, community, educational attainment, and employment, among others.

3. Enabling Financial Sustainability

We will evolve and strengthen our fundraising and financial model to meet the challenges of the changing environment and maximize our impact.

What will we be doing?

In the face of an increasingly challenging fundraising landscape, Pathways Canada and our Program Partners continue to face growing financial challenges. In response, this plan will both increase and diversify our funding. This includes increasing private funding through growing our funding base, expanding our major gifts program, and deepening and broadening our relationship with foundations and corporate partners, while also pursue additional and expanded Government funding, both provincially and federally. In addition, we will further develop internal financial controls and leverage technological efficiencies to ensure a growing proportion of our funding flows directly to Program Partners.

Why now?

The financial realities facing non-profit organizations across Canada are challenging. Donations are down, governments have signalled reductions in funding levels, and inflationary pressures impact operations for both Pathways Canada and Program Partners. Funding constraints for Pathways Canada result in reduced funding for partners, while the needs they are responding to are growing significantly. The long-term sustainability of Pathways to Education relies on our financial health, which requires both funding growth and diversification.

What impact will this have?

This plan will build on existing processes to continue refining a sustainable fundraising model, internal financial controls, and technological efficiencies that will ensure Pathways Canada is positioned to increase funds shared directly with Program Partners.

Flagship Initiative: An opportunity assessment of fundraising sources and income-generating opportunities.

4. Expanding Thought Leadership

We will communicate and champion the needs of Pathways communities in the media and beyond, drawing on unique data and amplifying youth voices to raise funds, build awareness and grow our network of supporters.

What will we be doing?

Through an intentional thought leadership strategy, Pathways to Education will raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities currently facing our Program Partners and the youth we serve. Centring community voices and leveraging national expertise, we will grow our audiences, share best practices, influence funding priorities, and attract new investment.

We will create a comprehensive communications plan that starts with the wealth of qualitative and quantitative data we collect. From this data, we will work with communities, students and alumni to create reports, whitepapers, and a wider communications strategy designed to increase awareness, grow audiences, and build funding pipelines.

Why now?

Pathways to Education's impact remains hidden for many. To be seen, to be heard, and to be recognized as an authority in an increasingly competitive funding landscape, we must compete by demonstrating measurable impact, sparking conversations, and setting a clear vision for the future.

This approach will secure Pathways to Education's position as an authority and leader in community-led youth engagement and student success in high school and beyond. We will leverage unique data and insights to raise awareness of the needs of our partners and the youth we serve, honouring lived experience, strengthening internal alignment, and using storytelling to drive change.

What impact will this have?

This strategy will leverage unique data and insights to champion the needs of our Program Partners and the youth we serve. We will grow

the reputation and credibility of the whole Pathways to Education network, while ensuring we continue to be supported in an increasingly competitive philanthropic landscape. This is an awareness and audience growth strategy, growing key relationships to build a pipeline for funding, partnerships, and collaboration.

This plan will also allow us to build our reputation with media and the general public, and gives concrete, actionable routes for investment in our Program Partners.

Flagship Initiative: A thought leadership strategy that drives audience growth, brand awareness, and lead generation.

5. Embedding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Pathways to Education exists to eliminate educational inequity. We will formalize principles of equity, diversity & inclusion across our culture, governance, systems and practices, ensuring our approach continues to meet the complex needs of the communities we serve.

What will we be doing?

The communities Pathways serves are diverse, vibrant and resilient. However, we know that youth in these communities are often disproportionately affected by intersecting challenges and increasing barriers to success. To ensure our approach meets these shifting, complex needs, we will formalize principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across work.

The principles of EDI are fundamental enablers of our work at all levels—from ensuring inclusive partnerships and programming, to strengthening staff engagement and fundraising appeals. Through this work, we will establish a shared vision and action plan for EDI across Pathways to Education.

Why now?

Embedding EDI into our strategic plan reinforces our commitment to supporting every Pathways student to overcome systemic barriers and thrive

after high school, embracing the richness of their diverse identities, experiences, and backgrounds.

A strategic focus on EDI ensures that the Pathways Program and our national approach continue to be culturally responsive, inclusive, and tailored to the lived experiences of youth, families and their communities.

The need for a proactive, intentional, systemic, and visible commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is clear. For Pathways to Education Canada to genuinely centre community voice and serve diverse young people equitably, EDI practices must be embedded—not as a separate initiative, but as a core part of how the organization works, leads, and grows.

What impact will this have?

We will formalize principles of EDI across our culture, governance, internal systems, partnerships, and practices to ensure our approach continues to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

This work will ensure that our responses to real-world events and community dynamics are shaped by an equity lens, particularly those that disproportionately impact the youth and communities we serve.

Flagship Initiative: An Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy reinforced through the integration of EDI principles in governance, policies, and practices.



4

MONITORING PLAN

A strategic plan is created at a point in time and needs to be responsive and adaptable to the changing external environment.





A strategic plan is created at a point in time and needs to be responsive and adaptable to the changing external environment. To ensure this strategic plan remains relevant for Pathways to Education, the following activities will be carried out for monitoring.

1. Annual Strategy Review

To ensure the strategic plan remains relevant and responsive, the organization will conduct an annual strategy review. This process provides an opportunity to reflect on progress, assess changes in the external environment, and recalibrate priorities as needed. The review will involve the Board of Directors, leadership, staff, Program Partners and key stakeholders in examining what is working, identifying emerging challenges or opportunities, and determining whether adjustments are needed to stay aligned with long-term goals. It is both a learning moment and a decision-making checkpoint to keep the strategy dynamic and actionable.

2. Monitoring Emerging Risks and Trends

As part of the Annual Strategy Review, the organization will establish an ongoing monitoring process to identify, assess, and respond to external risks and trends that may impact its mission, operations, or the communities it serves. We will also monitor sector-wide data on giving trends, donor retention, and shifting philanthropic priorities.

Trend and risk monitoring can help the organization plan. By watching how key signals evolve over time—for example, whether public funding for youth programs continues to shrink—the organization can assess which strategic assumptions are being validated or challenged. These insights will help leadership identify when the operating environment is shifting. In response, the organization may choose to revisit priorities, test new approaches, strengthen partnerships, or accelerate specific initiatives. This scenario-informed monitoring approach enables the organization to remain agile and future-ready.



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the ground we work on is historically the land cared for and lived on by Indigenous Peoples.

Pathways Canada has two physical offices. One is located in Toronto, on the Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as well as the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee Peoples. We acknowledge the land our office is situated on is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This reinforces our awareness that we are Treaty People and we have our own set of rights and responsibilities as it applies to this and other Treaties.

We also have an office located in Montreal on the Traditional Territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations, including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and An-ishinaabeg.

We acknowledge the significant responsibility we have been granted by students, partners, communities, families, and First Nations as a resource that will support Indigenous students to graduate from high school and realize their true potential. We understand that this must be done with a culturally respectful and relevant approach, and we will continue our learning, engagement, and relationship-building so that our practice is the very best it can be.



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