

FOCUS FORWARD

OAO Strategic Plan

2026-2028



ONTARIO
ASSOCIATION OF
OPTOMETRISTS

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Message from the President and CEO

Building on Strength, Focused on the Future

Since 1909, the Ontario Association of Optometrists has stood as a trusted voice for eye health and a unifying force for the profession. Every chapter of our history has been guided by leaders who understand the importance of collective vision — and today, we are proud to build on that foundation with renewed focus, innovation, and purpose.

Our association is stronger than ever, supported by a dedicated Board of Directors, an experienced staff team, and the unwavering commitment of more than 2,000 members across Ontario. Together, we have achieved meaningful progress from advancing scope expansion discussions with the Ministry of Health to modernizing our digital tools, member communications, and continuing education programs. These achievements reflect both our legacy and our readiness to meet the opportunities ahead.

Optometrists are vital healthcare providers, often the first point of contact for patients in need of care. As we move into the next phase of our strategic journey, our mission remains clear: to ensure that every Ontarian has timely access to comprehensive eye care, delivered by the highly skilled optometrists who know their patients best.

The landscape of healthcare is shifting rapidly, shaped by technology, patient expectations, and system pressures. For OAO, this means continuing to advocate for fair remuneration, expanded scope of practice, and stronger recognition of optometry's role within the health system. It also means strengthening partnerships, expanding services, and building the data and insights needed to guide the future of our profession.

Our strengths — a long history of advocacy, a robust infrastructure, and a collaborative professional community, give us the momentum to pursue these goals with confidence. At the same time, our opportunities are compelling: developing new partnerships, advancing business and service innovation, and fostering growth through talent and professional development.

This is an exciting time for optometry in Ontario. By working together, with care, clarity, and a shared commitment to excellence, we can continue to shape the future of eye care for the benefit of every patient we serve.

With gratitude and optimism,



Dr. Shaina Nensi
President



Mark Donnison
CEO

Executive Summary

The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) enters this next strategic cycle from a position of strength, grounded in more than a century of leadership and advocacy and inspired by the opportunities ahead to transform how eye care is delivered in Ontario.

Our new Strategic Plan builds on the foundation established through the 2023–2025 InSight plan. As the voice of over 2,000 optometrists, OAO continues to advance a unified, sustainable, and patient-focused vision for the profession.

Our Current Landscape

Optometry is at a defining moment. The healthcare system is evolving, shaped by demographic change, technology, and rising demand for accessible care. OAO's role as a trusted healthcare partner has never been more vital. Our strengths — an engaged membership, capable leadership, and solid infrastructure — provide the foundation for progress. Our opportunities are clear: expand partnerships, pursue innovation, and strengthen professional development to help optometrists thrive in a changing environment.

Our Strategic Direction

The 2026–2028 Strategic Plan is anchored in four pillars:

- **Unity** – Establish the OAO as relevant, inclusive, and essential to all Ontario optometrists.
- **Advocacy** – Elevate the profile of the OAO and Ontario optometrists to its stakeholders.
- **Influence** – Educate and empower the population to recognize and seek Ontario optometrists for exceptional lifelong eye care.
- **Insight** – Enhance the profession through data, technology and education.

Each pillar includes measurable outcomes and performance indicators that track progress in engagement, advocacy, awareness, and organizational strength. Together, they form a focused path forward, one that sustains the profession, amplifies its influence, and reinforces OAO's role as a trusted leader advancing eye care for all Ontarians.

Our Commitment

OAO will continue to advocate for policies and investments that enhance patient care, strengthen practice sustainability, and reinforce optometry's leadership within Ontario's healthcare system.

This plan is about more than strategy, it is about pride in our profession, confidence in our future, and the shared belief that when optometrists thrive, Ontarians see better.

About Us

The Ontario Association of Optometrists

The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) represents more than 2,000 optometrists across the province. As the voice of optometry in Ontario, OAO advocates for better access to eye care, educates the public about vision health, and supports optometrists in delivering safe, quality care to millions of Ontarians.

Our mission

To be the essential resource for optometrists to thrive in their profession.

Our vision

A future where optometrists are valued as Ontario's trusted primary and frontline eye care provider.

Our qualities

Visionary

We anticipate the future of eye care and lead with foresight, shaping policies, partnerships, and innovations that keep Ontario optometry at the forefront of healthcare.

Powerful

We are a strong, unified voice for optometrists, influencing change, driving results, and ensuring the profession's priorities are heard and respected across the health system.

Credible

We are trusted experts and evidence-based advocates, guided by data, ethics, and professionalism in every decision, action, and message.

Uniting

We bring the profession together, fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and a shared purpose among members, partners, and stakeholders.

Impactful

We deliver meaningful outcomes, improving patient access, advancing the profession, and strengthening the role of optometry within Ontario's healthcare system.

Strategic Plan 2026–2028: Focus Forward

Introduction

The future of eye care in Ontario is being shaped by pressures that can't be ignored: patients want faster access, the health system is overburdened, and technology is changing the way clinicians deliver care. In this environment, optometrists are taking on a larger role, and the Ontario Association of Optometrists must lead with clarity and purpose.

Our three-year strategic plan responds to that reality. Built on the insight of our members, Board of Directors, and partners, it sets a focused direction to ensure optometry remains a cornerstone of primary care in Ontario. The plan is practical, disciplined, and rooted in what the profession needs now.

Guided by four pillars — Unity, Advocacy, Influence, and Insight — it provides a framework for decisions, investments, and measurable results. Each pillar is supported by clear outcomes and KPIs that hold us accountable and keep the profession moving forward.

Optometry has always been vital to the health of Ontarians. This plan strengthens that role, positioning the OAO to support a united profession, expand public awareness, and meet rising patient needs with caring and confidence.

Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles express how we work as an association, a profession, and a community, and shape every strategic decision we make.

Collaboration

We succeed together through shared purpose, open dialogue, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Integrity

We act with transparency and accountability, ensuring our decisions reflect the best interests of the profession and the public.

Innovation

We adapt to change, embrace new technologies, and pursue creative solutions that enhance patient care and member value.

Leadership

We champion the profession and model excellence in all that we do, from advocacy to education to governance.

Impact

We focus on measurable outcomes that improve member success, public awareness, and access to quality eye care.

Strategic Plan 2026–2028: Focus Forward

Our Path Forward

OAO's path forward is both ambitious and grounded, built on the collective insight of our members, the leadership of our Board, and the evolving needs of Ontario's healthcare system. Over the next three years, we will move from strategy to action through a focused plan that connects vision with measurable impact.

Our work is guided by four strategic pillars, each representing a core area of transformation for the profession and the Association. Together, they define how OAO will fulfill its mission, strengthen its influence, and create lasting value for members and patients alike.

UNITY

Establish the OAO as relevant, inclusive, and essential to all optometrists



ADVOCACY

Elevate the profile of the OAO and optometrists to its stakeholders



INFLUENCE

Educate and empower the population to recognize and seek optometrists for exceptional lifelong eye care



INSIGHT

Enhance the profession through data, technology and education



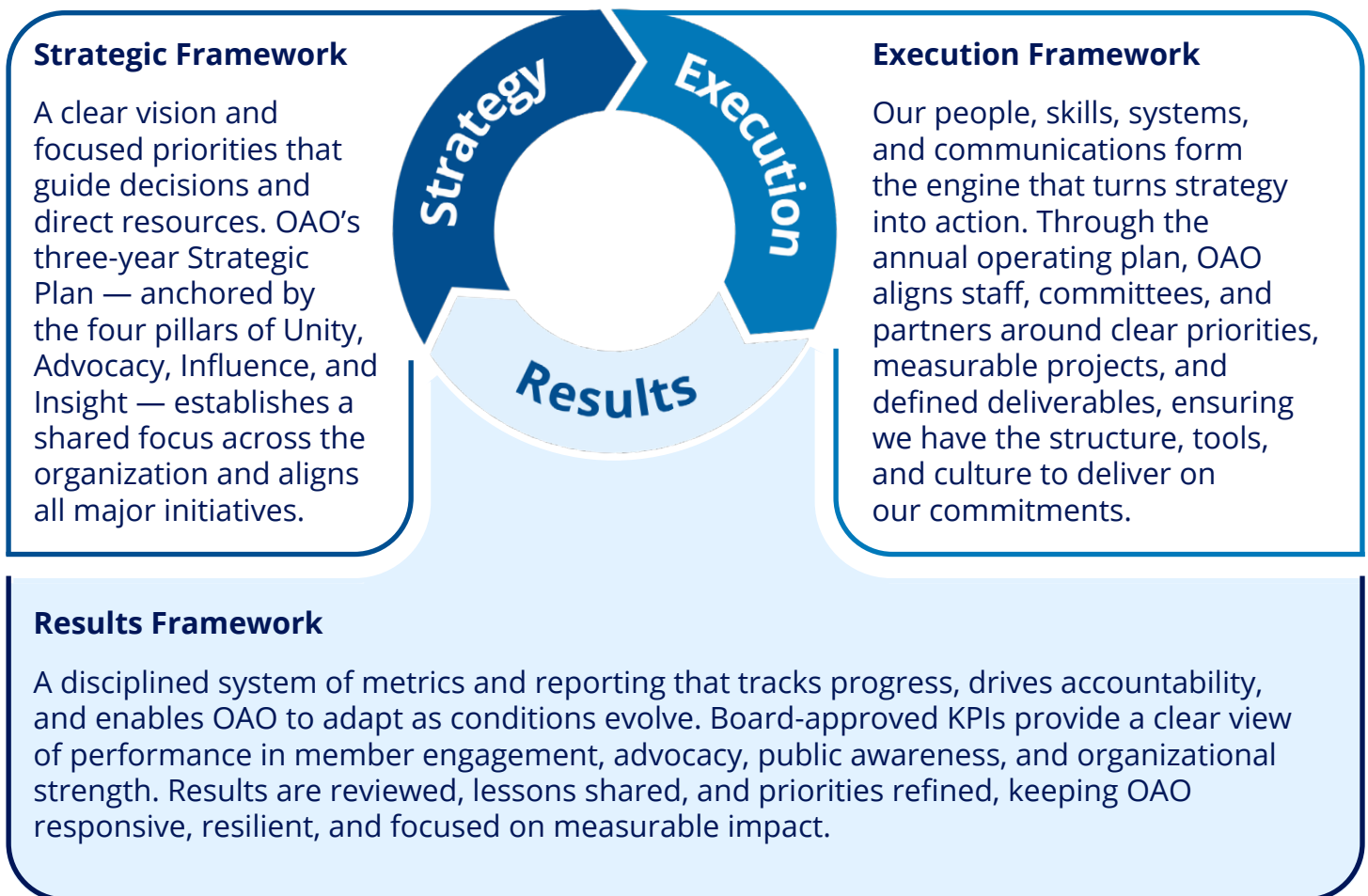
Together, these pillars form a clear and connected roadmap, one that builds alignment across our members, enhances collaboration across the healthcare system, and ensures that optometry continues to thrive as an essential pillar of primary care in Ontario.

Strategic Plan 2026–2028: Focus Forward

From Strategy to Action

The OAO Strategic Plan defines our direction, what we will achieve over the next three years through the four pillars of Unity, Advocacy, Influence, and Insight. But strategy alone does not create results; success depends on disciplined execution.

OAO's strength lies not only in having a clear plan, but in maintaining a continuous cycle of action, measurement, and improvement that keeps the organization adaptive and forward-moving. Our approach is built around a connected, framework, where each element strengthens and feeds the next.



This cycle creates a rhythm of accountability, learning, and momentum. It ensures OAO's strategy remains dynamic, a living system that evolves with our members, the profession, and Ontario's changing health landscape.

With this disciplined approach, OAO is ready, equipped, and resilient, turning strategy into measurable progress and lasting impact for Ontario's optometrists and the patients they serve.

Strategic Plan 2026–2028: Focus Forward

Measuring What Matters

To ensure accountability and transparency, OAO has identified ten Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that reflect the organization’s most critical measures of success. These indicators connect directly to the four strategic pillars and provide the Board with a clear line of sight from strategy to impact.

Each KPI is designed to track progress in the areas that matter most: member engagement, advocacy outcomes, public awareness, and organizational performance. Together, they offer a balanced view of how OAO is advancing its mission, strengthening the profession, and delivering value to members and Ontarians alike.

Regular monitoring and reporting of these KPIs will guide decision-making, ensure resources remain aligned to priorities, and demonstrate tangible results over the life of the plan.

Strategic Dashboard (Top Ten KPIs)

UNITY	85% Membership (3% per year)	80% utilization of benefits relevant to members	Retention rate year- over-year
ADVOCACY	# of meetings initiated by the government	100% of MPPs engaged	Direct investment dollars secured by industry/ government partnerships
INFLUENCE	% awareness of optometrists’ role	% of the public getting eyes checked at least every 2 years	
INSIGHT	100% complete member profiles	Newsletter engagement	

With the strategic framework now defined — outlining how OAO moves from vision to action through planning, execution, and measurement — we turn to the next layer: the Strategic Plan itself. The following section builds on that foundation, detailing the goals and KPIs that bring each pillar to life. This is where the framework becomes operational, translating high-level direction into focused strategies, measurable outcomes, and clear accountability for the next three years.

UNITY

Optometry is stronger when it speaks with one voice. Unity reflects OAO's commitment to building a connected, inclusive profession where every Ontario optometrist feels represented, supported, and valued. This pillar focuses on strengthening membership engagement, fostering collaboration across generations and practice models, and ensuring that the Association remains the trusted home for all optometrists in Ontario.

Establish the OAO as relevant, inclusive, and essential to all optometrists

GOALS

1.1 Foster a unified association which represents Ontario optometrists

1.2 Position the OAO as the provider of top-tier and exclusive benefits for members

1.3 Serve as optometry's networking hub, cultivating positive and long lasting relationships and engagement

KPIs

- Membership growth of ~3% per year, targeting 80–85% in 3 years
- Long-term aspirational goal of 100% membership
- Member satisfaction survey: % of members who feel represented/unified

- 80% utilization of benefits relevant to members
- % increase in benefit uptake annually
- Member satisfaction scores on benefits

- Symposium attendance (goal: sold out annually)
- % of members who report feeling represented/connected
- Retention rate year-over-year

ADVOCACY

Advocacy has always been at the heart of OAO's mission. This pillar represents our determination to advance fair remuneration, expanded scope of practice, and greater investment in eye care as part of a modern, sustainable health system. Through strong relationships with government and partners, OAO will continue to be the profession's leading voice, influencing policy decisions that shape the future of optometry and patient care.

Elevate the profile of the OAO and optometrists to its stakeholders

GOALS

2.1 Strengthen relationships with the government and other stakeholders allowing for improved eyecare access

2.2 Establish the OAO as the trusted advisor on eye care policy to other health professions and the government

2.3 Pursue top tier government and private investment in eye care to support excellence and sustainability in patient care

KPIs

- 100% of MPPs are engaged annually (tracked by touchpoints)
- Number of meetings initiated by the government
- Grassroots engagement metrics

- OAO listed on government/health professional websites
- Number of advisory councils with OAO seats (goal: at least 3)
- Referrals from other HCPs

- Annual direct investment dollars secured by industry/government partnerships
- Success rate of negotiations

INFLUENCE

To secure the future of optometry, the public must understand its value. Influence captures our role in shaping perception, raising awareness of the importance of routine and preventive eye care, and inspiring a cultural shift toward seeing optometrists as primary, frontline healthcare providers. This pillar drives public education, storytelling, and media engagement that position optometrists as essential to the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Educate and empower the population to recognize and seek optometrists for exceptional lifelong eye care

GOALS

3.1 Educate the public on the importance of routine and preventative eye care

3.2 Inspire a cultural shift on the role of optometrists as primary and frontline eye care providers

KPIs

- Public survey: % awareness of optometrists' role
- % of the public getting eyes checked at least every 2 years
- FAED / Social media engagement metrics
- Public polling: % choosing ODs first for eye care
- Earned media mentions on OD role
- FAED traffic & petition sign-ups
- Reduction in eye-related ER visits

INSIGHT

Knowledge powers progress. Insight reflects OAO's focus on strengthening the data, analytics, and evidence that inform decision-making for the Association, for members, and for the profession. By creating a centralized hub of optometric knowledge and industry trends, OAO will better anticipate change, support member success, and ensure that our strategies remain informed, adaptive, and impactful.

Enhance the profession through data, technology and education

GOALS

4.1 Creating a centralized hub of optometric data, statistics and insights to inform strategy and personalized member services

4.2 Provide up-to-date information on the landscape of optometry, autonomous clinical practice and industry trends

KPIs

- 100% complete member profiles (annual renewals)
- % of duplicate services reduced
- Member survey: % who feel informed
- Number of Town Halls & increased attendance rates
- Engagement metrics: clicks on newsletter

Shaping the Future, Together

This Strategic Plan reflects the voices, experience, and aspirations of Ontario's optometric community. It was developed through a comprehensive consultation process that engaged the Board of Directors, OAO staff, members, committees, working groups, external stakeholders, and partners at the University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science. Their collective insight and commitment have helped shape a focused, achievable vision for the years ahead.

At its core, the plan reaffirms OAO's enduring commitment to both our members and the patients they serve. As the trusted voice for optometry in Ontario, we will continue to champion the profession, advocating for fair remuneration, expanded scope, and evidence-based policies that strengthen access to quality eye care. We will also continue to support members through education, connection, and resources that enable professional excellence and sustainability in a changing healthcare landscape.

As OAO continues to evolve and lead, we remain dedicated to continuous improvement: modernizing our systems, strengthening partnerships, and building the capacity needed to deliver results. This plan is not static; it is a living framework that will guide our actions, measure our progress, and adapt to the needs of the profession and the public we serve.

We will know we have made a difference when Ontario's optometrists are recognized and supported as essential healthcare providers, patients experience improved access to care, and our profession stands united, informed, and empowered to shape its future.

Together with clarity of purpose, shared leadership, and measurable outcomes we will continue to advance eye health and strengthen the foundation of optometric care across Ontario.