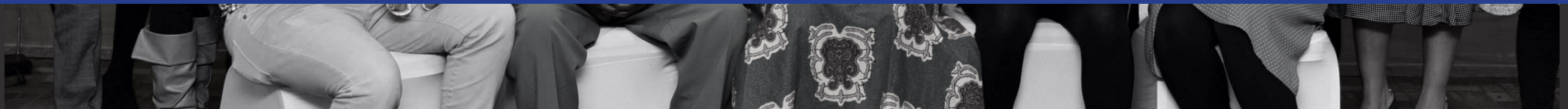




Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta



2021-26 STRATEGIC PLAN



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The African-descent community is growing in Alberta and as a result, so are we. Since our inception in 2006, the Africa Centre has made being a community hub for Albertans of African descent one of its leading prerogatives. Fast forward 14 years and we are still able to provide programs and services to support the emergent needs of our community.

I am excited to unveil the Africa Centre's Strategic Plan which will dictate the direction of the Africa Centre for the next five years. Our strategic goals focus on catering to our budding community and developing our resources to ensure that every need is met for all community members, from toddlers to seniors. Through establishing four strategic pillars: Cultural Identity, Advancement and Empowerment, Integration and Resource Diversification and Organizational Sustainability, the Africa Centre aims to provide exceptional programs and services in a manner that meets social change.

Building on our community's rich cultural identity to promote and create communal solidarity is the Africa Centre's first strategic pillar. Through the promotion of cultural identity, we are able to create a sense of belonging, reduce social isolation, foster inter-generational learning and support capacity-development and civic participation among communities over the next five years.

Advancement and Empowerment of those with vulnerability has always been a priority of the Africa Centre. As a strategic pillar, the centre aims to nurture and advance the lives of our young and old through creating initiatives that empower

youth, promote gender equality, provide access to affordable child development programs, among others.

Integration is a difficult, yet essential part of new Canadian life and the Africa Centre aims to provide support to African-descent newly immigrated Albertans. Skill development and career support translate to employment opportunities, as well as improve settlement experience and outcomes which would lead to full participation and quality of life for African-descent Albertans.

Image, sustainability and public trust is paramount to an organisation's success and we aim to operate efficiently, engage in and diversify initiatives, mitigate risk and safeguard the financial credibility and reputation of the organisation and its members. We understand that financial health, resource diversification and strong policy guides resource mobilization which in turn translates to a healthy organisation that is able to provide the best programs and services that the African descent community deserves.

The Africa Centre is aiming for change and progress over the next five years. This strategic plan will guide and give direction to the programs and services that the Africa Centre offers, in a manner that serves and enhances the quality of life of our stakeholders. We are dedicated to being supportive and impactful, and do so with creativity, resilience and innovation. We commit to keeping on top of our goals to ensure that our community feels safe, included, and supported.



03 MANDATE

Vision

Mission

Our Core Values

04 STRATEGIC GOALS 2020-2026

05 I. Pillar one: Cultural Identity

Goal 1.1: Develop a common understanding of the meaning of culture and identity.

Goal 1.2: Create a physical presence for the Africa Centre.

Goal 1.3: Reduce social isolation and facilitate intergenerational cultural perseverance.

07 II. Pillar two: Advancement and Empowerment

Goal 2.1: Provide a nurturing environment Among African-descent youth that fosters healthy relationships, inclusivity and resilience.

Goal 2.2: Facilitate Culturally Relevant and affordable Early Learning and Child Care Programs.

Goal 2.3: Promote gender equality and advancement of women.

09 III. Pillar three: Integration

Goal 3.1: Improve employment opportunities through skills development and career support.

Goal 3.2: Influence and improve the settlement experience and outcomes through partnership support.

Goal 3.3: Contribute to the economic inclusion by strengthening African descent business sector.

11 IV. Pillar four: Managed Organizational Growth

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Goal 4.3: Ensure sound decision-making throughout the organization.

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MANDATE

Our mandate is to build a thriving community of African descent Canadians in Alberta through access and participation of our programs and services. We strive to deliver this mandate through community empowerment, preservation of strong cultural heritage, appropriate integration processes, sustainable programs, strong leadership, and accountability.

VISION

A thriving, vibrant, and connected community of African descent in Alberta

MISSION

To create opportunities for access and full participation of the African descent community in Alberta

OUR CORE VALUES

Integrity

We believe that all our interactions with members, partners and stakeholders reflect our INTEGRITY; we, therefore, maintain high ethical standards.

Accountability

We are ACCOUNTABLE to our members, donors, funders, and partners to use resources to improve the lives of our community.

Responsiveness

We strive to be accessible, adaptable, and RESPONSIVE to demonstrate a sense of urgency in all our services and the support we provide to our community.

Inclusivity

We foster INCLUSIVITY in all aspects of life. We keep an open mind and embrace positive challenge as our institutional culture.

Respect

We believe in RESPECT and dignity for everyone. Therefore, we are guided by RESPECT for human dignity.

Passion

We believe that our purposeful actions will ultimately make the difference we envision in our community, and we believe this can be achieved through PASSION and volunteerism.

Excellence

We are committed to investing quality time in EXCELLENT services that enrich the lives of our community members.



STRATEGIC GOALS 2020-2026

Africa Centre is committed to carrying out its mandate by delivering programs and services that will enable achieving our strategic goals. These goals are organized under five Strategic Pillars. Africa Centre is determined to deliver programs and services that tie into these five Pillars, while recognizing the need to be adaptive considering the continually changing landscape of social service delivery. One way to approach such evolving context and competing priorities is to optimize the use of existing organizational strengths, while capitalizing on existing opportunity. In this light, Africa Centre has identified thirteen goals under the five Strategic Pillars. Building on the achievements of the past five years (2016- 2020), the organization will pursue these thirteen strategic goals under the following five pillars for the next five years.





PILLAR ONE: CULTURAL IDENTITY

A sense of belonging is essential to a thriving community. A key priority for our programs and services is fostering a sense of belonging within the African community. The intent of Pillar One is to promote and maintain the unique Cultural Identity of heritage, inter-generational cultural preservation, and a sense of belonging.

Under Pillar one, the Africa Centre's strategic goals support initiatives that foster unity among African-descent communities to celebrate diversity and promote their unique cultural identities. In addition to fostering cultural identity, Africa Centre intends to undertake programs that support capacity development and civic participation among African-descent communities. Pillar One has three strategic goals along with their respective actions and tactics:

GOAL 1.1. DEVELOP A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

As the Africa Centre evolves, an agreed upon meaning of what "culture" is in this context will help build mutually beneficial and supportive partnerships moving forward. In 2020, we had witnessed an increased need for cultural understanding and education as an approach to address issues of racism and race relations faced by many African descent and indigenous communities in Alberta. Under this goal, the intent is to position Africa Centre as an agency that has the competency to provide capacity building support on cultural identity by:

- a) Developing a guiding policy on cultural identity and strengthening institution building to deliver cultural competency training.
- b) Developing training tools and delivering development trainings on diversity and inclusion.

GOAL 1.2. CREATE A PHYSICAL PRESENCE FOR THE AFRICA CENTRE

Having a community space is an important step in creating a sense of belonging. A home for the Africa Centre will be a gathering hub and a safe, welcoming place for African descent communities in the region. A visible Africa Centre is a statement to the larger community about the contribution and impact of the people who work, learn, and gather within its walls. An appropriately sized and provisioned Africa Centre will support expansions in programs and partnerships with the ability to provide facilities and infrastructure.

This goal has mid-term and long-term tactics to:

- a) Ensure community access to spaces for community programs and services where cultural identity is celebrated.
- b) Develop a business case for a permanent location built on land currently under lease in Edmonton.

**GOAL 1.3: REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION
AND FACILITATE INTERGENERATIONAL
CULTURAL PRESERVATION.**

African-descent communities are multi-generational and the percentage of those who are now senior is increasing. Initiatives that support the social and services needs of the aging in the community are a priority for Africa Centre. However, we also honour and value our aged members not only for their contributions of the past, but for their wisdom and guidance for the future. This strategic goal addresses how Africa Centre will convey its respect for the aged by fully bringing them into our community and providing social supports. This will be accomplished by:

- a) Building an understanding of the age demographics of the African descent community
- b) Re-imagining seniors' social programs with the lens of reducing isolation and ensuring culturally appropriate program delivery.
- c) Integrating the notion of Wisdom Keepers into current intergenerational programming.
- d) Providing programs that address the social support needed to enhance the wellbeing of African decent seniors



PILLAR TWO: ADVANCEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Africa Centre's programs, activities, and services will focus on advancing the quality of lives and supporting the empowerment of our diverse communities. Our initiatives to support Priority Two are delivered through collaboration and partnership with communities and other stakeholders. Our programs and services strive to reduce inequality and empower the African descent community with its diverse demographics and cultural heritages. We aim to improve the quality of life of our community.

Our 5-year Advancement and Empowerment priorities are to create a nurturing environment for youth, to strengthen resilience and foster healthy relationships, to empower youth capacities, and to promote gender equality.

GOAL 2.1: PROVIDE A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT AMONG AFRICAN-DESCENT YOUTH THAT FOSTERS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, INCLUSIVITY AND RESILIENCE.

Investment in our youth is a key priority area for the Africa Centre. The intent of Goal 2.1 is to ensure that youth of African-descent communities are prepared for success. We will do this by providing leadership and mentorship opportunities that build culturally rooted resilience by:

a) Developing a youth specific leadership framework, supporting programs and mentor relationships (see Pillar 5)

b) Assessing existing youth programs to identify and develop growth opportunities.

c) Creating a youth and technology incubator to prepare future skills for youth.

GOAL 2.2: FACILITATE CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND AFFORDABLE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PROGRAMS.

Africa Centre recognizes the importance of nurturing children in a culturally appropriate setting. The second goal under Pillar Two is to support families and parents in maintaining cultural identity through early childhood development initiatives. The intent of Goal 2.2. is to improve access to culturally appropriate quality Early Learning Childhood Development and Care services while leveraging these programs for families to access other program and services.

In achieving this goal, Africa Centre will undertake actions that include:

a) Providing after school support programs through partnerships; and,

b) Organizing summer camp programs; providing daycare programs and supporting families by connecting them with other programs.

**GOAL 2.3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY
AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN.**

Africa Centre views advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a key priority. Gender equality will help create lasting solutions to challenges facing our communities. We will build coalitions of support to address gender-based disadvantages by leveraging existing resources within our communities and partners. For the next five years, Africa Centre will:

- a) Build a coalition of partnerships to promote women empowerment
- b) Use findings of the gender relations project as a foundation to develop a five-year gender equality program.
- c) Create support initiatives that promote women in leadership (see Pillar 5)



PILLAR THREE: INTEGRATION

Immigrant populations thrive when they fully participate in their communities and the wider civil society. Integration is an ongoing process as immigrants continuously adapt to changing demands. Africa Centre strives to support immigrants through this dynamic process and integration is our third Pillar of programing and services. Our driving desire is that people of African Descent will move beyond surviving to thriving.

Africa Centre focuses on economic integration by creating and enabling employment opportunities, facilitating career development, and building enabling partnerships with supportive agencies.

GOAL 3.1: IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER SUPPORT.

Africa Centre's programs and activities aim to bridge the gap for many in our communities to improved employment opportunities and full social and economic participation. Africa Centre will employ different approaches to skills development by creating career pathways and strengthening partnership with other stakeholders. Actions to support Goal 3.1 include:

a) Delivering employability and life skills development training.

b) Strengthening coordination and partnership with the business sector.

c) Developing and supporting connections with professionals and professional bodies and organizations.

d) Providing career development support through scholarships.

GOAL 3.2: INFLUENCE AND IMPROVE THE SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES THROUGH PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT.

We acknowledge the importance of a positive, successful settlement experience leading to integration and full participation in society. The Africa Centre will become an influencer in how resettlement programs are developed and delivered by:

a) Undertaking a strategic review of the Africa Centre's role in settlement programs to determine its level of direct programming involvement and decide on future direction.

b) Defining desired outcomes for relationships with settlement agencies and developing measurement tools.

GOAL 3.3 CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMIC INCLUSION BY STRENGTHENING AFRICAN DESCENT BUSINESS SECTOR.

a) Expand tailored entrepreneurial development, training, and educational opportunities for the African descent business community.

b) Bridge partnerships, linkages, and collaborations among African descent business ecosystems and the broader business community; and,

c) Assist in mobilizing private and public sector support for the development of the African descent business community.



PILLAR FOUR: MANAGED ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

The Africa Centre has a unique opportunity to grow based on emerging social and government priorities. We are committed to growth that reflects the values and vision of the Africa Centre and our diverse community. And we will take the time needed to get it right.

We intend to strengthen the financial health of the organization through revenue diversification and strengthened accountability systems, including risks management and target setting, tracking, and reporting.

GOAL 4.1: STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSIFICATION AND FINANCIAL GROWTH

The Africa Centre has determined that exploring diversification of its revenue streams over the next five years is key to its growth. With a view to diversify its revenues, Africa Centre will:

a) Establish an expert fund development function, provide appropriate budget support, and set key performance indicators

b) Establish a social enterprise program with the intent to diversify organizational revenues.

GOAL 4.2: BUILD AND MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS.

Organizations which build good governance practices are better able to manage growth effectively. We plan to continue our good governance momentum by advancing our governance structure and building strong policies and processes that enable effective governance and accountability. To achieve this goal, we will:

a) Conduct an annual review of Africa Centre's governance structure.

b) Deliver a Board recruitment process built on a competency matrix that includes skills, credentials, and leadership style.

c) Develop a Board development program that includes governance training and succession planning.

d) Acquire and maintain Imagine Canada accreditation in demonstration of organizational excellence.

**GOAL 4.3: ENSURE SOUND DECISION-
MAKING THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION.**

The purpose of the third Goal under Priority Four is not only to support excellence in governance but to facilitate operational accountability, an effective decision-making process, and transparency. To achieve this goal, we will

a) Develop scheduled progress reports which are communicated to members and stakeholders

b) Provide timely and accurate financial reports to the Board and management team



PILLAR FIVE: LEADERSHIP

As the Africa Centre continues to grow, the Board has recognized the critical importance of raising up and supporting leaders in the organization and in the community.

Following the past few years of growth and leadership responsibilities, a new strategic pillar has been created to bring focus to that organizational intent in leadership development. It is our hope that those who come to the Africa Centre, whether as a community member, staff, or board member, will emerge as leaders in their respective communities.

GOAL 5.1: EMBED LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AS A FOUNDATIONAL VALUE ACROSS ALL ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONS

Good leadership culture involves everyone attached to the organization. The Africa Centre is committed to actively developing leaders and supporting their growth. We intend to be known for the leaders who work with us and the leaders we empower and send out into the community. We will accomplish this by:

a) Developing and implementing a youth leadership building program that will equip and support youth with leadership skills and opportunities.

b) Developing a band of women in leadership within the community.

c) Developing a comprehensive leadership program that cuts across the Africa Centre and its community, supporting women, youth, staff, volunteers, and board on their leadership journey.