



Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions Association canadienne des foires et expositions

CAFE 2026- 2030

**Meet You There –
The Next Chapter
Strategic Plan**

Why This Matters Now

Fairs and exhibitions remain among Canada's most enduring and impactful community institutions. They bring people together to celebrate agriculture, culture, and shared experience; support local economies and tourism; foster youth development; and strengthen social connection across the country.

At the same time, the sector is operating in a more complex environment. Rising costs, workforce shortages, changing demographics, and heightened expectations around governance, safety, and professionalism are reshaping how fairs

and exhibitions operate. Nationally, the role of coordinated advocacy, shared learning, and credible data has never been more important.

The Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (CAFE) exists to strengthen this sector nationally. The 2026–2030 Strategic Framework builds on the momentum of Meet You There and sets a clear course for the next phase of CAFE's work, aligning ambition with capacity while deepening impact.



Our Purpose and Strategic Continuity

CAFE strengthens organizations that create experiences to enrich communities across Canada.

As the national association for fairs, exhibitions and agriculture societies, CAFE provides leadership, advocacy, programs, and tools that support collaboration, shared learning, and coordinated action.

CAFE's mandate remains unchanged. This solid framework reinforces continuity with the organization's long-standing purpose and pillars while sharpening focus on what matters most over the next four years.



Our Strategic Focus (2026–2030)

CAFE's work over the 2026–2030 period is guided by three interconnected outcomes:

CAPACITY

Ensuring CAFE has the organizational, financial, and technological foundations required to enhance and grow its impact.

MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Delivering clear, tangible benefits that members recognize as valuable, relevant, and worthy of participation.

AWARENESS

Elevating recognition of fairs and exhibitions as vital contributors to Canada's economy, culture, and community life. Strengthening CAFE's role as the national voice of the sector.

Together, these outcomes inform organizational investment and effort.

Strategic Pillars: How We Deliver

PILLAR #1

BE THE VOICE

What this means

Championing fairs and exhibitions nationally through advocacy, evidence-based storytelling, and coordinated government and stakeholder engagement.

Why this matters now

The sector's economic, cultural, and community contributions are often under-recognized. Strong, credible advocacy supported by data and consistent messaging is essential to influence policy, funding, and public understanding.

Priority focus areas

- National advocacy and government relations
- Sector storytelling and credibility
- Unified messaging to amplify communications focused on industry impact and importance to communities

PILLAR #2

SERVICES THAT DRIVE VALUE

What this means

Delivering relevant, accessible programs, learning opportunities, and connections that members clearly recognize as valuable to meet changing market conditions.

Why this matters now

Members are seeking practical support, professional development, and opportunities to connect with peers. Clear value delivery is essential to engagement, retention, and long-term sustainability.

Priority focus areas

- Clear membership value proposition
- Professional learning and peer exchange
- Engagement, recognition, and retention

PILLAR #3

FOSTERING PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATION

What this means

Strengthening collaboration across the sector by connecting partners, provincial associations, and stakeholders to amplify collective impact.

Why this matters now

The diversity of fairs and exhibitions across regions requires flexible collaboration models that respect local context while advancing shared priorities.

Priority focus areas

- Collaboration with partners and provincial associations
- Peer learning and knowledge sharing
- Board and member engagement

Key Initiatives

PHASE / TIMEFRAME	BE THE VOICE (ADVOCACY & AWARENESS)	SERVICES THAT DRIVE VALUE (PROGRAMS & MEMBER VALUE)	FOSTERING PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATION (ENGAGEMENT & ALIGNMENT)
2026 Foundation <i>Clarity, readiness, alignment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify national advocacy priorities and messaging Strengthen sector storytelling and credibility Establish positioning for a national economic impact study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify and communicate the CAFE membership value proposition Relaunch of core programs (Designation Program, Youth Exchange, webinars), etc Review and scope technology and systems to support engagement and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the Convention as the primary national learning and collaboration anchor Strengthen collaboration with provincial associations and service members Support Board and committee alignment
2027 Expansion <i>Activation and visibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance the national economic impact study and related advocacy efforts Use early findings to support government and stakeholder engagement Increase visibility through coordinated communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a focused set of learning and engagement initiatives (Designation Program, Youth Exchange, virtual offerings), etc Pilot or explore additional offerings aligned with capacity and member needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen member engagement through programming and peer exchange Assess staffing, volunteer, and governance capacity to support sustained delivery
2028 Consolidation <i>Embedding and refinement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate advocacy outcomes through reporting and member updates Refine messaging based on evidence and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stabilize and refine core programs based on evaluation Improve consistency and quality of program delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen internal processes supporting collaboration Reinforce committee effectiveness and engagement
2029–2030 Influence & Continuity <i>Sustained impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate multi-year sector impact Position CAFE as a mature, credible national voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure long-term sustainability of priority services and programs Embed continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support long-term collaboration models Prepare for the next strategic planning cycle

Measuring Progress

Progress under this framework will be monitored through annual planning, regular reporting to the Board, and outcome-focused indicators to demonstrate advancement against the objectives.

Illustrative indicators include:

- membership health and engagement;
- participation in learning and collaboration activities;
- advocacy activity and outcomes; and
- visibility and awareness of the sector.



Governance and Accountability

Implementation of this Strategic Framework is grounded in CAFE's by-laws and governance policies.

- The Board of Directors provides strategic oversight and monitors progress.
- The Executive Director is responsible for implementation within delegated authority.
- Committees, staff, and partners support delivery aligned with defined roles and capacity.

Looking Ahead



This Strategic Framework translates CAFE's long-term vision into a clear, actionable structure for 2026–2030. It provides a shared understanding of priorities while allowing flexibility in how initiatives are delivered year to year.

Together with the Strategic Overview and the full Board-approved Strategic Plan, it ensures CAFE's strategy is clear, coherent, and accessible — to members, partners, and the communities that fairs and exhibitions serve.

Serving:

- Fairs & Festivals
- Exhibitions
- Ag Societies
- Events
- Provincial Associations
- Service Providers to the Sector



800-663-1714



info@canadian-fairs.ca



204-78 George Street,
Ottawa, ON K1N 5W1

canadianfairs.ca