

AORS STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020 – 2024 2025:

An Open Road to Success

(Approved by the Board of Directors, February 23, 2020)

(Approved by Board of Directors to extend to 2025, March 4, 2021)

VISION STATEMENT

We are Ontario's Public Works Professionals who construct, maintain and operate the essential infrastructure you rely upon each day.

Our certified members are leaders in delivering services in the most effective, efficient and safe manner – embracing innovative technologies, educational opportunities and environmental stewardship.

MISSION STATEMENT

AORS supports and promotes our local associations and the public works industry through

- Communication
- Education
- Certification
- Networking
- Advocacy

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

At the 2019 Strategic Planning Workshop, the AORS Strategic Planning Committee and representatives from several Local Associations agreed on the following seven areas of focus for the next AORS Strategic Plan, which were subsequently approved by the Board of Directors on February 23, 2020 as the **Strategic Objectives**:

1. Leverage **Strategic Partnerships** to achieve broader goals
2. Support our members through the ongoing **Demographic Shift**
3. Strengthen our **Communication & Advocacy** Capabilities
4. Help our **Local Associations** increase and engage their membership
5. Build and maintain **Corporate Capacity** to achieve our goals
6. Continue to deliver **Education Programs** that meet our members' expectations
7. Promote and strengthen the AORS **Certification Program**

BACKGROUND

Following is some background information for each of the Strategic Objectives to better understand why each was identified as an area of focus:

1. Leverage ***Strategic Partnerships*** to achieve broader goals

AORS is a relatively small organization with limited resources, but committed to delivering the best possible service to its members, and expanding into new offerings where appropriate. There are several other organizations that serve the same constituency, but offer different services; others that offer similar services but to a different market; and in some cases there is overlap with AORS, where we both offer similar services to at least some of the same individuals. Some are non-profit organizations like AORS, while others are private sector for-profit organizations. The objective is to build partnerships with key organizations to raise awareness and extend the reach of AORS; and to expand or improve the services we offer our members, directly or indirectly, in the most cost-effective manner with minimal duplication.

2. Support our members through the ongoing ***Demographic Shift***

Like most employment sectors in Canada, municipal public works is experiencing an unprecedented turnover in staff as baby boomers retire. This is expected to continue for at least another 5 years. Many municipalities are struggling to find qualified individuals to fill certain vacancies. This is in spite of the fact that municipalities offer stable, secure, well-compensated employment with generous benefits in an environment increasingly known as the “gig economy”. The millennials who are filling many of these positions bring with them new skills, but also very different attitudes about long term commitment to an employer and willingness to participate in activities like volunteering with an association. How do we help our members, and the Association, recruit, train and retain the best of the best?

3. Strengthen our ***Communication & Advocacy*** Capabilities

Effective communication with members and other stakeholders is critical for any organization to be successful. One particular area of communication for an association like AORS is lobbying on behalf of its members. While significant improvements have been made in these areas in recent years, we’ll need to continue expanding our capabilities and communication channels, especially as technologies evolve, our members become more tech savvy, and municipalities are faced with increasing regulatory, fiscal and other demands.

4. Help our ***Local Associations*** increase and engage their membership

Many Local Associations are finding it increasingly difficult to attract new members, and to convince their members to actively participate. Even more so when members are asked to serve on their Local Association executive or participate at the Provincial level. This is expected to worsen as long term members retire, and as municipalities search for ways to cut costs. What can AORS do to inject new life at all levels of the organization?

5. Build and maintain **Corporate Capacity** to achieve our goals

As organizations go, AORS is very lean, with just 3 FTE staff and several contractors who help AORS deliver key products and services. We also rely on a small group of dedicated members who volunteer their time. Not surprisingly, we are lacking in certain skillsets that are critical to delivering on our current and future objectives. There is also considerable risk if a key member of the team leaves, since there is a limited pool to draw upon for succession planning. And lastly, AORS has several outdated or deficient policies, procedures and systems, which creates risk and inefficiencies. We need to find innovative ways to close the gaps without adding to operational costs.

6. Continue to deliver **Education Programs** that meet our members' expectations

AORS Training and Professional Development Programs have become one of the most important services we offer to help our members improve efficiency and effectiveness, comply with regulations and overall satisfy their due diligence obligations. They are also key contributors to the success of the CRS program, which is based on the principle of supervisory experience backed up with continuing education. The training space is highly competitive and increasingly crowded, so AORS must constantly look for new opportunities, but focus on those that are most relevant and cost-effective for our members.

7. Promote and strengthen the AORS **Certification Program**

The Certified Road Supervisor (CRS) program is highly respected and increasingly accepted as an objective assessment of an individual's competency, as measured by their education and work experience. AORS must remain vigilant to ensure the program remains relevant and accessible, and increase its recognition among municipalities as a preferred qualification for public works supervisors and managers. There may also be opportunities to expand the scope of the CRS program, or to develop complementary programs, to support other public works disciplines.

STRATEGIES

In this section, several Strategies are listed under each of the Strategic Objectives. These were derived from the Member Survey conducted in 2019 and discussions at the subsequent Strategic Planning Workshop. Many of these strategies will be ongoing, rather than short term initiatives.

1. Leverage ***Strategic Partnerships*** to achieve broader goals

Strategies

- a) Expand AORS' recognition and brand awareness by leveraging the communications channels of partner organizations.
- b) Partner with other Ontario associations and like organizations to identify and deliver additional benefits for AORS members (e.g. MEOA re FLEET).
- c) Seek mutual recognition agreements with other organizations that will allow AORS training to be accepted towards other certifications.
- d) Partner with third party service providers to offer enhanced member benefits (e.g. hotel discounts, group insurance rates).
- e) Work with labour training resources (e.g. regional training boards) to identify labour shortages and develop plans to address them.

2. Support our members through the ongoing ***Demographic Shift***

Strategies

- a) Raise awareness and improve the appeal of Public Works as a career option among college and high school students
- b) Expand the use of social media and other electronic tools for communication and service delivery.
- c) Develop and/or support a mentoring program to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and provide support to junior staff.
- d) Promote enhanced recruiting and job placement services for municipalities and members (e.g. Participate in job fairs etc.)

3. Strengthen our ***Communication & Advocacy*** Capabilities

Strategies

- a) Continue to promote AORS membership, training and certification programs to municipal councillors and senior managers.
- b) Promote and deliver messaging tailored to different target markets (e.g. members, municipalities, suppliers, students).
- c) Utilize our website, social media, and other electronic tools to improve communications with/between our members, and with other stakeholders.
- d) Support our strategic partners by leveraging AORS' impartial position to lobby regulators on issues of common concerns.

4. Help our **Local Associations** increase and engage their membership

Strategies

- a) Promote and deliver a multi-pronged membership development program that promotes the benefits of LA membership and participation, aimed at
 - i. Councilors and senior municipal managers
 - ii. Potential members, in particular younger employees
 - iii. Supplier members
- b) Enhance and promote training, templates, and other tools to support members serving on LA executives and secretaries.
- c) Identify and promote potential speakers for LA meetings.
- d) Support LAs in the use of technology

5. Build and maintain **Corporate Capacity** to achieve our goals

Strategies

- a) Maintain up-to-date succession and contingency plans for employees and key contractors.
- b) Review staffing levels to ensure services can be delivered efficiently and sustainably.
- c) Develop a staff training program for Board approval, to improve employee effectiveness and engagement.
- d) Develop a plan to review and update the AORS constitution, policies, procedures and systems to improve efficiency, reduce risk, and ensure compliance with regulations (e.g. new Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act).
- e) Review AORS office accommodations to ensure they support efficient and effective delivery of services.
- f) Develop and implement annual budgets and business plans that support the long-term financial security of the Association.

6. Continue to deliver **Education Programs** that meet our members' expectations

Strategies

- a) Explore opportunities to develop and deliver training for private sector companies delivering services to municipalities.
- b) Consider alternate delivery models where appropriate (e.g. distance learning, webinars).
- c) Develop a system for maintaining training records online
- d) Explore additional funding sources to offset increases in training costs
- e) Identify new training programs and partners (e.g. Fleet management)

7. Promote and strengthen the AORS *Certification Program*

Strategies

- a) Promote the value of the CRS and complementary programs to young public works employees and municipalities as professional development, career planning, and workforce planning tools.
- b) Evaluate the CRS educational requirements to ensure they are not creating unnecessary barriers to certification (e.g. excessive cost, redundant training).
- c) Review the broader public works sector to identify gaps where no certification programs are currently available and evaluate whether the CRS should be expanded or a complementary program developed (e.g. equipment operators, fleet managers).