



**CPRS**

**One Community.  
Many Voices.**



# **Our Strategic Plan to 2021**

The Canadian Public Relations Society



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# A National Conversation

Timing is everything. As CPRS celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, we took the opportunity to look back on seven decades to see how far we've come and to look forward to help shape our future to meet the changing needs of our profession. This reflection has sparked a dynamic national conversation with thought leaders about the future of public relations and communications management.

We began in 2017 with the commissioning of *The Elevation of Public Relations*, a white paper outlining seven key megatrends affecting the public relations and communications management profession. Many thanks to Dan Tisch, APR, FCPRS and the working group for their thought-provoking insights.

The Future of CPRS Committee (FCPRSC) then took the discussion further, engaging more than 1,000 members and non-members across the country. The resulting new *Strategic Framework* is a collective commitment to creating a community of public relations and communications management professionals with common values and goals. Many thanks to the senior CPRS members who led this initiative, including co-chairs Kim Blanchette APR, FCPRS and Colleen Killingsworth MCM, APR, FCPRS.

This work over the past two years has served as the foundation for creating a *3-year Strategic Plan*. We continued to build and foster engagement, gain insights and have rich conversations across the country with key stakeholders to put an actionable plan together. This will set our course for the next three years and beyond. Our thanks to Jane Adams APR and the Strategic Planning Task Force for their work this year to develop the plan.

On behalf of your Board of Directors, thank you for being a member of CPRS. We are one community with many voices - all committed to helping each of us thrive as professional communicators.



**Dana Dean APR, FCPRS, LM**  
CPRS President 2018/2019

# Grounded in Research

At the core of CPRS is its members. Together, we are dedicated to professional development, delivering strategic value to our organizations and supporting and promoting ethical public relations and communications management in Canada and around the world and that is not always easy. Our world is in transition and change is rapid and constant.

***The Elevation of Public Relations***<sup>1</sup> white paper identifies seven interconnected megatrends shaping public relations and communications management today:

1. The rising business value of reputation, relationships and communication
2. The empowered audience, thanks to the social web
3. Content Shock
4. Many speak, few listen
5. Disintermediation, fake news and the decline of journalism
6. A gap in wealth – and trust
7. AI comes to PR

The white paper goes on to consider the actual implications of these megatrends and to introduce specific imperatives for CPRS.

The work of the Future of CPRS Committee<sup>2</sup> took our exploration one step further. Their findings were gleaned from consultations with close to 1,000 professionals – at the 2017 Kelowna conference, through focus sessions and then through the largest survey in CPRS history. This deep dive asked members to look closely at the industry’s challenges and opportunities - and even rank the trends in terms of their impact on day-to-day work. The committee also challenged members to define themselves and their place in CPRS. The resulting ***Strategic Framework*** brings it all together.

This year, the Strategic Planning Task Force reached out once more – speaking to close to 50 CPRS members, the National Board, committee and council chairs, Presidents’ Council and local society executives, and CPRS’s association management team. This pulse check confirmed the *Strategic Framework* findings, but it also helped us to learn more about what members are looking for in their professional association. It builds upon the 2010 strategic plan. This strategic plan was developed during a time of transition for CPRS. The CPRS Board of Directors is accountable for confirming these priorities, the annual work plans and related metrics. The metrics will be developed in 2019/2020. The result will be an actionable approach to help meet these needs during a time of significant change.

# Setting the Stage

Over this past year, CPRS has changed too. We acquired a philanthropic arm for CPRS by welcoming the Communications + PR Foundation (pending approval from the Foundation membership at its June AGM). The Foundation will further advance the public's knowledge and understanding of public relations and communications management and relevant research. But there have also been challenges. Local societies tell us that they need more support; and part of that support needs to include new technologies to maximize efficiencies. A new opportunity with the launch of the Atlantic Exploratory Pilot will help identify a new approach.

Perhaps most significantly, your National Board reviewed the Society's association management services. The Board made the decision to retain the services of Dalton Cloutier Inc. (DCI) to maintain continuity and institutional knowledge while seeking new organizational leadership and a new DCI workplan for the Society. After careful consideration, Executive Director Karen Dalton, APR, FCPRS (H), CAE made the business decision to partner with Managing Matters Inc., a larger association management company. The Board was supportive of this decision and we thank Karen for her incredible contribution to CPRS.

In the Spring of 2019, CPRS welcomed Tyler Callaghan as our new Executive Director. The team at DCI and the new Executive Director transitioned to Managing Matters Inc. effective April 1, 2019. This partnership positions CPRS to deliver on this Strategic Plan with a renewed commitment to enhancing our members' experience.

Today, CPRS has an opportunity to move forward and work together to take on the future of public relations and communications management with a strong vision and common purpose.



Our ability to build relationships, provide strategic business value, earn trust, and incorporate data and analytics into our work is key to the continued growth and success of our profession.”  
- *The Future of CPRS Committee*

<sup>1</sup>Download the *Elevation of Public Relations* white paper at [www.cprs.ca](http://www.cprs.ca)

<sup>2</sup>Learn more about the work of the Future of CPRS Committee at [www.cprs.ca](http://www.cprs.ca)

# A Path Forward

## What We Heard During the Strategic Plan Consultations:

*“We need to meet the needs of the newest practitioners. They will be working in a work world that is changing very quickly.”*

*“Success will be common values across the profession as a result of a shared CPRS vision.”*

## -Strategic Plan Consultations

Public relations and communications management is defined as “the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest”.<sup>3</sup>

CPRS is a national society committed to advancing public relations and communications management. There are more than 2,300 members across Canada, professionally engaged in the practice, management or teaching of public relations and communications management. CPRS is a federation of 14-member societies based in major cities or organized province-wide and is governed by our National Board of Directors.

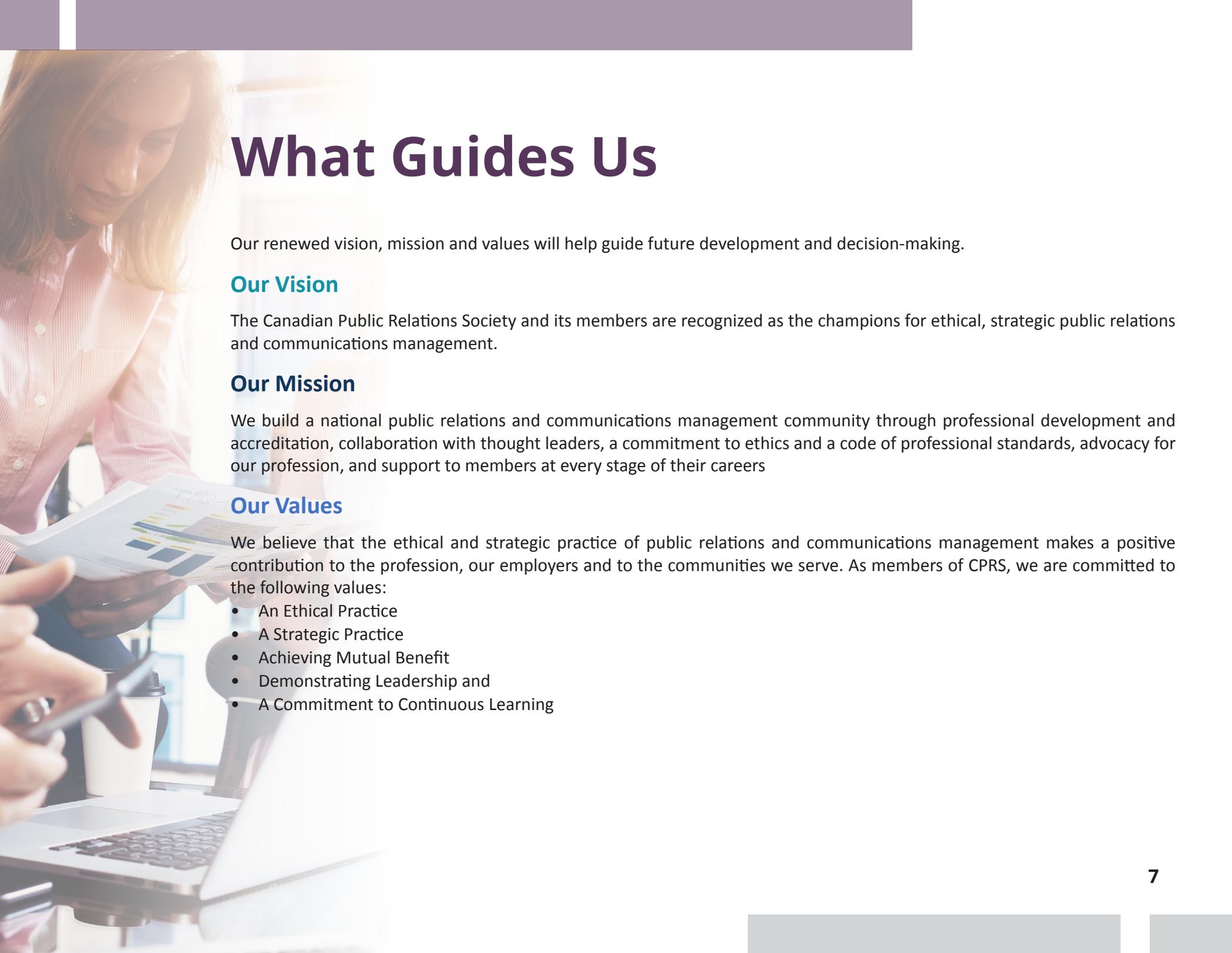
We’ve been listening – to our members, to our industry and to our world. We have a clear path forward with some essential learnings to guide us:

- Members do not define themselves solely by regions; rather as a national network of committed public relations and communications management professionals
- CPRS members relate to the seven megatrends outlined in *The Elevation of Public Relations* white paper; and for the most part, agree on the implications these trends have on our industry
- Members are looking for their professional association to:
  - advocate for the profession
  - enhance ethical and professional standards, and
  - provide support to help them succeed through the rapid changes affecting our profession through professional development, networking, and accreditation opportunities, while addressing skill gaps and changing mindsets

This 3-year Strategic Plan is a guide to help us at a key turning point in our journey, providing a path for the work plans and budgets to follow. It is a living document that will be reviewed annually by the Board to keep us focused, on track and agile.

The conversation continues.

<sup>3</sup> Flynn, Gregory & Valin (2008)



# What Guides Us

Our renewed vision, mission and values will help guide future development and decision-making.

## Our Vision

The Canadian Public Relations Society and its members are recognized as the champions for ethical, strategic public relations and communications management.

## Our Mission

We build a national public relations and communications management community through professional development and accreditation, collaboration with thought leaders, a commitment to ethics and a code of professional standards, advocacy for our profession, and support to members at every stage of their careers

## Our Values

We believe that the ethical and strategic practice of public relations and communications management makes a positive contribution to the profession, our employers and to the communities we serve. As members of CPRS, we are committed to the following values:

- An Ethical Practice
- A Strategic Practice
- Achieving Mutual Benefit
- Demonstrating Leadership and
- A Commitment to Continuous Learning

# A New Approach

The future of CPRS lies in our ability to respond to four strategic goals, as identified by the Future of CPRS Committee's work. This strategic plan includes a fifth element highlighting the underlying foundation focused on association sustainability.



## Goal 1: COMMUNITY

**A CPRS member is part of a national, bilingual community with full access to services and benefits regardless of where they live.**

*CPRS membership is national in nature. Members expect to be a part of a national network representing their industry with full access to resources, services and benefits regardless of where they live. While local societies have played an important role in supporting members, the nature of our community has changed. Any member who has attended a national conference understands how boundaries melt away. To truly serve our members' needs, we must be ONE community that can grow and adapt to the changing needs of public relations and communications management professionals in Canada.*



## Goal 2: COLLABORATION

**CPRS members have direct access to share knowledge with colleagues and professionals, opportunities to engage with thought leaders and discuss trends in the industry.**

*From tapping into the experience of our College of Fellows, to sharing thoughts with professionals nation-wide, CPRS has a wealth of knowledge and insight among its members and works to foster a robust knowledge exchange. We have an opportunity to move from informal networks to deliberate and purposeful collaboration, providing the tools to connect members and continue our national discussion on trends, challenges and issues we face in our work.*



## Goal 4: CONSCIENCE

**CPRS members are seen as ethical professionals who adhere to and uphold a code of standards.**

*In an era of fake news and alternative facts, CPRS must do more than talk about ethical public relations; we must be THE champion for the public relations and communications management industry in Canada. While having a code of professional standards and a commitment to ethical PR is important, we must speak out in support of professional communicators, call out unethical PR practice, and demonstrate leadership through a clear disciplinary policy that is fully implemented. We must understand the public perceptions of our industry and develop plans to promote ethical public relations across Canada.*



## Goal 3: CAREERS

**CPRS members are supported at every stage of their career.**

*We have an opportunity to expand our professional development offerings to support CPRS members at each stage in their career journey. Beyond the PRK, APR and College of Fellows, CPRS can explore development for new and middle managers, expand mentorship and coaching programs, and work with educational institutions to bring relevant networking, workshops and training sessions to members to help them manage the trends and issues facing the industry.*



# CPRS

## FUNDAMENTALS

Our Society's success depends on core fundamentals securing the long-term viability of CPRS through our revenue sources, volunteer resources, governance structures and cost-efficient internal processes.

# A Roadmap



## Goal 1: COMMUNITY

A CPRS member is part of a national, bilingual community with full access to services and benefits regardless of where they live.

PRIORITY	POTENTIAL SUPPORTING ACTIONS
<p><b>Priority 1.1</b> <i>Engage Locally. Connect Nationally.</i> Rebuild relationship with local societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop, implement and evaluate the Atlantic Exploratory Pilot (AEP)</li><li>▪ Identify and provide support services through association management company, recognizing and respecting local needs and capabilities</li><li>▪ Launch phase 2 of website (regional microsites)</li><li>▪ Find economies of scale and cost-efficiencies</li></ul>
<p><b>Priority 1.2</b> <i>We all belong to CPRS</i> Build a strong and vibrant national membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Expand the marketing campaign</li><li>▪ Work with the Society's francophone community to ensure national communications standards are met</li></ul>
<p><b>Priority 1.3</b> <i>What's in it for me?</i> Focus on the member experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Explore 'individualized approach' to engaging members targeted to their needs</li><li>▪ Define our member categories and explore streamlined renewal options</li><li>▪ Learn from member satisfaction surveys</li></ul>

# A Roadmap



## Goal 2: COLLABORATION

CPRS members have direct access to share knowledge with colleagues and professionals, opportunities to engage with thought leaders and discuss trends in the industry.

PRIORITY	POTENTIAL SUPPORTING ACTIONS
<p><b>Priority 2.1</b>  <i>Right place. Right time.</i>                      Review and prioritize professional development opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand online opportunities for on demand learning</li> <li>▪ Work with local societies to offer enhanced 'road trip' and/or remote sessions and explore new national conference models</li> <li>▪ Support local networking and PD, recognizing and respecting local needs and capabilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2.2</b>  <i>Create a community of practice</i>                      Expand opportunities for national conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand social media and collaboration channels (e.g. CPRS Connect)</li> <li>▪ Look for opportunities to link local societies</li> <li>▪ Advance the work of the Communications + PR Foundation to provide industry thought-leadership and research</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2.3</b>  <i>Share our expertise</i>                      Be engaged as thought leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand content in Bill Rees Learning Centre and continue to create original research and documents</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with other organizations (local, national and global) to leverage best practices and learnings to further strengthen our profession</li> <li>▪ Target Senior Professionals to draft articles/posts according to a theme calendar (start small with 4/year and build)</li> <li>▪ Participate in the Global Alliance</li> </ul>

# A Roadmap



## Goal 3: CAREERS

CPRS members are supported at every stage of their career.

PRIORITY	POTENTIAL SUPPORTING ACTIONS
<p><b>Priority 3.1</b>  <i>Life-long learning</i>                      Review and enhance Pathways to the Profession program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand Pathways packaging and marketing</li> <li>▪ Complete environmental scan and differentiate CPRS program; promote unique value proposition CPRS membership provides</li> <li>▪ Explore participation in the Global Capability Framework as an opportunity for the accreditation process</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 3.2</b>  <i>Supporting the next generation</i>                      Expand mentorship programming and opportunities, recognizing two-way benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go beyond 'find a job' approach</li> <li>▪ Build connections for young professionals and students</li> <li>▪ Enhance opportunities for skills development and career advancement for post-APR members</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 3.3</b>  <i>First Connections</i>                      Define and expand partnerships with education/academic partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Liaise with institutions and support instructor involvement with CPRS</li> <li>▪ Explore student membership opportunities, including benefactor funding model</li> </ul>

# A Roadmap



## Goal 4: CONSCIENCE

CPRS members are seen as ethical professionals who adhere to and uphold a code of standards.

PRIORITY	POTENTIAL SUPPORTING ACTIONS
<b>Priority 4.1</b> <i>Celebrating Success</i> Review national awards program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Conduct Awards program review including participant survey, environmental/best practices scan and submission process</li><li>▪ Recommendations for 2020 program</li></ul>
<b>Priority 4.2</b> <i>Speak Up</i> Further develop advocacy program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Further develop the Advocacy and Public Relations Committee and strengthen our position as a leading voice and advocate for public relations and communications management in Canada</li><li>▪ Advocate for ethical, strategic practice</li></ul>
<b>Priority 4.3</b> <i>#CPRSProud</i> Elevate our profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promote our vision and build trust</li><li>▪ Look for opportunities to elevate and promote member successes</li><li>▪ Explore potential name change to better reflect CPRS's current and potential membership</li><li>▪ Enhance Code of Professional Standards with appropriate policies</li><li>▪ Feature volunteers across the country (e.g. What's Your Story?)</li></ul>

# A Roadmap

## FUNDAMENTALS

Our Society's success depends on core fundamentals securing the long-term viability of CPRS through our revenue sources, volunteer resources, governance structures and cost-efficient internal processes.

PRIORITY	POTENTIAL SUPPORTING ACTIONS
<p><b>Priority 5.1</b> <i>A solid base</i> Ensure sustainable financial and association management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Review CPRS governance structure and new management model, including transition plan and performance measurement</li><li>▪ Explore technology and automation upgrades for efficiency and data management</li><li>▪ Review sponsorship program and revenue streams</li></ul>
<p><b>Priority 5.2</b> <i>A strong team</i> Define and expand CPRS's national volunteer base</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Review governance and organizational committee structures</li><li>▪ Develop national volunteer recruitment strategy</li><li>▪ Broaden our scope through the Communications + PR Foundation</li></ul>
<p><b>Priority 5.3</b> <i>Going beyond CPRS</i> Monitor CPRS's impact on sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Evaluate CPRS's environmental impact and introduce action plan related to metrics such as travel carbon footprint, conference resources, etc.</li></ul>

# Acknowledgments

This plan was developed by the Strategic Planning Task Force in consultation with CPRS members, the National Board, Presidents' Council, various committees and councils, and CPRS's association management team.

Our sincere thanks to all those who provided their thoughtful input on the plan.

## Strategic Planning Task Force

- Jane Adams APR – Task Force Chair
- Clay Adams APR
- Elizabeth Hirst ARP, FSCRIP, LM
- Tracy Kenney
- Jorielle Nunag, Student Member
- Dana Dean APR, FCPRS, LM - CPRS President
- Karen Dalton APR, CAE, FCPRS(H), LM - CPRS Executive Director

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