



**ROYAL
BOTANICAL
GARDENS**
www.rbg.ca

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Strategic Plan

**Approved by the RBG Board of Directors:
September 16, 2014**

“Royal Botanical Gardens puts nature’s beauty on display, but it isn’t a park system. It teaches but it isn’t a school. It protects and preserves forest and marsh, but it isn’t a conservation authority. It collects and propagates botanical knowledge and plant life, but it is not a library, museum, or laboratory. It is all those things and more than their sum”.

Dr. Leslie Laking, RBG Director Emeritus

VISION

Royal Botanical Gardens is a global leader in how we use plants and the natural world to connect people, place and sustainable behaviors.

MISSION

We dedicate our expertise in horticulture, conservation, science and education – together with our unique gardens, facilities and natural lands – to inspire and nurture society’s commitment to the environment.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Royal Botanical Gardens’ Staff and Board of Directors believe:

- Plants are vitally important for the well-being and sustainability of society.
- The future health of the environment depends on valuing and protecting plants and the habitats in which they live.
- They have a role to play in showing the public the beauty and environmental importance of preserving plant life.
- They should strive to deliver a memorable experience for visitors.
- Staff and volunteers are a valued and most important resource contributing to the success of Royal Botanical Gardens.
- The future sustainability of Royal Botanical Gardens depends on commitment, innovation and creativity of staff and volunteers.
- Effective communication is fundamentally important for the relationship with staff, stakeholders and partner organizations.

FACTS

- RBG is a corporation without share capital that was incorporated through an Act of the Provincial legislative of Ontario in 1941.
- We are Canada's plant biodiversity hotspot with close to 25% of Canada's and 40% of Ontario's wild flora growing on our properties.
- RBG encompasses 2,700 acres of cultivated gardens and natural lands.
- RBG's horticultural collections include over 50 collections of unique plants highlighted by one of the world's largest and most diverse collection of Lilacs, Irises and Roses.
- RBG is a central place for scientific and cultural experiences ranging from art and music in the gardens to environmental research in the wetlands.
- We are a major tourism destination, a National Historic Site of Canada, and we play an active role in our local community.
- We have helped to connect people, plants and nature through our educational programs since 1947. Over 30,000 children attend nature programs each year.
- Our properties front on the shore of Lake Ontario and are within the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve and the Ontario Greenbelt.
- We protect Carolinian Forest, Class 1 Wetlands, remnant prairies and Niagara Escarpment slopes that support 50 species at risk.
- We work with dozens of partners across sectors as diverse as horticulture and landscape management; plant conservation; education; habitat protection, management and restoration; species at risk; outdoor recreation; biodiversity stewardship; health; community development; and tourism.
- We are a lead player in the International Joint Commission's Hamilton Harbor Remedial Action Plan. Along with our RAP partners, we have made habitat improvements on our properties that, since 2013, have supported nesting Bald Eagles (the first pair to nest on the Canadian shore of Lake Ontario in 50 years).
- We lead the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System, a major initiative to connect habitats linking the shore of Lake Ontario with the Niagara Escarpment.
- We founded and lead Ontario's Back to Nature Network and played a key role in the development of the Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter.

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN:

1. THE RBG GUEST EXPERIENCE
2. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
3. ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP
4. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

SPECIAL NOTE: THE 'RBG TEAM' MEANS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT, STAFF, THE AUXILIARY AND VOLUNTEERS.

Strategic Goal #1 – The RBG Guest Experience

GOAL:

RBG will provide legendary guest experiences.

ACTIONS:

1. Provide a comprehensive customer service training program that results in a “wow” guest experience at RBG.
2. Implement a work schedule for the RBG team that will have team members available to enhance the guest experience at all times.
3. Create a complete and consistent signage and interpretation experience at all points of entry and throughout the RBG (including digital points of entry).
4. Obtain, analyze, and consider guest feedback on an ongoing basis to assist in improving the guest experience.
5. Develop and implement an internal transportation strategy aimed at connecting the separate areas of RBG, giving guests options for moving around the property. This strategy would ensure guest parking availability and provide alternative accessibility options including but not limited to: transit, cycling, walking and arriving by car.
6. Research public transit opportunities with key stakeholders in our area to provide improved access for our guests.
7. Provide guest amenities to enhance the guest experience.

Strategic Goal #2 – Financial Sustainability

GOAL:

RBG will become financially sustainable by 2020. RBG will have sufficient revenue to achieve its strategic goals.

ACTIONS:

1. Create new revenue streams for Royal Botanical Gardens. Leverage and enhance the existing land use plan to identify the next capital projects that should be undertaken over the next five years. For each project, develop a business plan which will include the feasibility of conducting a major capital fundraising campaign to cover capital costs.
2. Develop and implement an infrastructure renewal program for all assets of RBG in order to maintain facilities in a state of good repair.
3. Explore partnerships with the private sector and/or a university to leverage RBG expertise and physical assets in botanical and environmental science and research.
4. Identify surplus assets that should be sold.
5. Conduct an annual review of RBG businesses (activities) with a view to improving long-term performance.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive donor strategy.

Strategic Goal #3 – Environmental Leadership

GOAL:

RBG will take leadership on environmental stewardship and education locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.

ACTIONS:

1. Create a comprehensive communication plan around environmental issues and climate change.
2. Secure key partnerships that build on the “laboratory” nature of RBG’s natural lands, species resources and scientific expertise (intellectual property).
3. Demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship by continuing to focus on operating in an environmentally responsible manner in everything we do.

Strategic Goal #4 – GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

GOAL:

RBG will maximize all human resources (the RBG Team) to support the strategic directions of our RBG.

ACTIONS:

1. Define the structure and composition of the Board of Directors.
2. Determine the need for a separate fundraising arm or alternative option.
3. Revise the organizational structure to facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan.
4. Transition from a Management Board to a Governance Board.
5. Put a succession plan in place for critical management and Board positions.
6. Provide key information to RBG staff, members, guests, and the public.
7. Maximize the involvement of the Auxiliary in the new strategic directions.