

Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley



Strategic Plan for the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley

2022-2026

FINAL

Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board

Sahtu Land and Water Board

Gwich'in Land and Water Board

Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board

January 2022

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1.0 Background

The Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley regulate the use of land and water, and the deposit of waste, primarily through the issuance and management of land use permits and water licences. There are four land and water boards in the Mackenzie Valley Region that perform these functions, each in their respective management areas. They include the:

- Gwich'in Land and Water Board (GLWB)
- Sahtu Land and Water Board (SLWB)
- Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board (WLWB)
- Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board (MVLWB)

The **Gwich'in, Sahtu, and Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Boards** act as regional panels of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board in issuing land use permits and water licences on public and private lands for activities that take place wholly within their respective management areas. The MVLWB exercises similar powers for activities that take place in more than one management area (transboundary applications), or that take place wholly outside any management area.



In the Mackenzie Valley, **land and resource management is a shared responsibility** between all parties of the co-management system. The Land and Water Boards work collaboratively with other boards, who are responsible for environmental assessment, renewable resource management, and land use planning, as well as Indigenous governments, the territorial government, and the federal government as a part of this system.

The Boards have been **collaborating since 2008 to build consistency in their approaches** across the Mackenzie Valley. Key milestones for board collaboration have included developing a work plan and structure to advance priorities of mutual interest (Areas of Operation), publishing joint policies, developing a joint Strategic Plan (2016-2019), and developing a shared governance policy.

The **purpose** of this 2022-2026 Strategic Plan is to outline where the Boards will focus their efforts and how they will go about their collective work over the next **five years**. This will support the Land and Water Board family on their path of linking their ongoing work to the **bigger picture impact** they would like to have in their communities and the NWT as a whole.

What is Strategic Planning?

“Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees, Board members and other parties are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment.”¹

While strategic plans often outline standard elements (e.g., mandate, vision, mission, guiding principles, goals, and priorities) – no two strategic plans (or planning processes) are exactly alike. A strategic plan should meet the needs of the organization and serve as a “living” document that can be easily understood. The strategic plan should help an organization to implement “shifts in direction” that take the organization from Point A to Point B, responding to both the external and internal context.



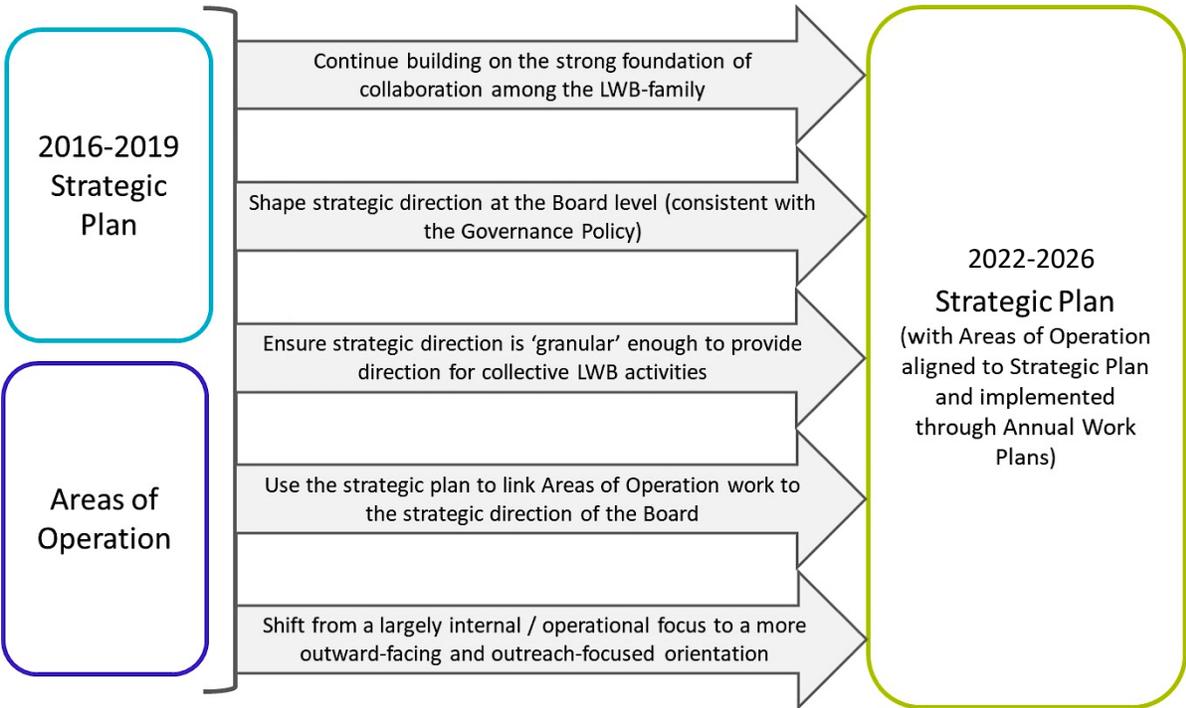
Figure 1: The Strategic Planning Process

Evolving Our Collective Approach

The LWBs will continue to strengthen how they work together to implement their collective priorities through this next iteration of their Strategic Plan, as described in Figure 2.

¹ Balanced Scorecard Institute website: <https://balancedscorecard.org/strategic-planning-basics/>

Figure 2: Key Shifts in the Collective Approach of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



The External Context

There are several aspects evolving in the external environment which may impact the LWBs over the next five years.

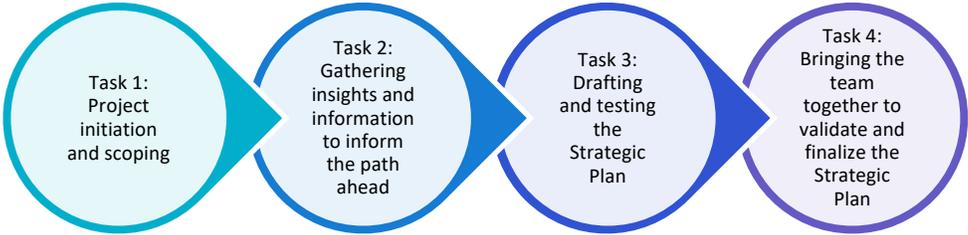
- **Reconciliation:** Canada is in an era of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, with significant changes taking place based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. This context will continue to evolve, shaping the landscape in which LWBs operate.
- **Land Claims and Self-Government:** The status of agreements, rights and governance continue to evolve in the NWT. As additional land claims are finalized, this may also have implications for the structure and role of the MVLWB. Further, as Indigenous governments continue to grow capacity, there may be changes in how these governments expect to be engaged by LWBs.
- **Devolution Agreement Review:** Although the Northwest Territories Land and Resources Devolution Agreement was finalized in 2013 (and accompanying legislation acclaimed in 2014), some of these changes are only being realized now and these will need to be internalized and implemented. In addition, the Agreement is to undergo a review in the near term, which may create further changes to governance in the NWT. It will be important for the LWBs to have input into the review process, recognizing that the outcomes of the review may have implications for LWBs.
- **Legislative Change and Legal Context:** Legislative change and implementation will continue to have implications for Board and staff operations. The following legislation / themes are potential areas that may impact LWBs in the next five years:
 - Implementation of existing legislation: changes associated with the Public Land Act (which received assent in 2019)
 - Anticipated legislative change: to the Waters Act and Environmental Protection Act
 - Emerging changes associated with Crown consultation, waste management, and tailings management
- **Dynamic, Global Issues with Local Implications:** Governments and policymakers are being asked to respond to increasingly complex, uncertain, and dynamic challenges that are occurring globally, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges will require the LWBs to be nimbler and more responsive in how they work and what they focus on for the duration of the plan.

2.0 Strategic Plan Methodology and Framework

2.1 Methodology

In the spring of 2020, the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley initiated a strategic planning process to clarify and strengthen the Boards’ collective efforts as key players in the NWT’s natural resource co-management system.

Figure 3: Strategic Plan Methodology



Following initial scoping with the Executive Directors, the results of which were approved by the Chairs, a series of steps were followed to both review relevant documents and gather input from internal and external audiences to collect information about the desired path forward and begin to shape priorities for the collective work of the Boards going forward.

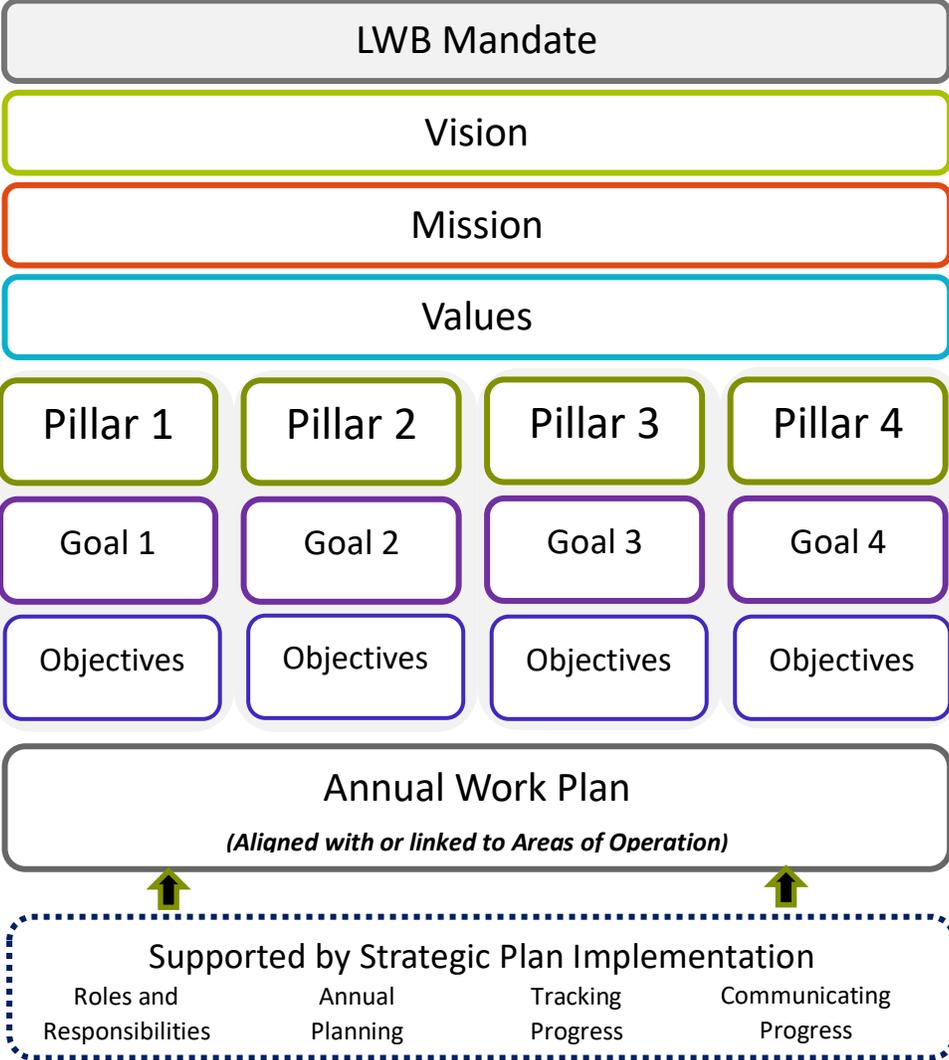
- Documents reviewed include the 2020 NWT Environmental Audit, the summary reports of relevant workshops (2019 Staff Team Building Session; 2020 Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue), and internal plans (Areas of Operation; 2016-19 Strategic Plan; Operational Policies).
- Focus groups were held with each of the four LWBs to discuss their work, mission, and possible areas of focus for the next five years.
- To ensure the new plan would be relevant and meaningful, representatives from Indigenous Government Organizations, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Government of Canada, and industry were also interviewed.
- Board members and staff discussed and provided feedback on a preliminary version of the Strategic Plan during virtual working sessions in January 2021.
- Additional input from the LWB Chairs and the full board was received throughout the spring of 2021.

This *Strategic Plan for the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley 2022-2026* has been developed based on the results of the document review and input provided during these engagements, as well as feedback received from the LWB Chairs and Executive Directors throughout the process.

2.2 Strategic Plan Framework

The Strategic Plan must be grounded in a framework that articulates guiding statements, more specific goals, and anticipated outcomes, as well as details about how those goals will be achieved. Below is the framework for this plan (Figure 4). The associated definitions can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 4: Strategic Plan Framework for the Land and Water Boards’ 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



3.0 Strategic Plan for the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley

3.1 Guiding Statements

The following guiding statements, articulated through the Mandate, Vision, Mission and Values, outline the impact we want to have collectively on the future of the Mackenzie Valley, our role in achieving this future, and the values that will guide the work ahead of us.

3.1.1 Mandate

Our role is to regulate the use of land and waters and the deposit of waste so as to provide for the conservation, development and utilization of land and water resources in a manner that will provide the optimum benefit for residents of respective management areas of the Mackenzie Valley and for all Canadians.

To fulfill our mandate as administrative tribunals we:

- Consider the importance of conservation to the well-being and way of life of the Indigenous peoples of Canada to whom section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 applies and who use an area of the Mackenzie Valley
- Consider traditional knowledge and scientific information

3.1.2 Vision

Current and future generations benefit from the collaborative management of natural resources in the Mackenzie Valley.

3.1.3 Mission

In support of our day-to-day activities as administrative tribunals, we work together as a land and water board family, and with parties in the co-management system, leveraging the power of collaboration.

3.1.4 Values

The following values guide the actions of the Boards' as we work toward realizing our mandate, vision, mission, and goals.

- **Transparency:** We are committed to ensuring our processes and decisions are clear and accessible.
- **Fairness:** We consider all perspectives to develop impartial and evidence-based decisions.
- **Inclusivity:** We are open and responsive, and we value diverse perspectives and cultures as we work together, and with others, to fulfil our mandate.
- **Excellence:** We pursue professional and creative solutions, modelling our values at all times, through our role and work with others in the co-management system.
- **Accountability:** We value and act on our responsibility to the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians through our processes and decisions.
- **Reconciliation:** We recognize the inherent rights of all Indigenous peoples and execute our mandate in the spirit of reconciliation.

3.2 Strategic Plan Pillars

As the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley we will realize our mandate, vision, and mission by focusing on the following four “pillars” of the Strategic Plan, with supporting goals, and objectives (Table 1).

Table 1: Strategic Plan Pillars, Goals, and Objectives

| Pillar 1: Relationship Building and Outreach | Pillar 2: Policy and Guidance | Pillar 3: Capacity Building | Pillar 4: Internal Processes and Policies |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Goal: Increase effort on outreach and relationship building with parties, applicants, and the public to support collaboration and effective implementation of an integrated co-management system</p> | <p>Goal: Develop / update key policies, guidelines and procedures that promote clarity, efficiency, and consistency in the LWB’s regulatory processes for parties, applicants, and the public</p> | <p>Goal: Use a deliberate and consistent approach to promote ongoing Board member and staff capacity development</p> | <p>Goal: Collaborate on internal operational processes and policies in pursuit of organizational excellence</p> |
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Strengthen our understanding of and relationships with communities, Indigenous governments, and industry by prioritizing greater outreach B. Build understanding and resolve issues with Parties, applicants, and the public by participating in initiatives outside of formal regulatory process C. Act on ways to make our tools and processes more inclusive, accessible, and user-friendly D. Identify materials that could be developed to provide clarity and consistency, and promote accessibility of community participation in the regulatory process E. Employ approaches to track, communicate and/or report on progress and updates | <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Update existing LWB engagement practices and guidelines for applicants (including to reflect pandemic realities and emerging practice as needed) B. Develop tools to support strengthened practice around the use of Traditional Knowledge into decision-making and expectations for applicants C. Update and/or develop policies, guidelines, and procedures, in collaboration with parties as needed, to bring clarity, efficiency and consistency to aspects of the LWB’s regulatory processes (e.g., security estimates and progressive reclamation, return of securities, municipal issues, etc.) | <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Ensure onboarding/orientation for Board members and staff is effective and consistent B. Ensure Board capacity development is systematic and comprehensive to empower and equip Board Members to the best of their ability C. Promote ongoing staff capacity development through purposeful planning and sustained implementation | <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Implement our policy to hire qualified staff representative of the population affected by decisions of the MVLWB, with the goal of increasing representation of Indigenous persons B. Enhance processes, tools and systems that support effective communication and collaboration across LWBs C. Capitalize on opportunities for shared roles among LWBs, where appropriate |

4.0 Strategic Plan Implementation

The following notations summarize both the roles and responsibilities, as well as the mechanisms needed to have the collective Boards work together well on delivering the Strategic Plan.

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Strategic Plan delivery will be guided through adoption of these roles and responsibilities:

- Chairs (through engagement with other Boards' members) provide strategic direction and guidance at the pillar/goal level
- Executive Directors implement the direction from the Chairs at the goal level and provide oversight of the objectives and projects (i.e., annual work plan and alignment with Areas of Operation)
- Staff bring the objectives and related projects to life through annual work planning and alignment with Areas of Operation

4.2 Mechanisms for Supporting Implementation

Strategic Plan implementation will be supported through key management mechanisms:

4.2.1 Annual Planning

- Executive Directors (with staff) co-develop the annual plan to support the implementation of the collective Strategic Plan, including delineation of clear roles and responsibilities (leads, supports, etc.) for approval by the Chairs
- Each Board integrates elements from the collective Strategic Plan annual work plan into their Board-specific annual work plans as required

4.2.2 Tracking Progress

- Executive Directors' Committee develops and utilizes a process to track performance against annual work plan milestones, as well as the Strategic Plan goals and objectives
- Modifications to the annual work plan should be made to reflect any shifts in priority or emphasis

4.2.3 Communicating on Progress (Internally and Externally)

- Report on collective progress made towards implementation of the Strategic Plan (for both internal and external audiences) annually

Appendix A - Strategic Plan Elements Defined

| Strategic Plan Element | Definition |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mandate | A concise statement defining an organization's fundamental purpose and what is required do according to its charter, policies and/or legislation. |
| Vision | A concise statement summarizing the desired outcomes for an organization resulting from the Strategic Plan. |
| Mission | A concise statement defining what the organization does to achieve its vision. |
| Values | Principles that guide behaviour and day-to-day business in the organization. |
| Pillars | High-level thematic areas of focus that support/uphold the vision. |
| Goals | Concise statements concerning the expected outcomes of the Strategic Plan. Goals must be consistent with the vision but describe a specific set of circumstances and accomplishments within a particular area of action. |
| Objectives | A more detailed articulation of the goal statement and how it relates to the organization's priorities. |
| Annual Work Plan | A set of action items, linked with Areas of Operation work plan and renewed annually, to lead towards delivery of goals and objectives. |

Appendix B: Draft Annual Work Plan Outline

Notes: This proposal for an annual work plan:

- is organized by the four Strategic Pillars
- assumes that existing work items from the Areas of Operation would be reorganized and aligned to these pillars
 - this strategic planning exercise could be used to see if any new Areas of Operation activities are required, or any existing activities should be suspended
- assumes that the work plan would be renewed annually (led by EDs, supported by staff, and approved by Chairs) using the same approach that is currently used for the Areas of Operation work planning
- would be used to help both Board members and staff to be aligned towards to a single focus through the lens of the Strategic Plan
- would propose to ‘sunset’ the Areas of Operation language and simply refer to this process as the “annual planning process in support of the Strategic Plan”
- would specify the work planning time horizon (still to be determined – e.g., 3-year rolling plan, discrete annual plans, etc.)

Pillar 1: Relationship Building and Outreach

| Strategic Plan Objective: | Projects: | Priority | Timelines: | ED Lead: | Project Lead: | Team: |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |

Pillar 2: Policy and Guidance (illustrative example provided)

| Strategic Plan Objective: | Projects: | Priority | Timelines: | ED Lead: | Project Lead: | Team: |
|--|--|----------|------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Update existing LWB engagement practices and guidelines for applicants (including to reflect pandemic realities and emerging practice as needed) | 1. Update Consultation and Engagement Policy, including consideration of COVID implications 2. Etc. | H | [TBD] | xx | xx | xx |
| | | | | | | |

