

Strategic Plan

2025-2028

Access Copyright is in a period of change and transformation. During the period from 2025 to 2028, the organization will stabilize revenues and strengthen operations. It will maintain its focus on the core business of licensing copyrighted material and distributing royalties to rights holders.

Revenues from licensing have declined precipitously over the past decade (falling by 79% since the modifications brought to the *Copyright Act* in 2012). These revenues continued to decline in 2023 and 2024. In recent years, strong investment revenues have somewhat compensated for the loss of sales. However, these cannot be counted on in downward markets. At the same time, past investments in litigation and innovation have reduced organizational reserves.

The past decade of litigation has created an adversarial relationship between Access Copyright and its customers in the educational sector, resulting in a negative perception of the organization and the loss of educational clients. The attrition of clients from this sector is ongoing. Prospects for legislative reform that could improve the market for educational licensing are low given the current political landscape.

In response to these realities, Access Copyright has already started to write its next chapter.

A restructuring at the end of 2023 has renewed our focus on licensing and royalty distribution. In 2024, we continued work on a new business system, to be implemented in 2025, which will improve efficiency across the organization. In addition, we focused on expanding our reach to provide new copyright licences to a growing number of corporate clients. We also completed a shift from being a leader to a supporter of member efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of copyright protection. Member organizations view this transition as a positive development that is encouraging greater engagement by industry associations that represent rights holders.

Access Copyright's current transition is taking place at a time of significant technological disruption in the publishing and creative industries. The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools has prompted existential questions for creators and publishers and has reinforced the importance of effective copyright frameworks. Reproduction Rights Organizations (RROs) around the world are responding to the challenges and opportunities that AI presents, with collective licensing offering a pathway for creators to participate in this emerging market.

With this three-year transitional plan, Access Copyright is affirming its mission, vision, and values, and how it serves its members, affiliates, and customers. As we look to the future, we acknowledge our current challenges and recognize that we have an opportunity to address them in new ways, through relationship building and by strengthening our services.

This plan is the result of extensive consultations with stakeholders held in 2024: surveys of affiliates and customers, member roundtables, and interviews with Board Directors and staff members, supported by a literature review.

Our Mission

We make it easy for users to share content responsibly, collect payment for this use, and distribute the royalties we generate to creators and publishers.

Our Vision

A world where copyright and creative work are respected and valued.

Our Values

We **respect** those whom we serve and each other. Relationships are important to us.

We **collaborate** with partners across our community and within our organization. Collective problem-solving and seeking a diversity of perspectives make us stronger.

We are **transparent** in our work. Being open and honest builds trust and keeps us accountable to our members, affiliates, customers and partners, and to each other.

We act based on **evidence**. Setting targets, measuring, and evaluating our work helps us to learn from our successes and failures, so that we can improve our services and achieve our goals.

We foster **creativity**. The royalties we distribute help to create new works that contribute to Canadian culture and society.

During the period of 2025 to 2028, Access Copyright will focus on four complementary goals, all of which are important to building a sustainable future for the organization.

Goal 1

Increase Sales of Licences to Canadian Organizations

As we look to the future, we will navigate a changing market in which content is more readily available for free or directly from rights holders, particularly in the educational sector. We will modernize and strengthen our products to better meet the needs of users.

We will continue to pursue new business amongst corporate clients. We will improve awareness amongst the corporate sector of the need for licensing to copy published materials and will highlight the role Access Copyright plays in providing pre-cleared permissions to reproduce and distribute portions of copyrighted works.

Like collective rights management organizations around the world, we will actively explore how we might enhance our corporate licence offerings to include uses related to AI, providing Canadian rights holders who wish to participate in the emerging market for AI licensing to do so, either in Canada or by virtue of reciprocal agreements with sister organizations.

We will seek to build bridges to the education sector and will learn more about current copyright management and licensing strategies. Where feasible, we will partner with our members to re-engage with this sector.

We will better communicate our value proposition and help customers to better understand and use their licences.

Goal 2

Raise Awareness about Copyright

Our members are significant partners in educating users and policy makers on the importance of copyright protection to encourage the creation of original IP, which is at the heart of Canada's creative economy.

We will continue to support our members in raising awareness about the importance of copyright and will leverage partnerships with other creative industry groups in support of this goal. We will continue to share our expertise and provide guidance to member organizations, ensuring that each has the knowledge to pursue the defence of creator rights, and to provide support to their own constituencies on copyright matters.

Within a context where the use and development of generative AI technologies is accelerating, we will continue to promote the value of creative work. We will equip our community with the resources they need to make informed decisions about emerging technologies and related business opportunities that may emerge.

Goal 3

Build a Performance-Based Culture

We commit to creating a culture guided by evidence-based decision-making and performance-based management. We will use data and evidence to measure our success and drive improvement. We will strengthen our existing strategic and financial planning processes by implementing meaningful performance objectives. We will put more emphasis on outcomes than outputs.

Improved planning, strategic orientation and increased information sharing and collaboration amongst staff and between departments will help our smaller team manage a heavy workload. We will foster a culture that prioritizes cross-functional teamwork and encourages continual learning.

Our staff members continue to demonstrate a commitment to the mission of Access Copyright. Their dedication, longstanding tenure and expertise are an invaluable asset. We will set staff up for success by improving their access to market intelligence and creating opportunities to enhance their skills, and to stay current on evolving best practices for collective rights management and licensing.

Goal 4

Increase Operational Efficiency

Customers and affiliates value the quality of service provided by Access Copyright staff. We will build on this foundation by improving efficiency in our information technology systems and simplifying our business rules, and processes to free staff to take on new tasks and responsibilities. We will streamline our affiliate registration process to encourage more creators and publishers to join us and offer online tools and resources that are easy for affiliates and customers to use.

A review of our legacy business processes and business rules will allow us to leverage our new business system software, which will go live in 2025, reducing operating costs and allowing us to deliver more value to our affiliates.