

Aurora Research Institute

Strategic Plan

2016-2026



Background

The Aurora Research Institute (ARI) is the research division of Aurora College, and its authorities and responsibilities stem from the *Aurora College Act* and the *Northwest Territories Scientists Act*.

ARI has a rich history that dates back more than 50 years. During that time, the Institute has evolved from a modest federal research laboratory, to a modern post-secondary research institute with tri-council funding eligibility, a key licensing role, and services that are valued by Canadian and international members of the northern research community.

The GNWT Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has ultimate responsibility for Aurora College. The College Board of Governors provides overall direction to ARI, and is responsible for approving and implementing decisions affecting the Institute. The Research Advisory Council, a standing committee of the Aurora College Board of Governors, has guided the development of the strategic plan and advises on the establishment of an annual research agenda for ARI.

Today, ARI has research centres connected to the three main Aurora College campuses:

- the Western Arctic Research Centre (WARC) in Inuvik, which acts as the headquarters for ARI, provides accommodation and logistics support for researchers, and supports Aurora Campus programs;
- the South Slave Research Centre on the Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith; and
- the North Slave Research Centre on the Yellowknife North Slave Campus.

ARI's key functions and services include:

- licensing and coordinating research in accordance with the *NWT Scientists Act*;
- providing logistics support for the research community, primarily out of the WARC facilities;
- delivering research programs, either as a principal investigator or as part of a research team;
- teaching Aurora College post-secondary courses;
- providing college-wide support for the administrative processes required for tri-council funding eligibility;
- administering the Research Fellowship program and the Research Assistant program;
- coordinating and delivering various science outreach activities for youth and the community; and
- building capacity in science and research.

Developing a Strategic Plan for the Aurora Research Institute

In 2015, ARI began the process of developing its first strategic plan with the support of a consultant. The planning process proceeded in four main phases.

- 1) The first phase included historical research on the institution and a full literature review. A number of existing documents and reference materials were reviewed, and the consultants met with ARI staff to better understand the history and current state of ARI.
- 2) In the second phase, a program review was conducted. A total of 15 interviews and nine focus groups were conducted to obtain input from a wide range of stakeholders.
- 3) In the next phase, the consultants worked with the Research Advisory Council of Aurora College (RAC), a project steering committee, and ARI staff to develop and refine a draft strategic plan.
- 4) In the final phase, all stakeholders involved in interviews and focus groups were provided a draft of the strategic plan for review and feedback.

Once approved by the RAC, the final draft strategic plan for ARI was recommended to the Aurora College Board of Governors and was approved at their October 2016 meeting.

It is important to note that Aurora College will embark on a college-wide strategic planning process in the fall of 2016. ARI will be an active participant in this process and will look for opportunities to align with, and support, the College's overarching strategic plan.

The vision, mission, principles, goals, and objectives described on the following pages will guide the Aurora Research Institute over the next decade.

The Aurora Research Institute Strategic Plan, 2016-2026

Vision

The vision of the Aurora Research Institute is to be a leader in generating and sharing knowledge in the Northwest Territories. The Aurora Research Institute will use its expertise to build strategic partnerships that expand the territory's research capacity, helping to ensure that research in the NWT produces meaningful outcomes for its residents while contributing to issues of global concern.

Mission

The Aurora Research Institute facilitates and conducts research in the Northwest Territories, and acts as a hub of northern knowledge. The Aurora Research Institute advances the territory's research capacity through discovery, outreach, and education.

Principles

The Aurora Research Institute is guided by six principles that form the foundation of our organization.

Leadership: Leaders bring people, ideas, and resources together. We identify shared interests and find opportunities to maximize northern research capacity.

Dedication: The energy, enthusiasm, and dedication of our staff are key factors in our success. We are committed to maintaining a positive, team-based research environment that optimizes the use of our skills, strengths, and interests.

Inclusiveness: Research should integrate all ways of knowing, including Indigenous and local knowledge. We actively incorporate different perspectives and knowledge in our work.

Collaboration: ARI seeks opportunities to build partnerships at the local, territorial, national, and international levels. We work with our partners to advance shared priorities, exchange ideas, and optimize the use of resources.

Discovery and innovation: ARI strives to be a place of learning and discovery, where innovation is encouraged and supported.

Communication: Research must be shared to have value. We look for opportunities to communicate the process and outcomes of research, and encourage others to do the same.

Goals and Objectives

ARI has identified five strategic goals to guide the institute over the next ten years. Each is further defined by supporting objectives.

GOAL 1 Strengthen the leadership of the Aurora Research Institute within the northern research community.

Objectives

- a. Raise the profile of ARI as a research institution.
- b. Foster the development of new and existing strategic partnerships.
- c. Improve ARI's capacity to carry out, support, and direct research.
- d. Enhance ARI's strategic value to the NWT research community.

GOAL 2 Develop research capacity within the Northwest Territories.

Objectives

- a. Increase participation of NWT residents and communities in all aspects of research.
- b. Foster the development of post-secondary research within the NWT.
- c. Increase opportunities for NWT-led research.

GOAL 3 Conduct and support research that builds northern knowledge in ways that respect and benefit the people of the Northwest Territories.

Objectives

- a. Conduct and facilitate research that addresses issues and questions that are relevant to the people of the NWT.
- b. Ensure that research respects local and Indigenous knowledge, culture, and practices.
- c. Encourage research practices that benefit the people of the NWT.

GOAL 4 Provide high-value research products.

Objectives

- a. Increase the quantity, quality, and availability of research products.
- b. Increase the utility of ARI's research products for NWT stakeholders.

GOAL 5 Ensure the sustainability of the Aurora Research Institute and enable future growth.

Objectives

- a. Secure ARI's long-term sustainability.
- b. Build ARI's capacity for expansion.

