



**Canadian Digital Learning
Research Association
Association canadienne de
recherche sur la formation en ligne**

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Approved: September 23, 2024

Introduction:

In 2017, Dr. Tony Bates and a team of researchers partnered with [Bay View Analytics](#) (formerly Babson Survey Research Group) and the [Western Co-operative for Educational Technology \(WCET\)](#). Together, they began conducting the annual **Canadian National Survey of Online and Digital Learning**. The National Survey tracks changes in online offerings, learning technologies, and digital strategies at all 234 publicly funded, post-secondary institutions across the country. Prior to 2017, there had been no such tracking of online learning in Canada.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, online learning became an important topic in higher education. In response, we expanded the scope of our research beyond the National Survey and launched the Canadian Pulse Project. The Canadian Pulse Project is a multi-stage effort to track the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education institutions across Canada.

The Planning Process

On September 1, 2021, CDLRA Board members met to discuss the Mission Statement. We discussed the following questions:

1. What is our goal? What are we trying to do?
2. For whom are we doing this? Who are our primary audience?

Based on these conversations we revised our mission statement and defined our audience as follows:

Our Mission:

The Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA) conducts applied national research to advance knowledge about digital learning strategies, policies, and practices in close collaboration with Canadian post-secondary institutions and affiliated organizations.


Our Audiences:

Primary: Canadian post-secondary institutions

Secondary: Organizations and institutions that impact and support Canadian post-secondary institutions (e-campuses, Provincial Education Ministries, CIGan, Universities Canada, Contact North, etc.).

Our Strategic Goals:

There are two key strategic pillars for CDLRA that have emerged from our current Board and membership discussions thus far: a) research expansion and b) membership growth.



Strategic Priority A - Research Expansion: Broaden and strengthen the scope of CDLRA’s research activities by identifying and exploring emerging trends, critical challenges, and innovative solutions that affect learners, educators, policymakers, post-secondary institutions and agencies in Canada.

Rationale: In the rapidly evolving landscape of post-secondary education, digital learning has emerged as a transformative force, offering new opportunities for personalized, accessible and engaging learning experiences. We will continue to foster and promote the national surveys as the core research focus for CDLRA. However, by broadening our research focus we are able to address a wider range of issues in various areas of online and digital learning in Canada. As part of the research expansion, we will focus on nurturing and supporting early career researchers and scholars who will be able to support these new projects.

Priority Actions:

1.1 Research prioritization - Conduct an assessment to identify the key areas of digital research that align with CDLRA’s mission and have the potential for significant impact. Involve members and stakeholders in the research prioritization process to ensure relevance and support.

1.2 Collaboration and Partnerships - Forge partnerships with academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and governmental bodies to enhance research capabilities and access to resources. Collaborate with other research organizations to share data, methodologies, and best practices.

1.3 Sponsorship and Grant Acquisition - Establish a dedicated team of Board members to pursue research grants and funding opportunities. Develop grant proposals that align with CDLRA’s research priorities and mission.

1.4. Research Dissemination - Ensure that research findings are disseminated widely through academic journals, white papers, reports, conference presentations and accessible online platforms. Offer webinars and workshops to highlight research outcomes and engage members and stakeholders.

1.5. Continuous Improvement – Establish a research committee to regularly review and evaluate CDLRA’s research initiatives and identify areas for improvement and innovation. Encourage an environment of learning and adaptation to stay abreast of emerging trends and educational challenges.



Strategic Priority B: Membership Growth – Grow to a diverse national membership to expand the reach and influence of our research activities within the online and digital learning research community within Canada.

Rationale: A larger membership pool brings in a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and expertise. Having more members opens up more opportunities for collaboration and partnerships within the online and digital research community. Growing the membership provides a larger network for researchers and educators to connect and exchange ideas and knowledge. Membership growth will strengthen CDLRA’s capacity to advance our research, promote evidence-based practices and make a positive impact on the post-secondary sector in Canada and on the global stage.

Priority Actions:

2.1. Define Target Members - Identify the key stakeholders, educators, researchers, policymakers, and other relevant individuals who can benefit from and contribute to CDLRA's mission.

2.2. Outreach and Communications - Develop a comprehensive communication plan to raise awareness about CDLRA and its initiatives. Utilize social media, email campaigns, and partnerships with educational institutions to reach a broader audience. Highlight success stories and impact achieved by CDLRA to attract potential members.

2.3. Membership Benefits and Incentives - Offer valuable incentives to attract new members, such as advanced access to research findings, webinars, workshops, and networking events.

2.4. Member Engagement - Foster a sense of community and engagement among members through online forums, discussion groups, and interactive platforms. Encourage members to participate actively in CDLRA's initiatives and events.

2.5. Retention and Renewal - Implement an annual membership renewal program with personalized communication to existing members. Recognize and appreciate long-standing members for their contributions to CDLRA.