



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24

Extended to 2026



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About OLTA

Through all its work Ontario Land Trust Alliance acknowledges and is grateful to all the original stewards of the land. For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have inhabited, cared for and used these lands and waters, applying original instructions, Indigenous knowledge systems and laws. Ontario Land Trust Alliance also acknowledges those Indigenous Peoples, and other peoples who currently live, work, play and learn on the lands around us.

Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) is a registered charity focused on providing community, knowledge sharing and support to land trusts and other groups committed to land conservation across Ontario.

By strategically protecting land, we contribute essential solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change. Restoring and protecting forests, wetlands, grasslands and farmland are nature-based climate solutions. Nature absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stores carbon in plants and soil. Nature also shields against storm surges, absorbs the worst effects of flooding and protects biodiversity.

Nature does the heavy lifting for us. All we have to do is protect it.

Our members and partners work from Rainy Lake in the west, to Windsor in the south, and Cornwall in the east, in 50 connected charities and communities. Ontario Land Trust Alliance's local land trust members collectively own and care for over 145,000 acres across Ontario, engaging the support of thousands of volunteers and supporters annually.

OLTA connects the land conservation community by sharing knowledge and best practices, reducing financial barriers to land conservation, promoting organizational excellence, sharing access to current research and Indigenous knowledge systems and acting as a voice for land trusts among the public, governments and other rights holders and partners.

We believe that, as a community, we need to learn about, engage and uphold our role within treaties, settler's obligations and responsibilities, and natural law in order to honour our ongoing commitment to meaningful reconciliation with all Indigenous Peoples on whose treaty and ancestral territories we live and work. We are mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile with all our relations.

OLTA is committed to providing an ethical space, valuing differences, and learning how to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion in all of its work.

Ethical space can be explained as a place where traditional oral practices and western written practices are paralleled, leveraging the strengths of the respective processes to co-create a safe place to design, develop, validate and work together, bridging the gap between cultures and activating meaningful reconciliation.

Together, may we strengthen and sustain our care for this land and each other, drawing on the strength of our mutual history of nation building through peace and friendship, and being mindful of generations past, present and yet to come.

OLTA History

OLTA was established in 1997 as a committee of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (Ontario Nature) known as the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance with 14 founding members. In July 2002, with a membership of 23 land trusts, it was decided to incorporate as a new independent organization named the Ontario Land Trust Alliance.

Context for this Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan extends OLTA's Strategic Plan for 2021-24. It was developed through extensive consultation and engagement with our staff, Board of Governors, member land trusts and associates, and with rights holders, stakeholders and the wider community. It is also mindful of the 2019 updated Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.

This document provides a framework to guide our strategic direction and operational planning. It ensures we remain accountable to our members, partners, donors, and our entire community.

This Strategic Plan metrics update was approved by the OLTA Board of Governors on September 26, 2024.

Vision

A landscape rich with connected and protected spaces, supported by a thriving conservation community.

Mission

Empowering a vibrant and enduring land trust community in Ontario.

Values

Our values guide our actions and they represent who we are as an organization and community. They influence our actions and decision making.

Collaboration	You add value. Together we strengthen the land trust community by sharing knowledge and ideas.
Equity	You are included. We are a continually learning organization that embraces a variety of perspectives and actively seeks to engage with people of all cultures and backgrounds.
Respect	We will listen. We care about your opinion and will operate with kindness and compassion.
Integrity	We will earn your trust. We are committed to being transparent, accessible and responsible, and using best available knowledge.
Leadership	We will raise the bar. We will set an example for ethical decision making and best practices in land conservation.
Resiliency	We will endure. We are committed to protecting the land you love forever.
Reconciliation	We will learn. We will work with Indigenous Peoples in the spirit and practice of reconciliation, honouring Indigenous interests, responsibilities, rights, Treaties, protocols and Knowledge Systems.

Priorities, Goals and Outcomes

Priority 1 Promote land trust organizational excellence

Context/Background: Our intention is that land trusts will be better supported, more stable and have sufficient resources available. OLTA will become the go-to resource for land trusts based largely on the premise that a high tide floats all boats.

This fundamental core activity for OLTA will empower and elevate other land trusts to be the very best at what they do.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
<p>1A Elevate the knowledge base of the land trust community</p>	<p>1. Wise governance and ethical practices inform and guide land trust operations and decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Determine and increase percentage of non-Indigenous OLTA members in compliance, or otherwise moving towards adherence to Standards and Practices, and showing improved operations, risk management and decision making</i> b) <i>Support Indigenous-led recognition or development of applicable, local guidance for Indigenous Land Trusts on governance and operations</i> <p>2. Relevant education and training are available to all levels of capacities in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Education and training needs identified from multiple sources</i> b) <i>At least three larger programs in place each year</i> c) <i>Two or three published reports/guideline documents or resources for land trusts developed, updated and made available</i> d) <i>Participation tracked and analyzed.</i>
<p>1B Reduce financial barriers to land conservation</p>	<p>1. Funding instruments and incentives are available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>At least \$5M in funding per year available to a variety of OLTA members for securement, stewardship and capacity</i> b) <i>Reduced procedures and taxes for land conservation, funding and transactions, where possible</i> c) <i>Funding opportunities for Indigenous-led conservation identified and prioritized</i>

Priority 2 Increase influence and visibility of community land conservation

Context/Background: OLTA needs to be louder to raise the profile of land conservation. OLTA boldly moves forward. Together we need to make sure that others know this work is happening and are invited to become a part of it. By “making a bigger pie” we can amplify local voices in the land trust community. As well as encouraging society at large to understand and support the important role land trusts play in the conservation landscape.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
2A Increase public awareness of the importance of protecting land	1. Engagement between the public and the land trust community increased <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Communications tools developed and available for OLTA and member land trust use</i> b) <i>Communications and marketing plans developed and strategies implemented and tracked to connect the public with land and land trusts</i>
2B Be recognized as a key influencer on land trust issues	1. Meaningful dialogue with government agencies, decision makers and influencers positively affecting policies that impact land trusts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Multiple calls led or actively supported each year at federal, provincial and local government levels to support policies that positively impact land conservation</i> b) <i>Active government relations group and agenda advocating for land conservation priorities with relevant governments and allies</i> c) <i>Collaborative approaches on wider policy initiatives, such as land conservation, Indigenous rights, and DEI developed</i>

Priority 3 Provide leadership to advance diversity and inclusion in all land trust practices

Context/Background: Through learning, listening and meaningful dialogue, we improve our understanding of discrimination and systemic racism in society, actively breaking down barriers. We learn how to welcome and meaningfully engage people of all abilities and backgrounds to the land trust community. We acknowledge the wrongs of the past and continuing in the present, and build new relationships as we learn what land conservation means, as part of an inclusive and diverse society. OLTA has an opportunity to demonstrate a new kind of inclusive leadership where we all belong. We believe that we need to be comfortable having uncomfortable conversations in the hope for a more inclusive and diverse future.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
3A Advance UNDRIP and the calls by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and MMIWG Inquiry	<p>1. Have informed and constructive dialogue on the role of OLTA and its members in upholding UNDRIP and advancing truth and reconciliation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Supporting guidance developed and shared to ensure dialogue is possible within an accountable and ethical space for all participants</i> <p>2. Increase engagement among Indigenous communities, OLTA and member land trusts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Resources shared (webpage created and maintained) and at least 2 direct engagement opportunities developed per year to assist land trusts and Indigenous communities in building collaborative programs and to build cross-cultural competencies</i>
3B Provide opportunities for nature and land conservation to be more accessible	<p>1. Facilitate increased participation for people of different abilities and backgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Programming and training developed to engage wider communities and encouragement and support provided to land trusts to engage in this work</i> b) <i>Stories and practices of OLTA and others showcased and shared</i>
3C Foster equity, diversity and inclusion in the land trust community to be more reflective of the people of Ontario	<p>1. The land trust community is supported to implement equity, diversity and inclusion practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>OLTA identifies needs, and policies and plans are created, reviewed, and implemented to track and maximize opportunities to be more inclusive across all areas of land conservation work</i> b) <i>OLTA explores and reimagines its governance to advance DEI and shares its journey with land trust community</i> c) <i>OLTA adopts, uses and shares accountable space and similar guidelines</i>

Priority 4 Grow organizational capacity to continue to serve the land trust community

Context/Background: People are the heartbeat of the charitable sector and culture can make or break an organization. Growth and sustainable revenue is the downstream product to healthy activities upstream, the result of which is financially sustainable organizations across the land conservation community. Working as a team we can lift each other up and remove barriers to success.

A big part of this work will be to take care of OLTA’s people (our staff and volunteers) and move toward an abundance mindset. This is what we will do to safeguard the future and be as prepared as possible for the impact of external threats.

Goals	Outcomes (What does success look like?)
4A Advance a culture of philanthropy across all aspects of the organization	1. Staff and volunteers understand the importance of philanthropy and are champions for it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Strategy to engage the board and staff in supporting fundraising for OLTA defined and implemented</i> b) <i>100% board financial support of the organization</i>
4B Diversify revenue streams and build sustainable funding	1. Fundraising strategy is implemented to diversify and grow funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>New program revenue streams in place, such as legacy gifts and corporate supporters</i> b) <i>Staffed fundraising department</i>
4C Take care of our people	1. Healthy, caring, and connected environment provided for staff and volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Staff supports provided and a staff benefits program implemented</i> b) <i>Low staff and volunteer turnover</i> c) <i>Succession plan, with some redundancy of knowledge and roles, is in place and updated</i> d) <i>Multiple opportunities for connection for staff and volunteers provided</i>

Thank You

This strategic plan is ambitious and we can't do it alone. We are counting on the support of our friends and the community to help us achieve our goals.

Please visit our website to keep up to date on various projects and ways that you can get involved, to help us protect and restore biodiversity and grow nature-based climate solutions across Ontario.

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Photo credits:

Front page clockwise from top left – Bruce Kennedy, Jeff Driscoll, David Agro at Long Point Basin Land Trust and David Coulson

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