

# Strategic Plan 2024-2028

## A Five-Year Vision



**EORN**

EASTERN ONTARIO  
REGIONAL NETWORK





## Message from the chair

I am delighted to present the Eastern Ontario Regional Network's five-year strategic plan, a blueprint designed to propel our organization and the region towards a future defined by equity, vibrancy and sustainable development. Our vision is to embrace opportunities that enrich eastern Ontario, fostering a community where collaboration thrives and innovation flourishes.

At the core of our mission, we commit to promoting connectivity and sustainable development through enhanced services, bridging gaps, and seizing regional and municipal opportunities. Guided by our values of innovation, leveraging partnerships, and regional orientation, EORN will pioneer innovative solutions and technologies, driving productivity and establishing best practices rooted in evidence.



We pledge to invest in projects that yield both social and financial returns, amplifying our impact through strategic collaborations with all levels of government, the public sector, and private enterprises. Our focus remains steadfast on regional priorities that promise inclusive benefits across eastern Ontario.

Together, let us embark on this transformative journey, ensuring EORN emerges as a beacon of progress and prosperity in our community.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Murphy  
Chair of the EORN board of directors



## Vision

Embrace opportunities to foster an equitable and vibrant future for eastern Ontario.

## Mission

Eastern Ontario Regional Network promotes collaboration, connectivity, and sustainable development by pursuing and improving services, bridging service gaps, capitalizing on regional and municipal opportunities, and facilitating innovation.

## About EORN

Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) strives to fuel economic development and growth by working regionally to improve and leverage broadband access and cell connectivity. EORN is a non-profit organization created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC). Since 2010, it has helped bring hundreds of millions of dollars in federal, provincial and private sector investment to improve connectivity across the rural region.

From 2010 to 2014, EORN helped to enhance broadband access for nearly 90 per cent of eastern Ontario through a \$175 million public-private partnership. By the end of the project, 423,000 homes and businesses were able to access services of up to 10 Mbps download. It also spurred an additional \$100 million of private sector investment in the region.

In 2021, EORN launched the Cell Gap Project, which aims to improve and expand cellular services. The goal is to provide 99 per cent of the area in eastern Ontario where people work, life and travel on major roadways with the ability to make a cell phone call, and improved standard-definition (95 per cent) and high-definition (85 per cent) services as well. The Cell Gap Project is valued at \$300 million and is funded in partnership with federal, provincial and municipal governments and Rogers Communications, which was selected through a competitive process. As part of its Cell Gap Project, EORN is working with Indigenous communities to ensure that new cell infrastructure is built with respect for Indigenous treaty rights and heritage.

Innovation | Leverage | Partnership | Regional Orientation

# EORN's Values

## Innovation

EORN will seek out innovative solutions, approaches, and technologies to help improve productivity for our partners and stakeholders resulting in evidence-based best practices.

## Leverage

EORN will invest in projects that leverage contributions and collaboration with other partners and result in clear social and financial returns.

## Partnership

EORN will continue to build successful partnerships and collaborate with all levels of government, the broader public sector, and the private sector.

## Regional Orientation

EORN will focus on regional priorities that deliver benefits to all of eastern Ontario.

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# Strategic Priority One

## Expand our impact through value-added services that support regional growth

Founded in 2010, EORN is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving rural connectivity, supporting economic growth, and enhancing quality of life in eastern Ontario.

Eastern Ontario is a diverse region and single economy consisting of 113 rural and urban municipalities facing shared challenges and opportunities. Eastern Ontario represents 25 per cent of the Ontarian electorate.

Over the past 13 years, EORN has been striving to fuel economic development and growth by working regionally to improve and leverage broadband access and cell connectivity.

EORN has created innovative public-private partnerships to address the digital divide and support a stronger future for rural eastern Ontario communities and is supported by the EOWC to address the regional priority of broadband connectivity and cellular enhancement. In addition to this important partnership, we have developed strong, influential relationships with all levels of government including elected officials and staff.



# Strategic Priority One

The funding provided by the members of EOWC and Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus (EOMC) has leveraged more than \$500 million in funding and investment in eastern Ontario. EORN has invested this in infrastructure resulting in over 1.1 million eastern Ontario residents accessing broadband services and improved cell services.

We have successfully accelerated technology growth in many rural communities and became the recognized experts and go-to organization for connectivity and technology.

We will continue to deliver on this work and monitor it until 2029 to meet our goal for improved coverage and capacity for cellular services in eastern Ontario. This is our primary focus throughout the construction phase to 2026.

Given our assets and competencies, we are uniquely poised to facilitate and build capacity to support key regional initiatives with our member municipalities, while leveraging economic development opportunities for our business partners and local communities. We have the ability and expertise to work with our 13 counties and their member municipalities, 10 separated municipalities, and six First Nations

communities to deliver regional projects to address shared challenges. EORN is experienced in consultation processes with First Nations and Indigenous groups.

Building on experience, EORN will extend its work to strengthen eastern Ontario's technological capacity and strength. We will evaluate, test, and recommend emerging technologies and, where appropriate, support the introduction of these technologies in eastern Ontario and elsewhere. This includes cyber security, chat bots, digital permitting, and other innovations. This will result in the introduction of technologies that will create efficiencies and security for our stakeholders.

Additionally, with a focus on where market failure has occurred, EORN will analyze the gap and then strategically identify solutions, secure funding, and roll out initiatives to address these needs. We will use data, analysis, and clear criteria to inform priorities and decision-making.



# Strategic Priority One

Our experience in effective project management and addressing market failure resulted in us being contracted by EOWC to study the challenging issue of affordable housing in eastern Ontario and developed a seven-year business plan to address housing waitlists in eastern Ontario by building 7,000 affordable rental units across the region, leveraging private contributions to provide an additional estimated 21,000 housing units.

**We are well positioned to secure the resources needed and leverage the specific talents and skill sets required to deliver on projects and support regional success in a dynamic, effective, and efficient manner. We offer a project management framework that enables successful delivery.**

In the coming five years, we have a distinct and important role to play to support our stakeholders through a changing political landscape. We can create efficiencies by exploring the introduction of new technologies and services, innovative responses to shared municipal needs like procurement strategies, project management solutions, and activities that support regional economic growth.

In consultation with our stakeholders, we will explore developing relevant and impactful services that are sustainable over the long-term. This includes undertaking needs assessments and feasibility work to identify new business opportunities that bring value to eastern Ontario communities.

As we test and roll out initiatives, we will explore the viability to generate revenue to further support EORN's important mandate to improve eastern Ontario's economy and quality of life. This includes sharing knowledge and expertise through our consulting services, which will also provide services to regions across the country, while ensuring our organizational sustainability.

As we move forward, we will continue to actively engage and respond to our diverse partners, government entities, stakeholders, and communities to ensure we are responsive and collaborative in providing value-added support, services and initiatives.

## Our strategies

- Achieve the goals and objectives of the Cell Gap Project on time and on budget.
- Identify and enable significant regional initiatives that address market failures, leverage opportunities that provide economies of scale and strengthen the respective region.
- Identify and provide services that address municipalities' operational needs and meet EORN's strategic direction.
- Introduce and advance the use of emerging technologies through education and support to create efficiencies for stakeholders.



# Strategic Priority Two

## Foster a sustainable, efficient and dynamic organization that delivers results

EORN is an established non-profit organization with a proven track record of delivering efficient and effective projects and supporting the needs of member municipalities. These successes are built on the establishment of a solid organizational foundation.

We have a well-established and representative governance structure that is committed to transparency, accountability, and impact. Our leadership is competent, capable and committed.

We will continue to build additional organizational capacity to achieve our strategic goals. We will adapt our team structure as we embark on new initiatives and projects and enhance our resources and skill sets as we grow. This includes maintaining and investing in a skilled stable core team to deliver on strategic goals.





# Strategic Priority Two

We will invest in our leadership and staff teams to succeed through succession, recruitment, retention, professional development, and team building. We will continue to build a learning culture committed to communication, flexibility, innovation, and problem solving in an evolving landscape.

We will continue to build a strong organizational structure with robust policies, procedures, processes, and systems based on legislation and best practices. As we develop and roll out new initiatives, we will ensure we have the research and data systems to support analysis and implementation.

We will strengthen our long-term financial sustainability to support our growth and evolve beyond a project-based funding model. This includes funding for a core administrative team and experts to fulfill existing contractual obligations and manage new initiatives.

To achieve this, we will provide value added services that generate consistent revenue to support future growth and impact. This will require in-depth feasibility work and business planning. This area of work will require a significant investment to fulfill.



## Our strategies

- Maintain staff capacity on current contractual obligations and enhance EORN's staff capacity and skill set for growth.
- Maintain and invest in a skilled stable core team to deliver on strategic goals.
- Enhance our organizational capacity, structure, and systems to address growth to deliver on new services.
- Examine funding model options and establish a financial plan that ensures long-term sustainability.

# Strategic Priority Three

## Raise awareness of EORN and its impact on the region



As EORN completes its Cell Gap Project and expands its focus to encompass additional regional services and projects, it will adapt its marketing and communications to reflect this emerging direction. This will include the internal development of a multi-year communications and marketing plan to promote EORN’s services and celebrate our successes.

As we add new initiatives to our mandate, we will upgrade our marketing collateral and revamp our website. We will additionally promote EORN’s consulting experience and expertise on the website to generate additional potential business. We will use interactive online engagement strategies to draw traffic to our site to enable people to access information.

A key target audience includes industrial stakeholders, municipal, provincial, federal staff and politicians with an objective of having them recognize and endorse EORN as a go-to leader and expert that provides solutions at a regional level, on behalf of the EOWC and EOMC. To support this, we

will continue to advocate and promote the significant impact we have in the region.

### Our strategies

- Develop and implement a marketing and communications strategy and plan that supports EORN’s strategic priorities.
- Champion and advocate to create opportunities and enable positive transformation for eastern Ontario aligned to EORN’s priorities.