

**2025-2029**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

A Shared Path to Collective  
Prosperity



**OFNEDA**



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# A Message from the Executive Director

## *A Path Together Will Yield Community Based Results*

Dear OFNEDA Membership and Partners,

I am truly honored to be appointed as the new Executive Director of the Ontario First Nation Economic Developers Association (OFNEDA). What a remarkable organization we are!



First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and express my deepest gratitude to our former Executive Director, Robert Furlonger, for his leadership, dedication, and stewardship of OFNEDA. Without Robert's vision and commitment, our organization would not be where it is today. His willingness to share his expertise, knowledge, and guidance with myself, our staff, and our board will continue to inspire us all. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors Robert.

In 2022, OFNEDA launched its five-year strategic plan—an extensive process rooted in meaningful engagement with our board, staff, membership, and funding partners. From this process, we unveiled a renewed collective path for OFNEDA.


I am pleased to share that together we have successfully achieved many of our objectives. Notably, we have undertaken several key initiatives focused on:

- ✓ Enhancing operational effectiveness
- ✓ Increasing member value
- ✓ Expanding community-based economic knowledge
- ✓ Identifying economic opportunities
- ✓ Building strategic partnerships

In August 2024, our board and staff came together to reflect on our collective accomplishments and explore new opportunities for growth. As a result, we have expanded our strategic pillars from five to ten, further strengthening OFNEDA's impact. The five new strategic pillars are:

1. Procurement Readiness and Access
2. Specialized Training and Skills Development
3. Entrepreneurship Development



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4. Capacity Building with First Nations
  5. Research and Advocacy

With these additions, OFNEDA enhances its ability to support Ontario's business community, First Nation Economic Development Officers, communities, funders, and industry partners in even more meaningful ways.

The future is bright, and the opportunities ahead are abundant. Now is the time to seize them—together and collaboratively. We are proud of the many partnerships and relationships we have built, and we remain committed to listening to the voices of our membership, staff, board, funders, and partners as we move forward.

Meegwetch,

*Peggy Dominique*

Executive Director



# The Organization

## About OFNEDA

The Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association (OFNEDA) is a non-profit organization that supports the efforts of First Nations Economic Development Professionals through engaging, networking, supplying resources, mentoring and training. Established at the First Nation Economic Conference held in Sault Ste. Marie in August 2009, twelve (12) Board members (3 from each Chapter) were elected at the conference. The Association's initial purpose was defined as follows:

1. Uniting EDO's and promoting the status and character of EDO's, supporting ethical business practices and best practices in economic development.
2. Promoting the maintenance and improvement of the qualification and standards of First Nation EDO's in the Province of Ontario.
3. Sharing information for the mutual benefit of the members.
4. Representing the members and presenting their views to other associations and government agencies.
5. Working with government agencies to develop assurance procedures for EDO's and have government agencies endorse them.
6. Providing information to members through various channels.

## OFNEDA Vision & Mission

### **Vision:**

*The Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association will promote and support a working environment and resources for our members / stakeholders that will enhance and promote economies that are viable and culturally sensitive, as defined by each First Nation community.*

### **Mission:**

*To empower and support economic sustainability through capacity building, networking and access to technical expertise, best practices and information sharing to our members/stakeholders while recognizing the unique and diverse nature of each First Nation.*



# Purposeful Progress

## Demonstrated Success and Accomplishments

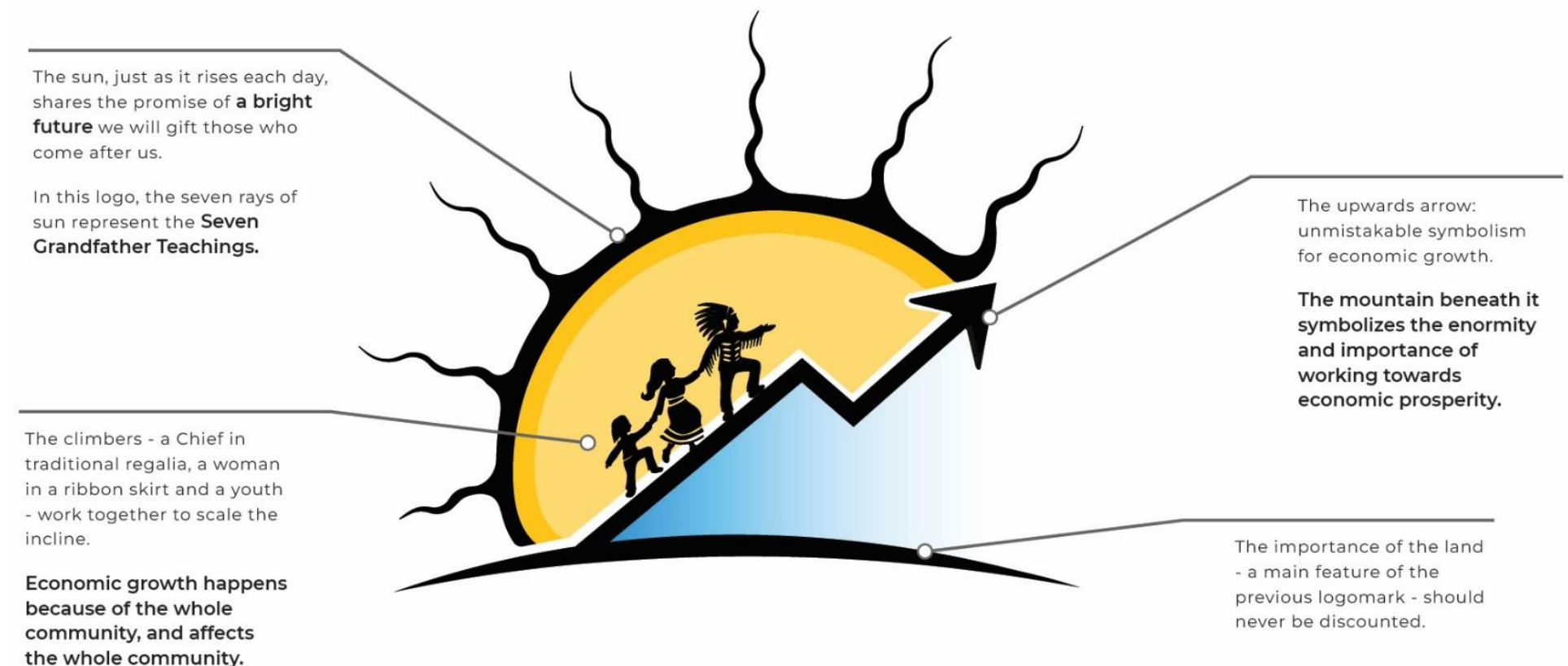
Since 2022, OFNEDA has followed through on many planned initiatives that have brought about many positive benefits to the organization, its membership, funders and industry partners. Specifically:

1. Created, recruited and hired five new full-time positions responsible for:
  - a. Indigenous Procurement Developer
  - b. Director of Marketing and Training
  - c. Research and Membership
  - d. Training Coordinator
  - e. Director of Procurement and Entrepreneurship Development
2. Significantly improved EDO engagement and forums resulting in an increase of EDO member support from 20 in 2020 to 123 in 2024.
3. Reduced the overall OFNEDA Board of Directors complement from 12 to 8 to improve governance. Currently, all 8 positions are filled by experienced individuals from a variety of regions.
4. Modernized financial and operational policies, controls and systems to match the current and future growth of the organization.
5. Significantly increased renewed funding and engagement from federal and provincial governments.
  - a. Accessed \$7 million over the past three years from Ontario.
  - b. Accessed \$1.5 million over the past five years from Canada.
  - c. Strengthened partnerships with both the federal (ISC) and provincial (IAFNER) government.
6. Aligned organizational goals with the realities of the economic development landscape for First Nation Economic Development Officers, communities, partners and funders which resulted delivering meaningful and effective forums, events, programs and services.
7. Since 2022, OFNEDA hosted 3 conferences, 6 procurement engagement sessions, 20 workshops, exhibited at numerous events and hosted multiple virtual EDO coffee sessions touching on a variety of topics.
8. Coordinated TAED training for 15 EDOs in Ontario through NVIT and CANDO and 9 EDOs for the EDAC training.
9. Rebranded, launched new website, logo and marketing of OFNEDA. [\[OFNEDA\]](#)



# OFNEDA's New Logo

The board and staff are excited to share the new logo of OFNEDA. The graphic below illustrates the meaning behind each key component of the logo.



# Strategic Planning

## The Process and Updated Plan

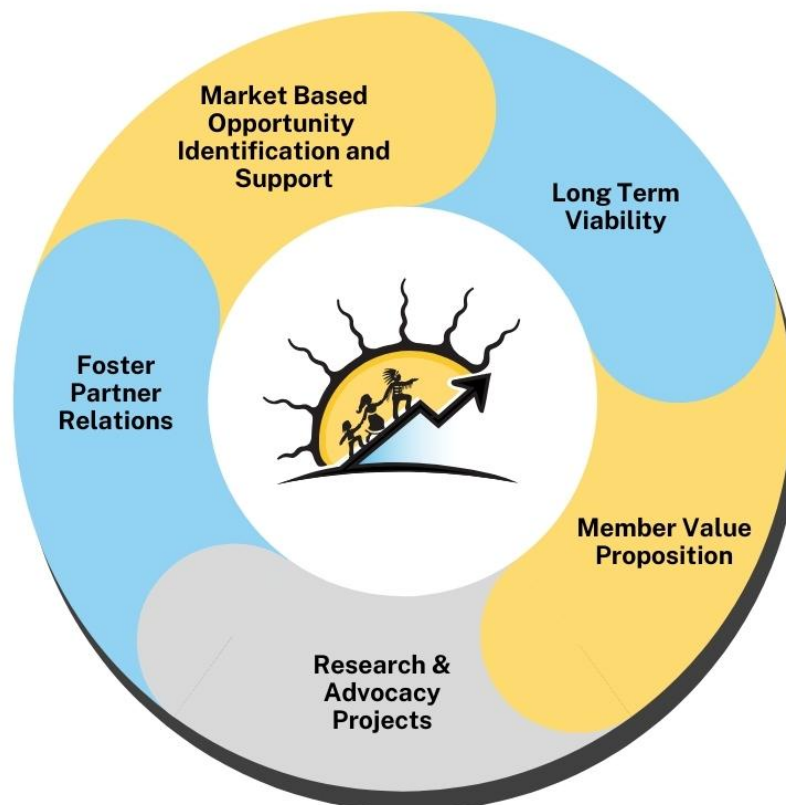
As a mindful leadership group, OFNEDA staff and the board closely monitored the significant progress made in executing its strategic plan. As a result, a facilitated session with staff and the board as well as follow-up meetings were held to pause, reflect and renew the organization's path forward. These discussions entailed topics such as: OFNEDA's identity and logo, vision and mission, acknowledging success, reviewing foundational themes and pillars, opportunities and challenges and lastly, next steps.

The following pages contain the updated version of OFNEDA's strategic plan. Specifically, this consists of revised strategic themes, pillars and initiatives.

## Strategic Themes

### Key Themes

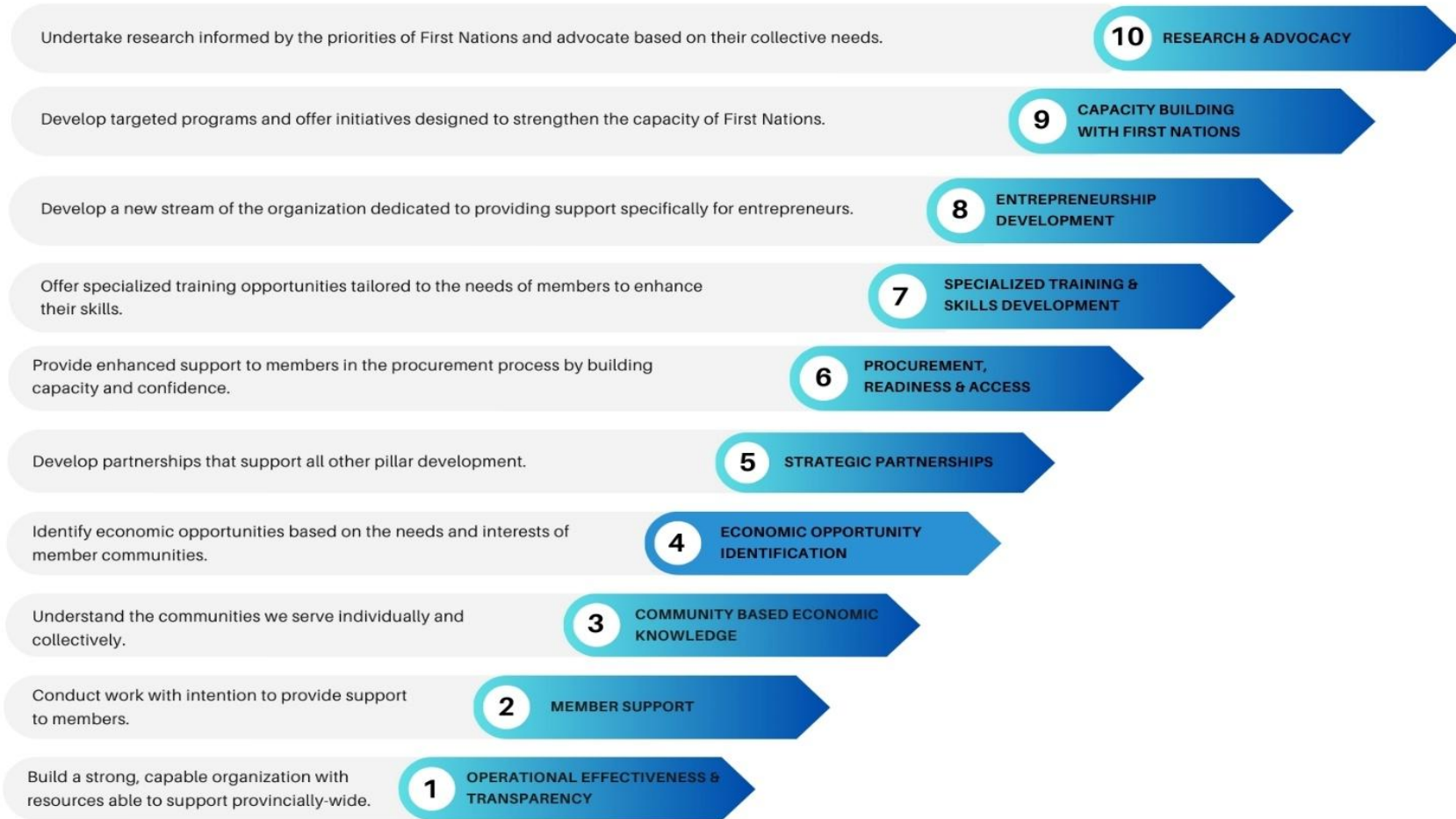
Below are OFNEDA's strategic themes that will guide the work it continues to do. These themes function as key drivers of organizational excellence and provide strategic direction to meet the desired expectations of all stakeholders.





## Strategic Pillars of OFNEDA's Strategic Plan

Given the themes of the engagement, strategic pillars that will drive OFNEDA for the next five years have been developed. Each pillar will anchor the organizational development of OFNEDA and provide focused growth over the next five years. OFNEDA will be driven to create the following ten strong, stable pillars:



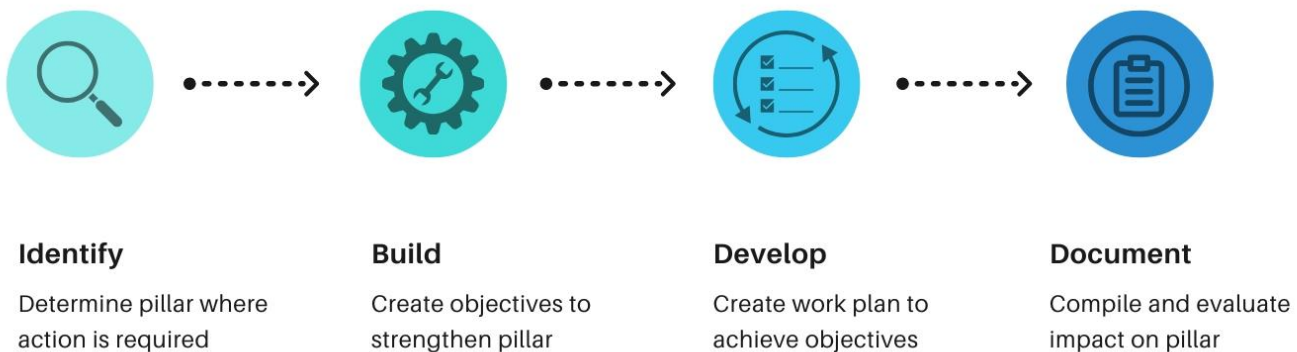
OFNEDA will continue to build their strategy around the ten foundational pillars. Each pillar can be strengthened independently of one another over the next five years, however, collective attention to each pillar will achieve the best results. By focusing efforts on all ten foundational pillars, OFNEDA will be positioned as a much more effective organization.

## Forming the Strategy Based on Strategic Pillars

Under every pillar there will be strategic objectives. These objectives have intent and will provide direction to Board and staff for implementation. Members will be able to hold the Board and staff accountable to successfully meet the objectives set out under the pillars based on operational workplans developed to achieve the strategic direction. An annual review of strategic activities will document and allow for adjustment and validation year after year.

The Executive Director will work with staff and the board to create realistic and manageable workplans to identify key initiatives to meet set objectives in each strategic pillar.

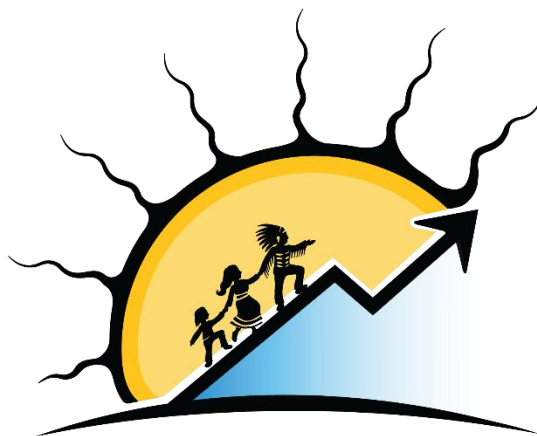
The following sections will highlight the pillar, objectives and workplan for the coming years.



## Association Commitment to the Plan

The foundation for any successful strategic plan is a commitment to accomplish the goals of the plan from those responsible for its implementation. OFNEDA must continue to focus attention on attaining desired results. Attainment of results is the byproduct of a culture that fosters and encourages individual and collective accountability.

# APPENDIX A



## Pillar No. 1—Operational Effectiveness & Transparency

**Build a strong, capable organization with resources able to support provincially wide.**

Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Timely Reporting	- Consistently deliver accurate, timely, and transparent reporting to the Board, members, and funders, strengthening accountability, trust, and informed decision-making.
Securing Funding	- Achieving diversified, sustainable funding streams that support long-term organizational stability and expanded programming for members and communities.
Enhance Staffing in Certain Areas	- The organization has the right mix of skilled staff to effectively deliver programs, respond to member needs, and advance strategic priorities.
Marketing and Branding	- OFNEDA's brand is widely recognized and respected, clearly communicating its value, impact, and leadership role in First Nation economic development.
Continuing to Strengthen Membership	- Membership growth and engagement increase across Ontario, with members experiencing clear value, relevance, and responsiveness from OFNEDA.
Continue to Access Sponsorship	- Strategic sponsorships contribute to financial opportunities and sustainability while aligning with OFNEDA's values and supporting high-quality events and initiatives.
Strengthen Conference for Membership	- The annual conference is a premier, member-driven forum that delivers meaningful learning, networking, and partnership opportunities.
Resource and Build HR Unit, Supports and Tools	- Human resource systems and tools support staff well-being, professional growth, and organizational effectiveness.
Refine Financial Reporting to ED / Board	- Clear, consistent financial reporting supports sound governance, fiscal oversight, and strategic decision-making.
Regularizing Chapter Meetings	- Chapters are active and well-supported, providing consistent regional engagement, communication, and peer support.



## Pillar No. 2—Member Support

Conduct work with intention to provide support to members.	
Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Increase One on One Outreach	- Members feel supported, heard, and connected through personalized engagement that responds to their unique roles and community contexts.
Launch Financial / Funding Database	- Members have timely access to relevant funding information, improving readiness and success in securing resources.
Make Research Readily Available	- Members can easily access practical, relevant research that informs decision-making and strengthens economic development practice.
Proposal Writing and Reporting Supports for First Nations and EDOs	- Provide real-time information and supports for EDOs and First Nations improve proposal quality, reporting compliance, and funding success through targeted supports.
Growing Membership in Northern Communities	- Increased representation and engagement from Northern communities ensures equitable access to OFNEDA services and supports.



## Pillar No. 3—Community Based Economic Knowledge

Understand the communities we serve individually and collectively.	
Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Host Chapter Meetings to meet their Needs	- Chapter meetings reflect regional priorities and foster meaningful dialogue, learning, and collaboration. Collaborative relationships with funders enhance understanding of community realities and align funding approaches with First Nation needs.
Launch Information Gathering on Communities and their Needs	- OFNEDA develops a strong understanding of community-specific economic development priorities to guide programming and advocacy.
Design Data Framework for Information	- A structured data framework enables consistent, respectful, and useful collection of community-level economic information.



## Pillar No. 4—Economic Opportunity Identification

Identify economic opportunities based on the needs and interests of member communities.	
Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Provide Procurement Information, Training and Opportunities	- Members are better equipped to identify, prepare for, and pursue economic and procurement opportunities.
Monitoring and Keeping Up to Date with Procurement and Development in Regions and Specific Communities	- OFNEDA proactively identifies emerging opportunities and shares timely information with members.
Local Content Supports for Communities	- Communities strengthen local participation and benefits from economic development and procurement projects.
Networking and Connecting Businesses, Communities and Industry	- Stronger connections lead to partnerships, joint ventures, and inclusive economic opportunities.



## Pillar No. 5—Strategic Partnerships

**Develop partnerships that support all other pillar development.**

Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Assess New Partnerships with Industry	- Assess and identify new partnerships that are strategically aligned, mutually beneficial, and respectful of First Nation and OFNEDA priorities.
Create a Partnership Benefit Framework	- Clear criteria guide partnership decisions, ensuring value for members and alignment with OFNEDA's vision.
Strengthen Relationships	- Key relationships are deepened to enhance collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective impact. For example, EDAC, FedNor, and EDCO.





## Pillar No. 6—Procurement, Readiness, and Access

**Provide enhanced support to members in the procurement process by building capacity and confidence.**

Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Provide Procurement Information, Training and Opportunities	- Members build confidence and capacity to navigate procurement processes and compete successfully.
Monitoring and Keeping Up to Date with Procurement and Development in Regions and Specific Communities	- Members receive up-to-date intelligence on procurement pipelines and opportunities.
Local Content Supports for Communities	- First Nations increase local participation and economic returns from procurement activities.



## Pillar No. 7—Specialized Training and Skills Development

**Offer specialized training opportunities tailored to the needs of members to enhance their skills.**

Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Finalize Funding to Complete Work for ST	- Sustainable funding supports delivery of high-quality, specialized training aligned with member needs.
Ongoing Assessment of Training Needs	- Training offerings remain relevant, responsive, and grounded in real-world challenges.
Assessment of the development of Training Partnerships	- Strategic partnerships enhance training quality, reach, and impact.



## Pillar No. 8—Entrepreneurship Development

**Develop a new stream of the organization dedicated to providing support specifically for entrepreneurs.**

Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Provide Training to Entrepreneurs	- First Nation entrepreneurs gain skills, knowledge, and confidence to start and grow successful businesses.
Ongoing Development and Growth of Membership and Committee for this Pillar	- A strong entrepreneurship network supports peer learning, mentorship, and collaboration.
Develop Entrepreneurship Forum	- Entrepreneurs have a dedicated space to share experiences, opportunities, and solutions.
Development of Entrepreneurship Supports	- Entrepreneurs access practical tools and supports that reduce barriers and support sustainability.



## Pillar No. 9—Capacity Building with First Nations

Develop targeted programs and offer initiatives designed to strengthen the capacity of First Nations.	
Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Ongoing Supports to Strengthen and Build Capacity with First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- First Nations strengthen internal economic development capacity aligned with their goals and values.</li><li>- Communities are supported with data, analysis, and reporting to inform planning and funding.</li></ul>
Ongoing Networking Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Communities benefit from peer learning, collaboration, and shared solutions through regular engagement in-person and virtual.</li></ul>



## Pillar No. 10—Research and Advocacy

Undertake research informed by the priorities of First Nations and advocate based on their collective needs.	
Initiative or Goal	Desired Outcome
Funding Opportunities	- Research and advocacy efforts are supported by sustainable funding aligned with community priorities.
Specific Research Needs	- Research addresses real-world challenges and opportunities identified by members and communities.
Specific Advocacy Needs	- OFNEDA effectively advocates shared priorities to influence policy, programs, and investment. - Members are informed, engaged, and aware of advocacy efforts and outcomes.
Assess External Opportunities to Advocate on behalf of OFNEDA	- Strategic engagement with external organizations amplifies First Nation economic development voices. For example, EDCO, NACCA, COO and CCIB.

