

Western Front Society

Strategic Plan
2025 - 2029

WHERE ART LIVES • SINCE 1973

Land Acknowledgement

Western Front acknowledges that we gather and create on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səɫílwətaʔɬ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We honor their stewardship of this land since time immemorial and pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

As an organization founded and largely directed by settlers and immigrants, we recognize our responsibility to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, embracing their knowledge and wisdom in our practices. We are committed to supporting and welcoming Indigenous artists, curators, and audiences, and to amplifying their voices within the cultural life of these territories and beyond.

Executive Summary

Western Front's *Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029* provides a five-year roadmap to guide the organization through its next chapter. This document outlines our new vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities and objectives, which were collaboratively defined with our board, staff, and a range of community stakeholders. I thank all who participated in this process for their invaluable reflections, insights, and ideas, which together have shaped our future direction.

This Strategic Plan follows a five-year period of significant renewal and transformation at Western Front. During this time, we streamlined and strengthened how we deliver our multidisciplinary program; increased our operational efficiency, sustainability, and resiliency; and positively grew our impact to artists and audiences alike. We also took major steps in how we steward our archives and heritage building, completing significant preservation and access projects that will ensure continued and increased use of both in the years to come.

Concurrent with Western Front's own evolution, there has also been significant change in the purpose of arts and culture organizations both in Canada and globally, including in the value and leadership that they must demonstrate to the diverse communities they represent and wish to serve. Western Front's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion has been central to the development of our *Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029*, reflecting our belief that art is a meaningful catalyst for personal, societal, and cultural change and can support a more equitable future.

Guided by this Strategic Plan, over the coming five years we hope that Western Front continues to grow the benefits it delivers to artists, and the reach and impact it has in our communities. We aim



Western Front, 303 E 8th Ave, Vancouver, 2026

to build upon the organization's unique Vancouver character, and its established national and international reputation, to further advance its position as a vibrant and leading multidisciplinary art centre.

Importantly, our Strategic Plan is a 'living document'. Our board and staff will review the plan annually to ensure its continued alignment with the needs of the organization, and our ever-changing world and arts sector. Each annual review will be anchored by the development of an Operations Plan, which will establish clear and measurable activities and initiatives to ensure that our Strategic Plan moves off the page, into action, with accountability.

Susan Gibb
Executive Director

Who We Are: Vision, Mission, and Values

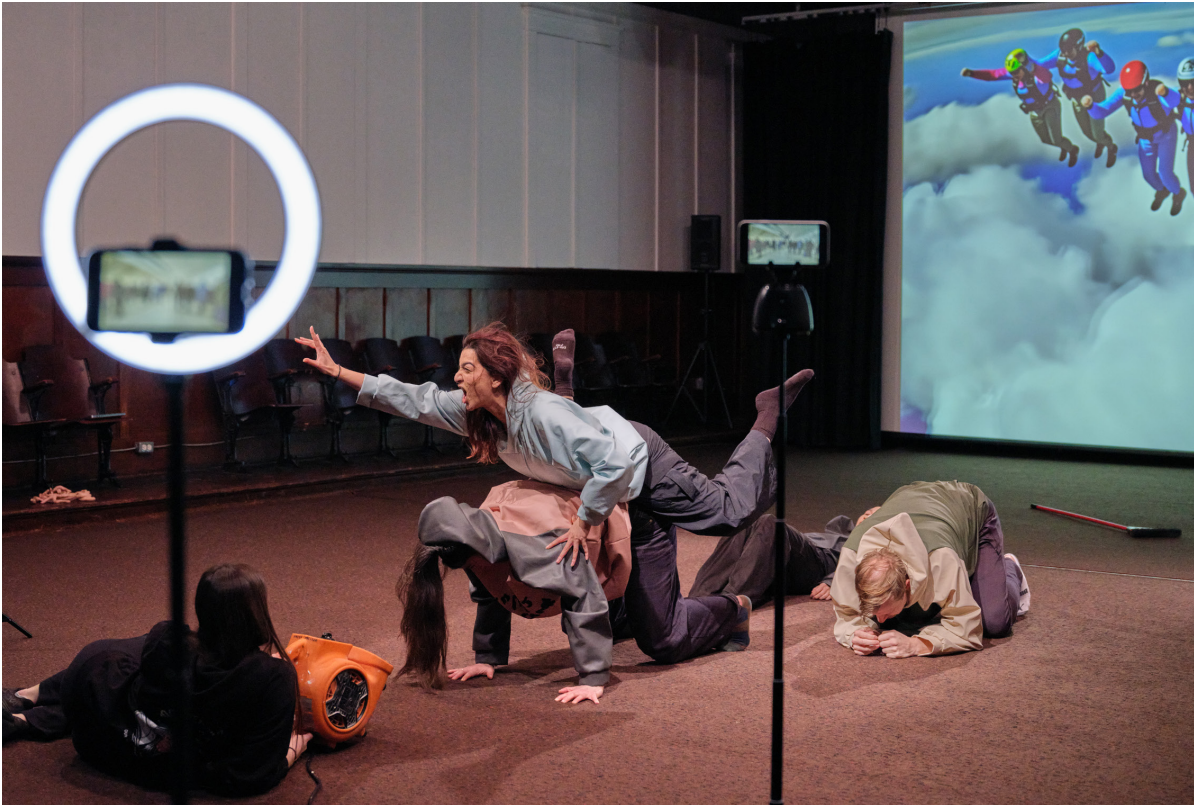
Western Front is recognized at a local, national, and international level for the innovation of its multidisciplinary program, for the transformative opportunities that its offer to artists, and the life-enhancing experiences that it affords audiences.

Western Front is unique within Vancouver for its long-term commitment to advancing the contemporary arts through a multidisciplinary approach, and nationally and internationally as one of first and longest-running artist-run centres. As a 50-year-old organization, we understand that it is important to reflect on our history, build on our strengths, and to position ourselves for continued relevance and future growth as a leading artist-run centre in Vancouver and beyond.

This Strategic Plan is based on our new vision, mission, and values outlined below. Together these outline our shared purpose—the what we do and the why we do it—and underpin our strategic priorities and objectives.



Western Front interior (c. 1973)



Nina Davies, *Contacting Image Worlds* (2026). Photo by Rachel Topham Photography.



Katayoon Yousefbigloo performing (2025). Photo Dennis Ha.



Screening of Miko Revereza's *Nowhere Near* (2024). Photo by NK Photo.



The New Improvisers Studio with Susie Ibrarra (2025). Photo by Rachel Topham Photography.



Tawhida Tanya Evanson reading as part of *Dear Friends &* (2023). Photo by Dennis Ha.

Vision

Where art lives.

Mission

Western Front supports artists in developing, creating, and presenting multidisciplinary work at critical stages of their practice. We invite publics to engage with contemporary art in ways that challenge, inspire, and redefine its meaning over time.

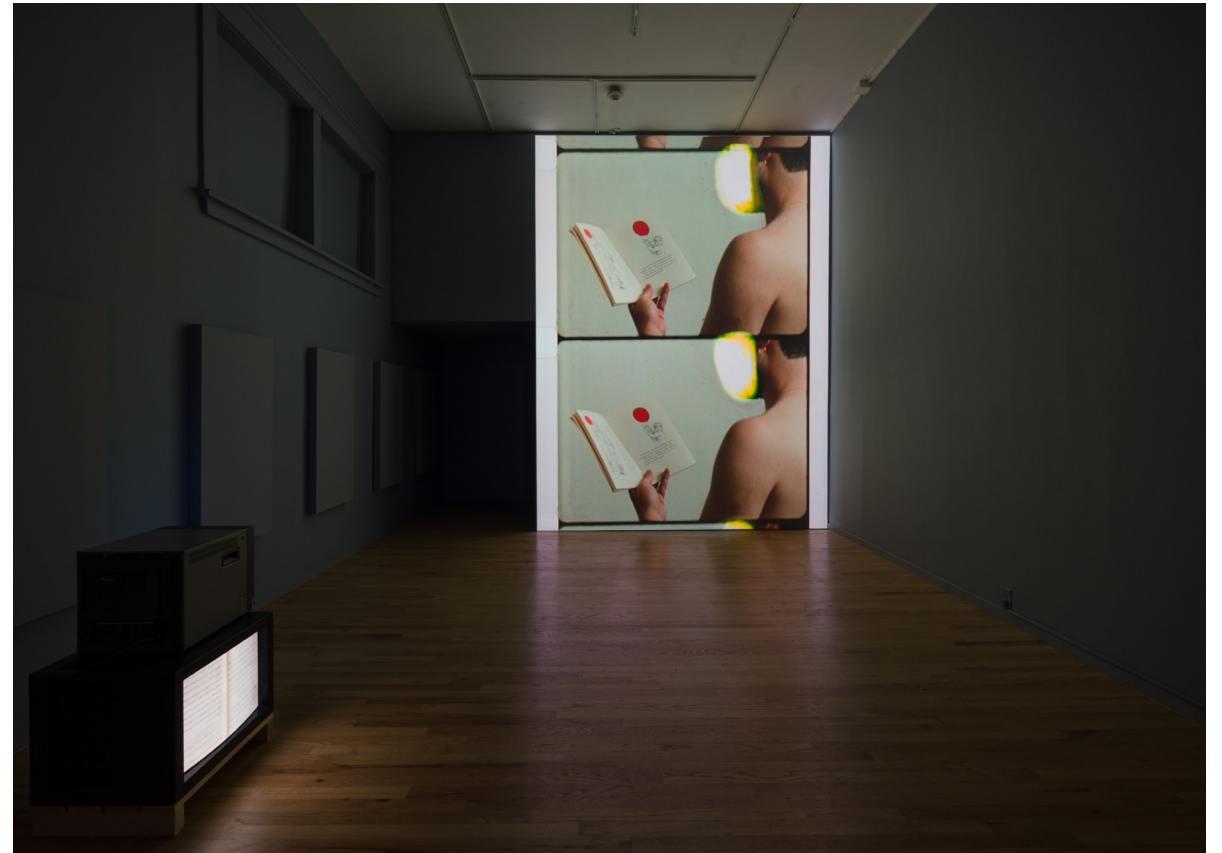
Values

Empowering People: We centre diverse voices and lived experiences, providing professional pathways for artists and staff to take creative risks, develop their practices, and grow through collaboration.

Learning Through Creation: We believe in learning by doing, valuing the creative journey as much as the outcome, and cultivating experimentation and process-based practices.

Creating Connections: We foster relationships across art forms, generations, cultures, and communities, enabling meaningful exchange between artists, audiences, and peer organizations.

Valuing Time: We honour time as a vital resource—giving space for reflection, intentional action, and time-based artistic practices, while preserving the contributions of artists past, present, and future.



Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko, *Lovers' Wind* (2024). Photo by Dennis Ha.



Nyege Nyege Tapes (2025). Photo by Dennis Ha.

Our Priorities & Objectives

Priority 1: Support for Artists

Western Front exists first and foremost as a place for artists to take risks, develop ideas, and make work that may not have another home. Our strength lies in giving artists time, space, trust, and meaningful support across disciplines and stages of practice. Sustaining this artist-centred approach allows Western Front to remain responsive to new forms, ambitious ideas, and the artists shaping contemporary culture.



Sarah Davachi in residence (2023). Photo by Rachel Topham Photography.

Objectives

- a. Empower artists to create and present innovative, experimental, and multidisciplinary work, enhancing our position as a leader in contemporary art and time-based practices.
- b. Provide professional support for local, national, and international artists from diverse backgrounds.
- c. Stay responsive to emerging art forms, practices, and opportunities.

Outcomes

1. Formalize our program structure to support a varied, ambitious, and responsive program annually.
2. Clarify and communicate our artist-in-residence and commissions frameworks, distinguishing creation, commissioning, presentation, and public engagement.
3. Strengthen artist contracts, including rights and permissions for archival documentation.
4. Build dedicated time for curatorial research, including studio visits, travel, and artist engagement, into programming workflows.
5. Develop a framework for responsive programming that enables shorter lead times and emerging opportunities.

Priority 2: Community Connection & Impact

Western Front's impact is built through relationships with artists, audiences, partners, neighbours, and communities. We seek to deepen reciprocal relationships with the Nations on whose territories we work, while creating meaningful opportunities for people to encounter and engage with contemporary art. Strengthening these connections will extend Western Front's reach locally and internationally while preserving the intimacy, openness, and exchange that define our artist-run culture.



Concert by Paul Chiyokten Wagner (2024). Photo by Rachel Topham Photography.

Objectives

- a. Strengthen relationships with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔt̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and Indigenous artists and communities.
- b. Collaborate with producing and presenting partners to broaden our community reach and impact.
- c. Grow our profile locally, nationally, and internationally.
- d. Expand audience reach and deepen engagement across communities.

Outcomes

1. Develop an authentic, reciprocal engagement strategy with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔt̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, Indigenous artists, and communities.
2. Increase co-productions, touring presentations, and off-site programs with local, national, and international partners.
3. Strengthen communications and media engagement to increase Western Front's local, national, and international profile.
4. Build on our distinctive visual identity and digital presence to strengthen recognition and extend our reach.

Priority 3: Excellence in Operations

Ambitious artistic work depends on the often-invisible conditions that make it possible. For Western Front, operational excellence means building the people, resources, governance, and financial resilience needed to support artists well over the long term. Strengthening our capacity is not an end in itself; it enables a small, collaborative organization to sustain its distinctive culture while growing its ambition, reach, and contribution to the wider arts ecosystem.



Western Front's team during the install of Dani and Sheliah Restack's *Feral Domestic* (2025).
Photo by Sheliah ReStack.

Objectives

- a. Attract and retain talented staff with competitive compensation and strong workplace culture.
- b. Plan for leadership succession at board and management levels.
- c. Align operational capacity with programmatic growth.
- d. Diversify revenue streams for long-term sustainability and resilience.

Outcomes

1. Establish an annual review cycle for organizational policies, staff benefits, and workplace practices, including identification of gaps and priorities.
2. Formalize professional development and advancement pathways that support staff growth, retention, and greater diversity within the organization.
3. Develop succession and knowledge-transfer plans for key roles, including documentation, cross-training, and leadership onboarding.
4. Develop a flexible staffing model, including an expanded roster of technicians and specialized staff, to align capacity with program needs.
5. Develop a five-year revenue strategy, including diversified funding, a grant pipeline, and a donor stewardship program.
6. Strengthen Board participation in philanthropy, fundraising, and advocacy.

Priority 4: Access and Innovation with Facilities

Western Front's building is more than a venue: it is an active part of our artistic history and a resource for artists, archives, audiences, and experimentation. Investing in its accessibility, safety, sustainability, and technological capacity ensures that this unique environment can continue to support ambitious work. Thoughtful renewal will preserve what makes the building distinctive while opening it to new forms of artistic production, participation, and exchange.



Entrance to Grand Luxe Hall (2023).

Objectives

- a. Plan and implement building upgrades to improve accessibility, safety, sustainability, and support for innovative programming.
- b. Invest in technology for art-making, archives, digitization, and operational efficiency.

Outcomes

1. Advance a long-term facilities masterplan that enhances accessibility, safety, sustainability, and functionality while preserving the building's distinctive character.
2. Establish a phased capital investment and fundraising strategy to realize priority facility improvements.
3. Implement a strategic equipment lifecycle approach to guide maintenance, replacement, deaccessioning, and new investment.
4. Develop a sustainable digital strategy that strengthens our website, CollectiveAccess database, digital programming, and organizational systems.
5. Expand access to and stewardship of the archives through improved cataloguing, copyright management, preservation, and digital access.