

2023-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



**Alberta
Association
of Black
Social Workers**

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The *Landscape*

The Canadian Human Rights Commission states that the roots of anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in Canada run deep. They are historically embedded in our society, in our culture, in our laws and in our attitudes. They are built into our institutions and perpetuate the social and economic disparities that exist in everything from education, to healthcare, to housing and employment.

In a society where systemic and institutional racism and oppression are pervasive, it is crucial to recognize the unique needs of Black communities. Racially and culturally specific associations can help address these needs by providing a safe space for people to come together and share their experiences. These associations also play an important role in raising awareness about the issues faced by these communities and advocating for change.

Developed in response to a need for community, connection, support and recognition, the Alberta Association of Black Social Workers is committed to serving the Black communities of Alberta both within and beyond the profession of Social Work.

Our *History*

The Alberta Association of Black Social Workers (AABSW) started as an informal group of five Black social workers who originally met in the Fall of 2018. They came together out of a concern for Black social workers practicing in isolation, working conditions, barriers to advancement, the future of social work as a profession, and the issues impacting Black communities in Alberta.

These women understood the importance and necessity of connection, belonging, and space to discuss issues of importance to Black communities. Through grassroots community organizing, 5 Black social workers working together has become a network of 100+ social workers and social work students supporting one another in order to work to their fullest capacities doing impactful work.

The AABSW became a registered non-profit organization in July of 2020 amidst the economic downturn, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the murder of George Floyd. It was established after collective discussions to understand more about the experiences, issues, concerns, and needs of professionals.

Our Process

AABSW's Board of Directors wanted to ensure that a strong, sustainable foundation was laid on which the association could grow, and which met the needs of its members.

In late 2022, AABSW initiated their inaugural strategic planning process by engaging Rida Abboud Consulting to start the development of a three-year strategic plan. Planning began through discussions about the AABSW which included the board of directors and founding members of the association to help shape the information gathering methods for the strategic planning process.

In November 2022, AABSW published a survey for current members, past members, and potential members of the association. Following this, in January 2023, AABSW held two focus groups including members of the association, community stakeholders, and members of the board of directors.

The culmination of this work is a three-year strategic plan which provides a framework and guide for the association to achieve its mission and vision.

The Current State

The feedback that AABSW received through the information gathering processes is summarized through the lens of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) chart below.

Strengths (What will we continue to build on?)	Weaknesses (What do we need to improve on?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o AABSW is meeting a need among Black Albertan Social Workers o Networking opportunities for members o Fostering a sense of community o Being a place where members are able to speak their truth without code-switching o Competency building opportunities o Mentorship between members o Capacity building for Social Work professionals o Connections to Social Workers who specialize in relevant and needed areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Trust issues between AABSW and its members o Clarity in communication with members and public o Internal communication channels can feel like a 'closed system' o Maintaining member engagement o Members lack an understanding of AABSW's purpose o Members don't know how to get involved supporting the Association o Potential for leadership burnout
Opportunities (What can we harness in our environment?)	Threats (What must we monitor in our environment?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o National level recognition o Collaboration with other racialized associations in Alberta and Canada o Opportunity to be an advocate for needs of Black Social Workers o Potential to promote and offer trainings by Black Social Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Long term funding sources

Our *Vision*

"A society with equitable access to opportunities for people of African descent in the province of Alberta."

Our *Mission*

"To support and empower Black Social Workers by providing a structure and forum to exchange ideas, offer services and create programs to enhance the well-being and social justice of the Black community and society."

The Strategic Plan

Through the feedback received during the information gathering process, three strategic pillars were identified as the main points of focus for AABSW over the next three years. Consideration was taken to ensure these pillars will address the needs of the association and its members by building on what AABSW has been doing well, fostering growth in directions which need to be improved on, and orienting the association in such a way that anticipates future needs of its members.

Each pillar is further defined by goal statements, and each goal contains targets which outline priorities that will guide AABSW towards its Vision and Mission. In order to ensure success, targets have been broken down into a list of activities which upon reaching the desired outcome will signal the target's achievement.

The order of the pillars has been chosen as such to reflect a tiered timeline, with Pillar 1 laying the foundation on which the other pillars will build on.

Pillar 1: AABSW Sustainability

- Goal 1 - Ensure the association's long-term financial sustainability
- Goal 2 - Foster the human resources required to build momentum and sustainability

Pillar 2: AABSW Facilitates Networking

- Goal - Build a strong and supportive community for Black Social Workers by creating opportunities to connect professionally and socially

Pillar 3: AABSW Supports Mentorship

- Goal - Foster the professional goals of Black Social Workers by providing mentorship and capacity building opportunities

Pillar 1: *Sustainability*

Goal 1

Ensure the organization's long-term financial sustainability

Target: Build a budget and fundraising strategy

Activity 1: Determine what financial resources and expenses are required, including hiring a coordinator or grant writer.

Outcome: AABSW's financial resource needs for the next three years have been identified.

Activity 2: Create a budget for 2023-2025

Outcome: 2023-2025 budget has been developed.

Activity 3: Create a fundraising strategy, including who is tasked for fundraising.

Outcome: AABSW begins to raise funds for 2023-2025

Pillar 1: Sustainability

Goal 2

Foster the human resources required to build momentum and sustainability.

Target 1: Maintain a strong governance team

Activity 1: Define roles and responsibilities of board members.

Outcome: Each member of the board knows what they are responsible for, with documentation defining roles.

Activity 2: Determine Board and committee structure required to meet the needs of the association.

Outcome: Defined governance structure complete for AABSW.

Activity 3: Develop a leadership succession plan that allows current members to step into leadership roles.

Outcome: Members are aware of the opportunity and path to step into leadership roles in the association.

Target 2: Foster new membership and volunteers base

Activity 1: Determine how to engage volunteers and volunteer opportunities.

Outcome: Increased involvement of members in AABSW activities.

Activity 2: Establish a connection with Black Social Work student groups.

Outcome: Current Social Work Students are aware of and joining AABSW.

Activity 3: Connect with schools to leverage Community Development focused practicum students.

Outcome: AABSW welcomes it's first practicum student into the association.

Pillar 2: *Facilitates Networking*

Goal

Build a strong and supportive community for Black Social Workers by creating opportunities to connect professionally and socially.

Target 1: Create and deliver relevant in-person and virtual connection and networking opportunities for members

Activity 1: Identify event coordinators through volunteer base or committees.

Outcome: Event planning starts to be conducted by those tasked.

Activity 2: Identify and enact opportunities for the association to facilitate professional and social networking among its members.

Outcome: Members are aware of potential opportunities to meet one another, and can attend some sort of event.

Target 2: Create a communications strategy, including leveraging the website

Activity 1: Determine how the association will communicate with its members, including who is responsible for delivering communication.

Outcome: AABSW members receive consistent messaging from association via website/emails.

Activity 2: Communicate strategic plan and key objectives of association to members and public.

Outcome: Members and public have access to public version of strategic plan.

Activity 3: Maintain website functionality including updated profiles, encouraging use and promoting member opportunities.

Outcome: AABSW website is utilized by members to find information, resources, and connect with one another.

Activity 4: Promote member benefits to members and public.

Outcome: New and current members are aware of what they can expect from being involved with AABSW.

Pillar 3: *Supports Mentorship*

Goal

Foster the professional goals of Black Social Workers by providing mentorship and capacity building opportunities.

Target 1: Build and operate a list for Social Workers seeking supervision

Activity 1: Determine how to best connect supervisors to those seeking clinical supervision.

Outcome: A working list of available supervisors within AABSW's membership has been created.

Activity 2: Promote supervision opportunities to members.

Outcome: Members are aware of and are connecting with supervision opportunities.

Target 2: Provide a bridge to connect Social Work students with mentors and practicum opportunities

Activity 1: Determine how to best bridge Social Work students with mentors within the association.

Outcome: Social Work student members have found meaningful mentorship within AABSW.

Activity 2: Determine how to promote practicum opportunities to Social Work students and members.

Outcome: Current Social Work student members are utilizing AABSW to find and obtain practicum opportunities.