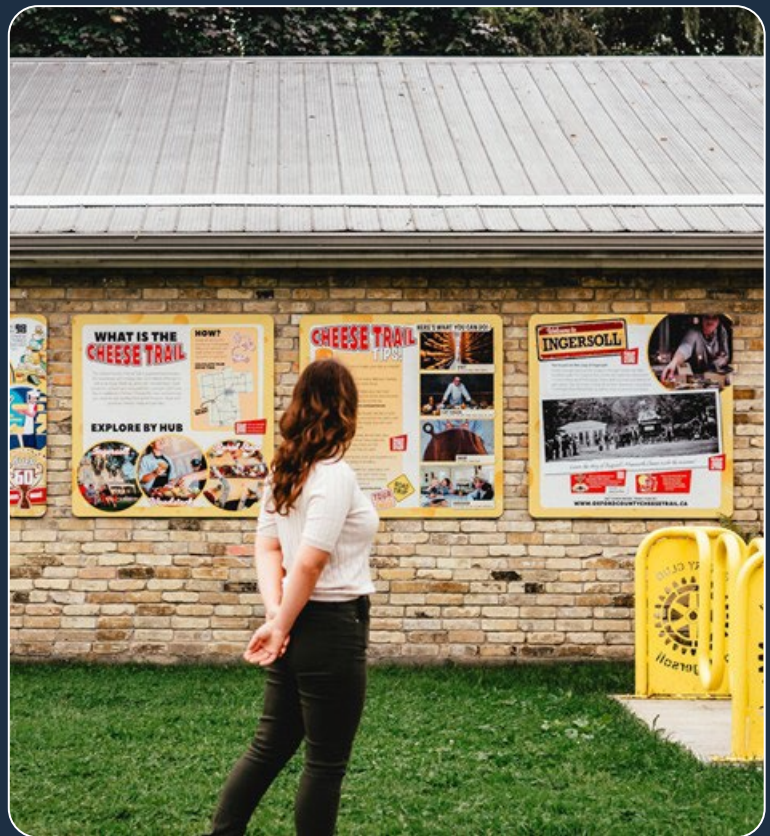


Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum Enhancement Plan

# Evolving with Purpose

Prepared for: Town of Ingersoll

June 2025





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# Message from the Mayor

Our past defines who we are as a community.

The Ingersoll Cheese and Agricultural Museum plays a key role in preserving Ingersoll's rich heritage. By sharing the history that has shaped Ingersoll into the community we are proud to call home, we can ensure that future generations of Ingersoll residents can understand and relate to the stories of our past.



The Museum is a hub of our community for people to gather throughout the year and celebrate small-town life. Having a plan to guide the Museum through this next key phase will ensure that residents continue to enjoy visiting with family and friends, and it will be an actively used tool to achieve goals for the museum advisory committee and staff alike.

On behalf of the Town's residents, I want to truly thank those who provided input into this important document. Without those contributions, it would not have been possible to have such an encompassing and comprehensive plan for our museum.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brian Petrie



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## Summary of the Plan

The Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum is a cornerstone of local identity – preserving the town’s heritage while offering dynamic, hands-on experiences that connect past and present. As both a cultural anchor and a tourism driver, the Museum has grown into a vibrant, multifaceted institution with strong community momentum and increasing regional visibility.

The Museum Enhancement Plan, ***Evolving with Purpose***, builds on this momentum to chart a clear, coordinated path for the next decade. Developed through in-depth research, community and interest-holder engagement, and alignment with municipal priorities, the plan provides a strategic framework to guide the Museum’s continued growth – helping it clarify its identity, strengthen its offerings, and expand its reach.

At the heart of the plan are renewed vision and mission statements that articulate the Museum’s long-term aspirations and core purpose.

**Vision:** A vibrant community hub where Ingersoll’s past and present inspire understanding, belonging, and local pride.

**Mission:** We connect people to place through the stories of Ingersoll’s past and present, brought to life by our collections and community voices. The Museum is a space for learning and community connection – where history is made accessible, engaging, and relevant for all.



# Strategic Pillars

The plan is structured around three strategic pillars, each supported by clear objectives and recommended actions.

## Pillar 1: Identity & Impact

This pillar focuses on defining the Museum's role, brand, and legacy. It positions the Museum as a dynamic community hub that reflects the full richness of Ingersoll's heritage and present-day stories.

As part of this pillar, the Museum will:

- Clarify and refine its mandate and identity
- Reflect diverse community voices and stories
- Raise its profile as a community, cultural, and tourism hub

## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience

This pillar focuses on elevating every visit. It equips the Museum to deliver interactive, inclusive visitor experiences that enhance relevance, encourage repeat visits, and deepen community connection.

As part of this pillar, the Museum will:

- Enhance gallery spaces
- Deepen visitor engagement
- Foster community connection through programs and events
- Extend its reach in the community

## Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship

This pillar focuses on building a strong future from the inside out. It shifts the Museum toward long-term operational resilience through diversified funding, strong policies and processes, and strategic investments.

As part of this pillar, the Museum will:

- Strengthen and diversify funding
- Strengthen operations and build capacity
- Invest in infrastructure improvements
- Ensure the collection is well-preserved and accessible



# Implementation

To support delivery across all three pillars, the plan includes a phased implementation framework that sequences actions over time. Each phase reflects a distinct focus in the Museum's evolution:

Phase	Timeline	Focus
<b>Clarify</b>	Immediate, Years 1 and 2	Lay the groundwork by updating the Museum's mandate, name, brand, interpretive lens, and foundational systems.
<b>Align</b>	Short term, Years 3–5	Ensure internal processes, partnerships, programs, and communications work together in a cohesive and coordinated way.
<b>Expand</b>	Medium Term, Years 6–9	Grow the Museum's reach, capacity, and impact through deeper programming, partnerships, and infrastructure investments.
<b>Sustain</b>	Long Term, Years 10+	Maintain momentum, strengthen sustainability, and continue adapting to community needs over time.

Detailed implementation tables accompany the plan, identifying timeline, cost range, responsibilities, and key performance indicators for each action. These tools are designed to support practical, phased decision-making while allowing for flexibility as circumstances evolve.

Above all, this plan positions the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum to remain relevant, resilient, and responsive – offering a shared foundation and clear direction for the next decade of growth.





# 1. Introduction

The Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum is a cornerstone of local identity, preserving the town's heritage while offering dynamic experiences that connect past and present. Originally focused on interpreting Ingersoll's agricultural roots and role in the Canadian cheese industry, the Museum has steadily evolved. Today, it serves as both a community hub and a key tourism destination, with growing visibility across the region and strong momentum from recent programs, partnerships, and events. Its blend of historical preservation, creative programming, and hands-on learning makes it a unique asset – one that resonates with residents and visitors alike.

To build on this momentum and ensure a clear path forward, the Town of Ingersoll engaged Nordicity to develop a ten-year strategic framework: **Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum Enhancement Plan: Evolving with Purpose**. This plan charts a direction for the Museum's continued growth – helping it clarify its identity, strengthen its offerings, and expand its reach. It provides guidance across key areas – from exhibitions and programming to infrastructure and operations – while reinforcing the Museum's role in Ingersoll's cultural, educational, and economic life.

Above all, the plan is designed to help the Museum remain relevant, resilient, and responsive to the community it serves – offering a clear roadmap and shared foundation for the work ahead.



## 1.1. Plan Development Process

This plan was shaped through a collaborative, evidence-informed process designed to reflect both community priorities and sector best practices. The process included:

- **Background document review** – analysis of local and regional strategies, planning documents, and internal materials to identify key intersections, challenges, and opportunities
- **Digital audit** – a Digital Portrait™ assessment to evaluate the Museum’s digital maturity, capacity, and future needs
- **Community and interest-holder engagement** – over 125 interactions captured diverse perspectives and ideas through:
  - **Interest-holder engagements** – focus groups and interviews with Town and Museum staff, members of the Museum Advisory Committee and other Town committees, Town Councillors (including the Mayor), and key partners in tourism, education, and culture
  - **Pop-up engagements and community input boards** – at the Museum and across key community locations, including the Creative Arts Centre, Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, Oxford County Library, and Victoria Park Community Centre
  - **Community survey** – administered by the Town to gather broader resident input on the Museum’s role, strengths, and areas for growth
- **Validation of key findings** – draft findings were reviewed by Town and Museum staff to confirm accuracy and alignment with local context
- **Collaborative planning workshop** – a facilitated session with Town and Museum staff and members of the Museum Advisory Committee to refine the strategic framework and explore implementation priorities

Together, these inputs shaped the final Museum Enhancement Plan – a coordinated, forward-looking strategy to guide the Museum’s growth over the next decade.

## 1.2. Alignment with Municipal and County Priorities

The Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum’s activities and strategic direction are closely aligned with the priorities of the Town of Ingersoll and Oxford County. These include:

- **Economic development and tourism:** The Museum contributes to Ingersoll’s tourism economy by anchoring the Oxford County Cheese Trail and drawing visitors from across the region and beyond. Its integration within the Economic Development department underscores its role in attracting tourism and supporting local businesses.





- **Community well-being and inclusion:** The Museum offers a forum for residents to engage with Ingersoll's unique heritage and events, building local pride and belonging. The Museum offers accessible, primarily free programming that supports the Town's Community Services Master Plan goals of fostering connectedness, cultural participation, and inclusion. Its efforts to reflect a broader range of local histories also align with the Town Diversity and Inclusion Committee's mandate.
- **Downtown revitalization and placemaking:** As a major tourism draw, the Museum has the potential to play a key role in drawing visitors into the downtown and anchoring future cultural and economic activity. The Museum's visibility along the 401 corridor offers a strategic opportunity to channel tourism into Ingersoll's core. Additionally, its location at the head of the Thomas Ingersoll Scenic Trail – which connects the Museum site to the downtown core – further reinforces this opportunity, offering a physical and experiential link between cultural attractions, natural amenities, and local businesses.
- **Accessibility and sustainability:** The Museum's programming, infrastructure improvements, and policy development efforts support the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Oxford County's focus on sustainable, inclusive communities.
- **County-wide collaboration and cultural heritage:** The Museum supports Oxford County's Strategic Plan (2023–2026) and Tourism Oxford's 5-Year Tourism Plan (2025–2030), both of which emphasize cultural heritage, rural tourism, and regional collaboration. Its activities also align with the Cultural Resource Policies section of the Oxford County Official Plan, which calls for the identification, conservation, and interpretation of cultural heritage resources as part of sustainable community development. The Museum is also well-positioned to help lead or support initiatives tied to the Safe and Well Oxford (SaWO) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Charter.

Moving forward, the Museum's ability to strengthen these alignments – through programming, storytelling, partnerships, and community outreach – will not only enhance its relevance and impact, but also expand opportunities for funding, collaboration, and long-term growth.



## 2. Community Profile and Market Analysis

A community profile and market analysis for the Town of Ingersoll was conducted to establish a baseline understanding of the town's current population makeup and future growth trajectory. This section presents key findings that inform the Museum's strategic direction; detailed analysis is included in Appendix 6.2.

Emerging trends point to the importance of planning for an aging population while also responding to recent in-migration of working-age adults and a youth population that is currently higher than the Ontario average. The local economy remains rooted in manufacturing, with modest income levels and a small but diverse mix of Indigenous and racialized residents. Ingersoll also sits within a high-volume domestic tourism region – highlighting opportunities to expand cultural programming that engages both residents and seasonal visitors.

- **Growing, aging population:** Ingersoll's 2024 population is estimated at 15,029, with growth projected to reach 16,292 by 2029 (8.4% growth). The town's age structure is also shifting: over the next 5–10 years, the proportion of seniors is rising while the proportion of working-age and child populations are declining. However, the overall population growth means that all age ranges are projected to grow in number over that time period, highlighting opportunities for programming and exhibition design that appeals to all ages. Intergenerational and participatory exhibits (e.g., oral histories) can also help to capture stories from older residents and newcomers, helping to build community buy-in and pride and ensure that all residents are reflected in the Museum's story over time.



- **More children than average:** Ingersoll currently has a higher proportion of children than the Ontario average. The Museum could consider using youth engagement as an entry point to cultivate relationships with parents, grandparents, and caregivers, building connections across generations. Furthermore, as these children grow up the Museum should consider programming designed to keep them engaged as lifelong patrons and future volunteers.
- **Limited immigration, strong in-migration:** Ingersoll has seen higher-than-expected domestic in-migration, particularly among residents aged 25–44, while international immigration remains limited: Only 1.1% of residents were recent immigrants as of 2021, compared to 4.2% provincially. This pattern reinforces the importance of engaging both long-time residents and newer arrivals through inclusive programming that supports community connection and reflects a shared and evolving sense of place.
- **Household incomes:** Ingersoll's 2020 median after-tax household income was \$77,000, slightly below the provincial median and neighbouring municipalities, with approximately 8.0% of residents living in low-income households. While this low-income measure is lower in Ingersoll than the national average, the overall household income environment reinforces the importance of maintaining free, pay-what-you-can, and/or subsidized models to ensure the Museum remains accessible to all residents.
- **Manufacturing-led employment base:** Manufacturing is the town's dominant employment sector, accounting for nearly 15% of all jobs as of March 2025. These jobs are particularly liable to disruption due to changing economic conditions in the region. This context highlights the importance of telling Ingersoll's industrial story – not only as a historical foundation, but as an ongoing thread that continues to shape the community's economic and cultural identity.
- **Cultural and language background:** Ingersoll's population is predominantly white and English-speaking, with 6.1% identifying as racialized and 2.8% identifying as Indigenous. A small minority speak French (0.9%) and other non-official languages (6.7%). The Museum should ensure that Indigenous peoples and the community's cultural diversity are meaningfully reflected in the stories it tells by working with the right partners to develop programming that is culturally appropriate, relevant, and accurate.
- **Mixed educational attainment:** 47% of Ingersoll residents have completed postsecondary education, while 35% have a high school diploma as their highest credential, and 18% have no formal certificate, diploma, or degree. This mix points to the importance of interpretive planning that presents information in different ways to ensure accessibility for all learning levels, thereby reinforcing the Museum as a welcoming, community-oriented space and not an overly formal institution.
- **Tourism highlights:** Region 1: Southwest Ontario, which contains Ingersoll, received over 10.7 million domestic visitors in 2022, with 72.3% visiting for the day and 27.7% staying overnight (averaging 1.9 nights). Visitor spending totaled \$1.56 billion, of which cultural tourism accounted for 3.2%. Visitation is highest in summer and lowest in the winter. These tourism patterns highlight opportunities related to the Museum's role as Ingersoll's primary tourism stop, especially in the absence of a formal tourism office. The Museum should continue to grow partnerships with Tourism Oxford and other regional operators to leverage visitor traffic, particularly among overnight guests. There may also be opportunities to increase promotion of camping as an overnight option in the region.



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## 3. Museum's Current State

This section provides an assessment of the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum's current state, drawing on community and interest-holder input, site visits, document review, and digital infrastructure analysis. It examines the Museum's mandate; operations; collections, exhibitions, and programs; audience engagement; and broader community impact. Together, these insights form a foundation for identifying strategic priorities and shaping recommendations in the next phase of planning.

### 3.1. Museum Mandate

The Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum's current mandate, as defined in its Statement of Purpose, is:

*...to depict the founding, settlement and development of Ingersoll (formerly named Oxford on the Thames) and immediate area (7 mile radius); to recognize and interpret the importance of the dairy, cheese and agricultural industry to the growth and development of the area; and to display, preserve and pay tribute to the history of local sports and to honour those who have made significant contributions to the field of sports.*



This focus reflects the Museum's origins and continues to inform its collections and exhibits – especially its role as a key stop on the Oxford County Cheese Trail. The theme of cheese remains a major tourism draw, though some visitors arrive expecting a working factory or a site entirely focused on cheese, which can lead to disappointment.

Apart from the tourism draw and associated challenges, the current framing is increasingly seen as limiting. Across engagements with Town and Museum staff, community members, and other interest-holders, there was widespread agreement that the Museum's mandate and name should be revisited. While the centrality of "cheese" in Ingersoll's history should remain a key feature, there is strong support for a broader mandate that better reflects the Museum's evolving role in the community and the diversity of local history. Staff noted that retaining the current mandate risks excluding valuable objects already in the collection, many of which reflect broader local heritage themes.

Many noted that the Museum already does far more than its current mandate suggests. Exhibitions and collections include topics ranging from Ontario education-related artifacts to contemporary cultural themes. Through its special events, educational activities, and outreach programs, the Museum functions as a vibrant community hub and a source of local pride. Events, in particular, are a major draw – helping to foster a sense of small-town connection and community spirit. These functions are not explicitly acknowledged in the current mandate but are central to the Museum's present-day impact.

The Museum is also seen as playing a significant educational role, particularly for schools and families. Survey respondents frequently used words such as "history," "cheese," "community," "educational," and "engaging" to describe the Museum. These terms reflect the Museum's value as both a keeper of local heritage and a space for learning and connection.

Looking ahead, the community articulated a shared vision for a Museum that:

- Preserves, shares, and celebrates Ingersoll's rich history and heritage – beyond cheese and agriculture
- Reflects the evolution of Ingersoll over time, moving beyond a static, single-period snapshot to a broader historical narrative
- Welcomes diverse stories, including those not yet fully represented in its exhibitions or collections
- Is vibrant, fun, dynamic, and educational
- Bridges the past and present by offering programming that brings the community together
- Engages families and children through interactive, hands-on learning
- Acts as a cultural and educational leader within the region
- Is integrated with the community, downtown revitalization, and tourism initiatives
- Is recognized and valued as a pillar in the community
- Operates with clear internal organization and strategically leverages partnerships





These aspirations highlight the need to review and update the Museum's formal mandate to reflect its current activities, community role, and future direction. At the same time, any changes should preserve a clear sense of purpose – ensuring the Museum retains a focused identity rather than attempting to be all things to all people. A well-articulated mandate will support strategic clarity and cohesion as the Museum evolves. Together, these updates can provide a foundation for rebranding, interpretive planning, and strategic development in the years ahead.

## Key Takeaways

### Strengths

- The Museum's existing mandate provides a clear link to Ingersoll's agricultural and cheese-making heritage, which remains a major tourism draw.
- There is strong support among those familiar with the Museum's activities for its contributions to education, tourism, and community connection.

### Challenges and Gaps

- The current mandate and name do not reflect the full scope of the Museum's programming, collections, or community role, contributing to a narrow perception of its purpose.

### Opportunities

- Updating the mandate and name could provide strategic clarity, support a future rebrand, and expand public understanding of the Museum's value.
- A revised mandate could better guide decisions around collections, programming, interpretation, and partnerships and provide a stronger foundation for brand and interpretive clarity.

## 3.2. Operating Context

### Governance and Staffing

The Museum currently falls under the Town's purview and is housed within the Economic Development department. This structure has enabled strong municipal support and is widely seen as working well. The Museum benefits from strong leadership and a dedicated staff team committed to its success. Community members noted recent improvements that have reinvigorated the Museum and brought greater engagement. Survey responses also highlighted the friendly, knowledgeable, and welcoming nature of staff.

The Museum operates with a small staff team, only two of whom are full-time (Museum Manager and Collections Coordinator). The part-time structure for the other staff positions (five, at time of writing) creates



coordination challenges and impacts operational efficiency, as tasks are passed between staff who may not be present on the same days. This structure also increases the risk of turnover, which in turn can hinder progress and consistency. In particular, the current status of the Museum Programmer role as a part-time position (two days per week) limits the Museum's ability to expand programming and respond to tour requests in a timely manner.

The Museum's activities are supported by the Museum Advisory Committee, a group of Town-appointed citizens and one Councillor, many of whom also volunteer at the Museum to assist with day-to-day activities such as documentation, front-line duties, and programming. In addition, the Museum is supported by a small group of other dedicated volunteers who contribute in various capacities. While this support is highly valued, the Museum has experienced challenges in attracting new volunteers that reflect the wider community. In particular, it can be difficult to engage younger adults who may be balancing work and family responsibilities, and who are less likely to have the time or flexibility to take on a volunteer or advisory role.

## Policies and Processes

Organizational sustainability relies on effective internal policies and procedures. Many of the Museum's core policy documents are outdated and in need of review. The Museum currently has three separate policy documents that govern acquisitions, collections management, and deaccessioning: a Policy of Acquisitions, a Collections & Records Management Policy, and a standalone Policy of De-Accession. While each of these documents addresses important aspects of collections governance, there is notable overlap and inconsistency across them, which contributes to confusion in both interpretation and implementation.

For example, both the Acquisitions Policy and the Collections & Records Management Policy outline procedures for acquiring objects, but with different parameters– for example the Acquisitions Policy identifies the Museum's focus on the history of agriculture and cheesemaking, while the Collections & Records Management Policy emphasize only the history of “the town of Ingersoll and the immediate surrounding area.” Similarly, both the Collections & Records Management Policy and the standalone De-Accession Policy outline deaccession criteria and procedures, but do so in different ways. The Collections Policy offers more practical criteria, while the De-Accession Policy emphasizes legal and other risk considerations. These documents are not fully aligned and offer limited guidance on appropriate methods of disposal. In practice, staff appear to rely more heavily on internal knowledge and precedent than on the policy documents themselves.

There is a clear opportunity to develop a single, modernized collections management policy that consolidates acquisitions, documentation, preservation, and deaccessioning into a cohesive framework. This policy should align with current museum best practices, clarify roles and responsibilities, and reflect the Museum's evolving mandate and operational needs. It should also provide clear and practical guidance for common challenges such as duplication, deterioration, and appropriate deaccession pathways.

The Museum also lacks a standardized Exhibition Plan. While staff have informal practices to guide exhibit formats, timelines, and development cycles, these are not currently documented. As a result, institutional knowledge is difficult to transfer, and exhibition planning may be inconsistent over time. Establishing a formal plan would support continuity and efficiency, while providing clearer direction for future exhibit design and scheduling.



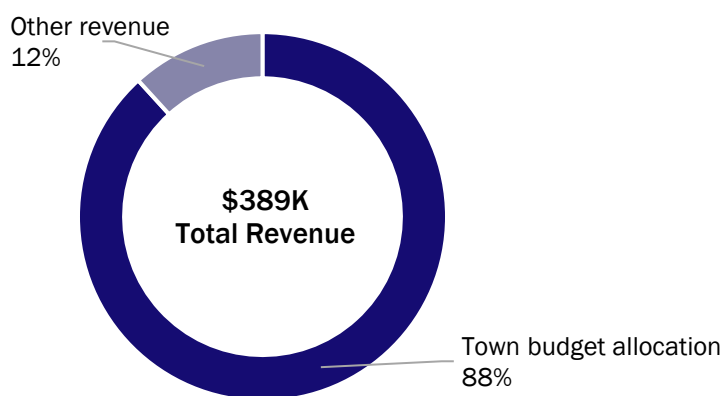
There is also an identified need to clarify processes between the Museum and the Town in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Historically, the Museum has handled public information requests directly, as these requests pertain to public historical information. The Museum is in conversation with the Clerk's Office to ensure clear mutual understanding and alignment with Town procedures. Looking ahead, a process to distinguish between routine disclosure and formal freedom of information requests would help mitigate future risk while preserving the Museum's ability to respond to public inquiries efficiently.<sup>1</sup>

## Revenue Mix

As a municipally operated museum, the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum is primarily funded by the Town of Ingersoll. At the same time, the Museum represents a relatively small investment within the Town's overall financial picture – accounting for just 2% of the total tax levy requirement, the lowest among all service areas, as reported in the Town's 2025–2027 Multi-Year Budget Update.

In 2024, the Museum's total revenue was \$389,189. As shown in Figure 1, 88% of that revenue came from the municipal budget allocation, while the remaining 12% was generated through other revenue streams.

**Figure 1 Revenue overview for Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum (2024)**



Source: 2025–2027 Multi-Year Budget Update, Museum 2024 Admin Budget

Figure 2 below provides a breakdown of the Museum's other revenue streams. The Museum operates under a free/pay-what-you-can (PWYC) model for general admission, with modest fees for group tours and school programs (on a cost-recovery basis). As illustrated below, grants (37%), donations (34%), and gift

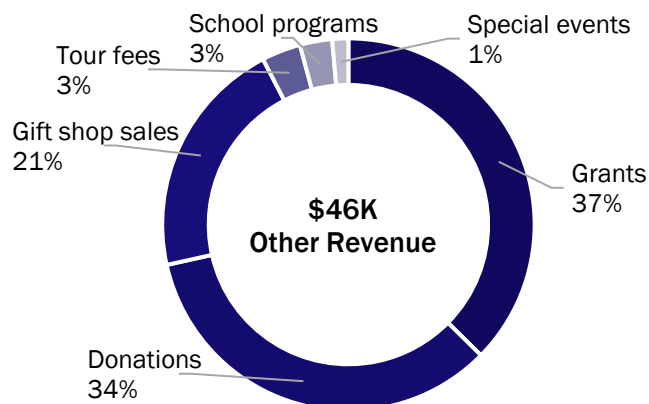
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<sup>1</sup> According to a resource provided by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, "When general records are classified for RD/AD [Routine Disclosure/Automatic Disclosure], and front line staff are aware of the RD/AD classification, the result should be less work for institutions when responding to requests for information, and better customer service. Institutions should review established directories or listings of records to determine which records can be classified for RD/AD. Freedom of Information and Privacy Co-ordinators should review general records and talk to staff to discuss which records would be good candidates for RD/ AD." Source: Cavoukian, Ann. "[Routine Disclosure/Active Dissemination \(RD/AD\) of Government Information.](#)" IPC Practices, no. 22 (September 1998).



shop sales (21%) made up the largest share of other revenue in 2024, with tour fees and school programs jointly accounting for just 6%.

**Figure 2 Breakdown of other revenue for Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum (2024)**



Source: Museum 2024 Admin Budget

From 2019 to 2025, the Museum’s budgeted revenues have steadily increased, reflecting growing expectations for earned income and fundraising. Gift shop sales, event proceeds, and donations have all seen notable increases in budget targets, while the 2025 budget in particular signals a strategic shift toward increased self-generated income through gift shop sales, programs, and fundraising.

Grants remain a consistent but limited part of the funding mix. The Museum receives regular support through the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) from the Ontario government and has historically received Young Canada Works funding from the federal government to support summer student positions, though this funding has declined in recent years. However, it has encountered challenges in securing additional provincial and federal funding – including unsuccessful applications to Experience Ontario (for events with a tourism economic impact), the Ontario Trillium Foundation Capital Grant (to improve community spaces), and the Tourism Growth Program in Southern Ontario (to develop local tourism products and experiences). Feedback from funders suggests that the Town’s healthy financial reserves may be a factor in these decisions, creating a unique challenge for the Museum in demonstrating financial need within a well-resourced municipality.

## Admission and Pricing Models

The Museum’s free/PWYC model for general admission and events is valued by the community and supports access to municipally funded services. There may be opportunities to make this model more effective by introducing a suggested donation amount (e.g., \$5) and improving the visibility of donation options throughout the site (as noted in Fundraising and Donor Development below). At the same time, the Museum may consider charging a modest admission fee for one-off, high-profile activities (e.g., special events, camps, packaged experiences) as well as introducing vendor fees at select events (which has recently been approved on a cost-recovery basis to discourage no-shows). While there is openness to



exploring select admission fees or pricing for premium experiences, maintaining community access remains a priority – particularly given the strong public expectation that Town-run events remain free

## Gift Shop Development

Expanding the gift shop is another opportunity to increase earned revenue. The shop currently includes a cheese fridge (which performs well), stickers and postcards (designed in-house), vintage candy, and a small selection of books. Opportunities include offering more child-friendly items (e.g., stuffed toys), expanding the range of literature on local history, and introducing products at different price points (e.g., keychains, t-shirts, tote bags). There may also be value in reviewing the prices of current offerings to ensure they reflect the appeal of and demand for the items offered. Improvements to the space – including better signage, lighting, and shelving – would also enhance its appeal. Gift shop revenue grew by 55% between 2022 and 2024, indicating strong potential for further development.

## Other Earned Revenue

The Museum could also further explore opportunities aligned with downtown revitalization. For example, a Museum membership or town passport program could provide discounts at local businesses while generating revenue through dues. Additionally, as the popularity of Museum events grows, there may be opportunity to introduce modest vendor fees for businesses or organizations participating in special events.

Community members also noted a general lack of venue space in Ingersoll, which often results in residents travelling to London. While the Museum's pavilion is open for rentals (with revenue collected by the Parks Division), planned infrastructure upgrades may open up potential to host revenue-generating events (e.g., birthday parties, showers, weddings) in the Museum's outer buildings. However, Town representatives emphasized that these buildings house valuable objects and equipment, and any events would require staff supervision. While some members of the public are enthusiastic about this idea, Town representatives feel that the Museum should prioritize its core role as a museum rather than expanding into event rentals.

## Fundraising and Donor Development

Fundraising remains a significant gap. Staff report some discomfort with soliciting donations, and the only point-of-sale system that can accept donations is located in the main building. Tap-to-donate machines with clear signage could increase donations across the site and at events. Providing basic fundraising training or resources could also help increase staff comfort and capacity in this area. There may also be value in establishing an arms-length "Friends of the Museum" group to lead fundraising efforts.

More broadly, the absence of digital donation tools, a customer relationship management system (CRM), or an email marketing platform limits the Museum's ability to implement targeted fundraising campaigns or steward potential donors effectively. Digital infrastructure upgrades could significantly strengthen fundraising efforts and broaden the Museum's base of support.





# Key Takeaways

## Strengths

- Strong municipal support, leadership, and a committed staff team; Advisory Committee and other volunteers provide additional capacity.
- Community appreciation for the free/PWYC model and strong interest in events and programs.
- Gift shop revenue has shown promising growth, indicating potential for increased earned income.

## Challenges and Gaps

- Part-time staffing structure affects operational efficiency, collaboration, and responsiveness.
- Outdated policies limit organizational effectiveness.
- Limited revenue diversification beyond public funding and small-scale gift shop sales.
- Fundraising and digital donation infrastructure are underdeveloped; staff have limited comfort and tools for donor engagement (e.g., absence of a CRM, digital donation tools).
- Grant applications may be disadvantaged by the perception of strong municipal funding, making it harder to demonstrate financial need.

## Opportunities

- Update and formalize key policy documents, especially the Collections Policy and Exhibition Plan.
- Introduce selective special event/program fees and expand gift shop offerings to increase earned revenue.
- Pilot a “Friends of the Museum” model and provide basic training to support staff-led fundraising (e.g., at point-of-sale, at events).
- Consider supervised rentals and vendor fees aligned with infrastructure upgrades and revitalization goals.
- Explore new funding streams, including grants, fundraising/donations, and sponsorships.
- Invest in digital infrastructure to support donor stewardship, marketing, and revenue development.



## 3.3. Collections, Exhibitions, and Programs

### Collections

#### Collection Management and Documentation

The Museum is currently focused on organizing its collection, ensuring proper storage, accessioning and documentation of objects in PastPerfect. This work is a major undertaking, led by the Collections Coordinator with support from Museum Attendants and volunteers. Additional time, space, and staffing are needed to support both the existing documentation backlog and future collection growth.

Digitization efforts are underway and could be accelerated with additional resourcing – for example, an intern or additional full-time Museum Attendant. Once PastPerfect is fully updated, the Museum is interested in making the collection accessible online. This step would support broader public access and strengthen the Museum’s digital engagement efforts. Related upgrades to the photo station are also needed, including a larger scanner, larger light box, and new cameras. Currently, programming and collections staff share a single camera, limiting flexibility and capacity. The current camera is outdated and produces low-quality images, leading staff to use a personal cell phone for all museum database photographs. Improved photography would also support digital storytelling and online engagement.

#### Preservation and Storage

There is an urgent need for an upgraded HVAC system in both the Museum and its secondary storage facility in the Town Hall basement. High humidity and fluctuating temperatures have caused damage to some objects, and climate control is essential to preservation. Storage capacity is also a growing concern. A significant portion of the collection is housed at Town Hall at no cost, but that space is expected to be converted into offices within the next five years. Additionally, a portion of the of the Town Hall storage space includes overhead water and sewage pipes, which underscores the importance of carefully monitoring conditions and planning for more secure long-term storage. The Museum will need to consider both interim and long-term storage solutions for the collections currently housed at Town Hall.

Preservation is a core function of the Museum – its collection serves not only to support exhibitions, but also to document, protect, and provide access to Ingersoll’s material heritage over time. To fulfill this role effectively, the Museum requires dedicated space and appropriate environmental conditions. In light of the expected loss of storage at Town Hall, there may be opportunities to manage storage pressures through strategic deaccessioning and selective long-term loans or partnerships for specific collection components. At the same time, consolidating the stored collection under one roof – particularly for materials intended to support research, exhibition, and programming – would offer longer-term benefits for care, coordination, and accessibility.



# Exhibitions

## Layout, Interpretation, and Visitor Flow

Front-line staff report that patrons are generally pleased with the amount and quality of exhibition content. However, staff and some community members feel that the permanent gallery is outdated, overwhelming, stagnant, and inaccessible. The volume of objects currently on display in the permanent gallery limits physical accessibility and crowds the space, contributing to the sense of overwhelm and making it difficult to navigate and absorb material. Additional accessibility challenges include signage that lacks proper contrast, is often printed in small font, or is placed in hard-to-see locations. There is a lack of a clear organizing principle within the gallery – even where objects are grouped thematically, the logic is not always visually intuitive or well-signposted. As a result, visitors may struggle to understand the overarching narrative or how different elements connect. There is opportunity to reconsider what objects are on display to ensure a cohesive narrative and impactful displays that tell the unique story of Ingersoll. Internally, there is interest in rotating select items in the permanent gallery annually not only to keep the experience fresh and engaging, but also to support preservation. Objects on display are more vulnerable to dust, light, humidity, and handling, making periodic rotation an important collections care consideration. Advancing this work is dependent on ongoing progress in collections documentation.

The Museum's temporary gallery rotates regularly (at least once per season) and presents a valuable opportunity to attract repeat visits. However, this regular rotation is fairly recent and awareness of the temporary space remains limited – unless connected to a larger program or event. There is an opportunity to promote this space more actively and ensure it is recognized as a dynamic part of the visitor experience. The temporary gallery is flexible, serving primarily as additional exhibit space but also sometimes as programming space for small groups. However, the space is relatively small and narrow, which can limit what can be put on display without interfering with visitor flow.

Across both permanent and temporary exhibitions, there is a need for a clearer interpretive path and improved layout to support flow, cohesion, and accessibility – and a better patron experience overall. “Don't touch” panels contribute to a more passive, traditional museum experience and are not conducive to family- or child-friendly engagement. Across all engagement streams, there was strong interest in more interactive, hands-on exhibits.

## Contemporary and Diverse Storytelling

There is appetite to see more recent history reflected in the Museum's exhibits. The permanent exhibition is primarily focused on the 1800s and early 1900s, but community members expressed interest in seeing more contemporary stories and themes. Suggested topics included Ingersoll's Cheese and Wine Festival (featuring the Mayor's grape stomp), sports history, and ties to local historical figures.

One of the most frequently raised issues was the lack of diverse stories. While there are small displays dedicated to Black and Indigenous history, they are limited in scope and were not developed in consultation with the relevant communities. There is also little representation of women's contributions to Ingersoll's history. Community partners emphasized the need to work with appropriate groups to ensure these stories



are told accurately and respectfully – something staff is also aware of. Related opportunities include deeper integration with existing initiatives, such as the downtown sculpture commemorating the Underground Railroad, or incorporating features like an Indigenous garden (an idea proposed by Museum staff but not yet realized due to funding constraints).

## Off-Site Connections

Sports-related content is another area of discussion. While some community members would like to see the Museum better highlight this part of Ingersoll's history, staff intend to move the sports collection entirely to a dedicated space in the planned Ingersoll District Memorial Arena. Communicating this transition clearly and ensuring the new location at the arena functions effectively as a satellite space for relevant interpretive content will be important.

There is also opportunity to introduce deeper seasonal or commemorative content – for example, programming and exhibitions aligned with Black History Month, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Christmas, or the spring season. The annual Truth and Reconciliation March in Ingersoll each September could be complemented by Museum programming or a temporary exhibit.

The Museum's role within the Elgin Oxford Network Association of Curators (EON) also offers regional opportunity. The Museum could play a greater leadership role in bolstering this network by loaning objects to smaller museums; helping to coordinate complementary or co-curated, traveling exhibitions; and encouraging inter-museum visits across Elgin and Oxford.

## Programs

### Signature Events and Community Engagement

Events are a major strength of the Museum and are deeply cherished by the community. Programs such as Santa's Village, Harvest Market, the Barn Dance, Pumpkin Fest, and the Car Shows bring in significant engagement and introduce new audiences to the Museum. Survey results confirm strong interest in special events and themed festivals, educational programs, and hands-on workshops.

Programs that complement exhibitions have also been successful. One standout example was the open mic night linked to the Museum's poetry exhibition. In general, programs that encourage interaction and participation resonate well with visitors and draw strong attendance.

### Space and Capacity Limitations

Program development is currently constrained by limited space and staffing. The part-time nature of the Museum Programmer role means that events can only take place on days when the programmer is on site. The primary programming space, the Schoolhouse, is climate-controlled but features fixed desks that are only suitable for children. The temporary gallery space is also used occasionally but is too small to



accommodate most programs. Staff noted the lack of any space suitable for high school groups as a particular gap in their educational offerings. There would be opportunity for Sherbrooke barn to host more year-round events and programming if it had heating. In addition, the Museum's kitchen requires upgrades to meet health and safety standards for food preparation. Addressing this gap would enable the Museum to offer food-based demonstrations or experiences – from on-site baking in the bread oven to simply sampling local cheeses – that speak directly to its identity and enhance the visitor experience.

## School and Seniors Programming

School programming more broadly remains a challenge. There are opportunities to strengthen relationships with local schools through PA-day camps, in-school programs, classroom kits, and digital program offerings. The latter could be especially helpful for schools with limited transportation budgets, making the Museum's offerings more accessible. Staff also noted that half-day programs tend to attract more registrations than full-day options. Efforts are underway to refresh the Museum's curriculum-linked content and programming to ensure that offerings are relevant, engaging, and aligned with student interests and learning goals, including the development of a mobile curriculum that can travel to schools with the Museum Programmer.

The Museum also runs a seniors program that sees staff and volunteers bring objects into seniors' centres. There is interest in expanding this program to retirement homes, long-term care residences, and apartment complexes. However, many of the objects currently available are too dated to resonate with participants. More modern historical items are needed to keep the program engaging and relevant.

## Outdoor Opportunities

The Museum is home to several facilities that give it a “village” feel and unlock diverse programming opportunities. Demonstrations at the Beacham Blacksmith are a popular feature, and there is potential to expand programming across other buildings with interactive elements (e.g., butter churning at the Cheese Factory). Sherbrooke Barn is regularly used for Town-run events, while the pavilion remains the only facility currently available for external rentals.

The Museum's surrounding environment also contributes to its appeal. Its ample outdoor space makes it a sought-after venue for events like the Car Shows, Harvest Market, and Festival of Lights, though limited parking and wayfinding pose ongoing challenges. Its location along the Thomas Ingersoll Scenic Trail enhances its integration into the community and positions it as a point of interest for hikers, cyclists, and campers. There is an opportunity to explore trail-oriented programming and outdoor activities that entice these visitors and increase foot traffic to the site.





# Key Takeaways

## Strengths

- Active collections organization and digitization efforts, supported by PastPerfect and a committed team.
- Strong community interest in events, educational programs, and hands-on learning experiences.
- Recent success with programs tied to temporary exhibitions and participatory events.
- The Museum's site offers multiple buildings that support diverse visitor experiences.
- The Museum's role in the Elgin Oxford Network Association of Curators (EON) provides a foundation for regional leadership and collaboration.
- The Museum is a sought-after event space due to its abundant outdoor space.

## Challenges and Gaps

- Storage capacity, infrastructure limitations, and documentation backlog hinder collections management and use.
- Permanent exhibition is seen as static, overwhelming, and lacks recent or diverse stories without a clear interpretive plan.
- Awareness of temporary gallery remains low.
- Space and staffing constraints limit programming, especially for schools and seniors.
- Strong event attendance does not always translate to broader engagement with exhibitions or the Museum's full offerings.

## Opportunities

- Reimagine the permanent gallery with more inclusive, updated, and interactive content.
- Develop clear interpretive plans to guide layout, storytelling, and accessibility.
- Promote the temporary gallery more effectively and build seasonal or commemorative programs.
- Collaborate with community partners to co-create exhibitions and ensure respectful representation.
- Strengthen partnerships through EON, expand in-school and seniors programming, and explore satellite displays in community locations.
- Consolidate stored collections under one roof (where feasible) to improve access, care, and integration into exhibitions and programming.



- Improve photo station infrastructure to support digitization, digital storytelling, and online access to the collection.
- Introduce heating in Sherbrooke Barn to support expanded year-round programming, including camps and other potential revenue-generating activities.
- Explore programming that integrates the Museum with its outdoor surroundings and the Thomas Ingersoll Scenic Trail.
- Upgrade kitchen facilities to enable food-based programming tied to the Museum's identity.

## 3.4. Audience Engagement and Development

### Visitor Engagement

Overall engagement with the Museum has increased significantly in recent years. In 2024, the Museum welcome nearly 27,000 visitors – representing an increase of 42% over 2023. This traffic has been driven in part by strong participation in tours and events. While this momentum is promising, encouraging ongoing, year-round engagement beyond special events remains an important goal.

Community events continue to be a major draw, accounting for the majority of visits, while bus tours bring in some out-of-town visitors. At the same time, the Museum has seen notable growth in general (non-event or tour) attendance, with 5,200 visitors in 2024 and 4,000 in 2023, compared to a pre-pandemic historical average of around 2,800. Building on this progress and continuing to grow visitation from local residents – particularly repeat visits – remains a key opportunity for future development.

Survey respondents cited several barriers to visiting, including limited awareness of events, the Museum's location, and restricted hours. However, a significant number also reported no barriers at all. While some feel the Museum is too far away, others see its proximity to the community centre, playground, trails, and Creative Arts Centre as a benefit. It is possible that barriers related to location are more about limited parking or low awareness of the Museum, rather than geographic location itself.

The Museum's free/pay-what-you-can (PWYC) model ensures it remains financially accessible and is widely appreciated by the community. While events are seen as exciting and engaging, exhibitions are viewed as more static and less likely to prompt repeat visits. There is broad interest in enhancing the visitor experience with more hands-on, participatory elements – such as live demonstrations and interactive programming – and Museum staff are actively working on strategies to do so.

The Museum also manages bookings for the adjacent Centennial Park Campground. Located behind the Museum and close to playgrounds, splash pads, and trails, the campground brings visitors into direct contact with the site. The campground and wider park area present an opportunity to increase foot traffic



and strengthen engagement, particularly with families and travellers exploring Ingersoll or stopping off from the 401.

## Audience Expansion

Community members typically learn about the Museum through social media, word of mouth, and physical promotions like posters and local newsletters. These include *The Village Voice*, *Ingersoll Times*, *Ingersoll Echo*, and *What's On Woodstock*. The Museum does not currently have its own newsletter. Although Museum events often attract new audiences – especially through partnerships with groups like Kiwanis and Cops & Rodders – there is no mechanism to connect those attendees with the Museum's ongoing activities, such as newsletter signups or follow-up communications.

A key challenge is general awareness. Many local residents remain unaware of the Museum's offerings. Survey findings reinforce this challenge: Most respondents had visited the Museum within the past year, suggesting the survey primarily reached existing, regular visitors. This finding highlights the need for outreach strategies that more effectively engage new or infrequent users who may not yet see the Museum as a destination. While some promotion mechanisms are already in place – such as directional signage around town, a recently updated on-site sign, event promotion through Facebook ads and flyers at local businesses, and listings in the Town staff newsletter – community members suggested further opportunities to expand awareness. Suggestions include improved visibility through local media advertising, further upgraded or additional signage, and stronger collaborations across Town departments.

Despite these challenges, the Museum has made significant progress in growing its online presence. Community members frequently cited the “History Mysteries” series on Facebook – an initiative that invites the public to help identify unknown people, places, or objects in historical photos – as a favourite. These posts encourage storytelling and interaction. At the same time, Instagram remains underutilized, and engagement on that platform is low.

Currently, visitor data is collected via an analog guestbook, which records names and places of origin but is not digitized. The Museum also tracks general attendance categories (e.g., adults, children, seniors, tours, education programs), but does not collect personal contact information. This system limits opportunities for follow-up communication and targeted marketing.

The Museum's location near trails, nature, and recreation amenities – including the adjacent campground – offers opportunities to increase foot traffic, especially among hikers and cyclists. There may be potential to develop experiential packages (e.g., wine and cheese nights, cheesemaking workshops), aligned with broader tourism trends and supported by regional partners like Tourism Oxford and Ontario's Southwest.

While most Museum events are family-friendly, community members expressed interest in offerings targeted to young adults and older adults. The Museum has begun serving craft beer at some events, which has been well received by attendees.

The Museum is also exploring regional outreach and is well-positioned to attract domestic tourists opting for local travel experiences. Additionally, current camping and tourism campaigns include Facebook advertising targeted at US audiences.



## Digital Tools

Community feedback suggests that while many people enjoy analog museum experiences, there is appetite for more digital features to enhance visits. Opportunities include updating the Museum's audio tours and QR codes (both of which exist but are outdated), and redistributing the digital screens currently concentrated in Sherbrooke Barn to support interpretation in other spaces (e.g., Blacksmith Shop, high-interest exhibits like Douglas Carr's bicycle). As the Museum works to improve internal processes for website updates, there may also be potential to expand the site's content and use it to host multimedia elements – such as audio clips, short videos, or related object records – that QR codes and audio tours could link to in support of a more engaging, layered visitor experience.

The Museum uses both Facebook and Instagram, with strong engagement on Facebook – particularly for historical content. However, content is reused across platforms, and Instagram lacks a channel-specific strategy. Engagement remains limited.

Specific opportunities to enhance the Museum's digital presence include:

- Using vertical video formats (e.g., Instagram Reels) for improved reach
- Incorporating more user-generated content (UGC) to create a casual, accessible tone
- Introducing Instagram Stories with behind-the-scenes content, gift shop spotlights, and interactive elements like polls or trivia
- Creating Story Highlights to maintain visibility of evergreen content
- Offering access to digitized collections online to extend public access and enable deeper engagement (longer-term opportunity, dependent on staff capacity to digitize the collection)

Further ideas include adding photobooth-style installations on-site, running social contests to boost engagement, and collaborating with partners like Tourism Oxford, BlogTO, and influencers to increase visibility.

Wi-Fi is available across the Museum site, enabling many of these digital enhancements. These tools also present a key opportunity to improve on-site visitor experience. Updated QR codes, interactive displays, and revitalized audio tours could deepen engagement and provide more accessible and personalized content for different audiences. Redistributing screens across high-interest exhibits and buildings could help activate underutilized spaces and create more cohesive storytelling throughout the site.



# Key Takeaways

## Strengths

- Events generate strong attendance and engagement, serving as an effective gateway to the Museum for new or returning audiences.
- Staff have built a growing and well-regarded social media presence, especially on Facebook.
- “History Mysteries” is a popular, participatory initiative that fosters local storytelling.
- The Museum’s location near trails and recreation amenities presents passive engagement opportunities.
- Wi-Fi access and existing digital screens provide a foundation for enhanced digital visitor experiences.

## Challenges and Gaps

- General engagement beyond events is limited, as exhibitions do not drive repeat visits and regular, year-round programming is limited outside of special events.
- Many residents are unaware of the Museum and its offerings.
- No process is in place to connect event attendees to ongoing communications.
- The Museum lacks a CRM, email newsletter, and tools for targeted marketing or donor engagement.
- The collection is not currently accessible online, limiting opportunities for remote engagement and digital storytelling.
- Instagram is underutilized, and there is no platform-specific strategy for digital content.
- Outdated digital infrastructure (e.g., QR codes, audio tours) limits the effectiveness of current interpretation tools.
- Limited collection of visitor data hinders follow-up communication, fundraising, and audience development.

## Opportunities

- Increase visibility through signage, local media, and partnerships with Town departments.
- Develop packaged experiences that align with regional tourism trends.
- Introduce audience data collection strategies to support targeted outreach.
- Launch a dedicated newsletter and build a database of engaged visitors.





- Invest in a robust digital strategy that includes vertical video, UGC, Instagram Stories, and collaborations.
- Redistribute and update digital infrastructure to enhance on-site interpretation.
- Use digital tools (e.g., contests, photobooths, influencer marketing) to expand reach and engage new audiences.
- Build on the success of events by integrating digital engagement tools and follow-up pathways (e.g., sign-ups, polls).

## 3.5. Community Impact and Identity

### Branding and Marketing

The Museum's current branding is inconsistent and outdated. The name – Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum – does not capture the full breadth of the Museum's activities and is difficult to incorporate into marketing materials on account of its length. In addition, multiple names are used across channels and merchandise (e.g., Ingersoll Community Museum, Ingersoll Cheese Museum), creating some confusion. Visual materials also vary in design and feel, lacking a cohesive brand identity.

Ongoing debates about the Museum's name have delayed the development of updated gift shop merchandise. One proposed name – “Ingersoll Cheese Museum & Heritage Village” – reflects interest in preserving the “cheese” branding while signalling a broader scope. Whatever direction is ultimately taken, there is an evident opportunity to revisit the name, logo, and tagline as part of a cohesive branding strategy.

While the Museum previously managed all of its own social media content, responsibilities are now shared. The Museum continues to create historical posts, while the Town's recently hired Marketing & Tourism Officer manages advertising and event-related content. This new arrangement reflects a closer working relationship with the Town's Economic Development and Tourism team, and the Marketing & Tourism officer is anticipated to play a role in supporting a refreshed brand. Partnerships with Tourism Oxford and Ontario's Southwest are also key opportunities for promotion and visitor attraction.

While the “Cheese Factory” sign along the 401 draws in visitors, it can also be misleading. Some tourists arrive expecting an operational factory and leave disappointed. A rebrand could help address these mismatched expectations while maintaining the draw of the “cheese” theme.

A refreshed website is another priority. The current site is functional but not engaging or visually aligned with the Museum's aspirations. A redesigned site could better reflect the Museum's personality – fun, relevant, and family-friendly – while offering more intuitive access to information and bookings.



## Community Partnerships and Impact

The Museum is continuing to grow its network of community partners. It works with schools, seniors' homes, service groups like Kiwanis, and others. These relationships support outreach, education, and programming. However, more work is needed to build meaningful relationships with underrepresented groups – particularly Indigenous and Black communities. Groups like the Indigenous Solidarity & Awareness Network were identified as important potential partners for inclusive storytelling and content development.

The Museum also plays a role in expanding local history beyond its walls. Working with the Town's Heritage Committee, it has piloted walking tours and is exploring adding QR codes to highlight the stories behind heritage buildings. There is opportunity to broaden this initiative to include other sites of historical or cultural significance – especially those not captured through built heritage.

Deeper community participation in exhibitions and interpretation is another opportunity. Ideas raised during engagements included:

- Inviting the community to share their interpretations of local history, bringing in new perspectives and engagement to objects on display (e.g., collaborating with local artists through the Creative Arts Centre, high school students)
- Capturing and sharing oral histories
- Continuing with initiatives along the lines of “History Mysteries,” which engages the community in crowdsourcing information to fill knowledge gaps about the collection

Notably, Town representatives described the Museum as the municipality's “best programmer” – a recognition of the quality and success of its events. These events help build community connection, pride, and a sense of place.

The Museum's sector network could also be strengthened. While it is an active member of the Elgin Oxford Network Association of Curators (EON), it could increase its participation in provincial and national initiatives to support professional development and peer learning.

## Tourism Integration

The Museum is viewed as a key tourism driver for Ingersoll and Oxford County. It benefits from strong relationships with Tourism Oxford as well as nearby Elm Hurst Inn & Spa, which promotes the Museum as the first stop on the Cheese Trail. The Museum-managed Centennial Park Camping offers additional tourism infrastructure, attracting families and travelers looking for accessible and affordable local experiences. The Museum's reputation for high-quality, family-friendly programming helps attract visitors from within and beyond the region.

There are opportunities to deepen regional collaboration in the future, especially as Tourism Oxford explores new initiatives. The Museum is well-positioned to contribute exhibitions, experiences, and events in support of these efforts.



# Key Takeaways

## Strengths

- The Museum is widely recognized and valued for its high-quality programming and events.
- Strong partnerships exist with Tourism Oxford, Elm Hurst Inn, and community groups such as Kiwanis.
- The Museum contributes significantly to local identity and regional tourism.
- The adjacent campground provides a unique point of entry for tourists and families, supporting increased foot traffic and new visitor engagement opportunities.

## Challenges and Gaps

- The current brand is outdated, inconsistent, and doesn't reflect a clear or unified sense of purpose.
- Uncertainty around the Museum's name has stalled gift shop development and merchandise updates.
- The "Cheese Factory" sign on the 401 can create mismatched visitor expectations.
- Relationships with underrepresented communities need strengthening.
- The Museum's sector network is limited beyond EON, reducing opportunities for peer learning.
- Website and visual materials lack cohesion and do not effectively communicate a consistent identity.

## Opportunities

- Develop a refreshed brand — including name, logo, and tagline — that reflects the Museum's renewed mandate, emphasizing its dual role as a community hub and regional tourism anchor.
- Leverage Town marketing capacity and regional tourism partnerships to improve promotion.
- Create a modern, engaging website aligned with the Museum's vision.
- Partner with local artists, youth, and community members to co-create content and exhibitions.
- Expand offsite storytelling and place-based interpretation – including walking tours (e.g., downtown), oral histories (e.g., working with Ingersoll Legion), and community-identified sites (e.g., related to Underground Railroad) – to reflect a broader range of histories and enhance the visibility.
- Develop bundled experiences or promotions that link the campground to Museum programming and regional tourism offerings.
- Increase involvement in provincial and national sector networks to enhance visibility and professional development.



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## 4. Museum Enhancement Plan

The Museum Enhancement Plan provides a clear and coordinated roadmap for the next ten years, supporting the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum as it strengthens its foundations, sharpens its focus, and expands its impact. At the plan's core are a refreshed vision and mission that define the Museum's purpose and aspirations. These statements provide a foundation for decision-making across a range of activities – including exhibitions, programming, partnerships, communications, and investment – helping the Museum stay focused on what matters most.

To bring this vision to life, the plan is structured around three strategic pillars, each supported by specific objectives and actionable steps:

1. **Identity & Impact** – Clarifying the Museum's role, mandate, and brand while strengthening its visibility and relevance.
2. **Engagement & Experience** – Enhancing the quality and accessibility of exhibitions, programs, and visitor experiences.
3. **Sustainability & Stewardship** – Strengthening internal capacity, infrastructure, and funding to ensure long-term success.

Together, these pillars provide a clear framework for strategic decision-making and coordinated action – helping the Museum serve as both a vibrant gathering place and a trusted steward of Ingersoll's past, present, and future.



## 4.1. Vision and Mission

The Museum is evolving. In recent years, it has become more active, more visible, and more connected to the community. The revised vision and mission statements capture this shift – providing direction for the years ahead and helping to focus energy, ideas, and resources where they will have the most impact.

These statements are not just aspirational. They are intended to guide decisions, shape priorities, and act as a reference point when choosing between different opportunities. In short, they help ensure the Museum stays aligned with what matters most.

### Vision Statement

*Where we're going*

A vibrant community hub where Ingersoll's past and present inspire understanding, belonging, and local pride.

### Mission Statement

*How we'll get there*

We connect people to place through the stories of Ingersoll's past and present, brought to life by our collections and community voices. The Museum is a space for learning and community connection – where history is made accessible, engaging, and relevant for all.

## 4.2. Envisioned Future States

This section lays out the future states for each focus area outlined in Section 3. These future states offer a forward-looking, realistic vision for what the Museum aims to achieve over the next ten years, and form the foundation for strategic goals, branding, and interpretive planning.



## Museum Mandate

- The Museum has a clear, updated mandate that reinforces its role in preserving, sharing, and celebrating local heritage beyond cheese and agriculture, and its role as a space for learning and connection.
- The updated mandate provides a foundation for cohesive decision-making and stronger institutional support, while preserving valued parts of the collection and identity.
- The updated mandate reflects Ingersoll's evolution over time and affirms the Museum's role in preserving, interpreting, and sharing this ongoing story in ways that engage the public.
- The name of the Museum is simplified and broadened to reflect its new mandate, without losing its connection to cheese. While "cheese" remains a recognizable and valuable anchor for tourism, it no longer defines the full scope of the Museum's identity.
- With its updated mandate, the Museum is a recognized cultural and educational leader in the region, providing vibrant, fun, and enriching learning opportunities and events.

## Operating Context

- The Museum's revenue sources are diversified to supplement Town support, enabling it to sustain and grow its services and impact over the long term.
- The Museum brings in more funding through grants, earned revenue, and donations to support stronger programming and ongoing infrastructure repairs.
- The Museum continues to offer free/PWYC events and admission to encourage public access and community engagement.
- The Museum has full-time staff support, including dedicated programming capacity, to deliver engaging community events, educational experiences, and other programs.
- The Museum's Advisory Committee remains active and reflects the wider community, helping to guide strategic direction and champion the Museum within the Town.
- The Museum benefits from a robust and engaged volunteer base that supports its day-to-day operations and special events.
- The Museum operates under clear, up-to-date internal policies that align with museum best practices and Town procedures, including a consolidated collections management policy (covering acquisitions, management, and de-accessioning) and relevant security guidelines.



## Collections, Exhibitions, Programs

- The Museum's gallery spaces are updated, interactive, and have clear interpretative paths.
- The Museum's permanent gallery displays a more inclusive range of stories – including more recent history and underrepresented narratives – that reflect the diverse history of Ingersoll, co-created with community partners.
- The Museum offers a dynamic rotation of temporary exhibitions, highlighting seasonal relevance and encouraging repeat visits.
- The collection is fully documented and digitized, and only includes items relevant to the Museum's mandate.
- A new storage solution is identified for the collection that supports safe preservation, accessibility, and future growth.
- The Museum is able to offer year-round programming, including community events and revenue-generating opportunities.
- The Museum's outdoor surroundings are integrated into its programming and activities.
- The Museum is equipped to offer food-based programming and experiences that tie into its mandate, with kitchen facilities that meet health and safety standards.

## Audience Engagement & Development

- The Museum is well-known throughout the Ingersoll community, building on recent growth in attendance and momentum generated through community events.
- The Museum sees more foot traffic in its galleries, with events serving as a key gateway for attracting new and returning visitors.
- The Museum continues to be integrated with Tourism Oxford, offering packaged experiences for visitors.
- The Museum integrates digital experiences across both its physical space and online platforms, building on the success of its participatory social media engagement thus far.
- The Museum's decision-making is informed by audience data.
- The Museum has stronger outreach and follow-up tools, including a visitor database and newsletter, to build lasting relationships with new and returning audiences.



## Community Impact & Identity

- The Museum actively collaborates with regional heritage organizations to tell complementary stories of the area, while maintaining a distinct focus on Ingersoll's unique evolution as a community.
- The Museum presents itself with a tone that is welcoming, engaging, and reflective of its local character – helping to build pride, relevance, and connection across generations.
- The Museum has consistent branding across its promotions, aligned with its updated mandate and renewed identity.
- The Museum's website is refreshed and serves as a visually compelling and informative landing page that entices people to visit.
- Community partnerships are continually nurtured, with new in-roads established with under-represented communities.





## 4.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are organized under three strategic pillars. Each pillar includes several objectives, with corresponding actions that reflect the Museum's evolving mandate, community role, and operational realities. These recommendations balance immediate opportunities – such as clarifying the Museum's identity, refreshing exhibitions, and expanding programming – with longer-term investments in infrastructure, collections management, and financial sustainability. Together, they provide a clear and actionable roadmap to guide the Museum's growth as a trusted steward of local heritage and a dynamic space for cultural connection in Ingersoll.

### Pillar 1: Identity & Impact

This pillar focuses on defining the Museum's role, brand, and legacy. It positions the Museum as a dynamic community hub that reflects the full richness of Ingersoll's heritage and present-day stories. Through this pillar, the Museum will emerge confident in what it offers and its role in connecting past and present.

#### Objective 1.1 Clarify and refine the Museum's mandate and identity.

*Refer to Section 5.1 for guidance on developing the Museum's brand to reflect its mandate and identity.*

##### A. Update the Museum's Statement of Purpose to reflect an expanded mandate.

This action formalizes the Museum's broader scope while maintaining alignment with its core heritage role. Updates should clarify the Museum's evolving function as a community hub, and ensure the mandate reflects its expanded programming, interpretive lens, and collecting scope.

##### B. Undertake a naming process to identify a new Museum name that reflects its expanded mandate and identity.

This process should engage the Museum Advisory Committee and the Town, and include opportunities for community input to foster understanding and buy-in.

##### C. Refresh the Museum's brand to align with its new name and mandate.

Ensure consistency across all visual and written materials, including signage, print and digital collateral, and merchandise (including through gift shop items that reflect the Museum's personality, mandate, and local identity). This initiative should include coordinating with the Town and relevant provincial authorities to update wayfinding and highway signage to reflect the new brand.



## Objective 1.2 Reflect diverse community voices and stories through exhibition content and program partnerships.

### A. Develop a flexible interpretive framework to guide future exhibition planning and storytelling.

This framework should be rooted in museum best practices and further informed by community input. It should be designed to evolve over time, ensuring exhibitions reflect both enduring themes and emerging stories. It will serve as a practical tool to support consistent, inclusive, and intentional curatorial decisions. *Refer to Section 5.2 for guidance on this interpretive framework.*

### B. Engage community partners (in particular Indigenous and Black communities) to co-create exhibitions and storytelling.

Partnership-based approaches will help the Museum reflect a fuller picture of Ingersoll's past and present, while building trust and accountability in how stories are collected and shared.

### C. Embed community storytelling into exhibitions and programs.

Initiatives such as oral history projects and crowdsourced exhibits (e.g., sharing artwork, photos, and personal stories) can draw on local knowledge, experiences, and creative expression. Social media can be used to encourage broader participation and community contributions, while digital displays within the Museum can be used to showcase submitted content in engaging ways. This type of storytelling strengthens relevance, encourages repeat visitation, and helps more people see themselves reflected in Museum spaces.

### D. Coordinate complementary exhibitions with other local and regional organizations.

While the Museum's core focus will remain on Ingersoll's identity and local stories, participation in collaborative exhibitions –within regional networks like the Elgin Oxford Network Association of Curators (EON) as well as with local partners such as the Creative Arts Centre or the Fusion Youth Centre – can strengthen storytelling, support professional exchange, and encourage reciprocal engagement. In addition to extending the Museum's reach and visibility, these partnerships may also help foster a sense of shared cultural infrastructure across the region.



## Objective 1.3 Raise the Museum's profile as a dynamic community, cultural, and tourism hub.

### A. Strengthen ties with Tourism Oxford to offer integrated visitor experiences and boost visibility.

Continue to collaborate on cross-promotional efforts (including through social media and working with local/regional influencers) and explore opportunities to develop co-branded tourism products or packages that highlight the Museum as a key cultural destination.

### B. Develop a holistic marketing plan that promotes the Museum's identity, programs, and offerings to diverse audiences.

Coordinate messaging across print, digital, and partner platforms. Consider local media, school newsletters, community calendars, social media, and in-person outreach. Tailor messaging to engage a mix of residents and visitors.

### C. Participate in community and regional events to raise the Museum's visibility and reinforce its role in civic life.

Explore opportunities to contribute to or co-host major community events and civic milestones (e.g., Doors Open, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, heritage festivals) through off-site displays, pop-up exhibits, or co-hosted activities. These participations should spotlight local history and the Museum's contemporary cultural relevance, helping position it as a visible, valued community asset.

### D. Continue to collaborate with the Municipal Heritage Committee on initiatives that mark places of historical significance.

Support efforts to recognize, interpret, and promote historic spaces and places across Ingersoll. This work includes participation in interpretive initiatives that extend into the community, such as self-guided walking tours supported by QR codes and digital content. Such initiatives reinforce the Museum's role as a connector between past and present, both inside and beyond its physical walls.

### E. Develop a visually compelling, accessible, and informative Museum website (within the Town's site).

Create a web presence that reflects the Museum's personality and impact. Prioritize intuitive navigation, rich visuals, program and exhibit highlights, and opportunities to explore the Museum's collections or stories online. Currently, all Museum content is presented on a single page, which can feel overwhelming and become difficult to navigate as content grows. To improve user experience and support future content



expansion, consider reorganizing the content into subpages based on categories. This structure will also help increase the Museum's website's discoverability through better SEO.

The Museum can consider the following page structure:

- Overview/Welcome Page (the Museum's main landing page): Brief introduction to the Museum, including its location, hours, admission details, with prominent buttons/links to guide visitors to the subpages
- Exhibits and Collections Subpage: Online collections, virtual tours and exhibit spotlights
- Programs and Camps Subpage: School programs, camps, educational programs, workshops, etc.
- Support the Museum Subpage: Online giving, volunteer opportunities

## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience

This pillar focuses on elevating every visit – from gallery drop-ins to exciting community events. It equips the Museum to deliver interactive, inclusive visitor experiences informed by audience data that enhance relevance, encourage repeat visits, and deepen community connection.

### Objective 2.1 Enhance gallery spaces with interactive, multi-sensory, and self-directed experiences.

*Refer to Section 5.2 for guidance on interpretive planning.*

#### A. Re-organize the gallery spaces (permanent and temporary exhibitions) with a clear interpretive path.

Focus first on the permanent gallery, where simplifying displays, repositioning and removing objects, and improving layout can create a more cohesive and engaging visitor experience. Across both galleries, a clearer path will help visitors make sense of the content on their own and spend time meaningfully in the space. Implementation will be dependent on progress in collections work, available space in collections storage, and the outcome of any construction activities affecting the gallery layout. Additional planning may be required once the condition and status of all objects in the permanent gallery can be assessed.

#### B. Add interactive, hands-on elements that engage all five senses throughout exhibition spaces.

Incorporate elements people can touch, listen to, or otherwise explore in more than one way that are connected to specific exhibit themes. These elements can be simple and cost-effective – such as tactile panels, “Say Cheese” photo ops, building materials like KEVA planks or materials and patterns for rag rug making, or object-based displays using the education collection (including items deaccessioned for this



purpose). Over time, and as funding permits, more sophisticated features such as sound stations, scent boxes, or digital interactives can be introduced. Adding features at different heights can help engage children and adults alike. These sensory-rich elements make learning more memorable and invite deeper curiosity for visitors of all ages.

### C. Strategically integrate digital displays in gallery spaces and other Museum facilities.

Short videos or other interactive digital content can be used to provide virtual demonstrations – for example, showing how tools and equipment were used in spaces like the Cheese Factory or Beacham Blacksmith Shop. These enhancements can help bring exhibits to life when live interpretation is not available and offer visitors a deeper understanding of historical processes and experiences.

### D. Bring in temporary exhibitions that encourage repeat visitation and seasonal interest.

These exhibitions can create new reasons for people to return, generate buzz (especially for higher-profile exhibitions), and support tie-in programs and marketing – particularly during quieter times of year. To advance this initiative, the Museum should explore partnerships with institutions that have a strategic interest in expanding their reach to smaller communities or in touring content more broadly. While renting exhibitions from larger institutions can be costly, these types of targeted collaborations along with grant and/or sponsorship funding can help offset expenses.

### E. Improve visitor wayfinding and site navigation to support a welcoming and accessible experience.

Introduce clear, consistent signage and visual cues throughout the Museum grounds and buildings. In addition to on-site wayfinding, consider signage that connects the Museum to nearby destinations and attractions, including downtown Ingersoll, the Thomas Ingersoll Scenic Trail, and the Oxford County Cheese Trail. Improved navigation enhances the experience for first-time visitors, individuals with disabilities, and larger groups.

## Objective 2.2 Deepen visitor engagement using digital tools and audience insights.

### A. Develop a focused social media strategy to guide content across platforms.

Define the Museum's tone, platform mix, and engagement goals to ensure consistent and intentional messaging. Leverage platform-specific features and vertical video formats to maximize reach and engagement. For example, use Instagram Stories to share more candid, less curated content – like behind-the-scenes glimpses and repost content from visitors tagging the Museum. Maintain successful campaigns



like “History Mystery” and “Where are we Wednesday,” while exploring more interactive content such as polls, surveys, and community prompts. Work with the Town to align messaging and share capacity.

## **B. Implement a simple contact management system to support visitor engagement and stewardship.**

Set up a basic customer relationship management system (CRM) or contact database to help track contacts and participation across events, donations, and programs. This tool will support follow-up and relationship-building, while laying the foundation for stronger engagement, fundraising, and outreach. Free or low-cost options (e.g., Airtable, HubSpot, Mailchimp) could meet initial needs.

## **C. Collect and analyze visitor data to inform decisions about programming, exhibition development, and engagement.**

Establish simple, consistent methods for gathering feedback and tracking participation, such as short surveys, comment cards, digital guest books, or basic analytics from social media and the Museum website. Use this data to shape offerings that reflect audience interests and needs.

## **D. Enhance digital interpretation and visitor tools both on-site and online.**

Use tools like QR codes, interactive digital displays, short videos, or virtual tours to extend the visitor experience beyond physical displays. Where QR codes are currently in place, replace any broken links and ensure that all updated and future codes direct to Museum-managed content as the primary source of interpretation. External resources can still be included but should be linked from within the Museum’s own pages to ensure visitors always land on active, Museum-controlled content. These tools can support different learning styles, offer deeper context, and make the Museum more accessible to off-site or self-guided visitors.

# **Objective 2.3 Foster community connection through enriching on-site programs and events.**

## **A. Offer engaging, seasonal, and food-based programming that connects with local heritage.**

Events like wine and cheese nights, cheesemaking demonstrations, and harvest-themed tastings can highlight Ingersoll’s agricultural and cheese-making roots. While a commercial kitchen would expand future programming options, partnerships (e.g., with local cheesemakers) and creative use of the existing facilities can support smaller-scale or collaborative food-based activities in the interim.



## **B. Enhance the visitor experience by activating outdoor Museum spaces.**

Offer programs that connect with nearby trails and cycling routes (e.g., volunteer-led and/or self-guided walks, outdoor art-making, pop-up history stations) to bring the Museum's stories into the landscape. Plans for a Three Sisters community garden could also serve as a platform for hands-on learning and seasonal events rooted in local food and Indigenous agricultural knowledge.

## **C. Continue to create innovative community events that attract new audiences and align with exhibitions or seasonal programs.**

Pilot new formats such as drop-in family workshops or youth-led programs to reach underrepresented audiences. Where possible, gather light-touch feedback through comment cards or short surveys to help track participation and improve future events, aligning with broader efforts to collect and learn from audience data.

# **Objective 2.4 Extend the Museum's reach through off-site programming.**

## **A. Expand the seniors' program to long-term care residences and other community settings.**

Over time, explore whether the model can be adapted to reach other groups facing barriers to on-site participation.

## **B. Deliver curriculum-linked educational programs in schools, such as half-day or full-day sessions for multiple classes.**

Building on existing mobile curriculum and in-school programming in development, offer enhance half- or full-day sessions for multiple classes. These programs can be tailored to reflect local history and curriculum needs, and provide direct access for student participation. Explore developing classroom kits as an optional leave-behind as well as digital resources to complement in-person visits.

## **C. Deliver flexible off-site programs and pop-up experiences in schools, parks, festivals, and other community venues.**

These mobile programs can help the Museum connect with new audiences and be visible beyond its physical footprint. By meeting people where they are, the Museum can build broader and deeper relationships and encourage future on-site visits.



## Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship

This pillar focuses on building a strong future from the inside out. It shifts the Museum toward long-term operational resilience through diversified funding streams, strong internal policies and processes, and strategic infrastructure investments that preserve the collection, and enhance its impact and reach in the community. In doing so, it supports the Museum's commitment to maintaining free/pay-what-you-can access while enabling sustainable growth.

### Objective 3.1 Strengthen and diversify funding by integrating revenue generation into everyday operations and community relationships.

*Refer to Section 5.3 for guidance on strategic fund development.*

#### A. Pursue targeted grant opportunities to support key priorities.

Build on past success by continuing to apply for grants that align with the Museum's goals. Where appropriate, explore joint applications with external partners or opportunities to be included in larger Town-led proposals.

#### B. Expand earned revenue streams through the gift shop, camps, and tourism partnerships.

Grow and diversify earned income by enhancing the Museum shop, exploring heritage-based or third-party camps, and collaborating with Tourism Oxford on fee-based visitor experiences.

#### C. Increase visibility and ease of on-site giving.

Use signage and prompts to make giving more intuitive and accessible throughout the site. Lower-cost options such as QR codes and additional signage that encourages donations or highlights what donations support can be implemented first, with tap-to-donate terminals explored over time or for specific events, as resources and donation revenue allow.

#### D. Launch an individual giving strategy.

Introduce simple initiatives such as a membership or passport program, online giving campaigns (e.g., Giving Tuesday, holiday season), and improved donor recognition to build a culture of support.

#### E. Lay the groundwork for local sponsorships.

Begin building relationships with local businesses and offering small-scale sponsorship opportunities that demonstrate shared community benefit.





## Objective 3.2 Strengthen operational foundations and capacity.

### A. Invest in full-time staff to support expanded programming and daily operations.

Current staffing levels limit the Museum's ability to sustain and grow its programming, despite strong demand and proven success in attracting visitors. Expanding the part-time programming role to full-time would improve continuity, relieve pressure on existing staff, and unlock more opportunities for engagement. This role could also serve as a proof of concept to demonstrate how additional capacity can translate into increased participation and community benefit.

### B. Expand ongoing staff training and professional development in key areas.

Ongoing, regular participation in external training opportunities will help the team continue to deliver high-quality, relevant offerings in areas such as exhibit development, program design, accessibility, and community engagement. The Museum should pursue a balanced approach to training that supports collaboration across a small team through cross-training while also strengthening specialized expertise where needed (e.g., collections management, programming, leadership and management). Training may include free webinars, publications, online courses, as well as paid programs offered by sector organizations such as the Ontario Museum Association, Canadian Museums Association, or Canadian Conservation Institute.

### C. Expand volunteer recruitment, development, and succession planning to ensure continuity.

The Museum benefits from a committed group of volunteers, including its Advisory Committee. However, many long-serving members are nearing the end of their tenure. Ongoing efforts are needed to broaden the volunteer base, bring in new perspectives, and ensure knowledge transfer over time.

### D. Develop internal exhibit policies and planning tools to support consistent curatorial processes.

The Museum currently relies on informal exhibit planning processes. Introducing clear internal guidelines (e.g., planning timelines, exhibit development steps) will support consistency, improve efficiency, and help ensure smooth transitions from one exhibition to the next.



## Objective 3.3 Strengthen infrastructure to support safe operations, community use, and future growth.

### A. Implement high-priority structural and safety upgrades, as outlined in the Building Condition Analysis Report.

Core infrastructure improvements are essential to ensuring safe collection storage, visitor safety, and preservation of the buildings across the site. This includes urgent repairs to HVAC, electrical, and other building systems as well as structural upgrades and environmental controls that protect the Museum's assets and users. The first round of priority upgrades have been approved by Council for the 2025 budget year.

### B. Upgrade kitchen facilities to support food-based programming.

Enhance the Museum's kitchen to enable safe and effective delivery of food-based heritage programming and special events. This initiative includes equipment upgrades such as a commercial sink that meets health and safety requirements for food service. Ideally, the Museum's bake oven will also be upgraded or rebuilt alongside this initiative. Upgrades are intended to support programming such as tastings, small food-based events, and partnerships with local producers.

### C. Acquire digitization and documentation equipment to improve collections care and public engagement.

Invest in tools such as a large-scale scanner and a dedicated Museum camera to support digitization, preservation, and access. High-quality imagery also enhances marketing, educational materials, and online interpretation. This investment can be approached incrementally, with modest annual allocations used to gradually acquire the necessary equipment over a few years.

### D. Improve site infrastructure to support indoor/outdoor programming, with accessibility upgrades and seasonal adaptability.

Enhance the Museum grounds with infrastructure such as lighting, seating, shade structures, and clear signage to improve comfort and usability during outdoor events. Accessibility upgrades (e.g., ramps, pathways, and entrances) should be integrated throughout. As part of this initiative, work with the Town's Parks Division to update the adjacent cheese-themed playground, a key opportunity to attract more families to the Museum grounds.



### **E. Develop a long-term solution for collection storage, prioritizing on-site expansion where feasible.**

The Museum's current storage capacity is at its limit, with overflow currently housed in the Town Hall basement – a space expected to become unavailable in the coming years. The ideal solution is a purpose-built, climate-appropriate facility on Museum grounds. This may also include better display and storage for select items (e.g., housing the school collection in a reconstructed, redesigned schoolhouse building). As an interim measure, explore off-site options using other Town properties and/or partnerships with nearby heritage institutions.

### **F. Explore the feasibility of a new Museum administration building and visitor welcome centre that enhances the arrival experience and supports broader tourism goals.**

As a long-term, aspirational action, consider a new facility that could serve both as the Museum's main entrance and administrative hub, and as a tourism welcome centre for the Town. A feasibility study should explore various models – including whether the new facility would replace or complement the existing main building – and assess implications for the current structure, site layout, visitor experience, and operational needs. This addition to the grounds would enhance visitor orientation, improve visibility, and strengthen Ingersoll's identity as a cultural destination. Note: Any such development would be contingent on collaborating with, and securing permission from, the Thames Conservation Authority, which owns the land the Museum buildings occupy.

## **Objective 3.4 Ensure the collection is well-preserved, accessible, and reflective of the Museum's mandate.**

### **A. Continue to document and digitize the collection.**

PastPerfect remains the most suitable solution for this work at this time. Over the long term, reevaluate collection management software based on evolving needs. Key considerations include public access functionality, ease of use for both internal and public users, integration/compatibility with the Museum's existing digital ecosystem, storytelling capabilities, and cost. The digitization process also supports overall collections management by helping identify objects that may be suitable for transfer to the education collection or potential deaccession – strengthening alignment between the Museum's mandate, collections, and capacity to steward materials effectively.

### **B. Create and implement policies aligned with museum best practices for collections management and public access.**

Develop a comprehensive collections policy that outlines criteria and processes for acquisition, documentation, storage, and deaccessioning. These policies should ensure that all items in the collection



reflect the Museum's refined mandate, are well cared for, and can be managed within the limits of available space and resources. Include high-level guidance for granting public access to non-displayed materials (e.g., establishing protocols for researcher visits, internal requests, or digitization-on-demand where feasible).

### **C. Secure a permanent home for the sports collection at the new Sports Arena, ensuring public display and community access.**

The Town's planned Sports Arena presents an opportunity to share this important local collection in a high-visibility setting. Work with the Town to formalize plans for display and long-term care of the sports collection, ensuring the site can accommodate both exhibitions and appropriate storage conditions for the full sports collection.

### **D. Explore and assess opportunities to increase public access to the Museum's collection online.**

Over time, the Museum should assess viable options for making the collection more accessible to the public in digital form. Potential approaches may include a searchable online catalogue or finding aids to support research access, or curated digital exhibitions that highlight select items and themes. This work relies on ongoing digitization efforts and would benefit from integration between the collection database and the Museum's website. Where possible, public access tools should be aligned with the Museum's collection management system and evaluated in tandem with future software decisions.



## 5. Implementing the Plan

To move from planning to action, the Museum will need clear direction and coordinated efforts. This section offers the foundational tools and implementation details needed to support that work over time.

It includes four key components designed to guide delivery across all areas of the plan:

- **Brand Building Blocks** – establishing a refreshed identity to guide communications, engagement, and visitor experience
- **Foundations for an Interpretive Framework** – offering high-level guidance to shape exhibition planning and storytelling
- **Guidelines for Strategic Fund Development** – outlining a scalable, mission-aligned approach to growing financial resources over time
- **Implementation Tables** – consolidating timelines, responsibilities, resource needs, and performance indicators to provide a clear roadmap for coordinated delivery

Together, these elements provide a common foundation for Museum staff, Town departments, and other interest-holders to work from as implementation unfolds.



## 5.1. Brand Building Blocks

As the Museum prepares to refresh its name, identity, and brand materials, a set of foundational principles can help guide this work. While this Museum Enhancement Plan does not prescribe a new name or full brand strategy, it does establish direction-setting elements to inform decisions around tone, positioning, and visual expression. These brand building blocks are designed to support recommendations throughout the plan (particularly under Pillar 1) and provide a foundation for future brand development processes.

### Purpose of the Brand Refresh

The Museum's updated mandate, broadened interpretive scope, and growing community role call for a brand that reflects who the Museum is today – and who it aspires to become. A strong, resonant brand will help position the Museum as a trusted steward of local heritage and a vibrant cultural hub for the Ingersoll community and its visitors.

The refreshed brand should:

- Reflect the Museum's identity as a space that connects people, stories, and place
- Support consistent, compelling messaging across programs, exhibitions, outreach, tourism efforts
- Reinforce community pride and visitor engagement
- Remain flexible enough to evolve as the Museum grows

### Tone and Personality

Community and interest-holder input emphasized the importance of a tone that is:

- **Welcoming and warm** – inviting participation from all ages and backgrounds
- **Curious and engaging** – sparking interest and encouraging return visits
- **Authentic and grounded** – rooted in the community's identity and values
- **Energetic and expressive** – with room for creativity, humour, and delight

The final tone (including how playful or formal the Museum brand should be) should be further defined through internal discussions with Museum and other Town staff, and supported by input from the Museum Advisory Committee.

### Messaging and Positioning

The Museum brand should clearly communicate its value to both local residents and visitors. Key positioning elements include:



- The Museum as a **community hub** for learning, connection, and celebration
- The Museum as a **destination** within regional tourism offerings (e.g., Oxford County Cheese Trail)
- A broadened focus that encompasses **local stories beyond cheese**, while retaining cheese as a unique and distinctive asset
- A narrative of **continuity and evolution** – honouring the past while embracing both new perspectives and ongoing community change.

## Visual Identity Considerations

The Museum's updated visual identity (including logo, colour palette, typography) should be:

- **Simple and memorable** – easily recognizable across signage, merchandise, and digital platforms
- **Consistent and adaptable** – aligning with the Town's broader brand standards while expressing the Museum's distinct personality
- **Legible and accessible** – supporting ease of use across formats

The Town's existing Brand Guidelines provide important framing for this work. While the Museum brand should complement the Town's visual identity, it can and should have distinct characteristics that reflect its role in cultural storytelling and visitor engagement. Internal collaboration will be needed to determine how closely the Museum's brand should align with the Town's – and where divergence can help clarify its unique mandate.

## Naming Considerations

As part of the brand refresh, it is recommended that the Museum undergo a renaming process. Key considerations include:

- Alignment with the Museum's **broadened mandate** and community-centred identity
- Avoiding confusion with the Town's administrative identity or other local institutions
- Ensuring the name is **memorable, versatile, and usable** across print, digital, and merchandise
- Clearly communicating the Museum's **contemporary role** as both a heritage steward and cultural space

While “cheese” remains a valuable tourism hook, the name should not limit public understanding of the Museum's purpose or programming. A simple, modern name that can scale with the Museum's growth will best support future engagement.



## Sample Naming Directions

While a full naming process is beyond the scope of this plan, several potential directions have emerged through engagement and analysis. **The examples below are not recommended names**, but rather illustrations of how different naming approaches could reflect the Museum's evolving identity:

- **Ingersoll Cheese Museum & Heritage Village** – Retains the well-known “cheese” branding while signalling a broader historical focus and immersive site experience
- **Ingersoll Cheese & Heritage Museum** – Balances the strong “cheese” tourism hook with a clearer nod to the Museum's broader interpretive scope
- **Ingersoll Museum** – A flexible, concise option that could be paired with a tagline like “Home of the Historic Cheese Factory” or “The history of cheese – and so much more”

These examples reflect different priorities – from maintaining tourism recognition to clarifying broader mandates and messaging. As part of any future rebranding process, the Museum will need to test options with interest-holders and community members to build buy-in and ensure alignment with both Museum mandate and audiences.





## 5.2. Foundations for an Interpretive Framework

Interpretive planning is the process of deciding which stories to tell, how to tell them, and how to shape visitor experiences that are meaningful, engaging, and consistent with a museum's mandate.

Interpretive planning helps guide curatorial decisions, support educational goals, and ensure alignment with community values and expectations. Unlike individual exhibition plans, an interpretive framework offers high-level guidance that can be applied across permanent and temporary exhibitions. It sets the tone, themes, and key messages that shape how the Museum communicates its identity, history, and purpose to the public. For a small museum, it can also support continuity and reduce reliance on institutional memory by giving staff and volunteers a shared reference point for decision-making.

The interpretive framework recommended in Action 1.2.A of this plan should be:

- **Flexible and evolving** – designed to grow with the Museum and its audience
- **Rooted in best practices** – supporting storytelling that is accessible, inclusive, and layered
- **Informed by community input** – drawing on the diverse voices, priorities, and knowledge shared through ongoing engagement

### Interpretive Principles

Based on museum best practices and further informed by community engagement for the development of the Museum Enhancement Plan, the following principles can guide development of the future interpretive framework:

- **Tell a fuller story:** Reflect Ingersoll's rich and evolving identity, including local industry, underrepresented histories, and contemporary life. Ensure stories are grounded in historical accuracy and educational value.
- **Emphasize experience:** Move from “so much stuff” to “so much to do” by integrating interactive, hands-on, and multi-sensory elements.
- **Make it intuitive:** Create clear and cohesive visitor journeys, particularly in the permanent gallery. Improve narrative organization to support self-guided exploration.
- **Invite multiple perspectives:** Use layered storytelling to offer multiple entry points and varied levels of depth – from high-level takeaways to in-depth context.
- **Centre community voices:** Build exhibitions that are shaped by, and responsive to, local residents and partners.
- **Be relevant and welcoming:** Design for school groups, seniors, families, and first-time visitors. Ensure accessibility across language, format, and physical space.



## Additional Insights to Guide Exhibition Planning

Throughout the planning process, a range of ideas were shared that build on the interpretive principles above. While the interpretive framework will guide the content and structure of exhibitions, these additional insights speak to the **experience and delivery** – helping to shape how exhibitions feel, how visitors interact with them, and how they evolve over time. Together, they offer practical direction for future exhibition planning and content development. Key themes included:

- Featuring **more diverse and representative local histories** – including Black history, Indigenous history, women’s history, and stories of everyday life
- Encouraging **surprise and delight** – including humour, unexpected objects, or playful storytelling
- Creating **space for emotional connection** – including stories of resilience, family, loss, and joy
- Ensuring that exhibits feel **fresh and updated** – avoiding repetition for frequent visitors
- Making content **more interactive and dynamic** – especially for kids and youth
- Including **more information about people behind the objects** – to humanize historical content and spark curiosity

These inputs can be used as prompts when developing specific exhibitions or updating gallery spaces. A future interpretive framework might also include overarching themes or questions (e.g., “What does it mean to belong in Ingersoll?” or “How do stories of making shape our community?”) to anchor curatorial choices across the Museum.



## 5.3. Guidelines for Strategic Fund Development

*Expanding on Objective 3.1: Strengthen and diversify funding by integrating revenue generation into everyday operations and community relationships.*

The Museum's ability to thrive long-term will depend not only on strong operational support from the Town – which remains foundational – but also on its capacity to grow additional funding sources. By embedding revenue generation into daily activities and strengthening relationships with visitors, partners, and funders, the Museum can expand its impact while maintaining accessibility.

This plan recommends the Museum take a gradual, integrated approach to establishing its fund development practices. Strategic actions are designed to align with the Museum's current scale, focusing on achievable steps that build confidence and capacity over time. Revenue generation should be treated as part of daily operations – not a separate, burdensome or intimidating activity. This shift can be supported through simple tools, such as:

- A short reference guide at the welcome desk with prompts for staff and volunteers, especially when visitors ask about admission (e.g., “Admission is by donation – suggested amounts are posted here, and you can also tap or scan to give.”)
- Donation signage that clearly communicates how to give and what donations support
- Orientation for new volunteers that includes a basic overview of the Museum's approach to fundraising and its importance

These efforts can help normalize conversations about giving, without requiring staff or volunteers to make direct asks.

## Grant Funding

The Museum should continue pursuing grants where eligible, building on past successes. Potential funders include provincial and federal government programs, cultural foundations, heritage and tourism bodies, and local granting organizations. Priority areas to target include:

- Infrastructure and equipment
- Digitization and collections management
- Community-engaged programming
- Indigenous partnership initiatives
- Youth employment and volunteer development
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Cultural tourism



Recognizing that the Museum's status as a municipal division can sometimes present challenges in accessing some grants directly, there are other viable paths to explore:

- **Joint initiatives with external partners** (e.g., heritage organizations, Indigenous-led groups, agricultural associations) offer an important opportunity. In some cases, these partners can act as the lead applicant, with the Museum contributing space or expertise. For example:
  - An Indigenous organization could lead a grant application for the Three Sisters garden, with the Museum hosting and supporting the initiative.
  - A community partner such as Kiwanis could lead a playground renewal project, with the Museum contributing ideas and helping to connect heritage themes.
- **Collaborate with the Town to ensure applications are coordinated and not duplicative.** Where possible, Museum priorities can be incorporated into larger municipal proposals – such as including a Museum component in summer employment funding or tourism development grants.

## Earned Revenue

The Museum has already established several promising avenues for earned revenue, which can be expanded and refined to generate more consistent returns over time.

Key opportunities include:

- **Gift shop:** Position the shop as the go-to source for official Town merchandise and on-brand items that reflect the Museum's identity (e.g., cheese pun products, old-fashioned candy, locally themed merchandise).
- **Educational camps:** Develop heritage-based programs with revenue potential beyond cost recovery, or host third-party camps as fee-for-service rentals.
- **Paid experiences:** Collaborate with Tourism Oxford on fee-based experiences promoted through Ontario's Southwest "Unlocked and Inspired" program.

Whatever the specific effort, initiatives should be:

- **Mission-aligned** (e.g., reflecting local history or cheese-related themes)
- **Capacity-aware** (e.g., scalable, possibly using third-party providers)
- **Supportive of brand-building** (e.g., through merchandise or branded packaging)



## Individual Giving

A low-barrier, integrated approach to individual giving can build a culture of community support while requiring limited additional time from staff or volunteers.

Key strategies include:

- A **membership or passport program** that offers small perks (e.g., discounts, early event access) and builds a sense of belonging. Publicly recognizing members (e.g., donor bulletin board/wall, social media shoutouts) can increase visibility and uptake.
- **Seasonal giving campaigns** tied to events or programs (e.g., “Give the Gift of History” during the holidays).
- **Simple online donation tool** (e.g., CanadaHelps) integrated with the Museum’s website to help support digital fundraising campaigns.
- **Simple on-site digital donation tools** such as QR codes or tap-to-donate stations that are visible, intuitive, and easy to use.

Recognition and stewardship are essential. Consider:

- **Thanking donors and members** through signage, the website, social media, and the Year in Review
- **Integrating stewardship into events and programs**, such as offering exclusive member previews or featuring donor highlights in event programs
- **Improving data management** by implementing a simple CRM to support basic follow-up and relationship-building

## Corporate Sponsorship

While major sponsorship campaigns may not be feasible at this time, the Museum can begin laying the groundwork for future growth in this area.

- **Start small:** Focus on modest in-kind contributions or event sponsorships with local businesses that offer community visibility in exchange for light-touch support.
- **Build relationships:** Cultivate local businesses that are already aligned with the Museum’s values and community presence.
- **Highlight community benefit:** As the Museum’s brand strengthens and its visibility increases, sponsorship can become a compelling way for businesses to demonstrate local investment and civic pride.

Over time, event-based and exhibit-based sponsorship opportunities may offer a sustainable way to bring in support without placing undue pressure on volunteers or advisory members.



## Leveraging the Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The year 2027 marks the Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – a meaningful milestone that can be used to spark community interest, attract new supporters, and rally momentum behind capital improvements. This anniversary provides a natural platform to introduce or grow key fund development initiatives, including:

- **A targeted campaign** focused on supporting infrastructure upgrades and collection care
- **Special edition gift shop merchandise** tied to the 50<sup>th</sup>
- **Sponsorship packages** for anniversary-themed events or exhibitions
- **A membership or passport program** launched in conjunction with the celebrations
- **Light-touch donor recognition activities** that build visibility and goodwill

Planning for this milestone should begin as soon as possible to ensure the Museum can make the most of the opportunity. The anniversary can serve not only as a celebration of the past, but as a launchpad for future growth and community investment.



## 5.4. Implementation Tables

This section outlines a practical framework for implementing the Museum Enhancement Plan over a ten-year horizon. To support effective sequencing and delivery, actions are grouped into four broad implementation phases, each reflecting a distinct focus in the Museum's evolution.

Phase	Timeline	Focus
<b>Clarify</b>	Immediate, Years 1 and 2	Lay the groundwork by updating the Museum's mandate, name, brand, interpretive lens, and foundational systems.
<b>Align</b>	Short term, Years 3–5	Ensure internal processes, partnerships, programs, and communications work together in a cohesive and coordinated way.
<b>Expand</b>	Medium Term, Years 6–9	Grow the Museum's reach, capacity, and impact through deeper programming, partnerships, and infrastructure investments.
<b>Sustain</b>	Long Term, Years 10+	Maintain momentum, strengthen sustainability, and continue adapting to community needs over time.

Organized according to these phases, each of the following implementation tables includes essential details to support planning, delivery, and tracking:

- **Estimated Cost** – Approximate financial impact of the action
- **Funding Source** – Source(s) of funds required to implement the action (to be determined)
- **Responsibility** – Lead and supporting roles (e.g., Museum staff, Advisory Committee, Town divisions, external partners)
- **Intersections** – Key connections within the plan, highlighting opportunities for coordinated delivery
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** – Measures to help assess progress and track success over time

Where relevant, actions are marked as ongoing to indicate continuous or recurring delivery. Together, these tables provide a coordinated and phased roadmap to help bring the Museum Enhancement Plan to life.



## About Cost Estimates

Estimated costs are presented as ranges to support effective prioritization, phased investment planning, and long-term budgeting. Because many actions will require further scoping and development before implementation, actual costs may vary depending on timing, available funding sources, vendor pricing, inflation, and evolving project scope. Using ranges helps the Museum and Town understand general financial implications, identify resource needs, and explore funding opportunities well in advance. More detailed cost estimates can be developed as part of project-specific planning processes, business cases, and future feasibility work, as appropriate.

The cost categories used are as follows:

- **Minimal cost (under \$5,000):** Actions that can typically be completed using existing resources or minor budget adjustments
- **Moderate cost (\$5,000–14,999):** Modest investments that may require limited external support or one-time expenses
- **Significant cost (\$15,000–39,999):** Larger-scale efforts requiring dedicated funding, staff time, or external expertise
- **Major cost (\$40,000–99,999):** High-impact initiatives involving sustained investment or capital improvements
- **Transformative cost (\$100,000+):** Long-term or capital-intensive projects representing major financial commitments, often implemented in phases

Costs are noted as one-time, annual, or scaling (e.g., initial cost with further investment based on need and budget over time) to help clarify the nature of the investment. Where relevant, best efforts have been made to align cost estimates with those provided in the Building Condition Assessment report.





## Implementation Phase 1A: Clarify

### Pillar 1: Identity & Impact (Year 1)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 1.1 Clarify and refine the Museum's mandate and identity.</b>					
A. Update the Museum's Statement of Purpose to reflect an expanded mandate.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	Provides the foundation for multiple recommendations throughout the plan, ensuring consistency between mandate, identity, and external communications and supporting cohesive decision-making	Updated Statement of Purpose drafted and approved by Council
B. Undertake a naming process to identify a new Museum name that reflects its expanded mandate and identity.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff, Internal Partner – Economic Development External Partners – Community organizations and the general public (through inclusive engagement activities)	Directly informed by the updated mandate as defined in the Statement of Purpose (Action 1.1.A) Prerequisite for the brand refresh process (Action 1.1.C) Name selection and launch should help inform the development of the marketing strategy (Action 1.3.B)	Number and diversity of participants engaged through the naming process New name proposed by Museum, approved by Council Early indicators of uptake, such as public awareness, use in media/social channels, and positive feedback on the name's clarity and relevance



## Objective 1.2 Reflect diverse community voices and stories through exhibition content and program partnerships.

A. Develop a flexible interpretive framework to guide future exhibition planning and storytelling.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	<p>Will guide all future exhibition development (Actions 1.2.B, 1.2.C, and 1.2.D)</p> <p>Closely linked to gallery space planning and the effective use of exhibition areas (Actions 2.1.A and 2.1.B)</p> <p>Supports the development of internal exhibit policies and planning tools to ensure consistent curatorial practices (Action 3.2.A)</p> <p>Can help shape program and event planning by highlighting interpretive priorities and seasonal or thematic opportunities (Objective 2.3)</p> <p>May inform marketing and social media content by identifying key themes and stories to highlight (Actions 1.3.B and 2.2.A)</p>	<p>Interpretive framework developed, documented, and referenced in the planning and development of new exhibitions</p> <p>Increased clarity and confidence for staff in exhibition planning</p> <p>Evidence of evolving use over time (e.g., periodic updates, new themes incorporated)</p>
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## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience (Year 1)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 2.2 Deepen visitor engagement using digital tools and audience insights.</b>					
A. Develop a focused social media strategy to guide content across platforms. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Co-lead – Museum Staff and Economic Development (Communications)  External Partners – Tourism Oxford	Should be considered alongside a holistic marketing plan (Action 1.3.B) and should support tourism marketing initiatives (Action 1.3.A)  Can serve as a key platform for inviting and amplifying community stories (Action 1.2.C), including through oral history projects, crowdsourced exhibits, and participatory prompts	Social media strategy developed and implemented  Frequency and consistency of posts across platforms  Growth in reach and engagement (e.g., social media followers, impressions)



## Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship (Year 1)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 3.1 Strengthen and diversify funding by integrating revenue generation into everyday operations and community relationships.</b>					
A. Pursue targeted grant opportunities to support key priorities. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	Will provide support for many actions contained in the plan, including exhibitions, programming expansion, and facility upgrades	Number of grants submitted and received  Number and types of initiatives supported through grant funding
<b>Objective 3.3 Strengthen infrastructure to support safe operations, community use, and future growth.</b>					
A. Implement high-priority structural and safety upgrades, as outlined in the Building Condition Analysis Report. [Ongoing]	\$100,000+ [in first year; annual 2026–2030 as presented in Museum Repairs report (May 2025), and ongoing as needed]	Approved 2025 capital budget for priority items (e.g., electrical repairs, safety upgrades); additional repairs may be addressed through phased capital planning, future Council approvals, and external funding (e.g., grants, sponsorships)	Lead – Town Facilities Division and contracted engineers/contractors  Internal Partner – Museum Staff	Essential to achieving infrastructure goals outlined throughout Objective 3.3  Improves visitor experience and safety, reinforcing efforts to deliver high-quality programming and events on site (Objective 2.3)  Supports collections preservation and aligns with Objective 3.4 (collections care and storage)	Completion of priority repairs and reduction in deferred maintenance issues  Evidence of improved interior conditions for staff, visitors, and collections (e.g., climate control, lighting, structural stability)



D. Improve site infrastructure to support indoor/outdoor programming, with accessibility upgrades and seasonal adaptability. [Ongoing]	\$15,000–39,999 [initial improvements], \$100,000+ [long term]	Approved capital funding for initial lighting and electrical repairs; additional upgrades may be supported through phased capital planning and/or external grants (e.g., for accessibility, infrastructure)	Co-lead – Town Facilities Division and contractors/accessibility specialists as required; Internal Partner – Museum Staff	Supports enhanced visitor experience through activation of outdoor spaces (Action 2.3.B)  Improves visitor navigation and accessibility, aligning with wayfinding improvements (Action 2.1.E)  Contributes to a welcoming and inclusive environment for diverse users, reinforcing the Museum’s community role (Objectives 1.3)	Completion of priority infrastructure upgrades (e.g., number of accessible pathways, seating areas, shade structures added)  Increased attendance at outdoor programs and events  Improved visitor and partner satisfaction with accessibility, comfort, and ease of navigation on site
<b>Objective 3.4 Ensure the collection is well-preserved, accessible, and reflective of the Museum's mandate.</b>					
A. Continue to document and digitize the collection. [Ongoing]	\$15,000–39,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	Leverage digitized objects on Museum website (Action 1.3.E) and on social media (Action 2.2.A)  Consider use of digitized collection in digital displays onsite (Action 2.1.C) and off-site (Action 2.2.D)  Supports collection management planning and policy development (Action 3.4.B)  Contributes to long-term storage and space planning efforts (Action 3.3.F)	Percentage of the collection digitized each year  Decision reached on collection management software for future public access



## Implementation Phase 1B: Clarify

### Pillar 1: Identity & Impact (Year 2)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 1.1 Clarify and refine the Museum's mandate and identity.</b>					
C. Refresh the Museum's brand to align with its new name and mandate.	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time]	Combination of existing operating budget and one-time costs for signage, design services, print materials, gift shop inventory, collateral updates as required.	<p>Lead – Museum Staff</p> <p>Internal Partner – Economic Development (Communications &amp; Marketing Support)</p> <p>External Partner – Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Canadian TODS Limited (for highway signage), Ontario's Southwest (RTO 1, to support integration of new brand into regional tourism marketing)</p>	<p>Informed by the updated mandate (Action 1.1.A) and dependent on completion of the naming process (Action 1.1.B)</p> <p>Will help shape the Museum's broader marketing strategy (Action 1.3.B)</p> <p>Should inform ongoing staff training in visitor engagement and marketing practices (Action 3.2.B)</p> <p>A clear, compelling brand will support fund development and sponsorship efforts (Objective 3.1)</p>	<p>Completion of visual identity package (logo, colours, typography, etc.)</p> <p>Consistent application of brand across physical and digital materials</p> <p>Number of branded merchandise items sold or distributed (e.g., through the gift shop)</p> <p>Internal indicators such as increased clarity and usability of brand assets among staff and volunteers</p> <p>Early external indicators, such as increased public recognition, web/social media engagement, and positive visitor feedback referencing the brand</p>



### Objective 1.3 Raise the Museum's profile as a dynamic community, cultural, and tourism hub.

<b>A. Strengthen ties with Tourism Oxford to offer integrated visitor experiences and boost visibility. [Ongoing]</b>	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partner – Economic Development  External Partners – Tourism Oxford, Ontario's Southwest (RTO 1), local tourism operators	Connects to the development of the Museum's marketing strategy (Action 1.3.B) and social media efforts (Action 2.2.A), ensuring coordinated tourism messaging  Aligns with wayfinding and signage improvements (Action 2.1.E), particularly through integration with the Oxford County Cheese Trail and promotion of nearby attractions  Can inform and be reinforced by on-site programs and outdoor activations (Objective 2.3), as well as relevant off-site initiatives that bring the Museum into tourism-oriented spaces or events (Action 2.4.C)  Supports efforts to grow earned revenue through fee-based tourism experiences (Action 3.1.B)	Number of joint initiatives, packages, or campaigns developed with Tourism Oxford and local operators  Participation rates in co-branded or tourism-focused programs/events  Web and social media traffic sources tied to tourism partnerships  Visitor origin data indicating increased regional or out-of-town attendance
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## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience (Year 2)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 2.1 Enhance gallery spaces with interactive, multi-sensory, and self-directed experiences.</b>					
A. Re-organize the gallery spaces (permanent and temporary exhibitions) with a clear interpretive path. [Dependent on progress of critical repairs]	\$5,000–14,999 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	<p>Dependent on completion of interpretive framework (Action 1.2.A) and closely connected to effective use of exhibition areas (Action 2.1.B)</p> <p>Essential to implement before bringing in interactive experiences (Action 2.1.B) and digital displays (Action 2.1C).</p> <p>Items from the sports collection currently in the permanent gallery would be moved to a permanent home in the Sports Arena (Action 3.4.C).</p> <p>Pursue in connection with structural and safety upgrades as noted in the Building Condition Analysis Report (Action 3.3.A)</p>	<p>Improved visitor satisfaction with gallery navigation, content, and quality</p> <p>Increase in visitor time spent exploring gallery spaces</p>





B. Add interactive, hands-on elements that engage all five senses throughout exhibition spaces. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [initial investment, ongoing cost as budget permits]	Existing operating budget, with potential to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff External Partners – Relevant community and cultural organizations (e.g., Oxford County Library)	Closely connects with integrating digital displays to enhance interactive elements (Action 2.1C).  Stems from first having a clear interpretive framework and re-organized gallery spaces (Actions 1.2.A and 2.1.A).  Community partners engaged in storytelling should also be consulted in the development of relevant interactive materials (Action 1.2.B).	Improved visitor satisfaction with gallery navigation, content, and quality  Increase in visitor time spent exploring gallery spaces  Increase in young patron engagement with gallery spaces
<b>Objective 2.2 Deepen visitor engagement using digital tools and audience insights.</b>					
B. Implement a simple contact management system to support visitor engagement and stewardship.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget, with potential need for minor capital investment depending on CRM platform selected.	Lead – Museum Staff	Contact list can also be used to conduct outreach around future programming and exhibitions (Action 2.2C).  Supports the development of an individual giving strategy (Action 3.1.D).	Number of new contacts added on a monthly or seasonal basis  Active use of the system by staff and volunteers for outreach and to understand Museum engagement  Ability to readily report engagement numbers tied to various programming and exhibition initiatives



C. Collect and analyze visitor data to inform decisions about programming, exhibition development, and engagement. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff Internal Partners – Economic Development (Communications)	Supported by the development of a contact list (Action 2.2.B)	Number of programming and exhibition decisions implemented based on visitor data  Improved visitor satisfaction with quality and outcomes of programming and exhibitions
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## Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship (Year 2)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 3.1 Strengthen and diversify funding by integrating revenue generation into everyday operations and community relationships.</b>					
C. Increase visibility and ease of on-site giving. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [one-time, additional investment based on need and budget over time]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorship) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff	<p>Increased donations will provide support for many actions contained in the plan, including exhibitions and programming expansions</p> <p>Should be aligned with the individual giving strategy (Action 3.1.D), ensuring on-site giving tools complement broader donor engagement efforts</p>	<p>Number of individual donations and average donation value</p> <p>Number and types of initiatives unlocked through donations</p> <p>Increase in donation revenue as proportion of total revenue</p>
<b>Objective 3.3 Strengthen infrastructure to support safe operations, community use, and future growth.</b>					
B. Upgrade kitchen facilities to support food-based programming.	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time]	Capital funding through operating or capital reserve; additional support may be explored through food or tourism-related grants	Co-lead – Town Facilities Division (infrastructure upgrades) and Museum Staff (programming alignment)	<p>Directly supports seasonal and food-based heritage programming (Action 2.3.A)</p> <p>Creates new opportunities for earned revenue (action 3.1.B) through ticketed food-based events and partnerships</p>	<p>Completion of upgrades to public health standards</p> <p>Number of programs delivered using kitchen</p> <p>Staff, participant, and partner satisfaction with effectiveness and functionality of kitchen</p>



C. Acquire digitization and documentation equipment to improve collections care and public engagement. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [one-time, over several years, as budget allows]	Capital purchase through operating or capital reserve; potential external funding via museum digitization, heritage, or digital access grants	Lead – Museum Staff	<p>Directly supports documentation and digitization of the collection (Action 3.4.A)</p> <p>Supports longer-term public access initiatives such as online exhibitions or digital finding aids (Action 3.4.D)</p> <p>Provides visual assets that can strengthen marketing efforts (Action 1.3.B) and support engaging content for social media (Action 2.2.A)</p> <p>Improves resources available for off-site programs (Objective 2.4), particularly where high-quality images or digital materials enhance curriculum relevance or accessibility</p>	<p>Acquisition and setup of identified equipment</p> <p>Volume of collection items documented using new tools</p> <p>Number of digital assets integrated into online platforms, marketing materials, or educational content</p> <p>Improved staff satisfaction with functionality and impact of digital equipment</p>
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**Objective 3.4 Ensure the collection is well-preserved, accessible, and reflective of the Museum's mandate.**

B. Create and implement policies aligned with museum best practices for collections management and public access.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff Internal Partner – Clerks Office	<p>Policies should govern documentation and digitization efforts (Action 3.4.A)</p> <p>Policies should be informed by ongoing professional development activities (Action 3.2.B)</p> <p>Collections policy should govern objects in storage (Action 3.3.F)</p>	<p>Increase in available space in storage linked to deaccessioning efforts</p> <p>Number of items accessioned and deaccessioned as per new collections policy and mandate</p> <p>Improved staff capacity and confidence to effectively manage collections and processes</p>
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## Implementation Phase 2: Align

### Pillar 1: Identity & Impact (Years 3–5)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 1.2 Reflect diverse community voices and stories through exhibition content and program partnerships.</b>					
B. Engage community partners (in particular Indigenous and Black communities) to co-create exhibitions and storytelling. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with potential to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Ingersoll Diversity & Inclusion Committee  External Partners – Relevant community organizations and cultural leaders	<p>Informs and enhances reorganization of gallery spaces and introduction of interactive elements (Action 2.1.A, Action 2.1.B) as well as development of exhibition planning tools (Action 3.2.D)</p> <p>Supports Objective 1.3 by reinforcing the Museum’s identity as a vibrant cultural hub through more inclusive and resonant storytelling</p> <p>Provides opportunities to align exhibition content with on-site programming and events that foster community connection (Objective 2.3)</p> <p>May be reinforced by staff training and professional development in areas such as equity, inclusion, and community-engaged arts practices (Action 3.2.C)</p>	<p>Number and diversity of community partners engaged in exhibition co-creation, as well as evidence of lasting relationships with partners</p> <p>Number of exhibitions or displays developed through community partnerships</p> <p>Partner satisfaction with the process and outcomes</p> <p>Evidence of visibility and reach of co-created exhibitions (e.g., attendance figures, social media engagement, media mentions)</p>



C. Embed community storytelling into exhibitions and programs. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage special initiative funding (e.g., sponsorships, grants)	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partner – Arts does and community organizations (e.g., Creative Arts Centre, Hillcrest Legion – Branch 119, Fusion Youth Centre)	<p>Reinforced by the interpretive framework (Action 1.2.A), which can guide the integration of community-contributed content into exhibitions and storytelling</p> <p>Supports the Museum’s function as a community hub by providing inclusive platforms for residents to share their lived experiences (Objective 1.1)</p> <p>Should be supported by the Museum’s social media strategy (Action 2.2.A), which can amplify community contributions and encourage participation</p> <p>Can contribute to interactive and multisensory exhibit elements (Action 2.1.B) and aligns with the development of innovative community programs (Action 2.3.C)</p> <p>Has potential to inform off-site initiatives such as pop-up programs and outreach activities that bring local stories into schools, parks, and festivals (Objective 2.4)</p>	<p>Number of community storytelling initiatives implemented, and volume of participant contributions (e.g., stories, images, recordings)</p> <p>Partner and participant satisfaction with process and impact</p> <p>Evidence of visitor engagement related to community storytelling elements (e.g., time spent, feedback, interaction), with increases over time</p> <p>Repeat visitation and/or increased community attendance linked to storytelling initiatives</p>
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### Objective 1.3 Raise the Museum's profile as a dynamic community, cultural, and tourism hub.

B. Develop a holistic marketing plan that promotes the Museum's identity, programs, and offerings to diverse audiences.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Co-lead – Museum Staff and Economic Development (Marketing)  External Partners – Tourism Oxford, community organizations, schools, and other partners with shared or cross-promotional channels	Informed by the Museum's brand refresh (Action 1.1.C) and closely tied to social media strategy development (Action 2.2.A) as well as efforts to strengthen visibility through tourism partnerships (Action 1.3.A)  Supports awareness of programs and exhibitions developed through community partnerships and storytelling initiatives (Objective 1.2 and Action 2.3.C)  Reinforces donor engagement and visibility goals associated with individual giving and sponsorship efforts (Actions 3.1.D and 3.1.E)	Marketing plan developed and implemented within the defined timeline  Frequency and consistency of branded messaging across platforms and materials  Growth in overall marketing reach (e.g., social media followers, impressions across channels)  Evidence of marketing-driven engagement, such as visitors mentioning specific campaigns, platforms, or outreach efforts as the reason they attended (e.g., in guestbook, surveys, informal interactions)
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C. Participate in community and regional events to raise the Museum's visibility and reinforce its role in civic life. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity for special initiative funding (e.g., grants, sponsorships)	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Economic Development and Community Services  External Partners – Relevant community and cultural organizations	Complements marketing and social media efforts by reinforcing the Museum's visibility and relevance (Actions 1.3.B and 2.2.A)  Should be informed by the interpretive framework and community storytelling initiatives (Actions 1.2.A and 1.2.C), ensuring content aligns with the Museum's identity and inclusive lens  Helps build partnerships that may support off-site programming and long-term outreach (Objective 2.4)	Number of external events the Museum participates in annually  Attendance or engagement levels at Museum-led or co-hosted activities  Participant and partner satisfaction with Museum participation/presence  Visibility across local media and social platforms linked to event presence
D. Continue to collaborate with the Municipal Heritage Committee on initiatives that mark places of historical significance. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Co-lead – Museum Staff and Municipal Heritage Committee	Can complement site-based and downtown storytelling efforts using QR-linked walking tours (Actions 2.1.E and 2.2.D)  Reinforces the Museum's role as a key player in cultural tourism and community storytelling (Objective 1.3 and Action 1.2.B)  Can contribute to marketing and visitor engagement strategies by highlighting off-site stories and heritage destinations (Actions 1.3.B and 2.2.A)  Supports the Museum's community outreach goals and complements off-site programming that brings history into the public realm (Objective 2.4)	Number of sites marked annually and interpretive materials produced or supported annually (e.g., signage, brochures, digital content)  Increase in public awareness of and visits to marked sites (e.g., QR scans, visitor feedback, social media mentions)



## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience (Years 3–5)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 2.2 Deepen visitor engagement using digital tools and audience insights.</b>					
D. Enhance digital interpretation and visitor tools both on-site and online.	\$5,000–14,999 [one-time, with additional investment based on need and budget over time]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partners – Locally based videographers and content developers (e.g., from Fanshawe College School of Digital and Performing Arts)	Should be aligned with re-organized gallery layouts (Action 2.1.A) and multisensory exhibit enhancements (Action 2.1.B) to ensure cohesive and layered visitor experiences  Closely connects with integrating digital displays across Museum facilities (Action 2.1.C)	Improved visitor satisfaction with gallery navigation, content, and quality  Increase in visitor time spent exploring gallery spaces  Increase in unique visits to the website, session length (time on site), and page engagement (e.g., virtual tours)



### Objective 2.3 Foster community connection through enriching on-site programs and events.

A. Offer engaging, seasonal, and food-based programming that connects with local heritage. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., sponsorship, tourism grants including Ontario Southwest Tourism's " <u>Unlocked and Inspired</u> ")	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partners – Tourism Oxford, Ontario's Southwest Tourism	Requires upgraded kitchen facilities to support food-based programming onsite (Action 3.3.B)  Would require full-time staff to support expanded programming (Action 3.2.A)	Number of food-based programs implemented  Registration and attendance at food-based programs  Improved participant satisfaction with programs
B. Enhance the visitor experience by activating outdoor Museum spaces. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Recreational Trails Committee, Municipal Heritage Community  External Partners – Creative Arts Centre	Closely connects with contributing to major events and calendar milestones (Action 1.3.C)  Closely connects with pursuing initiatives that mark places of historical significance (Action 1.3.D)  Would require full-time staff to support expanded programming (Action 3.2.A)	Number of outdoor programs implemented  Registration and attendance at outdoor programs  Improved participant satisfaction with quality of programs



C. Continue to create innovative community events that attract new audiences and align with exhibitions or seasonal programs. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Museum Advisory Committee  External Partners – various community organizations (e.g., Kiwanis)	Promotion of and photos captured at these events should be integrated in a social media strategy to showcase the Museum’s value (Action 2.2.A)  Visitor feedback gathered at events can inform broader audience data collection efforts (Action 2.2.D)  Events offer an opportunity to build the Museum’s contact list and strengthen future outreach (Action 2.2.B)	Number of community programs held in a year  Attendance and registration numbers at community events (i.e., year-over-year increases)  Evidence of repeat visitation following participation in community events (e.g., return attendance, program sign-ups, mailing list growth)  Improved audience satisfaction with events
<b>Objective 2.4 Extend the Museum’s reach through off-site programming.</b>					
A. Expand the seniors’ program to long-term care residences and other community settings. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partners – various community partners (e.g., long-term care facilities, hospitals, retirement homes)	Would require full-time staff to support expanded programming (Action 3.2.A)	Number of sessions held and attendance numbers  Improved participant satisfaction on quality of programs and value of participating



B. Deliver curriculum-linked educational programs in schools, such as half-day or full-day sessions for multiple classes. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partners – local schools and school boards	Would require full-time staff to support expanded programming (Action 3.2.A)	Number of programs developed and held  Improved satisfaction among schools and participants on the quality of programs and educational value
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### Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship (Years 3–5)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 3.1 Strengthen and diversify funding by integrating revenue generation into everyday operations and community relationships.</b>					
B. Expand earned revenue streams through the gift shop, camps, and tourism partnerships. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., sponsorships and grants including from Ontario's Southwest Tourism, Young Canada Works) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  External Partners – Tourism Oxford	Increased revenue will provide support for many actions contained in the plan, including exhibitions and programming expansions	Number of new initiatives launched to generate earned revenue (e.g., new gift shop items, fee-based programs, tourism experiences)  Increase in earned revenue as proportion of total revenue



D. Launch an individual giving strategy. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Museum Advisory Committee  External Partners – Sponsoring businesses/organizations	Increased donations will provide support for many actions contained in the plan, including exhibitions, programming expansions, and facility upgrades  Should be aligned with efforts to increase on-site giving (Action 3.1.C)  Supported by creation of contact management system (Action 2.2.B)	Number of individual donations and average donation value Number and types of initiatives unlocked through donations  Increase in donation revenue as proportion of total revenue
E. Lay the groundwork for local sponsorships.	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	Increased sponsorship will provide support for many actions contained in the plan, including exhibitions, programming expansions, and facility upgrades	Number of new sponsorship partners  Total and average value of sponsorship contributions  Number and types of initiatives unlocked through sponsorship support  Sponsor satisfaction with partnership value and visibility



### Objective 3.2 Strengthen operational foundations and capacity.

A. Invest in full-time staff to support expanded programming and daily operations.	\$40,000–99,999 [annually]	Increase to operating budget	Co-lead – Council (budget approval) and Museum Staff (role fulfilment)	Increased programming staff is required to maintain and support programming expansions (particularly Objective 2.3, Objective 2.4)	<p>Increase in new programs offered and frequency of programming</p> <p>Improved public satisfaction on quality of Museum programs</p> <p>Improved staff capacity to deliver on core duties and responsibilities, as reported in staff feedback</p>
B. Expand staff training and professional development in key areas. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	Professional development should be aligned with and help inform policies and tools (Action 3.4.B)	<p>Number of training hours completed per staff each year</p> <p>Improved staff confidence in current museum trends and other core competencies</p> <p>Adoption of best practices (e.g., updates to policies, new practices and processes established) based on ongoing training</p>





C. Expand volunteer recruitment, development, and succession planning to ensure continuity. [Ongoing]	Under \$5,000 [annually]	Existing operating budget	Co-lead – Museum Staff, Economic Development, Town of Ingersoll Clerks Office  External Partners – School boards and other community organizations that can support volunteer recruitment (e.g., through student volunteer hours or service programs)	A well-staffed Museum Advisory Committee will be important for Museum's ongoing activities, particularly expanded programming (Objective 2.3, Objective 2.4)	Size and diversity of volunteer pool  Number and diversity of new committee members appointed (maintaining an appropriate size and composition to support the committee's mandate and objectives)  Increase in programming capacity at the Museum supported by volunteer engagement
<b>Objective 3.4 Ensure the collection is well-preserved, accessible, and reflective of the Museum's mandate.</b>					
C. Secure a permanent home for the sports collection at the new Sports Arena, ensuring public display and community access.	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time, with additional investment for maintenance and activation as needed]	Integrated within Sports Arena facility plans	Lead – Town Facilities Division	Connects with re-organizing gallery spaces (Action 2.1.A)	Public satisfaction with the quality of and access to Sports Arena display  Increase in available space in permanent gallery and storage linked to sports collection



## Implementation Phase 3: Expand

### Pillar 1: Identity & Impact (Years 6–9)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 1.2 Reflect diverse community voices and stories through exhibition content and program partnerships.</b>					
D. Coordinate complementary exhibitions with other local and regional organizations. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [annually]	Existing operating budget, with potential for special initiative funding (e.g., grants, sponsorships) to support collaborative projects	Lead – Museum Staff Internal Partner – Fusion Youth Centre External Partners – EON member organizations, Creative Arts Centre	Supported by the interpretive framework (Action 1.2.A), which provides a consistent curatorial lens for local contributions to regional exhibitions  May complement efforts to bring in higher-profile or themed temporary exhibitions (Action 2.1.D)  Supports broader visibility efforts under Objective 1.3 by extending the Museum’s reach across the region	Number of regional or collaborative exhibitions developed and delivered with EON partners  Participation rates from Ingersoll visitors attending regional exhibitions and vice versa (where data is available)  Improved visitor satisfaction with exhibition experience  Partner satisfaction with the process and outcomes  Staff satisfaction with professional learning and partnership outcomes



### Objective 1.3 Raise the Museum's profile as a dynamic community, cultural, and tourism hub.

E. Develop a visually compelling, accessible, and informative Museum website (within the Town's site).	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time]	Initial capital investment with some ongoing maintenance through existing operating budget, with potential for external funding (e.g., grants for digital engagement, arts and heritage technology initiatives)	Co-lead – Museum Staff and Economic Development (Communications)  Internal Partner – IT support	Dependent on the refreshed brand and updated visual identity (Action 1.1.C), which should be completed prior to website re-design  Should align with and support marketing strategy implementation (Action 1.3.B)  Can help promote? highlight? stories and exhibitions developed through the interpretive framework and community partnerships (Actions 1.2.A, 1.2.B, and 1.2.C)  Potential to support public access to digital collections and online interpretive content over time (Action 3.4.D)	Launch of refreshed Museum web page or section of Town website  Volume and diversity of content regularly updated or featured on the site (e.g., stories, events, digital content)  Increase in unique visits, session length (time on site), and page engagement (e.g., collections, program listings)  Improved user and staff satisfaction with website functionality and experience
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## Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience (Years 6–9)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 2.1 Enhance gallery spaces with interactive, multi-sensory, and self-directed experiences.</b>					
C. Strategically integrate digital displays in gallery spaces and other Museum facilities.	\$5,000–14,999 [one-time, with additional investment based on need and budget over time]	Existing operating budget, with potential to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum staff  External Partners – Locally based videographers and content developers (e.g., from Fanshawe College School of Digital and Performing Arts)	Closely connects with creating interactive experiences in gallery spaces (Action 2.1.B)	Improved visitor satisfaction with gallery navigation, content, and quality  Increase in visitor time spent exploring gallery spaces  Increase in young patron engagement with gallery spaces
D. Bring in temporary exhibitions that encourage repeat visitation and seasonal interest. [Ongoing]	\$15,000–39,999 [per exhibition]	External funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum staff  External Partners – Various museum/educational partners	Requires first having an updated gallery space and interpretive framework in place (Actions 2.1.A and 1.2.A)	Number of high-profile exhibitions brought in  Improved visitor satisfaction with exhibition content and experience  Increase in (repeat) visitations linked to temporary exhibitions



E. Improve visitor wayfinding and site navigation to support a welcoming and accessible experience. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [one-time, with additional investment based on need and budget over time]	Capital budget	Co-lead – Museum Staff, Economic Development (Communications)  External Partners – Tourism Oxford	Supports integration of downtown storytelling and tour-based engagement (Actions 1.3.D and 2.2.D)	Increase in awareness and visitations  Improved visitor satisfaction with ease of navigation  Increase in traffic directed downtown from Museum (and vice versa)
<b>Objective 2.4 Extend the Museum’s reach through off-site programming.</b>					
C. Deliver flexible off-site programs and pop-up experiences in schools, parks, festivals, and other community venues. [Ongoing]	\$5,000–14,999 [ongoing]	Existing operating budget, with opportunity to leverage external funding sources (e.g., grants, sponsorships) for specific initiatives	Lead – Museum Staff  Internal Partners – Economic Development and Community Services  External Partners – Relevant community and cultural organizations, sponsoring businesses/organizations	Closely connects with activating participating in community and regional events, activating the Museum’s outdoor spaces, and developing in-classroom educational programs (Actions 1.3.C, 2.3.B, 2.4.B)  Would require full-time staff to support expanded programming (Action 3.2.A)	Number of off-site programs explored  Number of Museum visits and onsite registrations driven by participation in off-site programs  Participant satisfaction on the quality of pop-up experiences



## Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship (Years 6–9)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 3.2 Strengthen operational foundations and capacity.</b>					
D. Develop internal exhibit policies and planning tools to support consistent curatorial processes.	Under \$5,000 [one-time]	Existing operating budget	Lead – Museum Staff	<p>Ongoing professional development and training should align with these policies and tools (Action 3.2.D)</p> <p>Closely connects with interpretive framework for exhibitions (Action 1.2.A)</p>	<p>Percentage of planned exhibits that follow standardized process</p> <p>Improved staff satisfaction with exhibit planning process</p>
<b>Objective 3.3 Strengthen infrastructure to support safe operations, community use, and future growth.</b>					
E. Develop a long-term solution for collection storage, prioritizing on-site expansion where feasible. [Beginning in Year 6–9, continuing in Years 10+]	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time, interim solution], \$100,000+ [one-time, long term]	Capital funding (likely phased); potential support through infrastructure, heritage, or collections-related grants	<p>Lead – Town Facilities Division (feasibility, construction)</p> <p>Internal Partner – Museum Staff (planning and collections alignment), other Town divisions (for interim solutions)</p> <p>External Partners – Heritage institutions (for interim solutions)</p>	<p>Closely linked to development of a collections management policy with deaccessioning guidelines (Action 3.4.B)</p> <p>Improves long-term care and preservation of the collection, aligning with overall intent of Objective 3.4</p>	<p>Feasibility of on-site expansion assessed and documented</p> <p>Interim storage solutions identified and implemented as needed</p> <p>Design and funding plan developed for long-term storage solution</p> <p>Improved environmental conditions for stored items</p>



## Implementation Phase 4: Sustain

### Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship (Years 10+)

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility	Intersections	KPIs
<b>Objective 3.3 Strengthen infrastructure to support safe operations, community use, and future growth.</b>					
F. Explore the feasibility of a new Museum administration building and visitor welcome centre that enhances the arrival experience and supports broader tourism goals.	\$100,000+ [one-time]	May include feasibility study and/or future capital funding; opportunity to explore federal/provincial tourism or cultural infrastructure grants	<p>Lead – Town Facilities Division (capital planning)</p> <p>Internal Partners – Museum Staff and Economic Development (alignment with tourism goals)</p> <p>External Partners – Consultants or architects (for future feasibility/design work)</p>	<p>Strengthens the Museum’s role as a key cultural and tourism hub (Objective 1.3), and may serve as a central access point for downtown tours and heritage experiences</p> <p>Supports improved visitor orientation and welcome, enhancing overall site experience and accessibility (Action 2.1.E)</p> <p>Could incorporate improved administrative space and dedicated areas for storage/display, complementing broader storage needs and collections planning (Actions 3.3.F and 3.4.B)</p>	<p>Feasibility study completed and integration opportunities with tourism and visitor services identified</p> <p>Council direction or support secured for future exploration or funding efforts, if appropriate</p>



### Objective 3.4 Ensure the collection is well-preserved, accessible, and reflective of the Museum's mandate.

D. Explore and assess opportunities to increase public access to the Museum's collection online.	\$15,000–39,999 [one-time, with some additional investment for maintenance]	Existing operating budget, with potential for external funding (e.g., grants for digital engagement, arts and heritage technology initiatives)	Lead - Museum Staff, External Partners - website developer	Would first require having more of the collection digitized (Action 3.4.A)  Should be considered alongside the development of an updated website (Action 1.3.E)	Preferred approach identified based on needs, capacity, and alignment with broader digital infrastructure  Foundational technical requirements scoped or initiated (e.g., website back-end updates, database compatibility review)
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## Timeline at a Glance

The following tables summarize the recommended actions for each phase, providing a clear snapshot of the plan's timeline and sequencing at a glance. Actions are colour-coded to indicate pillars (Pillar 1: Identity & Impact, Pillar 2: Engagement & Experience, Pillar 3: Sustainability & Stewardship).

Actions in Phase 1A: Clarify (Year 1)	
1.1.A.	Update the Museum's Statement of Purpose to reflect an expanded mandate.
1.1.B.	Undertake a naming process to identify a new Museum name that reflects its expanded mandate and identity.
1.2.A.	Develop a flexible interpretive framework to guide future exhibition planning and storytelling.
2.2.A.	Develop a focused social media strategy to guide content across platforms. [Ongoing]
3.1.A.	Pursue targeted grant opportunities to support key priorities. [Ongoing]
3.3.A.	Implement high-priority structural and safety upgrades, as outlined in the Building Condition Analysis Report. [Ongoing]
3.3.D.	Improve site infrastructure to support indoor/outdoor programming, with accessibility upgrades and seasonal adaptability. [Ongoing]
3.4.A.	Continue to document and digitize the collection. [Ongoing]



## Actions in Phase 1B: Clarify (Year 2)

1.1.C. Refresh the Museum's brand to align with its new name and mandate.

1.3.A. Strengthen ties with Tourism Oxford to offer integrated visitor experiences and boost visibility. [Ongoing]

2.1.A. Re-organize the gallery spaces (permanent and temporary exhibitions) with a clear interpretive path. [Dependent on progress of critical repairs]

2.1.B. Add interactive, hands-on elements that engage all five senses throughout exhibition spaces. [Ongoing]

2.2.B. Implement a simple contact management system to support visitor engagement and stewardship.

2.2.C. Collect and analyze visitor data to inform decisions about programming, exhibition development, and engagement. [Ongoing]

3.1.C. Increase visibility and ease of on-site giving. [Ongoing]

3.3.B. Upgrade kitchen facilities to support food-based programming.

3.3.C. Acquire digitization and documentation equipment to improve collections care and public engagement. [Ongoing]

3.4.B. Create and implement policies aligned with museum best practices for collections management and public access.



## Actions in Phase 2: Align (Years 3–5)

1.2.B. Engage community partners (in particular Indigenous and Black communities) to co-create exhibitions and storytelling. [Ongoing]

1.2.C. Embed community storytelling into exhibitions and programs. [Ongoing]

1.3.B. Develop a holistic marketing plan that promotes the Museum's identity, programs, and offerings to diverse audiences.

1.3.C. Participate in community and regional events to raise the Museum's visibility and reinforce its role in civic life. [Ongoing]

1.3.D. Continue to collaborate with the Municipal Heritage Committee on initiatives that mark places of historical significance. [Ongoing]

2.3.D. Enhance digital interpretation and visitor tools both on-site and online.

2.3.A. Offer engaging, seasonal, and food-based programming that connects with local heritage. [Ongoing]

2.3.B. Enhance the visitor experience by activating outdoor Museum spaces. [Ongoing]

2.3.C. Continue to create innovative community events that attract new audiences and align with exhibitions or seasonal programs. [Ongoing]

2.4.A. Expand the seniors' program to long-term care residences and other community settings. [Ongoing]

2.4.B. Deliver curriculum-linked educational programs in schools, such as half-day or full-day sessions for multiple classes. [Ongoing]

3.1.B. Expand earned revenue streams through the gift shop, camps, and tourism partnerships. [Ongoing]

3.1.D. Launch an individual giving strategy. [Ongoing]



*Actions in Phase 2: Align (Years 3–5) – continued*

3.1.E. Lay the groundwork for local sponsorships.

3.2.A. Invest in full-time staff to support expanded programming and daily operations.

3.2.B. Expand staff training and professional development in key areas. [Ongoing]

3.2.C. Expand volunteer recruitment, development, and succession planning to ensure continuity. [Ongoing]

3.4.C. Secure a permanent home for the sports collection at the new Sports Arena, ensuring public display and community access.



### Actions in Phase 3: Expand (Years 6–9)

1.2.D. Coordinate complementary exhibitions with other local and regional organizations. [Ongoing]

1.3.E. Develop a visually compelling, accessible, and informative Museum website (within the Town's site).

2.1.C. Strategically integrate digital displays in gallery spaces and other Museum facilities.

2.1.D. Bring in temporary exhibitions that encourage repeat visitation and seasonal interest. [Ongoing]

2.1.E. Improve visitor wayfinding and site navigation to support a welcoming and accessible experience. [Ongoing]

2.4.C. Deliver flexible off-site programs and pop-up experiences in schools, parks, festivals, and other community venues. [Ongoing]

3.2.D. Develop internal exhibit policies and planning tools to support consistent curatorial processes.

3.3.E. Develop a long-term solution for collection storage, prioritizing on-site expansion where feasible. [Beginning in Year 6–9, continuing in Years 10+]

### Actions in Phase 4: Sustain (Years 10+)

3.3.F. Explore the feasibility of a new Museum administration building and visitor welcome centre that enhances the arrival experience and supports broader tourism goals.

3.4.D. Explore and assess opportunities to increase public access to the Museum's collection online.



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## 6. Appendix

The appendix provides relevant detailed analysis and background research to support the Museum Enhancement Plan. Subsections include

- Strategic Digital Recommendations
- Detailed Community Profile and Market Analysis
- Digital Maturity Assessment
- Town-Administered Public Survey

### 6.1. Strategic Digital Recommendations

The *Evolving with Purpose* enhancement plan includes several actions designed to help the Museum leverage technology across its operations and community engagement efforts. These digital-related actions are listed below.



They also align with requirements under the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), which asks applicants to outline a digital strategy that defines the Museum's digital needs and identifies priority focus areas – such as digital content, collections documentation and digitization, programming, and marketing.<sup>2</sup>

**Digital-related actions from the plan include:**

- **1.1.C.** Refresh the Museum's brand to align with its new name and mandate.
- **1.2.C.** Embed community storytelling into exhibitions and programs.
- **1.3.A.** Strengthen ties with Tourism Oxford to offer integrated visitor experiences and boost visibility.
- **1.3.B.** Develop a holistic marketing plan that promotes the Museum's identity, programs, and offerings to diverse audiences.
- **1.3.D.** Continue to collaborate with the Municipal Heritage Committee on initiatives that mark places of historical significance.
- **1.3.E.** Develop a visually compelling, accessible, and informative Museum website (within Town site).
- **2.1.C.** Strategically integrate digital displays in gallery spaces and other Museum facilities.
- **2.2.A.** Develop a focused social media strategy to guide content across platforms.
- **2.2.B.** Implement a simple contact management system to support visitor engagement and stewardship.
- **2.2.C.** Collect and analyze visitor data to inform decisions about programming, exhibition development, and engagement.
- **2.2.D.** Enhance digital interpretation and visitor tools both on-site and online.
- **2.4.B.** Deliver curriculum-linked educational programs in schools, such as half-day or full-day sessions for multiple classes.
- **3.1.C.** Increase visibility and ease of on-site giving.
- **3.1.D.** Launch an individual giving strategy.
- **3.3.C.** Acquire digitization and documentation equipment to improve collections care and public engagement.
- **3.4.A.** Continue to document and digitize the collection.
- **3.4.D.** Explore and assess opportunities to increase public access to the Museum's collection online.

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<sup>2</sup> Digital Strategies for Museums in Ontario: Planning for the Future. 2025. <https://resources.museumsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/1.-Ministry-CMOG-Requirement-Slides.pdf>



## 6.2. Detailed Community Profile and Market Analysis

A community profile and market analysis for the Town of Ingersoll was conducted to establish a baseline understanding of the town's current population makeup and future growth trajectory. This analysis examines population shifts (including net migration), employment and income, educational attainment, cultural background, and tourism patterns. Where possible, comparisons to provincial or national averages offer additional context on how Ingersoll's patterns align with or diverge from broader movements within Ontario and Canada.

### A Note on Data Sources

Data informing this community profile is drawn from a few different sources. The primary data source, providing the foundation for this analysis, is a series of Ingersoll-specific statistical reports compiled by Environics Analytics through Invest Ontario and supplied by the Town of Ingersoll. Where additional data was required, this community profile also draws upon information from the 2021 Census via Statistics Canada, including projection analysis based on Nordicity's custom net migration analysis methodology. When referencing Statistics Canada data, this community profile addresses the census profile for "Ingersoll, Census Agglomeration." Industry analysis also relies upon an Economy Overview report from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Finally, tourism analysis relies on the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's Regional Tourism Profiles.

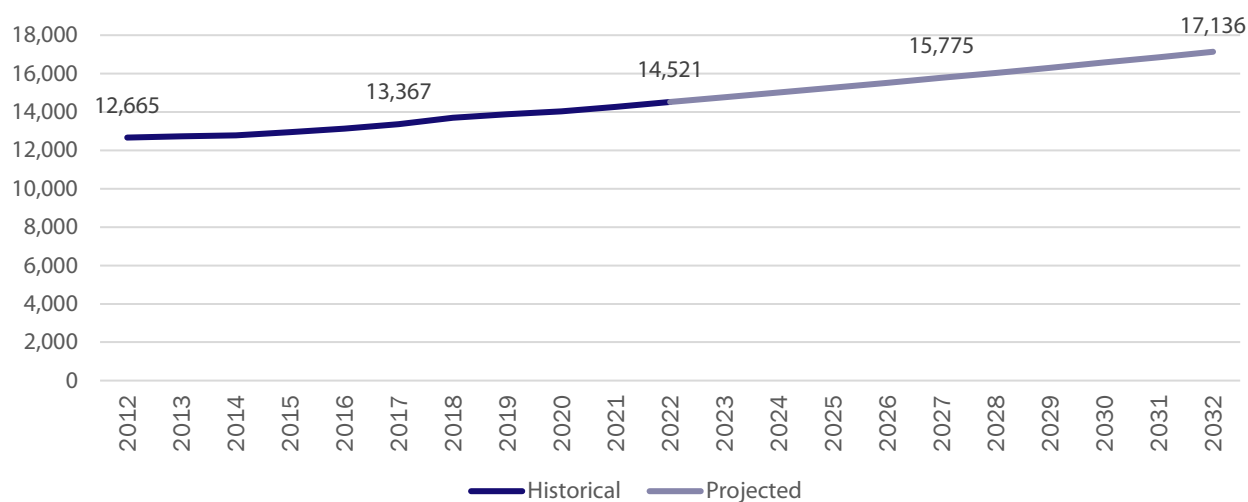
## Population Size and Growth

As of 2024, Ingersoll has an **estimated population of 15,029**. Ingersoll's population is expected to continue growing steadily over the coming years, alongside a shift in its age structure. The most recent census data (2021) shows Ingersoll with a five-year growth rate of 7.3%, surpassing both the Ontario average (5.8%) and the national average (5.2%). Figure 3 illustrates the historical and projected population growth rate extended over a 20-year period.





**Figure 3: Historical and projected population growth in Ingersoll.**



Source: Statistics Canada Table 17-10-0135-01

As for the shifting age structure, data provided by the Town of Ingersoll illustrates that the proportion of children and working-age adults is projected to decline modestly between 2024 and 2029, while the proportion of seniors is projected to expand. Table 1 provides a breakdown of age distribution between 2024 and 2029.

**Table 1 Ingersoll age distribution, 2024 and 2029**

Age Distribution	2024 Total (%)	2029 Total (%)
Children (0–14)	2,663 (17.7%)	2,827 (17.4%)
Working-Age (15–64) <sup>3</sup>	9,742 (64.8%)	10,322 (63.4%)
Senior (65+)	2,624 (17.5%)	3,143 (19.3%)
Total	15,029	16,292

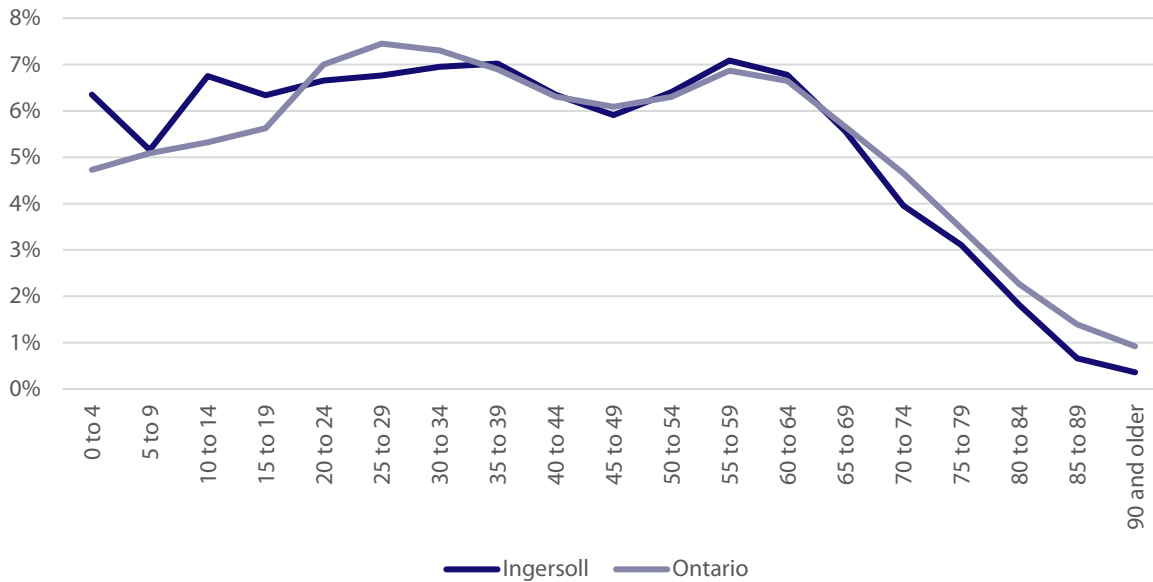
Source: “Ingersoll Demographics – Mar ‘25.” Environics Analytics, 2024 (via Invest Ontario)

<sup>3</sup> Defining the “working-age” population as individuals aged 15-64 aligns with Statistics Canada and other international standards (e.g., OECD, International Labour Organization).



Figure 4 provides a comparative look at age distribution in Ingersoll and Ontario, presented in five-year increments using detailed census data (2021). While Ingersoll does not vary widely from the provincial baseline, the data shows Ingersoll with a slightly higher proportion in the under-20 age range, and a slightly lower proportion in the 20–35 age range.

Figure 4: Age distribution in Ingersoll and Ontario.



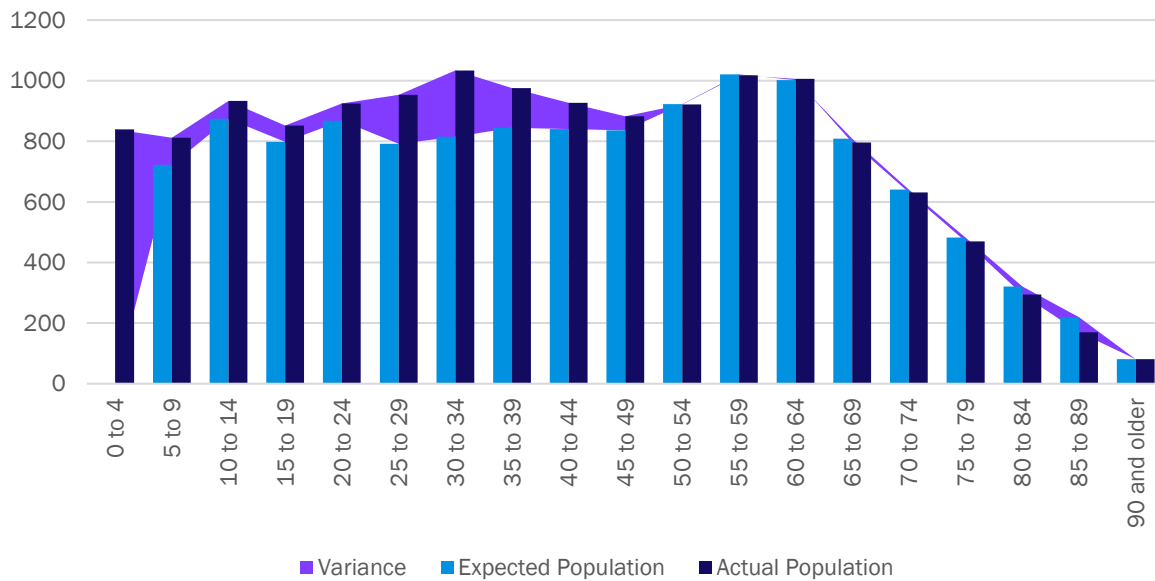
Source: Statistics Canada Table 17-10-0135-01

## Net Migration

As of the 2021 census, approximately **1.1% of Ingersoll's population were recent immigrants** who arrived in Canada within the previous five years – notably lower than the provincial average of approximately 4.2%. In contrast, 12.6% of the population relocated to Ingersoll from elsewhere in Ontario or from other provinces, reflecting a strong pattern of domestic in-migration compared to international newcomer settlement in Ingersoll. Figure 5 presents an age distribution of net migration in five-year increments. "Expected population" shows the expected population age distribution in Ingersoll in 2022 after applying typical rates of birth and death to the population observed in 2017. "Variance" (purple) compares the expected population to the actual population in 2022. The difference represents the net contribution of inbound and outbound migration to the 2022 population during that five-year period. Here, we can observe the steepest inbound migration patterns in the 25–44 age range between 2017 and 2022, suggesting disproportionate in-migration of working-age people during that time.



Figure 5: Net migration analysis of Ingersoll by age distribution, 2017 to 2022.



Source: Statistics Canada Tables 17-10-0135-01, 13-10-0114-01, 13-10-0418-01

## Income and Employment

As of 2020, the **median after-tax household income in Ingersoll was \$77,000**, above the national median (\$73,000) but slightly below the Ontario provincial median (\$79,500). For additional context, Table 2 shows that within its region, Ingersoll's medium income is lower than that of its neighbouring municipalities.

Table 2 Median household income in Ingersoll and comparators, 2021 Census

Census Area	Median Income \$ (2020)
Ingersoll (Town)	77,000
South-West Oxford (Township)	86,000
Zorra (Township)	91,000
Ontario (Province)	79,500
Canada (Country)	73,000

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population



According to the 2021 Census, 8.0% of Ingersoll's population was living in low income in 2020, as defined by the Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT).<sup>4</sup> This measure is lower than both the Ontario-wide rate (10.1%) and the Canada-wide rate (11.1%).

**Manufacturing is the most significant employer in Ingersoll**, accounting for nearly 15% of all jobs in the community. This sector's strength is closely tied to Ontario's broader industrial base, and particularly the health of the automotive supply chain. Other leading employment sectors include health care and social assistance (8.6%), retail trade (7.0%), accommodation and food services (3.3%), and educational services (2.9%).

Table 3 Ingersoll employment by top five industries, 2024

Industry	Total employees	% of employees
Manufacturing	1,813	14.8%
Health care and social assistance	1,049	8.6%
Retail trade	852	7.0%
Accommodation and food services	399	3.3%
Educational services	350	2.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

## Cultural Identity and Languages

Data provided by the Town of Ingersoll indicates that the population is predominantly white, with a small but diverse mix of racialized communities.<sup>5</sup> In total, **6.1% of residents identify as racialized**, with South Asian (2.0%) and Black (1.7%) communities representing the largest shares. Smaller communities include individuals identifying as Latin American (0.6%), Arab (0.2%), Filipino (0.2%), and others. The remaining **93.9% of residents do not identify as part of a racialized group**.

Approximately **2.8% of the population identifies as Indigenous**, including 2.0% who identify as First Nations and 0.8% as Métis.

English is the dominant mother tongue in Ingersoll, **spoken by 91.2% of residents**. French is the first language for 0.9% of the population, while 6.7% report a non-official language as their mother tongue. An additional 0.9% report both English and a non-official language.

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<sup>4</sup> The Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT) is a relative measure of low income used by Statistics Canada. It identifies individuals and households earning less than 50% of the median after-tax income, adjusted for household size. This adjustment accounts for the fact that a household's needs increase, but at a decreasing rate, as the number of members increases.

<sup>5</sup> The data from which this analysis was derived (Environics Analytics, 2024, provided by the Town of Ingersoll) uses the term "visible minority" to describe non-white population groups. In this report the term "racialized" is used instead, aligning with evolving language standards and best practices in Canadian research and policy to emphasize the social construction of race.



## Education

According to data provided by the Town of Ingersoll, an estimated **47.1% of Ingersoll's adult residents had completed some form of postsecondary education** as of 2024, including trades, college, and university programs. The proportion of residents with no formal certificate, diploma, or degree (defined here as less than a Grade 9 education) is **17.8%**. A more detailed breakdown can be found below in Table 4.

Table 4 Ingersoll educational attainment, 2024

Industry	Total employees	% of employees
< Grade 9	2,169	17.8%
High school	4,299	35.2%
Apprenticeship or trade diploma	776	6.4%
College or CEGEP diploma	3,221	26.4%
University diploma below bachelor	167	1.4%
University degree	1,590	13.0%

Source: "Ingersoll Demographics – Mar '25." Environics Analytics, 2024 (via Invest Ontario)

## Tourism

While tourism data specific to the Town of Ingersoll is not available, tourism patterns in Ontario are often measured by "tourism regions" defined by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport. Ingersoll is located within "Region 1: Southwest Ontario," which covers the areas around London and Woodstock, through the Sarnia and Chatham-Kent area, and down to the Windsor area and the southwestern tip of Ontario.<sup>6</sup> "Drawing upon **Region 1 data from 2022**, this region is characterized by the following key attributes:

- There were a total of 10,737,008 reported domestic visitors to Region 1, of which approximately 98.1% were from within Ontario and 1.9% were from other provinces.
  - These figures do not include international visitors, as region-specific data for international visitors is not available. US and international visits to Canada overall are down, however; recent national data from February 2025 shows a 5.3% decrease year-over-year of trips to Canada by US residents, and an even steeper 17.2% by other international visitors.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a visual map of "Region 1: Southwest Ontario", visit [www.ontario.ca/document/tourism-regions/region-1-southwest-ontario](http://www.ontario.ca/document/tourism-regions/region-1-southwest-ontario).

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. (2025). [Travel between Canada and other countries, February 2025](#). Released April 23, 2025.



- Of those domestic visitors, 72.3% were same-day visitors spending an average of \$96 per visit, while 27.7% were overnight visitors spending an average of \$274 per visit.
- Overnight visitors spent an average of 1.9 nights in Region 1.
- Total domestic visitor spending in Region 1 in 2022 was \$1,561,122,499, of which the highest three spending categories were Food & Beverage (29.4%), Transport (28.7%), and Accommodations (18.3%).
  - Cultural tourism spending in Region 1 came to a total of \$49,808,999, which is 3.2% of total domestic visitor spending.
- Visitor volume varied substantially by season. Visitor volumes to Region 1 were highest in the summer, with 34.9% of all person-visits occurring in the third quarter (July to September). This was followed by 27.1% in the fourth quarter (October to December), 21.8% in the second quarter (April to June), and 16.2% in the first quarter (January to March). These figures highlight a strong seasonal skew toward summer travel in the region.

## Key Takeaways

The trends emerging from this community profile point to the importance of planning for an aging population while also responding to recent in-migration of working-age adults and a youth population that is currently higher than the Ontario average. The local economy remains rooted in manufacturing, with modest income levels and a small but diverse mix of Indigenous and racialized residents. Ingersoll also sits within a high-volume domestic tourism region – highlighting opportunities to expand cultural programming that engages both residents and seasonal visitors.

Key takeaways that characterize Ingersoll's demographic and economic conditions include:

- **Growing, aging population:** Ingersoll's 2024 population is estimated at 15,029, with growth projected to reach 16,292 by 2029 (8.4% growth). The town's age structure is also shifting: over the next 5–10 years, the proportion of seniors is rising while the proportion of working-age and child populations are declining. However, the overall population growth means that all age ranges are projected to grow in number over that time period, highlighting opportunities for programming and exhibition design that appeals to all ages. Intergenerational and participatory exhibits (e.g., oral histories) can also help to capture stories from older residents and newcomers, helping to build community buy-in and pride and ensure that all residents are reflected in the Museum's story over time.
  - **More children than average:** Ingersoll currently has a higher proportion of children than the Ontario average. The Museum could consider using youth engagement as an entry point to cultivate relationships with parents, grandparents, and caregivers, building connections across generations. Furthermore, as these children grow up the Museum should consider programming designed to keep them engaged as lifelong patrons and future volunteers.
  - **Limited immigration, strong in-migration:** Ingersoll has seen higher-than-expected domestic in-migration, particularly among residents aged 25–44, while international immigration remains limited: Only 1.1% of residents were recent immigrants as of 2021, compared to 4.2% provincially. This



pattern reinforces the importance of engaging both long-time residents and newer arrivals through inclusive programming that supports community connection and reflects a shared and evolving sense of place.

- **Household incomes:** Ingersoll's 2020 median after-tax household income was \$77,000, slightly below the provincial median and neighbouring municipalities, with approximately 8.0% of residents living in low-income households. While this low-income measure is lower in Ingersoll than the national average, the overall household income environment reinforces the importance of maintaining free, pay-what-you-can, and/or subsidized models to ensure the Museum remains accessible to all residents.
- **Manufacturing-led employment base:** Manufacturing is the town's dominant employment sector, accounting for nearly 15% of all jobs as of March 2025. These jobs are particularly liable to disruption due to changing economic conditions in the region. This context highlights the importance of telling Ingersoll's industrial story – not only as a historical foundation, but as an ongoing thread that continues to shape the community's economic and cultural identity.
- **Cultural and language background:** Ingersoll's population is predominantly white and English-speaking, with 6.1% identifying as racialized and 2.8% identifying as Indigenous. A small minority speak French (0.9%) and other non-official languages (6.7%). The Museum should ensure that Indigenous peoples and the community's cultural diversity are meaningfully reflected in the stories it tells by working with the right partners to develop programming that is culturally appropriate, relevant, and accurate.
- **Mixed educational attainment:** 47.1% of Ingersoll residents have completed postsecondary education, while 35.2% have a high school diploma as their highest credential, and 17.8% have no formal certificate, diploma, or degree. This mix points to the importance of interpretive planning that presents information in different ways to ensure accessibility for all learning levels, thereby reinforcing the Museum as a welcoming, community-oriented space and not an overly formal institution.
- **Tourism highlights:** Region 1: Southwest Ontario, which contains Ingersoll, received over 10.7 million domestic visitors in 2022, with 72.3% visiting for the day and 27.7% staying overnight (averaging 1.9 nights). Visitor spending totaled \$1.56 billion, of which cultural tourism accounted for 3.2%. Visitation is highest in summer and lowest in the winter. These tourism patterns highlight opportunities related to the Museum's role as Ingersoll's primary tourism stop, especially in the absence of a formal tourism office. The Museum should continue to grow partnerships with Tourism Oxford and other regional operators to leverage visitor traffic, particularly among overnight guests. There may also be opportunities to increase promotion of camping as an overnight option in the region.



## 6.3. Digital Maturity Assessment

### Introduction

In order to gain a snapshot of the Museum's digital maturity level during the research phase of this project, Nordicity administered its proprietary digital maturity assessment tool, Digital Portrait. Based on a simple form questionnaire, the tool assesses the organization's digital maturity across six areas:

1. **Planning** – strategy and leadership in terms of digital maturity
2. **Vision** – vision for digital use within the organization
3. **Audiences** – use of digital in connecting with and engaging audiences
4. **Discoverability** – use of digital in promoting discoverability of the organization online
5. **Processes** – use of digital tools in internal operations
6. **Infrastructure** – current digital infrastructure, such as digital records and asset management

Based on the responses provided, the Museum is assigned one of four maturity levels (**Preliminary, Functional, Integrated, Innovative**) in each category as well as for the organization overall.

The following sections summarize the results of the Museum's completed assessment, what these responses reveal about the Museum's digital maturity, and what needs and opportunities the responses might reveal. The findings represented in this section have helped inform the recommendations presented in Section 4.3.

### Overview of Results

Overall, the digital assessment results indicate that the Museum “**digitally functional**.” To be “functional” means that digital is used effectively for efficiencies in daily tasks/functioning of the organization and is only just beginning to be considered for more strategic use.

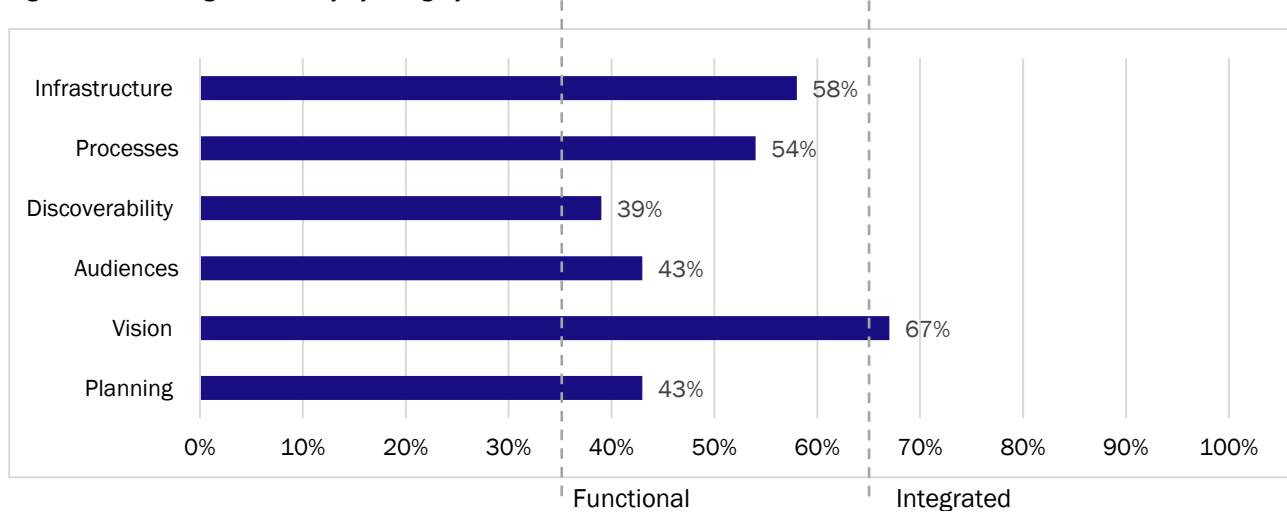
- The Museum is furthest ahead in terms of **vision** (rated as integrated), indicating that there is a clear, strong desire to pursue digital. Digital tools and approaches could be better leveraged in areas such as planning, audiences, discoverability, processes, and infrastructure.
- **Processes and Infrastructure** are showing strength, in the higher range of functional.
- **Planning, Audiences and Discoverability** have the most potential for greater digital integration, showing in the lower range of **functional**.

The chart below summarizes the level of digital maturity in each of the six categories.





Figure 6 Level of digital maturity by category



Source: Nordicity Digital Portrait™ for Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum

## Planning

### Digital Maturity Level: Functional

*Digital is beginning to help execute strategy in a functional way but remains a by-product of other activities in some areas.*

The Museum is thinking about how to use digital tools and approaches in some areas (e.g., exhibitions, social media, audience feedback). However, there is opportunity to expand digital thinking into the overall organizational strategy and planning, particularly when it comes to integrating digital into the organization's success metrics.

There is also an opportunity for increased thinking around *how digital technologies might help drive revenue*.

Staff are well-prepared to thrive in a digital future, but leadership and broader municipal policies/processes are only somewhat driving digital initiatives forward.

## Vision

### Digital Maturity Level: Integrated

*Digital is envisioned as an integral and necessary part of the organization's future but remains seen as a functional tool in many areas.*



There is an opportunity to further integrate digital thinking into how the Museum fulfils its mandate.

While there is a strong desire to engage with audiences across many touchpoints (e.g., from registrations, to in-gallery, to post-visit), there is less interest in gearing efforts towards proactive audience engagement (i.e., reaching audiences where they are).

The Museum also recognizes the power of content – there is strong desire to use digital content (e.g., digitized collections, videos, e-learning materials) to reach/engage with audiences.

## Audiences

### Digital Maturity Level: Functional

*Digital is used to connect and interact with audiences in an as-needed way (e.g., registration, marketing), and understanding is a by-product of that (e.g., see what works/work does not).*

Digital is understood as an important aspect of audience engagement in principle, but there are opportunities to enhance this engagement in a more pro-active way, whether through engagement at different points in the customer journey (e.g., pre-visit, during visit, and post-visit), or by using content more strategically.

There is opportunity to better use digital tools to understand the behaviours and preferences of existing and potential audiences. Doing so would enable the Museum to build audience engagement more strategically and better track what is working (and what is not), ensuring efforts are more targeted and efficient.

## Discoverability

### Digital Maturity Level: Functional

*Digital platforms are used to support the discoverability of the organization in a useful, but not strategic way.*

While the Museum has digital platforms (e.g., website, social media), they are primarily discoverable by those actively seeking them out, rather than being strategically optimized to reach new or broader audiences.

There is an opportunity to enhance online discoverability through strengthened SEO and strategic use of content (e.g., videos, digitized assets, online educational resources) to reach new audiences – including those who are not actively searching for the Museum.



## Processes

### Digital Maturity Level: Functional

*Digital is used to facilitate workflows and operational tasks.*

The Museum currently uses digital in so far as it needs to. However, there are opportunities to increase the use of digital tools to manage corporate activities (e.g., communications, audience development, corporate memory) and to allow staff to be more efficient and effective in managing the organization's activities.

There is an opportunity to establish a process, aided by digital tools, to improve data and feedback collection for audiences and other interest-holders.

## Infrastructure

### Digital Maturity Level: Functional

*Basic digital infrastructure exists to support the general functioning of the organization.*

Most of the Museum's assets are digitized (e.g., collections, archives, exhibition records), although a backlog remains. While these assets have been digitized at a quality suitable for internal collections management and identification (though some records lack sufficient detail to locate or identify the corresponding object), many are not at a resolution or standard appropriate for public-facing uses. Additionally, while records for the education collection exist in the system, none have accompanying photos. As a result, some assets may require re-digitization and/or improved documentation to support audience engagement, brand building, and storytelling.

While some external facing interactions such as event registration and campsite bookings are managed through digital systems, digital systems are not currently being used for customer/donor data management or for customer/donor communications and marketing.

Digital fundraising is not currently used. There is an opportunity to explore digital fundraising to encourage spontaneous donation and support an individual giving strategy.

The table below summarizes the platforms currently in use.



Table 5 Digital platforms currently used by Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum

Function	Platform(s) in use
Creation	Photoshop, Canva
Collaboration	Google Workspace, Office 365
Social Media	Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest (for ideas)
Content Sharing	YouTube
Digital Asset Management	PastPerfect (for museum collections), CityWide (for town assets)
Event Registration	Eventbrite
Ticketing and Sales	CampSpot (for campsite booking, advertising, and sales, as well as giftshop POS)
Collection Management System	PastPerfect
Customer Relationship Management	N/A
Email Marketing	N/A, currently using Gmail
Donations	N/A, currently using Cash/Debit
AI Tools	ChatGPT

## Key Takeaways

### Strengths

- The Museum's digital maturity is at functional level. The Museum has the vision, and baseline planning and infrastructure, to advance in its digital transformation. There is an opportunity to capitalize on this foundation to increase audience engagement and discoverability through more formalized processes.
- The Museum has passionate staff, dedicated to the mission of the organization and eager to drive digital transformation.



## Challenges and Gaps

- Digital thinking is not yet fully embedded in the organization's strategic planning, doing so could allow for digital tools to become more integral to achieving organizational goals.
- While digital is recognized as important for audience engagement, it is not yet leveraged proactively. There are missed opportunities to use content more strategically to engage audiences where they are.
- While digital platforms exist for audiences to engage with the Museum (e.g., social media, website), the type of engagement and its purpose have not been fully defined or optimized, limiting their effectiveness.
- Audience analytics is also not used to its full potential to support understanding of audiences' preferences and needs.

## Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to increase the Museum's discoverability through enhanced SEO, strategic use of content, and partnerships and collaborations (e.g., promoting the Museum's activities on partner's website/social media).
- There is an opportunity to assess the need for an integrated donor/customer management system to improve data collection processes and enhance donor/customer communications and marketing efforts.
- Similarly, there is also an opportunity to establish consistent data collection practices across the organization to better understand audiences, identify what is working (and what is not), and refine strategies based on insights.
- There is an opportunity to deepen audience engagement throughout the entire customer journey (e.g., pre-visit, during visit, and post-visit) by leveraging digital tools and using content more strategically.
- There is an opportunity to leverage digital tools to drive revenue. For example, exploring digital fundraising to encourage spontaneous donation.
- There is also an opportunity to build internal capacity through targeted training and education, helping staff feel more confident and equipped to integrate digital tools into their work.



## 6.4. Town-Administered Public Survey

**The findings presented in this section are provided by the Town of Ingersoll.**

This survey was administered directly by the Town of Ingersoll to complement the broader community and interest-holder engagement activities led by Nordicity as part of the Museum Master Plan process. It was open for just over two weeks and received a total of 37 responses. The survey was promoted through the Town's digital channels and in person at pop-up events and input stations.

The Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum conducted a survey to gather insights from visitors and community members regarding their experiences, preferences, and suggestions for improvement. This report summarizes the key findings and provides recommendations for future museum enhancements.

### General Perceptions

Survey participants frequently described the museum using words such as "history," "cheese," "community," "educational," and "engaging." Many respondents highlighted the museum's strong connection to local history and its unique cultural significance.

### Visitor Frequency & Reasons for Visiting

- The majority of respondents had visited within the past year, with many attending exhibits, events, and programs, as well as engaging in research/genealogy.
- Events were a primary draw, particularly themed events like the poetry night, barn dance, and Santa's Village.

### Appreciation for the Museum

- Visitors praised the friendly, knowledgeable, and welcoming staff.
- The museum's commitment to preserving and showcasing local history was widely recognized and appreciated.
- Many visitors valued the museum's events.



## Barriers to Visiting More Frequently

- A significant number of respondents stated there were no barriers preventing them from visiting.
- Some respondents cited limited awareness of events, inconvenient location, and restricted hours as obstacles.

## Desired Exhibits and Programs

Visitors expressed strong interest in:

- Interactive displays
- Special events and themed festivals
- Educational programs and historical exhibits
- Hands-on workshops

## Suggestions for New Exhibits and Features

Key recommendations included:

- Expanded space for historical talks and presentations
- More interactive experiences, including living history exhibits
- Enhanced outdoor spaces and activities
- Increased focus on local historical stories and artifacts
- A dedicated space for cheese tasting and food-related events

## Enhancing the Museum's Appeal

To make the museum a must-visit destination, respondents suggested:

- More modernized and updated displays
- Additional interactive history experiences
- Greater promotion of events through social media, community bulletin boards, and word of mouth
- Stronger integration with tourism initiatives



## Information Sources

- The majority of visitors learn about museum events through social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), word of mouth, and local newspapers/magazines.
- Some respondents suggested better event marketing within the community.

## Likelihood of Recommending the Museum

The majority of respondents were "very likely" to recommend the museum to friends or visitors, demonstrating strong community support.

## Additional Comments

- Many respondents acknowledged recent improvements in museum programming and community engagement.
- Suggestions included expanding community outreach, offering more hands-on activities, and enhancing promotional efforts.

## Conclusion

Based on survey responses, the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum is well-regarded for its historical significance, welcoming staff, and engaging events. However, opportunities exist to further enhance visitor experiences through expanded programming, improved marketing, and interactive exhibits. Implementing these changes could strengthen the museum's role as a cultural and educational hub for Ingersoll and beyond.



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