



Trent Radio

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Approved November 18, 2022 by the Board of Directors

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Message from the Board

From our beginnings as a Trent University student club in 1968, Trent Radio has been a fixture of the Trent University and Nogojiwanong/Peterborough community. Trent Radio operates a producer-oriented broadcast facility with a focus on building community, offering skills development, and amplifying diverse voices for students and non-student members of the community. It was incorporated as a registered charity in 1978, and was granted a Campus/Community Broadcast license in 1984. Throughout its history, Trent Radio has been sponsored and designed by students from Trent University, and is a resource that is shared with the whole Nogojiwanong/Peterborough communities.

This will be the first official strategic plan for Trent Radio. It comes at a time when our organization has achieved some stability after a period of significant and rapid change. In many ways, change is in our nature. We have always navigated the fluctuating demands and transiency inherent in university life as we work hard to empower students to make the most of Trent Radio. We move along with the ebbs and flows of this shifting tide, welcoming and orienting new producers and volunteers, reaching out to new or new-to-us potential producers, and making room in our schedule for the next great ideas to come forward.

That said, our recent changes have been starker. The loss of John K. Muir, one of Trent Radio's founders and our long-time general manager, in June 2019 is something we still grapple with today. A strong leader and passionate radio maker, John inspired, mentored, innovated, and educated so many, and in his own way, built community in and around Trent Radio.

As we came to terms with that profound loss, Trent Radio quickly faced dire financial consequences from the 'Student Choice Initiative' of the Ontario government in the fall of 2019 that allowed the opting-out of levy fees collected by Trent University for student groups and clubs. Thankfully the initiative was struck down in the courts in December 2019 and has not been in effect since then. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived to sweep us out of Trent Radio house and solidly into the remote broadcasting world.

This strategic planning process has helped us reflect on what we do and how we do it. We know we want to keep strengthening our financial position while making thoughtful investments to further our purpose. While Trent Radio has made great strides forward in recent years, staffing sustainability and the well-being of the staff team are top-of-mind as we continue to rely heavily on two core staff members with significant experience and knowledge. And although Trent Radio has existed for many years and has a strong reputation among those attracted to us, it will take work to deepen our connections and strengthen our relationships with diverse communities, particularly Indigenous peoples.

We are grateful for the time and energy of everyone who helped us put this plan together, including current and former staff, producers, and operators, as well as our community partners and supporters. I am also thankful for the Board members who helped to shape and frame this plan. I'm hopeful that they will see their input reflected in this new plan and that they'll help us bring it to life.

Over the next three years, Trent Radio will focus its efforts on three strategic priorities. Working on our **organizational vitality, accessible and supportive opportunities, and deepened connections** will enable us to keep building community through radio. We are excited to be opening this next chapter in Trent Radio's important history.

Sincerely,

Bill Templeman
Vice-Chair, on behalf the Trent Radio Board of Directors

The Purpose of Trent Radio

Although our work is guided by the aims and objects associated with our application to the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission for a broadcast license, this strategic planning process helped us to define our purpose more concisely. Our purpose, which is our core work and what we are trying to achieve, is:

To build community and empower a diverse collection of people to amplify their voices through radio by providing access to broadcasting facilities as well as training and mentorship opportunities.

Our Strategic Priorities

Through our strategic planning process, we have identified three strategic priorities that will guide our work over the next three years. Each priority includes a set of objectives, which outlines the work that we hope to do to achieve that priority.

Our priorities and objectives are intentionally broad to maximize flexibility in how they are implemented. They will guide the creation of annual operational plans that more closely define specific tactics, timelines, and measurements.

Together, the priorities and objectives will help focus our work, direct our resources, and guide our decision-making.

Strategic Priority 1: Organizational Vitality

Trent Radio is a small organization that exists in a world of constant change, with more recent upheavals offering an opportunity to revisit how we operate. We need to carve out time to strengthen our foundation so we can continue to serve our purpose. This includes being an employer that prioritizes the short and long-term well-being of our staff, being thoughtful about how we invest in our facilities and equipment while creating a reasonable cushion of savings, strengthening our Board, rethinking how members and volunteers engage in our work, and sharing our values.

Our goal is to be a sustainable organization that is a desirable place to work, that balances revenues and expenses, and that has a strong Board of Directors.

Objectives:

1. Enable an **immediate shift to a 3-staff model and continue to expand staff benefits** (e.g., professional development, retirement contributions).
2. **Create a financial plan** to move to a 4-staff model by 2027, invest in our equipment and facility, and create an operating reserve.
3. Continue to **develop our Board** and make the most of student leadership.
4. Explore a **formal fundraising model**.
5. **Engage members and volunteers** to reinvent their roles and provide meaningful connection.
6. Consider ways to **articulate, demonstrate, and communicate our values**.
7. Promote the development of Trent Radio as a **highly desirable employer** among Trent University students and in the broader Nogojiwanong/Peterborough community.

Strategic Priority 2: Accessible and Supportive Opportunities

Trent Radio is at its best when people with diverse opinions and backgrounds, as well as a breadth of interests and passions can participate in the joy that is community radio. We want to ensure that the opportunities we offer are accessible to as many people as possible while also providing the supports for volunteers to develop new skills, learn from each other, and feel included and empowered.

This means we need to work towards minimizing barriers to involvement, bolstering our training options, and fostering connection and mutual support among volunteers so they can create dynamic community radio at diverse programming locations. We also need to keep the physical space and materials of Trent Radio in good working order, while staying up-to-date with the latest changes and trends in the media landscape.

Our goal is to be a welcoming environment that allows our community to amplify their voices, interests, and skills.

Objectives:

1. Continue to examine how to **minimize physical and other barriers to participation**.
2. **Expand training and educational opportunities** for programmers and operators, including methods to connect with listeners if desired.
3. **Foster mutual learning, feedback, and mentorship** among volunteers.
4. Continue to **support in-studio programming, while enabling more remote broadcasting** by training volunteers.
5. **Invest in renewal** of Trent Radio house, its studios, and equipment.
6. Explore current and new **digital opportunities and digitization** to augment our analogue radio operation.

Strategic Priority 3: Deepened Connections

While Trent Radio has always made strong efforts to reach out to our diverse communities, including those who attend Trent University and the broader Nogojiwanong/Peterborough region, we recognize that we need to recommit ourselves to this work. We want to strengthen and deepen the connections we have with those who are interested in Trent Radio, by focusing our outreach practices on relationships of importance, by reaching out to Trent University students, and by cultivating pathways for listeners to connect with us.

Our goal is to be thoughtful and deliberate about our outreach to diverse communities, particularly those who are under-represented in radio, to encourage participation and ownership.

Objectives:

1. Continue and, where possible, **strengthen existing outreach practices**.
2. Continue to **focus on relationship-building** with Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, international students, and the arts community.
3. Continue to explore innovative ways and partnerships to **engage students**
4. **Develop an engagement strategy** to encourage listeners to deepen their involvement as members, volunteers (including Board members), and donors.
5. **Develop an integrated, multi-media approach** to building and enriching Trent Radio's connection and outreach to the Nogojiwanong/Peterborough community and our global digital communities.

Appendix: Overview of the Planning Process

Setting out with the goal of creating a meaningful first strategic plan, Trent Radio made engagement with the Board of Directors and key stakeholders an important part of the process.

Engagement Overview

Between September 5 and 16, 2022, a total of 32 individuals participated in focus groups and interviews, and 20 responses were received to an online survey. Some survey respondents may have also joined a focus group or participated in an interview.



Three virtual focus group sessions were held with a mix of different Trent Radio stakeholders. Many participants identified as members of multiple stakeholder groups, with 23 people identifying themselves as programmers, eight (8) as operators, five (5) as former staff members, four (4) as past Board members, three (3) as community partner representatives, three (3) as current Board members, and one (1) as a donor.

Three key informant interviews were held with individuals with strong knowledge of Trent Radio. Stephen Stohn (Chancellor of Trent University), Sean Conway, and Barb Woolner were interviewed, with Paul Cleveland joining Barb on the phone during the interview.

Twenty respondents answered the questions in an online survey, hosted on Survey Monkey. The survey was open during the full engagement period. It was promoted by Trent Radio via email and social media, and was shared with participants from the focus group and interviews, in case they had additional comments to share.

Plan Development

To craft this plan, **four strategic reflection and retreat sessions** were held with Board members and the two core staff members of Trent Radio. Participants were engaged in facilitated discussions to articulate Trent Radio's purpose, develop priorities, and identify goals and objectives.