

★ SPARQ! Lighting the Way to Better Care for Mental Illness and Addiction

The Royal's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgement	3
Message from our CEO	4
Message from the Chair of the Board of Trustees	5
An Inclusive Process	6
Vision, Mission, Values	7
By the Numbers	8
Overview of the Strategic Plan	9
Goal: Sustainability	10
Goal: People	12
Goal: Access	14
Goal: Research	16
Goal: Quality	18
The Road Ahead	21

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We acknowledge with gratitude that The Royal's Ottawa campus is located on the traditional, unceded and unsundered lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabe People. Traditionally known as "Anishinaabe," the Algonquin are the original inhabitants of a wide swath of territory along the Ottawa River. Since time immemorial, Algonquin Anishinaabe peoples have called this place home, establishing political, social and economic relationships with one another and with neighbouring Indigenous nations, long before European contact.

We also recognize that The Royal's Brockville campus is located on the traditional unceded, unsundered territory of the Wendat, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee Nation. We honour their longstanding relationships with these lands and waters.

As a mental health care provider whose services extend beyond these locations, we acknowledge the many First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities we serve. We recognize the ongoing and intergenerational impacts of colonization, including its effects on mental health and well-being.

At The Royal, we are committed to listening, learning and working in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Through humility, respect and accountability, we aim to contribute to a future that is more equitable, inclusive and healthy for all.

Thank you for your time and reflection.



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

At The Royal, we are united by a shared vision: to help people reclaim their lives from mental illness and addiction through compassionate care, research and education. Over the past year, I've had the privilege of listening and learning from many of you — patients, families, staff, partners and community members. These conversations have made it clear: the need for accessible, high-quality mental illness and addiction care is growing, and The Royal must be ready to meet it.

We've faced real challenges — system-wide pressures, growing demand and the complex needs of the people we serve. But we've also seen resilience, innovation and an unwavering commitment to care. The Royal is an organization full of talent, compassion and untapped potential. Despite these challenges, I see a renewed sense of possibility. Our new strategic plan, **SPARQ**, guides us in moving forward deliberately, with clarity and purpose.

SPARQ stands for **Sustainability, People, Access, Research and Quality**. These five areas reflect what matters most as we set our sights on the future. SPARQ guides how we'll strengthen our organization, support our teams, expand access to care, advance life-changing research and ensure excellence in everything we do.

This plan is not a quick fix. It's a roadmap to transformation — a commitment to doing better for our patients, our communities and each other. It was built with input from our community of stakeholders — our staff, physicians, researchers, patients, families and community partners — and it reflects both the realities we face and the opportunities ahead.

To our staff and physicians: thank you for your courage, compassion and commitment. To our patients and their families, partners and community members: thank you for standing with us. Together, we will create a future where everyone has the support they need to thrive.

Cara Vaccarino MSW, RSW, MHA (she/her)
President and CEO



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are proud to endorse SPARQ, The Royal's 2025–2028 strategic plan.

We were actively engaged in the development of the strategic plan and champion the clear path forward to advance quality health care, innovation and collaboration. It reflects our unwavering dedication to those we serve.

Thank you to our patient and family partners, Team Royal, volunteers, researchers and community stakeholders for your commitment to building a brighter future for mental illness and addiction care.

The way ahead will require resilience, trust and a shared commitment to creating meaningful change. The Board of Trustees believes in the strength of The Royal's people and the power of this plan to make a difference on the ground. We're proud to stand alongside you as this vision becomes reality, and we look forward to supporting your progress every step of the way.

Sharon Squire (she/her)
Chair, Board of Trustees

AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

This strategic plan is the result of reflection, collaboration and consultation. From the beginning, our goal was to build a plan that reflects the voices of the people we serve, and those who make our work possible.

The planning process began in 2024 along with a broader conversation about The Royal's identity and purpose. We engaged with patients, families, staff, physicians, partners and community leaders to shape a bold but practical vision for the next three years. A key input to this process was a Medical Leadership Model Review, led by Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull, which informed important structural considerations for the future.

We listened to hundreds of people across the region:

- Patients, clients and family advisory groups
- Staff and physicians at all levels
- Board members
- Volunteers
- Leaders of community mental health organizations
- Regional health system partners
- Research and academic collaborators

What we heard was clear: There is pride in the work being done at The Royal, but also a desire for change, growth and improvement.

The result is a strategic roadmap that aligns long-term goals with priorities, supported by clear strategies and measurable objectives. It will guide how we allocate resources, support our people and improve access to more effective care.

While we've made every effort to reflect a broad range of voices, we acknowledge that this plan may not capture every perspective. That's why we're committed to treating this strategy as a living process, continuously evolving based on feedback, learning and the realities of our environment.

Thank you to the many individuals and groups who generously shared their time, experience and ideas. The SPARQ strategic plan is stronger because of you — and it belongs to all of us.



VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

Lives reclaimed from mental illness and addiction.

OUR MISSION

We advance specialized care and strengthen our region's capacity to help people with mental illness and addiction through treatment, research, education and partnership.

OUR VALUES

The Royal lives by its values – “iCARE”

1. Innovation
2. Collaboration
3. Accountability
4. Respect
5. Excellence

The iCARE values guide how we treat one another, care for our patients and serve our community. At The Royal, living these values is part of our everyday commitment in how we work, how we lead and how we support each other. Together, we bring them to life through our actions, big and small.

BY THE NUMBERS

The province of Ontario funds The Royal to provide approximately **19,280** ambulatory care visits (outpatient) and **91,240** patient days (inpatient).

The Royal has two campuses located in Eastern Ontario:

OTTAWA



A 210-bed state-of-the-art mental health facility and a 96-bed facility (32 recovery beds and 64 long-term care beds).

BROCKVILLE



A specialized mental health facility with 163 inpatient beds, including 63 in the Forensic Treatment Unit and 100 in the Secure Treatment Unit.

The Royal has other facilities located across the region, including:

- The Community Mental Health Program, located in Carlingwood Shopping Centre, with additional community clinics around the region, including Brockville and Ottawa.
- Two Operational Stress Injury Clinics in Arnprior and Kingston. These programs provide care for clients of Veterans Affairs Canada, members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP and their families.



The heart of The Royal is our people:

- 88 full and part-time medical professional staff (most are psychiatrists).
- 1,725 nursing and health professionals, researchers, administrative professionals and leaders.
- 50 psychiatry residents, 300 nursing students, 80 health professionals and up to 200 medical residents further their education with us every year.
- 300 volunteers who contribute over 18,000 hours of volunteer time each year.



OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the next three years, The Royal will focus on five key goals:

Sustainability: Build our successful future on a solid foundation.

People: Cultivate a positive work environment through transparency, collaboration and engagement.

Access: Break down the barriers to mental illness and addiction care and provide the highest quality and timely treatment for more patients.

Research: Integrate data-driven learning into care and accelerate the translation of discoveries into practice.

Quality: Integrate evidence-based care and innovation to promote and enhance client and patient experience and outcomes at both the individual and system levels.

These priorities reflect what we've heard from our people and partners: the need to support those who care for others, the urgency of getting help to people sooner and the desire to grow our impact regionally and beyond.

The strategic plan will guide how we set priorities, measure progress and make decisions. It is ambitious, but achievable with shared leadership, clear focus and a deep commitment to helping more people access better mental illness and addiction care.



GOAL: SUSTAINABILITY

Building our future on a
solid foundation

It is no secret that our health care system is facing significant financial pressures. Costs have risen while funding has not kept pace with the growing demand for care. In mental illness and addiction services, the need for expanded access and resources is urgent.

These complex realities highlight the need for The Royal to focus on strong financial and operational performance to ensure long-term stability, resilience and the ability to continue to meet the growing needs of our community.

The SPARQ strategic plan focuses on practical, incremental changes that strengthen corporate, financial and environmental sustainability over time.



Maximize revenue and funding

The Royal will advocate for increased government funding, while also strengthening fundraising initiatives and diversifying sources of support.

Be a responsible steward of limited resources

The Royal is committed to strong financial accountability, effective cost management and optimizing resource use to ensure that every dollar advances our mission and serves our community.

Improve our approach to risk management and governance

The Royal will enhance its approach to risk management by strengthening accountability and oversight and ensuring that governance practices align with the standards set by the Ontario Hospital Association.

Reduce our impact on the environment

The Royal will identify and implement ways to reduce waste, protect the environment and contribute to the fight against climate change. Through sustainable practices, we will support the health and well-being of both our community and the planet.

Use technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness

The Royal will develop a digital strategy that guides investments in modern tools such as the Regional Epic medical records system and Microsoft 365. Together with our staff and partners, we'll create a framework for introducing artificial intelligence with the goal of improving productivity and easing administrative burdens.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We'll know that we are reaching our goals related to sustainability based on these results:

- Balanced budget, subject to funding
- Successful introduction and adoption of Epic, Microsoft 365 and a new intranet
- Stronger corporate performance and accountability
- Improved climate and environmental protection measures

Sustainability is strong financial and operational performance because we manage resources efficiently and have invested in the right technology.



GOAL: PEOPLE

Cultivate a positive work environment through transparency, collaboration and engagement

People are the heart and soul of The Royal. Supporting their well-being and fostering a positive work environment through transparency, collaboration and engagement is essential to our success and a measure of our commitment to one another.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed the healthcare sector and exacerbated the mental illness and addiction crisis, the psychological and physical stress of our work was taking a toll on our people.

Workforce shortages in healthcare have made finding and keeping great people a challenge. And when we struggle to find enough qualified staff, it leads to increased workloads and burnout. It can be a vicious cycle.

To overcome these challenges, the SPARQ strategic plan will strengthen our commitment to being a great place to work, creating a culture guided by our values and focused on our purpose.

SPARQ builds on the work started by the Culture Club and our commitment to a whole-of-organization approach to improving employee well-being.

The Royal's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan



Strengthen engagement by building a culture of respect, trust and open communication that provides safety and wellness

At The Royal, we are committed to creating a workplace where every voice is valued and matters. We will develop an internal communications strategy and introduce modern channels, including a new intranet. We will continue to enhance our wellness and safety initiatives, employing a whole-of-organization approach that empowers employees, prioritizes engagement, fosters open communication and focuses on practical solutions. We'll also amplify recognition programs and promote a values-driven culture that celebrates and supports everyone.

Foster a culture of accountability

Accountability means showing up for each other, keeping our word and standing behind our commitments. It starts with our leaders and extends to every member of our team. It also means supporting our people by providing the tools, skills and training they need to deliver exceptional patient care.

Expand opportunities for learning and growth

At The Royal, we know that our employees want and need the opportunity for learning and growth. The SPARQ strategic plan includes activities to enhance learning, training and professional development at all levels, such as expanding leadership competencies.

Modernize people programs and systems

The programs and systems in place for our people will be renewed, refreshed and reimaged as part of the strategic plan. This includes many aspects of the employee experience, from optimizing our approach to scheduling and implementing new HR systems to reviewing benefits and wellness offerings.

Strengthen belonging, diversity and EDIIA initiatives

The SPARQ strategic plan prioritizes action, including training and investment in the Equity, Diversity, Indigeneity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIIA) committees. Establish an Indigenous, First Nations and Inuit advisory circle to develop an action plan in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We'll know that we are reaching our goals related to people based on these results:

- Recognized as a workplace of choice by providing the best employee experience.
- Increased employee engagement and wellness
- Improved representation and engagement in EDIIA programs
- Increased participation in training and learning opportunities





GOAL: ACCESS

Break down barriers to mental illness and addiction care to provide high-quality and timely treatment for more people

Access to mental illness and addiction care has never been easy. For too long, stigma, lack of awareness and fear of disclosure have stood in the way of people seeking the help they need. While strides have been made to break down these barriers, significant challenges remain — and as awareness grows, so does the demand for care.

Today, people seeking support often face a fragmented, overburdened system and long waits that leave many turning to emergency departments across the region. These delays can lead to worsening conditions and increased complexity in the care required.

To truly improve access, the SPARQ strategic plan outlines how we will reimagine our role within the broader system, working more closely with primary care and community partners to create a more connected, responsive network of support.



Define our place in the system

The Royal will clarify care pathways. Working with our clinical leaders, we'll balance specialized care with broad access to mental illness and addiction services. Data will inform these decisions, enabling us to understand today's needs and anticipate future demand.

Implement patient-centred services

We will increase meaningful partnerships and programs within the community, including strengthening communication and coordination for inpatient, outpatient and transitioning patient care. This will include leveraging our size and scope to provide leadership and act as a catalyst for system development.

Increase community partnerships and programs

The Royal will strengthen communication and coordination across inpatient, outpatient and transitional care to better support patients at every stage of their journey. This includes being a strong presence at key planning tables, including those focused on housing, emergency services and mental illness and addiction services in community settings, to build on the strengths of each partner, foster collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts.

Focus on timely access and seamless flow

The Royal will use access indicators to become more responsive to patient needs. We will also leverage digital solutions, such as virtual care, to make it easier for people to connect with the support they need. In addition, we will streamline referral management processes to improve the flow of patients into the right services, reducing wait times and enhancing the overall patient experience. This includes introducing an on-site pharmacy to provide easier and faster access to medications and better coordination of care between pharmacists and other healthcare professionals.

Meet the needs of diverse and marginalized people

The Royal will use data to identify disparities in care and inform our resourcing decisions. Working collaboratively with community partners, we will co-design solutions that improve access and support for marginalized and underserved groups.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We'll know that we are reaching our goals related to access based on these results:

- Increased satisfaction across primary care providers and community partners
- Fewer visits for mental illness and addiction to acute care emergency departments
- Increased patient and family satisfaction



GOAL: RESEARCH

Integrate what we learn from data into care and accelerate the translation of discoveries into practice

In any given year, one in four Canadians will experience a mental illness or addiction. Yet current approaches to treatment don't always work. In fact, available treatments work about half of the time. This stark reality underscores the urgent need for comprehensive research and intervention.

Yet, mental illness and addiction research is chronically underfunded, especially when directly related to care. That's why hospital-based research and innovation, like the work we do, are vital to closing the critical gap between discovery and patient care.

Our research provides real opportunities for improvement by unlocking the mysteries of the brain. And together with artificial intelligence and other advances in technology, these discoveries can be translated into more personalized and targeted evidence-based treatments that help more people access care that works for them.

Research is care.

Focus on distinct research and specialty areas

The Royal will build strength in research areas like depression, anxiety, addiction and trauma. This means investing in recruiting and developing researchers with deep expertise to fuel innovation and improve patient outcomes.

Become a rapid learning health system

The Royal will build a learning culture where evidence drives improvements in care. Through training, career pathways, academic partnerships and learning events, we will create more opportunities for our research teams to learn, grow and apply new knowledge, ensuring that research and innovation translate quickly into better outcomes. We'll also combine data interoperability with artificial intelligence to accelerate clinical insights and decision-making.

Reduce the gap between discovery and impact

The Royal will strengthen research capacity and expand clinical trials while improving how we mobilize knowledge into practice. We will increase the involvement of patients, families and our community in the research process and build our ability to develop evidence-based policies that shape all aspects of mental health. These efforts will help ensure that what we learn translates into real-world improvements faster.

Become a globally renowned academic hospital for research

The Royal will strengthen its reputation as a leader in mental illness and addiction research by increasing awareness of our work and expanding research partnerships. We will become a first-line validation site and early adopter of new tools and methodologies for diagnosis and treatment, helping to shape the future of mental illness and addiction care, here and around the world.

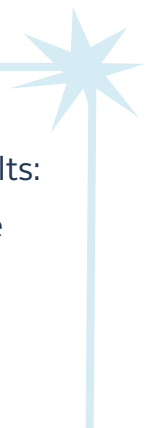
Redesign academic portfolio to strengthen internal oversight and external partnerships

The Royal will renew its focus on training and professional development by addressing gaps and ensuring that learning can be applied in practice. We will establish an internal academic committee to provide stronger oversight and coordination, while also deepening partnerships with academic institutions in postgraduate medical education, nursing and graduate studies. These efforts will support a more connected and supportive academic environment that fuels continuous learning and innovation.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We'll know that we are reaching our goals related to research based on these results:

- The Royal is advancing discovery and care in mental health and addiction at the regional, provincial, national and international levels
- The Royal attracts and retains talented researchers
- A new integrated platform helps researchers and care teams make better use of data
- The latest research and innovation are integrated into patient care





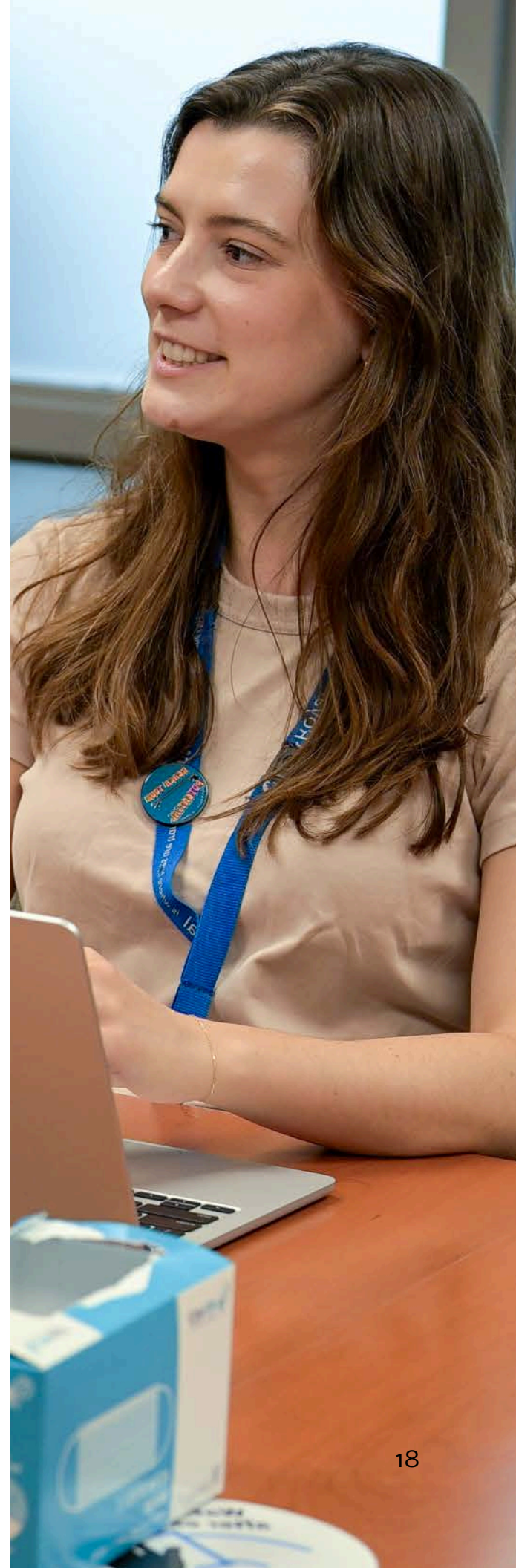
GOAL: QUALITY

Raising the standard of quality, together

The healthcare system is facing complex challenges, including workforce shortages, rising costs, health equity disparities, patient safety concerns and data security risks. At The Royal, we're not immune to these pressures. These issues directly affect patient safety, experience and outcomes, and they also deeply impact the well-being of our staff.

In response, we are committed to integrating evidence-based care and innovation to improve experiences and outcomes at both the individual and system levels. We will foster a culture where patients, families and staff feel safe, respected and valued. Equity and inclusion will guide our care models and practices, helping us better meet the unique needs of the people and communities we serve.

By embracing continuous improvement and using data to evaluate our work and inform decisions, we will create a more connected, compassionate and high-quality system of care.



Modernize our medical leadership model

The Royal will adopt the medical leadership model recommended by a 2025 review, which will include a Chief of Staff, a Senior Medical Officer, and additional senior medical leadership roles to support and strengthen this structure.

Foster a person, family and community-centred approach to care

The Royal is committed to improving how we listen, communicate and learn from those we serve. By strengthening communication at every stage of care, we aim to ensure patients and their families feel heard, respected and included in decisions that affect them. These patient-centred best practices will be standardized across The Royal to ensure a consistent, high-quality experience for everyone.

We will also support staff in deepening their understanding of the patient experience and why it matters — strengthening our culture of empathy, partnership and respect. This approach will be grounded in the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigeneity and Accessibility — not as add-ons, but as essential elements in creating a care experience where everyone feels safe, seen and supported.

Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration

Mental illness and addiction outcomes improve when we work together. The Royal will strengthen collaboration across roles and teams at every stage of the patient journey — from clinical staff and front-line managers to inpatient and community care providers. By breaking down silos and building stronger connections, we can deliver more coordinated, compassionate care that truly supports the whole person.

Implement a comprehensive framework for patient safety and person-centred care

The Royal will draw on key frameworks to strengthen patient safety and person-centred care, and also adopt relevant national and provincial standards. These frameworks will inspire our practices, helping us create safer, more responsive and more compassionate care environments for everyone we serve.

Measure outcomes and improve evaluation

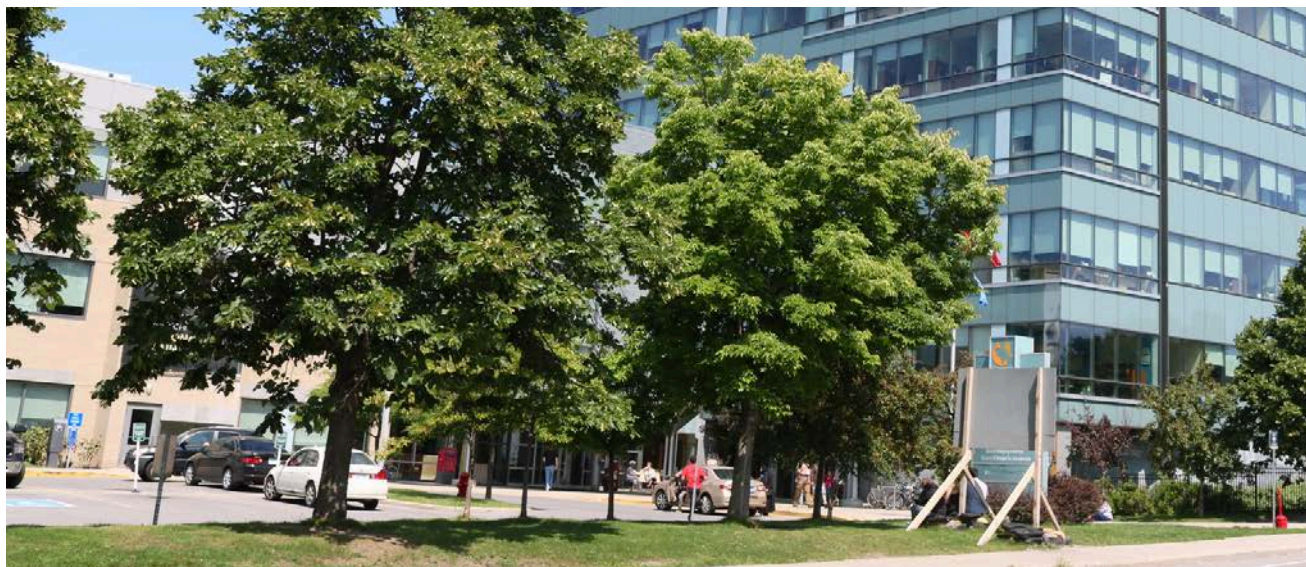
The Royal will develop reports and dashboards to track progress toward our goals, from hospital operations and patient outcomes to the employee experience. By measuring what matters, we can make informed decisions, identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability as we work toward lasting, meaningful change.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We'll know that we are reaching our goals related to quality based on these results:

- Increase in patient and family satisfaction scores
- Improved health outcomes
- A committed and strong culture of reporting, responding and learning from safety events that improve patient outcomes
- Care that is responsive to the voices of patients and families





THE ROAD AHEAD

The SPARQ strategic plan is ambitious. It requires commitment, collaboration and a new way of working together. We are ready for the challenge. The issues we face are too urgent, and the need to improve care and outcomes is too important.

As we work together to implement plans, activities and initiatives in SPARQ, we are committed to open and honest communication with our patients, families, staff, physicians and community partners who depend on us. Together, these voices will guide us as we learn, adapt and grow.

This is a shared journey. Every idea, every action and every conversation brings us closer to the future we envision: more lives reclaimed from mental illness and addiction. Together, we will bring SPARQ to life and shape a stronger, more compassionate healthcare system for all.

Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre

1145 Carling Ave.,
Ottawa ON K1Z 7K4
+1 613-722-6521

Brockville Mental Health Centre

1804 Highway 2 E, P.O. Box 1050,
Brockville ON K6V 5W7
+1 613-345-1461

