



THE ROYAL
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2025-26 Annual Report

Our SPARQ Strategic Plan Ignited



Our Road Ahead

Our SPARQ Strategic Plan is bold in both vision and scope. Delivering on it will take deep commitment, strong partnerships, and a willingness to work in new and more connected ways.

The challenges before us are urgent, and the opportunity to strengthen care and improve outcomes has never been more important.

We are ready to meet those challenges.

As we put SPARQ into action — through its priorities, initiatives and day-to-day decisions — we are committed to engaging openly and transparently with the patients, families, staff, physicians and community partners who place their trust in us.

Their perspectives will continue to shape our path forward, helping us learn, evolve, and improve together. This is a collective effort — one driven by shared purpose and mutual accountability.

Every idea we bring forward, every step we take, and every conversation we have moves us closer to the future we are working to build: one where more people are supported to reclaim their lives from mental illness and addiction.

Together, we will turn SPARQ into action and in doing so, help build a stronger, more compassionate health system for all.

A Message from Sharon and Cara

As we reflect on 2025–26, we do so with pride, gratitude, and a deep sense of momentum. This year marked an important turning point for The Royal as we launched a new brand and our bold new strategic plan, SPARQ, designed to ignite innovation, strengthen partnerships and, most importantly, enhance access to mental health and addiction care for the people who rely on us.

The Royal was also grounded in our renewed focus on our ICARE values — Innovation, Collaboration, Accountability, Respect, Excellence — we made meaningful progress across our system of care. This year marked important progress in strengthening access and advancing care. We began the foundational work for a future Urgent Care Clinic — an essential step toward improving timely access to mental health services. At the same time, we expanded specialized, evidence-based care through the opening of a new Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) clinic and launched a Day Detox program, supporting individuals with increasingly complex needs. In parallel, we also initiated the groundwork for Epic, our new electronic health record system, moving in lockstep with regional healthcare organizations to build a more connected, integrated, and patient-centered system for the future.

Underpinning this progress is our commitment to research, which continues to transform how mental health care is understood, delivered and experienced. By advancing new discoveries and translating evidence into practice, we are improving outcomes, personalizing treatment and bringing hope to those facing the most complex mental health challenges.

None of this progress would be possible without our people. This past year, we were proud to welcome new physician leaders, nurses, expert clinicians, allied health professionals, administrators and values-driven leaders who bring exceptional skills, compassion and commitment to our mission. Together, they are helping more people reclaim their lives from mental illness and addiction and strengthening The Royal as a place of care, learning and discovery.

This annual report carries special meaning for one of us. As Board Chair, this will be my final report — a moment both reflective and deeply meaningful. It has been an extraordinary honour to serve alongside such a dedicated Board of Trustees and the hundreds of volunteers whose generosity, insight, and steadfast commitment help shape The Royal each and every day. Together, we have witnessed remarkable growth, resilience, and an unwavering dedication to those we serve. While this chapter as Chair comes to a close, I do so with immense gratitude —and I remain one of The Royal’s most passionate champions, always cheering us on with pride and confidence in what lies ahead.

Together, we are building a stronger, more accessible future for mental health and addiction care, and the best is yet to come.



SHARON



CARA

Sharon Squire
Chair, Board
of Trustees

Cara Vaccarino
President and CEO

A Message from Florence and Michael

This has been a year of meaningful change for The Royal and the Research Institute, particularly in how research and care are coming together for the benefit of patients, families, and our broader ecosystem. We have moved with urgency because people living with mental illness and addiction need help now.

The Royal's mission is clear: to provide specialized care for mental illnesses and addiction, while learning from every patient experience so that those who follow receive ever-improving care.

In recent years, we have significantly strengthened our research enterprise. More clinicians than ever are engaged in research, and our community now includes nearly 70 researchers. A new Academic Committee is helping accelerate the integration of evidence and discovery into daily practice. The new Urgent Care Clinic will bring research, including interventional psychiatry, closer to the front line of care. At the same time, the infrastructure we have been building for years — a world-class brain imaging platform, a national data network, and a growing clinical trials portfolio — is maturing into a platform for real patient impact.

Every day of illness matters. Our goal is direct: the right care, for the right person, at the right time. We are building the foundation for computational psychiatry, the ability to recognize patterns at scale, identify meaningful differences in one person's illness that clinical observation alone may not reveal, and act sooner.

Our timeline is ambitious, and we know it. But the need is urgent. Mental illnesses and addiction affect nearly every family in Canada, and the people who come to The Royal deserve the most precise care we can offer — not in a decade, but now.

We are confident in the direction ahead, and deeply grateful to the staff, researchers, donors, communities, and partners who are making this progress possible.



MICHAEL



FLORENCE

Michael von Herff
Chair, Research
Institute Board
of Directors

Dr. Florence Dzierszinski
President and CEO,
Research Institute

A Message from Carmen and Chris

There is so much to celebrate as we look back on the last year. Donors, volunteers and partners each played a meaningful role in improving access and outcomes for people living with mental illness and addiction.

That support helped accelerate progress at The Royal, increasing access to specialized care while advancing new approaches to treatment and prevention. This includes bringing the new Urgent Care Clinic closer to reality, strengthening suicide prevention efforts through earlier intervention and expanding personalized treatments that are helping more patients achieve better long-term outcomes.

Behind every advancement is something deeply human, and often familiar to many who choose to support this work: a family seeing hope return in their loved one, a parent beginning to breathe again after years of uncertainty or a person reconnecting with parts of themselves that mental illness or addiction had taken hold of.

These moments are powerful reminders of why The Royal's work matters so deeply. They are also what inspired the launch of the Lives Reclaimed campaign. Too many people still aren't getting the care they need or the care that works. Lives Reclaimed is how we change that. This campaign is how we create more meaningful outcomes.

As you read through the report, we hope you'll reflect on the critical role the community has played in making each of these moments possible.

To everyone who supported The Royal this past year, thank you. Because of you, more people are finding care that helps them reconnect with themselves, their loved ones and the lives they are meant to live.



CARMEN



CHRIS

Carmen Abela
Chair, Foundation
Board of Directors

Chris Ide
President and CEO,
Foundation

WE ARE ONE ROYAL

Our Year in Pictures







SPARQ Strategic Plan

Mental illness is one of our society’s greatest health care challenges. Ensuring better outcomes for our patients, their families and our community requires careful planning and strategic thinking.

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

The Royal’s 2025–2028 Strategic Plan is a bold roadmap focused on delivering better care for mental illness and addiction.

At The Royal, we know that standing still or the status quo isn’t an option — because one in four people living with mental illness and addiction in Canada are counting on us.

That’s why we’ve launched SPARQ, our new strategic plan to guide us over the next three years. SPARQ is a bold roadmap focused on delivering better care for mental illness and addiction. It reflects our shared commitment to healing, recovery, innovation, and hope for patients, families, and our entire community.

“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,” Cara Vaccarino, President and CEO, The Royal.

The strategy’s five pillars

The name SPARQ comes from the five clear goals at the heart of our plan. Each goal is connected by a common thread: a deep commitment to better care for people living with mental illness and addiction.

From 2025 to 2028, the SPARQ Strategic Plan 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.

To learn more, read the [SPARQ Strategic Plan](#) on The Royal’s website or scan the QR code.





Sustainability

Digital Transformation Leverages Microsoft 365

Driving sustainability and impact under the SPARQ Strategic Plan means working smarter by leveraging technology to increase efficiency, effectiveness and long-term value. Our journey of digital transformation will guide responsible investments in modern technologies, including the regional Epic electronic medical record system and Microsoft 365, creating a more integrated and streamlined environment for care, collaboration and decision-making.

These investments are not just about systems; they are about people. By reducing administrative silos and increasing integration, our staff are better supported to focus on what matters most: serving our patients.

In parallel, a clear and responsible framework for introducing artificial intelligence is being developed alongside staff and partners. This approach ensures that emerging technologies are adopted responsibly with purpose and to enhance efficiency, while maintaining trust, quality and accountability.

Together, this work advances SPARQ's focus on sustainability to build a resilient, future-ready organization equipped to deliver better outcomes for patients and the mental health system.



Risk Management Program

A stronger, more integrated approach to risk management is helping shape how the organization leads, makes decisions and governs. This year, we undertook a comprehensive assessment and rebuilt The Royal's Risk Management Program to align with leading sectoral practices and our SPARQ Strategic Plan — embedding risk awareness into everyday decision-making.

This evolution places accountability at every level. Leaders across the organization are empowered to proactively identify, assess and manage risks in real time, ultimately informing senior leadership decision-making and the Board of Trustees' oversight.

Our approach to risk management is also now supported by clear policies, standardized processes, and practical tools. This strengthens consistency, transparency, and accountability.

Together, these enhancements are helping us build a more resilient and proactive organization — one where risk management is not a separate function, but a core part of how we operate, collaborate and deliver on our commitment to high-quality care.



People

Sharing Opportunities for Understanding & Perspective

At The Royal, we are strengthening engagement by building a culture grounded in respect, trust, and open communication; one that supports safety, wellness, and a true sense of belonging. Every voice matters, and we are creating more opportunities for staff to be heard, connected, and informed.

This includes launching a new monthly all-staff town hall to share updates and hear directly from teams, as well as leadership forums that create space for dialogue, alignment, and timely problem-solving. A new weekly Sharing Opportunities for Understanding & Perspective (S.O.U.P.) session, designed for our leaders, will further encourage open conversation and learning across roles and disciplines.

These efforts, supported by the development of a modern intranet and a refreshed internal communications approach, are complemented by a strong focus on wellness, safety, and recognition. Together, we are fostering a values-driven culture, one that celebrates our people, supports their wellbeing, and empowers everyone to contribute to a stronger, more connected organization.

You're invited to
a S.O.U.P. Session!

Sharing Opportunities for
Understanding & Perspective

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Inclusive Culture Strengthens Belonging

Strengthening belonging across the organization is central to advancing equity, diversity, Indigeneity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIIA). This work acknowledges that creating an inclusive culture is an ongoing learning journey, one that requires intention, investment and shared accountability.

Dedicated roles were introduced to lead this effort, focused on developing meaningful education,

engagement, and learning opportunities for staff. New events, conversations, and training initiatives will create space to explore diverse perspectives, build cultural understanding, and foster deeper connection across teams.

At the same time, EDIIA committees will be further supported and activated to drive impact, while an Indigenous advisory circle will help guide a thoughtful and accountable response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Together, these efforts will help shape a workplace where inclusion is lived every day, where voices are valued, learning is continuous, and everyone feels empowered to belong and contribute.



Urgent Care Clinic

The Royal is proud to announce the launch of a new Urgent Care Clinic, a major step forward in improving access to mental illness and addiction care across our region.

By creating an accessible alternative to emergency departments, the clinic will help reduce pressure on local hospitals and ensure patients receive the right care at the right time.



“At The Royal, we see every day how important it is for people to get mental health care when and where they need it most,” said Cara Vaccarino, President and CEO, The Royal. “This new Urgent Care Clinic is about improving access, building a more responsive system, and delivering care with compassion and dignity. It’s a reflection of our shared commitment to do better for our patients, families, and community.”

Visit [The Royal announces new Urgent Care Clinic](#) on The Royal’s website or scan the QR code to learn more.

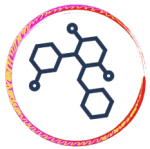
A New Era of Access in Adult General Psychiatry

Across the past several months, a deliberate and coordinated effort to improve access to Adult General Psychiatry has begun to show meaningful results. What was once a system strained by wait times exceeding 600 days is steadily transforming into one defined by momentum, innovation and renewed capacity. Since early in the year, five new psychiatrists have joined the program, supported by clearer expectations for caseload management and a redesign of care pathways.

Together, these changes have already reduced wait times from nearly 700 days to 368 days, with further improvements anticipated. This growing capacity is evident in the number of patients being seen. Where just 180 new assessments were completed in Q1 last year, the program is now on track to exceed 375 — more than doubling access for individuals seeking care.

By September 2026, monthly new-patient appointments are expected to reach 366, helping bring wait times down to approximately four months. Behind these numbers is a broader transformation: expanded outpatient criteria, more flexible inpatient admissions and a system redesigned to better reflect patient needs.

In partnership with the University of Ottawa, a comprehensive capacity analysis will further ensure resources are aligned for sustainable access, delivering more timely, equitable care to those who need it most.



Research



Interventional Psychiatry Division

Treatment-resistant depression and severe mental illnesses expose a significant limitation in conventional care models, where standard interventions often fail and patients encounter fragmented, iterative referral processes lacking systematic evaluation of treatment response. This inefficiency highlights the need for co-ordinated, data-driven approaches to optimize outcomes.

The Interventional Psychiatry Division (IPD) at The Royal addresses this gap through an integrated, research-informed care model. A central innovation is the use of pre-treatment brain imaging to characterize neural function, enabling more targeted intervention selection and reducing reliance on trial-and-error. IPD also establishes a continuous treatment pathway, allowing seamless progression between therapies without restarting referrals, thereby improving efficiency and continuity of care.

The program unifies advanced interventions — including neuromodulation, ketamine therapies, and electroconvulsive therapy — within a single framework. Its tripartite focus on clinical care, research,

and education creates a translational ecosystem that supports rapid application of emerging evidence and ongoing clinician development.

Research priorities include patient stratification, mechanism discovery, and enhancement of treatment durability, alongside efforts to improve equitable access. Collectively, IPD represents a systems-level innovation advancing precision psychiatry and care delivery.

Visit the [Interventional Psychiatry Program](#) page on The Royal’s website or scan the QR code to learn more.



Cardio-Neuro-Mind Data Platform

The Cardio-Neuro-Mind Data Platform (CNMDP) addresses a critical gap in large-scale research on brain-heart health by establishing integrated, Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusable (FAIR)-compliant data infrastructure. Led by the Research Institute in partnership with CAMH and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, the platform unifies mental health, neurological, and cardiovascular data across 21 studies, including regulated clinical trials. It aggregates multimodal datasets from hundreds of participants, enabling longitudinal and cross-domain analysis while ensuring standardization and accessibility. As the mental health node within Canada’s ARCHIMEDES initiative, CNMDP supports federated data analysis and strengthens national capacity for systems-level investigation of brain-heart interactions.

Visit the [Cardio-Neuro-Mind-Data Platform](#) page on The Royal’s website or scan the QR code to learn more.



Quality

A Shift in Our Medical Governance Structure

A pivotal shift is underway in how care is organized and delivered — bringing physicians and administrative leaders together as one unified team.

This year, we implemented our Credentialed Professional Staff by-laws, reflecting leading hospital practices and strengthening our medical staff governance structure. Alongside these improvements, we recruited a new Chief of Staff and a new Senior Medical Officer, and onboarded other skilled senior medical leadership. At the same time, 11 former program silos are being streamlined into three integrated departments: General Psychiatry, Integrated Forensic Psychiatry, and Severe Mental Illness. This move creates clearer accountability, stronger collaboration, and a more cohesive approach to care, research, and education.

This transformation comes at a critical moment, as the SPARQ Strategic Plan calls for greater integration, agility and impact. This new governance structure lays the foundation to move faster and continue raising the bar on excellence in the care we provide to our patients.

The insights, leadership and partnership of physicians and teams across the organization have shaped a model built for the future, one that empowers every clinician and staff member to thrive, contribute and lead.

Together, this new structure signals more than change. It marks a bold step forward toward a connected, responsive and high-performing organization.



Driving Accountability Through Data and Epic

Progress begins with seeing clearly. Across The Royal, teams are coming together around a shared commitment to measure what matters, capturing not just activity, but impact. From the bedside to the boardroom, there is a growing focus on understanding how care is delivered, how patients experience their journey and how staff feel supported in their work.

At the same time, foundational work is underway to build Epic, a transformative step that will modernize how information is captured, connected, and used. With Epic, data will no longer sit in silos. Instead, it will flow more seamlessly, enabling more accurate, timely and meaningful insights across the organization.

New reports and dashboards are being designed to bring this data to life. These tools will help teams spot trends earlier, respond with greater precision, and continuously refine how care and services are delivered. By strengthening how we measure and evaluate our work, The Royal is creating a culture of accountability and learning, one where evidence drives decisions, progress is visible, and every improvement brings us closer to lasting, meaningful change.

The Royal — By the Numbers

437

Inpatient
beds

1,295

Inpatient
admissions

1,717

Staff, not including
physicians

94

Primary physicians

69

Researchers

785

Learners

289

Volunteers

2,916

Donors

48.87

Years worked by the
longest-serving employee

22,271

Number of job
applications received

172

Research
studies

7,802

Research
participants

194

Peer-reviewed
publications

\$18.7M

Research expenditures
per year

\$240M

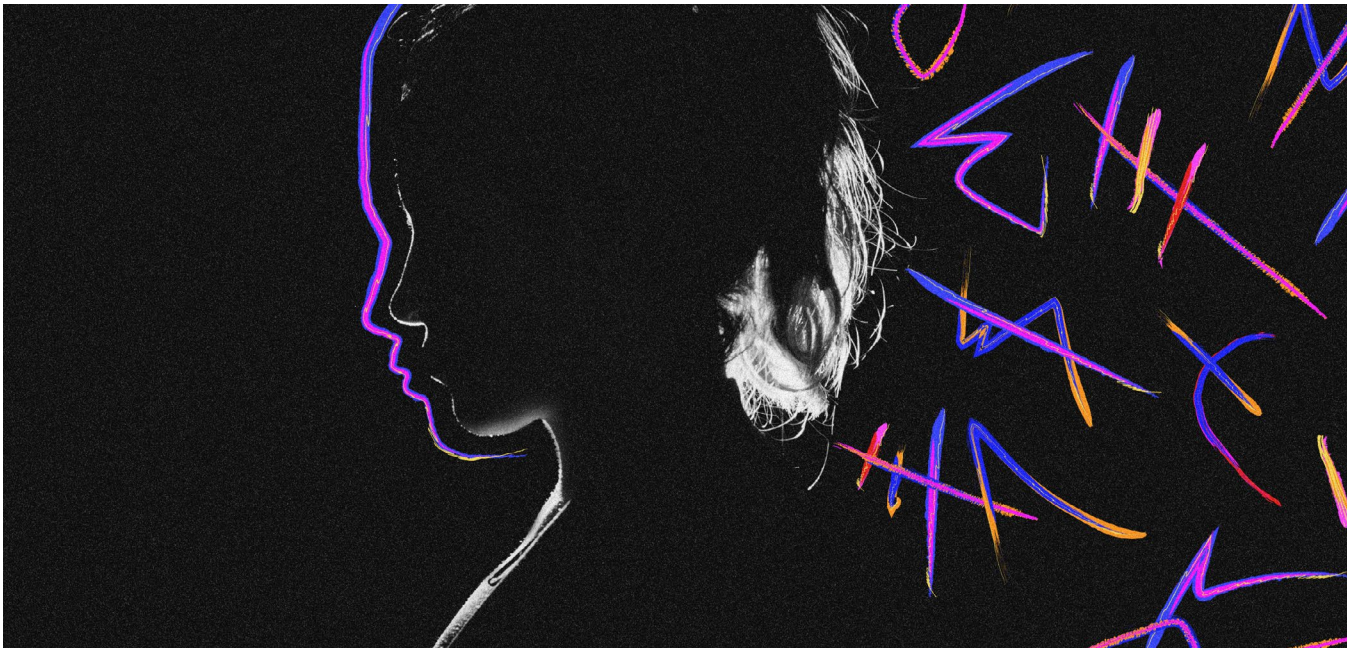
Operating
revenue

\$22.8M

New donations
to The Royal

\$14.5M

Grants directed by the
Foundation, including \$9.8M
for research



2025–26 HIGHLIGHTS



Our New Brand

The Royal is entering a bold new era of care, connection, and community leadership — redefining how we see and support people living with mental illness and addiction.

With a new brand identity and redesigned website, this transformation reflects a renewed commitment to clarity, compassion, and dignity. “This new brand unites our voice and strengthens our purpose,” says President and CEO Cara Vaccarino, underscoring the urgent need for equitable mental health funding and a continued push to challenge stigma.

More than a visual refresh, the brand represents a shift in how The Royal connects with people — separating the person from the illness and fostering understanding. The new website improves access to services and support, especially in moments of crisis.

“At its core, this direction reflects a powerful truth — mental illness does not define a person,” says former patient Richard Kennedy.

A new visual language uses unique “marks” to represent individual journeys of resilience and recovery, reinforcing the organization’s belief in lives reclaimed.

This evolution aligns with The Royal’s SPARQ strategic plan, advancing service, partnerships, research, and quality, while strengthening how the organization engages the community, attracts talent, and inspires support.

As The Royal prepares to open its Urgent Care Clinic, this brand signals more than change; it’s a commitment to lead, innovate, and improve access to mental health care.

To learn more, visit [The Royal launches new brand to redefine how we see and support people living with mental illness and addiction](#) on The Royal’s website or scan the QR code.

In Our Community





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1145, ave Carling Ave

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge with gratitude that The Royal's Ottawa and Carlingwood campuses are 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 this location, 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.

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