PAAB Strategic Plan

2026-2028

Report

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Executive Summary

The Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board (PAAB) stands at a pivotal moment in its evolution. Over the next three years, the organization must navigate an increasingly complex environment defined by rapid digital transformation, heightened public scrutiny, and shifting industry dynamics. While PAAB's core function - *ensuring accuracy, balance, and integrity in healthcare advertising* - remains unchanged, the context in which it operates has evolved dramatically. The rise of artificial intelligence in marketing, the growing demand for transparency and real-world evidence, and ongoing questions about misinformation have fundamentally reshaped expectations of regulatory oversight. At the same time, voluntary participation, economic pressures, and the integration of global marketing systems have introduced new challenges to PAAB's authority and relevance.

This strategic plan responds to these realities by focusing on four interdependent goals that strengthen PAAB's role as a trusted, future-ready, and high-performing partner in Canada's health communication landscape. The first goal, *Positioning PAAB as a Strategic Partner*, centers on deepening collaboration, trust, and visibility across regulators, industry, healthcare professionals, and patients. By enhancing transparency, reinforcing relationships, and expanding its communication channels, PAAB will re-establish its role as a credible and indispensable partner in shaping ethical healthcare promotion.

The second goal, *Establishing PAAB as a Leader in Digital Advertising Oversight and a valuable partner in Health Product Misinformation Management*, ensures that PAAB remains ahead of the accelerating pace of digital change. Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is spread, regardless of intent to deceive. Through innovation in AI-assisted preclearance, real-time health product advertising misinformation monitoring (both independently and through stakeholder collaboration and partnership), and the creation of a digital health communication lab, PAAB will lead the development of evidence-based standards that protect trust while supporting responsible innovation. Strategic collaboration with Health Canada and key industry partners will reinforce consistency, alignment, and national credibility in digital advertising oversight.

The third goal, *Fostering a Culture of Performance Excellence,* focuses on strengthening PAAB's internal capacity, structure, and sustainability. Organizational alignment, robust performance metrics, and investment in employee development and growth will ensure PAAB remains resilient and adaptive. By embracing technological transformation, refining governance, and expanding service offerings, PAAB will build the internal foundation required to sustain its credibility and operational excellence.

The fourth goal, *PAAB's financial position is sustainable over the long term*, keeps the organization's financial health in focus so that PAAB can continue its important work well into the future.

Collectively, these goals form a cohesive roadmap for PAAB's modernization and long-term relevance. This plan positions PAAB not only as a regulatory authority but as a collaborative thought leader at the intersection of health product communication, trust, and innovation. Through strong partnerships, digital readiness, and a commitment to performance excellence, PAAB will continue to uphold its core values while evolving to meet the expectations of a rapidly changing health communication environment.

The Strategic Plan (2026-2028)

Strategic Goals		PAAB is recognized as a strategic partner for healthcare-related advertising	PAAB is a leader in digital advertising oversight and a valuable collaborator and partner in health product misinformation management	PAAB promotes a culture of performance excellence	PAAB's financial position is sustainable over the long term
Strategic Objectives	**1**	Structured stakeholder engagement	Innovation & systems development	Organizational realignment	Achieve operating sustainability
	2	Relationship management	Health product misinformation monitoring (both independently and through stakeholder collaboration and partnership)	Process improvements & accountability	Increase diversity in revenue sources
	3	Trust Campaign initiative	Education & capacity building	Employee development & growth	Build financial resilience
	4		Advocacy & thought leadership	Expanded service offerings	Investment capital appreciation through an asset mix aligned with PAAB's liquidity needs and low drawdown tolerance

NOTE: Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is spread, regardless of intent to deceive.

Supportive Priorities/Objectives

Strategic Plan Overview
This section outlines PAAB's priorities and direction for 2026–2028 in greater detail. It reflects extensive environmental analysis, stakeholder input, and internal reflection on PAAB's evolving role within Canada's healthcare communications landscape. This report responds to both external pressures - such as digital transformation, misinformation, and changing industry dynamics - and internal opportunities to strengthen organizational capacity, collaboration, and trust. Together, these strategies and priorities form a roadmap to ensure PAAB continues to serve as a credible, forward-looking authority in ethical healthcare advertising.

Strategic Direction and Goals
Building on this foundation, the following sections outline PAAB's strategic direction for the next three years. Each goal is supported by targeted priorities designed to strengthen collaboration, enhance digital integrity, and build organizational excellence - ensuring PAAB remains a trusted and resilient leader in Canada's evolving health communication environment. ***Some strategic priorities appear under more than one strategic goal, as they contribute to each goal in distinct ways.*** While those priorities are repeated, their relevance differs depending on the context of the goal they support.

Strategic Goal 1
PAAB is recognized as a strategic partner for healthcare-related advertising.

Focus: Collaboration, trust, visibility, and influence.
Intent: Strengthen PAAB's position as a trusted, collaborative, and visible authority across the health communications environment.

PAAB's influence depends on its ability to be seen not only as a regulator, but as a proactive, solutions-oriented partner that provides value to all stakeholders in the healthcare advertising ecosystem. As the landscape evolves - with increasing misinformation, digital complexity, and industry fragmentation in approaches toward regulatory compliance - PAAB must reinforce its collaborative relationships and strengthen its visibility among stakeholders. This goal aims to deepen trust, enhance transparency, and position PAAB as a valued strategic partner to regulators, industry leaders, and patients alike.

Strategic Priority 1.1: Structured Stakeholder Engagement

To formalize PAAB's partnerships and create consistency across its stakeholder interactions, a *Strategic Partnership Framework* will be developed. This framework will define how PAAB engages with regulators, manufacturers, healthcare professionals, and patient groups - ensuring two-way communication and meaningful consultation.

Under this framework, PAAB will modernize client communications with manufacturers through enhancements in tagging data, Client Experience Index (CEI), and amplified sharing of submission data – both on individual and aggregate levels – in relation to industry benchmarks.

Collaboration with Health Canada will be reinforced through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), clarifying respective roles and improving coordination on compliance issues and misleading advertising. PAAB will also advocate for the reinstatement of the annual Health Canada meeting with preclearance agencies such as Ad Standards to promote consistency and information sharing across the sector. Beyond the Marketed Health Products Directorate (MHPD), PAAB will seek to strengthen relationships with other regulatory bodies (including the Competition Bureau) to enhance cross-agency alignment on promotional standards, deceptive marketing practices, and enforcement priorities. These efforts aim to foster a more integrated regulatory environment that supports transparency, trust, and sector-wide compliance.

PAAB will also strengthen relationships with industry associations, including but not limited to Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) and Biotech Canada, by jointly addressing health product misinformation and reinforcing PAAB's value as a trusted partner.

Finally, partnerships with advertising agencies, including the Canadian Healthcare Communication Providers (CHCP), will expand to co-develop guidance on topics such as global campaign adaptation, imagery interpretation, and digital compliance - ensuring clarity and alignment across domestic and international contexts.

Strategic Priority 1.2: Relationship Management

Once the Strategic Partnership Framework is in place, PAAB will operationalize it through structured dialogue, feedback mechanisms, and measurable outcome tracking. *A stakeholder liaison function* will be introduced to lead the framework's execution, ensuring PAAB's value proposition is clearly communicated and its role in risk mitigation is well understood across audiences.

In addition, PAAB will establish an *Annual Client Services Review* to proactively understand the evolving pressures facing clients - including global alignment challenges, financial constraints, and operational realities. Insights from this process will inform continuous service improvements, promote collaboration, and ensure PAAB remains responsive and relevant to stakeholder needs.

Strategic Priority 1.3: Trust Campaign Initiative

To mark its 50th Anniversary, PAAB will launch a Trust Campaign that highlights its independence, integrity, and historical contribution to confidence in healthcare advertising. This initiative will strengthen stakeholder awareness of PAAB's role and reinforce the association between the PAAB brand and trust in healthcare communications.

Through thoughtful storytelling and visibility across media channels, this campaign will reintroduce PAAB to its core audience as well as its broader stakeholders as a credible, forward-thinking authority committed to ensuring truthful, ethical, and transparent health communication in Canada's evolving information landscape.

Strategic Goal 2

PAAB is a leader in digital advertising oversight and a valuable collaborator and partner in health product misinformation management.

Focus: Ethical innovation, digital integrity, and proactive health product advertising misinformation response.
Intent: Position PAAB as Canada's leading authority in health product communication integrity and a valuable collaborator and partner in misinformation management within the evolving digital landscape.

Digital transformation is rapidly reshaping the healthcare communications environment. Artificial intelligence, social media, and real-time engagement have created new opportunities for education and connection - but also new risks of misinformation, data manipulation, and loss of trust. To remain credible and relevant, PAAB must lead in defining the ethical and regulatory standards that govern digital health advertising. This goal focuses on establishing PAAB as a trusted leader in digital integrity, ensuring that innovation and ethics evolve hand-in-hand to protect Canadians from misleading or unsafe information.

Strategic Priority 2.1: Innovation & Systems Development

PAAB will advance the development of its AI-assisted preclearance platform to improve the speed, accuracy, and consistency of ad reviews while mitigating the risk of misinformation. This system will enable reviewers to analyze submissions more efficiently while maintaining the scientific rigor that underpins PAAB's credibility.

To complement this, PAAB will establish a Digital Health Communication Lab — a multidisciplinary forum bringing together experts in AI, social media, digital ethics, and health communication. The Lab will serve as both an innovation hub and an expert external advisory committee facilitated by PAAB. It will identify emerging risks and opportunities, test new review models, and generate evidence-based recommendations to guide industry and regulatory partners. In addition, the Lab will help PAAB anticipate future advertising trends and shape policies, procedures, and services to ensure the organization remains relevant and responsive to the evolving digital landscape.

PAAB will collaborate with pharmaceutical industry associations and Health Canada to explore the potential for various forms of mandates pertaining to promotional materials, including but not limited to mandatory ad filing and targeted mandatory preclearance. This initiative would increase national consistency, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and elevate Canada's position as a leader in responsible health communication oversight.

PAAB will explore the potential to collaborate with Health Canada, and other parties with an interest in misinformation, to address gaps in accessible, verified health product information. This initiative aims to support health professionals, patients, and communicators seeking reliable sources, while leveraging PAAB's strength in preclearing health product advertising to ensure it is truthful and not misleading. This effort underscores PAAB's commitment to transparency, education, and informed decision-making, and represents a strategic opportunity to expand its impact in the public health ecosystem.

Strategic Priority 2.2: Health Product Advertising Misinformation Monitoring

The growing spread of health product misinformation poses significant risks to public health and industry credibility. PAAB will collaborate and partner with Health Canada, public health agencies, academic research institutions, health professionals, and health professional associations, toward the development of a real-time health product advertising misinformation monitoring and detection system. This system will enable proactive identification of high-risk content trends and help shift PAAB's monitoring role from reactive policing to proactive partnership.

By monitoring patterns and emerging topics across both pharmaceutical and broader health product communications, PAAB will help regulators and industry stakeholders respond faster, coordinate messaging, and prevent health product misinformation from taking root. This initiative will also reinforce PAAB's evolving role as a collaborative problem-solver and early-warning partner for Canada's health communication ecosystem.

Strategic Priority 2.3: Education & Capacity Building

PAAB will continue to develop training modules focused on compliance with the PAAB Code, ethical health communication, and the responsible use of digital tools in advertising. Education for health product manufacturers and communication agencies will be central to sustaining integrity in the digital era.

PAAB will explore development of accredited health professional training modules outlining PAAB's role in safeguarding trustworthy health product promotion and potential roles of promotional content in informed decision-making. These modules will enhance HCPs understanding of the influence of advertising on clinical practice while teaching them how to critically engage with promotional content and participate in PAAB's collaborative efforts to uphold integrity in healthcare communications. These modules, potentially delivered in partnership with organizations such as Council for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (CCPE) and Canadian Medical Association (CMA), will support professional development.

Additionally, as introduced in section 2.1 above, PAAB will work with interested stakeholders and other parties to explore how to address gaps in availability of

verified health information to support healthcare professionals, patients, and communicators seeking reliable sources, in collaboration with Health Canada. This will demonstrate PAAB's role as a pre-clearance agency for pharmaceutical advertising while reinforcing its commitment to transparency, education, and informed decision-making.

Strategic Priority 2.4: Advocacy & Thought Leadership

PAAB will enhance its leadership profile through active advocacy and knowledge-sharing on ethical health advertising. Working with industry associations (e.g., IMC & BIOTECanada), CMA, Health Canada, and academic partners, PAAB will publish opinion papers, case studies, and analyses addressing digital ethics, health product advertising misinformation trends, and industry best practices. These publications will establish PAAB as an authoritative voice within national and international health communication forums.

To strengthen sector-wide coordination, PAAB will also advocate for reinstating the annual Health Canada meeting with all preclearance agencies - ensuring alignment, transparency, and shared progress in advancing advertising integrity and oversight.

Strategic Goal 3
PAAB promotes a culture of performance excellence.

Focus: Organizational learning, adaptability, and continuous improvement.
Intent: Build organizational capacity, resilience, and innovation to sustain credibility, trust, and operational excellence.

To deliver on its mission and remain credible in an evolving environment, PAAB must strengthen its internal foundation. This goal focuses on creating the organizational conditions that enable excellence - ensuring PAAB has the right structure, systems, and culture to deliver on its strategic objectives. By investing in internal alignment, data-driven decision-making, and employee wellbeing, PAAB will build resilience and adaptability while maintaining the trust and confidence of its stakeholders.

Strategic Priority 3.1: Organizational Alignment

PAAB will realign its organizational structure to enable the effective implementation of Goals 1 and 2. This includes integrating specialized leadership functions that ensure a focus on artificial intelligence and stakeholder relations in order to strengthen engagement across sectors.

Following approval of this report, the PAAB Board will review its vision and mission statements to ensure they reflect the organization's emerging direction and evolving responsibilities. Clear, aligned statements will anchor the organization's priorities and guide decision-making across all levels of operation.

Strategic Priority 3.2: Process Improvements & Accountability

To support continuous improvement, PAAB will enhance its internal processes and introduce new systems for forecasting, monitoring, and accountability. A submission volume monitoring and forecasting model will be developed, initially focused on the top 15 companies, incorporating data such as IMC affiliation, Agency of Record, and product portfolio (including products in the pipeline when such information can be shared). This model will improve resource planning and financial forecasting, ensuring agility in responding to changing market conditions.

A Consistency Improvement Initiative will be introduced to define what consistency means across the organization, establish measurable standards, and strengthen communication clarity for stakeholders.

Finally, forecasting and environmental monitoring will be integrated into regular Board updates, ensuring decisions are informed by real-time data and trends.

Strategic Priority 3.3: Employee Development & Growth

Recognizing that organizational change relies on people, PAAB will invest in supporting its employees through this period of transformation. A recognition initiative will be created to acknowledge staff contributing to AI system development and modernization, addressing the fatigue and uncertainty that often accompany large-scale change.

To foster collaboration and innovation, PAAB will introduce cross-functional innovation teams (spaces where employees from different teams can co-design service improvements and operational solutions). These teams will not only enhance engagement but also strengthen internal communication and shared accountability. PAAB will continue to prioritize engagement (measured through staff surveys) to ensure staff remain energized and committed.

In addition, PAAB will provide training in digital literacy and AI-assisted analytics to ensure all staff are equipped with the skills and understanding needed to responsibly leverage emerging technologies.

Strategic Priority 3.4: Expanded Service Offerings

To ensure long-term sustainability and financial resilience, PAAB will explore opportunities to diversify its service offerings beyond traditional preclearance. This includes potential new revenue streams such as AI-driven preclearance tools, monitoring and analytics services, and strategic advisory offerings for industry partners.

By evolving its portfolio in alignment with stakeholder needs and regulatory trends, PAAB will strengthen both its financial foundation and its role as an innovative, future-ready organization.

Strategic Goal 4
PAAB's financial position is sustainable over the long term

Strategic Priority 4.1: Achieve operating sustainability
PAAB will strengthen its financial foundation through prudent cost management, optimized pricing structures, and improved forecasting accuracy. Collaboration with manufacturers will help refine volume projections and submission forecasting to ensure alignment between operational capacity and market demand. These measures will support a balanced operating position that enables reinvestment in modernization and service quality.

Strategic Priority 4.2: Increase diversity in revenue sources
PAAB will explore complementary revenue streams beyond traditional preclearance services. These service offerings will be aligned with PAAB's mandate and expertise (e.g., advisory services, educational offerings, AI platform licensing). Expanding the mix of income sources will reduce reliance on submission volume and enhance long-term financial resilience.

Strategic Priority 4.3: Build financial resilience
PAAB will enhance its financial resilience through deliberate reserve management and scenario planning. Establishing clear targets for reserve fund coverage and maintaining liquidity buffers will protect operations during revenue fluctuations or market downturns. Robust financial reporting and oversight will ensure timely, data-driven decisions.

Strategic Priority 4.4: Investment capital appreciation through an asset mix aligned with PAAB's liquidity needs and low drawdown tolerance
PAAB will pursue a disciplined investment approach guided by its Investment Policy Statement (IPS), ensuring that assets are allocated to preserve capital while achieving modest, consistent returns. Regular reviews will confirm alignment with organizational liquidity needs and evolving market conditions.

Report Summary (2026–2028)

Strategic Goal 1: PAAB is recognized as a strategic partner for healthcare-related advertising.

Focus: Collaboration, trust, visibility, and influence.
Intent: Strengthen PAAB's position as a trusted, collaborative, and visible authority across the health communications environment.

Key Priorities:

- Develop and implement a Strategic Partnership Framework to formalize engagement with regulators, manufacturers, HCPs, and the public.
- Strengthen collaboration with Health Canada, industry associations (e.g., IMC & Biotech Canada), and CHCP through a new MOU, annual agency meetings, and co-developed guidance. Also form new vectors of collaboration with regulators beyond MHPD (e.g., Competition Bureau).
- Introduce a *stakeholder liaison function* and an *annual client services review* to foster ongoing feedback and service improvement.
- Launch a 50th Anniversary Trust Campaign to reinforce PAAB's independence, integrity, and relevance across its stakeholders.

Strategic Goal 2: PAAB is a leader in digital advertising oversight and a valued collaborator and partner in health product misinformation management.

Focus: Ethical innovation, digital integrity, and proactive monitoring for misinformation in health product advertising (both independently and through stakeholder collaboration and partnership).
Intent: Position PAAB as Canada's leading authority in health product communication integrity and collaborator and partner in health product misinformation management within the evolving digital landscape.

Key Priorities:

- Advance an AI-assisted preclearance platform to enhance speed, accuracy, and consistency in ad reviews.
- Establish a Digital Health Communication Lab to research trends, assess risk, and guide industry on emerging technologies.
- Collaborate toward the development of a real-time health product advertising misinformation monitoring system in partnership with Health Canada, research institutions, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
- Launch accredited training modules and explore, with stakeholders and other interested parties, how to improve access to verified health product information to strengthen digital literacy and transparency.

- Elevate PAAB's thought leadership through opinion papers, and reinstated cross-agency collaboration meetings.

Strategic Goal 3: PAAB promotes a culture of performance excellence.

Focus: Organizational learning, adaptability, and continuous improvement.
Intent: Build organizational capacity, resilience, and innovation to sustain credibility, trust, and operational excellence.

Key Priorities:

- Review alignment of PAAB's mission and vision with the overall strategy following approval of the strategic plan report.
- Introduce forecasting models, updated performance metrics, and a Consistency Improvement Initiative to enhance accountability and clarity.
- Prioritize employee engagement and innovation through recognition programs, cross-functional teams, and AI literacy training.
- Explore expanded service offerings - including AI preclearance tools, analytics, and advisory services - to ensure financial sustainability.

Strategic Goal 4: PAAB's financial position is sustainable over the long term

Focus: Financial stability, resilience, and prudent growth.
Intent: Ensure long-term sustainability through diversified revenues, effective governance, and disciplined investment management.

Key Priorities:

- Achieve operating sustainability through accurate forecasting, prudent expense management, and rate optimization.
- Diversify revenue streams beyond preclearance in alignment with PAAB's mandate and expertise.
- Strengthen financial resilience by maintaining robust reserve coverage and liquidity planning.
- Pursue disciplined investment growth within the parameters defined in the Investment Policy Statement.
- Enhance governance capacity through collaborative forecasting with manufacturers and improved financial oversight.