



A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times

2026-2031 | Strategic Plan Summary

Starling Community Services

Introduction

We are in a period of rapid and destabilizing change from a global to a local level. The rules and systems we have followed for decades that brought prosperity and stability, are being disrupted. What we need is a guide that provides direction, flexibility, and resilience.

The title of Starling Community Services' Strategic Plan for 2026-31 **“A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times”** was selected as it reflects the context in which this planning took place. The next five years are expected to be marked by significant uncertainty across society, the economy, and government policy and funding. The compass metaphor signals direction, purpose, and clarity as Starling faces this turbulence.



A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times

The Strategic Plan was developed by Starling's senior leadership team and approved by the Board of Governors in January 2026. The plan provides a clear, evidence-based understanding of the trends, threats, challenges, and opportunities that will shape Starling's future. It brings together research, analysis, and insights from staff, client families, and community partners to give a comprehensive response to the needs of the communities which the agency serves given the environment in which it operates. The plan is broken down into three areas of focus: Client Services, Organizational Capacity, and Operating Environment, each of which have corresponding strategic and aspirational goals. These goals were then used to set measurable operational goals as part of the annual business planning process.

This document forms a summary of the three strategic areas of focus and their goals which are then attributed to each service area as presented on page 4, affectionately known internally as our “placemat.”



Strategic Plan Focus Areas and Goals

For Starling Community Services and Starling Child and Family Foundation

1. Client Service Focus

Focusing on client, participant, and resident needs, we will continually adapt our services to improve their experiences and results.

- Strengthen and strategically adapt services to accommodate service demand increases, meet complex client needs, and deliver quality, culturally grounded options

2. Organizational Capacity Focus

Applying a business lens, we manage our human, financial, and infrastructure resources to ensure we successfully and sustainably deliver on our mission & vision.

- Foster a strong and healthy workplace to strengthen organizational culture.
- Modernize administration prioritizing customer service.
- Continue to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion principles in workforce, leadership, and service design.
- Diversify, stabilize and strengthen financial resource

3. Operating Environment Focus

Working together with funders and community partners, we will position ourselves to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing operating environment.

- Expand collaboration with funders and community partners to respond to community needs and influence system-level changes.
- Position Luther Village as the prominent niche destination for retirement living to exceed occupancy targets and build waitlists.



An Overview of Starling's Strategic Plan



Our Mission

We deliver community services to strengthen lives.

Our Vision

Communities where everyone experiences mental wellness, opportunities for employment, a place to call home, and a sense of belonging.

Our Values



Respect for All

We actively create spaces of belonging for all.



Compassion

We model hope and optimism by caring about the wellbeing of those impacted by our work.



Working Together

We strengthen our ability to address community needs by working closely with our clients and community partners.



Making a Difference

We strive to deliver meaningful and culturally grounded services.



Growth

We continuously learn and evolve both as individuals and as an organization.

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Starling Community Services Strategic Plan | 2026-2031

STRATEGIC GOALS



Children's Mental Health Services

1. Assess and adapt services and supports to better meet changing client needs
2. Enhance Front Door and mental health services presence in the community by leveraging new physical location
3. Work with Lead Agency Advisory Council to achieve Multi-Year Plan goals
4. Explore and continuously evaluate health service integration opportunities
5. Focus on performance metrics to meet funding targets



Employment Services

6. Assess and adapt services and supports to better meet changing client needs
7. Stabilize and expand specialized programs (e.g., youth, newcomers) to meet client needs
8. Focus on performance metrics to meet funding targets



Housing Services

9. Assess and adapt services and supports to meet changing participant needs
10. Continue to participate in the Region of Waterloo's 10-year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and influence system strategies to meet evolving participant needs
11. Leverage opportunities to work with housing and health partners, governments, and funders to build a more collaborative, integrated and equitable housing service system



Administration

12. Enhance agency administration to better support service delivery by optimizing physical space use and co-locating administrative departments
13. Complete IT system modernization and retest cybersecurity posture
14. Seek alternative funding sources and build flexibility into budgets to adapt to shifting funding models
15. Build and maintain healthy capital reserve funds for all buildings and facilities



Agency-Wide

16. Implement new Equity Strategy
17. Implement a workforce strategy that highlights accountability, addresses skill gaps, expands succession planning initiatives, and expands leadership and staff development
18. Strengthen inclusive recruitment and retention practices
19. Reinforce organizational culture with more intentional engagement strategies, workplace wellness practices, and results-based performance measurement
20. Implement secure, user-friendly technology that improves equitable service access
21. Implement AI and digital tools to reduce time spent on administrative tasks

