



A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times

2026-2031 | Strategic Plan

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 along with its Priorities and Goals were developed by Starling's senior leaders, reviewed by Starling's Board of Governors and the Starling Child and Family Foundation Board in December 2025, and is presented to be 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. These priorities and goals will be used to set measurable operational goals as part of the annual business planning process.

Strategic Plan Priorities 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**

Goals:

- Assess and adapt services and supports to better meet changing client/participant needs
- Explore and continuously evaluate health service integration opportunities and challenges
- Enhance Front Door and mental health services presence in the community by leveraging new physical location
- Leverage opportunities to work with housing and health partners, governments, and funders to build a more collaborative, integrated and equitable housing service system
- Expand unique wellness programming that differentiates Luther Village from competitors
- Implement secure, user-friendly technology that improves equitable service access



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.**

Goals:

- Implement a workforce strategy that highlights accountability, addresses skill gaps, expands succession planning initiatives, and expands leadership and staff development
- Enhance measures that protect staff and client health and safety
- Strengthen inclusive recruitment and retention practices
- Reinforce organizational culture with more intentional engagement strategies, workplace wellness practices, and results-based performance measurement

➤ **Modernize administration prioritizing customer service.**

Goals:

- Enhance agency administration to better support service delivery by optimizing physical space use and co-locating administrative departments
- Implement AI and digital tools to reduce time spent on administrative tasks
- Complete IT system modernization and retest cybersecurity posture

➤ **Continue to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion principles in workforce, leadership, and service design.**

Goals:

- Implement new Equity Strategy

➤ **Diversify, stabilize and strengthen financial resources**

Goals:

- Focus on performance metrics to meet funding targets
- Seek alternative funding sources and build flexibility into budgets to adapt to shifting funding models
- Secure permanent funding for expanded mental health programs
- Build and maintain healthy capital reserve funds for all buildings and facilities



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.**

Goals:

- 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
- Work with Lead Agency Advisory Council to achieve Multi-Year Plan goals

- **Position Luther Village as the prominent niche destination for retirement living to exceed occupancy targets and build waitlists.**

Goals:

- Deepen our position as a wellness leader by offering unique wellness programming
- Rebrand Luther Village to appeal to a more diverse demographic
- Continue expanding marketing initiatives and Sales team skill development
- Invest in the campus to remain competitive and enhance service



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.

A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times

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 and safety goals



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 better 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



An Overview of Luther Village on the Park's Strategic Plan



A Steady Compass in Uncertain Times

Luther Village on the Park Strategic Plan | 2026-2031



Our Mission

The Village emphasizes health, wellness, safety and choice to inspire each resident to engage in a lifestyle that best suits their needs.



Our Vision

The Village is a distinct welcoming retirement community where residents enjoy exceptional service in a warm and caring environment.



Our Values

Respect for All
Compassion
Working Together
Making a Difference
Growth

Luther Village on the Park Strategic Goals

1. Invest in the campus to remain one of the premier older adult facilities in Waterloo Region
2. Innovate, adapt, and improve services to maintain or exceed occupancy targets
3. Expand wellness programming that differentiates The Village from competitors
4. Rebrand the Village to appeal to a wider demographic

Agency-Wide Strategic Goals

- Implement new Equity Strategy
- Implement a workforce strategy that highlights accountability, addresses skill gaps, expands succession planning initiatives, and expands leadership and staff development
- Reinforce organizational culture with more intentional engagement strategies, workplace wellness practices, and results-based performance measurement
- Implement AI and digital tools to reduce time spent on administrative tasks



Our Mission, Vision and Values

Our vision, mission, and values are guiding statements that provide the backbone of our strategic plan and that lead our board, leaders, and staff to pursue service excellence, social service leadership, and innovative solutions that will help us strengthen the lives of those in our community and beyond.

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.



Appendix: Stakeholder Input and References

Stakeholder Input

- Gathered feedback from 76 staff through meetings and a survey to confirm mission, vision, and values, and identify potential concerns, risks and opportunities.
- Mental health client feedback is collected through anonymous surveys, discussions with staff, comment boxes, online reviews, and grievance reports. This feedback was compiled and sent to leaders to help inform programing and strategic plan priority and goal setting.
- Met with our Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to confirm Starling's mission, vision, and values and help identify strategic plan priorities. CAC is composed of and parents of former clients as well as community representatives interested in the mental health system
- As Lead Agency, conducted one-on-one leadership meetings with core service agencies to individual agency pressures and successes and determine collaborative system priorities.
- Regular Lead Agency Advisory Council meetings are used to gather partner input specific to children's mental health services for Waterloo Region.
- Front Door Partners meetings with referral sources (School Boards, Developmental Services, and Child Welfare) and children's mental health service providers were used to discuss successes, pressures, waitlists, gaps in service, challenges and support needs.
- To further engage youth and community perspectives, Starling as Lead Agency held an interactive consultation session with the Children and Youth Planning Table, which directly sought opinions on priority areas for mental health collaboration and investment in Waterloo Region. This session was well attended by youth from age 10-23.

References

- Auditor General of Ontario's report Community-Based Child and Youth Mental Health Program
- Region of Waterloo, *2024 Immigration Profile*
- Starling's Child and Youth Mental Health Service Area Plan 2024-25
- Statistics Canada / Ontario Labour Force Data
- Waterloo Region Community Foundation 2025 Vital Signs Report
- Waterloo Region Community Round Tables Results
- Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy 2025 (WREDS)
- Waterloo Region Strategic Plan
- Workforce Planning Board's 2025 Local Labour Mark