



STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN: TIMEFRAME 2018-2020

Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region is a professional agency, successfully delivering on our **Mission**: Empowering and supporting women and children to move beyond violence and abuse through the provision of safe shelter, education, and outreach services. Our impact is broad and measurable: In the past fiscal year (2016-17), over 23,000 days of care were provided to women and children in Waterloo Region, providing a safe and secure place to live; 2467 crisis calls were received and professionally responded to by our team; and 852 women and children were supported via our outreach services.

Our physical infrastructure is exceptional and this is a tremendous asset for our agency. In the span of eight short years, we worked hard to fundraise for, and build, two outstanding new shelters – Anselma House in Kitchener and Haven House in Cambridge – where women and children can seek safety and rebuild their lives free from violence and abuse. We have stretched ourselves to spread the word about the important work we do, to move this community beyond violence, to new audiences, and in new ways, because the women and children we serve – and the disturbing reality of their experiences – deserve to be taken seriously.

We have emerged as a leader in the conversation about gender-based violence in Waterloo Region and our voice is valued in this community. We have participated in difficult conversations and led the way to better solutions.

And we know that our work has just begun, as the issue of violence against women is not going away.

In fact, the work we do is becoming more complex and the need is growing, with each day presenting an endless array of systemic pressures that need to be addressed in new ways, by an entire community, working together.

This strategic plan provides an opportunity for Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region to step into the future – with a clear and shared purpose - as we work relentlessly to achieve our **VISION** of building a community free from violence and abuse in any of its forms.

VALUES: OUR PRINCIPLES

Our principles are the motivating force behind our decisions and guide our relationships with the women, children and communities we serve, partners, donors and employees.

We believe...

- **Respect, Choice and Diversity**
Treating people with respect, honouring choice and valuing diversity is at the core of who we are.
- **Partnership and Empowerment**
Partnerships make us stronger and contribute to our efforts to promote the empowerment of women and children experiencing domestic abuse and violence.
- **Excellence and Leadership**
Our community deserves the best and we strive to be the best in everything we do.
- **Integrity and Accountability**
Doing the right thing promotes honesty and integrity and fosters accountability.

The Process

An effective strategic plan – one created to inspire an organization and its community to reach for the future – must:

- Reflect the aspirations of many – purposefully engaging a wide array of stakeholders.
- Be meaningful to the audience.
- Drive accountability at the organizational level.

Every strategic plan is different, with an organization's unique needs determining the final product.

A classic strategic plan consists of *four main elements* – organizational context, high-level goals, strategic priorities, and actionable steps.

- Community Context: Who are we? How are we currently positioned?
- High-Level Goals: What are we striving to achieve over the long-term?
- Strategic Priorities: What can we do to achieve those goals?
- Actionable Steps: What tangible actions can be taken to get there, in the short, medium and long-term time frame.

When **launching** our strategic planning process, we started by identifying our **key stakeholders** – clients, staff, volunteers, management, board members, and external partners – and created a set of **engagement exercises**, designed to tap into their organizational knowledge, in effective ways.

We began with a belief in **asset-based community development** – asking what strengths, gifts, talents and opportunities do we currently have at **Women’s Crisis Services** and how do we leverage them to create an **even better organization**.

As the data was collected, we worked with the project team to establish a set of **key themes**, laying the foundation for **Women’s Crisis Services** leadership to determine and define an array of **clear, strategic and actionable steps** they can take to achieve those aspirations.

It is important to note that the **Engagement Strategy** for Women’s Crisis Services Strategic Plan was structured to engage all stakeholders in an equitable and respectful way, fostering understanding between diverse views, values, and interests. We heard numerous voices – from staff to clients, and community partners to volunteers – throughout this process.

Timing

With the announced **retirement** of the current CEO, Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region will soon be experiencing a change in leadership. It was important to consider the **timing** of this strategic plan through that lens; primarily with an eye to the action plans.

The Strategy

This **Strategic Plan** is designed to chart a **practical** path forward, in incremental and intentional steps, all aligned to channel our collective energies towards making progress on a set of **aspirational** goals.

Desired **outcomes** of this **Strategic Vision** include the following:

- Improved employee satisfaction and retention rates.
- Increased benefit from community partnerships.
- An expanded and engaged donor base– i.e., demonstrating a long-term commitment.
- Continued fiscal stability – decreased mortgage payments and continued clean audits.
- Continued positive client feedback, along with decreased recidivism.

Strategic Priorities

We will achieve our strategic vision by focusing on **three key strategic priorities**.

Each of the three strategic priorities - and subsequent identified goals - serves to provide the focus for creating specific tactical work plans that outline actionable steps, timelines, key players, tasks and measurable outcomes.

Together, these three strategic priorities work in concert with each other and are, in fact, inter-related, in terms of achieving the over-arching goals of long-term organizational effectiveness and continued fiscal viability.



We believe passionately in the important work we do, and fueled by that passion, we will lead the movement to end violence against women in our community, working relentlessly to **drive the conversation** about gender-based violence in Waterloo Region, while ensuring the long-term **organizational effectiveness** and continued **fiscal stability** of Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region.

Strategic PRIORITY #1: We will inspire action, working to free our community from violence against women (VAW).

GOAL#1: Be a community voice for violence against women through education and advocacy.

The work we do at Women’s Crisis Services is real and complex—but can be difficult to talk about. The stigma and misconceptions attached to our sector and the people we serve are an ongoing challenge, as we work to raise awareness and secure funding.

We will work to:

- 1.1 Normalize the conversation about VAW in Waterloo Region
 - Strategic Communications Plan
 - Internally – develop an external crisis communications plan
 - External – Simplify & Amplify our key messages
 - Raise Community Awareness
 - Evaluate & revise our education program
- 1.2 Maximize our Partnerships
 - Develop & implement an Influencer Strategy
 - Identify existing and new partnership opportunities
 - Identify existing and new advocates & supporters
 - Influence policy and decision-making at all levels of government
- 1.3 Expand our donor base – with an eye to increasing long-term/repeat support

Strategic PRIORITY #2: We will effectively serve those who need us the most.

GOAL#1: Build capacity in our clients

All engagement groups identified the opportunity to have a lasting impact on the lives of the women and children in our care.

We will work to:

- 2.1 Continue to examine and implement strategies to reduce client recidivism
- 2.2 Identify and offer learning opportunities, designed to build success
 - Enhancing client skill sets – i.e., coping, parenting, problem solving
 - Formal & Informal – access a variety of avenues to learning
- 2.3 Seek ways to increase participation in programs

GOAL #2: Find new ways to address an increased diversity and complexity of needs.

The VAW sector is becoming increasingly complex and challenging.

We will work to:

- 3.1 Clearly identify and understand the needs:
 - Diverse ethnic cultures
 - Gender complexities, including LGBTQ+
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental health

- 3.2 Provide staff with the supports, training and system-wide awareness they need, to effectively assist our clients

Strategic PRIORITY #3: We will support our people - those who work and volunteer here.

GOAL#1: Foster a culture where the values of the organization are lived, every day.

Culture is the glue that holds our shared values, beliefs and principles together, leading to actions and behaviours that serve to build purpose and trust in an organization.

We will work to:

- 4.1 Clearly define organizational roles and responsibilities

- 4.2 Develop succession plans & leadership development plans

- 4.3 Prepare for effective and positive change initiatives

- 4.4 Demonstrate a positive commitment to employees & volunteers
 - Foster personal & career development
 - Create meaningful volunteer roles, connected to the purpose of WCSWR.