



Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region Strategic Plan 2024-2027

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To those who use our services, our team, supporters, and friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read this strategic plan. The pages that follow provide the roadmap for how Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region (EAFWR) will allocate our time, resources, and talents for the next three years.

We had the opportunity to connect with many people in the development of this plan, and we heard that there are opportunities to provide services that are more accessible, where people feel safe, welcomed, celebrated, and receive supports that meet their unique needs and circumstances. We've been working closely within and outside of the developmental services sector to seek ways to prioritize equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging for our team, the people we support and our community. We hope to see positive results of the advocacy work of our last strategic plan, to make housing more accessible and life more affordable. Plans for our next office location continue to evolve. The Ministry of Children Community and Social Services plan to further their Journey to Belonging transformation. These are complex and exciting times!

We are grateful to everyone who took the time to share their suggestions, hopes and dreams with EAFWR. If you shared with us, we hope that you will see your contributions within these pages.

Thank you to everyone who will help us realize these goals and objectives, always moving us towards our vision of a community where everyone belongs and is valued for their contributions.

Thank you to our friends at People Minded Business for their research and guidance, our Board of Directors for their tireless dedication to the mission & future of EAFWR, and the members of our Steering Committee for providing input and guidance throughout the development of this plan.

We can't wait to get started. Let's do this together!



Allan Mills, Executive Director

EAFWR'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission Statement

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region champions an inclusive community for all by working with people with disabilities, their networks and the broader community.

Vision Statement

We envision a community where everyone belongs and is valued for their contributions.

Values



Belonging: We value every person's understanding and feeling of Belonging.



Community: We value connections between people and places that create Community for each of us.



Equity: We value people's diverse experiences and contributions, and the journey of learning and unlearning to support Equity for all.



Relationships: We value the importance of authentic and reciprocal Relationships for the well being of all.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Beginning in the summer of 2023, Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region (EAFWR), supported by People Minded Business (PMB) a consulting firm with extensive experience working in Developmental Services, undertook a strategic planning process, illustrated below, to help prioritize our focus into 2027.



PMB researched the environment in which EAFWR operates including local, regional, and provincial trends. Using an inclusive process of consultation, collaboration, and co-creation, EAFWR learned first-hand about what matters most to **194** people representing all the key constituent groups.



What follows is a summary of what we learned and what our priorities and supporting foundation will be going forward.



A WORD FROM PEOPLE SUPPORTED

EAFWR's Mission is "Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region champions an inclusive community for all by working with people with disabilities, their network and the broader community," so it's appropriate to give people with disabilities the first word before we get into the analysis. An in-person focus group was conducted with WALES (Working Adults Learning Empowering Skills) Members to hear about their opinions on the supports they receive from EAFWR and what could be better.

When talking about what they liked about EAFWR, people shared how much they appreciated meeting other people and the friendships they've made. They also appreciated having somewhere to go, being encouraged to develop different social and personal goals, and having the chance to learn different skills, such as typing or cooking. Several individuals mentioned that being involved in EAFWR has supported them to do things they wouldn't have been able to do on their own, such as getting a job or doing public speaking at schools.

Most suggestions for improving EAFWR were about the WALES facilities or about activities they used to do. Washrooms in some disrepair, computers being old and slow, and not having nice furniture or a quiet place to go when others are loud were all shared by a few individuals as things they wished were better. Things to do or places to go that were most mentioned were camping, BBQs, and Waterloo Park. While there were things that people attending WALES thought could be better, they were all very positive and appreciative of the staff and program.

TRENDS AND ASSETS

The developmental services sector is facing unprecedented levels of change and challenges. Organizations such as EAFWR will need to continue to adapt as they respond to these changes. As part of the strategic planning process, the following trends and themes were considered:

Trends

- Journey to Belonging and anticipated expansion of direct funding
- Persistent poverty for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Lack of affordable housing
- Human resource crisis, difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified employees
- Population growth leading to the increasing amount of service needs
- Changing face of clients: aging, greater diversity, increased complexity of needs
- Significant loss of expertise and leadership through retirement
- Low levels of young people entering the sector as employees
- Technological advancements, hybrid services, and digital inclusion
- Ever growing waitlists

Each organization has a unique ability to act on the future, built on the resources, assets, and strengths it can deploy against the challenges and opportunities it is facing. Below are frequently mentioned assets that surfaced via constituent input.

Assets

- Values-Based Supports
- Great Staff
- Strong Leadership
- Commitment to EDIB
- Strong Community Partner
- Innovative and Forward-Looking
- Caring Environment

EAFWR'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority 1: Drive Financial Sustainability and Diversify Revenue

Intent: EAFWR will develop new and innovative funding and revenue streams, while ensuring the efficient and sustainable use of our resources.

- Increase corporate and private donations.
- Clearly articulate and communicate the organization's value proposition.
- Secure a new location for EAFWR's office and programs.
- Strengthen partnerships in line with our values to expand opportunities for the people we support.

Priority 2: Enhance Our Team

Intent: EAFWR will support employee well-being, organizational resilience and professional development through continuous learning, interpersonal connection and strengthening our organizational culture.

- Provide ongoing learning for professional growth and support employees' mental well-being to meet job demands.
- Compensate and recognize the work of team members in a way that demonstrates respect and identifies the value they bring.
- Create a culture where employees feel safe and included, encouraging participation within and across teams.
- Hire and keep people with the skills, values and perspectives necessary to provide excellent services and support.



Priority 3: Adapt Our Work To Meet The Needs Of Our Community

Intent: EAFWR will improve our services and supports to meet the diverse and evolving needs of people we support, their families, networks and our community as a whole.

- Expand the development of meaningful respite programs that meet the needs of people supported and their networks.
- Develop collaborative innovative housing options to enhance EAFWR's supportive housing choices.
- Build relationships across communities to ensure that the people we reach for service are reflective of our community.
- Streamline processes and paperwork to make interactions with EAFWR convenient and accessible.
- Provide support to families and people waiting for funding and services.

Prioritize Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) as foundational to EAFWR's work.

In support of these priorities, EAFWR will deepen our learning while developing our policies, processes, practices and services to ensure equitable impact for all community members and employees.

- Allocate resources and develop a framework to guide the organization in its EDIB initiatives.
- Identify and eliminate organizational barriers to building a workforce that is representative of our community.
- Work with community partners and funders to recognize and invest in EDIB as integral to effective service delivery.
- Review and update policies through an EDIB lens.

