



BRIDGES

FOR WOMEN SOCIETY

2019-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

Women¹ affected by trauma, violence, abuse or neglect have the choice and opportunity to break free from the cycles of violence, poverty and isolation, and to achieve safety, health and personal control in their lives.

Mission

Bridges is a feminist, strength-based, gutsy, innovative, trauma-informed community agency. Our healing, education and employment programs inspire a diversity of women impacted by trauma, violence, abuse or neglect to reclaim their lives and build economic security.

By drawing on its extensive knowledge of the impacts of trauma on employability, Bridges provides expertise and resources to a diverse range of individuals, organizations and allies in order to break the cycles of violence, poverty and isolation faced by the people we serve.

Values and Principles

The following values and principles guide us in our work:

- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of each woman, her boundaries, cultural context and diverse belief systems
- Honoured the individual learning and healing process and cultivating non-judgmental environments
- Committed to trauma-informed, anti-oppressive practice and non-violent organizational culture
- Breaking the silence and educating on trauma, violence, abuse and neglect
- Working to ensure our workplace reflects the diversity of our clients
- Recognizing, valuing and normalizing women's experience of surviving trauma
- Honouring our feminist roots in our commitment to cooperation, collaboration and building consensus
- Fostering community connections to support knowledge-sharing, collaboration and advocacy

¹ Bridges provides safe and respectful services to women and those who identify as women or as non-binary. When we use the term 'women' or 'woman' in this document it is inclusive of the above.



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- Recognizing and valuing women's work, paid and unpaid, women's equality, and contribution to the economy
- Bridges adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a reconciliation framework and will work to apply its principles, norms and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their land and resources
- Acknowledging and embracing change as a constant
- Practicing mindfulness and critical curiosity
- Bridges will provide education and training for all staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, UNDRIP, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism

Goals and Strategies

Bridges was founded in 1988 and now finds itself amidst a rapidly changing internal and external environment. In order to ensure the organization continues to operate with excellence, the Board and staff team articulated the following three strategic goals:

Goal #1 Bridges will have the internal organizational capacity to support growth and sustainability

Goal #2 Bridges will have diverse sources of unrestricted funding to support program growth and sustainability

Goal #3 Bridges will be recognized as a national leader in trauma-informed healing, education and training programs

Note: Goals #1 and #2 are near-term goals to be addressed in the first two years of the plan. Goal #3 is a longer-term aspirational goal that will guide the organization in continuing to pursue excellence in program and resources design in the near term, and in the longer term, in confirming Bridges as a national leader.



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Strategic Goal #1 - Bridges will have the internal organizational capacity to support growth and sustainability

Rationale

As our staff team has grown, so too have the challenges with retaining and supporting staff. To ensure Bridges continues to be known for its dynamic, caring and highly effective staff team, the agency will require innovative strategies to ensure we can continue to recruit and retain the best people despite the increasing cost of living in Victoria and surrounding areas, and increased competition from the private sector. A second challenge is that the programs operate over several sites and because Bridges is dependent on leased buildings the organization is highly vulnerable to the impacts of a high demand market and the potential for unstable tenancy arrangements (this vulnerability is addressed in Goal 2).

The strategies focus on strengthening organizational capacity in three areas: enhanced human resources capacity; articulating a comprehensive volunteer and mentoring program; and, improving internal communications systems and processes. Through developing and clearly articulating a new organizational structure, we will be able to optimize our existing capacity and identify gaps, while simplifying the roles that staff play to avoid our people becoming overextended. By articulating clear roles and responsibilities across the agency, we can maximize work/life balance, role clarity and improved work flow. In addition, Bridges will continue to value and strengthen the role that volunteers play in the success of our organization. Strengthened communications infrastructure and processes will also be needed to ensure staff and volunteers have access to the information and support they need across multiple sites. This will include integrating appropriate tech tools into our organizational culture.

Key Strategies:

- Develop the human resources capacity to:
 - Ensure staff recruitment, retention and succession plans are in place
 - Ensure clear job descriptions, annual evaluations and regular remuneration reviews for all staff positions
 - Ensure consistent orientation and training for all staff (e.g., trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, strengths-based approach)
 - Ensure staff have continuous opportunities for training and professional development (e.g., somatic practice, feminist theory, IT), etc.)
 - Develop a staff and organizational safety plan
 - Explore pros and cons of accreditation
- Strengthen community engagement through creating a comprehensive volunteer/mentoring program



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- Improve internal communications across the agency by:
 - strengthening linkages between central and satellite offices; and
 - ensuring that written policies and procedures are in place and readily available to staff

Strategic Goal #2 - Secure sustainable, responsive and resilient funding by cultivating new and existing relationships with individuals, groups and other partners

Rationale

A key focus over the next five years will be to shift the agency's funding model to be less vulnerable to the shifting priorities of traditional funders. We seek to set our own course rather than respond and adapt our activities to fit external priorities. We will do this by creating opportunities for new and existing supporters to strengthen their financial support, forging new partnerships, and exploring the feasibility of social enterprise.

Key Strategies:

- Use knowledge of existing donors and relationships to create donor profiles and craft an informed strategy to identify and acquire new donors and steward and cultivate existing supporters:
 - Strategically increase and diversify individual donor strategy, through new or reimagined appeals, events and partnerships that increase and diversify revenue sources
- Create opportunities for the wider Bridges community to contribute to resource development activities, including involving alumni, Board, members, and community spokespersons:
 - Investigate feasibility and benefits of social enterprise
- Ensure that all fundraising activities and partnerships are consistent with our values:
 - Ensure that the true costs of delivering our high-value, innovative services are reflected in all agreements and budgets, including the need for ongoing organizational development
- Develop a long-term plan for capital assets
- Develop partnerships to fund Bridges' research



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Strategic Goal #3 - Bridges will be recognized as a national leader in trauma-informed healing, education and training programs

Rationale

As the founders of the Bridging Employment Services model and many other innovations we've developed in-house, Bridges has an opportunity to showcase the many advancements we've made—and will continue to make—in improving the lives of marginalized women and their families. By continuing to show national leadership as experts in trauma-informed practice, education and employment programs, we aim to become recognized as a centre of excellence for the work we do.

As Bridges continues to expand its offerings, there is an opportunity to explore the potential to create a Bridges Academy and Healing Centre based on the Bridges' service delivery model. Ultimately, we envision a centre with supportive housing, multi-modal healing and training programs and on-site social enterprises to provide apprenticeship and employment opportunities for Bridges graduates. Achieving this ambitious goal will depend on having a well-articulated service delivery model and the necessary tools and resources for success and demonstrating the positive results we have achieved. At the same time, we will continue to work to sustain our well-earned reputation for excellence and innovation.

Key Strategies:

- Establish Bridges as a designated centre of excellence for trauma-informed healing, education and training programs (i.e. International Centre for Bridging Programs):
 - Ensure all Bridges publications, curricula and resource materials reflect trauma-informed practice.
 - Foster new partnerships to expand Bridges curriculum and programming
 - Continuing to develop in-house innovations to lead systems change (e.g. iPad intake processes, integrating somatic practice into confidentiality work).
- Demonstrate the impacts of the Bridges model:
 - Develop partnerships with the academic and research communities to show the impacts of the work on the lives of the women Bridges serves;
 - Report on results of impact evaluations and joint research initiatives
- Ensure enhanced and sustained visibility of the Bridges model by:
 - Continuing to ensure Bridges' program is endorsed by highly visible organizations like the Status of Women Canada.
 - Strengthening our digital presence, including exploring opportunities for online sales (e-books, tutorials, etc.)