

WOMEN'S HABITAT STRATEGIC PLAN

**2025
-
2028**



THE Importance

OF OUR LANGUAGE

Language plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions, systems of meaning and discussions around gender-based violence (GBV). At Women's Habitat of Etobicoke (WHE), we recognize that the way GBV is framed in language influences societal attitudes. Language can either perpetuate stereotypes or promote understanding and empathy, it can empower or disempower.

In an organization, the use of intentional discussion around language contributes to the building of organizational cohesion which facilitates the development of shared vision, goals and strategies as well as ensures that all stakeholders understand the objectives and their roles in achieving them.

Throughout our strategic planning process, we were acutely aware of the importance of having a shared understanding of the language our organization uses to clearly articulate our mandate, organizational philosophies, viewpoint and culture. Language must bridge eventual gaps between governance and operations and across all departments and functions to foster collaboration and ensure everyone is aligned. We had plenty of healthy discussions to ensure that concepts and narratives were attentive to interpretation of all stakeholders including clients, staff, volunteers, donors, funders, sector partners and the community in general.

As language changes to reflect current viewpoints and positions within the issue of GBV and the feminist movement, our organization must engage in intentional discussion to ensure that our organization remains aligned with collective understandings, while maintaining organizational unique perspectives. Our new vision and mission statements are clear examples of how we have evolved our narrative around gender identity. The previously used terminology "women-identified" is replaced by the term "**all**" women. Likewise, we also have decided to make the distinction between being **impacted by** gender-based violence and **fleeing** gender-based violence to convey a message around the scope of the issue.

As an organization we will continue to be open and challenge ourselves to ensure that language continues to be an instrument of cohesion, integration, inclusion, empowerment and clarity.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Developing our new strategic plan has been an intentional and thoughtful journey, grounded in robust consultations and careful reflection on the future Women's Habitat of Etobicoke (WHE) seeks to create.

The Board of Directors and Executive Director together extend our heartfelt thanks to the clients and persons with lived experience who generously shared their experiences and insights. Your feedback has guided our understanding and strengthened our resolve to drive meaningful change.

Thank you, too, to our valued community partners, sector experts, supporters, volunteers, as well as WHE's dedicated staff and management for giving time, energy, care, and knowledge during the many interviews and workshops underpinning this plan. We are grateful for your steadfast commitment to WHE's vision and mission. Lastly, we extend our appreciation to the consultants who provided valuable guidance throughout this process.

With this new strategic plan, we are united in our purpose and direction and confident we can build a future that is safe, equitable, and free from gender-based violence for all women, children, and youth. We look forward to collaborating with you to build that future of hope.



WOMEN'S
HABITAT



Our VISION

EVOLVED

ORIGINAL

All women have choice and opportunity to live their lives in dignity, with equal access to economic and social opportunities and freedom from violence.

EVOLUTION

A future for *all* women, children, and youth that is safe, equitable, and free from gender-based violence.



Our MISSION

EVOLVED

ORIGINAL

To provide a safe refuge, counselling, support and advocacy for women and their children who are fleeing violence; while also working toward a more equal society where the inherent value of all women is recognized and celebrated.



EVOLUTION

To provide trauma-informed services to women, children, and youth impacted by and escaping gender-based violence through intervention, prevention, and collective action that drives systems transformation.



Our

CORE VALUES

Our values, vision and mission should reflect the changes that have been evolving not only in our organization, but the community and world around us. Better reflect the time in which we live, the approach we take every day, and how we change over time to meet and address the needs.



ORIGINAL

- ✓ Equality
- ✓ Advocacy
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Diversity
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Respect

EVOLUTION

- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Compassion
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Optimism



Our

CORE VALUES

Collaboration

Authentic, people-centred relationships fuel our work. We intentionally seek diverse perspectives, foster meaningful connections, and co-create opportunities for deeper impact.

Compassion

We recognize our shared humanity, welcoming moments of joy and challenge. We honour each person's dignity and uniqueness, embracing their strengths, needs, experiences, and journey with an open mind and open heart.

Integrity

We stay true to our values and principles, making ethical decisions and taking responsibility for our actions to build a foundation of trust.

Optimism

We know that change is possible and cultivate environments of hopeful persistence. We see challenges as pathways for growth, understanding that small steps lead to meaningful transformation. Optimism fuels our actions to create better tomorrows.



THE Pillars

ESTABLISHING OUR BLUEPRINT

Identifying the core areas that our organization will focus on over the course of its new plan, ensuring initiatives are aligned with our vision, mission, and values. Channeling our resources and efforts towards the areas driving the greatest impact.





THE PILLARS

OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN



WOMEN'S
HABITAT

01

**PROGRAMS
& SERVICES**

02

**PREVENTION &
SYSTEMS**

03

**ORGANIZATIONAL
VITALITY**

04

**FINANCIAL
STABILITY**

VISION

MISSION

VALUES

**PROGRAMS
& SERVICES**

01

Better outcomes for clients' knowledge, skills, capacity, and agency.

**PREVENTION
& SYSTEMS**

02

Being a thought leader and collaborator in promoting and leading collective action.

**ORGANIZATIONAL
VITALITY**

03

An enriched organization with capacity to meet the evolving needs of clients.

**FINANCIAL
STABILITY**

04

A financially healthy organization with diverse revenue and strong resource management.

VISION

MISSION

VALUES



-
-
-

BUILDING ON OUR PILLARS

IMPACT AND ACTION

Same organization. Same team. Made stronger with a focus on aligning governance and operations with strategy and structure, while seizing opportunities to innovate for the future together.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

01

IMPACT

Women's Habitat provides better outcomes for clients' knowledge, skills, capacity, and agency.

Programs and services are at the heart of how WHE creates lasting impact. Through the supports and services that WHE offers, clients enhance their safety, gain confidence, build capacity to overcome challenges, and grow their independence while being supported in their journey. Strengthening WHE's programs and services ensures we position ourselves to deliver the right tools at the right time and provide transformative experiences that unlock better outcomes for clients and support lasting change.

ACHIEVED BY

- Developing a comprehensive evaluation framework and feedback infrastructure to systematically capture and analyze client feedback on their experiences.
- Establishing a client-centred feedback loop that systematically integrates client voice into program evaluation and decision-making processes to drive continuous innovation, improve service delivery, and develop new initiatives to meet emerging needs.
- Developing and implementing innovative programs that recognize, understand, and celebrate the diversity of our clients and community.
- Fostering strong collaborations and partnerships with sector and non-sector organizations - including housing, mental health and addictions, healthcare, education, employment, legal - to enable holistic, integrated supports for our clients.



PREVENTION & SYSTEMS

02

IMPACT

Women's Habitat is a thought-leader and strong collaborator in promoting and leading collective action.

Gender-based violence will not end unless and until we dismantle the underlying systems of oppression that sustain it. The dual focus of prevention and systems transformation work hand-in-hand to create lasting change. This means taking a proactive stance, serving as a trusted voice to shape conversations, influence policy, change harmful social norms, and foster a collective response to the root causes of gender-based violence so systemic issues can be addressed at their core.

We know that complex issues such as gender-based violence and gender inequity cannot be tackled alone. By working together and engaging in 'upstream' thinking and action, we amplify our efforts to not only create better systems and outcomes, but to create a world with a more hopeful, inclusive, safe future for all.

ACHIEVED BY

- Developing a robust advocacy strategy - with clear success measures for impact, visibility, and influence - that clearly defines Women's Habitat's unique value proposition, focusing on its expertise in addressing gender-based violence and its role in systems change.
- Fostering partnerships and collaboration within and beyond our sector to achieve widespread perspective and change.
- Developing a targeted communications strategy that educates key audiences on the complexities and root causes of gender-based violence while increasing awareness of Women's Habitat's vision, mission, services, and impact.
- Developing programs and initiatives that engage men and boys in conversation and education around gender-based violence so as to foster awareness, encourage allyship, and promote healthy relationships.



ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY

03

IMPACT

An enriched organization with capacity to meet the evolving needs of clients.

A vital, vibrant organization has the capacity to evolve alongside the communities it serves, with the flexibility and strength to embrace new opportunities and address emerging needs. Focusing on WHE's organizational vitality emphasizes the importance we place on investing in the people who help WHE thrive and deliver on its long-term impact. Staff, management, volunteers, and the Board are the heartbeat of the agency, and creating an environment and culture that fosters their growth and engagement is key to our long-term success. By focusing on the agency's internal health, WHE will ensure it remains agile to adapt to whatever challenges and opportunities unfold, and its people remain motivated, equipped, and aligned so we can continue delivering meaningful change for clients today and for years to come.

ACHIEVED BY

- Strengthening team engagement, cohesion, and communication.
- Enhancing organizational capacity through continued leadership development.
- Continuing to align and build the relationship between governance and operations.
- Enhancing Board recruitment and engagement to continue to attract diverse, skilled individuals equipped to provide strategic oversight that drives forward the Women's Habitat mission.
- Developing an intentional staff feedback loop and more regular check-in processes to foster open communication, ensure staff well-being, and enhance organizational responsiveness.
- Enhance infrastructure in key areas such as property management, IT, and HR to ensure we are well-equipped to support clients' dynamic needs.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

04

IMPACT

A financially healthy organization with diverse revenue and strong resource management.

Strong finances are a vital element of any organization, allowing WHE to deliver timely and critical services, expand programs, support the evolving needs of clients without interruptions, and honour our commitment to accountability and excellence in resource stewardship. With a solid financial foundation, WHE can dream bigger, innovate boldly, and plan strategically for the future. It ensures we have the capacity to respond quickly to emerging needs and invest in new opportunities that align with our values and vision. By making financial sustainability a priority, we are committing to building a stronger, more resilient WHE — one that is poised to achieve lasting impact for the communities we serve, today and for years to come.

ACHIEVED BY

- Enhancing our corporate engagement strategy by building deeper relationships focused on shared values, vision, and mutual benefits that increase opportunities for sponsorship, donations, and in-kind.
- Strengthening our donor stewardship by enhancing relationship-building efforts, improving communication, and creating personalized engagement opportunities.
- Developing alternative funding streams, such as social enterprise opportunities, targeted grants, and fee-for-service models that will diversify revenue sources, reduce reliance on traditional funding avenues, and create sustainable income channels.
- Enhancing efficient and effective resource management practices; optimizing operational processes, improving oversight, and leveraging technology so that all resources - financial, human, and physical - are utilized to their fullest potential.





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