

Community Living Atikokan

Strategic and Operational Plan, 2022-2025

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Community Living Atikokan

A strategic plan is essential for the purposeful direction of an organization. Within a strategic plan are the aspirations of its stakeholders and the levels and types of services provided to the people it supports. The following strategic plan emphasizes the importance of focusing on supported individuals' unique abilities, their choice in decision making and having autonomy over their aspirations. There is further recognition within the strategic plan that it is the agency that must provide services that center around supported individuals as opposed to these individuals conforming to fixed structures within the agency. Structural and cultural flexibility through the integration of support within our surrounding communities are prerequisites to individuals living a *Meaningful Life [through] Relationships, Community, Happiness [and] Wellbeing*.

Traditionally, the use of strategic plans has been the exclusive domain of governance boards and senior leadership teams. The strategic plan must be viewed as an active and guiding resource that provides both a philosophical foundation for Community Living Atikokan (CLA) as well as a *road map* for broadening and deepening the experiences of the people we support. Community Living Atikokan has a strong history of providing person-directed support to individuals. The strategic plan acknowledges the agency's history and its dedicated staff while moving the organization to new levels of exemplary and responsive service.

Community Living Atikokan's strategic plan gives direction to the continued development of the organization's structure, its culture, its use of technology, the operation of its human resources and its support teams. It's important to recognize that an organization and its culture are living and growing entities and that the quality of any agency cannot exceed the capacity of its employees. Continuously developing all employees and the further establishing of a learning culture is essential to Community Living Atikokan's future success. By doing so, the strategic plan must have a direct presence within meetings, during performance evaluations and throughout onboarding of new employees. It must be understood by all employees at every level of the agency in order to create alignment of practices.

It should also be clear to everyone involved with Community Living Atikokan that our

growth requires a recognition of continuous improvement and a deep desire to explore and share new and innovative practices, and the provision of excellent service to those we support.

About Community Living Atikokan

Community Living Atikokan celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019. It has been evident throughout the strategic planning process – whether it be in consultation with the board or through conversations with the senior leadership team, with supported individuals and with employees – that there is a demonstrated commitment to person-directed practices that result in staff supporting individuals’ choices and autonomy to make decisions in all aspects of their lives. The ability to have choice in, for example, where someone lives and with whom is fundamental to a meaningful life and is reminiscent of Executive Director, Jim Turner’s question as to whether everyone who wants to, has a key to their own home. It is commendable that Community Living Atikokan, a decade ago under the leadership of Jim Turner and the agency’s senior team, took the important steps to restructure the organization to be person-directed.

The results of more than 10 years of work are evident. From the results of surveys completed by members, the overwhelming percentage of respondents felt very safe in their homes, felt that their personal space was respected, appreciate staff who support them and believed that their preferences and aspirations are understood by staff. From a person-directed perspective, members felt that they were involved in and directed decisions about the events in their lives.

Staff shared meaningful sentiments about their work with members. The underlying theme in all comments was related to the importance of the relationships they have developed and value with the people they support. When asked about the most rewarding aspect of their work, one employee commented, “the personal connections we make with each member. Watching members do something they may not have done before and succeed and the joy it brings is wonderful.” Another employee commented, “I love working here. It is rewarding and has made me a better and stronger person.”

Guiding Philosophy

From a person-directed approach, Community Living Atikokan is committed to the following:

- The focus is entirely on the person, never the system. It is all about how I as a unique individual want to live my life, how I am being supported to reach my goals, ensuring I

have the right amount of support – no more and no less – *just enough*. Listening to what I have to say, facilitating opportunities and experiences that enable me to make informed choices and recognizing that I am not dependent on you. I am empowered through my strengths and bolstered by your support.

- Numerous mainstream and community resources are unearthed, considered, researched and used. These resources are the ones that would be utilized ahead of supports created within the agency
- System resources are considered after the person’s dreams, interests and gifts have been discovered and only in relationship to how those resources can be used to support people in achieving their dreams and contributing their gifts
- The process asks, “How can we do this?” rather than finding reasons why we cannot
- The process and participation in the process depends more on our heart connections with the person than on our professional connections to the person

Methodology

In building the strategic plan, significant emphasis was placed on consultation with Community Living Atikokan’s Board, its senior leadership team, its staff and its supported individuals. In each of these respective consultations, there were opportunities for open dialogue and for the submission of responses to questions posed at meetings. There were also extensive and enlightening discussions with Executive Director, Jim Turner, who provided context with respect to the agency’s past as well as insights into the agency’s current challenges and opportunities.

Community Living Atikokan’s board was consulted on December 2, 2020 and the agency’s senior leadership team was consulted on May 10th. Meetings with staff took place on May 3rd and 4th and consultation meetings with members on June 21st and 22nd.

The analysis of all feedback and related documents were weighted, analyzed and were accordingly themed to ensure that *all* voices were recognized. Further consideration was given both to best practices in the areas of organizational development and to emerging practices within the Developmental Services sector.

The Strategic Plan was drafted beginning with an examination of the existing values, mission and vision statements in comparison to the feedback provided and documents received in preparation for the creation of the following strategic plan. Doing so enabled a better understanding of the agency’s philosophical stance and directions in 2016 and Community Living Atikokan, Strategic Plan (2022 – 2025)

in 2019.

Finally, the strategic plan utilizes the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' (MCCSS) framework for change within the developmental services sector. It will be necessary for organizations in the sector to create pertinent changes in order to become and remain successful within this new environment.

Sector Analysis

In June, 2021, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) announced the *Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion*, its framework for a long-term vision for developmental services in Ontario, “where people with developmental disabilities are supported to fully participate in their communities and live fulfilling lives”. See <https://www.ontario.ca/page/journey-belonging-choice-and-inclusion>.

During the next eight to ten years, MCCSS will embark on a plan for the future that focuses on people and how they can belong in their communities and live meaningful lives through person-centered and person-directed approaches. The following principles will help guide the Ministry's reform agenda:

- **People receive support based on their needs** - Greater equity through individualized funding and budgets tied to people's assessed needs.
- **Services build on the strengths of people and supports provided by families, support networks and communities** - Supports complement services available in the community and are culturally appropriate to reflect the needs of Indigenous people, Francophones and diversity within our communities, while also reflecting regional differences across the province.
- **Supports are person-directed and flexible** - People have more control over directing and managing their funding and supports.
- **Supports are proactive and responsive to people's changing needs across the course of their lives** - Greater focus on early intervention and prevention for people, with supports that are better integrated with other sectors.
- **Services are driven by evidence, outcomes and continuous improvement** - More emphasis on outcomes and quality services that are responsive to feedback from people using them.
- **Services and supports promote health, well-being and safety** - Services promote positive health and wellness outcomes and a high quality and meaningful life experience. Supports help address systemic barriers (for example, discrimination, racism, ableism) that prevent people from accessing supports and fully participating in their communities.

- **System is sustainable** - Improving the ability of developmental services to help people now and into the future.

Key commitments related to the, *Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion* are premised on three themes:

1. Putting people first
2. Improving service experience
3. Improving quality and accountability

Related action items include:

1. Putting people first

- Support people to pursue their goals through better planning and coordination across key sectors and programs
- Support individuals, families and support networks to make connections, get peer support and find information
- Address people's emerging needs and help prevent crises through early interventions and service coordination approaches

A new funding model focused on people

- Promote greater fairness and equity by providing funding based on people's assessed needs
- Give people more flexibility, choice and control by introducing options to direct their own supports
- Increase transparency for people and providers by allocating funding using an evidence-based funding model
- Provide people clear guidelines on the services and supports to be funded by the ministry
- Support people and agencies to adopt a new funding model

2. Improve service experience

- Improve the application process for people by making it simpler and easier to access
- Providing timely and clear information to reduce uncertainty for people and allow them to plan for their future

Improving how people's support needs are assessed

- Review different approaches to the application and intake process that are more responsive to people's circumstances, support needs and the service they are looking for

- Make it easier for people to understand the link between their assessed needs and funding and supports
- Improve how people’s needs are re-assessed as things change in their lives and how supports may be adjusted based on those changes

Adopting best practices and supporting innovation

- Provide a platform that allows the sector to share best practices so ideas can be scaled-up and adopted across the province, including innovative technologies to support people to live more independently

Supporting technology and digital delivery

- Implement more convenient service options for people such as online forms, virtual delivery and self-serve options
- Use digital platforms to provide information and resources to people and families

Improve quality and accountability

- Support continuous improvement in services for people by introducing a performance measurement approach across the province over the next two years
- Help people better understand and choose quality services through a transparent quality framework
- Promote healthy competition among providers and reward innovators

Planning for a skilled workforce

- Support a skilled, diverse and professional workforce to help people participate meaningfully in their communities and live good lives
- Collaborate with the sector to develop a long-term workforce strategy so that people and their families have access to high-quality support staff

It is evident that Community Living Atikokan is considerably further ahead of other organizations in its development as a person-directed organization and in areas highlighted by MCCSS. This should not be surprising given the leadership role that Executive Director, Jim Turner has provided provincially as an ongoing resource to the ministry.

Key excerpts from the *Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion* have informed the strategic plan. These include:

- People have more control over directing and managing their funding and supports
- More emphasis on outcomes and quality services that are responsive to feedback from people using them
- Increase transparency for people and providers by allocating funding using an evidence-based funding model

- Provide people clear guidelines on the services and supports to be funded by the ministry
- Improving the ability of developmental services to help people now and into the future
- Increase transparency for people and providers by allocating funding using an evidence-based
- Support people and agencies to adopt a new funding model
- Provide a platform that allows the sector to share best practices so ideas can be scaled-up and adopted across the province, including innovative technologies to support people to live more independently
- Implement more convenient service options for people such as online forms, virtual delivery and self-serve options
- Use digital platforms to provide information and resources to people and families
- Support continuous improvement in services for people by introducing a performance measurement approach across the province over the next two years
- Help people better understand and choose quality services through a transparent quality framework
- Promote healthy competition among providers and reward innovators

Given the proposed changes to the sector in the coming years, it is incumbent on Community Living Atikokan to:

- Define and assess service excellence related to all areas of service delivery with supporting qualitative and empirical metrics that inform and support decision making
- Understand and assess the “member experience” in conjunction with service excellence measures to continuously triangulate and strengthen practices that can be shared within the agency and across the sector
- Strengthen the “employee experience”
- Continue to build Community Living Atikokan’s reputation as a model of best practices that are aligned with the organization’s values, vision and mission
- Continue to augment government funding with alternative and innovative revenue sources

Key Drivers

Strategic plans are most effective when they have larger and overarching drivers that move goals and strategies forward. It was evident through consultations and an examination of the *Journey to Belonging* that for Community Living Atikokan will be well

served to:

- 1. Define and deliver Service Excellence in all aspects of its work
- 2. Become an employer of choice

Values, Mission and Vision Statements

Values

An organization’s *Core values* are deeply ingrained principles that guide an agency’s actions; they serve as its cultural cornerstones. *Core values* are inherent and are sacrosanct; they can never be compromised, either for convenience or for short-term gain. Community Living Atikokan’s *Core values* must be understood by all stakeholders, must be practiced and must become applicable to all facets of the agency’s actions. They need to be applied by the board, by senior leadership and by staff to focus on the people we support.

In order for CLA’s *Core Values* to be brought to life, they must become embedded in team meetings, utilized in planning, decision making and in employees’ performance evaluations and coaching, and be regularly used in conjunction with performance metrics to determine formative and summative levels of success. Consultation with staff and the senior leadership team revealed sentiments around the following headings and should be inextricably linked to the strategic plan’s strategic goals and operational objectives:

Community Living Atikokan’s *Core Values*

Safety	means more than the avoidance of harm. Safety begins with a genuine belief in inclusiveness through which our emotional, physical and psychological needs are recognized and nurtured. Safety enables each of us to reside in a place of support that then enables each of us to move outside of our comfort zones and to learn and grow as we embrace the dignity of risk.
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Respect	requires the full acknowledgement of the unique abilities, talents and gifts, aspirations and goals of each person as a unique individual. Through a person-directed approach we will work with members from where they are in their lives in order to explore meaningful and enriching experiences.
Teamwork	is at the center of everything we undertake. In order to have a meaningful impact in all aspects of our work, it is necessary to maintain clear communication, to honor commitments, to have high expectations and to serve one another with the highest levels of mutual accountability.
Service Excellence	speaks to the importance of achieving and maintaining the highest standards of performance in the delivery of person-centered services. This is achieved through continuous evaluation and reflection within a culture of continuous learning and the development of innovative practices. Service excellence requires that attention is paid to both our processes and desired outcomes through self, team and agency- wide evaluation of our work through the lens of our <i>Core values</i> , our <i>Mission</i> and our <i>Vision statements</i> .

Mission Statement

A mission statement describes an organization’s reasons for existence. It defines the organization’s identity and its approach to providing services. Community Living Atikokan’s mission is:

“Inspire, Encourage, Nurture”

Vision Statement

A vision statement is a foundational document that looks to the future that is aligned with its Guiding Philosophy and establishes what an organization wants to be in the future by providing direction.

Community Living Atikokan’s vision is to:

“A Meaningful Life: Relationships, Community, Happiness, Wellbeing.”

Strategic Goals and Operational Strategies

In order to create meaningful change, strategic goals serve to connect the organization’s values, mission and vision statements with actionable items that advance the former. It is important to note that goals drive the aforementioned through strategies and the latter cannot be goals in and of themselves. For example, technology is a strategy and cannot be a goal without its connection to CLA’s values, mission and vision. Strategic goals and operational strategies must meet further criteria. They must be:

- Capable of serving different and multiple functions across CLA that are aligned with its values, mission and vision
- Identifiable with supporting actions by employees across every level of the agency
- Measurable and regularly reviewed by senior management and their teams along with the board to determine progress and required changes
- Used as a basis for the evaluation of teams and tied to coaching, performance assessment and succession planning

Strategic Goals and Operational Strategies

With a focus on the Key Drivers of Service Excellence and remaining an Employer of Choice, the following strategic goals and operational strategies will strengthen Community Living Atikokan’s abilities to deliver high quality services, to develop staff and to meaningfully assess continuous improvement.

Service Excellence Strategic Goal

Define and assess service excellence related to all areas of service delivery with supporting qualitative and empirical metrics that inform and support decision making, communication, processes and workloads.

An informative and an important question worthy of consideration is, “How do we know if what we are doing through our work is having a positive impact?” In the absence of being able to meaningfully respond to this question, it is unlikely that we will be able to advance our practices or to align them with our values, vision or mission.

Collecting meaningful data that informs our successes and that identifies areas requiring change can be challenging but, it is necessary in order to continuously improve.

Operational Strategies

1. Define criteria to determine service excellence with respect to operational processes and service delivery that are aligned with Community Living Atikokan’s values, vision and mission. Criteria should include responsiveness, communication, follow through and use of technology to internal clients. This process could begin with discussions about what the highest levels of service would look like within the organization and could result in a continuum/scorecard with which to assess service excellence.
2. Evaluate all operational and service delivery processes using the continuum/scorecard
3. Identify areas that can be enhanced and create project plans and timelines
4. Establish a set of processes for assessing excellence and service delivery every 6 months and document ongoing growth
5. Mentor, coach and develop employees around continuous improvement, service excellence and advocacy of full inclusion within the community
6. Adopt criteria of service excellence continuum/scorecard with Collaborative Performance Management
7. Create a dashboard for all key metrics on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis

Service Excellence Quality of Life Strategic Goal

Understand and assess the “member experience” in conjunction with service excellence measures to continuously triangulate and strengthen practices that can be shared within the agency and across the sector.

Whereas operational and service delivery expectations can be quantified, taught and assessed, the *member experience* is subjective to each supported individual. All processes related to service delivery can be met and the member’s subjective experience may or may not be satisfied. Therefore, it is necessary to separate the objective and subjective during assessment and reexamine them in relation to one another to determine best practices that will inform both areas of service excellence.

1. Utilize a combination of personal outcome measures/quality of life indicators and develop questionnaires, anecdotal feedback templates and *look fors* to be utilized with members to assess all areas of their experience

2. Identify criteria for person-directed planning documents and audit best practices from other agencies
3. Develop processes for the use of person-centered approaches and provide additional training to direct support staff
4. Review and update CLA's Bill of Rights document with the people we support and provide supported individuals with the ability to determine staff and family members who will be part of their *Circle of Support*
5. Create a video portfolio for members to document their experiences
6. Utilize software to create electronic templates around person centered planning that can be accessed by a remote workforce and that significantly reduces/eliminates the use of paper
7. Ensure that the designated portal provides access to everyone within a supported individual's *Circle of Support (non-siloed teams)*
8. Create and utilize processes around the discussion of each supported individual at team meetings utilizing a standing agenda
9. Promote inclusion throughout the community and provide staff with additional tools to support individuals
10. Provide members with the ability to determine which staff will support them
11. As a sector leader, share practices and transfer knowledge and practices within and throughout the sector

Employee Experience Strategic Goal

Highlight the "employee experience" in order to strengthen engagement and further promote service excellence.

The member experience and the employee experience are inextricably linked and are fundamental to achieving service excellence. Employees in all organizations are fatigued from Community Living Atikokan, Strategic Plan (2022 – 2025)

the pandemic and there are heightened levels of attrition across the sector. Many employees in organizations in all sectors are reevaluating their life's priorities and in many instances are looking for meaningful, purpose-driven careers. Unlike most agencies, Community Living Atikokan does not have a significant retention issue, however, there is a limited pool of candidates to draw on from the community. As a result, creating emphasis around the employee experience is as important as it is elsewhere in the province.

Operational Strategies

1. Distribute an employee engagement survey annually and develop a subsequent action plan
2. Continue to emphasize professional development for all staff
3. Implement Collaborative Performance Management as a practice to promote continuous improvement; ongoing coaching with staff
4. In addition to the Staff Excellence Award, establish further formal recognition programs for staff as well as processes for monitoring of informal feedback and recognition
5. Implement (or continue to implement) exit interviews for all departing staff
6. Breakdown silos of staffing groups and programs and cross assign staff
7. Resume outside of work activities with staff
8. Undertake a Diversity and Inclusion course with all employees
6. Support unpaid sabbaticals for educational purposes

Priority	Tasks	Responsibility	Timeline	Approval Requirements	Metrics

Priority		Tasks	Responsibility	Timeline	Approval Requirements	Metrics

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