

The Bridge Strategic Planning 2023

Executive Summary

The Bridge: From Prison To Community Hamilton provides reintegration services to people exiting incarceration. Since 1970, The Bridge has been promoting safe community reintegration for persons exiting incarceration. Through our restorative approach, we provide clients with an opportunity to rebuild connections to the community and achieve personal reintegration goals for a better future.

Over the last few years, several unfortunate events have occurred and hindered our day-to-day operations. The Covid-19 pandemic brought a lot of business to a halt and created a need for government help. A CEBA (Canadian Emergency Business Account) loan was taken out in the amount of \$60,000. This loan will be required to be paid back beginning in December 2023. In 2022, our Transitional Housing program also came to a halt due to a fire that devastated the entire Bridge Home. This fire also disrupted services as our offices were also located in the home. This made operations difficult for staff and also disrupted our clients and their living accommodations. In 2022, our last transitional housing client left the program and housing operations have been paused. This creates an issue as there's a new lack of clients we now serve, and a loss of income tied to the housing program. During this time, we have been operating in the community and have recently secured a temporary location as of the Summer of 2023. As an agency, we now face a need to both grow our programming and our financial support. More clients will be needed in order to operate effectively and finances from individual and corporate donors and through grants and other government funding will be required to carry this out.

The Board of Directors along with staff and members of the public held a Strategic Planning meeting in the Spring of 2023 to discuss the future of The Bridge and a way to move forward. The Bridge offers a great service to those exiting incarceration, however, with the loss of our transitional housing program and lack of clients, we now need to find other ways to retain clients and keep moving forward until our housing program is viable again. Moving forward, we will be required to create a number of services in order to maintain our capabilities to operate and pay down our government debt.

One of the ways we will do this is by implementing a stat and charting system to identify where our clients are coming from and what services they need and are receiving. By keeping up-to-date live data, we can ensure we are asking for the proper amount of funding in order to service the clients we help, as well as identify what new funding and training opportunities we require. By offering a number of services that help clients in several different areas, we both help our clients improve their quality of life, but also ensure that we maintain the level of funding needed to sustain operation and administrative costs as well as any other needed funding on top of our debts. In order to carry a caseload which allows us to do this, staff will begin retaining clients from outside agencies and networking to ensure that we are reaching the clientele we serve and can get them in our doors. Charting details and communicating with the board frequently can ensure that we keep on track to grow and sustain the organization. Our working board of directors will be helping staff in any way possible to move forward and sustain the organization long term. This will include helping implement the strategic plan and goals we wish to achieve and offer training and support in various areas while we grown and offer new and updated services.

Our staff have managed to keep going through the difficult times and in order to help them grow with the organization, there will need to be a better system in place to know where their strengths and weakness lay. Supervision and staff performance reviews will take place regularly in order to help staff identify where they are struggling and what they believe can help them optimize their performance. By implementing staff reviews as well as ongoing training and other supports, we will provide the organization with more to offer to the community and clients we are servicing. As we move forward, new staff may be retained on a contract or permanent basis.

Our new data collection policy will help us identify target areas of services and provide the opportunity to build a portfolio to provide to potential donors showcasing our success and what types of services and outcomes they can help provide by funding the organization. Our Social Media and other online presence will also help us showcase our organization and help as we attempt to obtain clients through referral and word of mouth. Again, by highlighting our services and talents, we can grow our client numbers and offer a larger amount of services to those in need.

Creating a larger online presence as well as targeted emails and donor requests will help us grow and find potential partners for both financial support and client retention. Another method of obtaining clients is to get back into the Barton Street Jail and start meeting with inmates wishing to have case management services and readily available, free programming to help them as they re-integrate into the community. By having a detailed and organized intake and case management system in place as well as structured programming, clients will be able to access the services they need to prevent re-offending and have a higher quality of life. Ongoing progress reporting as well as action plans for goals to highlight projected outcomes for clients will help staff provide details about what services are helping clients with and the areas they are making gains in. Actual outcomes can be matched to the projected outcomes as well as the methods used to achieve the goals and this will help to determine what strengths and weaknesses occurred from staff and clients. This will help us grow and decide what training, funding, and other areas we will need to grow in order to stay relevant and needed for the clients and community.

The areas of volunteering and fundraising have been weak for various reasons and created a lack of people to provide help with various tasks. We will begin searching for a Volunteer Coordinator and Fundraising Coordinator immediately. This will help us take the work off of staff and the Board so certain tasks can be carried out by volunteers and those who may be more qualified and experienced in them. Helping with the day-to-day operations, event planning and execution, as well as meeting financial goals of the organization will be the projected outcome of the two Coordinator roles.

As we move forward, the implementation of several new ideas and methods of operating are projected to help grow the organization and funding. Making ourselves known to potential clients and the community as a whole will assist us in obtaining and maintaining high caseloads and the financial means to carry out day-to-day operations and administrative costs. By having a sufficient amount of finances available by way of grants and donations, clients will receive quality care and ongoing support that meets our mission and vision. By balancing our budget and having enough funds to be allocated to our debts, we wont risk the need to place a lien on our house or jeopardize the future of our organization.

Our services stand out because of the clientele we serve are underserved or are not serviced in the areas they benefit from. It is now the job of the organization and its staff to ensure we are doing what we can to provide the best services and carry out the mission of The Bridge and grow the organization so that it can continue helping in all ways possible.

Overview and History of The Bridge

The Bridge program grew out of a desire to provide a greater follow-up after incarceration to help criminalized individuals reintegrate into the community. Individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system are often stigmatized upon release or acquittal and can face a lifetime of consequences. In 1988 an ecumenical committee helped structure the Board Of Directors, and in 1990 The Bridge was incorporated. The Bridge is a charity which is registered with the Canadian Revenue Agency and works to help by facilitating community reintegration and reconciliation for men in the justice system, and their families, through advocacy, education, and restorative justice. In 2001, The Bridge purchased the Bridge House at 319 Barton St E, Hamilton, Ontario, and it was opened in 2004. Since then, we have operated by providing transitional housing services as well as other programming and counselling to former inmates and their families. In 2022, the Bridge House caught fire and was destroyed. It is currently under restoration and in the summer 2023, we began operating out of a temporary space at 399 Barton St East. Throughout the Covid Pandemic, we had to operate from home, and in some instances when available, in the community to help our clients with their needs. Our clients have lived in other temporary spaces since the fire, and after the discharge of our last resident, we have had no further housing until further notice. We continue to offer services such as case management, groups and programming, and family support.

Our Mission (REVISED)

To provide anti-oppressive and anti-racist services of discharge planning, transitional housing, rehabilitative programs, and trauma-informed care for victims, former offenders, and their families, by the promotion and enabling of healing and reconciliation for those in our community affected by crime.

Our Vision

To facilitate community reintegration and reconciliation for men in the justice system and their families through advocacy, education, and restorative justice.

Our Core Values

- We believe in the commitment of staff to promote for the growth and accountability of our clients.
- We believe that our programs will contribute to the well-being of the community.
- We believe in volunteers who will provide compassionate support for the reintegration of clients into the community.
- We believe in challenging the community to become a welcoming, understanding place.
- We believe in a volunteer Board of Directors to embrace the vision and values of the Bridge, and the requirements of various levels of government and outside agencies.

Our Volunteers

Our programs have always relied heavily on the support of volunteers. Volunteers are the connection and often the only connection the people we serve have back into the community. Stigma, discrimination, and the resulting social isolation leave folks without a sense of belonging and meaning that being a part of the community brings. Our volunteers are that bridge between. They are also some of the biggest advocates for social change.

We are currently looking to fill the volunteer position of a Volunteer Co-ordinator. This person will help organize and delegate tasks to our volunteers with day-to-day operations, special events, and fundraising.

Our Community Support

Hamilton residents and organizations have rallied around and supported us after The Bridge House fire. We received well over \$15,000 during our call out through social media and a GoFund Me campaign launched on our behalf. Summit Housing stepped in and provided temporary housing for our residents from June through to November 2022 until our current residents were able to secure alternate housing. We happily report that as of November 2022 these residents have found longer term stable housing. Raise Meaningful Work Foundation not only provided us a grant for two years in a row to support our very successful employment program. We continue to rely heavily on donation from the community in order to operate and provide services.

We continue to require on-going financial support through grants and individual donations within the community. We are currently looking for a volunteer Event Coordinator to take on Fundraising and take the lead on setting up events.

Our Services Provided

While we focus on growing the organization and our client base, we continue to provide the following services:

Family Support Group

The Family Support Group empowers relatives and immediate supportive relational networks of people who are incarcerated with community resources and peer emotional support. This group currently runs once a week via zoom. For those who may require more in depth help or wish to speak privately with the case manager, this option is available.

Support Group/Programs

The goal of our programs is to provide men an opportunity to address barriers to integration and build positive relational and life skills in supportive and facilitated group settings. Through our groups, men who are entering back into the community, or who have already entered, can gain skills in areas such as addiction, mental health, healthy living, and other life skills to assist them in their reintegration and building towards success.

Intensive Case Management

The Bridge is open several days a week and has a caseworkers on-site to provide Intensive Case Management services to clients. Case management assists clients in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and finding solutions to the barriers they may be facing . By working with a case manager, goals and the steps to reach them can be identified in a case plan and meeting regularly with the case manager to assist in ongoing work towards achieving the goals set by the client.

On-Site Clinical Counselling

The Bridge's clinical team works closely with various community-based counselling and mental health supports and can provide referrals where further services are required. Clients can access informal counselling services with a case worker or be referred to local agencies for more in-depth counselling or therapy services.

Services which could be provided

Discharge Planning and Re-integration services

Upon an agreement from local jail, our case worker will have the opportunity to meet with men who are about to be released and develop a case plan for their reintegration into the community. This will assist in identifying immediate housing needs, food security, counselling, and other areas to assist them in a successful reintegration from the jail setting in hopes to lower their risk of re-offending.

Additional psychoeducational, life skills, and other groups from professionals and volunteers in the community

Local agencies and services providers could be offering services on a volunteer or contractual basis with The Bridge to offer various psychoeducational groups in areas to help former offenders learn about their behaviours and build the skills to assist them in moving forward post incarceration.

Our Goals

Through our meeting we identified the following goals we wish to reach in the next year:

1. **Awareness:** Enhance awareness of The Bridge and its purpose by:
 1. Establishing an on-line and social media presence that is regularly updated.
 2. Create a list of networking opportunities The Bridge should take advantage of:
 1. Visit local social service agencies to network and share what specialised services we can offer their clients.
 2. Visit local law offices to notify criminal law lawyers of our services and try and retain clients.
 3. Set up our "One Drive" to list agencies and individuals that have met with staff or board members. Captures of case management and areas of focus to be listed to identify areas clients are being serviced and help given.

Measures of success:

- *Increased # of agencies contacted*
- *Increased # of agencies/individuals contacting The Bridge*
- *Increased # of hits on social media*
- *Increased media attention*

2. **Fundraising:** Increase fundraising to enable the support and programming required.
 1. Generate a pie chart that displays where our funding comes from.
 2. Have a working document available on-line to notify Board Members of grants that we have applied for, its purpose, categories it is be placed into under our finances, and whether we received it or not.
 3. Research and identify additional sources of funding.
 4. Begin allocating money towards the Covid Debt Repayment.

Measures of success:

- *Increase in total fundraising \$*
- *Increase in # of donors*
- *List of grants regularly updated (e.g., monthly to Board/annually to AGM)*
- *Acknowledgement/thank you letters sent to donors within 30 days of grant receipt*
- *Covid Debt repaid by end of Dec. 2023*

- 3. Programming and Events:** Build on current programming and event opportunities.
1. Get back into the Barton Jail to meet with inmates and provide services that we are given the opportunity to perform.
 2. Develop a list of potential groups and structured activities that can be offered to clients and potential clients in the community (e.g., drop in pizza/meals, psychoeducational groups, support groups, games and activities, etc.)
 3. Prioritize activities based on resources and volunteers available to support.

Measures of success:

- *Increase # of programs offered*
- *Increase # of clients who take advantage of our programs*
- *Positive feedback on programming from our clients*
- *Constructive feedback has been addressed to enhance programming*

- 4. Operations:** Enhance the operational/administrative elements of The Bridge.

1. Restore the house.
2. Update the Operating Manual and Board Bi-Laws.
3. Review and update the Business Plan.
4. Get insurance information updated and any outstanding business taken care of.

Measures of success:

- *House is fully restored.*
- *Operating Manual and Board Bi-Laws have been updated and approved.*
- *Business Plan has been updated and approved by the Board.*
- *Insurance information has been updated.*
- *Other outstanding business has been identified and addressed.*

- 5. Volunteers:** Build our volunteer and event capacity.

1. Recruit a Volunteer Coordinator
2. Recruit an Event Coordinator
3. Establish a list of volunteers that can be utilized to support various events

Measures of Success:

- *Volunteer Coordinator in place*
- *Event Coordinator in place*
- *List of volunteers has been established*
- *# of volunteers increased from current by 25%*

6. Data: Establish and track data and metrics to demonstrate progress against goals

1. Establish baseline metrics and key performance indicators of our work with our clients (Data capture of services provided , topics of conversation, informal counselling, and client outcomes and projected outcomes)
2. Communicate KPIs annually to our Board and the community through regular feedback mechanisms (e.g., newsletter)

Measures of success;

- *Baseline metrics established*
- *Regular measurement and reporting on metrics to Board (e.g., monthly, annually)*

7. Staff Development: Support the development and capability of our staff.

1. Make sure each staff member has an updated job summary with clearly articulated goals.
2. Begin routine staff performance reviews to provide feedback and support to staff to enable their success.
3. Work with staff to identify development opportunities that will be supported by The Bridge.

Measures of success:

- *All staff have an updated job summary and are clear on goals and expectations*
- *Regular performance meetings established and held and staff development expectations have been met.*

During the Strategic Planning Meeting a SWOT Analysis was performed and the following was observed:

STRENGTHS

- ✓ We have a multitalented Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers.
- ✓ Our purpose is unique, and we can optimize this message to retain more clients.
- ✓ We have a jail near by which we can retain clients from upon discharge.
- ✓ We have a house which we provide transitional housing (restoration currently puts this on hold).
- ✓ Our organization has a passion for the community which we serve.
- ✓ The programs we offer have value and help increase the quality of life of our clients.
- ✓ We focus on restorative justice and not negative reinforcement. This helps our clients build relationships and trust with individuals involved in our organization and help them view themselves without stigma.

WEAKNESS

- The fire has temporarily halted our Transitional Housing portion of our programming. This has removed potential clients and funding for our organization.
- Fundraising is lacking. Many people are unable to donate, and we require a dedicated volunteer to focus solely on donations and fundraising.
- The hours we offer may not meet the needs of the community we serve.
- The training our staff have may not be sufficient for the clients we serve.
- There is disorganization within the organization with communication and ways programs are being delivered.
- There's a lack of community acknowledgement and awareness of our organization and programs we offer.
- Our outreach and exposure are lacking.
- We lack the amount of funding required to operate sufficiently.
- We need to find a better way of obtaining and retaining clients.
- At the time of writing this we were not being able to get into the jail facilities.
- We have no measurable data to provide information on whether our services are making any change or providing the needed work in the community.
- We do not have enough Insurance information, and the third party individuals/companies are not communicating clearly enough with us.
- Lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities and expectations of staff.
- The organization doesn't currently fully utilize our volunteers to provide support for admin, programming and events.
- There's a lack of understanding of the role of the Board in day to day operations.

OPPORTUNITIES

- We can offer more programming to individuals in the community which would improve their quality of life and also help us get more exposure and funding opportunities.
- Utilizing the local jail would provide us with more clients and opportunities to help the community and individuals who are reintegrating into the community.
- We have the opportunity to connect with criminal justice organizations and social services within the city.
- We can connect with politicians on the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to help with exposure and funding and exposure.
- By utilizing social media more and make the community more aware of our existence and what we do. By utilizing it as educational resource, we may find more funding, clients, and more opportunities as a whole.
- Visiting local criminal justice lawyers we can find more clients who may benefit from our services and potentially help them with reduced time if they enter an agreement to receive services as part of their plea bargaining, or upon probation/parole agreements.
- Secure the skills of someone with fundraising experience.
- We can partner with other agencies/organizations to provide complementary services.
- To streamline and promote the specific unique services offered by The Bridge (without trying to do too many things - what do we want to be known for?)

THREATS

- Covid loan repayment. The money owed back on our loan is high and the interest rate is set to begin accruing in December of this year (2023). This puts us at a significant disadvantage due to the money we receive as donations from individuals will need to be allocated to the loan and lessen the amount put towards programming.
- We lack exposure, if not improved we will not gain more clients.
- We currently have no rental income due to the house being under construction.
- Other agencies are currently performing the same programs and tasks as we do when we specialize in it. This takes clients and funding from our organization. This includes “reintegration offices” within the jail and other social service agencies within the community. We will need to develop messaging as to why our programming is “better” and clients should come to us.

By focusing on our opportunities and building on our strengths, we can minimize the weaknesses identified and work towards ensuring the threats do not interfere with our operations.

Strategic Goals and Actions

Upon review of the Goals and SWOT analysis, a plan of action will need to be carried out. By following the action plan, the individuals involved will be able to ensure the goals can be effectively executed and completed in a way that is time efficient and measurable. The following Action Plan will be followed in order to achieve the goals and directives of The Bridge as we move forward.

1. **Action:** Establishing an on-line and social media presence that is regularly updated and provides details of our services, seeks out clients, requests donations, and provides value.

Due Date: Ongoing- but regular content that is educational, informative, and to request donations will begin immediately. Posting should be done at least 3 times a week on social media. A monthly newsletter will be sent out via MailChimp once a month, and any additional materials at any times needed to highlight achievements, notify the public and donors of upcoming fundraising and events, and any other opportunities for funding or community awareness. Board members and community volunteers to help with monthly newsletter educational pieces.

Who's Responsible: Staff, Volunteers, Board of Directors

Priority: Moderate to High

2. **Action:** Create a list of networking opportunities on our One Drive or other sharable file that The Bridge should take advantage of. Staff and Board to begin visiting local social service agencies and local law offices to notify them of our services and try and retain clients. This list will be regularly updated with notes indicating who was seen, what was discussed, and any outcome or follow up directions. This will be shared with the Board monthly at Board meetings via a report as well as online at all times.

Due Date: Ongoing- begin immediately.

Who's Responsible: Case Worker, ED, Chair and Vice Chair.

Priority: HIGH

3. **Action:** Generate a pie chart that displays where our funding comes from on a monthly basis and be included in the financial report for the monthly board meeting. This will also be available to have to potential funders. An end of the year chart will also be developed showing where the years' financial resources generated from and went.

Due Date: Ongoing beginning immediately- Monthly and Yearly.

Who's Responsible: Financial committee- ED, Treasurer, Staff.

Priority: Medium

4. **Action:** Have a working document available on-line to notify Board Members of grants that we have applied for, its purpose, categories it is be placed into under our finances, and whether we received it or not. The break down of the grant will notify the board of how much is dedicated to staff pay, operational costs, and other resources.

Due Date: Ongoing, to be available on a monthly basis. To be sent as apart of the Executive Director's Report prior to every Board meeting.

Who's Responsible: ED, Staff, Treasurer.

Priority: Moderate to High

5. **Action:** Research and identify additional sources of funding.

Due Date: Ongoing- Begin immediately

Who's Responsible: ED to find additional grants and meet with potential funders in the area. Board Members to research who donates to local agencies and is involved in the areas of addiction, mental health, and criminal justice/restorative justice, etc. These may be individual donors, government agencies and grants, or corporate level donors.

Priority: HIGH

6. **Action:** Begin allocating money towards the Covid Debt Repayment. Secure donations from individual donors that can be set aside for ongoing debt repayments. Seek out ways to utilize all funding opportunities to be allocated towards payments.

Due Date: Ongoing- Begin Immediately

Who's Responsible: ED to look for funding opportunities and meet with potential funders as well as Board Members to meet with potential funders. The ED will allocate the funds on the advice of the Treasurer and Board Of Directors

Priority: Very High

7. **Action:** Get back into the Barton Jail to meet with inmates and provide services that we are given the opportunity to perform.

Due Date: Ongoing effort to begin immediately.

Who's Responsible: ED and Case Manager

Priority: Medium to High

- Action:** Develop and approve a list of potential groups and structured activities that can be offered to clients and potential clients in the community (e.g., drop in pizza/meals, psychoeducational groups, support groups, games, and activities, etc.) and prioritize activities based on resources and volunteers available to support. New grants and funding will need to be applied for and staff may be contracted on a short-term basis to provide a group or structured activity. Board Members may be contracted to do a group or activity and be paid a wage or stipend for their time and efforts. Stats will be collected on participants and topics or skills taught and how it benefits client and the organization.

Due Date: Ongoing- New groups to begin being offered by the end of the year.

Who's Responsible: ED, Case Manger, Board Members who participate, Volunteers, Contracted Staff.

Priority: High

- Action:** Restore the house and get our insurance information updated and any outstanding business taken care of re: building and insurance.

Due Date: Ongoing- As fast as possible

Who's Responsible: ED to oversee day to day business regarding house restoration. ED and Past Chair to oversee insurance and building operations with board insight and notifications. Every month a House Update to be provided to the board along with expenses, insurance information, and information on the building process are to be provided for viewing.

Priority: Very High

- Action:** Update the Operating Manual and Board Bi-Laws

Due Date: End of the year- beginning of 2024

Who's Responsible: Chair, VC, Secretary. Input and final approval of the Board.

Priority: Moderate-Medium

- Action:** Recruit a Volunteer Coordinator and Event Coordinator. Establish a list of volunteers that can be utilized to support various events.

Due Date: Ongoing to begin immediately.

Who's Responsible: Board members to volunteer to post job posting and interview potential candidates. ED to work with both Coordinators to support them as they carry out their duties as delegated by the Board Members.

Priority: High

12. **Action:** Establish baseline metrics and key performance indicators of our work with our clients (Data capture of services provided, topics of conversation, informal counselling, and projected outcomes and actual outcomes). These will be provided online and at monthly board meetings.

Due Date: Ongoing to begin immediately.

Who's Responsible: ED and Case Manager

Priority: High

13. **Action:** Case Management and Intake process to become more detailed and structured. Record keeping and documentation to mirror other local agencies in order to facilitate ease of access and ability to transition clients back and forth between agencies, and to monitor progress and projected and actual outcomes.

Due Date: Ongoing- Documentation process to change immediately after training.

Who's Responsible: Board Members, ED, Case Worker.

Priority: Medium to High

14. **Action:** Finances to be spent more conservatively and budget to be balanced or deficit to be as minimum as possible.

Due Date: Ongoing- Documentation process to change immediately after training in regards to petty cash and other staff spending. Finance committee and staff to review budget and see where cuts can be made and other services implemented that will bring in revenue from grants or donors.

Who's Responsible: Board, Treasurer, ED, Staff, Finance Committee

Priority: High

15. **Action:** Staff to provide a guideline of day-to-day activities they engage in order to help with development of performance reviews and see where new programming and case management loads can fit in.

Due Date: September

Who's Responsible: ED, Case Manager

Priority: High

16. **Action:** Staff performance review documents and layout to be created and reviews to begin happening quarterly.

Due Date: Development of review layout / charting 4 months. Reviews- Ongoing quarterly with monthly supervision for staff.

Who's Responsible: Chair, Vice Chair, Past Chair Secretary.

Priority: Medium - High