

A photograph of a woman and a child walking away from the camera on a wooden boardwalk. The woman is wearing a blue denim jacket and black pants. The child is wearing a light purple jacket and black pants, and has a backpack. The background is a bright sunset with silhouettes of other people in the distance.

Thriving Children, Youth, Families and Communities

**Strides Toronto
2021 - 2026 Strategy**





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“We are aiming to be a leader in the sector and community, where services are well integrated, accessible, and the first place that comes to mind for families.”

— Staff member, Strides Toronto

“We will be visible within communities, and emerging and client-defined families will be co-creators of our programs and their own goals.”

— One of the aspirations expressed in a strategy hive

Co-creating a Strategy for a New Organization

Strides Toronto became a single organization with a shared mission right on the eve of the pandemic. Just as the organization was beginning to integrate its workforce, programs and structures, front line staff scrambled to provide safe, uninterrupted services, and clients and families experienced unprecedented disruption and anxieties. As 2020 wore on, expectations for racial justice and addressing systemic inequities became increasingly urgent, and Strides Toronto began to look at itself more deeply, with anti-Black racism training and an assessment of its culture.

Against this complex landscape, Strides Toronto devoted significant time and energy to bring people together to explore their hopes for the future of Strides Toronto, to understand the needs of its communities, and to create a robust strategy designed to make a powerful difference for its clients, staff and the broader system of support for children, youth and families. Over several months, entirely virtually, Strides Toronto held more than 20 conversations, 100 interviews and a public survey to engage its workforce, clients, families and many other stakeholders in exploring what the world needs Strides Toronto to be. All aspects of the organization’s client environment, work environment and social accountability were explored.

Engagement Process

Pollination: Core Team Interviews

What do we do now that is most important?
 What else do clients/the community need from us?
 How can we work with other partners as a greater force for systemic equity and seamless support?"

~ 100 (clients, families, staff, community partners, youth advocates, former clients, local leaders)

Pollination: Focus groups

"What is the value of Strides Toronto to the community? What would make it even better/have a more powerful impact? What is the potential of the integrated organization?"

13 focus groups (staff, youth and families, Board, managers/ supervisors, community partners)

Pollination: Interviews

"What is the most important change Strides Toronto could make to better support kids, youth and families?"

~ 130 responses

3 + 1 Strategy Hives

All staff/Board mini-Hive: ideal client experience and ideal work experience

Hive 1: How can Strides Toronto be a force for change for our clients and communities?

Hive 2: What is the ideal experience for every child, youth and family who needs Strides Toronto?

Hive 3: What is our vision for a thriving, unified organization?

~ 330 participants

Refining and Evolving

Workshops with Senior Management Team, Management Team, front line teams, Core Team, Board Strategy Working group and Board to finalize, refine and launch strategy

~ 150 touchpoints



Using a strategic planning process that combined appreciative inquiry and understanding of complex adaptive systems, we first explored the needs, strengths and aspirations of the community in a phase called “Pollination”. In these discussions, interviews and survey responses, three broad themes emerged:

1. Strides Toronto has deeply committed staff, who are experts in their work, respond to changing needs and have a “do whatever it takes” mentality. Because of this, **Strides Toronto is able to make a transformative difference** in people’s lives.
2. There is **huge potential to expand Strides Toronto’s impact**, which includes a social accountability to take on system leadership on health equity and social determinants of health including addressing racism and oppression.
3. There are **foundational investments needed** in organizational infrastructure and team development within the newly merged Strides Toronto to fulfill its potential.

The themes identified in those conversations became the topics for focused innovation sessions called “Strategy Hives”. The first hive with the full Strides Toronto staff identified what the ideal work and client experiences would be. With these in mind, the consultants held three workshops that included included clients, families, partners and the board who identified Strides Toronto as a force for change.

Each of the hives centred on fundamental principles of health equity, recognizing that socio-economic inequalities have a direct impact on both physical and mental health for young people and their families. The primary communities served by Strides Toronto in the city’s east end have extremely low socioeconomic resources and a high percentage of immigrant and racialized populations. These communities have also been among those hardest hit by COVID-19, both economically and in terms of disease burden.

As the Strides Toronto community worked to define its future, it recognized it must continue to work toward fully client- and family-centred services. It also deeply explored its role as a system leader on anti-racist change and systemic equity.

Appreciative Inquiry:

A positive approach to leadership development and organizational change that doesn’t look at improvement by focusing on “problems to be solved” but instead focuses on what’s working and leads people to co-designing their future.

Complex Adaptive Systems:

An approach that sees healthcare and other systems as dynamic, with different related components that affect and are shaped by the system.

“We will be a powerful community voice and advocate for child and youth health through an integrated approach to services, care and change that addresses inequities, fosters full inclusion and diversity, and speaks to the fullness of the human experience.”

— One of the aspirations expressed in a strategy hive

As the hives unfolded, several fundamental themes emerged:

1. **Strides Toronto needs to amplify its presence, visibility and connectedness in underserved neighbourhoods**, building trust, offering satellite and local services, centralized access points, hearing what clients and their families need, and meeting them where they are at.
2. **Clients and families need seamless, simple access to services, both within and across Strides Toronto, and from Strides Toronto across the broader system.** This first requires people within Strides Toronto to fully understand what their colleagues do, to integrate and connect services and programs, and to create simple-to-understand “family trees” of services.
3. **Strides Toronto has a deep commitment to take a greater leadership role in systemic equity and anti-racism**, in its internal dynamics and culture, in ensuring clients see themselves reflected in the workforce, and in addressing system gaps in care. This includes advocating with partners for integrated funding and service models that address how health, social determinants of health and mental health intersect.

“Strides has supported us with space in a school. This has been huge to help us grow and provide a new host of programming. This provides a level of stability and consistency that we couldn’t provide before to our clients.”

— Community partner of Strides Toronto

“My child was being bullied and didn’t know how to express what he was feeling, and he would run away. With Strides day treatment, he found his voice. He advocates for himself better than I do for him. He understands what he needs in terms of support.”

— Parent, Strides Toronto

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4. **Strides Toronto will partner with clients to develop individually defined goals for their own care, and to co-design services** and programs that are fully accessible, culturally capable and meaningful to their full needs.
 5. **All of Strides Toronto’s goals require more effective and simple technology, data collection and analysis and well-designed virtual and digital services.**
 6. **The Strides Toronto workforce has the potential to be an even greater change force**, supporting and empowering teams to innovate within their own areas, and creating greater opportunities for individual and team development and learning, and building a stronger culture of recognition and acknowledgment.

Finally, the Strides Toronto community expressed a **strong desire to amplify its voice with media and across the community** as a client-driven, community-connected advocate for child and youth mental health.

All of these intentions were shaped into an aspirational vision, mission and five key strategic priorities.

Strides Toronto's Vision, Mission and Strategic Priorities

VISION:

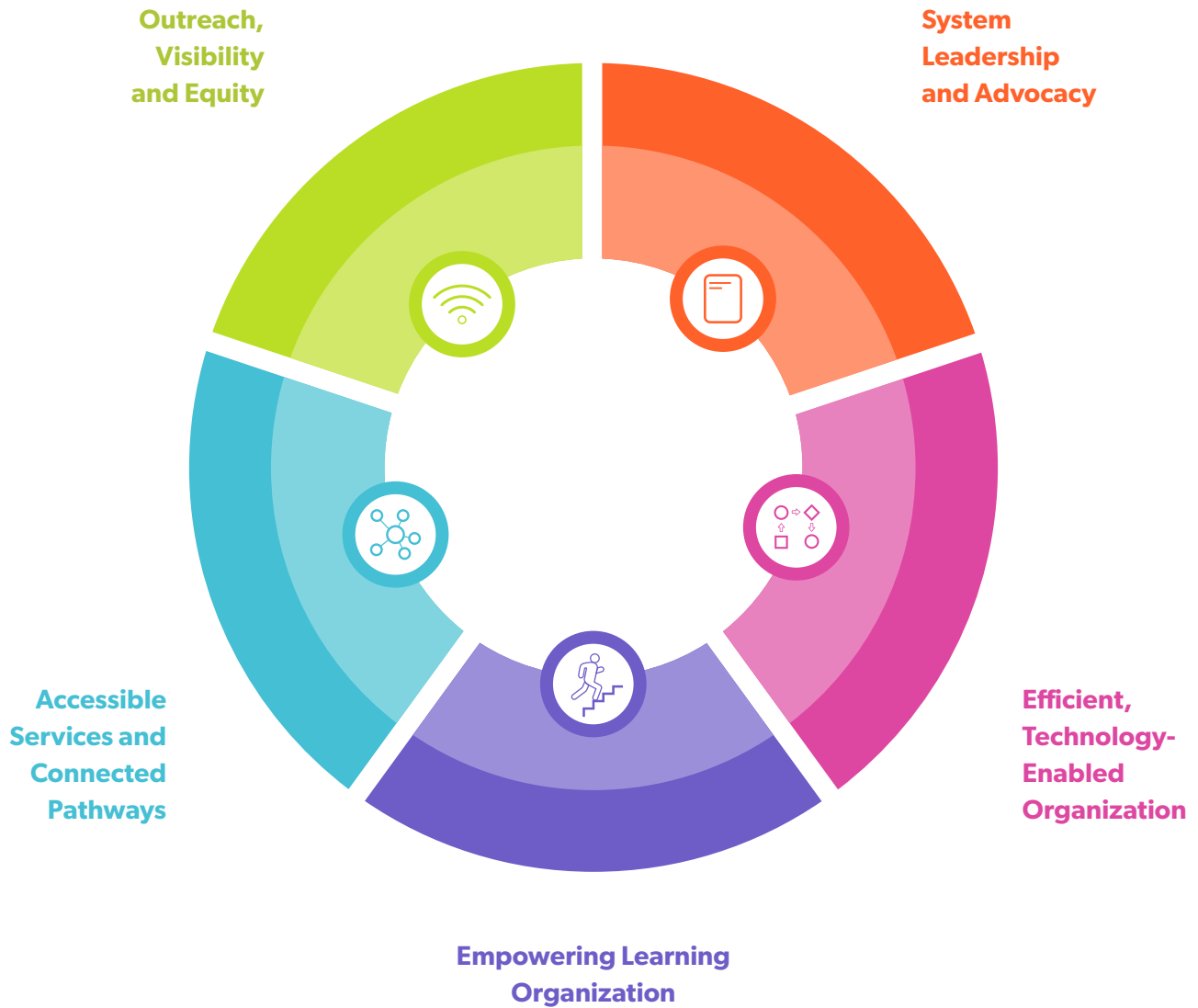
Thriving children, youth, families and communities.

MISSION:

We build strength and resilience with infants, children, youth and families through equitable, accessible, client-driven services, system leadership and advocacy.



Strides Toronto's Strategic Priorities



All five priorities are interconnected and are aimed at continually working toward an equitable internal culture, partnering with clients to craft programs and goals that meet their needs, and stepping fully into a system leadership role. Strides Toronto will focus both on deeply understanding and meeting the needs of its immediate

geographic communities and, where appropriate, sharing its expertise more widely where it can uniquely meet system gaps. These five priorities are intended to have value for the duration of the five-year strategy, with the specific actions and goals within each being adapted as the world shifts and Strides Toronto continues to evolve its role.

Adaptive Strategy and Change Leadership

THE STRATEGY

Fundamentally, Strides Toronto’s strategy is aspirational. It describes what the Strides Toronto community wants to strengthen, appreciate and create. The strategy does not stand apart from the day-to-day work. All of the work underway across the organization—serving clients, developing and integrating programs, IT projects, cultural transformation, anti-Black racism training, HR policy development, expanding the lead agency role, reaching out into client communities—all of it is informed by the shared purpose of the strategy.

THE PRIORITIES

The priorities are guiding lights for Strides Toronto’s work over the next several years. Strides Toronto recognizes that the world is always changing, and that Strides Toronto needs to adapt accordingly. The goals, actions and intentions that fall within the priorities will evolve and adapt to meet these changes. Strides Toronto will continue to learn – learn about its strengths, develop greater flexibility to meet client needs, gain new partners and system connections, and strengthen the capacity for each team to innovate.

As the work of the organization continues to unfold, Strides Toronto will take a “many boats, one light” approach to change leadership, meaning that leaders will continue to reinforce the strategic purpose of everyday activities and decisions, and teams, front-line staff and clients and families will continually interpret their own work against the goals they’ve set for the future.

This means that strategy is brought to life in four different, interconnected ways:

1. **Formal, organization-wide initiatives**, such as equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives, a new client information system, and outreach to communities.
2. **Local innovation**, where teams and programs initiate their own improvements and learning related to the overall strategic intentions, such as experimenting with new ways to incorporate their clients’ voices into program development.
3. **Leaders keeping “the whole in mind,”** meaning continually exploring, naming and reinforcing the strategic purpose of ideas and change, and using the strategy as a lens for decision-making. This level will be particularly important to track momentum and assess new ideas for their strategic value, creating coherence and clarity out of multiple activities.
4. **Finally, bringing the strategic intentions into day-to-day work**, meaning people recognize that their day-to-day work has a greater purpose and value to the organization as a whole.

Detailed Priorities, Goals and Actions



“We will be a leading voice, convenor, and partner to directly address the socio-economic, racial and system inequities of our communities, supporting clients and working across the system to break cycles of poverty.”

— One of the aspirations expressed in a strategy hive

“We really see that we are stronger together. We have amazing people who are deeply committed to making the world a better place for all to live their full potential.”

— Staff member, Strides Toronto

Outreach, Visibility and Equity



GOAL

All infants, children, youth and families have equitable access to the culturally safe services they need to thrive.

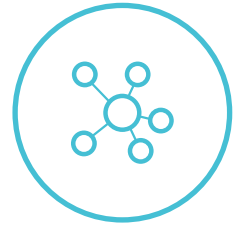
ORGANIZATION-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. Increase community awareness of Strides Toronto services so those who need our services can access them.
2. Conduct outreach into at-risk communities to increase access to programs and services.
3. Implement anti-Black racism, anti-racism, and anti-oppression (ABR/ARAO) strategies to improve access, cultural competence and responsiveness of programs and services.
4. Engage families and youth to improve programs and services.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

1. Implement active, dynamic social media and marketing strategy.
2. Identify and utilize most effective communication channels to engage main stakeholder groups (e.g., clients, potential clients, community partners, media).
3. Conduct marketing and outreach activities to link infants, children, youth and families to available services, with a focus on young people on the autism spectrum and their families in year one.
4. Complete an equity, diversity and inclusion project that assesses Strides Toronto's current state and develops a road map for deepening our ABR/ARAO work.
5. Implement ABR/ARAO priorities.
6. Initiate parent advisory and initiatives.
7. Launch youth engagement strategy.

Accessible Services and Connected Pathways



GOAL

Every client feels fully supported from the moment they come through the doors, and have clear, connected pathways, both inside and outside Strides Toronto, for all the services they need, from infancy through young adulthood.

ORGANIZATION-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. Implement consistent, integrated, supportive entry and service delivery experience and pathways for all clients so that the time spent waiting for service is minimized and clients are engaged in their plan of care.
2. Build structures and processes between programs and departments to improve client experience and outcomes across multiple areas of need.
3. Build client empowerment through peer support and developing their advocacy skills so that clients have what they need to achieve their potential.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

1. Clearly define the pathways into and between services; create capability to enhance use of pathways.
2. Create communication tools and opportunities to increase staff knowledge of all Strides Toronto services (e.g., referral processes, clients served).
3. Integrate Mental Health and Autism intake staff into a single team accessible via one phone number, and using aligned intake protocols.
4. Continue exploration of opportunities to integrate similar service streams and teams and ensure services are well integrated in the new structure.
5. Develop peer support models and training for staff and clients.

System Leadership and Advocacy



GOAL

Improve accessibility of services and address social determinants of health through system planning, partnerships, influencing policy and sharing our expertise.

ORGANIZATION-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. Identify and address service gaps through collaboration with partners, including Ontario Health Teams (OHTs).
2. Increase accessibility, coordination and quality of Toronto child and youth mental health (CYMH) services through implementation of year-one priorities of the three-year CYMH sector plan.
3. Implement provincial virtual walk-in to improve accessibility of service.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

1. Support sector to implement initiatives aimed at combating anti-Black racism by developing a three-year anti-Black racism road map for the sector.
2. Work with Toronto OHTs to position the core service providers as a collective resource.
3. Re-vision both the identity and the function of the central point of access (Mental Health TO); market to increase access to CYMH services.
4. Work with core service providers and other stakeholders to design a new model for intake into CYMH intensive services.
5. In partnership with the Lead Agency Consortium, implement a provincial virtual walk-in service.

Empowering Learning Organization



GOAL

Everyone in the organization is engaged in ongoing quality improvement, learning and development, empowered and supported to work at their best, and feels inspired by the impact of their work.

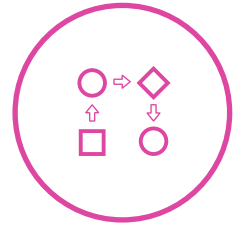
ORGANIZATION-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. One Strides TO Culture project supports engaged, empowered, productive employees.
2. Build skills for integrated, empowered organization.
3. Implement quality initiatives that support a culture of improvement in core quality domains.
4. Integrate human resources policies and practices to support HR excellence across Strides Toronto.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

1. Develop the One Strides TO Culture road map and implement the priority actions.
2. Build a change management philosophy and strategies into initiatives.
3. Implement a leadership development initiative that includes identifying and building core leadership competencies.
4. Plan and prepare for accreditation.
5. Board, management and staff education sessions align the organization's quality aims and initiatives to a scorecard to monitor improvement.
6. Integrate HR policies and align them with best practices and the new collective agreement.

Efficient, Technology-Enabled Organization



GOAL

Our robust technology, processes and infrastructure support high quality client experiences and efficient use of resources.

ORGANIZATION-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. Develop an IT strategy and three-year road map that supports efficient, effective client service and business processes, including systems for integrated, accessible information sharing and governance.
2. Implement a new client information system that supports integration, coordinated client service and continuous improvement in service delivery.
3. Implement online and digital tools to increase access to services and information.
4. Evaluate Strides Toronto’s space requirements, and develop plans to enable both virtual and on-site services.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

1. Implement year one of a multi-year IT strategy road map.
2. Enable sharing and storing of information across Strides Toronto departments and locations.
3. Select and implement a new client information system.
4. Design websites and virtual tools to enable clients, community members and partners to easily access services and information.
5. Develop a space plan for Strides Toronto that supports virtual and in-person services.

“The strategic plan of the organization lives in the everyday work we ALL do – it’s what we’re doing every day!”

— Staff member, Strides Toronto

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