CJI
Imagine a Just Community

Community Justice Initiatives

Strategic Plan 2026 - 2029

Executive Summary

Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) mobilizes restorative justice alongside the community to meet healing, justice, and safety needs across the full continuum of harm, conflict, crime, and wrongdoing. This Strategic Plan sets out CJI's direction for 2026 to 2029: a Waterloo Region where justice is reclaimed as a restorative community practice rooted in accountability, dignity, consent, and repair.

This plan is built on three connected pillars:

- **Four Strategic Priorities** describe the impact CJI wants to have over the coming years: expanding access to restorative justice for victims and community members; shifting culture and building capacity for relational, restorative practice in workplaces and communities; supporting healing and reintegration for people navigating life after incarceration; and expanding restorative justice access and leadership for youth.
- **Four Foundations for Delivery** describe the organizational capacity CJI must strengthen to achieve that impact: Financial Sustainability, People & Culture, Communications & Advocacy, and Community Collaboration & Program Quality — capacities shared across all four priorities rather than rebuilt separately within each one.
- **An Operational Plan** that lays out a set of success indicators for each Strategic Priority and Foundation for Delivery. The Operational Plan has specific, measurable actions that will show CJI is making progress.

Over the life of this plan, CJI will invest deliberately in our people and financial resilience. We will also deepen the partnerships that broaden our community reach, and use our voice and expertise to advocate for restorative, non-punitive approaches to harm. CJI will achieve this work while staying rooted in the values that have always guided this work: dignity, accountability, hope, empowerment, transformation, collective care, and consent.

Together, these three pillars position CJI not only to grow our own programs, but to be a catalyst for restorative justice becoming the norm across Waterloo Region and beyond.

Please note that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the research or analysis of this strategic plan. AI was used as an accessibility tool for edits, for early stage drafting and final design suggestions.

Message From Our Executive Director

Guided by a year of reflection, stakeholder feedback, and decades of learning from this community about what justice means to them, I share with you CJI's 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

This plan comes at a time of significant investment in policing and prisons, alongside reduced investment in healthcare, education, and grassroots social service - systems that are among the strongest contributors to long-term community well-being and crime prevention. In Waterloo Region, these pressures have contributed to growing and increasingly complex needs across our communities, alongside a growing network of not-for-profit organizations working to address them. While this reflects the strength and responsiveness of the community sector, it also means that organizations are operating within an increasingly complex, competitive, and resource-constrained environment where resources have not kept pace with community needs.

At the same time, there are growing calls from victims of crime, youth, workplaces, community groups, and reintegration services for more justice options that are consent-based, trauma-informed, victim-centred, and individualized to reflect the unique needs and circumstances of each person. This plan focusses us on being ready to respond to these calls as our four strategic priorities reflect both the changing needs of our community and the unique strengths CJI brings to this work.

CJI has an important role to play in this community, yet this strategic plan recognizes that meaningful change is only possible through our relationships with others. Our service model has always been grounded in equipping community members to contribute to this work rather than having it only facilitated by paid staff. By utilizing community volunteers for our frontline services and now we seek to invest in recognizing the critical contributions of our fellow community partners and elevate the community based justice knowledge and work from Indigenous, Black, or 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Mark Yantzi famously referenced 'the fabric of our community'; this metaphor still resonates with us today, and it is our intention to repair the tears and strengthen the threads at the points of strain, to move toward collective care as a valued framework.



I am constantly reminded of the care people across this Region and beyond have for CJI. What we do here is a microcosm for a better way of being in community with one another. It creates feelings of hope and possibility for a future where we have the support we need from one another, even if that support is centred on taking responsibility for harm. I hope that this plan not only resonates with you but excites you about what lies ahead of CJI. Thank you for your contributions to this plan, to our work, and for the care that you show to the people who make up CJI.

Kate Crozier

(she/her)
Executive Director

Message From Our Board Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to share CJI's 2026-2029 Strategic Plan. This plan reflects the voices, experiences, and ideas of CJI staff, volunteers, Board members, and community partners. Guided by a Strategic Planning Advisory Committee representing staff, the Board, and Capacity Canada, we sought input throughout the planning process and carried that feedback into the development of this plan. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed their time, knowledge, and perspective.

Having served on the Board for the past three years, I have had the privilege of watching CJI continue to grow and evolve. I have seen the organization deepen its partnerships across our community, expand its influence through training and capacity-building, and become increasingly intentional about living the values it promotes. Most importantly, I have seen an organization that continues to listen, learn, and adapt to the changing needs of the people and communities it serves.

CJI occupies a unique place in Canada, combining direct community-based restorative justice work with education, training, and capacity-building that strengthen communities far beyond our region. As demand grows for more compassionate, effective, and community-centered responses to harm, CJI is well positioned to continue leading, innovating, and creating meaningful impact.

This Strategic Plan reflects that evolution. It acknowledges the challenges around us and growing pressures on community organizations, while remaining firmly grounded in the belief that restorative and community-based approaches to justice are more important than ever. It challenges us to build on our strengths, deepen our impact, and continue responding to emerging needs in thoughtful and innovative ways.

What gives me confidence in this plan is not simply the goals it sets out, but the people who will bring it to life. I have been continually impressed by the dedication, expertise, creativity, and compassion of CJI's staff, leadership, volunteers and a Board that is focused on supporting the organization and helping position CJI for long-term success.
This plan is ambitious, but it is also achievable. It builds on strengths that already exist: strong community relationships, dedicated staff and volunteers and a reputation for excellence that extends well beyond Waterloo Region. These strengths provide a solid foundation for the work ahead.



As Chair, I am optimistic about CJI's future. Together, we are creating the conditions for CJI to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities. Thank you for believing, as we do, that justice can be held in community and by community. We look forward to continuing this important work together.

Ben Gregory

(he/him)
Board Chair

Our Mission

We mobilize restorative justice alongside the community to meet healing, justice and safety needs across continuums of harm, conflict, crime, and wrongdoing.

Our Vision

A Waterloo Region where justice is reclaimed as a restorative community practice rooted in accountability, dignity, consent, and repair.

Our Values

Dignity & Worth: We honour the inherent dignity, value, and spirit in every person, recognizing that all beings are connected and deserving of care and respect.

Accountability: We uphold accountability as a relational practice in which individuals and communities take responsibility for harm in ways that foster repair, understanding, and strengthened connection.

Hope & Possibility: We nurture the belief that healing, change, and renewed relationships are always possible when people and communities are supported with compassion and awareness.

Empowerment: We create conditions where people can learn, grow, and act with confidence and safety, building the skills and insight needed to navigate conflict and restore relationships.

Transformation: We work to shift not only individual relationships but the broader conditions and assumptions that create harm, fostering deeper systemic and cultural change.

Collective Care & Interdependence: We embrace an ethos of collective care rooted in our interdependence, choosing relational responsibility and mutual support over punitive responses.

Consent & Boundaries: We centre voluntariness by honouring each person's boundaries, ensuring that participation in restorative processes arises from genuine choice and mutual respect.

CJI Strategic Plan Overview

CJI's 2026 - 2029 Strategic Plan is built on three connected pillars to ensure the goals are met.

Strategic Priorities

The impact CJI wants to have and plans on achieving over the next 3 years.

Foundations for Delivery

The shared capacity CJI needs to strengthen in order to accomplish the Strategic Priorities over the next 3 years.

Operational Plan

The work and success indicators required to ensure this strategic plan is successfully implemented and achieved. *(internal)*

CJI Strategic Plan Overview

Strategic Priorities

Victim and Community Initiated Responses
Expanding access to restorative justice for victims and community members, beyond referrals through the legal system.

Culture Shifting & Capacity Building
Making relational, restorative approaches the norm in workplaces and communities beyond CJI's own programs.

Spaces & Places of Healing and Reintegration
Helping people leaving incarceration reconnect with safety, connection, and community.

Youth and Restorative Justice
Expanding youth access to restorative justice, and youth leadership within it.

Foundations for Delivery

Financial Sustainability
Securing and diversifying funding.

People & Culture
Fostering a thriving, values-aligned workplace for staff and volunteers.

Communications & Advocacy
Building awareness and influence with a clear and consistent approach to advocacy.

Community Collaboration & Program Quality
Focusing partnerships and decision-making where CJI can advance our mission most effectively.

Pillar One – Strategic Priorities

CJI's 2026 to 2029 Strategic Plan has four strategic priorities that will guide our work.

Victim and Community Initiated Responses

CJI wants victims and other community members, not only those referred to us through the legal system, to have real, timely access to restorative justice when and where they want it. This means expanding access beyond the courts and ensuring services are high-quality, considerate of individual safety plans, and responsive to community needs. This also means building the partnerships and trust that let people find their way to CJI in the first place.

Success looks like more people impacted by harm finding a safe, community-based path to healing and accountability, built alongside the organizations and community members who understand their needs best.

Culture Shifting & Capacity Building

CJI wants relational, restorative approaches to become the norm in workplaces and communities well beyond our own programs — not just something CJI practices, but something we teach and models for others. This means being a leader in building restorative, relationship-forward workplace cultures by expanding training and partnerships to support other organizations doing this work, investing in leadership development, and using CJI's voice to shift public narratives toward accountability and repair instead of punishment.

Success looks like other organizations turning to CJI as a trusted culture-change partner, and a growing cohort of CJI staff and volunteers equipped to lead that work themselves.

Strategic Priorities

CJI's 2026 to 2029 Strategic Plan has four strategic priorities that will guide our work.

Spaces & Places of Healing and Reintegration

CJI wants Waterloo Region to be a place where people leaving incarceration can successfully reconnect with safety, connection, and community — not a place where they are permanently defined by their past. Beyond restorative justice programming, this means using restorative practices to help prevent harm and to build real pathways back for people navigating reintegration. CJI aims to deepen collaboration and partnership with the corrections and community organizations already doing this work. We will strive to build meaningful partnerships with BIPOC led organizations to support their increased access to prisons.

Success looks like stronger, more numerous pathways back from prison, a measurable shift in how the community views people who are criminalized, and CJI recognized as a workplace and partner that lives these values, not just advocates for them.

Youth and Restorative Justice

CJI wants youth across Waterloo Region to have real access to restorative justice, and a genuine voice in shaping how it's delivered, not just as recipients of services, but as partners and leaders. This means strengthening the programs, partnerships, and funding that reach youth where they are, building staff and volunteer capacity in youth-centred practice, and creating dedicated pathways for youth engagement and advocacy, with particular attention to countering polarization and the recruitment of vulnerable youth into extremist ideology.

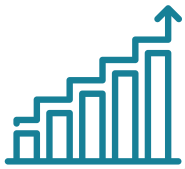
Success looks like more youth reached through stronger partnerships, and youth themselves stepping into leadership and advocacy roles within CJI's work.

Pillar Two – Foundations for Delivery

In order to achieve CJI's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, CJI must strengthen **four areas of organizational enablement**.

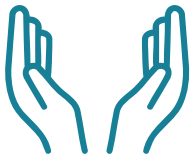
1 **Financial Sustainability**

Secure and diversify funding so CJI can sustain its work and expand access for community members not funded through the legal system.



2 **People & Culture**

Foster a thriving, values-aligned, workplace by investing in staff and volunteers, strengthening safety and accessibility, and embedding accountability and equity into how CJI operates.



3 **Communications & Advocacy**

Build awareness and influence through strategic, transparent communications and a clear, consistent approach to advocacy.



4 **Community Collaboration & Program Quality**

Focus partnerships and decision-making where CJI can advance our mission most effectively, and build consistent practices for measuring program quality.



CJI
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Looking Ahead

This plan sets CJI's direction for 2026–2029: to deepen restorative responses across four priority areas, while strengthening the organizational foundation that makes that work possible.

- Victim and Community Initiated Responses
- Culture Shifting & Capacity Building
- Spaces & Places of Healing and Reintegration
- Youth and Restorative Justice

Much like the services we provide, every journey of growth and individual needs looks different. This plan is meant to be a living roadmap. As CJI's programs grow and community needs shift, the specific actions under each priority will be revisited regularly, while the vision behind them - a Waterloo Region where justice is reclaimed as a restorative community practice rooted in accountability, dignity, consent, and repair - remains the constant against which progress is measured.

Gratitude

This plan reflects the time, insight, and care of many people.

CJI Staff: thank you for grounding every priority in this plan in the real, day-to-day needs of the people we serve, and for giving generously of your time, insight, and lived expertise throughout the planning process.

Our Partners: thank you to CJI's community, referral, and funding partners across Waterloo Region. Your collaboration and trust make restorative approaches possible, and your input shaped how this plan thinks about partnership and program quality.

Capacity Canada: thank you for the facilitation and guidance that supported CJI through this strategic planning process from start to finish.

In solidarity and appreciation,

CJI Board of Directors

Ben Gregory, Allison Chenier, Melanie Goodfellow, Stacey Colliver, Shanesha Robinson, Stephanie Krug, Marion McKeen, Laurie Rooney, and Mars Tran.