



**CoolAid**

everyone deserves home

# Strategic Plan

## 2024-2030



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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Since 1968, the Victoria Cool Aid Society has been an influential leader in providing shelter, housing, and health services in Victoria.

Today, both Cool Aid and the circumstances in which we operate have changed, yet the intent to provide robust community services around housing and health is steadfast. Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the toxic drug supply public health emergency proved that we are agile, responsive, creative, and resilient. We have learned a lot over our 55 plus years of operation and we are ready to build a future for Cool Aid that not only keeps up with demands but also supports people to reach their own personal goals.

Our 2024-2030 strategic plan was developed through extensive engagements with clients, staff, the board of directors, our leadership team as well as trusted partners and funders. Reflecting the voices and lived experiences of our community, we have built five strategic priorities and accompanying goals and objectives that will steward our work through 2030.

The work includes a continued focus on decolonization and anti-racism, setting a sustainable future, more integrated housing and health services, supporting transformation of clients' lives, ensuring wellness among staff, as well as fostering innovation in service delivery and solutions to problems we collectively face. Our plan is ambitious and aspirational, and it is now our joint responsibility to put it into action.

Cool Aid's unique strength lies in its range and depth of services that support our vision of a community where everyone has the dignity that comes from home, health, and connection. Our passionate and experienced staff, across our diverse service areas, are united in their unwavering commitment to positively impacting the lives of our clients. I am proud of the work we have done thus far to create a clear path for ourselves to realize our vision and I look towards the future of Cool Aid with excitement and optimism as we address the challenges before us with the clarity provided through our renewed 2024-2030 strategic plan.



# VISION & MISSION

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## Our Vision

A community where everyone has the dignity that comes with home, health, and connection.

## Our Mission

We deliver life-changing housing, health, and community services and champion systemic action on poverty, colonization, stigma, and homelessness.



# ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMING

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## Who We Are

We are a leader in providing housing, health care, and community services in Victoria. Our services include permanent housing, emergency shelter, health and dental care, employment assistance, and social and recreational opportunities.

We believe that everyone deserves a home and we create hope and opportunities for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and living in poverty.

## Where We Work

Victoria Cool Aid Society acknowledges the Lekwungen and wsANEC peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose traditional territories we build homes, lives, and community. We support individuals at 20 locations in Victoria, Saanich, and Langford.

## Who We Serve

Working with our partners in the Capital Region, we offer life-changing services to adults who are impacted by poverty, colonization, stigma, and homelessness.

Annually we support thousands of people through more than 700 housing and shelter units, over 60,000 health visits, 2,400 dental care treatments, and over 20,000 visits annually to our diverse support services.

Our health services are open to a range of people including those who: are chronically under-housed; live in supportive housing; seek support around substance use; live with a mental health diagnosis; or live with HIV or hep C.



# What We Do

Cool Aid's focus on providing integrated wraparound housing, health, and community services is grounded in our belief that all of our clients and patients should have access to the services that meet their individual needs and support their personal goals. We offer a continuum of housing, primary health care, and a sense of community.

We are committed to ensuring that individuals have continuous access to housing and health options where they can maintain appropriate housing in line with their evolving needs. This may mean supporting and developing varying pathways to different types of housing. As our clients have faced social and economic barriers, their needs have developed in a multitude of ways. Cool Aid is committed to building and supporting a continuum of care for our clients while working in collaboration with other providers who offer critical services in the Greater Victoria Area.



**Cool Aid uniquely provides housing, health, and community support services.**

The integrated and wraparound nature of our housing, health, and community services supports individuals around their holistic wellbeing and empowers them to meet their life goals.



# Our Focus

## Housing

Cool Aid provides short-term and emergency shelter, supportive and affordable housing. Our three shelters provide 165 guests with a warm bed, meals, social connection, and other life-saving supports. Cool Aid has over 550 permanent housing tenants in Greater Victoria who were previously unhoused. We are currently building 233 additional new homes.

All of our housing models focus on maximizing our resources to deliver the best care for individuals, while ensuring sustainable models of service delivery. We bring innovative practices to evolve housing options and we work in collaboration with other housing providers to support a community of housing.

## Health

Cool Aid's multidisciplinary team of medical professionals at the Community Health Centre specializes in low-barrier health services, including mental health and wellness, primary care, hep C and HIV care, dental care, and end-of-life care. We design our services to provide care for individuals to meet their varied and evolving needs. We support over 60,000 patient encounters per year through both our Community Health Centre and health outreach. We will be opening a second health clinic, at our new Crosstown location, in 2025.

## Community Services

We actively seek to create opportunities for our clients to participate in community, including accessing our Downtown Community Centre, employment services, counselling, and other opportunities. Opportunities for people with lived experience (PWLE) to inform, direct, and participate in the planning and implementation of Cool Aid programs and services are critical elements to this work.

# DEVELOPING OUR 2024-2030 PLAN

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To move toward this vision and deepen our impact, we engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process involving hundreds of clients, staff, board members, and community partners. Through this, we defined five priorities to refine our services, innovate new models to fill community gaps, and support a sustainable workforce.

## Board and Senior Leadership

The Cool Aid Board and Senior Leadership team completed a strategic planning survey and engaged in five strategy sessions to explore key strategic areas, including Cool Aid's strengths, weaknesses, role in the community, future direction of services, and top priorities for the coming years.

## Community Partners

1-1 key informant interviews were conducted with external partners and peer organizations to understand the network

of services in Victoria, Cool Aid's unique strengths, and gain insight into collaboration toward an ecosystem of care for clients.

## Clients and Staff

To reflect community needs and frontline realities in the strategic plan development, Cool Aid housing and health clients were engaged through three listening sessions and one survey to hear their priorities, needs, and visions for the future. A global cafe style staff engagement was also held, where we heard from over 70 staff to validate emerging themes and identify priority areas important to them.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

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**By 2030,** we want to ensure all clients have access to appropriate housing that meets their current and evolving needs no matter their journey, and for all of our clients to be connected to wraparound health and community services.

## Priority Setting

Through this engagement process, we've identified five strategic priorities that will guide Cool Aid toward achieving our vision and living out our mission. The priority areas are intended to steward Cool Aid's work at a strategic level, and lead into Goals and Objectives that set a foundation for action that will create real change.

## Making It Happen

To bring the strategic plan to life, Cool Aid's team will develop an operational plan that outlines annual actions to help us progress towards realizing our strategic priorities. The framework of goals and objectives that our leadership team has committed to will be benchmarked by key results, measurable milestones that indicate achievements, and will allow us to adapt our initiatives and approaches to best achieve our aims.

# Strategic Priority Map

**WE DELIVER** life-changing housing, health and community services and champion systemic action on poverty, colonization, stigma and homelessness.

**WE INVISION** a community where everyone has the dignity that comes with home, health and connection.



## Act for Equity and Reconciliation

Embed anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices across our work to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion and take action on reconciliation.

## Invest in Staff and Clients Through Connection and Learning

Hold staff and client care at the centre of everything we do by listening, learning, and improving from their experience.



## Set a Foundation for a Sustainable Future

Support a sustainable organization with solid infrastructure, systems, and financial means.

## Integrate Services to Strengthen Continuum of Care

Provide more options for clients through integrated housing and health that meets clients where they are at and supports their personal goals.



## Innovate for Continuity and Transformation

Redefine our models and approaches to housing and health services to elevate quality of care and enable transformative impact on clients' lives.



## Act for Equity and Reconciliation

Embed anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices across our work to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion and take action on reconciliation.

### Goals

- ✓ Build a culture of shared commitment to decolonization and anti-racism, grounded in the lived realities of Indigenous and racialized peoples in our community.
- ✓ Intentionally identify and develop skills that build trust with local Indigenous nations to engender safety and care for Indigenous clients.
- ✓ Ensure our decision-making, policy development, and service design are informed by anti-racism and acknowledge all root causes of housing and health injustices.
- ✓ Indigenous and BIPOC staff and clients thrive while working at Cool Aid and engaging with its services.

### Objectives

**Objective 1:** We will effect behavioural change by establishing a culture of shared responsibility providing educational opportunities for staff and leadership to understand colonial histories and systems of oppression that create housing and health inequity today as they intersect with our work.

**Objective 2:** Truly influence our decision-making, policies, and service design by increasing the number of BIPOC staff so that by 2030 our staff at all levels will reflect the communities we serve.

**Objective 3:** We will strengthen connections with Indigenous partner organizations who value our relationships and regard Cool Aid as a trustful resource to further their own goals and initiatives.





## Invest in Staff and Clients Through Connection and Learning

Hold staff and client care at the centre of everything we do by listening, learning, and improving from their experience.

### Goals

- ✓ Cultivate a culture of mutual respect and support, committed to staff safety and wellbeing.
- ✓ Listen and learn from clients by actively creating opportunities to involve them in decision-making.
- ✓ Identify a manageable load of core services and equip staff with training and resources required to meet evolving client needs.
- ✓ Advance and improve on the impactful and innovative ways we provide services that meet the unique needs of individuals and facilitate achievement of personal goals.

### Objectives

**Objective 1:** Support staff learning and development for more equipped and healthier teams.

**Objective 2:** Create effective channels of communication to inform and receive feedback from clients on issues that directly affect their care and wellbeing, and reliably implement insights.

**Objective 3:** Find structured and supportive ways to build relationships and bring staff together to advance and innovate how we deliver services.

**Objective 4:** Implement an annual Culture Survey to champion what we're doing well and identify actions required to improve organizational culture.



## Set a Foundation for a Sustainable Future

Support a sustainable organization with solid infrastructure, systems, and financial means.

### Goals

- ✓ Secure operational funding that supports health and safety in all services.
- ✓ Diversify funding streams to support long term financial security.
- ✓ Establish staffing models that allow for sustainable and safe services and ensure adequate resources to meet workload requirements.
- ✓ Bridge structural and departmental silos and streamline processes across the organization.
- ✓ Reinforce our community presence, profile, and reputation through dedicated approaches to branding, marketing, and philanthropy.

### Objectives

**Objective 1:** Clarify processes and improve infrastructure to manage operations efficiently.

**Objective 2:** Achieve optimal staffing levels at all sites to meet the demands of the job and ensure health and safety.

**Objective 3:** Diversify operational funding streams and achieve more independence and flexibility in capital and infrastructure for housing solutions.

**Objective 4:** Reinforce and expand our community profile.



## Integrate Services to Strengthen Continuum of Care

Provide more options for clients through integrated housing and health that meets clients where they are at and supports their personal goals.

### Goals

- ✓ Ensure all Cool Aid housing tenants have timely access to primary and mental health supports.
- ✓ Provide specialized services to our clients through the integration of housing and health that allows for personalized support.
- ✓ Become systems navigators within the greater network of community providers to ensure uninterrupted and consistent quality of care for clients.
- ✓ Pilot projects for integrating housing and health services within Cool Aid to support wider application.

### Objectives

**Objective 1:** All VCAS housing clients are attached or offered attachment to our clinic for health services and receive care.

**Objective 2:** Housing and health teams are integrated and coordinated within VCAS network of care, so clients move through shelter and housing options in keeping with their personal and health needs.

**Objective 3:** We are trusted systems navigators and ensure our clients maintain continuous housing and health supports within the VCAS community and in the greater network of service providers.





# Innovate for Continuity and Transformation

Redefine our models and approaches to housing and health services to elevate quality of care and enable transformative impact on clients' lives.

## Goals

- ✓ Develop timely and accessible treatment and recovery options for clients on their own terms.
- ✓ Cultivate dialogues with decision and change makers that act on systemic issues that disproportionately impact our clients' lives.
- ✓ Design housing and health strategies to create culturally safe environments for Indigenous staff and clients by transforming approaches to include principles of decolonization.
- ✓ Foster innovation by creating avenues of collaboration and support among staff and leadership.

## Objectives

**Objective 1:** Diversify supportive housing options and services we provide to meet the range of client needs.

**Objective 2:** Inspired by our mission, evolve our identity as innovative leaders and advocates who influence system transformation.

**Objective 3:** Innovate holistic wellness programs, drawing the connections between trauma, mental health, and substance use.

# IN CONCLUSION

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This plan represents the aspirations and knowledge of our Victoria Cool Aid Society community, and it is now our collective responsibility to put it into action. Through a focus on organizational sustainability, integration, and innovation while ensuring we live our values through decolonization and anti-racism, and client and staff centeredness, we will meet the challenges we face and excel as an organization.

It is time to take our unique strengths and build upon our abilities to provide wraparound housing, health, and community services, to support individuals around their holistic wellbeing and empower them to meet their life goals. By 2030, we are committed to living out our mission in supporting people to live with the dignity that comes with home, health, and connection.



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