

Kootenay Society for Community Living

2026-2029 Strategic Plan

September 8, 2025

Table of contents

- Letter from the Executive Director..... 3
- Introduction..... 4
- What We Heard: Strategic Plan Update for Kootenay Society for Community Living..... 5
 - What we did..... 5
 - What we heard..... 5
- Strategic Plan..... 10
 - Vision statement..... 10
 - Mission statement..... 10
 - Core values..... 10
 - Strategic Goals + Key Actions (2026-2029)..... 10

Letter from the Executive Director

The development of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan is the culmination of months of thoughtful reflection and meaningful consultation with both internal and external members of our communities. As we chart our course for the next three years, we have also taken time to reflect on the progress and learning of the past three.

Our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan was designed to provide a strong foundation—one that could guide the organization through change and growth. We take great pride in what we achieved over that period. Building on that success, our new strategic goals and initiatives position us to support over 250 youth, adults, and their networks across the West Kootenays.

We are especially proud of our dedicated team of more than 180 staff members, who remain committed and well-prepared to meet the diverse needs, goals, and aspirations of those we serve. Kootenay Society for Community Living will continue to work collaboratively with the individuals we support, their families and caregivers, community partners, funders, and our staff and board to bring this new Strategic Plan to life.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this process. Your insight and engagement played a vital role in shaping the direction and substance of this Strategic Plan, helping to ensure its goals and initiatives are both meaningful and responsive to our community.

Kathleen Elias

Executive Director, KSCL

Introduction

This strategic plan outlines the vision, mission, values, and key goals for the Kootenay Society for Community Living (KSCL) for the next three years, from 2026 to 2029. It is informed by insights gathered from surveys of staff, the community, and the board, workshops with staff and the board and site visits and quick touch points with individuals receiving services and staff at program locations and housing in both Castlegar and Nelson.

This report includes outcomes from engagement activities as well as the strategic plan that is informed by those activities.

The actions in the strategic plan lay out the organization's focus for its work over the next three years.

What We Heard: Strategic Plan Update for Kootenay Society for Community Living

This report summarizes key themes and feedback gathered from various engagement audiences and events. This information informs the actions in the proceeding strategic plan update.

What we did

We had approximately 110 touch points during engagement activities. We conducted surveys with staff, the community, and the board. We led workshops with staff and the board and had very quick touch point interviews with individuals receiving services and staff at program locations and housing in both Castlegar and Nelson. A prize draw for a \$100 gift card from Safeway was offered to respondents of each of the community and staff surveys.

Activity / audience	Date	# people engaged
Staff survey	May 22 to June 13, 2025	24
Community survey	May 26 to June 13, 2025	36
Board survey	XX to July 18, 2025	5
Staff workshop (management)	June 23, 2025	8
Staff workshop (administration)	June 24, 2025	7
Board workshop	June 24, 2025	8
Staff interviews	June 24, 2025	7
Individual interviews	June 24, 2025	About 13

What we heard

Outcomes from the engagement activities are summarized here.

Voices of Individuals Receiving Services

Individuals receiving services shared valuable insights into what they enjoy, what could be improved, and what they hope to see more of in the future.

What is Working Well / What Individuals Enjoy:

- **Positive Relationships and Community:** Many individuals highlighted the importance of friendships, feeling like "one big happy family," and getting to know people. The "warmth and welcome" at KSCL locations was frequently mentioned.
- **Engaging Activities:**
 - **Creative Arts:** Drawing, art, music programs (including new music books and sing-alongs), and collaborative murals. The "art room is my favorite space."
 - **Outings + Socializing:** Park visits (especially for live music), fishing, camping, "Rec Fridays," movies (e.g., *Madeline*), coffee outings ("Timmies!"), visiting family at restaurants, and cheering for the Toronto Maple Leafs.
 - **Physical Activities:** Swimming, playing pool, riding horses (equine therapy), dancing, basketball, and water fights.
 - **Home + Daily Life:** Cooking, reading, gardening, cleaning cars, decorating for events and holidays, and having spaces to lounge (couches were mentioned, people are interested in room design/set up). The kitchen and back patio/bikes were noted as favorite spaces.
- **Personal Growth + Advocacy:** Creating as part of jewelry making and sewing businesses, and participation in a self-advocacy group.

What is Not Working / What Could Be Improved:

- **More Activities + More Variety:** A strong desire for "more art" (including art therapy programs), "more camping," "more basketball," "more movies," and "more painting."
- **Broader Community Engagement:** A wish to "do more things outside of Castlegar."
- **Comfort + Environment:** Some mentioned "too cold" conditions and a desire for a "more homey feeling and TV" (sometimes teens and those in their early 20s just want to chill out).
- **Walking:** "Walking too much outside" was noted as something not working.

What Individuals Would Like to See More Of:

- **Enhanced Programs + Facilities:**
 - **Creative + Social:** Gardening (getting the garden back at CD House), coloring, birthday celebrations, calendar making, and parties/dancing.
 - **Recreational:** Going out more, sports season passes, a pool table, disco lights, water slide, upgraded gaming system (Wii was specifically mentioned), and a movie room.

- **Life Skills:** Cooking skills and more general cooking opportunities.
- **Travel + Exploration:** Desire to "travel south and east."
- **Pets:** "Pets like dogs, cats, and chickens" were requested.
- **Specific Events:** Sunfest, WWE viewing parties, and Operation Track Shoes.
- **Staffing:** A desire for "more 'Amys'" (flexible staff).
- **Accommodation:** "Rooms to sleep."

Key Themes from Others

Feedback from staff, management, and the board reinforced and expanded upon many of the themes raised by individuals receiving services.

Community Inclusion + Profile:

- **Increased Visibility:** A consistent theme across all groups is the need to "promote the organization," "create more awareness and understanding about what it is that we do," and increase KSCL's "visibility in the community".
- **Broader Engagement:** Suggestions include diversifying offerings to engage the broader community and appeal to diverse needs and interests. The idea of "getting back out there" and being less "insular" was raised.
- **Renaming:** There is an ongoing conversation about renaming "residential" services to "staffed living" to be more culturally sensitive.
- **Community Perception:** A board member noted that the community often has "no idea how [staffed living homes] are run" or "what it takes to get it and keep it".

Reconciliation:

- **Awareness + Training:** Many are "unsure or unaware of how KSCL is currently incorporating reconciliation". There is a "clear call for staff training on Indigenous histories and cultures, as well as broader education on the meaning and impact of reconciliation".
- **Cultural Integration:** Suggestions include participating in Indigenous events, inviting Elders, offering Indigenous services, and incorporating Indigenous ways of being into program design.
- **Board Education + Action:** The Board needs "as much education as possible to embrace reconciliation". A desire to "start truth and reconciliation, moving forward on that and making something happen".

Housing:

- **Future Needs:** A strong emphasis on "more housing needs" and identifying "future land development needs".
- **Creative Models:** There's interest in "creative new housing models" and exploring options like "laneway housing".
- **Expanding Housing Opportunities:** Future land development should consider housing that has become less valuable due to repairs and upkeep.

Workforce + Staffing:

- **Staffing Shortages:** An "ongoing concern" leading to "high workloads and burnout among existing staff".
- **Training & Development:** Need for "more relevant training and education around reconciliation" and "all staff could benefit from training regarding self-advocacy and person-centred support".
- **Support for Teams:** For individuals to succeed, there needs to be "support for the teams to be successful like training".
- **Modernizing Processes:** Modernizing "position changes, staff evaluations" and creating job aids.

Quality Services + Person-Centered Care:

- **Continuity of Support:** Many wish for "more of the same" or to "keep offering programs to adults with disabilities"..
- **Aging Population:** Acknowledging the need for "even more support as our son would be entering adulthood and would require constant care" and "increased support due to natural aging".
- **Person-Centered Approach:** Continued emphasis on "self-centred care for children, youth and adults alike".
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Recognizing the need for and discussing how to "better incorporate [trauma-informed care] into your practices". Adopting a trauma-informed approach, including trauma/grief support counseling, is mentioned to incorporate reconciliation.
- **Feedback + Communication:** Need for "a variety of ways to engage those not tech savvy" for feedback.

Areas for Growth and Future Focus

Based on the feedback, several areas emerge as crucial for KSCL's future strategic direction:

- **Rebranding:** A new vision and mission that showcases all that KSCL does, including housing, and potentially a new logo and name.

- **Strategic Land Development:** Proactive identification of future land development needs, focusing on housing that benefits society.
- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** Expanding awareness and advocacy campaigns to attract new board members, staff, and opportunities, and fostering deeper connections with other service providers.
- **Workforce Investment:** Continued investment in staff wellness, comprehensive training (especially in reconciliation and person-centered support), and modernizing HR processes.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Exploring the "creation of a fund to support services".

Strategic Plan

Vision statement

A future where everyone belongs through inclusion, partnership, and housing solutions.

Mission statement

KSCL supports individuals of all abilities through inclusive services, advocacy, and access to housing and community connection.

Core values

Based on the workshop discussions and staff survey feedback, the following values strengthens KSCL's operations and strategic direction:

1. **Inclusion + belonging:** Fostering environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and an integral part of their community, ensuring no one is left behind due to accessibility or barriers.
2. **Empowerment + choice:** Supporting individuals to make informed decisions, exercise their rights, and pursue their personal aspirations, including their preferences for programs and support.
3. **Compassion + respect:** Approaching every interaction with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to individual dignity, acknowledging diverse family cultures and parenting styles.
4. **Collaboration + connection:** Working together with individuals, families, staff, and community partners to achieve shared goals, enhancing communication and liaison.
5. **Innovation + adaptability:** Continuously seeking new and improved ways to deliver services, respond to evolving needs, and embrace positive change, particularly in program design and housing solutions.
6. **Celebration:** Fostering resilience, enhancing mental health, and building community.

Strategic Goals + Key Actions (2026-2029)

The following five strategic goals are designed to guide KSCL's efforts over the next three years, with actionable steps to achieve each objective. These goals are informed by the identified strategic priorities and the outcomes from both the ecocycle exercise and the community survey.

Goal 1: Enhance Quality and Expand Person-Centered Services

Objective: To expand and improve the accessibility and impact of services, ensuring they meet the evolving needs and choices of individuals and their families.

Key Actions:

- **1.1 Expand Program Offerings:** Develop new community resource options (e.g., explore home for youth in care models, increase one-on-one services, particularly for a growing population, include new spaces for the Employ Me program (with adequate parking)). Develop more children/young adult programming, focusing on including children and creating "teen-focused" activities with meals/snacks to encourage engagement.
- **1.2 Evolve Support Models:** Explore cluster living models and update existing support models to offer more independent living with support.
- **1.3 Improve Service Evaluation:** Implement robust evaluation frameworks for all programs to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to individual needs.
- **1.4 Streamline Intake and Planning:** Optimize Individual Support Plan (ISP) meetings and intake processes to be more efficient and person-centered. Improve support for the "transition to adulthood, social connections and community involvement (aka full life cycle planning)" for young adults and continue to grow these plans for individuals with other community agencies and within the organization.
- **1.5 Enhance Homeshare Provider Support:** Improve communication with homeshare providers about their needs, increase financial support, offer more respite opportunities, and foster a greater sense of belonging and community (e.g., event invitations without ticket expectations).

Goal 2: Strengthen and Empower the Workforce

Objective: To attract, retain, develop, and support a highly skilled, trauma-informed, and engaged workforce.

Key Actions:

- **2.1 Prioritize Trauma-Informed Care:** Implement in-depth, mandatory trauma-informed care training before staff begin work (including topics like sexual health and FASD), integrate trauma-informed discussions into staff meetings, and establish a clear, top-down and bottom-up standard of care. There is also a need for more education in cultural safety, Indigenous governance, and trauma-informed practices.
- **2.2 Enhance Staff Wellness and Support:** Develop initiatives to manage staff stress, improve work-life balance, increase wellness focus (including paid wellness days and more flexible time off), and increase health and wellness benefits beyond \$50/year. The organization should also teach healthy mental practices like meditation.
- **2.3 Improve Communication and Collaboration:** Strengthen professional communication channels through meeting opportunities that facilitate generative dialogue and are solutions-focussed, providing space for discussion of challenges and trauma-informed approaches, in addition to adhering to the meeting requirements for accredited services.
- **2.4 Address Staffing Challenges:** Focus on staff recruitment and retention strategies, including competitive wages, bonuses, and adequate training hours to cover shifts effectively. Address "rapid staff turnover" and a desire for "more consistency" and "changes in scheduling reduced" to ensure continuity of care.

- **2.5 Foster Staff Appreciation and Morale:** Organize more KSCL-wide events (similar to the Christmas party, but with surveys for desired activities/locations like Nelson) to build team morale and appreciation from staff up to the Board.

Goal 3: Promote and Embed Self-Advocacy

Objective: To empower individuals and staff to advocate for their needs, rights, and choices effectively.

Key Actions:

- **3.1 Provide Self-Advocacy Training:** Offer training in self-advocacy and person-centered support for all staff and individuals served.
- **3.2 Incorporate Voice of Service Users:** Ensure the voices of support workers and individuals served are consistently incorporated into planning and decision-making processes.
- **3.3 Foster Independence:** Develop programs and support structures that actively encourage greater independence and choice for individuals, emphasizing "self-centered care for youth and adults alike."

Goal 4: Foster Community Inclusion and Profile

Objective: To increase KSCL's visibility, community engagement, and create more opportunities for individuals to be actively involved in their broader communities.

Key Actions:

- **4.1 Rebrand and Re-engage:** Consider a new name and rebrand to reflect growth, create excitement, and increase KSCL's presence and engagement within the community using new tools for connection and visibility.
- **4.2 Strengthen Indigenous Reconciliation Efforts:** Increase Indigenous teachings, invite Indigenous leaders and Elders into KSCL spaces to share experiences and ideas, and ensure individuals can attend events promoting their Indigenous heritage. Explore partnerships with Indigenous organizations like COINS.
- **4.3 Expand Community Partnerships:** Actively meet with community members and connect with job coaches and employers to expand opportunities for individuals. Collaborate more effectively with other agencies, exploring how KSCL can help employ their clients (e.g., connections with Selkirk College and WorkBC, explore the desire for more cooking as a social enterprise opportunity to make frozen meals for purchase).
- **4.4 Support Independent Living in the Community:** Explore strategies to increase housing options for individuals in need and fill gaps in types of staffed living arrangements, including expanding into new communities. Prioritize the development of "affordable subsidized housing" and continued safe accommodations, especially in Nelson. Ensure new homes benefit from design updates, such as new bathtubs and nicer outside areas. Need to create alternate living opportunities and think outside the box.

- **4.5 Increase Community Visibility and Awareness:** Enhance KSCL's visibility in the community through social media, public acknowledgements, and diversifying offerings to engage a broader community (e.g., community clothing exchange, having goods made by individuals sold in local shops, coordinate a fashion show with local businesses, further partnerships with local sports teams, etc.). Improve how KSCL advertises and promotes awareness of its programming. Expand community awareness and advocacy campaigns.

Goal 5: Enhance Organizational Governance and Operational Efficiency

Objective: To ensure robust governance, effective management practices, and streamlined operations that support quality service delivery and organizational sustainability.

Key Actions:

- **5.1 Bridge Administrative and Frontline Gaps:** Address the perceived gap between administration and frontline staff by increasing understanding of day-to-day realities and fostering a united team environment.
- **5.2 Optimize Operational Tasks:** Streamline routine residential activities (personal care, food, and medication counting) to reduce staff burden.
- **5.3 Improve Documentation and Communication Systems:** Ensure ShareVision is updated as needed and monitor its effectiveness. Enhance check-ins and communication protocols among staff and with families.
- **5.4 Strengthen Financial Management and Resource Allocation:** Provide more support and budget for Nelson programs and housing options. Explore the "creation of a fund to support services" to enhance financial sustainability.
- **5.5 Improve Corrective/Disciplinary Conversations:** Revisit and improve how corrective/disciplinary conversations (redirection) are held to ensure they are trauma-informed and supportive.
- **5.6 Foster Liaison and Awareness between Programs:** Enhance liaison between staffed living homes and community inclusion programming to ensure all staff are familiar with available services.
- **5.7 Explore strategies to diversify board expertise and representation:** this can include continuing to identify gaps in board knowledge and skills and using that information for targeted recruitment and mentorship programs.