

A Call for Collective Action



The 2022-2024 Strategic Direction for The Bridge for Youth includes a new mission, vision, and values centered in youth voice, racial justice, and equity.



**My
Voice
Matters**

Core Competencies

- › Minor-aged youth homelessness in Minnesota
- › Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness
- › Disparities amongst youth experiencing homelessness that identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+
- › Centering youth voice in all we do

VISION

All youth feel safe, accepted, and supported.

MISSION

The Bridge for Youth centers youth voice, justice, and equity in all we do, and empowers youth experiencing homelessness through safe shelter, basic needs, and healthy relationships.

VALUES

Patience

We give space for youth to make decisions on their own timeline in their own way.

Love and Caring

We believe in acceptance, empathy, and non-judgment.

Communication

We engage in intentional dialogue to understand each other's truths.

Integrity

We actively learn, grow, and change to align our actions in equity and justice.

Co-Creation

We seek connection to amplify the voice of youth and each other.

Community

We stand together for youth and for each other.

Youth Voice and Leadership is a Catalyst for Change to Disrupt and Prevent Homelessness

At The Bridge, youth hold the wisdom, power, and resilience to thrive. By being journey oriented, The Bridge activates youth to recognize the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future as they decide their goals and achieve them. We believe youth are changemakers, both independently and within commUNITY. By engaging youth experiencing homelessness, family conflict, violence, and/or inequities in systems and institutions, The Bridge creates intentional opportunities, as well as provides a platform, for youth to exercise their wisdom and power.

Our response and commitment: The Bridge for Youth will invest resources in developing a nationally reputable model of youth engagement, leadership, and changemaking alongside youth experiencing homelessness. By authentically engaging youth and centering their voices, their proposed solutions act as a catalyst for the necessary changes needed at The Bridge, across systems, and in the community.



The urgency to address youth experiencing homelessness is clear. In Hennepin County, **1,324** minor-age youth represent **33%** of the homeless population.

Expand Options for Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiencing Homelessness

What gap do we need to fill:

- › The Bridge for Youth Transitional Living Program - known as Marlene's Place – is consistently full at capacity to serve 5 youth and their children.
- › Once youth transition from Marlene's Place, there are drastically limited site-based housing options with culturally responsive case management and supportive services – such as parenting, education, employment, and healthcare - available for young families.

Our response and commitment: The Bridge for Youth will work with community experts in housing and policy in a space of co-creation and imagination to develop a culturally responsive spectrum of services - from prevention to safe shelter to transitional living to permanent housing – for youth who are pregnant and parenting, including minor-age youth. This includes expanding Marlene's Place and adding permanent supportive housing for pregnant and parenting youth to our portfolio.



Youth Voice

Surveyed Youth Indicate Important Programming Areas

50% ask for support for pregnant/parenting youth

87% recognize the need for resources as early as possible

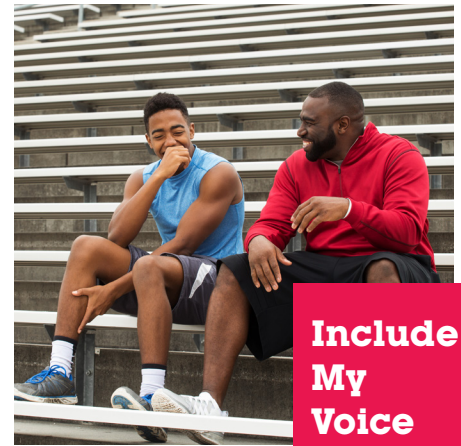
Staff Are Representative, Skilled, Satisfied, and Supported

Youth voice matters. During the strategic planning process, youth shared they want staff and board at The Bridge that look like them, have the same identities, share their experiences, and celebrate same cultures.

Staff voice matters too. Staff shared they need increased mental health supports as they navigate crisis work and the traumas they experience in community. They need sustainable wages and benefits, and the opportunity to grow professionally at The Bridge to stay at the organization long term.

Our response and commitment: Liberation is love at The Bridge where all feel safe and are inspired to show up as their true and authentic selves free from conflict, judgement, harm, and oppression. The mission of The Bridge is achieved by co-creating a loving and supportive community where everyone can thrive and experience belonging.

Based on feedback from youth, The Bridge immediately shifted its practices, prioritizing hiring staff and recruiting board members with identities, experiences, and cultures that align with those of youth in program, and building a succession plan to assure organizational leadership alignment. In February 2022, The Bridge increased the organization's minimum wage to \$20, matching Hennepin County's \$20 minimum. The Bridge will continue to invest resources in maintaining competitive and equitable wages and trauma responsive benefits, and advocate on behalf of staff needs in funding and legislative conversations.



**Include
My
Voice**

Facilities and Infrastructure are Welcoming, Impactful, and Safe for Youth and Staff

What gap do we need to fill:

- Did you know, due to recent programmatic expansion, we have outgrown space The Bridge?

Our response and commitment: From September 2021 – June 2022 youth and staff of The Bridge partnered with three 5th year architecture students from Dunwoody College and the Joy Collaborative in a research and design project to understand what is possible in our current facilities and reimagine their capabilities. Based on feedback from youth and staff and the input of our architecture team, the new design will be spacious and welcoming, trauma responsive, grounded in culture that represents our youth, centered in art of youth and community, and conducive to healing activities. We anticipate contracting with an architect in 2023 for final design, unveiling design and capital plans, and launching a campaign within the next 12 – 18 months.



**A Safe
Place for
All Youth**

The Bridge for Youth Commitment to Our Strategic Plan

About the Strategic Planning Process

In September 2021, The Bridge for Youth completed a 9-month strategic planning process with prioritization on centering youth and staff voice, and advancing racial justice and equity. It was a collective process driven by shared voice. Leveraging Dr. John-Paul Chaisson-Cardenas, PhD, MSW, we engaged community partners, peer organizations, thought leaders, funders, elected officials, board, staff, and youth. The evaluation was a Mixed-Methods quant-QUAL; comprised of individual surveys, focus groups, and 1:1 interviews. Data analysis was divided into phases – a qualitative review of internal survey responses; and a themed based quantitative analysis of the qualitative data of the internal and external surveys, which were overlaid on the information gathered by focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Special consideration was given to inclusion, diversity, and equity; prioritizing racial justice.

The 2022-2024 Strategic Framework for The Bridge, approved in September 2021, reflects a new mission, vision, and values, centered in racial justice and equity, and is grounded in youth voice. Over the next three years, these strategic goals will be implemented through specific strategies, objectives, and deliverables that further advance racial justice, expand and align new service delivery with the voiced needs of youth and drive systemic change.

Are you inspired by the 3 year vision of The Bridge?

We need you to be part of the journey!

- > Advocate
- > Foster Connections
- > Volunteer
- > Make a Financial Investment

Learn more at bridgeforyouth.org/strategic-framework or contact:

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