

BRIDGES TO BELONGING WATERLOO REGION



ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

www.bridgestobelonging.ca

A Message From Our Executive Director & Board Chair

**To all of our families, donors, supporters, volunteers, and our team –
Thank you!**

This past year we have developed into what now seems like a whole new organization, all while maintaining our core values and goals. A few of the highlights of the past year include:

- ✓ Reaching our target of serving 85 new people through the Independent Facilitation Demonstration Project, and serving more people than ever through our traditional fee-for-service work;
- ✓ Launching our "Be At Home Creative Housing Program" and starting "A New Chapter: Peer Led Parent Support Group" along with our partners at Waterloo Region Family Network;
- ✓ Kicking off our "We Belong Waterloo Region" campaign, including an original song and music video, and becoming the support organization for the Buddy Choir;
- ✓ Renaming and rebranding to Bridges to Belonging, becoming a legally incorporated not-for-profit organization, and this past January, becoming a registered charity with Canada's Charities Directorate!

We could not have achieved our goals this past year without the unwavering support from our families, donors, and volunteers in Waterloo Region. Because of you, Bridges to Belonging has a bright future.

Thank you to our tireless and dedicated team who bring energy and passion to their work every day. We have established an organization that is built on respect and trust for one another with a passionate focus on the people that we serve. We are so thankful for the creativity, generosity and friendship found at Bridges to Belonging that has allowed our work to continue to thrive. May this upcoming year allow us to continue to make meaningful relationships within the community, honour choices and dreams, and celebrate the uniqueness of every individual.

We have evolved and grown into such a strong and unique organization within this past year. We cannot wait to see what we can offer Waterloo Region in the near and far future with your continued support.

Yours in inclusion,



Amy Fee
Board Chair



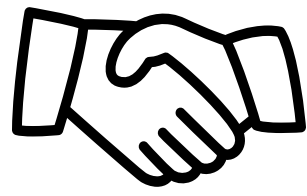
Cameron Dearlove
Executive Director

ABOUT US



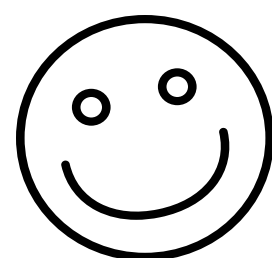
Our Vision

Waterloo Region is a community where everyone belongs – where we value meaningful relationships, honour choices and dreams, and celebrate the uniqueness of each person.



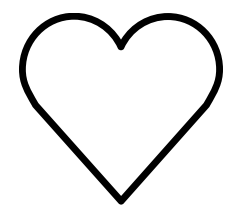
Our Mission

Through meaningful relationships, we support you to build on your unique abilities, to create the life you want in the community.



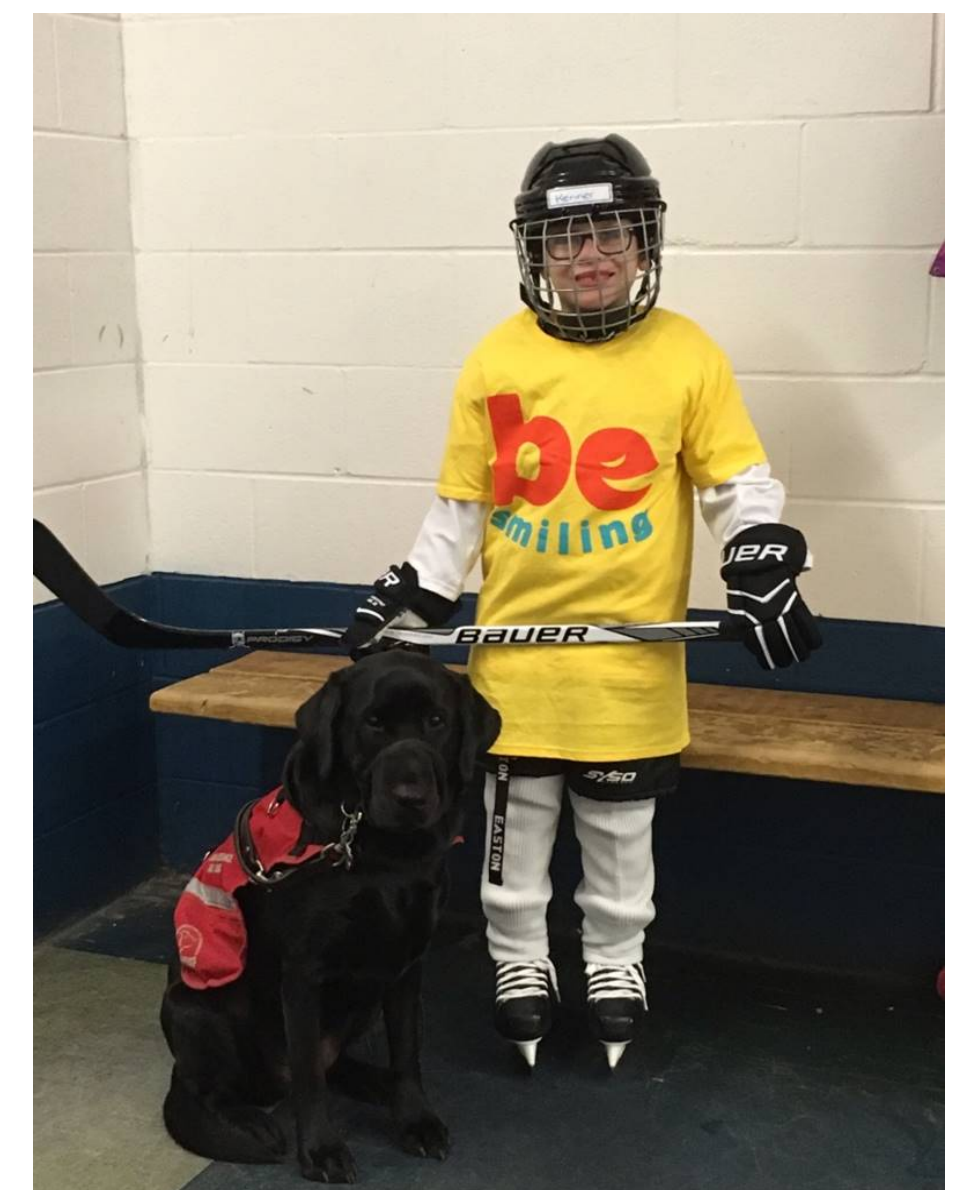
Our Values

Choice: The opportunity to choose
Uniqueness: The individuality of each person
Relationships: Social networks and friendships are critical for healthy well being
Full Citizenship: Valued membership of community
Respect: Mutual respect and kindness for all
Collaboration: We value partnership – working well together with others
Inclusion: Full involvement in community for all



Our Motto

Embracing Possibilities ~ Enriching Community



We asked our BtoBe family,
what does Bridges to Belonging mean to you?

Adaptable Community Support Connected
Accessible Teamwork Life Raft Empowered
Flexible Innovation Energy Pathway Diverse
Transformative Caring Mapping Resourceful
Belonging Celebrating Accommodating
Possibility Essential Building Positive Vibes
Creative Inclusive Refreshing Valued
Relationships First Bridges



EVENTS & FUNDRAISERS

Inclusion Film Series

The Waterloo Region Inclusion Film Series screens films that will inspire, model, or challenge our thinking about what inclusion means. It is a chance for the community to come together and enjoy a film while considering what it means to be included.

At each showing we invite partners and guest speakers connected to each film, asking them to share their stories and speak about the work they do to make Waterloo Region, Canada, and the world a more inclusive place. This year we had our first ever sold out screening! Our film series will continue on through 2017-2018.

"Everybody, whether you have a disability or not, has gifts, has talents, has passions. If people aren't sharing those, that's our job to help people uncover those and find the places where they can share those and build their life within the community."

- Cameron Dearlove, Executive Director



Moksha Yoga Karma Charity

For the month of June, Moksha Yoga Waterloo will be donating all proceeds from their Friday night Karma Class to Bridges to Belonging. A huge thank you to Moksha Yoga Waterloo for their support and opportunity to sweat it out with our community!

Looking Ahead →

Bowling for Belonging

Bridges to Belonging will be running a Bowling Fundraiser at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener in August 2017. We are looking forward to seeing all of our volunteers and community come together to get a spare or two!



4th Annual Jazz Night February 7th, 2017

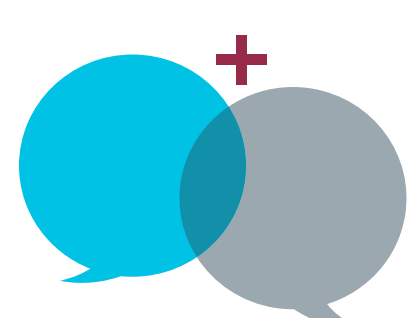
Since 2013 Bridges to Belonging has celebrated community with a night of amazing music, food, drinks and silent auction. This year, great company collected at THEMUSEUM in downtown Kitchener.

This year's performers included Tim Louis, Jimmy Boudreau and Matthew Lima, Master of Ceremonies 570 NEWS' own Eric Drozd, plus a performance by the incomparable Buddy Choir!

Thank you to all who donated, performed and attended for making this annual fundraiser another success!

"I like doing my job, I'm really proud of the work I do there. But I wasn't feeling connected to my community. With the help of my facilitator, now I'm doing more things in my community."

- Greg, Bridges to Belonging Self-Advocate



ONGOING PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

KWCF Youth Grant

We are pleased to announce that we now have support from The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation's Sector Specific grants. One of these grants will support new work with youth in transition in our community. We cannot wait to assist and connect with even more individuals within Waterloo Region.



A New Chapter: Families Moving Forward

Our work as Planners and Facilitators helps people to create the life they want in the community. This usually means that people take on a more active life outside of their family home – working, volunteering, visiting friends, and living independently.

For many parents and caregivers, supporting your child, relative, or friend to build this life can bring up complex feelings. It can be exciting and thrilling, and at the same time challenging and stressful.

Bridges to Belonging, in partnership with Waterloo Region Family Network, now hosts a Peer-Led Parent Support Group called A New Chapter: Families Moving Forward, where we can share some of the challenges – and solutions – in supporting someone to build a full and active life in the community.



Independent Facilitation Demonstration Project

In the spring of 2015, our organization along with 6 other Independent Facilitation Organizations across Ontario became a part of the Independent Facilitation Demonstration Project, funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Among other outcomes, this project allowed us to serve 85 new individuals and families in our community.

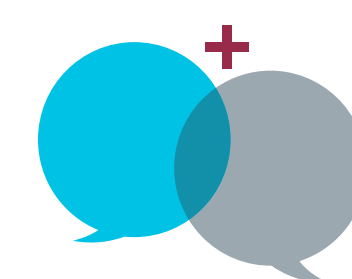
This two-year demonstration project was scheduled to end on March 31, 2017. We are so pleased to share that the Ministry of Community and Social Services will continue this project for at least one more year, with a commitment from April 1, 2017 until March 31, 2018.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to get to know and support so many wonderful people, which makes the news that the project will continue for at least another year all the more exciting.

"Our family now sees a light at the end of what was once a very dark tunnel. We see hope and a future ahead instead of darkness. I cannot stress enough how important Bridges to Belonging and Independent Facilitation is for us and other families."

- Desiree Halloran, Bridges to Belonging family member

"I feel like my prayers have been answered."
- Barb, Bridges to Belonging Self Advocate



We Belong Waterloo Region

This year Bridges to Belong launched a new project called We Belong Waterloo Region. We Belong is a movement that boldly declares: "We all belong in our community!"

The goal? To inspire everyone to foster a sense of belonging in each other through simple, everyday actions with friends, neighbours, colleagues, and strangers.

We invite you to read stories from the community, pledge to take action, and challenge others to make an effort to improve belonging in Waterloo Region!



The Buddy Choir

The Buddy Choir emerged through the Waterloo Region Down Syndrome Society as a choir for people with Down Syndrome and their buddies.

As the Buddy Choir grew and evolved, it became a reflection of the diversity of our community and a model for community inclusion and belonging.

In early 2017, Bridges to Belong was excited to enter into a partnership with the Buddy Choir as their support organization. The Buddy Choir is grateful for the ongoing financial sponsorship of the Waterloo Region Down Syndrome Society.

The Buddy Choir performs for the public to show that everyone can shine and when we all shine together it is magic! The Buddy Choir's hope is that life will imitate art, where all are included regardless of skin, intellect, talents or years!



"A community where everyone belongs is the community I want to live in."

- Christina Koenig, Board of Directors Member

A STORY OF INNOVATION

Written by John Lord

Bridges to Belonging developed Be At Home Creative Housing Supports in 2016 to respond to the growing interest of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families for housing options for the person with the disability. The BtoBe Independent Facilitators also noted that several people they were working with wanted to live more independently from their parents. Many of the people BtoBe serves have talked about “moving out” at some point. Due to the Independent Facilitators often being busy supporting people on a range of goals, housing did not always get the attention it required.

In reflecting on the roots of this initiative, Cameron Dearlove, executive director of Bridges to Belonging, noted how important it was to engage in “upside down thinking,” where we assume that something is the case and build reality around that. We wondered, says Cameron, “if it might be possible to flip the assumptions about housing and people with developmental disabilities. Traditionally, we have assumed that people could not live away from parents until they were ‘ready’ or until all resources were in place.” The Be At Home Project assumes that people can live in the community and that they have the resources and readiness to make it happen.

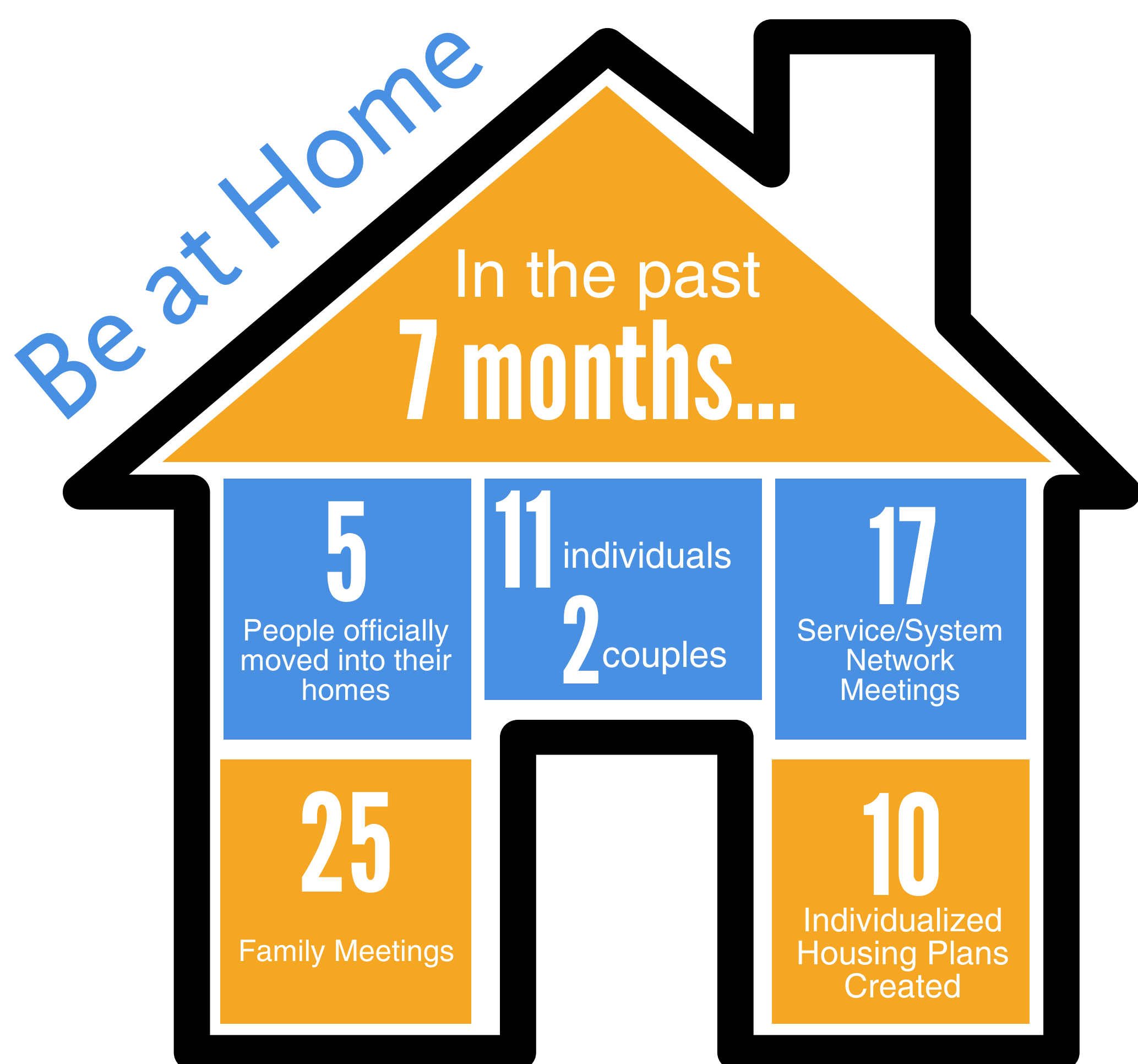
Cameron framed the proposal for this two year initiative around the principles of Independent Facilitation – choice, person-directed, collaboration, and full citizenship. Cameron also noticed that people talk a lot about housing for people with developmental disabilities, but that there has been limited action to date. He notes that, “People tend to know what they do not want, but often do not know what they do want or how to get it.” Cameron’s hope for Bridges to Belonging was that this designated housing support would accelerate people’s ability to access creative housing options in the community. Bridges to Belonging staff recognized that a lot of creativity would be needed to move from the what (we can help people develop homes in community) to the how (strategies and solutions to make it happen).

Jessica Cave is the Be At Home Creative Housing co-ordinator. Her role is to work closely with families interested in building creative housing options for their loved one. Many of the families happen to already be connected with a facilitator which has been a huge asset in building relationships with families. She finds that some people want to move away from their parent’s home and need planning support to do that. Other families are just beginning to explore possibilities and may only need resources and information initially. Jessica supports families in ways that are unique to that individual by assisting them with their journey in a personalized manner. She collaborates with the person’s facilitator (if they have one) by serving as a guide, assisting people to intentionally think about how they want to live their lives. Her role includes planning, supporting people to think about options, and problem-solving around issues such as finding a roommate and looking at affordable apartment options while exploring what supports are needed to make it happen.

Jessica describes her approach to working with individuals and families.

"I take a person-directed approach in helping support families with people with disabilities who want to explore moving into a home of their own. I begin by asking what kind of supports they are looking for. For example, the timeline in which they see themselves in a place of their own, if they've tested living on their own, the preferred age or gender of roommate if applicable, budgeting support (establishing a budget for all expenses needed and determine what type of living situation is affordable; i.e. supported living, paid/unpaid supports, roommate).

The networking piece is also very important to finding a roommate, sharing information with other agencies, community groups, friends, family, posting roommate wanted ads, etc. Next, we create a plan for the transition into housing which could include a calendar with a move-in plan so there's a timeline to reach the move in day and all the pieces in between! I also have several resources to help with the process such as: a mini bio to help with roommate search, a housing plan which outlines how they imagine what having a home of their own is like, support people involved, and what is their plan to stay safe in their new home and community."



A STORY OF INNOVATION

Jessica shares a few stories of people in Waterloo Region successfully transitioning into their own homes.

Steph's Story

When I first met Steph, she shared her dream to find an apartment within walking distance from her family, close friends, and many folks from her network. She had her mind set on renting an apartment within a home.

I initially assisted in sharing resources and housing information about potential rentals, but finding the actual apartment was largely Steph's mom who was in contact with a landlord in their neighbourhood. It was the perfect fit for Steph's housing dream. The tenants happened to be vacating soon and before they knew it they were signing a lease!

The apartment has three-bedrooms so Steph will need to find at least one roommate to help share the financial costs. At this point, none of her friends are ready to move out of their family home so she is looking for someone who wants to share an apartment with her that is fun, polite, respectful, tidy, and will share the chores. A flyer was put together to share with her network, her family, her friends, and her church to try to find a roommate. Another idea that we discussed is to explore testing out living with some of her friends who aren't yet ready to move out but may want to try it out first on a short-term basis until a long-term roommate can be found.

"As my young adult daughter Steph has gotten older (and me too!), I have felt a need to make sure that I have provided opportunities for her to "spread her wings" and for me to "let go." As a single parent and looking down the road, it is important for me to know that Steph has developed her independent living skills to the extent that she is happy, confident and comfortable living in her own space, with a friend and with support. As Steph would say, "I like taking small steps." In this way, Steph's independent housing journey is a work in progress, taking time and thoughtful planning. As someone once said, "We are not where we used to be. We are not where we want to be. However, we are on our way." I am proud of the milestones that Steph has achieved and we will continue to work together, along with family, friends and community organizations to help Steph be independent and in a happy space and place." - Steph's mother before the housing search with Be At Home.



Becky & Joe's Story

This young couple both still lived at home with their parents and when I met them back in December for coffee we talked about where they would like to live and what their short/long-term living plans were. They were largely focusing on finding a place that was close to their jobs, and located on or near a bus route as they both use public transportation. We began to explore some affordable options until they hit the jackpot! The co-op suited their needs around affordability and location, and when they viewed the apartment, they could really see themselves living there. Living in a co-op also connects them to a community where they can give back.

The next stage was to go through an interview process which was a new experience for them and they were successful and approved to live in the co-op. After completing all the paperwork, they were given keys to their new apartment with huge smiles on their faces!

All of the pieces came together and the next steps involved working on the transition into the apartment; settling in, doing laundry, organizing bills and paperwork, budgeting money, doing chores, and putting safeguards in place for emergency situations. With the help of facilitation and housing supports to guide them through the process they are now living on their own and very happy to have made the choice to pursue their desire to live in community.

The Future

The development of Be at Home is a local story with provincial implications. Cameron and Bridges to Belonging observed a trend line present through individuals they were serving that showed people needed additional support to imagine, plan for, and take action towards their ideal housing future.

The experience of selecting and living in community-based housing of your choosing has a significant impact on an individual's (and by extension, their family and network's) sense of belonging. While Bridges to Belonging is focused on the Waterloo Region, the interest in creative housing supports has trickled in from other communities. Families are seeing this as a practical, individualized resource to support a full life in community, and there are early talks to recreate the Be at Home model in other communities.

Should the Be at Home Creative Housing Support program continue to show signs of success, innovative and collaborative solutions will need to be found to fund this innovation.

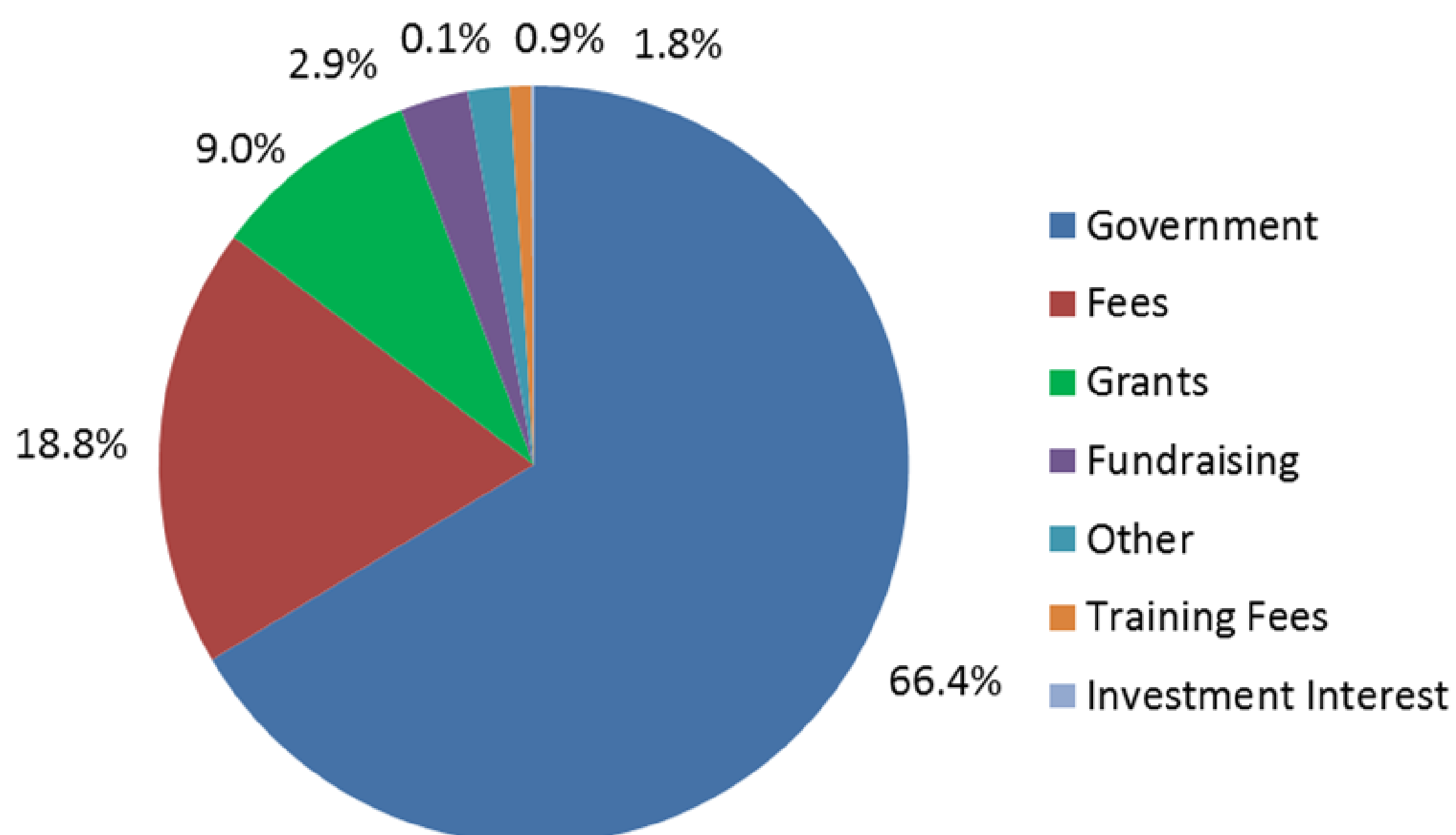
FINANCIALS

Summarized Statement of Expenses and Revenues 2016-2017 Fiscal Year

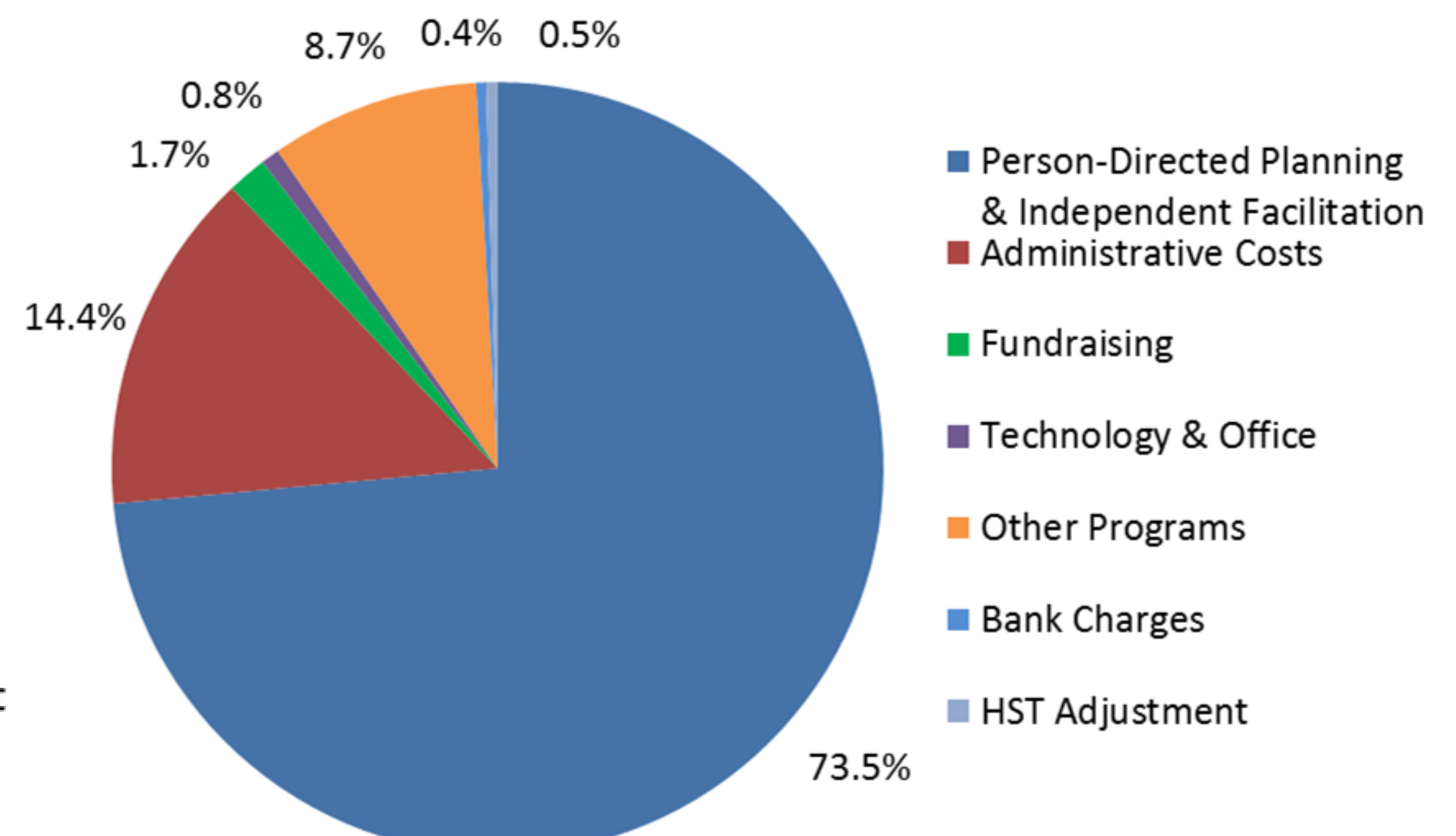
Income	2015-16	2016-17
Government	192,514.00	243,732.00
Fees	60,820.00	69,090.00
Grants	9,500.00	33,002.00*
Fundraising	19,669.00	10,774.00
Other	13,407.00	6,637.00
Training Fees	2,019.00	3,395.00
Investment Interest	0.00	348.00
Total Income		\$366,978.00
Deferred Income		\$88,265.00
Expenses	2015-16	2016-17
Person Directed Planning & Independent Facilitation	234,387.00	275,086.45
Administrative Costs	49,380.00	53,795.63
Fundraising	5,206.00	6,209.00
Technology & Office	13,646.00	2,905.00
Other Programs (Creative Housing, Buddy Choir A New Chapter, We Belong)	2,025.00	32,724.92
Bank Charges	0.00	1,592.00
HST Adjustment	0.00	1,769.00
Total Expenses		\$374,082.00

* Project based funding to be carried forward.

Income 2016-17



Expenses 2016/17



DONORS

We are incredibly grateful to the individuals, organizations, businesses, and foundations who have showed us their support.

Our thanks go to:



Our Donors:

St. Anthony Daniels Catholic Women's League
John Lord
Shelagh & Derek Hitchens
Mark & Nancy Edmond
Nichola Stevenson
Fauzia Mazhar
KW Citivan Club
Desiree Halloran
United Church Women First United Church
Cameron Dearlove
Subeer Bhandari
Brian Tardiff
Tanya Williams
Anette Bolt
Lynne Quigley
& the many auction and prize donors!

Our Funders:

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Waterloo Wellington Autism Services
Government of Canada- Canada Summer Jobs Grant
Kitchener & Waterloo Community Foundation
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A special and tremendous thanks to KidsAbility for their generous in-kind support of Bridges to Belonging. Another big thank you to Extend-A-Family for the support they gave us over the years. We couldn't do it without you!

