



DARE TO BE YOUTH CHARITY

Roadmap to Sustainable Expansion
and Impact

THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

JUNE 11, 2025

Supported by UWHH Seed Grant



A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER & CEO

UNVEILING OUR 2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



Shannon Tobin
Founder & CEO

Dear Dare To Be Youth Community,

I am excited to share our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, a culmination of months spent listening to communities, reflecting on our core values, and carefully examining how we can better fulfill our commitments to supporting youth mental wellness, financial literacy, and resilience, while promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. We involved youth, volunteers, community partners, and leaders to help guide our future direction.

Every decision we make and each action we take will be firmly rooted in these values. Our mission remains steady: to leverage our expertise in creating and supporting mentoring relationships that spark the potential and promise of youth.

As we progress, we will expand our reach by creating engaging, connected, youth-centred journeys that lay the foundation for future success. To do this, we will continue to invest in listening to youth as the experts of their own lives and build stronger partnerships with underrepresented communities and non-profit community organizations.

This is a pivotal moment for us—a time for reflection, pride, and new opportunities. It is our opportunity to reinvent our work, invest in our community, and redefine our impact. This plan is bold, considerate, and truly reflects who we aspire to be.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Board of Directors, the Strategic Planning Task Force, and our Strategic Planning consultant. Their guidance, challenges, and collaboration have been invaluable in crafting this plan and centring our focus on youth and community.

Thank you to everyone who has energized our mission, inspired the creation of this plan, and is bringing their passion to the opportunities that lie ahead. Together, we will make a lasting impact.

Warm regards,
Shannon Tobin
Founder & CEO, Dare To Be Youth Charity

Executive Summary



In the heart of our community, a vision is forming—one where every young person aged 14 to 24 thrives. This is the story of Dare to Be You(th) Charity (DTBY), dedicated to inspiring resilience and empowering youth to build meaningful community connections.

As we launch our 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, we're driven by a mission to equip young people with essential life skills and support healthy relationships, enabling them to make a real impact. Our vision is a future where all youth are resilient, empowered, and ready to contribute positively to society.

Our journey is guided by our core values: caring, community, impact, commitment, and inclusivity. These values lead us through challenges and opportunities. We know empowerment begins with prevention and well-being. By focusing on early intervention and creating safe spaces, we aim to boost youth mental, emotional, and social health through engaging programs and strong community ties.

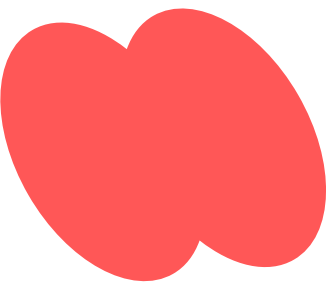
We are building community-centered ecosystems, strengthening partnerships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and funders. By integrating our programs into trusted spaces, we ensure young people feel safe, seen, and supported. This collaborative approach aligns our efforts with the real needs of the youth we serve.

Sustainable growth is vital. We're committed to building a resilient organization through diverse funding and operational excellence. This means securing resources for our programs while ensuring strong, transparent governance.

Our strategic priorities are set: expand program reach via peer-led initiatives, launch impactful programs like "Leader Within" and "Enhance Your Finance," secure multi-year grants, and partner with like-minded funders for sustained revenue. We'll also streamline operations and elevate our brand, positioning DTBY as a youth empowerment leader.

Success will be measured by both our program delivery and the impact on young lives. Guided by the 40 Developmental Assets and Developmental Relationships Framework, we'll track progress and adapt to truly help youth discover their identities and shape their futures.

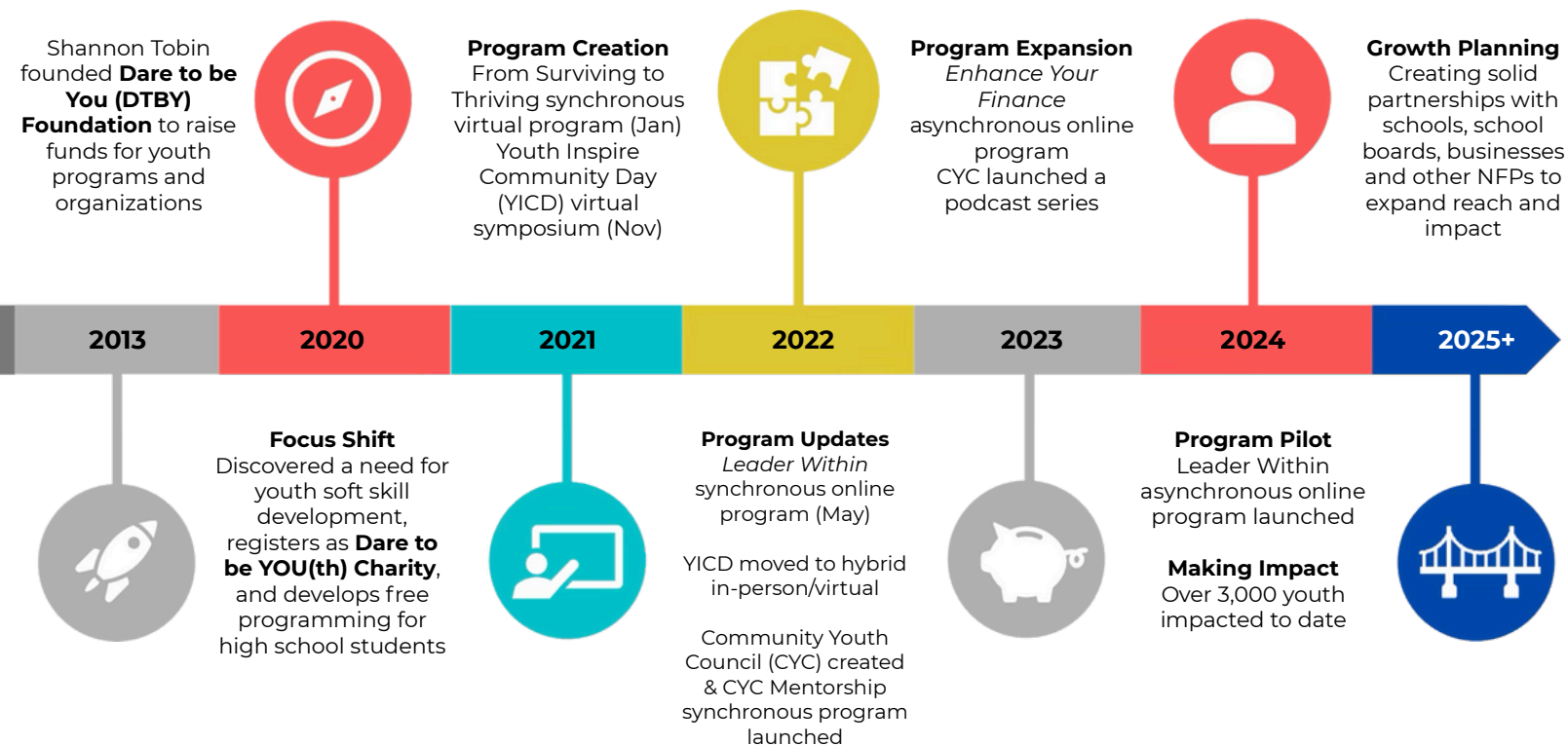
Looking ahead, we are filled with hope and determination. Together, with our community's support, we'll equip the next generation to thrive. This is more than a plan—it's a promise to today's youth and tomorrow's leaders. The journey has begun, and we invite everyone to help bring this vision to life.



WHO IS DARE TO BE YOU(TH)?

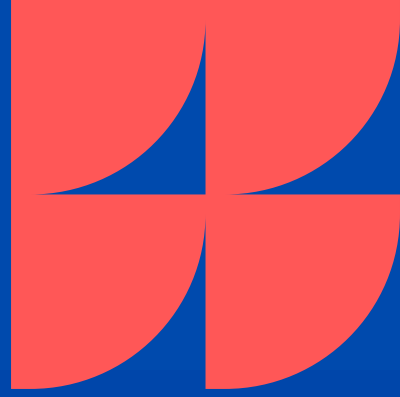
Dare to Be You(th) (DTBY) is a social impact organization driven by the belief that investing in the potential of youth today shapes a brighter, more inclusive, and resilient future. As a registered charity serving Halton and Hamilton regions, its focus is dedicated to empowering youth ages 14 to 24 by providing no-fee, accessible programming that helps participants build essential life skills, develop healthy relationships and connect within their communities. Since its first program launch in 2021, well over 3,000 young people have engaged in initiatives designed to equip them for life beyond high school, empowering them to make an authentic impact.

TIMELINE & MILESTONES





dare to be YOU(th)
make your mark



OUR MISSION

Inspiring 14–24-year-olds to build life skills and develop healthy community connections.

OUR VISION

A future community where all youth are resilient and empowered to make an authentic impact.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our core shared values are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all of DTBY's actions; they serve as its cultural cornerstones and reflect the spirit of who we are as an organization.



CARING

We are respectful, kind, helpful, compassionate and value our team and the young adults we serve.



COMMUNITY

Our community inspires us to support young adults and empower them to make a difference.



IMPACT

We apply our knowledge and insight to help young adults make a positive impact.



COMMITMENT

We are self motivated with a drive and dedication to our mission.



INCLUSIVE

We welcome everyone, respect one another and embrace our differences.



DTBY has given me a platform, a voice that I am able to utilize to advocate for youth within my community. I have met an abundance of leaders like myself who have sparked a sense of light in my life.

– CYC Member and Peer Mentor



A Vision for the Future



By integrating the 40 Developmental Assets and the Developmental Relationships Framework, we are creating a community where every young person receives the support, skills, and opportunities needed to succeed. These frameworks are more than just tools—they serve as the foundation for our mission to generate lasting, positive change in the lives of the youth we serve. Together, we can make sure that every young person feels recognized, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.



I'm part of DTBY because it gives me the opportunity to meet amazing people and to be a part of something that will help me grow as a person and develop skills that will help me in the future.

– Leader Within Participant

Empowering Futures: The Case for the 40 Developmental Assets and Relationships Framework

Imagine a community where every young person feels supported, valued, and equipped to thrive. This vision is at the heart of our strategic plan, which draws on two transformative frameworks developed by the Search Institute: the 40 Developmental Assets and the Developmental Relationships Framework. Together, these research-based tools provide a roadmap for fostering resilience, reducing risky behaviours, and unlocking the potential of every young person we serve.

The 40 Developmental Assets: Building a Foundation for Success

Picture a young person navigating the challenges of adolescence. What if they had a network of caring adults, a safe environment, and opportunities to grow? These are the external assets—the relationships, opportunities, and environments that support youth development. Now imagine that same young person also possesses a strong sense of purpose, self-esteem, and the skills to make positive choices. These are the internal assets—the personal qualities and strengths that help youth thrive.

The 40 Developmental Assets framework highlights essential supports and strengths, categorized into external and internal groups. Research indicates that the more assets a young person possesses, the more likely they are to excel academically, lead confidently, and steer clear of risky behaviours like substance abuse or violence. These assets are not just theoretical—they have been applied worldwide, adapted across different age groups, and demonstrated to improve the lives of millions of young people significantly.

SUPPORT

- Family support
- Positive family communication
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighbourhood
- Caring school climate
- Family-school partnerships

EMPOWERMENT

- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety

BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

- Family boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighbourhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious or spiritual community
- Time at home

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

- Achievement motivation
- School engagement
- Homework
- Bonding to school
- Reading for pleasure

POSITIVE VALUES

- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

- Planning and decision-making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution

POSITIVE IDENTITY

- Personal power
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of personal future

The Developmental Relationships Framework: The Power of Connection

Now, imagine a young person who feels genuinely seen and supported by the adults and peers around them. They are encouraged to dream big, challenged to grow, and given opportunities to lead. This captures the core of the Developmental Relationships Framework, which emphasizes the quality of relationships that help young people thrive.

At its core, this framework identifies five key elements of strong relationships:

1 Expressing Care

Showing young people they are valued and loved.

2 Challenging growth

Encouraging them to push their limits and learn.

3 Providing support

Helping them achieve their goals.

4 Sharing power

Respecting their ideas and giving them a voice.

5 Expanding possibilities

Connecting them to new opportunities & experiences.



These relationships act as the bridge between external supports and internal strengths. They help young people internalize the skills and resources necessary to face challenges and build a brighter future.



Why These Frameworks Matter for Our Strategic Plan

For youth-serving nonprofits like ours, these frameworks are more than just concepts—they are actionable strategies that guide every aspect of our work. Here's how they shape our work:

A Holistic Approach:

By addressing both external environments and internal strengths, we create programs that support every aspect of a young person's development.

Equity and Inclusion:

These frameworks emphasize tailoring supports to meet the diverse needs of youth, ensuring that all young people—especially those from underrepresented communities—have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Program Design & Evaluation:

The frameworks provide a clear structure for designing impactful programs and measuring their success using tools like the Developmental Asset Profile.

Fostering Resilience:

By focusing on strengths rather than deficits, we empower young people to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential.

HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS

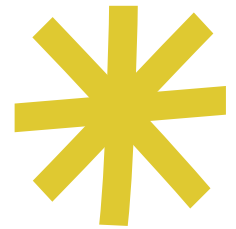
Kevin's Journey: The Impact of the Leader Within Program

Kevin's experience in the **Leader Within Program** is a powerful testament to how structured youth development programs can inspire personal growth and self-discovery. As an autistic student, Kevin entered the 4-week hybrid program unsure of what to expect but left with a deeper understanding of their strengths, resilience, and leadership potential.

One transformative moment came when Kevin discovered that his greatest strength wasn't creativity, as they had always believed, but curiosity. This revelation opened new doors for exploration and growth, showcasing how the program helps participants uncover hidden strengths.

"This has been an amazing experience," Kevin shared, reflecting on how the program helped him grow and build his strengths. Kevin's journey highlights the **Leader Within Program's lasting impact**, equipping young people with the tools to navigate challenges, foster self-discovery, and develop leadership skills for future success.

STRATEGIC PILLARS



PREVENTION AND WELL BEING

Focus on early intervention and preventative strategies to support youth mental, emotional, and social well-being through DTBY programming and community connections.

COMMUNITY- ROOTED ECOSYSTEMS

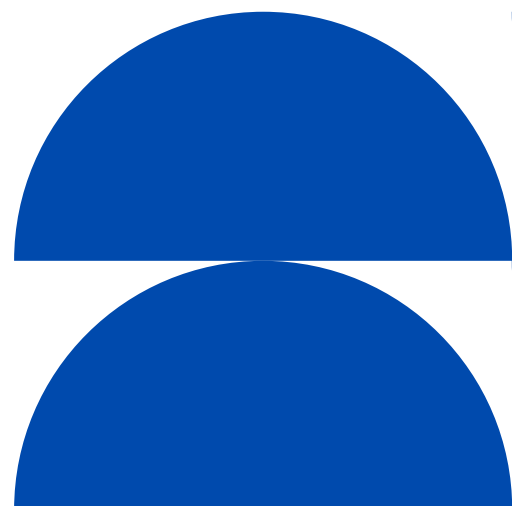
Further develop our relationships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and funders to embed DTBY programs in trusted, inclusive spaces where youth feel safe, seen, and supported.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Build a resilient organizational foundation through diversified funding, operational strength, and governance excellence.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Program Expansion and Partnership Eco-Systems
2. Grants and Fund Development
3. Operations and Governance
4. Brand



PROGRAM EXPANSION AND PARTNERSHIP ECOSYSTEMS

Drive program expansion through intentional and mutually beneficial partnerships, leveraging complementary strengths to broaden reach, enhance capabilities, and create sustainable value for all stakeholders.

Details	Key Initiatives	Timeline
<p>Expand DTBY program reach and impact through peer-led delivery in schools and community settings in Halton/Hamilton</p> <p>Supports Pillars 1 & 2 by embedding preventative, peer-led programs in trusted community spaces</p>	<p>Expand Leader Within and Enhance Your Finance programs to in-person delivery models</p> <p>Co-deliver Leader Within Program in Halton/Hamilton with youth serving community organizations e.g. Art House.</p>	Year One
	<p>Create a facilitators guide for educators within the school boards (Halton/Hamilton)</p> <p>Develop a playbook for school clubs to continue Leadership Development post Youth Inspire Community Day</p>	Year Two
	<p>Build the peer leader alumni strategy and pathway</p>	Year Three

Expected Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators:

- Expanded program reach and impact
- Access to new markets, audiences, and resources
- Enhanced innovation through diverse perspectives and capabilities
- Stronger, more resilient partnership networks
- Long-term sustainability and shared success

GRANTS AND FUND DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen long-term financial resilience by building a comprehensive grants and fund development strategy that leverages data-driven prospecting, cultivates donor relationships, and aligns funding pursuits with organizational priorities and community impact.

Details	Key Initiatives	Timeline
<p>Build sustainable revenue streams to fund DTBY programming.</p> <p>Supports Pillar 3 by securing sustainable funding for preventative programs and partnerships.</p>	<p>Secure multi-year grants</p> <p>Develop pathway partnerships with value aligned funders</p>	Year One
	<p>Initiate peer-to-peer giving program</p>	Year Two
	<p>Grow third-party fundraising partnerships</p>	Year Three

Expected Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators:

- Increased and diversified revenue streams
- Greater capacity to deliver and expand mission-driven programs
- Enhanced credibility and visibility with funders and the community
- Stronger donor and funder relationships leading to repeat and multi-year support
- Improved ability to measure, communicate, and amplify impact

OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Establish robust, transparent, and adaptive operational and governance frameworks that promote accountability, ethical stewardship, and continuous improvement, enabling the organization to achieve its mission with greater impact and resilience.

Details	Key Initiatives	Timeline
<p>DTBY will prioritize strengthening governance and operational excellence, beginning with a comprehensive assessment using Imagine Canada's Gap Analysis Tool to guide us toward future accreditation. This ensures we maintain the highest standards of accountability, trust, and transparency while scaling our impact.</p> <p>We will optimize internal systems and structures to support growth and measure what matters using the 40 Developmental Assets and Developmental Relationships Framework.</p> <p>Supports Pillar 3: Sustainable Growth by ensuring our operations, governance, and evaluation practices are robust, transparent, and aligned with sector best practices.</p>	<p>Refine reporting dashboards and impact storytelling on DTBY's website and CRM.</p> <p>Secure a Grant Writer</p>	Year One
	<p>Streamline internal processes.</p> <p>Implement AI to support impact and outcomes</p> <p>Annual board training (CDH) and committee strategy</p> <p>Use Imagine Canada's Gap Analysis Tool and address priority</p> <p>Create program toolkits</p>	Year Two
	<p>Hire a Full-Time Director of Operations</p>	Year Three

Expected Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators:

- Greater organizational efficiency and effectiveness
- High standards of accountability and ethical practice
- A well-informed, engaged, and diverse board
- Enhanced risk management and regulatory compliance
- Improved stakeholder confidence and trust

Strategic Timeline



BRAND

Embed brand-centric thinking across every touchpoint and decision, ensuring consistent delivery of the brand promise, differentiated positioning in the marketplace, and emotional resonance with target audiences.

Details	Key Initiatives	Timeline
<p>Supports all Pillars by communicating DTBY's preventative, youth-led, community-rooted impact clearly to stakeholders.</p> <p>Revitalize DTBY's brand to spotlight prevention, youth leadership, and community-driven impact. Refresh the visual identity and redesign the website to reflect this renewed focus.</p>	<p>Partner with a brand/marketing agency to support brand revitalization and stakeholder alignment.</p>	<p>Year Two</p>
	<p>Refresh the website to align with brand updated messaging and visuals.</p>	<p>Year Three</p>

Expected Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators:

- Stronger brand equity and recognition
- Greater customer trust and loyalty
- Increased market share and competitive advantage
- Sustainable business value over time

Summary



This strategic plan reflects DTBY's commitment to upstream, preventative, youth-empowered change, guided by evidence and strengthened through trusted partnerships. Together, we will equip the next generation with the skills for a thriving future.





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Thank you!

Supported by UWHH Seed Grant



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