



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Federation Strategic Plan 2027-2032

Unify. Innovate. Lead Boldly.





A Message from Our National CEO and Board Chair

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

The future of Big Brothers Big Sisters has always been shaped by those who believe in the potential of young people. This Federation strategic plan reflects that shared commitment. It was developed through listening, learning, and collaboration with agencies across our Federation, as well as young people, families, volunteers, funders, partners, and sector leaders who generously shared their perspectives.

In January 2026, we embarked on a comprehensive journey to better understand where we are today, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and how we can create even greater impact for young people across Canada. Through over 400 consultation and engagements combined with a comprehensive environmental scan, we gathered insights from across our Federation and the broader mentoring and youth-serving landscape. Federation members imagined what a thriving future Big Brothers Big Sisters Federation could look like.

Those insights shaped the priorities and direction outlined in this plan. Collectively, we are the architects of this shared strategy.

 Throughout this strategic plan document, you'll see this soundwave icon which represents the voices and ideas of agencies that emerged from our conversations.

We thank our Federation for bringing their ideas, perspectives and ambition to this process—and for helping shape our shared vision. These aspirations challenged us to think beyond today's realities and imagine the future we want to build together. Alongside the findings of our environmental scan, they helped shape the strategic direction outlined in this plan.

We sincerely thank the Strategic Plan Task Group for their leadership, thoughtful guidance, and commitment. Through meaningful discussions, and a shared commitment to our Federation's future, they helped strengthen our direction, and ensure this plan reflects the diverse perspectives, realities, and aspirations of the people in our network.

We appreciate Bain & Company and Radiance Advisory for their strategic advice, facilitation, and partnership in guiding this work. Their expertise and unique perspectives enriched our conversations. Their contributions are reflected in a plan based on where we are today and the opportunities ahead.

This strategy is built on a fundamental belief: our Federation in Canada can create greater impact than any one organization can achieve alone. It recognizes the critical role of local agencies for program delivery, the systemic support of the National Office, and the importance of collaboration. We will work alongside governments, schools, community organizations, researchers, funders, volunteers, and young people themselves to strengthen mentoring and connection.

Three ways of working will guide everything we do to deliver measurable success and impact for young people:

Unify — Strengthen our collective voice, deepen collaboration, and align our efforts to maximize impact.

Innovate — Continue evolving mentoring through evidence, innovation, and responsiveness to the changing needs of young people and communities.

Lead Boldly — Think differently, pursue transformational opportunities, and expand access so more young people can benefit from the power of mentoring.

This strategic plan is a roadmap—not a destination. We commit to measuring our progress, learning from what works, and adapting as the needs of young people and communities continue to evolve.

Whether you are a Federation member, volunteer, employee, funder, policymaker, researcher, community partner, or supporter, you play a role in helping young people thrive. We look forward to working together to strengthen mentoring, expand our impact, and build brighter futures for generations to come. Thank you!

With enthusiasm and gratitude,



Jill Zelmanovits
National President and CEO



James Sliter
Chair, National Board of Directors



Vision

All young people realize their full potential.

Mission

To enable life-changing relationships that ignite the power and potential of young people.

Big Brothers Big Sisters gratefully acknowledges the multi-year strategic partnership and the contributions of the team at Bain and Company. Their input was critical to developing the Federation Strategic Plan for 2027 to 2032.

In 2025, the Big Brothers
Big Sisters Federation served

17,871

trained volunteers to build healthy
mentoring relationships with

31,329

young people supported
by staff serving

83

agencies across Canada over

100+ years.

The Context for Young People Today

Young people today are growing up in an increasingly complex world. Many are navigating rising mental health challenges, social isolation, economic uncertainty, changing family structures, and barriers to consistent, trusted support. As demand for mental health services outpaces capacity across Canada, there is growing recognition that upstream, preventative supports are essential. The need for increased mental health services is compounded by rapidly evolving technology, including social media and artificial intelligence, which are reshaping how young people form identity, build relationships, access information, and experience connection. For many, daily life unfolds online. These spaces offer opportunities for learning and connection, but also bring risks such as comparison, distraction, sleep disruption, and disconnection. These are not temporary conditions. They are becoming a defining feature of childhood and adolescence. **The question is: how can all sectors support young people to build healthy, meaningful connection?** Caring adult mentors help young people navigate challenges before they reach a point of crisis and prepare them to thrive beyond adversity as future-ready adults.

The Power of Connection

Consistent and caring relationships are among the strongest protective factors in a young person's life and are foundational to a healthy society. Research consistently shows that strong relationships contribute to better mental health, increased resilience, stronger educational and employment outcomes, greater civic engagement, and more connected communities. **As loneliness and social isolation continue to rise across Canada, investing in meaningful relationships is increasingly recognized as essential to individual and collective well-being.**

Too many young people cannot access a caring adult. While Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than 31,000 young people annually, more than 3 million young people across Canada need mentors. More than half of the young people served by Big Brothers Big Sisters face multiple forms of adversity, reflecting the growing complexity facing children, youth, and families today. For these young people, a mentor would provide stability, encouragement, and belief at critical moments in their lives.

The impact of mentoring extends beyond mentees. Mentors also experience personal growth, new perspectives, and a stronger sense of purpose and connection. Communities, in turn, become more connected, resilient, and supportive. As the world continues to change, we must ensure mentoring remains relevant, accessible, and responsive to the evolving realities of young people, mentors, and communities.



What Differentiates Big Brothers Big Sisters?

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) nurtures a unique type of connection. Our mentoring relationships are intentionally designed, not left to chance. Professional staff carefully assess the strengths, interests, and needs of young people and match them with mentors to meet those needs. We provide ongoing guidance, monitor relationship quality and safety, offer support when challenges arise, and help relationships grow over time. This intentional approach distinguishes our model from informal mentoring and helps ensure young people experience meaningful relationships that allow them to realize their full potential.



The Opportunities: A Call to Action

Our 2026 Federation Environmental Scan highlights clear opportunities to expand our collective impact. It calls us to:

- Strengthen data and impact measurement to improve learning and accountability
- Modernize program models to reflect how young people and mentors connect today
- Respond to increasingly complex youth needs through more flexible and adaptive approaches
- Deepen integration within broader youth-serving ecosystems
- Reach more young people who could benefit from mentoring
- Reimagine how volunteer mentors are recruited, supported, and engaged
- Strengthen long-term sustainability across the Federation

This Strategic Plan is both a roadmap and a call to action. It reaffirms Big Brothers Big Sisters as a leader in mentoring while enabling us to evolve our models, deepen our reach, and strengthen our role within broader systems of youth support. It positions BBBS as a trusted partner of choice, where mentoring is recognized as a core part of the solution across government, community, and the youth sector. It also raises a shared question for the future: **how do we build on the foundation of mentoring today to create even greater connection, belonging, and support for young people in Canada?** At its core, this direction reinforces the simple truth that a consistent, caring mentoring relationship can change the trajectory of a young person's life and create ripple effects across families, mentors, and communities.

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serves more than
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How This Plan Was Developed

The Federation strategic planning process was designed by:

- Bringing the Federation together to convene, collaborate, and co-create
- Keeping young people at the centre through a practical and humble approach
- Looking ahead by embracing emerging opportunities enabled by innovation, technology and people
- Encouraging bold thinking and challenging traditional assumptions
- Providing a clear framework for decision-making and collective action

Our Way Forward

This plan is our commitment to the future. It is a call for the Federation to move forward together - unified in purpose, aligned in action, and focused on creating greater impact for young people across Canada. Achieving our goals will require more than individual initiatives. The National Office and every individual Agency will have to deeply consider how we work differently in our communities and as a Federation. We will do this through three interconnected ways of working, which happen simultaneously and reinforce one another.

We will Unify. Innovate. Lead Boldly.

These ways of working will position Big Brothers Big Sisters as a catalyst for prevention, systems change, and stronger youth outcomes across Canada and allow us to achieve our four strategic goals:

Lead as the Trusted Voice in Mentorship

Be known as the relevant solution for young people facing adversity.

Evolve the Mentoring Experience

Meet the needs of mentors and mentees.

Ensure Access

Serve more young people who need mentoring relationships.

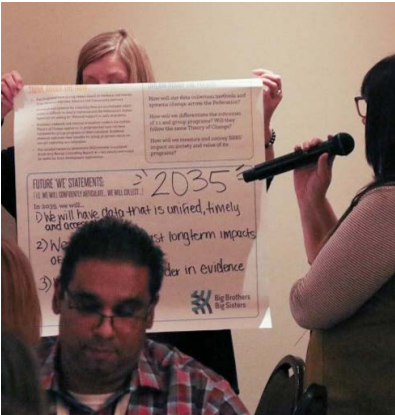
Mobilize Funding

Increase the resources needed to sustain and grow our impact.

ENGAGEMENT DETAILS

Since January 2026, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada held nearly **73 consultation sessions** and **512 engagements** that included young people and families, agency leaders, service delivery staff and boards, mentors, National Office staff and board members from every active region across the country. These engagements also included external partners across education, health, community organization, funding, and government. The distinct phases are described in detail below:

	Phase 1: (January–March) Environmental Scan	54 sessions	180 people
	Phase 2a: (April) Fireside Chats on Environmental Scan	3 sessions	29 people
	Phase 2b: (April–May) Visioning Sessions	5 sessions	183 people
	Phase 3: (June–July) Regional Consultations	7 sessions	81 people
	Phase 4: (August–September) Fireside Chats on the Strategic Plan	3 sessions	39 people



Big Brothers Big Sisters gratefully acknowledges the role of Radiance Advisory for connecting, engaging, and inspiring agency leaders and community partners. Their contribution will amplify the impact of this Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan at a Glance

This Strategic Plan is a shared roadmap for the Federation, setting a common direction and helping align our collective efforts across agencies and National Office. While the goals are shared, there is flexibility in how they are achieved. This approach recognizes that agencies and partners work in different contexts and serve different community needs.

Progress will be tracked through ongoing measurement and regular accountability conversations across the Federation. We will stay grounded in outcomes, continue to learn as we go, and keep the plan responsive as circumstances change.

We will Unify. Innovate. Lead Boldly.

In 2032 we will	How we will get there
Lead as the Trusted Voice in Youth Mentorship Be known as the relevant solution for youth facing adversities.	A Measure, Share and Demonstrate the National Impact Data B Demonstrate Thought Leadership and Advocacy
Evolve the Mentoring Experience Meet needs of mentors & mentees.	C Streamline and Innovate Mentoring Experiences that are Responsive to Today’s Young People and Mentors by Integrating Youth Voice D Develop Partnerships & Embed Mentoring Experiences into Existing Youth Ecosystems E Centre Child Protection in Mentoring Experiences
Ensure Access Serve more young people who need mentoring relationships.	F Retain and Recruit Mentors G Support Federation Health, People & Culture H Explore & Implement Organizational Design I Optimize Technology Systems
Mobilize Funding Increase the resources needed to sustain and grow our impact.	J Focus Fund Development Based on Impact Data K Differentiate BBBS Brand Across Sectors
ENABLERS: Quality Assurance • Network Development • Information Technology (IT) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) • National Partnerships • Marketing & Communications • Insurance	



"We will be the "go-to" leaders and influencers in the youth mentorship space and will be known for our innovative and tactical strategies."



Lead as the Trusted Voice in Youth Mentorship

How we will get there:

- A** Measure, Share and Demonstrate National Impact
- B** Demonstrate Thought Leadership and Advocacy

Lead as the Trusted Voice in Youth Mentorship

KPI (Key Performance Indicator value to be developed with Federation in Year 1)
For example, number of references to BBBS impact expertise including research citations, cross-sector partnerships, policy influence, and media coverage.

How we will get there:

Strategy **A**

Measure, Share and Demonstrate National Impact

- Align on the outcomes that best enable mentees to reach their full potential, and directly benefit mentors, families and communities.
- Strengthen how mentoring experiences are measured through unified, timely, accessible, insight- and technology-driven data.
- Communicate the impact and value of mentoring programs as they contribute to broader societal priorities of health, education, justice and employment.

Strategy **B**

Demonstrate Thought Leadership and Advocacy

- Increase awareness of the BBBS brand and mentoring as an investable solution to social challenges through government advocacy, partner relations and coalition building.
- Increase publication of National impact data, participation at sector tables and activations with funders and decision-makers.
- Be recognized as trusted mentor experience leader with measurable research-based impact.



Picasso

“We will have consistent national data outcome measurements that clearly demonstrate each of our programs through co-developed frameworks built on logic models and theories of change that articulate specific outcomes that tie to the greater Theory of Change.”



“We will work with governments and communities to inform meaningful policy that ensures mentorship remains a priority for Canada’s socioeconomic infrastructure.”



Evolve the Mentoring Experience

How we will get there:

- C** Streamline and Innovate Mentoring Experiences that are Responsive to Today's Young People and Mentors by Integrating Youth Voice
- D** Develop Partnerships & Embed Mentoring Experiences into Existing Youth Ecosystems
- E** Centre Child Safety in Mentoring Experiences

Evolve the Mentoring Experience

KPI (Key Performance Indicator value to be developed with Federation in Year 1)
For example, percentage of children, youth, mentors and families who agree their experience met or exceeded their needs.

How we will get there:

Strategy **C**

Streamline and Innovate Mentoring Experiences that are Responsive to Today’s Young People and Mentors by Integrating Youth Voice

- Streamline mentoring experiences into a core menu of consistent, evidence-based, culturally responsive offerings to enhance measurable impact and strengthen brand clarity and cohesion across the Federation, while maintaining flexibility to meet local community needs.
- Evolve and enhance mentoring experiences to meet the changing needs of mentees and mentors by aligning them with how these individuals want to connect, engage, and access mentorship opportunities. This will include leveraging effective efforts across the network and evidence-based practices from other organizations.
- Integrate youth voice to inform mentoring program design and implementation.

Strategy **D**

Develop Partnerships & Embed Mentoring Experiences into Existing Youth Ecosystems

- Develop partnerships with youth-serving organizations and integrate mentoring into existing community-based programs and services, to deliver more coordinated approaches to serve youth in places and ways that mentees and mentors feel comfortable.

Strategy **E**

Centre Child Safety in Mentoring Experiences

- Maintain our commitment that child safety is fundamental in all we do through a strong National Standards Program that supports the Federation.



“We will align ourselves with delivery partners to help achieve measurable impact and outcomes, that will drive operational efficiencies.”



“We will always ensure young people and mentors experience safe, welcoming spaces that strengthen connection and community belonging.”



**"We will serve youth
who will benefit most
from our programs
based on the data...."**

Ensure Access

How we will get there:

- F** Retain and Recruit Mentors
- G** Support Federation Health, People & Culture
- H** Explore and Identify Organizational Design
- I** Optimize Technology Systems

Ensure Access

KPI (Key Performance Indicator value to be developed with Federation in Year 1)
For example, number of young people who need mentoring relationships served.

How we will get there:

Strategy **F**

Retain and Recruit Mentors

- Target recruiting the mentors that mentees need most through National Campaigns.
- Create a mentor lifecycle brand experience that meaningfully benefits mentors, strengthens engagement, and supports long-term retention.

Strategy **G**

Support Federation Health, People & Culture

- Expand capacity by defining and measuring operational health indicators, delivering core services, expanding training, and enabling the sharing of best practices and resources across the Federation.
- Drive a positive culture of trust and collaborative synergies among all members of the Federation.

Strategy **H**

Explore and Identify Organizational Design

- Explore and identify organizational models and delivery channels that enable us to serve communities and youth who would benefit from mentoring services.

Strategy **I**

Optimize Technology Systems

- Invest in the technology, systems, processes and training that enable the service delivery, program, impact, fund development, technology and operational needs of the Federation.



“We will operate a federation that is guided by capacity, capability, and sustainability, ensuring we are structured and resourced to realistically deliver services based on local demand.”



“We will have a scalable operating model that will leverage shared resources, and that enables capacity-building across the country and promotes cohesion.”



"We will bring together people and resources to invest in the potential of young people."



Mobilize Funding

How we will get there:

- J** Focus Fund Development Based on Impact Data
- K** Differentiate BBBS Brand Across Sectors

Mobilize Funding

KPI (Key Performance Indicator value to be developed with Federation in Year 1)
For example, dollar increase in fund development revenue, reduction of annual member dues as a percentage of National Office Revenue.

How we will get there:

Strategy **J**

Focus Fund Development Based on Impact Data

- Build a fundraising strategy to sustain investment in BBBS that funds the strategic plan, reduces membership dues and builds a network of brand ambassadors who invest in our mentoring mission.
- Identify funders by leveraging national impact data to pursue aligned funding opportunities from funders who value and support the outcomes BBBS delivers.

Strategy **K**

Differentiate BBBS Brand Across Sectors

- Invest in brand awareness and marketing activities grounded in updated return-on-investment research.
- Differentiate our mentorship experiences as a compelling, investable, and cost-effective strategy.
- Inspire more young people, mentors, donors, and community partners to join and support the BBBS mentoring movement.



“We will confidently articulate measurable data for our societal return on investment across BBBS to increase funding opportunities.”



“We are a trusted provider of mentorship programming that inspires a network of ambassadors and funders to invest in our mission.”



Unify

Align around shared priorities, systems, and ways of working together to strengthen our collective impact and create a more connected Federation.

Innovate

Design, test, and scale new approaches that respond to the evolving needs of young people, mentors, families, and communities.

Lead Boldly

Challenge assumptions, pursue new opportunities, and confidently champion mentoring as a critical solution for young people facing adversity.

About Us

CHAMPIONING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOUTH

Growing up is not the same for all young people but facing adversity should not stand in the way of who they can become.

Young people are growing up amid rapid change and increasingly complex pressures. They bring strengths and the potential to shape their futures, but access to the relationships and opportunities that help them thrive is not equal. Research shows that even one consistent, trusted adult can make a meaningful difference by helping a young person feel connected, build confidence, navigate challenges and see new possibilities.

In 2025, more than 31,000 young people participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs. **But the need for mentorship is nearly 100 times greater: more than three million young people** across Canada could benefit from a life-changing mentoring relationship.

Among the young people served by Big Brothers Big Sisters, four in five face three or more complex challenges in their daily lives. Mentoring does not remove every challenge they face. It helps ensure they do not have to navigate those challenges alone.

OUR SOLUTION

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the leading provider of youth mentorship in Canada. Through a national network of 83 locally rooted agencies, mentoring specialists connect young people with trained, caring volunteers through safe, high-quality one-to-one and group mentoring programs that respond to young people's strengths, circumstances and goals.

When we enable the transformative benefits of mentoring relationships, **we ignite the power and potential of each young person.**

The safety and well-being of young people are fundamental to everything we do. Working together with families, schools, social service organizations, communities and funders, we help create the conditions for young people to achieve stronger social-emotional and educational outcomes, support their mental wellness and build for future success.

We will unify, innovate and lead boldly.

Strategic Partners:

BAIN & COMPANY 



Contact:

Big Brothers Big Sisters

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We have the plan.

Let's make
life bigger
for young
people.

