



FIREFLY

Adaptive Strategy & Impact Plan Playbook

2026

Welcome to (y)our playbook

This is FIREFLY's shared guide for moving forward with purpose, clarity and adaptability. It brings together what was heard from staff, families, children, youth, partners, leaders, and community voices.

Parts of this may feel familiar. Research affirmed that much of FIREFLY's previous direction still holds true. Consider this an evolution rather than a reimagining. You will see some recognizable commitments alongside new priorities shaped by the future we are planning into.

This is not intended to be a static plan. It is meant to be a living tool to help us stay anchored in what matters and make decisions that keep strengthening care in Northwestern Ontario.

FIREFLY PLAYBOOK 2026

What's Inside

A shared guide for moving forward with purpose, clarity, and adaptability.



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Foundation

Why this playbook exists

FIREFLY has built a strong foundation of care, connection, and community.

At the same time, the world around children, youth and family services is changing. Needs are becoming more complex and families are carrying more pressure. Digital life, workforce strain, funding uncertainty, equity gaps, and regional access challenges are reshaping care.

This playbook aims to help FIREFLY balance stability and flexibility, staying clear about what must remain steady, while creating practical ways to adapt with shifting conditions.

How it was created

This playbook was shaped through an iterative process of listening, learning and action.

We heard from voices across FIREFLY's system: staff, caregivers, youth, partners and experts. The process was guided by: two external facilitators, eight staff representing a cross-section of FIREFLY, the strategy and performance team (SPT) and the board of directors. Input came through all-staff sessions, focus groups, interviews, video/audio responses from community, attending events, and strategic planning conversations.

The process drew on Strategic Foresight, Three Horizons thinking, and the Adaptability Intelligence (AQ) framework. Data was synthesized with a combination of human and artificial intelligence.

The context we are planning into

Across the engagement, several core conditions stood out as important to consider:

Needs are becoming more complex and emerging earlier.

Children, youth, and families are presenting with more layered developmental, mental health, family, and social needs. Referrals are increasing, and many needs are showing up sooner and with greater intensity.

Families are carrying more pressure.

Many families are navigating financial, emotional, and social stress while also trying to understand and coordinate care. Past experiences of not being heard or understood by systems, continue to shape trust and engagement.

Access is shaped by geography, equity, and capacity.

In a vast northern region, where a family lives still affects what support they can access, how long they wait, and whether specialized or intensive services are close. Rurality, funding inequities, transportation, culture, trust, and local capacity all shape access.

Childhood and family life are changing.

Children and youth are growing up with earlier digital exposure, online safety concerns, social isolation, disrupted routines, disconnection, and changing family structures. Many service models were not designed for these conditions.

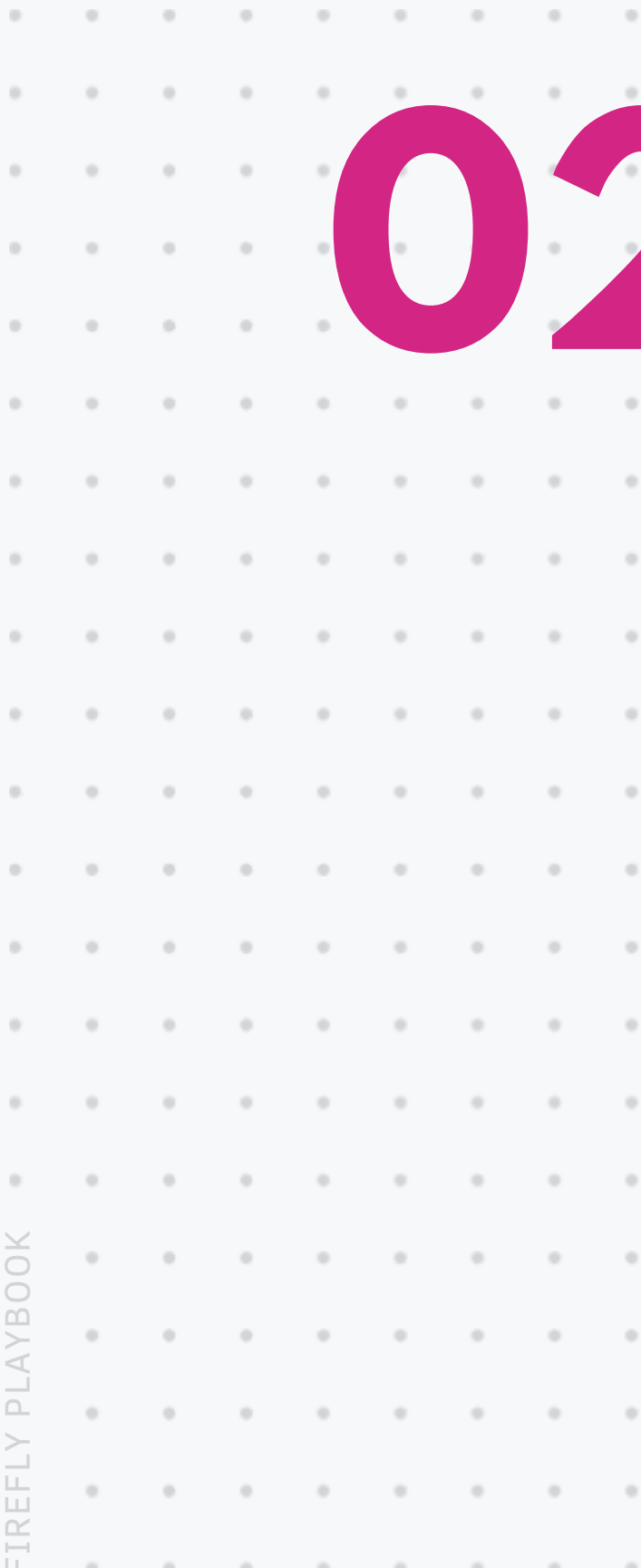
The system around care is under strain.

Staffing constraints, funding uncertainty, increased referrals, and rising expectations are reshaping how care can be delivered. The pace of change is increasing faster than many people and systems can absorb.

No organization can respond alone.

The challenges facing infants, children, youth, and families are interconnected. FIREFLY’s future impact will depend on stronger partnerships, clearer pathways and shared learning.



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02

Who We Are

Our Mission

Making a positive difference in the wellbeing and life journey of infants, children, youth and families.

Our Vision

Healthy People. Resilient Families. Vibrant Communities.

Our Values

Heart
Reaching Beyond
Empowerment
Sharing & Playing Together
Accountability

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03

The Three Horizons

The Three Horizons help FIREFLY connect the future we are working toward with the choices and actions we need to make today. This section moves through three connected timeframes:

Where we are going — the future FIREFLY wants to help create for infants, children, youth, families, staff, partners, and communities.

What we will focus on — the strategic directions that guide our decisions and priorities as we move toward that future.

What we can do now — the actions, strengths, and experiments that help us make progress today.

Imagine it is **May 2046** in **Northwestern, Ontario.**

The maps still show the same distances: long roads, communities spread across water, forest, highway, and treaty lands. But the experience of that distance has changed. A family's postal code no longer has an impact on the quality or speed of care they receive.

Twenty years ago, FIREFLY was an organization with deep roots, a clear vision, and a growing recognition that the world around infants, children, youth, families, staff, and communities was shifting faster than any fixed plan could hold. Families were carrying too much. Staff were stretched. Needs were becoming more layered. Technology was changing childhood, care, and connection. Trust could not be assumed.

So FIREFLY made a different kind of commitment: not to predict the future perfectly, but to keep learning on the way toward it.

What followed was slow, uneven, sometimes hard, and never finished. But something real was built. Care is now more connected. Families are true partners. Youth have more ways in. Staff are better supported to adapt. Relationships with communities have deepened through time, humility, and follow-through. People have what they need.

In May 2046, we asked caregivers, youth, staff, leaders, and community partners one question: What is different now? These are the voices of the people who lived it.

Where we are going

I remember when every appointment meant starting again – explaining our child, our family, what had helped, and what had hurt. Now our story travels with us. People know my daughter’s name, what matters to her, and what we are working toward. I can show up as her parent, be part of the plan, and trust that we are not doing this alone. Long before people need FIREFLY, they already know the agency because of the incredible things heard from other parents in our community. They have become an integral part of the village helping raise children.” –**Caregiver, Sioux Lookout**

I booked my own appointment. I could see the options, choose what felt right, and talked to someone in a way that worked for me. For a long time, I couldn't see my own path until FIREFLY helped me light the way to make it visible. Nobody made me feel like a problem to fix. They helped me understand what was happening, what I had control over, and what I could try next. I feel understood. Support feels normal now — safer and easier to reach before everything falls apart.” –**Youth, age 16, Kenora**

“I stayed because FIREFLY created the conditions for staff to do hard heart-work well. The way we work has changed. The agency secured funding to increase staffing and balance workloads, waitlists dropped and our caseloads became genuinely sustainable. I have the time to dedicate my full attention to my clients. We talk about pressure before people burnout. We learn together and ask for help sooner. Families are not treated like visitors to the process, and staff are not treated like endless capacity. We are building a human bridge to care, not just getting through the day. It has made FIREFLY a truly coveted place to work across the North.” –**Frontline staff, Fort Frances**

“The shift I am most proud of is how we transformed the ecosystem around care. We strengthened sustainability for staff and navigation for families, recognizing that better care depends on both. We balanced this systemic shift with a focus on measurable progress. By tracking real-time demand and capacity data, we can adjust resources, while always prioritizing real people over the technologies that support them. By consistently sharing positive client and caregiver testimonials, we keep the seed of hope thriving. We built stronger relationships and quicker feedback loops. When people feel supported, they support others differently. That changed everything.” –**FIREFLY leader, Dryden**

“What changed with FIREFLY is that partnership became a deeply integrated reality. We stopped working beside each other in separate lanes and started building around the child and family together. Today, school teams are creating genuinely inclusive classrooms and connecting with primary healthcare and pediatricians, ensuring continuity from youth into adulthood. We shared information more clearly, named gaps earlier, and took responsibility for what happened between services. Families still have complexity in their lives, but they were no longer left alone to coordinate it.” –**Community partner, Red Lake**



What we'll focus on

Easier to Navigate

Shape care around the whole child, family and caregiver, streamlining intake and navigation, so support meets rising complexity.

Energized, Valued, Adaptable

Strengthen conditions for the recruitment, retention and well-being of FIREFLY's people, balancing the stability and proactive adaptation needed to deliver responsive care.

Equitable Support

Design flexible, culturally safer, locally-grounded services through an anti-oppressive and decolonizing lens so access, trust, and quality do not depend on location in Northwestern Ontario.

Moving Systems Together

Coordinate internal and cross-sector partnerships that reduce fragmentation, support basic family needs, stretch limited resources and clarify FIREFLY's role.

Together, these four strategic pillars describe what FIREFLY must become known for in the future and context we are planning into.

Easier to Navigate

Shape care around the whole child, family and caregiver, streamlining intake and navigation, so support meets rising complexity.

What this asks of us now

Look for the places where families are carrying the burden of coordination, reduce administrative friction, and make the next step clearer, warmer, and easier to follow.

Capabilities to Build

- **Whole-family, relationship-based practice** that starts where families are and includes caregivers as part of the care team from day one.
- **Clear navigation and coordinated pathways** so families understand what is happening, what comes next, and where to turn.
- **Co-design and complex-needs support** that brings children, youth and caregiver voices into decisions when needs are layered or uncertain.
- **Unified information sharing** through centralized systems to minimize redundant intake screenings and repetitive storytelling.

Where are families still doing invisible coordination work that we could help reduce?

Energized, Valued, Adaptable

Strengthen conditions for the recruitment, retention and well-being of FIREFLY's people, balancing the stability and proactive adaptation needed to deliver responsive care.

What this asks of us now

Make staff voice, learning, and client impact part of everyday decisions; not only formal projects or major change efforts.

Capabilities to Build

- **Trusted frontline-leader relationships** where expertise is valued, expectations are clear, and people closest to the work have voice in co-creating.
- **Adaptive leadership** including mental flexibility, unlearning, resilience, hopefulness and emotional health.
- **Everyday quality improvement habits** that help teams plan, test, learn and connect decisions back to client and family impact without overloading front-lines.
- **Sustainable workloads** that involve succession planning, intentional onboarding and a culture of appreciation.

What would help our team do hard work well without losing clarity, energy, or connection?

Equitable Support

Design flexible, culturally safer, locally-grounded services through an anti-oppressive and decolonizing lens so access, trust, and quality do not depend on location in Northwestern Ontario.

What this asks of us now

Design from the realities of each community first, prioritizing long-term relationship continuity and localized trust over model uniformity.

Capabilities to Build

- **Culturally safer and locally grounded practice** built on humility, trust, and understanding of northern, rural, remote, and Indigenous realities.
- **Flexible service models for place-based access** that account for distance, transportation, staffing, technology, and local capacity.
- **Community connections in remote and underserved areas** through nursing stations, local providers, and community-based supports.
- **Workforce retention strategies** that reduce turnover to protect continuity, trust, and stable relationships for vulnerable children, youth, and families.

Where does access still depend too much on where a family lives, and what could we design differently?

Moving Systems Together

Coordinate internal and cross-sector partnerships that reduce fragmentation, support basic family needs, share resources, and clarify FIREFLY's role.

What this asks of us now

Move from parallel work to shared problem-solving, especially where families are still experiencing gaps between services or where communication platforms are disjointed.

Capabilities to Build

- **Transparent, trust-based partner relationships** where organizations understand each other's roles, funding realities, constraints, and strengths.
- **Shared cross-system problem-solving** to reduce duplication, respond to service gaps, share limited resources, and support more families.
- **Clear coordination and communication** so families experience supports as more unified.

Where are families feeling the gaps between organizations, and how could we close those gaps together?



04

Adaptive Strategy in Action

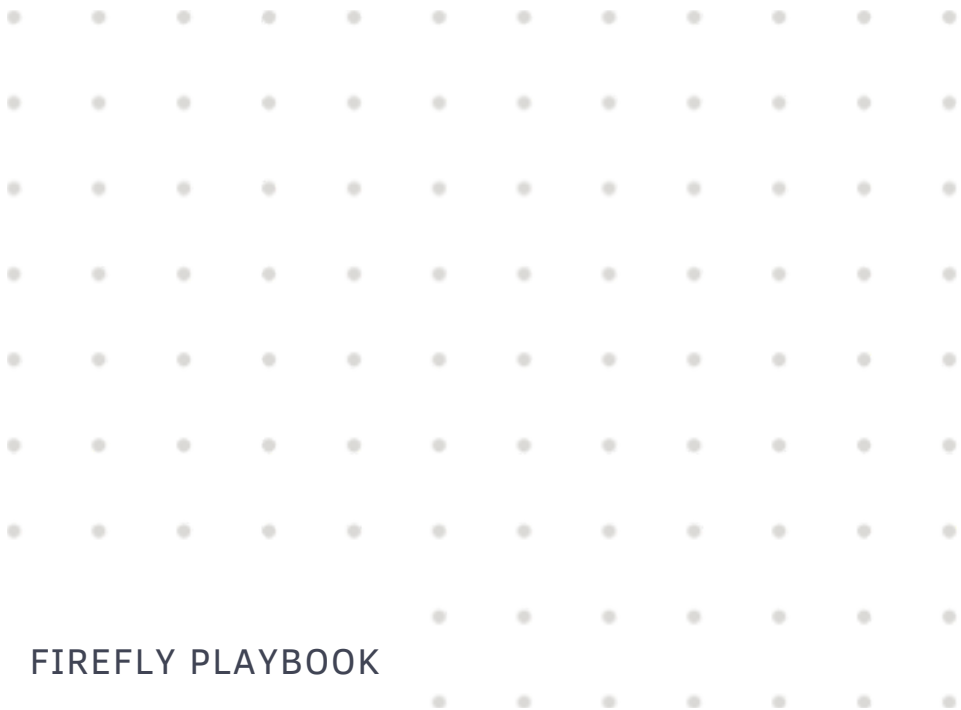
This playbook gives FIREFLY a stable foundation and a way to keep learning as conditions change.

Staying adaptive means regularly asking:

- What is changing around us?
- What are we learning from children, youth, families, staff, partners, and communities?
- What needs to be adjusted, strengthened, tested, or communicated differently?
- What can stay steady because it still holds true?

The goal is not constant change. The goal is learning and adjusting as we go.

What do you need to help implement the strategic plan?



During our all-staff retreat you shared your thoughts on what you need from FIREFLY and your team. Here is what we heard:

- 1. Anchor decisions in impact for children, youth, families, and communities.
- 2. Create a clear line of sight between strategy, operational plans, team goals, and daily work.
- 3. Clarify roles and decision points so people know who does what.
- 4. Protect time to reflect, plan and follow through.
- 5. Communicate clearly across teams and locations.
- 6. Focus on fewer priorities at a time so change can be implemented well.
- 7. Ground planning in capacity and wellbeing so expectations match reality.
- 8. Keep the model practical and realistic so teams can actually bring it to life.

Operational Planning

The bridge between strategy and action. This turns FIREFLY’s direction into clear priorities, team-level plans and learning rhythms that guide the work day to day.



How we’ve done it in the past

In the past, operational planning was developed and carried mainly by senior leaders, with less visibility, input, and feedback across the staff team.

What’s changing

Operational planning is becoming more collaborative, transparent, and connected to everyday work.

Why it matters

Strategy has more impact when it is shaped by the realities of the work and translated into action that improves service for children, youth, families, and communities.

What does this mean for me?

Bringing Strategy to Life: Operational Planning Roles & Responsibilities



Board of Directors

The Board approves strategic direction and provides governance oversight so FIREFLY stays aligned with its mission, values, and long-term impact.

Strategy & Performance Team (SPT)

SPT sets direction, creates alignment, and ensures teams have the clarity, focus, and support needed to implement the operational plan so strategic priorities can move forward in a coordinated and realistic way.

Managers

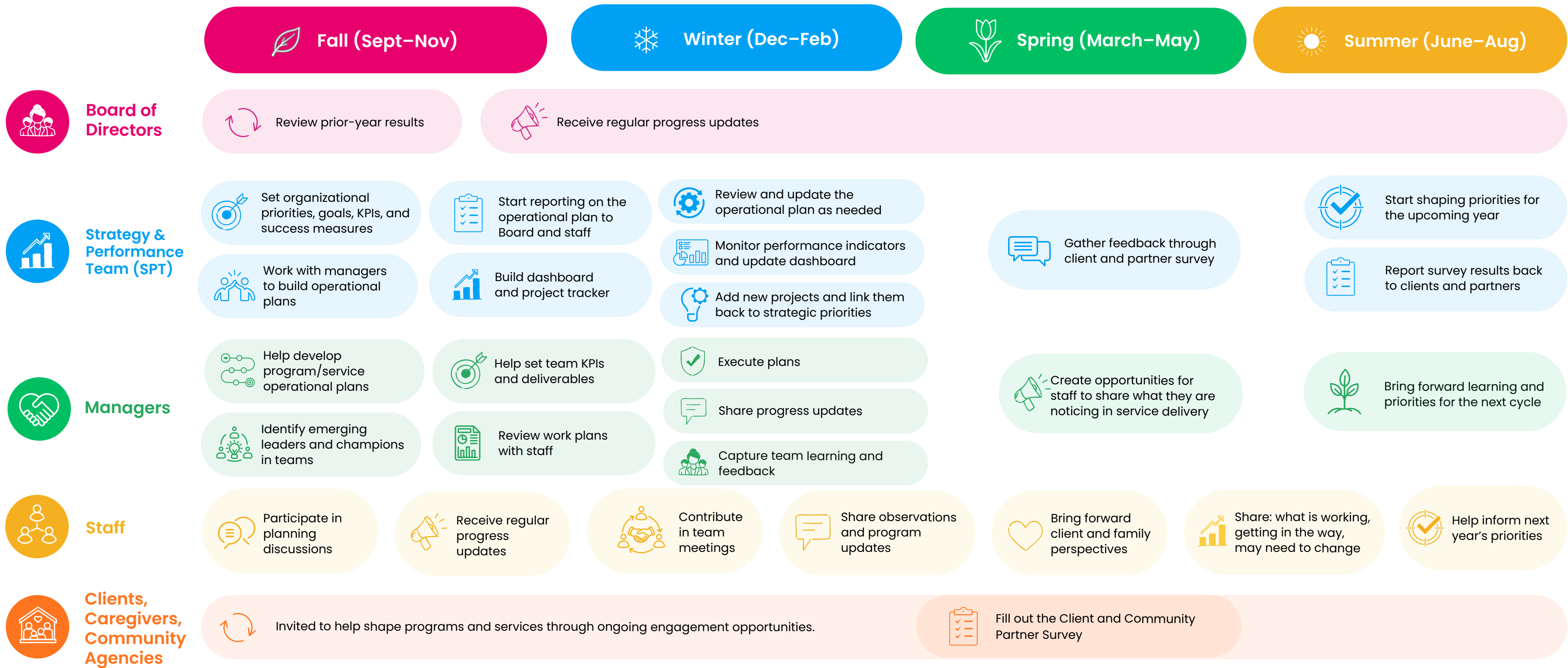
Managers translate strategy into team-level action so priorities are visible, practical, and connected to daily work.

Staff

Staff bring the strategy to life through their insight, experience, and day-to-day actions so the plan reflects the realities of infants, children, youth, families, and communities.

Clients, Caregivers & Community Agencies

Children, youth, families, caregivers, and community agencies are important partners in shaping how this strategy is put into action. By sharing their ideas, experiences, and feedback when they are willing and able, they can help shape priorities, improve services, and keep the needs of infants, children, youth, and families at the center of our work.





**Optimal Affect**

FIREFLY's Adaptive Strategy and Impact Plan was co-created with the support and facilitation of Optimal Affect and The Making-Box
optimalaffect.ca. | themakingbox.ca