

AVENS: A COMMUNITY FOR SENIORS STRATEGIC PLAN 2017



PLANNING CONTEXT

HISTORY

AVENS is a not-for-profit organization that works with partners to help create the community we all want for our seniors. It was established in 1983 as the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors (YACCS).

Since its inception, AVENS has worked to establish programs and services not only for Yellowknife seniors, but for seniors across the NWT. Currently, AVENS provides a variety of residential options for seniors, including:

- 29 long term care beds, operated under a contribution agreement with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority – Yellowknife Region (Aven Manor)
- 28 dementia care beds, operated under a contribution agreement with NTHSSA-YK (Aven Cottages)
- 32 independent living units, 29 units subsidized by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (Aven Court and Aven Ridge)

In addition, the Baker Community Centre was built in 1995 with the generous help from the late Mr. Ed Baker and community donations. The Centre is operated by the Yellowknife Seniors Society (YSS). YSS provides social and wellness programs and services in support of Yellowknife seniors.

AVENS is governed by a volunteer board of directors, and uses the Carver Model of governance.

PREPARING FOR PLANNING

AVENS undertakes strategic planning regularly to reflect on the context in which AVENS exists, identify trends and factors that do and will affect AVENS' future success, to focus on the vision

of the organization, and to provide direction to management so that operations are aligned with the board's vision.

In preparation for strategic planning 2017, the board and management engaged with owners (those we exist to serve) and stakeholders (those with an interest or stake in our work), undertook some perspective-setting reflection, and reviewed and researched our operating environment. Some of these activities included:

- Focus group with AVENS members (at September 2017 AGM)
- Meetings with the Minister of Health and Social Services and his ministerial officials
- Meetings and liaison with the NWT Seniors Society
- Engagement meetings with employees
- Meeting with owners regarding respite care
- Review of contextual material including:
 - o “Being Mortal” by Atul Gawande
 - o AVENS financial and operational backgrounder
 - o NWT Seniors’ Society strategic plan summary

On October 21, a team of four board members, three AVENS senior managers and an external facilitator, met in a day-long strategic planning meeting. From the background research, stakeholder/owner engagement, and strategic planning meeting, this strategic plan was formulated.

TRENDS AND DRIVERS (ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN)

Demand for Seniors’ Services

The demand for seniors’ services across the NWT continues to be strong and increasing as the population ages, and as more and more northerners choose to remain in the North. There is a movement toward helping seniors to remain independent as long as possible, and to age “in place” in their own homes and communities. This creates demand — and long waiting lists — for residential options across the housing continuum, from independent living to long term care.

The GNWT continues to work on increasing the number of long-term care beds across the NWT, and has identified and approved budget for specific projects to be initiated and come on line in several communities in the coming years. Of particular note for AVENS:

- The GNWT will redevelop the old Stanton Territorial Hospital as a 72-bed long term care facility. AVENS has been asked by the GNWT about its interest in operating this facility, and AVENS has expressed to the GNWT its interest in doing so. This long-term care facility is expected to come on line in 2021.
- The GNWT has been working with AVENS on adding beds on AVENS' campus. This expansion is not expected to be initiated until approximately 2022, and be operational until 2026.

There is a need, and strong desire among stakeholders and the public, for non-residential supports for seniors, such as respite and a day program. Stakeholders have indicated a desire for a full spectrum of housing choices for seniors, from independent living through to long-term care.

As more seniors choose to remain in the NWT, as more seniors age in place for longer periods, and as seniors' needs increase, services such as "Nurses Next Door" and "Meals on Wheels" will grow in demand.

Acuity of Seniors' Needs

The nature of elder care is that needs increase as a person ages. As the population ages, not only will there be more seniors requiring services, the services required by that population will become more intense. Dementia is an example of a disease that, as it progresses, presents increasing care needs. Seniors with dementia eventually lose their ability to independently perform activities of daily living. Feeding, bathing, and dressing are activities that they will need assistance to perform as they age and their disease progresses. They may no longer be able to walk, requiring lifts and wheelchairs for assistance. The intensity of personnel needed to deliver this care will likewise increase.

Perceptions of AVENS

Reputation: Quality at Low Cost

AVENS has a solid reputation in the (NWT) community and with partners as an experienced organization delivering quality services economically. This reputation is by and large accurate and well-earned. In recent years, AVENS has struggled to evolve from a small, “mom and pop” organization to its current size while managing costs. Growth has required additional skilled personnel; attracting and keeping this personnel has meant that AVENS has had to increase its pay scale to approach (but not match) GNWT pay scales. This additional cost has not been fully offset by increases in government funding to deliver contracted services. This, in addition to other cost pressures (such as inefficient, manual operational processes, and increasing resident needs through aging), has put AVENS in a significant deficit.

Community and Government Perceptions and Expectations

AVENS delivers long-term care services funded by the NTHSSA-YK. The NTHSSA-YK funds AVENS, through a contribution agreement, to deliver these services on behalf of the GNWT. AVENS is sometimes mistakenly referenced, perceived, and treated as a government agency. Indeed, in other NWT communities, the GNWT and NTHSSA does build and operate facilities that provide the services that AVENS provides in Yellowknife. It becomes confusing: the long-term care facility in one community IS government, but IS NOT government in Yellowknife.

While AVENS has a strong partnership with the GNWT and NTHSSA, and in particular the Department of Health and Social Services, this closeness of relationship can, at times, lead government officials to operate as if AVENS is a part of government.

In this environment, it is not difficult to see how the public may likewise be confused about who runs AVENS.

When AVENS is mistakenly perceived as a government entity, our ability to establish and remain committed to our vision and mission — which identify quality, and focus on residential services — is stressed. We feel pressured to evolve that focus to quantity over quality, and the

expectation is that we will expand our suite of services beyond our mandate, which is residential (for example to deliver a day program).

Territorial Admissions Committee (TAC)

AVENS does not control who is admitted to its long-term care and dementia beds. Admissions are decided by the Territorial Admissions Committee (TAC). TAC's criteria for admission is driven by the GNWT's priorities, not necessarily the best fit for AVENS, or consistent with AVENS' model. TAC does not recognize the behavioural model of care that is integral to AVENS. This can result in a mis-match between those admitted and AVENS' ability to deliver services.

Because TAC controls admissions, AVENS does not have the ability to control movement of residents within AVENS' facility as their needs evolve. For example, as a senior ages in the Manor, and his or her needs increase or the resident develop dementia, AVENS cannot transfer that resident to the dementia care residence without reapplying to TAC on behalf of the resident; this is the purview of TAC. This puts stress on resident and staff safety, and pressure on AVENS' ability to deliver on its standard of quality care.

Increasing Costs

AVENS' current financial situation is unsustainable. AVENS care facilities have been operating at a significant deficit in recent years. We are working in partnership with our main funder, NTHSSA, to resolve this issue, however the issues are complex and significant.

As noted previously, there are a number of drivers that have pushed costs up while government funding has not kept pace with inflation. These include:

- **Acuity of resident care needs:** As seniors age, their care needs increase. However, AVENS' funding does not increase as resident's health deteriorates, and the costs associated with providing care increase.

- **Services provided to residents:** In addition to providing basic daily care for which AVENS receives funding from the GNWT, AVENS provides additional, necessary services that are unfunded (such as staffing to be able to escort residents to appointments).
- **Staffing requirements:** AVENS' funding enables us to staff based on a care model, but not on a behavioural model (Supportive Pathways), which is more staff-intensive.
- **Staffing costs:** In order to attract staff needed to support its growth, AVENS has had to be more competitive with other health service providers in the market; AVENS had to bring its wages closer in line with GNWT wages. Personnel costs make up 74% of AVENS total organizational spending.
- **Administrative complexity:** As AVENS' facilities have grown, the overall financial and administrative complexity has increased. Each facility has its own funding and reporting method, meaning that economies and efficiencies that might be achieved through increasing critical mass have not been realized.
- **Manual operational processes:** AVENS' systems and methods of recording, tracking, maintaining and recording client care, as well as operational administration are manual and paper-based. AVENS has not had the financial liquidity to invest in evolving to more efficient automated or computer-based systems.

Funding Model

The historical funding model used two contribution agreements: one for the Manor and one for the Cottages. There was no ability to flow funds between these agreements, so surpluses in one agreement were refunded to NTHSSA, while overages in the other led to deficits. This, while the cost of operations covered by the two agreements — such as food, supplies and laundry services, for example — were not segregated.

Funding out of Step with Inflation

The rent AVENS can charge is regulated and set at \$796 per (long term) resident per month. This tariff was established in the 1980s, and has only been indexed in recent years. According

to the Bank of Canada inflation calculator, a bundle of goods costing \$700 in 1987, would cost \$1,327 in 2017.

Obsolete and Inefficient Systems Affect Future Growth

While identified above with respect to cost drivers, AVENS' operational systems not only drive costs, but also keep AVENS from being prepared for future growth and evolution. Currently, process at AVENS are manual and paper-based. These include scheduling, charting, maintenance tracking, procurement, time reporting and payroll processing, among others. Manual processes are initially more cost effective in a small organization, but as the size and complexity and services of an organization increase, the cost of labour to complete manual processes becomes significant and inefficient.

Staffing

As noted previously, staffing is AVENS greatest expense, comprising almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of its operating costs. As the 72 long term care beds come on line in the old Stanton Hospital, staffing costs will become an increasingly important consideration. AVENS expects to operate the 72 off-campus long term care beds (and has expressed this to Minister of Health and Social Services). When this happens, staffing cost will be significant. However, should the GNWT choose to operate the long-term care beds through government (instead of contracted to AVENS), it will create competition for AVENS staff, at higher government rates of pay. This could affect AVENS' ability to retain its staff, and put further upward pressure on AVENS' staffing costs.

Partnerships and Relationships

AVENS enjoys a strong partnership with the GNWT (Department of Health and Social Services), NTHSSA, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation as well as other organizations who share an interest in seniors, such as the NWT and Yellowknife Seniors Societies, the Hard of Hearing Association, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, the Alzheimers Society, and others. While relationships are good, they could be improved so that opportunities to work together and lever resources are maximized.

Campus and Infrastructure

Existing Campus

One of AVENS key strengths is its campus. AVENS owns its property, and the buildings and infrastructure on it. Some of its infrastructure is owned outright (Baker Centre), while other buildings are currently mortgaged (Manor, Court and Ridge).

AVENS has room to expand on its campus. With advice from the GNWT that funding for the expansion of AVENS long-term care facilities is not on the GNWT radar until at least 2022, AVENS now has the information it needs to make decisions about other construction and other uses of the campus.

Aven Manor and the Ridge are subsidized by the NWT Housing Corporation. Because of this, AVENS is limited in the rent it can charge for the independent living units (the Court and Ridge). When the mortgage comes off these buildings the NWT Housing subsidy will also come off, allowing AVENS to adjust its rent structure if it deems appropriate.

Aven Manor needs significant upgrades if it is to extend the life of this asset. When the 72 beds at Stanton come on line in 2021, and opportunity may exist to move residents into Stanton while the Manor is upgraded or replaced.

Although AVENS has the room to expand, although its existing infrastructure requires urgent upgrading, AVENS currently lacks the financial capacity to pursue these opportunities and needs.

Kitchen and Laundry

The GNWT has earmarked funding to upgrade AVENS' kitchen and laundry facilities. These upgrades will help AVENS position for future expansion by increasing its capacity for the eventual expansion. AVENS is unclear, at this point, the relationship and decision-making roles between AVENS, on whose property the facilities will reside (and who will own and operate the facilities), and the GNWT, who will design, build, and pay for the new facilities.

STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Seniors have access to a safe and caring community for life

What the Vision Means

AVENS' vision describes the future state we aspire to for seniors in the NWT. Vision is a statement of an ideal future, upon which we set our sights. The vision may never be fully achieved, but it is what we strive for. It acts as our North Star: we take our bearings from it, and use it to determine our direction, even if we may never reach it.

AVENS' vision refers to seniors in the Northwest Territories. Our ideal future is one where seniors are well-supported. They have access to the level of safety and care that they need and want, they have it within a sense of belonging and community, and it exists for the rest of their lives.

AVENS does not own this vision exclusively. We recognize that there are many partner organizations that also share a similar vision, or whose work supports our vision. We know, for example, that the NWT and Yellowknife Seniors Societies, the Alzheimers Society, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, the Hard of Hearing Association, and the GNWT Department of Health and Social Services, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, NTHSSA— among others — are stakeholders in that vision, and through their individual mandates, own a piece of that vision. We cannot achieve it alone.

Mission

AVENS delivers quality services in a safe and respectful manner to support residential living choices for seniors.

What the Mission Means

Mission states what we do, for whom, and why, in pursuit of our vision.

The piece of the vision that AVENS owns and is reflected in our mission focuses on enabling choices for seniors with respect to where and how they live.

Everything we do is to allow seniors to be able to make choices that work for them, about where and how they live. Whether a senior wants to choose to live independently or be supported in their own home, or needs the supports of assisted living, long term care or dementia care, AVENS' services support that choice and those needs. We work to provide the supports that make those choices possible.

AVENS' mission also describes the nature of our services. The services we provide are focussed on quality over quantity; they are delivered in a way that balances safety of the senior with respect for their choices.

Values

Respect, Dignity, Accountability, Integrity, Collaboration

What our Values Mean

Our values describe how AVENS approaches its daily work. The values describe the standards that our administration holds AVENS staff accountable to; it defines the desired culture of the workplace for our staff, and the living and care environment for our owners and residents.

Because AVENS' values describe how we deliver our services, it is up to AVENS' CEO and the management team to articulate their meaning in the context of the day-to-day operations of AVENS.

GOALS AND ENDS

In strategic planning, goals articulate the high level outcomes that the organization will pursue within the planning horizon. The goals speak to ends to be achieved. It is up to the management team to develop and implement objectives and actions that will result in the achievement of these goals. While it is management's purview to establish and implement objectives, context and elements that could support achievement of each of the goals is described with each goal.

AVENS follows the Carver Model of governance. In the Carver Model, the board identifies "ends" or outcomes for the CEO to achieve. The goals of this strategic plan will, therefore, be re-described in the language of the Carver Model for adoption by the board as ends policies.

The goals that follow are long-term goals. The board looks to its CEO and her management team to identify appropriate steps in the short-, medium-, and long-term that will move AVENS toward achievement of these goals.

Community Recognition and Relationship:

AVENS will be recognized by partners, stakeholders, and owners for our expertise and for the delivery of high quality services within the bounds of our mission.

What This Goal Means

In order to achieve our goals, and to be ready for opportunities and challenges in the future, it is important that we work closely and effectively with, and have the support of our owners, partners, and stakeholders. In order to do so, we need to have ongoing dialogue and relationship with these groups so that they understand what AVENS does, why we do it, how we do it, and how our work supports their own goals and works.

Organizational Preparedness:

AVENS will be adequately prepared and well positioned to access and benefit from opportunities as they arise.

What This Goal Means

Our environmental scan has identified a number of opportunities that are expected to arise in the near and distant future. These may include opportunities to manage long term care beds in the old Stanton Hospital; new federal CMHC funding that may become available; private sector partnerships to develop additional housing stock for seniors; delivery of new outreach services by AVENS, among others. In order to be ready to pursue these opportunities as they arise, AVENS may need to undertake planning in a number of areas such as: staffing, capital plan, systems automation, marketing housing, etc.

Organizational Structure:

AVENS will be organized for operational efficiency, to encourage a positive organizational culture, and to be ready for expansion of services.

What This Goal Means

AVENS' operations must be scalable if we are to expand our campus and our off-campus services in the future. The current organizational structure needs to anticipate and support this growth; operational systems — currently manual — need to be modernized to create efficiency and smooth-running operations now and in the long term future.

Service Compensation:

Contracts with partners such as the GNWT, to deliver services, will adequately cover the annually projected cost of delivering those services on their behalf.

What This Goal Means

The funding model currently in place to deliver long term care was put in place in the 1980s, and has not kept pace with changes to needs, services, and inflation over that period. This has contributed to significant financial challenges at AVENS. AVENS needs to work closely with its partner to understand the situation and its drivers, and to agree on an adequate and sustainable funding model for the delivery of existing service, and for the provision of future services.

Bed Management:

Beds within AVENS' residences will be appropriately utilized. AVENS will have some control over admission standards and the allocation of beds resulting in optimal use of beds and resident-centred care.

What This Goal Means

As residents age, their needs change. AVENS currently provides a continuum of residential and care services, however we do not have the ability to move residents within that continuum of care as their needs evolve. Rather, this authority is vested in the Territorial Admissions Committee. Likewise, AVENS has little influence over which new residents enter care at AVENS, which means that we are not able to match our capacity to the needs of our residents. AVENS needs to work with the GNWT to update the admissions process to ensure optimal care for residents, and optimal efficiency for AVENS.

Housing Choices:

Seniors in the NWT will have choices for housing, accommodation and care while aging.

What This Goal Means

AVENS' mission focuses on creating and supporting seniors' choices in accommodation. This means working toward the availability of options across the full housing spectrum: market housing, independent living, supported living, long term care, and dementia care. This also extends to the provision of services, such as meal delivery service and in-home nursing care, that enable these choices.

Revenue and Service Expansion:

AVENS will develop an additional revenue stream through the delivery of specialized services that are aligned with our vision and mission

What This Goal Means

Through our review of trends, needs and our environment, we have identified a need to support seniors who choose to age in place. Evaluation of outreach services such as meal service or in-home nursing supports are aligned with our vision and mission, and may provide an opportunity to diversify our revenues. The management team will assess these opportunities, and endeavour to pilot and/or deliver one or more outreach services in the future.

Stanton Long Term Care:

AVENS will operate the 72 beds at Stanton when they come on line in 2021.

What This Goal Means

The GNWT has asked AVENS to be its partner by operating a 72-bed long term care facility that they propose to construct in the old Stanton Hospital building. AVENS' intention to work with the GNWT on this project must be clear to the GNWT, and we must work in active partnership to see this come to fruition.

Kitchen/Laundry Expansion:

AVENS' new kitchen and laundry facilities will support our future services and expansion opportunities in keeping with our vision and mission.

What This Goal Means

The GNWT has committed to planning and constructing new and enlarged kitchen and laundry facilities at AVENS that will support existing and future needs. We need to work closely with the GNWT, as a partner, in conceiving and designing these assets so that they are appropriately integrated into our campus and are created with sufficient capacity to support not only the anticipated expansion of long-term care beds, but also the addition of any other on-campus housing or outreach services.

STRATEGIC PLAN AT A GLANCE

Vision

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Mission

AVENS delivers quality services in a safe and respectful manner to support residential living choices for seniors.

Values

Respect, Dignity, Accountability, Integrity, Collaboration

Goals

Community Recognition and Relationship: AVENS will be recognized by partners, stakeholders, and owners for our expertise and for the delivery of high quality services within the bounds of our mission.

Organizational Preparedness: AVENS will be adequately prepared and well positioned to access and benefit from opportunities as they arise.

Organizational Structure: AVENS will be organized for operational efficiency, to nurture a positive organizational culture, and to be ready for expansion of services.

Service Compensation: Contracts with partners such as the GNWT, to deliver services, will adequately cover the annually projected cost of delivering those services on their behalf.

Bed Management: Beds within AVENS' residences will be appropriately utilized. AVENS will have some control over admission standards and the allocation of beds, resulting in optimal use of beds and resident-centred care.

Housing Choices: Seniors in the NWT will have choices for housing, accommodation and care while aging.

Revenue and Service Expansion: AVENS will develop an additional revenue stream through the delivery of specialized services that are aligned with our vision and mission.

Stanton Long Term Care: AVENS will operate the 72 beds at Stanton by their completion in 2021.

Kitchen/Laundry Expansion: AVENS' new kitchen and laundry facilities will support our future services and expansion opportunities, in keeping with our vision and mission.