OPACC
Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019

1. Introduction

Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer (OPACC) is a charitable organization with a Provincial-wide catchment area. OPACC has three main areas of activity: Family support services which provides direct support to families thorough the Parent Liaison Service currently operating out of the Hospital for Sick Children and Parent Support Groups operating across the Province in various communities; training initiatives focused on Parent Support Group Facilitation (and directly supporting Parent Support Group expansion); and lastly, advocacy on behalf of families through involvement in a number of research studies and policy recommendations at a local, Provincial and Federal level. Incorporated as a charitable organization in 1995, OPACC builds off the foundation-building work that began through Families of Children with Cancer (FCC), which was the precursor to the current organization and had a long track record of providing family support to those facing a childhood cancer diagnosis.

Over the operational history of OPACC, its areas of focus have been largely been influenced through the availability and/or scarcity of resources – both financial, through fundraising approaches, and in-kind through volunteer resources and commitments. While this has allowed the organization to be responsive and adaptive to change, it has also placed restrictions on what services or initiatives the organization could do at any one time. This reliance has left OPACC in a vulnerable position in that, while being responsive to shifts in the levels of support received, the needs of the organization over the long term have often not been addressed due to a focus on immediate pressures and concerns.

Although OPACC has engaged in goal-setting sessions on a yearly basis with Board and staff members, the last comprehensive Strategic Plan for the organization was done in 2007. The outcomes of these, while helping to move the organization forward, have been very ad-hoc or focused on a shorter timeline (i.e. one year) and have not provided an overall plan that focuses more on a longer term strategic or systems-wide approach.

In discussions at the Board and staff level, the lack of an overall plan for the organization has been cited as a primary area of concern. As OPACC continues to develop its service and fundraising approaches, it is essential for the ongoing success of the organization that a Strategic Plan be undertaken to direct and focus resources over the next 2-3 year period.

At a Board meeting held in late 2014, the approval to engage in a Strategic Planning process was given, with the first part being a Visioning Exercise to reaffirm the overall direction for the organization. As a lead-up to this exercise, board and staff members were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather information on their views of the organization and thoughts on current opportunities, strengths, challenges, etc. that the organization may face. This feedback (see Appendix A for a summary) provided the baseline for the Visioning Exercise, as well as reference points to refer back to once engaged in the planning process itself. Three planning workshops were held with both Board and staff to work through the feedback, discuss hopes and fears for this undertaking, engage in the visioning exercise itself and identify preliminary high-level strategies. This was followed by the Strategic Planning process which occurred on a quarterly basis throughout the remainder of 2015 and into early 2016 with discussions occurring at each Board of Directors meeting. Additionally, as the strategic areas of focus came into view, working groups (made up of board members and staff) were created to drill down into their respective areas and identify needed actions to support their respective work.
This approach allowed for the needed time and focus to continue the process and identify the key elements which will frame the Strategic Plan for OPACC for the period 2016 through 2019. The final strategic approach and related action priority items were affirmed at a special meeting of the Board of Directors and staff in March 2015 and is outlined for review in this document.

There is great potential for OPACC to continue to grow and diversify. The organization has proven its ability to respond to the needs of its membership while also balancing the needs of multiple stakeholders as it continues to develop innovative approaches to support families facing a childhood cancer journey. The potential opportunities stemming from the expansion of the family support services model pose both a benefit in terms of model replication as well as a threat in that they may also stretch the current human resource and operational capacity. It is clear from discussions and meetings to date that with a clearly understood Strategic Plan, balancing both revenue generation and in-kind supports, OPACC will be better equipped to assess potential shifts and/or opportunities as they materialize.

This Strategic Plan will provide clear recommendations and direction necessary for the organization to achieve success in both its ability to provide support to families while at the same time ensuring a strong internal foundation for the organization itself. From this plan, yearly business plans will be developed through the working groups already established to support each area of focus and to operationalize the priorities set forth in the Strategic Plan document. These plans will be adjusted on a yearly basis to ensure that they are in tune with the realities of the organization’s approach at that time.

2. Vision Statement

Over a 6 month period the Board of Directors along with the senior staff management team undertook a Visioning Exercise to review OPACC’s current vision statement and arrive at the following updated version:

**OPACC will be the leading voice and expert resource for families and organizations navigating the childhood cancer journey.**

3. OPACC’s Guiding Principles

The actions and decisions of OPACC’s Board, staff and volunteers are guided by the following principles:

**Ethical** – We are morally and financially responsible, understand right from wrong and conduct ourselves with the utmost integrity. We are proud of our vision and always treat others with dignity and respect.

**Professional** – We ensure that all our interactions are appropriate and welcome. We place a high regard on the confidentiality of our membership and the trust they place in us. We are mindful of potential areas where conflicts of interest may occur and declare conflicts as they arise.

**Collaborative** - We are supportive and inclusive, encouraging and valuing the contributions and opinions of others. We embrace diversity and strive to invite participation and promote harmony and teamwork in all our relationships.

**Accountable** – We act with integrity, honesty and courtesy delivering on the promises we make and taking responsibility for our actions.
Inclusive - We are courteous, kind and tolerant; treating others in a fair manner with dignity and respect. We value diversity and recognize different cultures, organizations and environments managing our expectations and striving for mutual understanding and communication.

Innovative - We embrace change and seek out ways to improve. We value innovation and creativity and work with each other to learn and share ideas.

4. Critical/Overarching/Strategic Issues

In order to ensure that strategies are relevant and responsive to current conditions, while at the same time looking forward from a strategic context, it is important to look at environmental scans, trends and their impacts on the organization in each of the following domains or areas:

1. Government Policy/Goals;
2. Socio-economic and Economic Conditions;
3. Stakeholder/Community Needs;
4. Sector Trends;
5. Human Resources and Infrastructure Capacity.

Government Policy/Goals

As governance models in the social service sector evolve, specifically at the Provincial level with the community hub concept, social impact bonds, consolidation of services under one umbrella (i.e. Lead Agencies) and social innovation approaches, OPACC’s governance and current service model(s), including a focus on hospital based parent support programs, will most likely be challenged to demonstrate that OPACC will be an optimal choice for delivering and/or supporting any potential government funded intervention. This policy shift may also have profound impacts on those transfer payment organizations (such as Hospitals and Community Health Care Centres) currently in receipt of Provincial Funds as they may face more of a directive to investigate these types of service solutions.

Socio-economic and Economic Conditions

Growth, while slow over the past few years, continues to accelerate the Province’s economic capacity and will result in continued increases in individual real income, employment growth and the increased ability of individuals to purchase services or choose which services are a best fit for them and their families. The continued reality of Urban/Rural mix and the varying levels of support available within communities for families affected by childhood cancer may create opportunities for program/service expansion as well as unique partnership models. Improvements in OPACC’s revenue performance may be achieved from an increase in the operation of fee-for-service services through its Training approach OR through advocacy for targeted funding to support Parent Liaison services; each which may be tailored to specific underserviced communities. As with any new or expanded initiative, fee-for-service offerings or funded initiatives face potential impacts/risks associated with:

- Emergent government programs which may duplicate or replace existing services;
- Influx of other better well-resourced organizations as a part of service expansion;
- Wide variances of existing levels of support across the Province;
- Risk of market entry for new services;
- Change in policy/licensing criteria that would adversely affect the cost of operation.
Stakeholder/Community Needs

Continued population growth, coupled with the number of new children diagnosed year over year and increasing survivorship rates, in addition to an existing lack of infrastructure within the health care sector, is impacting our stakeholders and community in many ways:

- Service delivery models and governance structures are ever changing resulting in ongoing confusion and lack of information on existing supports available;
- Increase in the diversity of ethno-specific communities and agencies (i.e. emergent new language needs);
- Large discrepancies in terms of accessibility to services throughout the Province;
- Continued influx of new diagnoses places severe strains on the capacity of current service providers;
- Social services are still viewed by many as for the “at-risk” and “needy” and as such have marginal levels of support;
- Childhood cancer organizations specifically supporting children and youth have a higher level of public support than those focused on family or tertiary supports;
- Many individuals across the Province have little knowledge of the impacts of childhood cancer on the family exacerbating the low level of awareness of organizations;
- Many families affected by childhood cancer have limited services available or are unable to access information on these services.

As a result of these impacts, potential and existing needs will be increasingly more complex and varied, requiring integrated strategies with other service providers to ensure non-duplication of services and resource investment. This will place additional demands on social service organizations leading to the opportunity for strategic partnerships or alliances in order to maintain their current service level. OPACC will need to be properly situated to respond to opportunities as they arise.

Sector Trends

Continued pressures to the funding system and fundraising in general over the past few years has been coupled with a shift from grant making or core funding to more strategic approaches such as Request for Proposal processes that have been initiated. In addition, donations year over year across the sector have been diminishing with fewer individuals giving to charitable causes and those who do give, targeting their donations to specific “charities of choice”.

These trends have resulted in the following:

- Mission drift as organizations attempt to source shrinking and often short-term or project based funding opportunities;
- Non-existent or unrealistic funding of centralized administration;
- The need to investigate new types of donor directed relationships beyond simple funding agreements (strategic alliances, agency partnerships) such as referenced in the last section;
- Consolidation of funding delivery approaches (e.g. Purchase of Service through Request for Proposal(s));
- Increased requirement on performance measures, metrics and outcomes;
- Use of best practice models as a guide to service development;
- Fund chasing is the norm;
- Increase in legislative requirements as part of funding expectations;
- Lack of infrastructure across the sector continues to erode; partnerships are an essential norm; &
- Investigation of shared space models as a response to rising facility and administrative costs.
As a result of these factors, many organizations in the social service sector are continually faced with financial pressures to either source or secure existing funding opportunities. With limited centralized administration support, the core infrastructure of the organization is often jeopardized. This focus has left little room for program development (both existing and new) or at times, quality assurance systems to be fully implemented. The Request for Proposal process has pushed many to re-think the way that they do business; to understand that competition for available funds is high and that all proposals will be awarded based on set criteria which often focus on return on investment and other financial considerations. Organizational capacity and service delivery experience is often secondary in this consideration process. Competition for donor dollars will continue to be high as more and more organizations work to offset their funding shortfalls year over year.

**Human Resources**

OPACC’s most vital resource is its people. The greatest challenges are to continue to maximize employee performance and assure that all are working in concert with agency mission, vision and values. The shrinking workforce, salary limitations due to funding capacities and increased mobility/choices for employees create added challenges to retain and attract quality staff. The limited attraction of a social services career and the current salaries (many with little to no benefit plan) available further compound the human resource challenges. The needed shift of the organization to more of a stakeholder-focused, outcomes driven and strategic professional charitable organization has increased the need for proficiency in our service areas.

Central to OPACC’s strategy for addressing these challenges will be the implementation of clear employment contracts, performance-based compensation systems, competency-based training, recruitment, promotion and ongoing professional development opportunities at all levels throughout the organization.

**Infrastructure Capacity**

To successfully support service delivery model(s) that an organization currently operates, a strong centralized administration must be in place. Through a centralized administration, new business processes and streamlining of existing processes are created to provide more efficient support to the organization and to realize cost efficiencies.

To support OPACC’s service delivery model(s), time must be spent looking at all current business processes, financial reporting requirements, information technology needs and general administrative supports needed on behalf of the Board and staff team. The result of increased efficiencies in centralized administration will result in further staff efficiencies being generated and improve overall management of information throughout the organization ensuring strategic vs. reactive responses.

The following challenges derived from these assessments will need to align with the key strategic issues/risks to be addressed by our strategies and supported by the Strategic Plan.
5. **Strategic (long-range) Goals**

Building from the information from the work done throughout 2014 and into 2016, including the visioning exercise, the Board of Directors has identified the following 3 areas of focus as building blocks for the organizational Strategic Plan:

1. Capacity Building
2. Family Support Service and Resources
3. Advocacy, Engagement and Awareness

Through discussions in each of the three areas identified, OPACC has expanded each to include recommended strategies and related tasks for the organization to undertake which will build on the work already accomplished and respond to those items listed in the summary of critical/overarching/strategic issues listed above.

1. **Capacity Building**
   - **Leadership** - Continue to build leadership capacity throughout the organization at all levels
     - Maximize opportunities for linkages and engagement for support mechanisms and initiatives.
     - Needs assessments – Internal/External.
     - Model – develop national standard.
   - **Human Resources** - Development of an effective strategy that ensures retention of a skilled and motivated staff, board and volunteer team
     - 360 degree review of board.
     - Board/Staff support and development – min. of 1 development opportunity each year (Governance, Community Development, etc.).
   - **Infrastructure** - Maximize and build on current resources and demands to ensure a work environment that supports and meets the evolving needs of the organization
     - Maximize existing resources based on needs assessment review.
   - **Funding** - Ensure a sustainable fund development plan that balances both public and private sector approaches to benefit OPACC.
     - Resource development strategy.
     - S expectations (Give or Get)– board, staff, membership.
     - Securing Admin $.
     - Corporate support – targeted engagement.

2. **Family Support Service and Resources**
   - **Education** - Ensure the provision of ongoing education opportunities to our membership and key stakeholders
     - Expert led workshops – Lunch & Learn series on mindfulness, sibling relations, bereavement, PTSD, etc.
     - Connecting with other professionals already working in the areas of interest and engaging them in workshops and training opportunities.
   - **Access to information** - Ensure that various options are available to families
     - Investigation of online supports or webinars.
     - Community asset mapping/environmental scan to identify what supports are available.
Family Support Services and Resources Cont’d

- **Enhancing Available Resources** – Building on current services to ensure needs of families are being met
  - Investigation of the Psychosocial Assessment Tool (PAT) and its incorporation into the service model.
  - Establishment of parent support groups in communities that have no similar type of support.
  - Partnerships with other groups, organizations, etc. to support growth and awareness building activities.

3. **Advocacy, Engagement and Awareness**
   - **Targeted Marketing** – Using a variety of tools to ensure a consistent and impactful presence for the organization
     - Creation of a Marketing and Communications Plan including a material and communication audit process.
     - Implementation of the plan through a variety of channels and key stakeholder groups.
     - Solicitation of engaged ‘activist parents’ to align their social media strategies in promoting core campaigns.
   - **Partnership Engagement** - Increase long-term strategic alliances that will expand our capacity to anticipate and respond to emergent needs thus ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of the childhood cancer support system at large.
     - Affirm key relationship partners and develop value propositions for each cluster.
     - Prioritize and determine annual engagement activity plan.
     - Explore possible collaboration, with other key stakeholders.

*For a breakdown of the focus for each fiscal year, please refer to Appendix B*

6. **Key Assumptions** - Strengths that OPACC will resource to achieve success

| 1. Staff | • Experts on community development  
|          | • Strong, dedicated  
|          | • Knowledgeable  
|          | • Respected  
|          | • Passionate  |
| 2. Board | • Committed  
|          | • Thinking strategically  
|          | • Passionate  |
| 3. Organizational Foundation | • Mission, vision  
| | • Guiding principles  
| | • Reputation  
| | • Use skills and knowledge of Board/Staff  
| | • Willingness to evolve  |
| 4. Organizational Service Model | • Range of services offered  
| | • Client focused approach  
| | • Efficient delivery systems  
| | • Welcoming and informal approach  
| | • Uniqueness  
| | • Service excellence  
| | • Deliver on goals  |
5. Community Awareness

- Good reputation
- Strong community profile
- Respect
- Credibility
- Partnerships

6. Fundraising knowledge

- Skill
- Success
- Leverage
- Collaborative approach

7. Business Plan

Once the Strategic Plan is initiated in June of 2016, business/activity plans for each fiscal year (2016/17, 2017/18 & 2018/19) must be completed to operationalize and give substance to the action plans identified in section 6. Through the development of business plans the financial cost, both in-kind and material, will be identified fully and may have impact on the timing of some of the items specified in the action priority items. The need for flexibility will remain paramount from a governance perspective as the overall plan moves forward.

Service plans will provide the specificity required to achieve the following:

- Ensure compliance with action plans identified in the organizational Strategic Plan
- Provision of a clear, concise and focused delivery plan to ensure that vision and mission drift is minimized
- Ensure governance is maintained through all services working within the parameters set out and approved through the Strategic Planning process and end document
- Provision of detailed budget plans based on service plan deliverables which then clarify or dispute approximations of financial supports laid out in each action item within the Strategic Plan
- Support outcomes measurement by detailing the fine points of service delivery and linking that process back to the overall Strategic Plan; evaluation on the plan’s success will come through this formal “feedback” loop

8. Conclusion

The development of the organizational Strategic Plan will ensure that everyone, both within and external to the organization, has a greater understanding of our common direction and goals. The Strategic Plan will create guidelines on how we collectively plan for and move OPACC forward. It will result in greater awareness and cooperation with many community groups and service providers. Over time there will be increased participation by stakeholders in all aspects of service delivery and ensure that the organization remains relevant in ever changing times.