

TAKING STOCK

How Canadian Child and Youth Agencies are Responding to Economic Challenges

Case Study # 5: Family Centre Society of Southern Alberta,
Lethbridge, Alberta

Capacity Building and Organizational Change —
Taking on a Capital Campaign during a Recession

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Capacity Building and Organizational Growth: Taking on a Capital Campaign during a Recession for the Family Centre Society of Southern Alberta

Background of the organization

Family Centre Society of Southern Alberta started in a historical building in Lethbridge in 1980 as Parents Place, a small family resource program with a \$2000 grant. Its objective was to promote a greater awareness of the resources available to families with children and, through effective use of these resources, change attitudes and behaviors towards parenting and children.

- In 1994, Parents Place merged with Family and Community Resource Development to become Family Centre.
- The objective remained to be a resource centre for families, providing a wide range of services to children and families in Southwestern Alberta.
- Family Centre has a wide variety of funders but has remained true to the core of remaining a family resource program that is focused primarily on prevention and early intervention.
- Family Centre is also a Parent Link Centre.
- In 2008, as a recession hit, Family Centre launched a capital campaign to move to a larger facility, and in July 2010 the organization moved into their new space that more than tripled the size of their former facility.

Family Centre has a mission to “strengthen capacities and encourage the best possible development of families in Southwestern Alberta.” Not wanting to duplicate excellent services already available in the community, Family Centre partners with other agencies that provide expertise and services that Family Centre does not. Their goal is to reach more families and to guide them to the services that will best meet their needs.

Issue or situation

In 2008, recognizing their pressing need for growth and a larger facility, Family Centre embarked on an ambitious capital campaign. By then, the organization had experienced significant achievements; their programs had grown from that original \$2000 budget and one employee to a \$1.5M budget and twenty employees. Additionally, they had eight satellite partners offering services to the greater Lethbridge community.

To meet the needs of the community, continued growth in terms of staffing, programming, funding and venue, were critical.

Challenges

The Capital campaign commenced and the recession hit. Consequently, raising funds became a huge challenge. There was some rejection and initial expectations shifted along the way. Internally, some staff struggled with change, while others welcomed it.

Actions taken

Despite some rough patches and rejection, the organization persevered with the Capital Campaign, “Building Families...One Square Foot at a Time,” and they continued to develop satellites and build relationships with a wide variety of funders who shared their passion and vision.

They discovered that while the not-for-profit model is for an ED to be “master of all skills,” paying for expertise unavailable in house can pay off, for example, the cost to hire a consultant for a few hours who brought expertise in HVAC and construction and saved money and headaches later on.

To overcome internal resistance to change and to keep stakeholders informed, communications became a priority. Thanking and recognizing every donor and sponsor for helping the organization reach its goals in a meaningful way was vital. Following the end of the campaign, presentations were given offsite to thank partners and show them the results and benefits to the community of their participation.

Outcomes

Family Centre successfully completed its capital campaign and relocated to its new facility in July 2010. The family resource program went from 3100 sq. ft. to almost 11,000 sq. ft. and they are now easily accessible, in the core of the community, and serving almost 10% of the population of Lethbridge. The organization recognizes that its success in reaching its goals is through its partnerships with other agencies and funders that share their vision and passion. These relationships have enabled them to reach populations they might struggle to reach on their own, achieved better results for families, and provided opportunities to share resources resulting in more understanding as well as cost savings.

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