



Special Needs Resource Centre

INTRODUCTION

For 35 years, Aspire has provided knowledgeable, understanding and supportive services to help children with special needs and their families reach their full potential. Over those years, services have evolved and grown, and location and name have changed. Aspire continues to maintain the highest standards.

This strategic plan includes information from parent, staff and community stakeholders. We are grateful to all who helped the Board of Directors understand community needs, understand Aspire better and consider future possibilities.

The Board is committed to preserving the integrity of Aspire and its excellent reputation for providing high quality services to children with special needs and their families now and in the future.

To this end, the Board has endorsed the Mission, Vision and Values of Aspire, and created Strategic Goals to move into the next five years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Armitage'.

Robin Armitage
Chair, Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Sluchinski'.

Michelle Sluchinski
Executive Director

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

MISSION

A charitable organization providing hope to children with special needs, the families who love them and the communities that care for them.

VISION

Working together to discover full potential.

Helping children with special needs reach their full potential.

OUR VALUES

At Aspire, our values are at the core of everything we do. They are the promise of what to expect from our services and from our staff. We stand behind them and they guide us each and every day.

Professional

Our staff are among some of the best trained in their fields of expertise. We strive to stay on the leading edge of innovative practices to ensure our children always receive the best support we can provide.

Compassionate

We understand what it is like to feel alone and uncertain of where to turn for support and assistance. We respect and honor the journey of each child and family. We approach all aspects of our services with gentleness and care.

Optimistic

Addressing challenges early gives each child we work with the capacity to reach his/her full potential when nurtured in an integrated and supportive environment. It is that potential that fills us with optimism and drives us to success every day.

Integrated

We believe in the importance of considering the 'whole' child, so we offer a fully integrated approach to assessment, intervention, and education. By combining all of our professionals under one roof, the child is relieved of the anxiety of strange people in strange places, and parents are relieved of having to coordinate information and appointments with professionals in different locations.



BACKGROUND

Aspire is recognized as a leader in providing services to children with special needs and their families, including diagnosis and assessment, consultation and therapy, education, development and support, primarily in the early years.

The services of Aspire are appreciated by parents, schools, community partners, government, volunteers and financial supporters. There were very few suggested changes to the way in which Aspire offers its services.

Aspire's service delivery is based in its central location, providing access for Central Alberta, including some outreach. A preschool program provides intensive intervention for children until they transition to community schools. Assessment and diagnostic services, and individual services to families depend on a team of professional disciplines. Aspire also provides other supportive programs, such as its summer playground program, and assisting with wills and financial planning as needed by families. The cultivation of strong partnerships with other community partners involved with special needs children is important for advocacy, planning and coordination. Aspire assists families to access other services and to make transitions.

A strong, engaged Board works with staff to plan and manage resources to make possible the work of Aspire. Financial sustainability, including fund development is integral to the success of Aspire, and a strong focus of the Board.

The Board identified some major challenges which are based on in its data gathering and consultation with stakeholders for this strategic plan:

1. The needs never end. There are always more families with more needs, and increasing access concerns from communities outside Red Deer.
2. The Government of Alberta has signalled its intention to reduce spending overall, and also to change some of the ways it funds services for children with special needs and their families. This signals a period of uncertainty in program funding, and also in the configuration of individual funding which may change families' ways of accessing and paying for services.
3. Central Alberta is continuing to experience evidence of economic downturn, so the fund raising environment is more difficult for everyone, and more families may experience precarious income.
4. There are province wide (in some cases, nation-wide) shortages of some professional staff, which make recruitment and retention of staff at Aspire challenging to meet our current needs.
5. Aspire's centrally located space is purpose-built and meets most needs, but, with the current configuration of services, it is just barely sufficient. Some staff and parents find the downtown location challenging.

Fortunately, Aspire has operated in a financially responsible manner for several years, and has dedicated and skilled staff who are committed to serving children and families. Leading edge services and compassionate and optimistic support for families will continue at Aspire. The Board is committed to helping Aspire continue to evolve to serve our community well.

GOALS

The primary goal of Aspire for the next 5 years is to optimize the staff, space and financial resources that are available, to maintain the volume of service currently provided. The configuration of service may change if funding models change.

1. Attract and retain high quality staff in a challenging recruitment environment.

The quality and commitment of our staff are at the heart of our ability to meet the needs of children and their families. Aspire has encountered increasing difficulty in recruiting professional staff, such as Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech Language Pathologists and Psychologists. There is a province-wide shortage of practitioners to fill the available positions, so Aspire is competing in a difficult market.

There is some continual turn-over in Child Development Facilitators as well, so considerable time is required to recruit and orient new staff.

2. Modify processes, staffing and use of space to respond to changes in funding and to evolving needs of children and their families.

Change in government funding models and levels for children with special needs is expected. Aspire will continue to deliver service of the highest quality possible, but there is a need to be responsive to a changing environment.

At the same time, families' needs continue to evolve eg. mental health, English as a Second Language, precarious family income. Aspire will continue to work with its community partners to assist families.

3. Continue to secure sustainable funding to meet our service and strategic goals in partnership with government funders and community and corporate supporters.

As the government reviews its funding for programs we offer, will take every opportunity to provide input and advice, advocating for the needs of our community. In addition, fundraising is more difficult in the current economic downturn, so Aspire will continue a strong focus on fund development.

GOALS

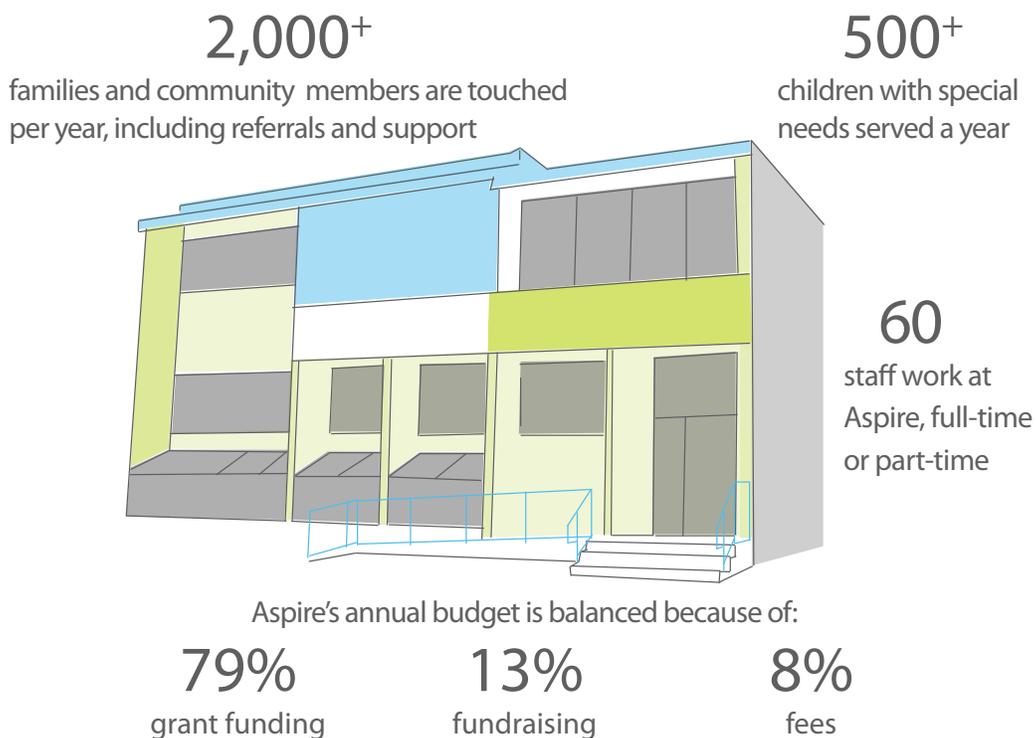
The second major goal of Aspire is to prepare for growth in our service provision, which we anticipate toward the end of this five year period, as the population in Central Alberta grows.

4. Complete an analysis of the space that would be required to increase service to respond to community demand.

Aspire has reached the maximum service it can provide partly because of space constraints. Aspire needs a clear understanding of space priorities to enable further expansion as needed by the community. Identification of alternative solutions and their implications should be included in the analysis. This will enable Aspire to plan for the future and evaluate opportunities that may present.

5. Develop a more accurate picture of the unmet need for our programs and services in the community.

Aspire's programs and services are fully utilized now. A closer look at unmet demand will be needed toward the end of this 5 year period to prepare for future growth. While Aspire does currently extend services outside Red Deer, challenges to access needed services outside of Red Deer should be included in data gathering.



Aspire is a registered charity, our registration number: 87134 6623 RR0001