



STRATEGIC PLAN

2012-2015

Our Mission: Eastside Baby Corner makes a positive difference in the lives of children and families in need. We do this by collecting and purchasing children's items and distributing them, free of charge, through local social service agencies. We give families help and hope.

Our Vision: Our aim is that all children will have what they need to thrive through the abundance of support from our community.

Our Values: Eastside Baby Corner is strongly rooted in a set of core values that have defined the organization from its very beginnings. Our values define what we do, how we do it, and why it matters.

Values

Grounded In Mission

We focus exclusively on serving the community of children in need.

Community

We bring the community together to work joyfully for the benefit of children in need.

Service Orientation

We go beyond what is expected by anticipating the needs of others. Those who depend on us for help know we are reliable.

Efficiency

We are intentional in ensuring the greatest impact with each resource while doing more with less. We get it done no matter what.

Caring Space

We are a positive, inclusive environment for diverse people and ideas.

An Innovative Business Model

Eastside Baby Corner (EBC) has developed a unique, high-leverage business model that serves over 550 children per week in east King County, fifty weeks of the year.

Central collection of donations. Donated items are collected from community members at EBC’s warehouse hub in downtown Issaquah. The donations are immediately sorted, and items such as cribs and car seats are checked for safety, repaired if necessary, and matched with instructions. A small army of volunteers, including many groups of high school students, community businesses, and service clubs, assembles custom orders for individual children and organizes donations. These shift volunteers are supervised by one of the few paid staff members as well as core volunteers, who implement procedures for efficiently managing a large inventory of clothes, toys, furniture, diapers, and other items.

Filling orders for absolute essentials. EBC is intimately familiar with the needs of low-income families, and strategically purchases absolute essentials to make sure that orders for these items are filled. The organization runs with very low overhead, allowing donated monies to be applied directly to the purchase of these goods.

Examples of purchased items:

- Diapers
- Infant formula
- Baby food
- Port-a-cribs
- Car seats
- Socks/Underwear

“...diapers and formula are like gold, we can’t keep them on the shelf. If there is any way to get more, it would make a lot of people happy. Otherwise, thank you very much for what you do!” -- A Provider

Distribution via human service providers. EBC distributes items to low-income families identified and pre-screened by human service providers such as case managers, social workers, public health nurses, and school counselors. EBC partners with nearly every human service agency in east King County: over 120 “provider partners” at 47 different agencies. These provider partners make specific requests for their clients via EBC’s online ordering system. In collaboration with EBC, our provider partners deliver the requested items to the families they serve, as well as provide guidance to the recipient family, such as reviewing how to install a car seat.

Customization. Each order is custom prepared based on the individual child’s age, development level, gender, culture, and family circumstances. For example, car seats are chosen for the child’s age and weight, as well as for other considerations like configuration of the parent’s car, how many other children must ride, etc. Toy and book selections are tailored to each child. Dresses might be found for a girl whose culture requires such attire, or sweatpants might be found for a special needs child.

EBC's model is appealing on several levels

EBC helps the helpers. By providing items that human service agencies need in an efficient, user-friendly way, EBC allows those agencies to concentrate their funding on professional expertise and services to help families in need. EBC exists so that human service providers in greater east King County do not need to collect, sort, and distribute essential items on an individual agency basis, which would be inefficient and duplicative.

“Hopelink programs rely heavily on the support our families receive from Eastside Baby Corner. Their access to these materials provides a foundation for their personal growth and for the healthy development of their children. Thank you for this invaluable service.”

**--Meghan Altimore, MSSW
Director of Asset Building, Hopelink**

EBC prioritizes safety. We ensure that items given to children are in good condition, age-appropriate, and include instructions. EBC diligently tracks recalls, and all cribs, car seats, strollers, and toys are assessed for safety before distribution. Many other items are assembled at the warehouse hub to ensure they are complete, stable, and have no sharp edges or other hazards.

EBC prevents child abuse. We help parents by providing the tools and equipment they need to care adequately for their children. Imagine trying to fix dinner with no toys

“Our clients often struggle to access the items that EBC provides. The price of formula and diapers alone would be too much for some of our clients to handle.”

--EBC Provider Partner

to distract a toddler. Imagine the frustration of a parent struggling to make ends meet upon discovering that her kindergartener's one pair of pants is dirty. Imagine missing out on a chance for a job because you don't have enough money to provide diapers for daycare.

EBC allows everyone to volunteer. We welcome all those who choose to volunteer to participate in an activity that has an immediate, positive impact on fellow citizens. People of all ages can volunteer together, including students and families.

“Thanks Karen! I love donating to Eastside Baby Corner and any opportunity to do so makes me happy knowing that I'm helping other families!”

--Michelle

EBC is a green nonprofit. We recycle and repair items for reuse that would otherwise go to the landfill. We are one of the largest recycling operations in the Seattle area.

EBC's business model has been successfully replicated. EBC has freely shared its wisdom, operating procedures, and tools, including customized spreadsheets, with organizations modeled after EBC in Iowa, Massachusetts, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

A Brief History

Eastside Baby Corner (EBC) was founded in Issaquah, Washington, in April of 1990 by Karen Ridlon, a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, under the name St. Joseph's Baby Corner Eastside. Initially, St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Issaquah took phone calls and received mail for the new organization. With a few small items, a broken playpen for shelves, and an unheated donated storage unit, EBC began



distributions to public health nurses in Bellevue and Issaquah and to the Issaquah Food Bank. Donated items were collected from congregations and individuals in the local area.

In the following years, EBC grew as more people became aware of the organization. In 1993, the organization incorporated, and the name changed to Eastside Baby Corner. The IRS granted EBC their 501(c)3 status in April of 1994. The same year, EBC advocated

successfully for a new state "good Samaritan" law that protected volunteers involved in distributing donated children's items to low income residents from liability. In the past, legislation had applied only to donated food distributed by food banks. With sponsorship from State Representative Phil Dyer, the "Baby Corner Bill" (Substitute House Bill 2566) passed on March 21, 1994. In 1997, an expanded law was passed to include public health agencies among the distributors released from liability.

Rowley Properties donated storage space in 1990 for the fledgling organization, starting with an unheated 12 x 30 unit. In 1996, EBC moved to occupy a portion of a heated building, but still had no water or telephones. In 1998, EBC moved to a 4000 sq. ft. warehouse with restrooms and telephones. EBC occupied that building until July of 2005 when they moved to their current location, also generously provided by Rowley Properties. Throughout that time, the "main office" was located in the Ridlon home.



Until 2008, EBC was an all-volunteer organization with very low overhead. Today, a lean staff (3.0 FTE) supports the volunteer executive director, the "kitchen cabinet", and core volunteers. Administrative and fundraising costs are less than 5% of the total budget.

As the organization has grown, the number of items donated, sorted, and distributed, and the value of those items, has dramatically increased. For example, distribution of diapers and layettes for newborns increased exponentially between 1993 and 2007, rising from 958 packages of diapers in 1993 to 10, 233 in 2007. Since 2008, the number of items distributed has risen substantially in response to the economic downturn. In 2011, EBC distributed almost 400,000 diapers to address this need.

The Plan to Sustain and Grow Community Impact, 2008-2011

In 2007, a team of community leaders joined with the Board of Directors to develop a comprehensive three-year vision and strategic plan to facilitate EBC's evolution from a founder-led organization to a long-term, sustainable community resource. Rapid progress on the strategic plan was necessary in order to build the staffing, governance, and funding structures needed to keep EBC growing and sustainable for the long term.

Between 2008 and 2011, EBC accomplished many important goals:

- instituted a governing board
- hired the first staff members to ensure continuity of operations
- revamped the EBC brand and website



- developed employment policies and procedures
- implemented online volunteer management and donor relationship systems
- strengthened the data collection systems and interaction with partner agencies
- created a fund development program

Additionally, during that time, EBC was recognized as a leader within the Eastside community. Eastside Baby Corner was chosen as the non-profit of the year in 2009 by the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, selected as auction beneficiary partner by the Bellevue Rotary Club in 2010, and cited as an Innovation Award winner in 2011 by the Issaquah Chamber of Commerce.

In just over 3 years, the new Board of Directors, newly hired staff, and reliable community volunteers have transformed Eastside Baby Corner from a treasured, indispensable start-up into a professional, sustainable organization with solid infrastructure. They have ensured that EBC is well-positioned to deliver its essential services for the foreseeable future.

The Next Crucial Chapter

The accomplishments of the last 3 years are notable, but EBC will never be an organization that rests on its laurels. Many, many children need our help. The need continues to grow and we are eager to reach out to them, as well as share our expertise with others who want to help. Realizing that many challenges remain, and that new ones will continue to arise, in November, 2011, the EBC Board of Directors embarked on a process to develop a new Strategic Plan for the next crucial chapter: 2012-2015.

We are grateful for the contributions of the Strategic Planning Committee: Angela Kennedy, Karen Ridlon, Claudia Malone, Kari Magill, and Paul Dolan, as well as the invaluable assistance of consultants Janet Boguch and Erik Johnson.

With the right structure and community support, EBC will be able to secure its infrastructure, leverage its competencies to build its visibility, and dramatically increase services in order to help thousands more children each year.

In summary, we will focus on the following strategic priorities for the next three years:

- Organizational Sustainability
- Volunteer Program Development
- Service Delivery Expansion
- Regional Collaboration
- Facility Improvements
- Fundraising Capacity Increase
- Standardized Business Model

Eastside Baby Corner: Strategic Goals 2012-2015

➤ **Organizational Sustainability**

Current Situation. The Founder of Eastside Baby Corner serves as the unpaid Executive Director, as she has done for the last 22 years. A group of dedicated, but unpaid, volunteers performs other assorted Executive Director roles. This fragmented approach to the Executive Director role has served it well for many years, but it is no longer optimal for the organization. The current leadership structure is not sustainable or effectively serving the increasing needs of a growing organization. In order to grow further and take advantage of opportunities in the communities it serves, EBC needs to hire a full-time, professional Executive Director.

Goal: Hire and orient a full-time, on-site Executive Director.

- a. Form a search committee to define and conduct the search process
- b. Research compensation and benefits
- c. Hire an Executive Director by January, 2013
- d. Implement the Karen Ridlon Legacy Fund to increase the capacity of EBC to support the position
- e. Form a transition team to orient the new Executive Director to EBC and effectively accomplish organizational transition

➤ **Volunteer Program Development**

Current Situation. A powerful culture of volunteerism defines Eastside Baby Corner. We are fortunate to have an ample number of community volunteers who contribute thousands of hours each month to deliver the regular services of distribution of goods to children. Additionally, we are very fortunate to have many core volunteers who perform sophisticated roles within the business, much as staff might do in other organizations. We have a great deal of experience in recruiting and training volunteers. However, there exist additional opportunities for skill-based volunteers to fulfill many executive and operational roles. We lack a structured process for converting casual volunteers into more vested, core volunteers; these core volunteers would fill key positions, such as being members of the Board of Directors, or serving in auxiliary roles as hub specialists or in professional services. Further, back-up systems and cross training for individual roles could strengthen service delivery and efficiency within the organization.

In 2008, the by-laws defined the Board of Directors as consisting of 15 members. Between 2008 and 2012, the board grew from 4 to 13 members. Certain skill sets and stakeholder representation from the community are still lacking and could be better met with additional board members.

The current staff and board members do most of the public speaking, fundraising, and planning, but additional help is needed in these key areas. We are presented with a great opportunity to increase our outreach into the community by recruiting skill-based volunteers who can help deliver EBC's services and strengthen the infrastructure of the organization.

Groups such as a luncheon committee, Speaker's Bureau, and volunteer auxiliary could play a vital role in these areas.

Goal: Strengthen our ability to recruit, train, and nurture leadership volunteers through the implementation of a structured volunteer development program.

- a. Add one new Board member per year
 - i. Identify and target needed skill sets
 - ii. Develop Board orientation process
- b. Create an intentional recruitment and retention program for skill-based volunteers needed to help achieve the goals of the organization
 - i. Identify and define key volunteer roles and potential successors
 - ii. Further develop a programmatic approach to recruitment and retention strategies for new leadership volunteers
 - iii. Increase the number of skill-based volunteers
- c. Identify specialty volunteer groups and recruit/establish working groups as needed to support the execution of EBC goals. Possible examples include event committees, a Speakers' Bureau, and volunteer auxiliary, etc.

➤ **Service Delivery**

Current Situation. Eastside Baby Corner has grown by approximately 5% per year over each of the last 4 years. The number of orders filled has increased from 27,450 per year to 33,500 per year, and the total monetary value of distributed items has increased from \$2.5 million to almost \$4 million per year. Due to the generosity of our donors and efficiencies within our system, we are able to fill 96% of all orders placed. Many of our 140 provider partners have grown significantly in that time frame, while others have shrunk or disappeared altogether. At the same time, overall need in the Eastside community has increased. The constantly changing provider landscape challenges EBC's ability to reach the children who need our help. It is imperative that we find the children in need, through the vehicle of the partner agencies, in order to deliver our services.

Currently, more than 35 agencies, which serve children and families, sit on our waiting list, anticipating the time when they will be able to receive essentials from EBC. The number of children below the poverty line is growing, so it is clear that a need for our unique services will continue to grow. Because we are the primary provider of essentials for children, and because there are underserved communities in our geographic service area, we expect to increase our service delivery. Our system of donation collection and redistribution is proven and effective. We are well-positioned to continue to increase our service delivery and satisfy additional unmet needs.

Goal: Increase service levels to families served by our provider partners by 20% over 3 years (as measured by number of orders fulfilled).

- a. Develop a formal process for evaluating and bringing in new partner agencies
- b. Continue to refine inventory management to increase distribution to children
- c. Add 15 new partner agencies by 2015
- d. Research and develop additional intake and distribution strategies

➤ Fundraising Capacity Increase

Current Situation. Fundraising capacity has increased dramatically through implementation of the goals in the 2008 strategic plan, supporting the continued sustainability, program growth, and foundation work for the long term goals of Eastside Baby Corner. A Development Director has been hired and the annual fund has doubled over the last 4 years. EBC has initiated an annual fundraising event which has delivered excellent results in the first two years. However, a number of pieces of a well-rounded development department have yet to be established, which limits the ability of the organization to access the resources and support its needs in certain areas. The annual fundraising event, and a fund to accomplish the transition to a sustainable executive leader for EBC, present opportunities for further growth.

Goal: Strengthen development program to support annual fundraising goal of \$800,000 by 2015.

- a. Establish a Fund Development Committee through the Board of Directors to outline the annual development plan
- b. Equip the development program to fund the strategic goals through infrastructure enhancements, communication tools, and support staff
- c. Implement keystones of sustainability for the Annual Fund
 - i. Create the opportunities and stewardship necessary to grow and sustain increasing levels of major gift support
 - ii. Focus growth of the annual luncheon event: target goals are a 30% increase in year one; a 25% increase in year two; and a 20% increase in year three
 - iii. Build a corporate and business sponsorship program
- d. Develop a lifetime and testamentary gift program (including bequests, charitable trusts, and other appreciated assets)
- e. Implement a written gift acceptance policy

➤ Regional Collaboration

Current Situation. In the Puget Sound region, there exist a number of “baby corner” style agencies which operate independently of one another. There is minimal communication between these agencies and therefore opportunities for cooperation are not being identified. Collaboration happens on an ad hoc basis with a minimum of deliberate planning or strategic foresight. Increased collaboration could help maximize efficiencies among organizations and reduce overhead, which would help these agencies better serve their mission in a cost-effective way. Because service area boundaries are not well-defined, there is overlap in some areas while other regions are underserved or completely neglected.

Goal: Establish a regional alliance of like agencies.

- a. Identify the players
- b. Convene an annual meeting to bring agencies together
 - i. Establish regular communication among participants

- ii. Define geographical service areas
- iii. Identify opportunities for collaboration

➤ Facility Improvements

Current Situation. EBC is housed in a large, divided warehouse, however, there is no shared interior passageway between the units; the units are accessible only via the exterior of the main warehouse. The space is viable for storing inventory, but not optimal for daily workflows, limiting its usefulness in the current state. Proposed increases in service delivery necessitate space to process and store a larger inventory.

Additionally, the warehouse has limited insulation and a very basic heating system. Better heating would improve the work environment for volunteers and staff, as well as make the building more suitable for operations on a consistent basis and improve productivity.

Goal: Remodel the warehouse hub to enhance our ability to provide services to our provider partners, as well as improve the employee environment and volunteer experience.

- a. Establish a remodel team to develop a floorplan, timeline, and budget
- b. Assess administrative space needs for additional staff, including the Executive Director; implement by 2013
- c. Secure funding and/or in-kind support to accomplish remodel project
- d. Remodel warehouse space to satisfy defined requirements

➤ Standardized Business Model

Current Situation. Eastside Baby Corner is based in a centralized warehouse facility that serves a large geographic area. This requires donors, volunteers, and partner agencies to physically travel to the Issaquah location. This centralized model may need to adapt in order to address anticipated regional traffic congestion and economic pressures that increase the cost of travel. A test donor drop-off site located in a family intensive area has demonstrated the potential positive impact of remote or satellite locations for EBC.

Goal: Develop and institute a flexible business model that facilitates quick response to changing needs in the community.

- a. Form a satellite team to perform needs analysis and assess costs and benefits of different types of satellite models; the team will make a feasibility recommendation
- b. Establish first EBC satellite center
 - i. Identify and procure satellite location
 - ii. Integrate satellite operations into existing operations
- c. Develop replicable satellite plan