

OASIS 2020



Strategic Plan



OASIS supports developmental service agencies building inclusive communities, enabling healthier lives for Ontario's most vulnerable



About OASIS

OASIS (Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs) was established on November 22, 1996 by six founding agencies. Over the past 20 years the organization has grown significantly and provided an increasing leadership role in the developmental services sector. OASIS is a group of organizations that have come together to support the development of development service and agencies serving people with special needs. OASIS's vision is a community of strong, viable, accountable community agencies who have the resources and professional competencies to provide quality supports and services to people with special needs. OASIS's mission is to provide leadership through sharing ideas, information, knowledge and interacts with government and other organizations on issues affecting its members.

OASIS is a volunteer-run, member-driven organization. Its member community agencies serve over 65,000 of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens and employ 25,000 full and part-time staff. Its 190+ member agencies currently provide more than 85 per cent of all developmental services funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

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Letter from the President

As OASIS celebrated its 20th Anniversary this year, it was once again a time to reflect on our accomplishments and set a new strategic direction to steer our course over the next 3 years during a time of crisis for agencies. OASIS hired Kerr Consulting to support us through this initiative. Between February and October 2017, OASIS undertook a series of activities to assess the organization's changing environment and priorities for the future.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the following for their support and willingness to share their feedback on OASIS:

- Jonathan Bradshaw, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Karen Chan, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Erin Hannah, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Barb Simmons, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Christine Kuepfer, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Sal Marrello, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Nancy Weiss, Delaware University
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- Janet Noel-Annable, Provincial Network & Christian Horizons
- Mark Wafer, OASIS Patron's Council
- Christine Elliott, OASIS Patron's Council
- Kevin Costante, OASIS Patron's Council
- Sandy Stemp, OPADD
- Ann Kenney, President
- Darren Connolly, Vice President Volunteer & Community Living Elgin
- Sherry Parsley, Treasurer & Community Living Hamilton
- Judy Reid, Past President
- Darlene Ryan, Community Living Prince Edward & Business Resource Committee
- Flavian Pinto, Community Living Toronto, Business Resource Committee, DS Finance Group, and Project lead Individualized Funding
- David Ferguson, Labour Relations Committee
- Roxanna Spryut-Rocks, Sensory Partner & Deafblind Ontario Services
- Terri Gray, Secretary & Community Living Oshawa Clarington
- Krista Haiduk-Collier, Community Living South Muskoka
- Janet Lormier, Community Living Oakville
- Nancy Wallace-Gero, Community Living Essex County
- OASIS Board of Directors and Supporting Executive Directors
- 61 member agencies responses to Online Survey
- Feedback from members attending the OASIS AGM and Annual Conference on initial findings

I look forward to working with the Board of Directors and member agencies to implement the new strategic goals and priorities that are outlined in this document.

Sincerely,

N. Ann Kenney

Executive Summary

In January 2017, OASIS contracted with an independent consultant, Kerr Consulting to provide support to its 2017-2020 strategic planning process. At the February 2017 Board meeting, Directors kicked off the strategic planning process by examining some key foundational questions such as whether the organization wanted to revisit its mission, vision, values, guiding principles. The consensus at the meeting was that there was no need to change the OASIS mission and vision at this time. There was discussion around the need to clarify, expand upon and perhaps integrate the guiding principles and values. With input from the Board of Directors, the Strategic Planning Working Group revisited these and these were approved at the August Board meeting.

A key part of the planning process involved a scan of the current environment and context for OASIS at this time. The Strategic Planning Working Group developed a list of potential stakeholders to interview and Kerr Consulting completed the actual data collection process and analyzed the information. All consultations explored key questions around the success and challenges of OASIS to date as well as ideas on the future role of OASIS. Please see the Letter from the President for a list of all key informants interviewed and the total number of agencies that completed the online survey.

Key Findings

Stakeholders felt that OASIS was a high performing organization, especially considering that the work is volunteer-led. All key informants interviewed felt that given its structure and capacity, the organization has provided an important value in the developmental services sector.

Through its various projects and committees, OASIS is seen as a central resource for organizational and management issues facing agencies. A number of key informants mentioned the position papers written by OASIS as valuable resources and the role that the organization and its committees play in providing guidance on several challenging organizational issues.

Both MCSS and OASIS internal key informants all spoke about the important role that OASIS has in relations with government. At various levels OASIS has a very good working relationship with MCSS. MCSS staff all spoke about role in terms of being a partner with government. MCSS staff also spoke about the role that OASIS can play in creating a space for the agencies to proactively discuss and work out complicated issues such as the impact of individualized funding on agency finances and program planning. Executive Directors viewed this strong relationship with government as positive. OASIS can influence government but only after good consultation and work with its members.

Many key informants noted that they valued the opportunities that OASIS creates to bring leadership of the sector together to share ideas and strategies. The annual conference is well received and popular and some key informants mentioned other times where OASIS brought leaders together on specific themes or topics for meetings or trainings. Some key informants spoke about the value of the various committees in also building connections and mentorship across the membership.

Agency expectations around the quality and quantity of information is increasing and several internal key informants noted that OASIS should improve its ability to communicate in timely fashion that goes beyond a monthly news bulletin.

Executive Summary

A few internal key informants felt that OASIS could do further work around improving its governance and possibly reviewing its current structure, such as the various committees. As OASIS has expanded membership over the years, there are an increasing number of member organizations who do not have a strong connection to the Board of Directors. Some key informants also thought OASIS could do more work at the regional and local level to bring organizations together.

Members responding to the online survey felt most strongly that OASIS should continue its advocacy on behalf of the sector and play a role in supporting innovation and best practices in the sector.

The most frequently mentioned theme by internal stakeholders and the online survey was the growing stresses on agency infrastructure, both financial and funding related but also service delivery related. Many agencies across the sector are struggling or are even in crisis mode due to the cost of living realities, flat-lined administrative funding, pay equity demands and growing wait lists.

Accountability issues are also increasing pressures on OASIS members. Agencies also face increasing requests for information from funders and requirements to implement policy changes. There is concern around the impact of sector transformation and what this will mean for agency budgets, financial management, service delivery and community relations. Key government staff provided their perspective that agencies would have to become better at managing data, improving digital and financial literacy at the senior management level, and increasingly aware of how to identify and then break down barriers to accessing services. The government's stated principle of inclusion and the move towards focusing more on individuals and families in policy development will be a challenge for some parts of the sector. Agencies will need to focus on how they communicate with clients and improve their competencies in social media, marketing and communications.

A specific infrastructure pressure related to complexity that was mentioned by key informants and the online survey, is the changing workforce and issues related to human resources, including staff recruitment, retention, and succession planning. Many agencies are having challenges recruiting and retaining both frontline and leadership staff due to a number of issues from an aging workforce, to compensation, to interest in the sector. Agencies will need to invest in more human resource capacity and dedicate resources to issues such as training and staff retention. A few key informants also mentioned that the recruitment and retention of qualified and skills Board members is also a growing challenge.

A number of key informants identified demographic and service-oriented trends that will have a significant impact on organizations in the coming decade. Broader shifts such increasing numbers of children and youth with special needs and changes in the way that young people are moving into adult services were noted. An aging population and more diverse population in Ontario were seen as major demographic shifts that will impact organizations and service delivery.

Overall, stakeholders, both external and internal, including member agencies, overwhelmingly felt that OASIS should stay focused on its core business of supporting organizational strength of its members. Many felt that OASIS could go deeper in this area and do much more in the coming years to prepare agencies for some of the changes ahead.

Executive Summary

Strategic Planning Approach

At the Board of Director's August meeting, the Board discussed and approved the OASIS 2020 planning approach, strategic goals and priorities along with a set of revised Core Values statements.





Diversity and Equality

OASIS acknowledges all members as equals, respects the autonomy and philosophical positions of members and understands that agreement may not be possible on all issues.

OASIS offers an environment that encourages participation of its diverse membership in all matters of interest or concern.

Integrity and Transparency

OASIS conducts itself with transparency, openness and cohesion in all aspects of its work.

OASIS interacts with government in a non-partisan manner.

OASIS is a volunteer driven organization.

Diversity and Equality

OASIS engages in strategic planning and ongoing review to ensure that we meet the needs of our members.

OASIS partners with other groups when appropriate in pursuit of its vision.

OASIS provides information to members and government regarding best practices, emerging issues and current trends through research and other activities.

OASIS promotes the collective interests of people with special needs and their families by helping to improve and extend responsive and cost-effective supports and activities to its members.

Goals & Priorities

Strengthen and support member agencies through organizational capacity building

Create or link to existing communities of practice or mentorship opportunities for OASIS members on various management issues.

Organize learning opportunities for member agencies, including agency Boards of Directors.

Promote and strengthen OASIS's award program, including leadership awards, scholarships, and bursaries for learning for various levels of the organization including Boards

Be a Strategic-leader in the Developmental Services Sector

Showcase innovation and best practices across OASIS membership, in business practices, financial models, human resources, community engagement and service delivery.

Support the establishment of more collaborative cross-sectoral tables and partnerships on policy issues impacting OASIS members.

Examine data on developmental sector services and strengthen the accessibility of data and research for the sector, this could include partnerships with academic and government partners.

Champion the value and expertise of member agencies to the benefit of Ontarians

Engage and support our members in an advocacy campaign to help unify and strengthen the voice of our sector with politicians and community leaders.

Strengthen advocacy for increases in funding from all sources for a healthy and sustainable sector.

Develop relationships with the developmental service sector across Canada, including sharing best practices and provincial advocacy.

Strengthen and modernize its infrastructure and governance

Create an effective, timely and modern communications strategy, provincially and regionally that highlights the value OASIS brings to the sector.

Evaluate current governance model and strengthen engagement of lay leaderships.

Establish more formalized Board and Committee evaluations and link to Board education and development.



Developmental service agencies building inclusive communities, enabling healthier lives for Ontario's most vulnerable.

Community Agencies Matter

Community agencies are the backbone of the developmental services sector. They are the thought leaders and experts who champion inclusive, vibrant, strong and diverse communities. Their provision of dedicated, trained professionals ensures that capacity can be realized, high quality services sustained and communities thrive. Funding them makes good economic sense.

For years our members have provided high quality services that have helped many people achieve and embrace fully engaged community based lives. Continued failure to invest in a manner that helps community agencies meet demands, will mean a loss of vital support to communities both now, and in the future.

Long-term failure to provide base funding budget increases to assist community agencies to keep up with cost of living increases and to carry out legislated changes has stalled progress and compromised system capacity and the long-term sustainability of a sector identified as being in crisis.

50% of agencies that have made Pay Equity adjustments without government funding since 2009/10 have reduced staffing levels and services in order to meet this legal obligation. Our members are reporting 42% fewer full-time positions and 37% less management positions. Employees should not fear that their jobs are being eliminated, becoming part-time or contract, and families should not fear that unqualified workers will become the standard as the sector is transformed.

With registrations on the waiting lists soaring beyond 20,000 families are desperate for community agencies to respond to families in a proactive manner. **Increased Family Crisis = More Complex Needs = Increased Cost to the Province.**

We suggest that an annual review of funding levels should occur and be monitored. Statistical information such as the annual cost of living allowance (COLA) and any wage adjustments provided by or legislated by the Government of Ontario should be used to assist in determining if funding levels are adequate.

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Collaboration Matters

Community agencies develop and maintain expert networks that assist people with a developmental disability and their families to navigate the complexities of a fragmented system, and to access resources in their community. Government's commitment to engage communities in inter-Ministerial discussions is vital to achieve fully informed initiatives that are responsive to the diversity and needs of the disability community. Partnerships and collaboration with community agencies prevents duplication of services and ensures communities are inclusive for all Ontarians.

Since 2008, the Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Provincial Network on Developmental Services to professionalize the sector and ensure the best quality of supports for people with developmental disabilities in Ontario.

The Government of Ontario must consider how the developmental services sector can be included within an integrated strategy to develop resources that address poverty and accessible and affordable housing, to help address the waiting list of more than 20,000 vulnerable adults and aging families waiting for services.

Part of this integrated strategy must include the formation of an inter-Ministerial working group. This would enable Ontario's Ministries to work with community agencies to develop integrated long-term solutions. Increased collaboration between Government and community agencies will make a meaningful impact in the lives of all the people we serve and help our communities thrive.

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People Matter

Everyone plays a role to ensure people have timely access to essential supports and services.

Community agencies make the promise of citizenship real for those with a developmental disability. Our members firmly believe that we are not full citizens if our neighbours are not; and citizenship means nothing if those with developmental disabilities and their families cannot live rich and fulfilling lives.

Everyday OASIS members support people to overcome barriers to full inclusion and citizenship within their communities. Our members are advocates for high-quality, and cost-effective supports and services. They work to ensure that people living with a developmental disability are active and present in all aspects of community.

Good citizenship demands inclusive workforces. The developmental services sector is a leader in equity – more than 50% of our Executives are female. However, limited opportunities for advancement within our female-dominated workforce is threatening our ability to attract, retain and sustain our most valuable assets – our employees. Lack of timely resources that align with life transitions means families are being forced to leave the workforce to care for loved ones when no services are available. **Lack of Timely Resources = Withdrawal of Women from the Workforce = Greater Financial Disparity and Pressure on the Economy.**

Only with dedicated and trained professionals can we ensure full community integration and employment of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. With concerned and committed members we are enhancing learning, training and building organizational capacity in agencies in every corner of the province so that every Ontarian can live up to their fullest potential.

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