

EAC Network Strategic Plan

2023-2028

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Message from CEO, Neela Mukherjee Lockel

Dear EAC Staff, Volunteers and Stakeholders-

When I came to EAC in Spring of 2021, we were in the midst of so many significant challenges and changes. Not only were we dealing with Year 2 of Covid-19, but also, many attention-grabbing events and milestone moments in the fabric of our lives, but also significant change here at the EAC Network. Much of the top leadership at the organization retired after 20-25 years of service.

I was the first of the new leaders, bringing on 3 new members of the senior executive team, as well as a group of diverse board members with interesting backgrounds and great enthusiasm for the work and mission of the organization. As we started to come out of Covid, I had the opportunity to spend some time learning, observing, and talking with people. It was clear to me that we needed to address some fundamental issues and regroup as an organization with a shared vision to carry us through these changing times, and to set us up for greater sustainability, increasingly positive impact, and growth for the future.

So, we decided to embark on a Strategic Planning Process. Although the decision to engage in this process came from our Board and Senior Leadership, we all agreed that we needed and wanted to engage and hear from staff: what is working? What is not working? What can we do better? What do we need to know and prepare for? What do you think of how we function as an organization?

We wanted to know everything.

We asked Gemma DeLeon, a Commissioner of Federal Mediation, trainer, and consultant, to work with us on developing a plan that incorporated the thoughts and ideas from across the organization. It felt like a herculean task, but we did it. We conducted a survey across the organization, focus groups with board, leadership and managers, as well as a SWOT analysis with a group of individuals representing each division and community of our organization. From there with the advisement of our Board -led Strategic Planning Committee, and the guidance of Gemma, we created what we think is a strong document and comprehensive plan to help us prioritize and strategize how to move forward and accomplish our goals.

We also re-wrote our mission, vision, and values statement to reflect more accurately who we are and what guides our work.

The next steps for the process are that we will build out teams to work on the 5 pillars of the plan:

- ✓ Equity, Justice, and Belonging
- ✓ Taking Care of our Employees
- ✓ Physical and Technological Infrastructure
- ✓ Fundraising, Friendraising, and Raising our Public Profile
- ✓ Program Innovation and Sustainability

Over the next five years, we will be working on sets of key initiatives under each pillar. We want and need everyone's support and enthusiasm to achieve these goals to make us a stronger, healthier organization, where we can have an environment that celebrates diversity, encourages inclusivity,

wellness, growth, and professional development for our employees, and where we can model and advocated for issues that are relevant for our clients and communities.

As you have heard us say, there is always MORE TO DO!

We hope that you will be excited by our plans and supportive of the work it will take to get us to an even BETTER EAC Network!

Neela Mukherjee Lockel

President and Chief Executive Officer

EAC Network

Our Mission

Our mission is to foster a more compassionate and just society. We are a network of vital programs and resources that ensures every person has an opportunity to achieve a better life.

- We Empower communities.
- We Assist with access to complex service systems.
- We Care for individuals and families in need.

Our Vision

We envision a world where all individuals and families have equal opportunities to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. We strive to be a beacon of hope and to inspire a society built on compassion and equity.

Our Values

We are brave.

- We own who we are and what we do.
- We face difficult issues head on.
- We take on new challenges without fear of failure.

We are excellent.

- We set high standards.
- We strive to be the best at what we do.
- We strive for continuous improvement.

We believe in equity.

- We fight for social and economic justice.
- We work to remove barriers and promote equity in all areas of our work.
- We believe that everyone deserves equal access to outcomes regardless of their background or circumstances.

We are honest.

- We value truth and transparency in all of our interactions.
- We are accountable and follow through on our commitments.
- We believe in integrity and doing the right thing, even when it is difficult or unpopular.

We are resilient.

- We build and plan for the future.
- We embrace change and adversity with resilience and determination.

- We learn from our mistakes, adapt to new situations, and find creative solutions to overcome challenges.

We are empowering.

- We create an environment where all our clients can succeed.
- We encourage and support each other to take ownership of our work, make decisions, and push boundaries.
- We aim to build a culture of personal growth that fosters innovation and impact.

We are compassionate.

- We recognize that each person we work with has unique experiences, emotions, and needs.
- We value empathy, kindness, and respect in all our interactions, whether it is with colleagues or our clients.
- We are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where everyone feels heard, valued, and cared for.

Strategic Pillars

Strategic Pillar I: Promoting Equity, Justice and Belonging

We are committed to promoting equity, justice and belonging as fundamental values and drivers of our mission.

This strategic pillar focuses on fostering an inclusive culture, addressing systemic barriers, and actively advocating for social justice to ensure equal opportunities and outcomes for all individuals and communities we serve.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Apply the lens of equity, justice and belonging to our structure, people, policies, and practices.
2. Uphold equity for all stakeholders, regardless of background and personal circumstances.
3. Educate internal and external stakeholders and advocate for public policies and legislation that support our Equity, Justice and Belonging (EJB) goals.

Key Initiatives:

1. Assess baseline and track progress regarding people, policy and practices, through an EJB lens. G1, 2
2. Train Every employee and board member about EJB concepts and practices. G 1,3
3. Develop transparent reporting mechanisms to track progress and share information. G 1, 2,3
4. Ensure staff and leadership reflects the communities we serve. G 1, 2
5. Engage everyone at EAC in the commitment to EJB. G1,2, 3
6. Engage in advocacy efforts as they relate to issues of EJB and intersection of our work in our communities. G 3

Strategic Pillar II: Empowering and Take Care of our Employees

We recognize that our employees are the heart and soul of our organization. By engaging and investing in our dedicated workforce, we can create a positive, meaningful and impactful work environment, leading to improved service delivery and better outcomes for the communities we serve.

Goals and Objectives:

1. **Cultivate a Supportive Work Culture:** Foster an inclusive and supportive work environment that celebrates diversity, promotes collaboration, and encourages open communication. This ensures that every employee feels valued, respected, and heard.
2. **Invest in Professional Development:** Provide opportunities for ongoing training, skill enhancement, and career advancement. By investing in our employees' growth and professional development, we empower them to excel in their roles and contribute to our organization's mission effectively.
3. **Recognize excellence and improve employee experience:** Recognize exceptional employee performance, dedication, and innovation. Celebrate achievements and milestones, both individually and collectively, to foster a culture of recognition and motivation.
4. **Encourage Work-Life Balance:** Strive for work-life balance, promote wellness initiatives, and encourage self-care. Valuing the personal lives and well-being of our employees leads to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and overall happiness.
5. **Foster Transparent Leadership:** Ensure transparent and inclusive leadership practices throughout the organization. Encourage regular feedback, constructive discussions, and involvement in decision-making processes, enabling employees to feel engaged, valued, and part of the bigger picture.

Key initiatives

1. **Communication Channels:** Launch platform(s) for all employees to share ideas, which will enhance communication, and make everyone feel heard and connected. G 1, 5
2. **Mentorship Program:** Establish a mentorship initiative to connect experienced employees with those seeking growth, fostering professional advancement and knowledge sharing. G 2, 3
3. **Enhancing employee well-being:** Allocate resources and improve offerings to support employees' mental, financial, and physical well-being, fostering a well-rounded and positive work environment. G 4
4. **Employee Engagement Surveys:** Conduct regular pulse surveys to gauge employee satisfaction and engagement levels, using information to continuously improve the work environment. G 1, 5
5. **Leadership and Professional Development:** Provide leadership and work skills training for staff to improve communication skills, reduce turnover, promote transparency, and create a positive team culture. G 2, 5

6. Career Pathing: Implement a structured program that helps employees map out their career paths within the organization, linking professional development opportunities to their career aspirations. G 2, 3
7. Recognition Programs: Establish a recognition program where employees are acknowledged for their contributions, reinforcing a culture of excellence. G 1, 3
8. Improve the quality of facilities and technology: To improve the employee experience, we will make improvements to provide a comfortable and technologically appropriate workspace. Provide ergonomic furniture, high-speed internet and wi-fi, working PCs, and up-to-date hardware and software that can boost productivity and job satisfaction. G 3

Strategic Pillar III: Maximizing Grants and Fundraising for Sustainable Impact

Grants and fundraising are vital for the financial sustainability and growth of our organization.

This strategic pillar focuses on optimizing the acquisition of grants and fundraising efforts to secure diverse and sustainable financial resources to support the continued delivery and expansion of our programs and services.

Goals and Objectives

1. Enhance marketing and communications efforts to improve our visibility.
2. Expand and diversify the scope of grant opportunities and funding sources.
3. Develop stewardship plans to engage stakeholders.
4. Maintain the highest levels of financial transparency and accountability.

Key Initiatives

1. Increase presence in NYC – outreach, fundraising, reputation. G 1,2,3,4
2. Develop and promote public-facing subject-matter experts within staff. G 1
3. Build out an individual donor base. G 1,2,3
4. Increase all fundraising to \$2,000,000 per year, inclusive of unrestricted funds. G1,2,3,4
5. Growth of unrestricted funding to \$850,000/year by year 5 (through increased NYC)
G1,2,3,4
6. Implement a Give and Get Board policy. G 3,4
7. Organize innovative fundraising events and campaigns to attract new donors and engage the community. G 1,2,3
8. Increase donor engagement and encourage participation in EAC activities. G 1,2,3,4
9. Strengthen relationships with public officials. G1,3,4
10. Develop strategies to engage board members in fundraising. G 1,2,3,4
11. Cultivate strategic partnerships with corporations and foundations that align CSRs with our mission and values. G1,2,3,
12. Improve standing on nonprofit / charity rating organizations (e.g., GuideStar, Charity Navigator). G 1,4
13. Improve Board reporting mechanisms. G1, 4

Strategic Pillar IV: Enhancing Technology and Physical Infrastructure for Greater Impact

Improving our technology and physical infrastructure are crucial for us to deliver services efficiently, in welcoming, safe environments for our clients, staff and volunteers.

This strategic pillar focuses on:

1. Investing in technology and fostering digital innovation to enhance our organizational effectiveness and outcomes, and
2. Improving our buildings and maintenance practices to provide environments that foster positive experiences and support program effectiveness.

Goals and Objectives (IT)

1. Build Robust IT Infrastructure
 - Invest in a scalable and secure IT infrastructure to support the increased technological demands of our organization. Ensure reliable hardware, software, networking, and cybersecurity systems are in place, allowing for collaboration, data management, and protection.
2. Enhance Data Management and Analytics by investing in appropriate systems to collect and collate client and program data. P1, G3,7
3. Promote Digital Inclusion
 - Ensure staff have training, knowledge, and skills to utilize technological systems.
 - Facilitate equitable access to technology and digital resources for our target populations.

Key Initiatives - Technology

1. Evaluation and Resource Allocation
 - a. Analyze existing technology infrastructure, processes, and systems to understand what is in place. G1
 - b. Identify gaps and risks. G1
 - c. Evaluate and prioritize initiatives based on resources and need. G1
 - d. Establish a plan to update equipment. G1
2. Enhance conference Room Technology G1
3. Establish comprehensive data management systems that capture, analyze, and leverage data for informed decision-making, program evaluation, and outcome measurement. G 2
4. Utilize data analytics tools and techniques to gain insights, identify trends, and optimize service delivery to better meet the needs of our beneficiaries. G 2
5. Utilize efficient and effective software systems – HR, Finance, Program Administration G1,3
6. Train staff to adopt and utilize new technologies. G3
7. Move to a paper light environment. G1,3

8. Collaborate with community partners, secure funding for technology initiatives, and provide training and support to bridge the digital divide and empower individuals to thrive in the digital age. G3 (P1)

Goals and Objectives (Physical Infrastructure)

Secure funding and resources to:

1. Renovate and upgrade existing facilities, ensuring they meet current safety standards and are accessible to all.
2. Develop a cost-effective maintenance plan to ensure that our facilities provide a welcoming safe and sustainable environment.
3. Establish stringent health and safety protocols for all facilities, ensuring compliance with regulations and providing a secure environment for staff and clients.
4. Maximize space planning and utilization to ensure effective delivery of services to our clients.

Key Initiatives - Physical Infrastructure

1. Evaluation and Resource Allocation G1,2,3,4,5
 - a. Evaluate the condition of existing physical spaces G1,2,3,4,
 - b. Prioritize needs based on factors (e.g., safety, operations, risk, budget, impact) G1,2,3,4
2. Explore repair and maintenance strategies to determine the most effective approach for each asset.
 - a. Relocate programs to better spaces as needed G2,3,4,
 - b. Repair spaces in need G1,2,3
 - c. Retain a facilities volunteer or staff member G2
3. Provide safety training for staff / De-escalation / Active shooter G2,3
4. Revamp safety committee G1, 2,3
5. Create smart working environments to ensure efficiency and productivity of staff to improve workflow. G4

Strategic Pillar V: Program Innovation and Long-term Sustainability

We are committed to ensuring our programs remain responsive, impactful, enduring and aligned with our mission. With a relentless focus on the communities we serve, we strive to not only meet current needs but also anticipate future challenges, guaranteeing our lasting impact on the lives of those we support.

This strategic pillar focuses on creating sustainable social service programs that adapt and thrive in the ever-changing landscape, ensuring EAC's impact on communities for the long term.

Goals and Objectives

1. Continuous Needs Assessment- Regularly assess the evolving needs of the communities we serve to identify emerging challenges and opportunities, enabling us to tailor and develop relevant programs that address current and future needs.
2. Long Term Impact – Develop a framework for measuring, monitoring, and evaluating outcomes beyond short-term indicators, and demonstrating our contributions to the communities we serve.
3. Apply evidence-based and data-driven decision making to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of programs. P4
4. Collaboration and Partnerships – Foster strategic collaborations with other nonprofits, government agencies, business, and community stakeholders to pool resources, share knowledge and amplify the impact of our programs.P2
5. Diversification of Funding Sources – Develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy to diversify revenue streams, reducing reliance on single sources of funding and enhancing financial stability for sustained program implementation. P3
6. Scalability - Ensure successful initiatives can be expanded to reach more beneficiaries and serve different communities effectively.
7. Technology Integration – Embrace technological advancements and innovation to enhance program delivery, optimize operational processes, and reach clients in underserved areas. P4
8. Training and capacity building – Invest in the professional development of staff and volunteers, empowering them with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality programs and respond effectively to future challenges. P2
9. Implement a formal budgeting process – Create a comprehensive financial plan that aligns with our mission, goals, and strategic priorities. This process will be collaborative, engaging key stakeholders from different departments and leadership levels to provide valuable input and insights.

Key Initiatives

1. Analyze demographic and socioeconomic trends to anticipate evolving needs.
 - a. Conduct internal and external focus group discussions to better understand emerging challenges. G6
 - b. Capture stories of long-term impact. G1,2,6

- c. Collaborate with academic institutions and/or hire staff to conduct impact evaluations, and incorporate research findings and best practices into program design G 1,2,4
- 2. Develop a system for tracking and analyzing program performance and outcomes over extended periods. – G 3, 7, P4.2, I4.3
 - a. Regularly analyze data to identify trends and assess the effectiveness of interventions. G 7. P4.2, I4.3
- 3. Identify potential partners and stakeholders through networking and research. G4, P3.2
- 4. Establish and update formal linkage agreements, MOUs, and qualified service agreements. G1,2
- 5. Organize regular meetings and workshops to exchange knowledge and resources. G2.2,
- 6. Explore innovative fundraising approaches, such as crowdfunding or social impact bonds. G5, P3.2
- 7. Secure additional resources to support the expansion of successful initiatives. G4,6
- 8. Conduct regular training sessions on program content. G8
- 9. Provide specialized training workshops. G8
- 10. Review and adjust the budget periodically to ensure alignment with organizational goals. G9