

The background of the cover features a series of light purple silhouettes of people of various ages and ethnicities walking together. In the foreground, a woman is holding the hands of two young children. Behind them, several other adults are walking, some in pairs and some alone, creating a sense of a community or a group moving forward.

REXDALE WOMEN'S CENTRE

STRATEGIC
PLAN
2013–2015



ABOUT REXDALE WOMEN CENTRE

Rexdale Women's Centre (RWC) has been providing exemplary services in the Greater Toronto Area for over 30 years.

Services are provided using a holistic, client-centered model that seeks to enhance the quality of life of people and support their full contribution to their communities. We offer programs and services in the following key areas:

Newcomer Assistance and Integration	Violence Prevention and Crisis Intervention	Employment Support for Women and Families
Parenting Supports	Children's Services	Ethno-Cultural Seniors Programs and Services
Welcoming Communities Program	Feeding with Love and Eating for Two Pre- and Post-natal Nutrition Programs	Community Capacity Building

Mission

Our mission is to support immigrant, newcomer and refugee women and their family members of all generations to become fully participating members of Canadian society who are self-sufficient, financially secure, safe, happy, healthy and socially active. We accomplish this by enhancing our clients' individual functioning skills and by facilitating their access to resources, agencies, and community services. See Appendix 1 for our vision, mandate and guiding principles.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Our strategic planning process was guided by a five-member Steering Committee, made up of the Executive Director and four members of the Board of Directors.

To begin the process, an environmental scan was conducted that gathered data from a variety of sources, including engagement of stakeholders that shared their experiences of our agency, the sector and most importantly, uniformly surfaced their deep commitment to and concern for RWC. Specifically, the scan gathered data from:

- ▶ Internal planning, evaluation and reporting documents
- ▶ External reports and updates
- ▶ Sectoral position papers and research reports (including funder reports)
- ▶ Focus groups with all staff (75+)
- ▶ Key informant interviews with¹:
 - Executive Director (1)
 - Senior Management (2)
 - Chair of the Board of Directors (1)
 - Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors (1)
 - Agency funders (2)
 - Agency service partners (4)
 - Sector researchers and policy makers (2)

All data was presented to the Steering Committee and the Board in an Issues Paper, with identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The Issues Paper was used as the foundation for a Board and staff strategic planning day in October, 2012. The process has culminated in this Strategic Plan that will serve as a compass for our journey over the next three (3) years: 2013-2016. It will also be a tool for us to use as we negotiate our external environment so that our invaluable work will continue to improve the lives of women and their families, and therefore the entire community.

Identified strategic directions will be incorporated into an implementation workplan that will be driven by RWC's senior management team and reviewed regularly by the Board of Directors.

¹ RWC gathers feedback and input from its clients on its programs and services on an ongoing basis; this data also informed the process.



KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS

The context for planning was guided by the following identified key strategic findings:

- ▶ The strength of RWC is in its unique services, which are highly woman-focused, yet also holistic and family-based. RWC also knows its community and target groups extremely well from a linguistic and cultural perspective.
- ▶ RWC has many partnerships that contribute to its ability to fulfill its mission. In fact, the community looks to RWC to lead many types of partnerships and collaborations; this leadership must continue for the agency to sustain service delivery.
- ▶ RWC's funding and policy environment is precarious, with intense pressure to do more with less and highly demanding accountability requirements.
- ▶ Due to changes in immigration policy and technology, clients are finding out about the settlement process before they arrive to Canada and are increasingly precise regarding their needs. This has implications for how staff deliver services.
- ▶ Senior staff at RWC is stretched to the limit, thus creating a need to explore how middle managers can support management of the agency in order to free up more time for strategic thinking and planning at the senior level.
- ▶ There is a need to find new models re: existing services, and to look at new ways to innovate for sustainability.
- ▶ Organizations that can demonstrate their impact will have the best case for sustained funding in the future; this has important evaluation implications for RWC.

“Rexdale Women’s Centre has a principle – it understands that if we work in silos, then our impact is diminished.” - Key Informant

“Senior staff have to have the time to do the work they need to do at the level [in the sector] they need to do it at. This has to happen for survival.” - Key Informant



65% of North Etobicoke (NE) is comprised of visible minorities as compared to almost **47%** of the City of Toronto.

The South Asian community makes up NE's largest immigrant population and **58%** of its recent immigrant population.



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

RWC's strategic directions build on the idea of developing its adaptive capacity as an organization².

That is, the organization will focus on developing its ability to react to and instigate change in the coming years. This recognizes the unpredictability of the environment RWC is in, and supports managing and flourishing in the face of that unpredictability.

To that end, RWC has set four **(4) core strategic directions**. Action on these strategic directions will strengthen the central role that RWC plays in creating healthy families and communities in North Etobicoke and beyond:



² See page 11 for more information.

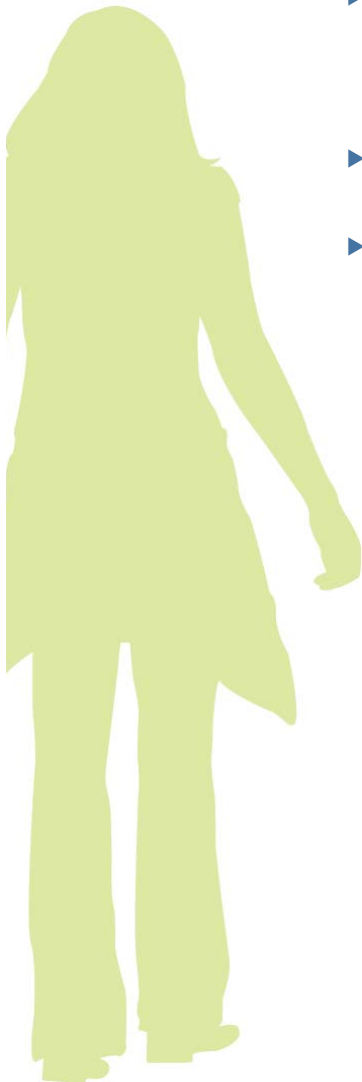


1 Re-align key programs and services.

The strength of RWC is and always has been its belief that women reside at the centre of families and communities. We believe that when women are empowered, they become agents of change at individual, group and community levels. We know that families and communities are healthier when women have access to resources, information and services that address their basic needs and address violence and oppression they may experience. Our guiding principles reflect our beliefs. In order to focus our efforts as we seek to achieve our mission, we will re-align all programs and services, placing the right of all women to live violence-free, fully realized lives at the centre. Ultimately, this will result in healthier families and communities.

What will RWC do?

- ▶ Develop a programmatic theory of change that clearly outlines why we deliver services the way we do and to what clients. This will include articulating the fundamental challenges we help clients address, what we hope our clients will ultimately achieve and how our work fosters those outcomes.
- ▶ Conduct an evaluation of current programs and services against the theory of change to articulate our current impact on the women and families we serve.
- ▶ Assess where focus should be relative to current programming; assess for new areas of service and new target populations that align with partnership, collaboration and revenue and resource generation opportunities.





2 Strategically align new partnership and collaboration opportunities with service delivery and resource development goals.

RWC is known as a high-performing partner and collaborator in the community and with its many stakeholders. And, partnership and collaboration are increasingly being seen as one of the most important vehicles organizations can use to grow and evolve. As a core strategy to build the sustainability of the organization, we will build on our excellence in this area and develop new partnerships and collaborations that directly and positively impact service delivery, resource development and organizational capacity. Ultimately, we will benefit from working with others through enhanced capacity to provide programs and services to our clients.

What will RWC do?

- ▶ Develop a Partnership and Collaboration Framework that guides decision-making around potential partnerships and collaborations and also guides partnership development and implementation. The Framework will support us to strategically consider mission, values, sustainability, capacity and risk in partnership and collaboration efforts.
- ▶ Use the Framework to assess all current partnerships and collaborations for alignment with our strategic directions and fit with organizational values and needs.
- ▶ Focus on engagement of larger institutions (i.e. school boards, municipal groups, academic institutions and the mental health system) to explore innovation through partnership and collaboration in evaluation, programming & resource generation.



3 Generate revenue and build resources for sustainability.

In order for RWC to fulfill its mission, secure resources and revenue are needed. Our environment tells us that this is best achieved through innovative partnerships and collaborations, as well as strategic fundraising activities. After 30 years of providing exemplary services, it is time to brand ourselves as an excellent investment of private and public resources. Ultimately, we will balance out our dependence on government and project funding and sustain programs and services through a diversified funding base that includes corporate, private, government and foundation support.

What will RWC do?

- ▶ Increase our capacity to tell our story and publicize our impact, including assessing and addressing rebranding needs.
- ▶ Develop a longer-term Fund Development Plan for RWC, which includes a strategic framework for assessing cost-benefit analyses of approaching new funders and targets from diverse revenue sources.
- ▶ Ensure an articulated commitment to fundraising by all stakeholders through written policies and practices at the Board, staff and volunteer level.





4 Build internal capacity of the organization through management restructuring and professional development of all staff.

The re-alignment of programs and services and the urgent need for energy to be put towards partnerships, collaborations and resource development has implications for RWC staff and their capacity. Front line staff must be able to provide services that support the achievement of stated outcomes. Senior staff must have sufficient time and energy to drive the strategic agenda forward. Middle managers must have the skill and knowledge to support all staff to realize their primary functions. Perhaps most importantly, the organizational structure must support the work we need to do in order to be sustainable. These needs imply changes to our management structure and the role middle managers, in particular, play in supporting the overall administration of our agency. Front line staff may also need support to provide revised or new services. Building internal capacity means we will ultimately harness the rich assets our staff brings to their work and to the realization of our mission.

What will RWC do?

- ▶ Assess capacity of staff against existing and new service areas and populations; articulate and address resultant training and professional development needs.
- ▶ Based on best practices in the non-profit sector, assess current tasks and functions of senior staff (e.g. team building, performance appraisal, grant writing and funder reporting, external liaison and risk management) and assess delegation to middle managers; restructure organizational chart and/or redistribute responsibilities to middle management to reflect needed changes.
- ▶ Develop and implement a professional development plan that supports well-trained middle managers who facilitate the provision of high quality services through streamlined support to front-line workers and senior staff.

... we will ultimately harness the rich assets our staff brings to their work and to the realization of our mission.



ABOUT STRATEGIC PLANNING TODAY

While this plan outlines directions to be taken over the next three years, the reality is that strategic planning processes can no longer assume a stable environment from which to consider the future.

RWC, like so many other organizations in the non-profit sector, must focus effort on being able to adapt to ongoing change. This means that all strategic directions must be approached with a willingness to critically examine old ways of working, to learn and to regularly take small, calculated risks. Our goal is to think “outside the box” as much as possible in order to see ideas and solutions emerge. We feel this is best achieved by turning our gaze outward to see what others are doing and how they are doing it, and to constantly network in the name of sparking something new and exciting.

While some of the high-level strategic actions outlined in this document are basically tools that can support us to remain adaptable going forward, other activities will need to be assessed at regular intervals as new partnerships and resources come in the door, as changes in public policy and technology occur and as new challenges and opportunities arise. As such, strategic planning will be framed as an ongoing activity of the Board of Directors of RWC. As well, the implementation plan resulting from this document will be revised regularly as new information becomes available and as new learning occurs.

Our goal is to think “outside the box” as much as possible in order to see ideas and solutions emerge.



APPENDIX 1:

RWC'S MANDATE, VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mandate

The Rexdale Women's Centre is an independent, non-for-profit, voluntary agency that serves high-need women and their family members residing in the Greater Toronto Area.

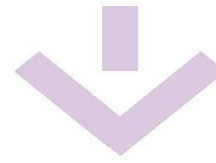
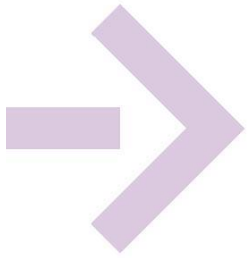
Vision Statement

At the Rexdale Women's Centre, our vision is that in the Greater Toronto Area all immigrant, newcomer and refugee women and their partners, children, parents, and other family members of all generations have everything they need including: access to education, housing, services, programs, and meaningful/gainful employment; ability to effectively settle and integrate into the local community and fully participate in Canadian society; to become self-sufficient and financially secure; to have respectful, caring and harmonious relationships with their partners, family members, neighbours and community members; and to live happy, safe, healthy, and socially active lives in which they are honoured and respected for who they are regardless of their background or gender.



Guiding Principles

- ▶ We believe that we improve women's lives by serving women and their partners, children, parents, and other family members;
- ▶ Our approach to service delivery is holistic and responsive to client and community needs;
- ▶ We believe that every new person living in Canada can contribute to our society by being provided with the services, programs, and tools to integrate easily and to participate fully in our society;
- ▶ We value the diversity within our agency and within our community;
- ▶ We believe that every woman has the capacity to be self-sufficient and financially secure and to live a life that is healthy, happy and socially active;
- ▶ We operate with honesty and integrity, and treat everyone with honour and respect;
- ▶ We encourage the development of caring and harmonious relationships within our agency and within our community;
- ▶ As an organization, we focus on what will best serve our clients' needs;
- ▶ We believe that well-being within individuals, families, and communities is the foundation for well-being within our society;
- ▶ We promote the principles of access and equity in all that we do.



Settlement Services

“I am Suba. I was born in a small town in Sri Lanka. I lived happily with my family until we had to flee to India as refugees due to the ethnic conflict. We had lost everything and lived in a refugee camp in India. My mother arranged a marriage for me in the hopes that I would have a good life in Canada. In Canada I attended English classes. When I needed help, the school gave me contact number of The Rexdale Women's Centre. The worker was very helpful and has shown me a new path.” - *Suba*

Domestic Violence Support

Before William joined the Partner Assault Response Group, he didn't know that intimidation was part of controlling and abusing his spouse. Instead of communicating his concerns, he would raise his voice and intimidate his wife. It was not easy to change. William developed short-term goals to achieve changes in his behaviour. While in the programme, he learned to communicate and talk out his emotions and feelings of anger rather than becoming violent. His spouse noted the change in his behaviour and his ability to better communicate with her and their children.

- *Staff*

Seniors Services

“I never realized that I can also learn about computers, I was always scared to touch them. Thanks to RWC for providing me computer training, considering my age and language limitations. I am also thankful to my young buddy (high school student) who was patient with my slow learning pace but helped me to learn. Now I enjoy working on computers”. - *Velia*

Children's Services

“When I was introduced to School Readiness Programme, I didn't know that it would help my daughter Miriam to improve her personality and confidence to do well in the start of very first academic year of her life. At the programme, they promote the concept of school in young mind so beautifully that children show interest rather anxiety on the first day of school...Miriam is doing very well at her school. Whenever there is news about her accomplishments, I feel proud of my decision to register her in the programme.” *Shaista*

Domestic Violence Support

“I was sponsored by husband and arrived in Canada in March 2003 with my child. After a few months, my husband told me he did not want to be together. I was ashamed and I begged him not to leave, in spite of his verbal and physical abuse. My uncle heard about the Rexdale Women's Centre and made an appointment for me to see a counsellor. I was so happy to be able to talk to a counselor who understood my language and culture. I was given help immediately. With financial assistance, I found an apartment, got food and furniture for my child and me.” - *Manjeet*

Parenting Support for Women and their Families

"I received a great deal of information and tips on child behaviour, emotional and physical problems and possible solutions [in the Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program]. Now I make use of these techniques with my own children and I am happy with the positive results. I liked the program very much.” *Zaida*



GET INVOLVED AND BE PART OF OUR SUCCESS STORY



VOLUNTEER

Opportunities to volunteer are available in:

- Programs and Services
- Administration

Just call 416-745-0062 and tell us you want to volunteer with us.

DONATE

There are three easy ways to donate:

- ▶ Go to <http://www.rexdalewomen.org/contactUs.html> and fill out the form. Tell us you want to make a donation and we will get in touch right away!
- ▶ Go to <http://www.rexdalewomen.org/sponsors.html> and fill out the donation form. Send it along with a cheque made out to Rexdale Women's Centre. Our charitable registration number for your records is 11911 8297 RR0001.
- ▶ Go to <http://www.rexdalewomen.org/sponsors.html> and donate through Canada Helps by clicking on the Canada Helps logo.

Rexdale Women's Centre

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