



## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 – 2016**

**June 2013**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2012, the Utah Parent Center (UPC or Center) confronted several emerging issues that contained both opportunities and risks. The 2012 “sequester” loomed at the federal level, threatening state funding also. A planned leadership succession was taking shape on the outer edges of the organization’s radar screen, and emergency succession in several key positions was a possibility. Existing funding models offered only restricted funds, none of which could be used for staff infrastructure in fundraising, technology, or marketing.

At the same time, the organization was preparing to celebrate thirty years of strong and sustained growth, and a powerful commitment to mission on the part of its long-term executive director, board, staff, volunteers, and community partners. Early investments in technology had paid dividends in service and efficiency. The organization enjoyed stability in key federal grants and in its executive leadership. In addition, UPC was extremely well positioned to seek private funding to supplement its revenue, due to the marketability and appeal of its mission, the broad and diverse constituencies in its client base, and a valued service niche in the community as a recognized leader in disability services.

Consensus grew within the board during 2012 that its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary offered an opportune moment to take a fresh look at its programs, its funding sources, and its infrastructure. Although the board had shrunk in size as it reevaluated its role in the organization, it was sufficiently courageous and visionary to recognize this important pivot point. UPC, therefore, made the decision to begin an intentional strategic planning process to create a preferred future, rather than a reactive one.

The Board of Directors launched a strategic planning process in December 2012 that was dynamic and inclusive, involving all board members and leadership staff. Multiple planning

sessions, renewed committee work, active engagement and forward thinking, all engendered lively conversation and debate over UPC's future goals and focus.

Under the leadership and guidance of board chair Peggy Milligan, executive director Helen Post, and incoming board chair Jennie Dopp, the board and staff worked to build a consensus-based plan to strengthen and sustain UPC's core programs to inform, support, train, and advocate for families of children with special needs. It is their hope that execution of this plan will INSPIRE the Center's many communities, CONNECT its constituents at all levels in powerful ways, and create an infrastructure able to SUSTAIN the remarkable growth and service that has marked its history.

During its planning process, the board and staff expressed the following understandings that undergird the goals and strategies contained in this plan.

- + There is a need for additional clarity about UPC program scope and priorities for the coming three years, clarity which should be driven as much by organizational aspirations and competencies as by federal grant guidelines.
- + Reliance on restricted federal funding, while critical to the Center's entire success, is also impeding its future potential, because the organization is uniquely positioned to do private fundraising and inspirational public marketing.
- + There is clarity about the need for fundraising staff to generate unrestricted funds and other program or operational support not available in federal and state grants.
- + There must be a new focus on operational issues such as technology, leadership succession, marketing, and staffing infrastructure as drivers of continuing success, and none of them are fundable under the current model.
- + There is growing clarity about the real and often hidden challenges of planned ED succession, board development in preparation for succession, and the importance of both completing an emergency plan now and beginning conversations about a longer range succession plan.

The Board of Directors approved this Strategic Plan on June 27, 2013.

## **WHO WE ARE**

### **Our Mission**

The mission of the Utah Parent Center is to help parents help their children, youth, and young adults with **all** disabilities to live included and productive lives as members of the community. We accomplish our mission by providing accurate information, empathetic peer support, valuable training, and effective advocacy based on the concept of parents helping parents.\*

*\* The term parent is broadly defined to include anyone serving in that role.*

### **Our Vision**

UPC envisions a future in which no Utah family that has a child with special needs lacks the resources to thrive.

## **WHAT WE DO**

The Utah Parent Center is an award-winning training and information center founded in 1983 by parents of children and youth with all disabilities to help other parents facing similar challenges throughout Utah. The caring and competent staff of the UPC utilizes a proven, effective parent-to-parent model to help many thousands of parents annually. Although located in Salt Lake City, the Center serves families across Utah.

We also represent families in many systems level activities. UPC staff has built collaborative networks with education, health and human service professionals, agencies and organizations. The Center promotes change within community through various projects and activities.

The UPC is founded on the philosophy that parents are full partners in the decision-making processes that direct their child's care and programs and, as such, can provide significant support to other parents in similar circumstances.

Our staff helps parents and professionals through:

- Toll-free telephone access to the Center where trained parents (Parent Consultants) provide information, support and referrals.
- Workshops and presentations on a variety of topics related to special education, health and other issues pertinent to the needs of families.
- An online calendar of events in support of families
- Online training resources, such as video modules, webinars and print resources.

- An annual conference attended by hundreds of parents and professionals.
- An electronic newsletter (e-Connections) which contains the latest information and updates (also available in print for families who require it)
- A library of resources to help parents increase their knowledge and improve skills.
- Trained local volunteers and IEP Coaches to support parents

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **PART I. TO INSPIRE (I)**

*UPC is not satisfied simply to make information or training available. The Center wants to inspire networking and fellowship among families, help them to become living resources for one another, and move them all to imagine a future of extraordinary potential in the face of a challenging diagnosis. UPC aspires to be the trusted go-to resource for community partners who also serve and refer these families, and to remain top-of-mind for families that might need its services.*

**GOAL I: To be seen as the provider of choice in the disability community in our areas of expertise, and to lead clients and the public as a whole toward a better understanding of the support we can offer families.**

**Core Strategy I.1: Update the organization's image and marketing tools.**

**Key Drivers: Marketing Committee/staff**

**Objective I.1.1:** Create a new logo, tag line that demonstrates more vividly what the organization is now and what it aspires to be.

**Objective I.1.2:** Agree on and implement consistent graphic and communication standards.

**Core Strategy I.2: Tell 30 Stories for 30 Years**

**Key Drivers: Staff**

**Objective I.2.1:** Celebrate the anniversary year by inviting families past and present to tell their own stories in a variety of media: What makes your child special? How has your family discovered extraordinary potential despite the limitations of your child's special needs? How can you inspire other families to look beyond disability and envision a positive future?

**Objective I.2.2:** Invite trainers/teachers to share their stories also.

**Objective I.2.3:** Lead with these stories in all events, publications, home pages, trainings, meetings, conferences, using our clients and partners themselves to tell these stories as frequently as possible.

**Core Strategy I.3: Develop social media strategies to enhance parental collaboration.**

(See S.II.5)

**Key Drivers: Staff**

**Objective I.3.1:** Develop a blog, an on-line community that can share successes and solutions, a lively FB presence, twitter chats, etc., so that client families themselves can share their own experiences in their own words and images, along with volunteers, teachers, staff/board, and partners.

**Objective I.3.2:** Enlist the help of a social media guru as mentor and create a simple plan for how to create, develop, promote, and update social media sites, and the kind of staff/volunteer/intern support that might be needed to actualize the plan.

**Objective I.3.3:** Set realistic goals and accountabilities for building participation in digital spaces, and use all available social media strategies to gather email addresses and invite participation.

**Core Strategy I.4: Refine the Center’s vision and values and then use them to focus all internal decisions about policy, programs, and planning.**

**Key Drivers: Executive Director/Board**

**Objective I.4.1:** Review and refresh the decision matrix on a periodic basis.

**Objective I.4.2:** Board and staff together identify core organizational values and how they might focus the decisions UPC makes.

**Objective I.4.3:** At a board level, discuss a vision of the future through unanswered questions about UPC’s service model, like: Are we a central clearinghouse in Salt Lake? Do we aspire to service locations elsewhere in the state? What are our aspirations about our partnerships with schools and the medical community? Etc.

**Core Strategy I.5: Clarify the scope of immutable core programs that will create the UPC brand.**

## **Key Drivers: Executive Director/Board of Directors**

**Objective I.5.1:** Review current program strategies (Inform, Support, Train, Advocate) and the amount of time, human resource, and money consumed by each, as compared to the impact of each activity. Is any realignment necessary?

**Objective I.5.2:** Identify the Center's and its unique niche in the disability community, so that it can be marketed in a way that is as narrow and focused as possible. (What does UPC do better than anyone else in the world? What would it continue to do even if existing funding were withdrawn? What would it never do, even if funding were available, because it is outside the Center's core competence and there might be others who do it better?)

**Objective I.5.3:** Claim and promote our core training competence, market it consistently, and protect its financial value. Incentivize the professional organizations and individuals we train to stay with us rather than compete with us.

## **PART II: TO CONNECT (C)**

*Although UPC is well known in the disability community, it is often invisible to the general public. This means that families in crisis are not always connected with UPC immediately on diagnosis or at the best possible time. It also means that UPC is seldom top of mind for schools, businesses, and service organizations that are planning a community fundraiser. Both general public awareness and targeted communication with key constituencies are important strategic imperatives for the Center.*

### **GOAL ONE – CONNECT (C.I): To create community awareness and organizational vitality through connections with internal audiences.**

**Core Strategy C.I.1: Provide ongoing state-of-the-art professional development tools for professionals inside and outside UPC.**

#### **Key Drivers: Staff**

**Objective C.I.1.1:** Further develop the website as a learning tool in order to reap efficiencies in terms of money and time, and to make resources available throughout the state. (See technology plan)

**Objective C.I.1.2:** Explore strategies (like the paper thumb drive as an example) to push more traffic from trainings, conferences, schools, and medical providers to UPC social sites to

build a mutually supportive on-line community, and to promote the organization across platforms in an intentional way.

**Core Strategy C.I.2: Identify new mission populations and the amount of resource and attention they will get over the next three years.**

**Key Drivers: Program Staff**

**Objective C.I.2.1:** Do a SWOT analysis of our school and other agency partnerships, and make a simple plan to strengthen, broaden, and cultivate those people and programs.

**Objective C.I.2.2:** Identify and prioritize core community partnership opportunities, both expansions of existing programs and also new opportunities that address gaps in existing services.

**Objective C.I.2.3:** Do an assessment of the experience of community partners as a way of strengthening engagement and deepening partnerships. Consider doing a focus group with key partners to understand their experience with the organization, to solicit their advice, and thus deepen their engagement.

**Objective C.I.2.4:** Identify and prioritize relationships with medical providers.

**Objective C.I.2.5:** Define the scope of Spanish language programs and outreach to other diverse populations.

**Objective C.I.2.6:** Define the scope of rural or geographical outreach.

**Objective C.I.2.7:** Determine whether, and to what extent, we will provide services to families of adults with disabilities.

**Core Strategy C.I.3: Connect with families past and present.**

**Key Drivers: Staff**

**Objective C.I.3.1:** Consider a new methodology for needs assessment.

**Objective C.I.3.2:** Invite ongoing relationships with families in social media.

**Objective C.I.3.3:** Regularly invite families, as appropriate, into volunteerism, board service, donation, focus groups, story sharing, and any other strategy for maintaining the support of this key constituency in service of the UPC mission.

**Objective C.I.3.4:** Create protocols for keeping contact information up to date.

**GOAL TWO (C.II): UPC will create community awareness through connection with external audiences.**

**Core Strategy C.II.1: Build the UPC Brand**

**Key Drivers: Marketing Committee**

**Objective C.II.1.1:** Produce and distribute a visual and distilled short-term media kit.

**Objective C.II.1.2:** Write a compelling “elevator pitch” that all Board and staff members use to describe UPC.

**Objective C II.1.3:** Create a long term, comprehensive marketing plan that identifies organization strengths and weaknesses, marketable content and knowledge areas, existing and potential new audiences, existing and required channels for communicating with these audiences, social media and targeted communications specific to various audience categories.

**Core Strategy C.II.2 -: Develop strategic corporate partnerships that support program opportunities and connect UPC with a broader swath of the general public.**

**Key Drivers: Fundraising/Marketing**

**Objective C.II.2.1:** Identify media partners and leverage their promotional activities to create more awareness of UPC via daytime talk shows, feature stories, PSA campaigns.

**Objective C.II.2.2:** Outline parameters for partnerships and continue to foster relationships with schools and other service organizations.

**Objective C.II.2.3:** Seek out and take advantage of speaking opportunities in the community and develop a group of people, including client parents, who would join a speaker’s bureau or ambassador program. Make stories and resources easily available to them on line.

**Objective C.II.2.4:** Seek a corporate partner for a television/radio awareness-building media campaign.

**Core Strategy C.II.3: Continue to retain and build relationships with donors and partners.**

**Key Drivers: Development Director (Fundraising/Marketing Committee; volunteer coordinator)**

**Objective C.II.3.1:** Continue to call and personally thanking any new donor, and annually call and thank repeat donors.



**Objective C.II.3.2:** Assess volunteer satisfaction as a way of both strengthening the program and inviting the deeper engagement of volunteers.

**Objective C.II.3.3:** After hiring a development professional, create a cultivation and stewardship plan for donors.

**Objective C.II.3.4:** Actively manage and utilize PIX relational database to maximize donor activities.

### **PART III: SUSTAIN (S)**

*UPC has an impressive and stable organizational history of which it is proud. It also has a service gap of 80,000 Utah children. To continue the Center's growth and reach those unserved children and their parents, the organization must have a much more stable financial foundation. It must leverage government funds with private donations, and build an infrastructure with unrestricted funding. To achieve any significant growth in services and impact, fundraising and marketing staff support would be required.*

#### **GOAL ONE (SI): Increase diversified revenue streams to ensure financial sustainability.**

##### **Core Strategy S.I.1: Launch an Organized Fundraising Program**

##### **Key Drivers: Development Committee/Executive Director**

**Objective S.I.1.1:** Assess current fundraising capacity, now complete, which led to the recommendation of a professional fundraiser.

**Objective S.I.1.2:** Provide fundraising training for the board in several stages

**Objective S.I.1.3:** Research prospective foundation and corporate foundation donors that might support a staff person in fundraising

**Objective S.I.1.4:** Apply for that funding from private foundations and identify other funding streams that could support a staff position.

**Objective S.I.1.5:** Write a fundraising plan that includes staff and board responsibilities.

**Objective S.I.1.6:** Hire a fundraising professional and determine the initial job description for that person.

##### **Core Strategy S.I.2: Develop a philanthropic approach to fundraising.**

### **Key Drivers: Development Committee/Development Director**

**Objective S.I.2.1:** Create a signature breakfast event to raise unrestricted funds, new networks of friends, and organizational awareness.

**Objective S.I.2.2:** Create a new culture for fundraising that includes foundations, corporate foundations and individuals as a core component of annual fundraising.

**Objective S.I.2.3:** Engage prospective donors in specific UPC programs.

**Objective S.I.2.4:** Actively diversify funding streams through grants and proposals to private foundations, corporate foundations, and individuals.

**Objective S.I.2.5:** As new programs are discussed, conduct research in funding opportunities for those programs to assess their feasibility.

### **Core Strategy S.I.3: Examine viability of long-term government revenue**

#### **Key Drivers: Executive Director/Board**

**Objective S.I.3.1:** Review programs and their funding streams and their alignment with organizational priorities and vision.

**Objective S.I.3.2:** Decide where there are critical unmet needs that would be funded first with new revenue, or less critical needs that would be dropped if funding were unavailable.

## **GOAL TWO (S.II): To maximize the quality of governance in UPC**

### **Core Strategy S.II.1: Long range financial planning**

#### **Key Drivers: Executive Committee**

**Objective S.II.1.1:** Annually, review a three year projected budget, and measure against actual/projected funding and core priorities or new programming.

**Objective S.II.1.2:** Include projected unrestricted funding streams in the budgeting process, and the uses to which these funds would be expensed.

**Objective S.II.1.3:** Annually assess the growth of the operating reserve/endowment against three-year projections. (If you don't already have them, create policies regarding the use of interest and the classification of restricted and unrestricted endowment funds.)

**Objective S.II.1.4:** Do an annual analysis of staff salaries/benefits/succession costs.

**Objective S.II.1.5:** Create a contingency planning group to look at facility needs and costs should the pro bono space UPC now enjoys disappear in 2015, and develop a set of organizational responses should the worst happen.

**Core Strategy S.II.2: Identify a more intentional process for board recruitment and board performance.**

**Key Drivers: Board Capacity Committee, Executive Committee**

**Objective S.II.2.1:** Do a board self-assessment at least every other year, and use it to identify board training, development, and recruiting needs.

**Objective S.II.2.2:** Compile a list of people who meet one or more of those targets, contacting them to determine interest and availability, now or in the future, and meet with them, if interested, to discuss board expectations and activities.

**Objective S.II.2.3:** Maintain and cultivate a pipeline of names for the future and regularly ask board, staff, and partners to suggest names for that pipeline.

**Objective S.II.2.4:** Create a board Manual, to be shared at a board orientation for new members once a year, but also available and regularly updated in Google Docs or some other utility on line.

**Objective S.II.2.5:** Consider an ongoing “board operations” committee to handle nominations and recruiting, board training needs, board orientation, accountability for board expectations, self-assessments, and so forth.

**Objective S.II.2.6:** Move work from this plan into appropriate board committees, to ensure board awareness and accountability for the plan, as well as the board’s engagement in execution of the vision it contains.

**Core Strategy S.II.3: Create a high-level evaluation process to assess organizational effectiveness.**

**Key Drivers: Executive Committee**

**Objective S.II.3.1:** Evaluate the ED annually against agreed-upon goals (perhaps selected goals in the strategic plan, for example), to develop within the board a deeper understanding of the ED role, meaningful executive oversight before ED succession is imminent, and a growing consensus on the skills and experience they will seek in the next leader when the time comes.

**Objective S.II.3.2:** Develop, with staff, criteria for a board program evaluation process.

#### **Core Strategy S.II.4: Succession Planning**

**Key Drivers: Executive Director, Board Chair, Associate Director**

**Objective S.II.4.1:** Draft an Emergency Succession Plan.

**Objective S.II.4.2:** Discuss Emergency Succession with board and key staff, clarify elements in it so that the full board agrees with and understands it, and fill in the technical information required. Finalize, approve, and file with all key people.

**Objective S.II.4.3:** Understand the critical board role in eventual ED Succession and the need to prepare the board for this work, through a rich discussion of the challenges of succession and their implications for staff development, staff reorganization over time, ED role, policy development, market environment, planning, and other key issues.

**Objective S.II.4.4:** Create a plan for current and future staffing needs including job descriptions, market compensation and benefits, with particular attention to the current roles of the executive and associate directors, and how those roles might change in succession.

**Objective S.II.4.5:** Decide where UPC might need policy statements to clarify its mission populations, programs, or priorities, in order to provide guidance and mission stability through any future change in leadership.

#### **Core Strategy S.II.5: Technology Planning and Implementation (See I.3)**

**Key Drivers: Technology Committee**

**Objective S.II.5.1:** Create a technology plan to support all of the core strategies listed above: programming, digital community, social media, tools for professionals, and so forth.

**Objective S.II.5.2:** Actively integrate PIX into Utah Parent Center operations.