



James Bay Community Project Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026

The James Bay Community Project (the Project) is a social services non-profit providing a range of programs and services for seniors, for parents and their children, and for youth in James Bay, and other Victoria communities. In 2025, the Project will celebrate its 50th year of operation.

Vision, Mission, and Slogan

The Project’s vision, mission statement and slogan remain unchanged from those developed for the 2016-2021 strategic plan. These elements were based on a comprehensive process of consultation involving staff members, volunteers, stakeholders, and members of the broader community—a process that also informed the themes and goals for that plan.

The Project enables connections and builds resilience – at its core. This is seen as the Project’s fundamental competency and basis for funding support. This benefits communities and their members meaningfully and it is to this that the board, management, and staff dedicate themselves in their respective roles.

Vision: A community of connected resilient people

Mission: To build resilience through connections

Slogan: Building Community Together

Recent Context

Never has this enduring institution been more important than over the past three years as community members navigated the uncertainties of the Covid-19 pandemic. Within a few short weeks of the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the Project’s staff had developed plans to continue to provide services where possible on a limited basis, and to respond to other needs as they arose.

Due to the on-going need to pivot and respond to constantly changing health orders and pandemic-related needs, as well as the uncertainty of when in-person services would return to normal levels, strategic planning by the board did not move forward at its normal rate during the previous two years. This strategic plan responds to lessons learned regarding the impact on operations by

unforeseen events, ongoing operational challenges made more severe by the increasingly tight funding environment, and the shifting needs of the community.

The purpose of the Project's programs and services is to build and enable a community of connected, resilient people. About 150 volunteers assist in providing JBCP's services. Examples of programs for young families include new parent and baby groups and play groups for young children. Youth and family services include outreach, special targeted programs based on needs, mentoring and family mediation. Services for seniors include social programs to reduce isolation and enhance community connection and a broad array of support services to lower income seniors to enable them to live independently in their own homes. Services to the community range from food assistance programs to income tax preparation to a low vision and macular degeneration support group. The Project also operates a community thrift store offering quality clothing at reduced prices. The high degree of participation by the community in the Project's services attests to the need for these services.

The goals and strategies noted below identify how the Project will continue to provide needed programs and services to the community.

Strategic Goals

These goals have been developed after a review of the 2016-2021 strategic plan to identify ongoing vital work, a draft outline informed by Covid-19 experiences reviewed by the board and Project staff, a facilitated discussion at the 2022 board retreat, and input from staff. They reflect the need to address a continued tight income stream, ongoing organizational challenges and shifting needs of the community.

I. Fundraising

Although the Project received Covid relief funds to subsidize wages and two months waiver of rent for the Community Closet thrift store, the pandemic has highlighted the inadequacy of the Project's reserve funds. The heavy reliance on project-specific government and foundation grants that limit how the funds are directed, the temporary closure of the Community Closet that normally generates a regular monthly income, and reduced fundraising efforts in a time of economic uncertainty for many, created financial worries.

A paradigm shift in approach to fundraising to increase sources of revenue, cultivate high value donors, and a greater number of small donors is needed. Building this capacity in a sustainable way requires a plan for short, medium, and long-term goals.

1. Build long term fundraising capacity.

- a. Explore options for donor funding (likely a philanthropic foundation) for a full-time fundraiser for 2024-27 (salary + operating budget ~\$300k for 3 years).

- b. Subject to identifying donor interest, build the fundraising goal, business case and job description necessary to secure funding.
- 2. Drawing on incremental resources (\$1,300/month from mortgage savings, student), execute enhanced fundraising efforts in 2023.**
 - a. Develop new communications content (with an emphasis on “story telling”) to underpin fundraising efforts in 2023.
 - b. Select a new donor database management system and migrate the existing database.
 - c. Execute spring and fall fundraising campaigns using broader channels and tactics than past years.

II. Food Security

The issue of food security became more acute during the pandemic period as community members dealt with increased costs due to supply chain problems and other inflationary pressures. There are many local organizations working in this area with food available for the Project’s clients. The Project can build on its existing efforts with these goals.

Expand our food security work with additional capital and operational funds raised.

- a. Subject to increasing donations raised, more funds can be put towards food security such as grocery cards.
- b. Explore capital funds available through the Federal government and BC Gaming for kitchen renovations, which will enhance our existing food security work.
- c. Review the Project’s efforts to ensure that people can access existing food access locations, e.g., the driving program.
- d. Evaluate how food security work is currently embedded within existing programs to identify gaps rather than developing a stand-alone program.
- e. Explore incorporating food literacy work within existing programs, e.g., having an education/learning component as part of the family and senior dinners.

III. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Beyond the important value of striving for equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of the Project’s work and operations, there is a pragmatic reason to address this issue. This goal, along with Indigenous reconciliation addressed as a separate strategy, is increasingly a lens by which government and other institutional funding agencies are evaluating program funding. The Coalition of Neighbourhood Houses, of which the Project is a member, has secured a grant to investigate integrating justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into their member organizations. The report will “provide a roadmap and share strategies that our organizations can use to shift the culture so EDI is embedded into organization governance, policies, practices and workplace culture.” Short-term goals to pursue in advance of this report include:

- a. Research the community profile to understand the composition of the community served by the Project.
- b. Explore training in these areas for the board and staff.
- c. Reach out to the Songhees nation and the Friendship Centre to begin the long process of building trust.
- d. Continue deliberations on representation and diversity in board membership.

IV. Profile Raising and Communications

The Project has many remarkable stories to tell, from its beginnings in the mid 1970s as a small group of advocates looking to support an underserved community to the respected institution it is today. The story of the Project’s diverse programs, especially the innovations and vital connections with vulnerable community members during the pandemic, is persuasive evidence needed for our institutional funders, elected and other officials and, importantly, to support more robust private fundraising campaigns.

- a. Work with the Project’s communications manager to develop an “elevator speech” – a short and compelling statement about the Project’s mission and accomplishments that can be used in fundraising materials, board presentations and discussions with others in the community.
- b. Prepare regular, brief updates or stories on programming that can be shared on social media or through email lists.
- c. Practice more creative use of email and snail mail lists to target updates and look for ways to augment the lists.
- d. Regularize outreach to elected officials and other decision-makers, including meetings, and written updates
- e. Prepare a calendar of events and opportunities, e.g., pre-budget consultations, commemorative days, such as Giving Tuesday, or weeks.
- f. Identify opportunities for earned media, e.g., rescheduling the open house was tentatively planned for autumn, 2022
- g. Explore reaching out to service organizations to share our story.

V. Organisational structure and practices

Every successful organization must strive to attract, retain, and support outstanding staff, volunteers, and directors on a continuing basis. Regular evaluation of operational needs to ensure that the organizational model aligns with the Project’s strategic priorities is essential. For many years, owing to a funding deficit, the Executive Director has been burdened with routine operational duties that hasn’t permitted a focus on higher level objectives, specifically fundraising and the attendant relationship building.

- a. Develop a succession plan for the Executive Director.
- b. Explore funding for an Operational Director as the fundraising capacity expands.

- c. Catalogue, review, and set priorities improvements to the Project’s framework of policies, processes, and best practices.

VI. Rebranding

Work undertaken in 2021 to rename the Project to eliminate long-standing confusion with other James Bay organizations, and to reflect the geographic reach of the Project more accurately has been put on hold. The issue will be revisited with a longer timeline to ensure adequate resources to implement the change. This goal will be closely tied to the fundraising strategy to ensure those resources are available and to use the renaming as an earned media event and fundraising opportunity. Short-term goals will be revisited at the end of 2023.

- a. Work to clarify the messaging around the community served by the Project, i.e., the geographic coverage beyond James Bay, and how Capital City Volunteers fits in.
- b. Conduct a program audit to better understand who we serve, what we offer, who funds what, what limits are placed on what programs, etc.

Looking ahead

This strategic plan outlines well-defined goals which, in large part, serve to strengthen the operational capacity of the Project. In particular, the financial stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic, within an increasingly tight funding environment, highlighted the urgency to develop a long-term, sustainable fundraising program.

The success of the fundraising goals depends on increased coordination of the committees. Recruiting board members with diverse community connections, and taking a more systematic approach to profile raising are two important components.

To facilitate a more rigorous annual review, a performance indicator tracker, specific to the goals enumerated in each section, will be managed by the relevant committee. This organizational practice should be adopted for subsequent plans to assess progress and update goals more easily.

A longer-term challenge is the future of the building. Maintenance issues for an aging structure will only increase, and ways to leverage this asset to generate revenue must always be considered.