



KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
Year in Review 2022-2023



OVERVIEW

KidsAbility's Business Plan FY 23 was guided by the following principles:

1. We must reduce wait times for children and families, thereby improving client access.
2. We must increase the diversity of our organization in our governance, leadership, staffing and client services
3. We must ensure that staff embrace KidsAbility as their employer of choice
4. We must embed innovation and creative problem solving in all we do
5. We must strengthen our capacity to deliver on all the responsibilities we have

As the fiscal year began, several realities continued to guide our work.

The pandemic was continuing to ebb and flow, causing operations to alter with each wave. By the end of the fiscal year, it was clear that we were moving to an endemic state. Relatively speaking, the organization fared pretty well throughout, however the impact was felt on staff, children and day-to-day operations.

In June, the Province of Ontario returned a majority Conservative Government. The provincial government is sentinel for the work of KidsAbility. We continue to work closely with our partners at the Ministry of Children and Community Services (MCCSS). Government priorities impacting our sector remained largely unchanged. We continued to implement initiatives such as Smart Start Hubs, we planned for the end of core Autism funding, we implemented new Ontario Autism Programs (OAP) and adjusted to the introduction of Access OAP. We entered into the first full year of annualized funding committed in the previous fiscal year. We were successfully able to carry over surplus funds to be served children born in 2018 prior to school entry.

We continued to deal with the impact of a sector wide shortage of regulated health professionals, particularly in speech and language. As a result, we spent most of the year in a surplus financial position. Not only does that mean that kids remain unserved, but it also creates heavier workloads for our staff.

A continual surplus also has an impact on the KidsAbility Foundation. In the last few years, funding from the Ministry has resulted in an opportunity to not draw as much from the Foundation compared to historical levels. The unspent funds though are able to be re-profiled into the two significant capital projects in the new fiscal year – Kitchener relocation and Waterloo Playground.

All of the factors identified in this report have reinforced to us the need to simultaneously ensure that we are making the most efficient use of every resource entrusted to us, as well as to continue to seek new ways to approach our greatest challenges.

INNOVATION

As indicated above, approaching challenges with new thinking is a key to managing the demand for services. Making the absolute best use of resources is critical in order for us to see more children faster. The establishment of the Innovation Hub has opened up new possibilities. This work was also linked to quality and accreditation in the new structure.

An internal “Bright Ideas” campaign unlocked 45 previously unexplored ideas. From there, identified staff were trained in innovation management. Three ideas (Mission Possible, Group assessments in speech and wait list experience) were piloted and have now been introduced into practice. External partnerships have opened projects such as redressing barriers to tele-rehab treatment, the development of an in-home robot for augmentative communication and an app to improve data tracking and curriculum management in autism.

Several new research partnerships are opening exciting avenues for innovation.

- Partnership between KidsAbility, Grandview CTC, University of Waterloo, and University of Toronto to use Operations Research (OR) to develop and validate service model changes that would increase efficient use of available resources
- New partnership with Biomedical Engineering at the University of Waterloo to investigate and develop AI to serve a documentation aid for clinicians
- New partnership with legal experts from Computer Science at the University of Waterloo to investigate legal and policy considerations for use of AI as a research aid in Pediatric Rehabilitation
- New partnership with the University of Guelph’s Centre for Advancing Responsible and Ethical Artificial Intelligence to investigate the ethics of using AI as a documentation aid in pediatric rehab

The budget for FY23 included the addition of a Business Development Manager to our ranks. This role is key in supporting our market-based autism service as well as looking for new ways to diversify our revenue.

DIVERSITY

Recognizing that we are on a journey of learning and change, KidsAbility placed an emphasis on diversity. Resources allowed for the hiring of an EDIA Co-Ordinator. A newly established culture committee brought attention and energy to our work. On September 30th all staff gathered to recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day by joining together in learning and reflection. We have reviewed many policies and resources with an equity lens. The introduction of VOYCE technology is allowing for immediate translation for any family who prefers to receive information in a language other than English. A staff survey provided us with important information about the makeup of our team members. We have intentionally increased our learning and understanding of the needs and desires of diverse communities within KidsAbility. Results from the Workwell Survey indicate that efforts in this area are important and deeply appreciated by our staff members. As our learning continues, we expect to see impact in client experience.

EXPERIENCE

Our goal is to ensure that all who journey with KidsAbility have a positive experience. Over the course of the past year, we have had an increased focus on staff wellness and retention. We have introduced practices to demonstrate to staff their value. This has included a new EAP program based on staff input, monthly wellness hours and the introduction of an Employee Wellness Network. The introduction of the two-week summer closure has been very well received. Investment in our team and their careers has resulted in a very successful Future Leaders program. We are intentionally connecting with managers and supervisors to have their perspectives and to have a pipeline to the talents and challenges of their teams.

The YMCA Workwell Survey was conducted in January. While our overall score dropped from 74 to 71, it is still in the “Adequate” range. In the next survey we will aspire to achieve “Healthy”. Of note in the survey was the high return rate – 90% of our staff had something to tell us! We also note that over 50% of KidsAbility staff have been with the organization for less than 3 years. This is important. It tells us that attention to culture really matters. Half of our staff wonder about “returning” to the pre pandemic days and the other half have no basis for comparison. The richness of the survey comes from the open-ended comments. The results

have been closely reviewed and action steps have been assigned to teams. Having taken a similar approach to the 2022 survey netted us improvements in targeted areas. New employee branding “Our Purpose, Our Community” launched with great excitement.

With the support of the Client Experience Committee of the Board we are seeking to increase our understanding of experience – in contrast to satisfaction. We did not conduct our usual Client Satisfaction Survey this year as we explored this question.

As the year progressed, more in person services returned to the sites. While averages fluctuated based on prevalence of illness, by the end of the year approximately 75% of visits were face to face. It is clear that hybrid services will continue to be provided based on family preferences.

KidsAbility delivers great services for children, youth and families – once they are in service. Wait times continue to grow and this is a pressure point for families and clinicians alike. We are working to increase our understanding of this and how we might develop solutions. One of the Bright Ideas initiatives focused on the experience of waiting. This is informing a priority focus in the new fiscal year.

In March 2022 MCCSS funded KidsAbility to introduce two new early intervention programs in Autism – Caregiver Mediated Early Years and Entry to School. The latter program ran for the first six months of the fiscal year. Parent survey results were extremely high. As the Ontario Autism Program continues to evolve, we are advocating for the stabilization of these early intervention programs.

ACCESS

KidsAbility exists so that children and families can access services when they need them. During the past year, we served a record 17,171 unique children. In total our clinical team delivered 90,735 visits.

To make the best use of resources, management continually sought to refine roles to ensure that employees were able to focus on high impact work within their role. We introduced new support functions to free up clinical time. The Resource Centres at each site

are now staffed with Clinical Assistants. In Autism two Goal Planning Specialists (GPS) roles support families. The introduction of a Business Development role provided new perspectives. These initiatives are being continued in the new fiscal year as we build on the early successes.

The School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS) team have partnered with CanChild (McMaster) and District School Boards to deliver the Partnering for Change (P4C) model. This universal approach to service is having a tremendous impact. We are on track to eliminate the wait list for OT within the next fiscal year.

Similar creativity was employed by taking advantage of some clinical capacity and introducing a short term “Learn, Play, Grow” program for children awaiting access to other programs. With this approach approximately 75 children were able to come off the wait list.

However, the wait list continues to be unacceptably long. While the overall numbers did not dramatically change, the length of time waiting has increased across all services. This makes the innovative approach to service delivery even more essential. We expect the shortage of talented clinicians to continue – thereby requiring us to make the absolute best of the resources we have available to meet the needs of our clientele.

KidsAbility was proud to partner with Public Health to support the Sensory Friendly Vaccine clinics. Together we helped ~ 1,000 kids. The Children’s Healthcare Canada invited KidsAbility to present our vaccine experience and model to its members.

STRENGTH

The pandemic taught us many lessons. We learned the importance of a strong and healthy organizational infrastructure. KidsAbility was able to weather so much of the uncertainty because our roots were well grounded.

Over the course of the year, we enhanced our cyber security system, implemented a three-year IT plan (in half the time) and built many new processes. While work must continue in this area (eg HRIS and ERP) we are aware of our needs. The decision to move away from Goldcare in favour of Alayacare was made after a comprehensive procurement process. The massive change initiative was launched in FY23 and is on track for implementation in FY2024.

Great services are possible in the right physical environment. The decision was made to seek a new location for Kitchener services. Our current location is too small, and a more integrated delivery model was envisioned. It is expected that our new site will be ready for occupancy by the fall of 2023. It has so much potential for our services and partnerships.

The difficult decision was made to close the pool in the Waterloo site. Given the emotional nature of the decision, a great deal of planning was undertaken to gather information, consult with stakeholders and communicate the ultimate decision. We look forward to seeing what that space will do for kids in the future.

The introduction of a senior strategy role has provided a great opportunity to modernize our approach to business planning and to develop a more coordinated approach to project management.

And to top it all off....we got to celebrate our birthday. KidsAbility turned 65 in 2022 and by year end we opened our doors and invited our friends back!

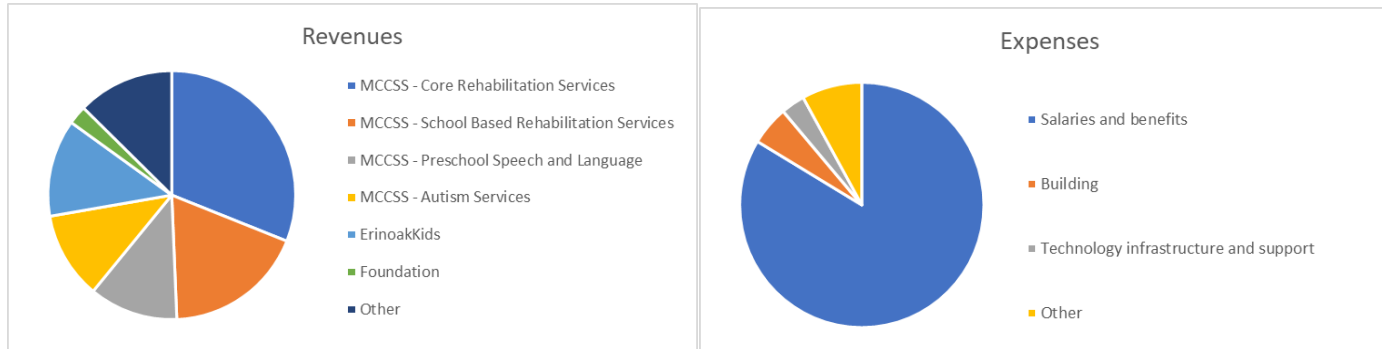
DISCUSSION OF RISKS IMPACTING PERFORMANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Access to Service: Our waitlist has never been higher and is a cause for concern within our Organization and leadership. Initiatives proposed within the organization all have a lens focusing towards improving efficiency with the aim to see more children and reduce our wait times. Addressing challenges in our client appointment scheduling, piloting group assessment sessions, improving clinical efficiencies are all projects undertaken in the year to do everything we can.

Change Management: Growth and large complex projects continue to challenge the organization. Investment into project management to facilitate the change and minimize its impact on staff was made as well as implementing a new employee intranet to communicate with staff.

Recruitment: The province continues to experience a severe labour shortage of clinicians in the pediatric care area. To address this challenge, the team continues to investigate alternative approaches to finding and maintaining talent.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



Expenses	Actual	Budget	Variance	
Salaries and benefits	24,355,608	26,365,131	(2,009,523)	-8%
Building	1,508,628	1,266,045	242,583	19%
Technology infrastructure and support	921,058	686,922	234,136	34%
Other	2,326,788	1,950,304	376,484	19%
	<u>29,112,082</u>	<u>30,268,402</u>	<u>(1,156,320)</u>	

Salaries and benefits were once again this year below budget due to delays in hiring qualified staff.

Security and signage increase costs in Building.

Technology infrastructure increased due to new client records system implementation.

Other costs increase from budget included greater than budgeted therapy supplies purchased, recruitment fees, branding costs and process reviews.

CONCLUSION

We are deeply indebted to our staff team who have demonstrated such amazing resiliency, to our board for the ongoing support, to the Foundation for the commitment that their success allows our success and most importantly to the families who trust us to help them realize their potential.