

# CONNECTING



## **Strategic Plan**

### **2021-2024**

**October 2021**

**Prepared by**

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Connecting Horizon's strategic plan was developed in collaboration with the Connecting Horizons team, committees, volunteers, representatives from local organizations, and dedicated community members.

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# Introduction

Connecting Horizons, a community-based organization committed to the promotion of inclusion, awareness, advocacy, and quality of life for all Kahnawà:kehró:non with special needs, embarked on a strategic planning process. As a grassroots organization, originally created by a group of concerned parents and community members, it relies on sporadic project funding to achieve objectives it sets for itself. One such objective is reflecting on its future by completing a strategic planning process.

This report provides a background of the organization, and outlines the methodology used to complete the strategic planning process, presents a summary of the data collected as well as the strategic orientations for the next three years.

## Background

The Connecting Horizons group is comprised of individuals with special needs, parents, and caregivers of individuals with special needs as well as representatives from the following community organizations:

- Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK),
- Step by Step Child & Family Center (SBS),
- Kahnawà:ke Fire Brigade (KFB),
- Kahnawà:ke Shakotiiia'takehnhas Community Services (KSCS),
- Tawatohnnhi'saktha,
- First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ), and
- Kahnawà:ke Education Center (KEC).

Connecting Horizons has one employee, an Advocacy Coordinator. The organization focuses on advocacy and support in the areas of occupation, future planning, family life and community integration and does so through collaboration, networking, information exchange and partnership. The work is overseen by a voluntary Steering Committee and is supported by MCK and the Executive Directors' Committee (EDC).

In 2014, a community needs assessment<sup>1</sup> concluded that individuals experienced a range of disability types and required a range of services. The individuals interviewed during the needs assessment highlighted several services available to them in the community but noted certain limitations regarding the types of programs available, their quality as well as limitations regarding workers' skills and knowledge. Some participants appreciated being heard, while others were concerned very little has improved with regards to services and awareness over the past few decades.

Since 2017, Connecting Horizons has worked on improving accessibility in and around Kahnawà:ke . Their objective is to improve access to buildings while raising awareness of the need to ensure the entire community is accessible to all its members. Connecting Horizons' members include those living with disabilities, their families and volunteers who work with the organization or a part of a working group. One working group visited several buildings and provided recommendations on improving accessibility. The group wishes to continue its collaboration with different organizations within the community to reflect on accessibility in the winter, increasing signage in braille, and increasing washroom accessibility. The hope is for future buildings to be designed with principles of universal access before they are built.

In 2019, Connecting Horizons reflected on its own mandate and structure. This work led to a project, funded by the Community Initiatives Fund of Kahnawà:ke, which enabled the organization to hire an advocacy coordinator in 2020, purchase a para-transport bus and reflect on the strategic planning process.

A 2021 call for proposals led to an agreement with Phil, the not for profit communication specialists, for the completion of a three-year strategic plan accompanied by an implementation plan for each year of the plan.

The methodology utilized for the strategic planning process is outlined in the next section.

## **Methodology**

Data collection for the strategic plan occurred in three phases between July 28, 2021 and September 27, 2021. In the first phase, the project consultant met with Connecting Horizons' Steering Committee to complete a visioning exercise. Several community organizations and

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<sup>1</sup> Nutton, J. and Milne, L. (2014). Support Individuals with Special Needs and Their Families: A Community Needs Assessment. McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families, for Connecting Horizons.

members were invited to a strategic planning event in the second phase. In the final phase, a survey was sent to stakeholders in the community.

Six Steering Committee members contributed to the visioning exercise, which was conducted virtually, due to Covid restrictions. Participants were asked to reflect on the vision and the mission of the organization and imagine what these would look like in Kahnawà:ke in seven generations.

In the second phase of the project, 17 participants attended an in-person strategic planning event, which was held at the Legion in Kahnawà:ke. Social distancing and Covid restrictions were respected and approved by Kahnawà:ke's Public Safety Commission. Participants were placed into four groups for each of the activities planned throughout the day. The objectives for the day were to:

- Validate the proposed mission and vision,
- Complete an analysis of Connecting Horizons' current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis),
- Reflect on the Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal, and Economic environment (PESTLE analysis), and
- Consider the actions required to help Connecting Horizons navigate the future, considering the analyses.

The information gathered during the strategic planning event was coded, summarized, and sent to stakeholders for validation through an online survey platform (SurveyMonkey) for the third and final stage of data collection. The survey was also sent to other stakeholders in the community. The online questionnaire was comprised of 24 questions. They were broken down into:

- 11 multiple choice questions,
- One "select all that apply",
- Four questions on a Likert<sup>2</sup> scale, each question presented between 12 and 14 statements for respondents to identify to what extent they agreed or disagreed,
- Seven open-ended questions, and
- One question where participants were asked to rank statements in order of priority.

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<sup>2</sup> Likert scale is a 5- or 7-point scale used to measure level of satisfaction or agreement.

Each question, except the four using a Likert scale, provided respondents with the opportunity to leave a comment. A total of 21 people responded to the survey. Though 60% of respondents completed the entire survey, all answers provided were used in the analysis.

All data collected throughout these three phases were coded and analysed to determine the strategic orientations. A summary of the themes, which emerged for the analysis, is presented in the following section. The strategic orientations presented in the subsequent section were validated with the Steering Committee.

## Summary Data from Strategic Planning Process

### Vision

The 2019 reflection on Connecting Horizons' structure enabled the Steering Committee to reflect on its vision and mission. The vision, as agreed upon by the Steering Committee and confirmed by all those who participated in the strategic planning event as well as 85% of survey respondents, is:

*Ensuring the inclusion of all Kahnawa'kehró:non living with disabilities.*

One of the participants at the strategic planning event proposed having one simple vision statement, supported by a paragraph to explain the nuances and include different words and ideas.

Of those who did not agree with the vision, two were unsure. One respondent mentioned a need to go beyond inclusion and address protection and security, while another felt there should be no separation between an individual, the family and the community when as it pertains to the effects of disability.

### Visioning

When asked what the future looks like when this vision is achieved, participants mentioned several themes. The one with the most mentions is accessibility.

Participants envisioned a future Kahnawà:ke where every single building, park and structure is accessible to everyone. Every person is going to school, working, or volunteering because they

all have the same opportunities and there are no barriers, and there is no fear. There is housing for those who are able to live autonomously, and housing with support for those who are not.

In the future Kahnawà:ke, everyone is included and supported. There is a complete shift in how people living with disabilities are perceived and attitudes towards them. Those living with disabilities are empowered and participate in all decisions affecting them. They are also members of a committee that provides recommendations for accessibility before buildings are built and before programs are created. Everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and has access to programs, both in terms of transportation to get to programs and a variety of programs, if they need them. There is no more talk of inclusion or disability anymore as it is a natural part of Kahnawà:ke and all Kahnawa'kehró:non lives. Everyone's gifts are appreciated, and everyone cares and looks after one another.

## **Mission**

While reflecting on its own structure in 2019, Connecting Horizons had the opportunity to develop a mission. Together, the Steering Committee reviewed and adapted the mission to ensure that, if acted upon, it would ensure the vision would be achieved. As such, the mission developed, and agreed upon by 100% of participants, is:

Through advocacy, awareness, coaching, and partnership building, Connecting Horizons shares their knowledge, lived experiences, and gifts to recommend and implement actions to empower, support and improve the lives of Kahnawa'kehró:non living with disabilities.

One respondent noted the importance of increasing employment opportunities for young people living with learning, cognitive or medical disabilities.

Once the vision and mission were confirmed and validated, participants engaged in a SWOT and PESTLE analysis to identify levers for future action while considering potential obstacles. The summary of each element analyzed is presented below. In addition to the PESTLE analysis completed by the group, a brief overview of the environment is presented following research conducted by the strategic planning consultant.

## **SWOT and PESTLE Analysis**

The summary of the data presented in this section emanates from the in-person consultation. The online survey enabled a validation of the information gathered as well as its prioritization.

Additional comments from the online survey were coded along with the responses compiled during the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and PESTLE (political, environmental, social, technological, legal, and economic environments) analysis.

### Strengths

Connecting Horizon's main strength is its grassroots approach, which includes the people it serves. Connecting Horizons is composed of passionate, caring people who are committed to the cause and have persevered. The one employee and core committee members promote inclusion for all, are dedicated and knowledgeable. In addition to being inclusive, it promotes inclusion for all as well as awareness about disabilities. It is also a credible organization that has succeeded in meeting some needs over the years. The bus is an excellent example of how it managed to meet the transportation needs of those living with disabilities.

### Weaknesses

The items identified as areas of weakness must be considered in a strategic planning process as, when not addressed, they may prevent the organization from achieving the objectives it sets for itself. The main one identified by participants and respondents is funding. Connecting Horizons does not have recurring funding but relies on sporadic project funding to accomplish its mission. There are also concerns around a lack of communication with other services, which may limit sharing of inclusive practices and perhaps limits access to a fully developed continuum of services. Respondents also identified the lack of political clout and influence as limitations. Other areas identified include the lack of a clear structure and roles within the organization, the risk of getting too involved in the work and taking the focus away from the needs of families as well as the lack of participation at meetings or events, partially due to the lack of respite care. In addition, it is difficult for Connecting Horizons to retain committed volunteers.

It was suggested that Connecting Horizons should not offer services, but rather focus on advocacy work and guide people towards existing services. Part of this work includes advocating for more services to be offered within the community, in collaboration with others such as KMHC (Kateri Memorial Hospital) and KSCS. Connecting Horizons' actions should focus more on inclusion and less of offering direct services. This work will require more volunteers and more employees; in both cases, more individuals living with disabilities would be included.

### Opportunities

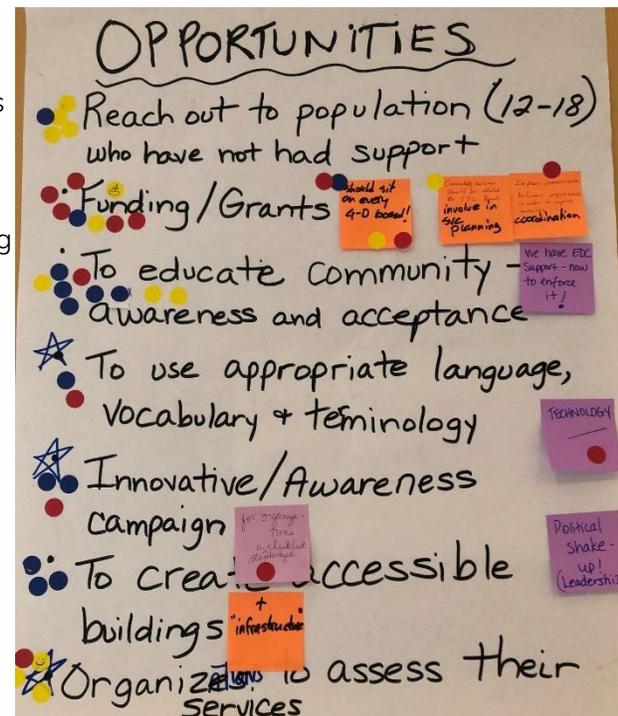
There are several opportunities, which will enable Connecting Horizons to move forward in a positive way. These include the general awareness, support, and acceptance within the

community, both with regards to people with disabilities as well as to learning more about disabilities and about inclusion in general. In fact, 80% of survey respondents would attend information sessions about living with disabilities in Kahnawà:ke .

Other opportunities identified include the availability of grants and funding, reaching out to youth who need support, having a coordinator who can support ongoing communication between organizations and the support of the EDC. Expanding online presence using social media is another opportunity to be innovative and increase awareness and support.

There are opportunities to collaborate with others in the community. Several examples of collaboration emerged. Connecting Horizons may collaborate with community services to:

- increase visibility,
- gather statistical information about those with disabilities in Kahnawà:ke,
- take advantage of new technologies to allow people living with disabilities to work from home,
- increase accessibility of buildings within the community,
- seek the support of newly elected officials,
- participate on the boards of directors of other community organizations, and
- develop concrete action plans.



## Threats

Participants and respondents identified several potential threats, which may prevent Connecting Horizons from achieving its objectives. The one which garnered the most support is the loss of funding, which would prevent further progress. One significant threat is apathy, or even resistance from the community, as people are unaware of the realities faced by those living with disabilities. Other threats include losing sight of families' priorities, not having the support from leadership, who may not always prioritize the cause, and competing for volunteers, or a lack of

volunteering in general. The lack of volunteering threatens the committee work underway at Connecting Horizons. Finally, there are threats related to excluding individuals living with disabilities from consultations; the people living with disabilities know about their own needs and must continue to be included in the conversation. This final threat is two-pronged in that some community members may feel unheard by Connecting Horizons. There were concerns voiced about the fluctuating levels of participation and engagement from members who come and go, which is an area to be further explored.

There are threats that pertain to specific issues faced by those living with disabilities, should the work being done by Connecting Horizons not be completed. For example, if accessibility does not increase or if appropriate living spaces are not provided, then people see a decrease in their quality of life. Similarly, if services are not available, then people may not obtain the medical care they require. If funding is no longer available for the bus, then transportation is limited. In addition, the community has seen an increase in diagnoses as accessibility to Jordan's Principal increases; this may have an impact on families and individuals, who may require more support and more services. One participant mentioned the potential threat of aligning Connecting Horizons too closely to funders, governments, and other organizations.



Threats and opportunities are better understood when examined as part of the political, environmental, social, technological, legal, and economic environment from which they emerge. As such, a PESTLE analysis enabled participants to reflect on the current environment. The findings from the analysis of participant responses are combined with the consultant's research and summarized in the next section.

## The Current Environment

### In Canada

Within the last five years<sup>3</sup>, federal legislation has been introduced to increase accessibility for, and the inclusion of, people with living with disabilities. Investments for projects to improve access and inclusion were announced as well.<sup>4</sup> Connecting Horizons' participants expressed concern over potential changes after the federal elections, which may have threatened potential funding opportunities. Given the results of the federal election, which resulted in no change in government, the social, political, economic, and legal environments appear to be favourable for continued political support. This also favours continued funding programs for organizations advocating on behalf of, and working with, people living with disabilities. Additionally, the physical environment, which would benefit from increased accessibility across Canada, as well as in Kahnawà:ke , will benefit from grants aimed at creating a barrier-free environment for all.

The effects of the pandemic, though not yet quantified, highlight the possibilities of remote work for all workers, and more specifically for workers living with disabilities. This opportunity may prove to be beneficial for collaborations between Connecting Horizons and employment organizations. The technological advances emerging from remote work are similar to those used to accommodate people with certain limitations. Their widespread use may present an opportunity to level the playing field for people with disabilities and Connecting Horizons may be able to play a prominent role in advocating for these changes.

With a move towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace and in the community, the social environment is changing quickly. There is an openness to learning, accommodating, and including all people, including those with physical disabilities as well as those with hidden disabilities. Though some would argue these initiatives fail to include people living with disabilities<sup>5</sup>. Arguably, this presents an opportunity for advocacy organizations to work towards ensuring all DEI initiatives include those living with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> [Making an accessible Canada for people with disabilities - Canada.ca](#) and [Government of Canada introduces legislation to create the new Canada Disability Benefit \(newswire.ca\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Government of Canada announces major funding for projects that promote the social inclusion of persons with disabilities - Canada.ca](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Op-Ed: Diversity, equity efforts often overlook those with disabilities \(cnbc.com\)](#)

## **In Kahnawà:ke**

Kahnawà:ke's Connecting Horizons is leading the way for the inclusion of peoples living with disabilities. Other First Nations communities are watching closely to see how changes are implemented in Kahnawà:ke. Connecting Horizons has also been involved in research projects and the creation of tools for employers who wish to integrate First Nations people living with disabilities<sup>6</sup>.

The participants recognize the political environment and the possibilities it presents. Connecting with the newly elected Chief and Council in Kahnawà:ke and seeking their support may be the opportunity to engage the political clout they feel is needed. The recognition of the EDC may enable them to continue soliciting the involvement of organizations they currently work with, while creating opportunities to involve other organizations. They will have a role to play in increasing the commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

As Kahnawà:ke prepares to make fiber optic, high speed internet available in the community by the fall of 2022, Connecting Horizons has the opportunity to begin reflecting on how this technology can benefit its members living with disabilities. It may use this tool to advocate for increased access to jobs, learning and any other needs expressed by its members, following consultation. Collaboration with service organizations within the community now may enable viable projects to emerge when the new technology is installed. This may lead to economic opportunities for Kahnawa'kehró:non living with disabilities as they access employment using the technology available to them. The collaboration may enable employers to have more tools to accommodate employees with special needs.

In general, the social and cultural environment in Kahnawà:ke is favourable to increased inclusion and understanding of people living with disabilities. There is no word for handicapped or disabled in Kanien'ké:ha. Any difference is seen as a gift. This creates an opportunity to change people's hearts and minds and involve them in social initiatives for change. The youth are vocal about inclusion and there is an opportunity to capitalize on the momentum they have initiated while increasing awareness and addressing perceived apathy among other groups.

Connecting Horizons identified several legal opportunities as Kahnawà:ke continues to work to implement its own laws, and its own justice system through the adoption of the Kahnawà:ke Justice Act. As Connecting Horizons works to identify accessibility deficiencies within buildings, they have the opportunity to advocate for laws to ensure new buildings respect a universal design approach to accessibility.

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<sup>6</sup> [Community Collaborators - Nisidotam](#)

Specific environmental issues may present threats for future projects. For example, should Connecting Horizons wish to encourage the creation of respite spaces or housing units for those living with disabilities, they must consider the shortage of land for new buildings in Kahnawà:ke. Land which is conveniently located is scarce.

Finally, society's increased environmental consciousness presents challenges for those living with disabilities. For example, disposable straw usage is discouraged, however, they are tools that are extremely effective to support some users with disabilities. This poses a threat, while presenting an opportunity to creatively seek new partnerships and opportunities to innovate to find environmentally friendly solutions to support individuals.

Before proposing strategic actions that consider the SWOT and PESTLE analyses, the following section provides a summary of the information gathered through the survey completed by stakeholders. The stakeholders were members of the community of Kahnawà:ke with different levels of involvement with and knowledge of Connecting Horizons. The analysis of the data enables the identification of priority strategic actions to be implemented in the next three years, which is presented in the section following the survey results.

## **Survey Results**

The survey provided clarity on questions related to Connecting Horizons, its mission, and its future. There is strong agreement on the importance of an organization like Connecting Horizons because every family in the community is affected by disability in one way or another. However, it seems that not everyone knows about the organization as indicated by 17% of respondents to the online survey, as seen in Figure 1 below.

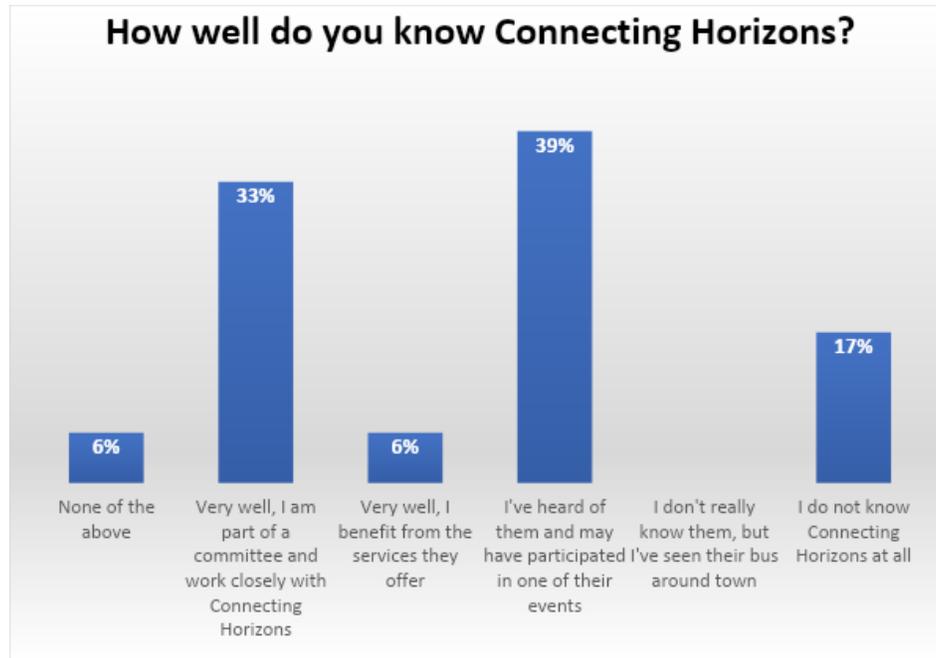


Figure 1: Percentage of People Who Know about Connecting Horizons

In addition:

- 25% of respondents were unaware of the role Connecting Horizons' plays with regards to inclusion, as a model for other First Nations communities.
- 95% of respondents knew about the para-transportation bus recently purchased for the community.
- 55% of respondents identified all the types of disabilities.
- 100% believe Connecting Horizons should encourage the establishment of laws and regulations to make new buildings more accessible and inclusive.
- 92% of respondents think the organization should access regular, ongoing funding.
- 100% think Connecting Horizons would benefit from implementing an awareness campaign to be more visible in the community.
- 80% would attend webinars about living with a disability in Kahnawà:ke.
- 92% think it is important to include Kanien'ké:ha language and culture in the work being done by Connecting Horizons.

- 42% of respondents agreed upon the two most important priorities for Connecting Horizons:
  - Promoting Connecting Horizons in the community.
  - Ensuring a continuum of services across organizations for all people living with disabilities in Kahnawà:ke.

When asked, “What does an inclusive Kahnawà:ke mean to you?”, survey respondents said, “That people with disabilities and their families have access to a safe and secure future, a good quality of life which includes having a valued role in the community, a real home, a job, friends and opportunities to be supported to maximize their participation in all of the above.”

“Everyone is heard, validated and supported in their daily lives.”

“All people should have the same opportunities; whether or not you have a disability.”

“The ability for a person with disabilities to go about their day with the ease of someone without disabilities.”

“Removal of physical and invisible barriers in order to make Kahnawà:ke accessible to all.”

“Awareness about the learning disabled and remove the stigma of making fun of these children/people. Employment opportunities. More work with FNRAEC [First Nations Regional Adult Education Center].”

“It means a community where everyone belongs and where everyone has access to services and supports which will help them to achieve their potential.”

“For all no matter what.”

## **Actions for the Future**

When asked about the steps that need to be taken in the next few years to achieve the mission, some participants provided concrete examples, while others provided overarching suggestions for strategic action.

Concrete examples include teaching sign language as part of the local schools' curriculum, providing training on "inclusion", and offering support for creating life plans. Some strategic suggestions include increasing community engagement and collaboration by encouraging the participation of a larger number of community members in these discussions, while convincing them to implement measures to increase inclusion and accessibility. The themes emerging from participant responses are summarized in this section.

When coded, the following five main themes emerge, and are presented below from most mentioned to least mentioned:

1. Increasing engagement, commitment and collaborations within the community and other organizations.
2. Finding innovative ways of increasing funds for Connecting Horizons.
3. Increasing awareness and providing education about disabilities, Connecting Horizons, and inclusion.
4. Finding ways of meeting people's needs and improving on the continuum of services offered within the community.
5. Increasing employment and educational opportunities for people living with disabilities.

The remaining themes were mentioned three or less times each:

- The structure of Connecting Horizons, including office space, and more regular meetings.
- Incorporating language and culture.
- Implementing policies and laws on accessibility.
- Working with families with needs and supporting them on their own path to inclusion.

Connecting Horizons' strengths must be utilized to benefit from the opportunities available in the current environment to implement the proposed action and enable the achievement of its vision and mission. The areas of weakness and potential threats must be given special consideration and their risk assessed to ensure they do not impact the strategic direction of the organization.

The strategic orientations resulting from the analysis of the data gathered throughout the process, and which will enable Connecting Horizons to achieve its vision for a more inclusive Kahnawà:ke, are presented in the following section.

# Strategic Orientations

## ENGAGE

Through consultations, Connecting Horizons continues to build grassroots initiatives to understand the needs of families and individuals living with disabilities, and increases awareness to engage leadership, community members and other organizations to support its mission to help meet those needs.

## COLLABORATE

Building on existing collaborations with MCK and the EDC, Connecting Horizons participates on boards of other organizations, develops partnerships, and shares the needs to increase funds for its operations and services for people within the community

## PROMOTE

Using existing media within the community as well as social media, Connecting Horizons promotes itself and the people it works with to increase understanding of people living with disabilities and their inclusion in all



# Strategic Plan and Three-Year Implementation Plan

	ENGAGE	COLLABORATE	PROMOTE
OBJECTIVES	To engage the community in reflecting on disabilities, needs, accessibility and inclusion. To engage Connecting Horizons' members and solidify CH's structure and clarify the roles of its members.	To increase collaboration within the community leading to increased services and funding.	To increase awareness around CH, specifically, and inclusion, in general.
ACTIONS			
YEAR 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conduct an updated needs assessment to identify the gaps in services in Kahnawà:ke through a community-wide consultation with all families and individuals living with disabilities</li> <li>● Organize regular meetings to reflect on inclusion and Connecting Horizons' projects with leadership, persons living with disabilities, and volunteers to maintain engagement</li> <li>● Engage with funders (new and existing) in reflecting on how their projects can support CH's mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Request to have a permanent seat at the EDC table enabling collaboration with all other orgs in Kahnawà:ke</li> <li>● Share the findings from the needs assessment with organizations in the community</li> <li>● Seek a renewed commitment from leadership and the EDC</li> <li>● Create partnerships with other organizations to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply for funding to support CH's mission, hire more staff, and implement projects</li> <li>● Implement recommendations from building accessibility assessments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine if new funding permits the hiring of a communications officer or outsource to a part time resource</li> <li>● Create and implement a communications plan</li> <li>● Share findings from the needs assessment with the community at large</li> </ul>
YEAR 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engage members and volunteers in reviewing the structure established in 2019</li> <li>● Engage members and volunteers in defining roles and responsibilities of each while considering the roles that need to be filled</li> <li>● Engage new volunteers to contribute to Connecting Horizons' (CH) mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to create partnerships with other organizations to develop               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Projects to increase inclusive educational opportunities</li> <li>● Projects to increase inclusive employment opportunities</li> <li>● Respite care within the community</li> <li>● Reflect on the housing needs are start developing long-term, concrete projects to meet needs</li> <li>● Develop a continuum of services for individuals</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conduct consultations to establish common definitions and solicit testimonies</li> <li>● Create informative videos in collaboration with families and individuals living with disabilities</li> <li>● Develop informative webinars or web-series on inclusion in Kanien'ké:ha and from a cultural perspective</li> </ul>
YEAR 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide training to volunteers to support the needs of individuals in the community</li> <li>● Create a "Care-squad" to offer direct services to individuals with special needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify new building projects and recommend a universal design to ensure accessibility</li> <li>● Continue to use voluntary committees to develop partnerships and implement projects, while reflecting on whether CH's structure remains the most appropriate way to achieve the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase advocacy for the establishment of new laws to ensure inclusion throughout Kahnawà:ke</li> <li>● Evaluate the actions completed throughout the strategic plan and begin a new strategic planning process</li> </ul>

## Final Thoughts

Connecting Horizons is a grassroots organizations created by individuals and their families living with disabilities for people living with disabilities in Kahnawà:ke. The organization sought to update its vision, mission, and strategic orientation to better serve people living with disabilities. It engaged the services of a consultant and invited stakeholders to participate in this collective reflection to help move the organization forward.

A review of the organization's mission and vision garnered support from participants. An analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and the environment in which it operates was reviewed based on the possible opportunities and threats that present themselves. Consultations were conducted both online and in person.

The result is a plan intended to outline how Connecting Horizons may support the people it serves over the next three years. Through engagement, collaboration and promotion, Connecting Horizons will better understand the needs, develop partnerships to meet those needs and increase its own capacity to promote inclusion throughout Kahnawà:ke.

One final thought emerged following the completion of the plan: the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Connecting Horizons members. One member of the Steering Committee stated,

*"The Covid pandemic has greatly affected the group members to meet in person due to the nature of their vulnerability. Not all have access to a computer or zoom and I'm sure their priority was self-care.*

*The pandemic created greater stress on our support resources such as the health and social services workers and consequently they were not as available as before. Everyone was pre-occupied with Covid.*

*Therefore, participation in Connecting Horizons' meetings and visibility were diminished.*

*I think the pandemic's effect on Connecting Horizon should be noted. It is interesting [none of us thought to mention it]."*

The level of engagement of Connecting Horizons' committee members, volunteers as well as community members in general, in addition to the accessibility of funding, will determine the level of success in attaining objectives set in the strategic plan.