

“Fee for Service” funding model for Independent Unencumbered Facilitation and Person-Directed Planning Organizations: An analysis based on two years of experience within Families for a Secure Future

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Introduction:

Families for a Secure Future is an independent unencumbered facilitation and person-directed planning organization. We are dedicated to serving adults who have a developmental disability and assisting them to take up their full citizenship in the community. We focus on ensuring individuals are supported to be involved in the key decision-making in their lives.

We are a family governed, provincial, not for profit charitable organization that is based on building networks of support for both individuals and their families. These networks help the individual and their family to take the next step towards community engagement and to secure plans for the future. Our focus is on providing independent facilitation and planning to individuals within the context of their family and friends and to act as a resource to family members in local Family Groups. There are currently seven Family Groups in three regions of the province, Durham, Peel and Guelph-Wellington. We support over 47 individuals across the province.

We are committed to building leadership and capacity among individuals and their families. Family Groups are usually comprised of parents and siblings however we define family broadly as those that love and care for the individual, those that are prepared to stand by the individual and show evidence of a personal, committed relationship over time. Family Groups are based on the notion of providing mutual support to one another. Families come together on a monthly basis to learn and to support one another to take the next step toward imagining and creating a better future. A key characteristic of these Family Groups is a shared intention of committing themselves to be there for each other as they age and as they support their sons and daughters to create meaningful plans for their future.

Families for a Secure Future is based on the fundamental principle that individuals and their families can define and prioritize their own needs. It is believed that individuals can make choices and direct their lives with support. To this end, Families for a Secure Future is governed by families and individuals themselves.

Families for a Secure Future helps individuals and families to manage the extra challenges they face on a day to day basis as well as figuring out what needs to be in place over the long run when parents are no longer there to provide hands on support and help with supported decision-making.

Change in Funding Model:

For the first eight years of our existence Families for a Secure Future was able to sustain ourselves entirely through grants and private fundraising. In 2008, we experienced an unexpected loss of core funding. This funding represented well over 60% of our entire budget. It had been committed to us over a twenty five year period and was promised to double within the next year. That event coupled with a steep decline in fundraising within the non-profit sector in Ontario, forced us to begin looking elsewhere for stable funding and focussed us on diversifying our revenue sources.

One of our core principles from the beginning was to ensure that all those who became members of FSF would have access to facilitation at no cost. We knew after this crisis occurred that we would have to reconsider this principle if we were to survive. We accelerated our fundraising efforts and were able to make some powerful connections and enrol some fabulous Fundraising champions. The fundraising we undertook at that time was fruitful but did not amount to sustainable funding. As an organization we felt that we could not just “wait and see” if the Ministry would be providing base funding to organizations like ourselves. Even though it seemed probable given that the new legislation guaranteed access to independent person-directed planning supports, we decided we would have to find other sources of funding in the interim. In 2012, it still remains unclear as to whether the Ministry intends to fund IUFP directly by allocating a certain part of the direct funding allocation to person-directed planning supports or whether it intends to provide base funding to independent unencumbered facilitation and planning organizations so that they are able to offer these supports. It is also not clear whether both options are being considered at this time.

Due to this lack of stable funding two years ago, Families for a Secure Future proposed several funding models to its' membership. After significant discussion, the membership decided on a mixed funding model that had at its base “fee for service”. The organization would continue with its corporate and philanthropic fundraising to maintain some of the core functions; however the ongoing facilitation support would have to be covered by asking members to pay a “fee for service.”

A Fee for Service Model requires charging a higher hourly rate because there are so many aspects of the work that cannot be billed directly to the family.

The Families for a Secure Future fee for service model was based on an hourly rate that included both “billable and non-billable” hours. This is partly because our model provides much more than the direct support of Facilitators. The hourly fee must cover the cost of each Facilitator’s salary and a number of other costs including:

Non-billable Facilitation Costs:

- Facilitation costs related to supporting monthly Family Groups
- Ongoing and regular training and mentoring of Facilitators
- Travel costs;
- Co-Facilitation – things like planning days and mediation when there need to be two Facilitators there.
- Orientation of Facilitators
- Some documentation
- Last minute and unforeseen cancellations

Other Costs:

- Organizational Costs related to maintaining an office, accounting, liability insurance...
- Program related costs like regional and provincial training days.
- Fundraising costs.
- Board costs.
- Part of salary for Executive Director- for administrative work.
- Subsidies to families completely unable to pay “fee for service”
- Benefits: Employment Insurance and CPP costs...

Substantive Concerns:

Organization Related Concerns

It is central to IUFP organizations to be able to respond to individuals and their families in a timely and flexible way. After eleven years of practice, Families for a Secure Future can reliably state that each individual requires unique supports and these supports are needed at different times throughout the year and over time. For this reason, the demand for facilitation and planning support fluctuates considerably on an annual basis and on a long term basis depending on several factors.

For one period of time, many hours may be necessary and helpful; at another there may be a lull and holding pattern as the family tries to consolidate the changes that they have just taken on. At times the family may need to sit back and reflect on where they are and what they are capable and willing to do next. It is important for Facilitators to be able to be available both at those times when energy is low as well as those times when the individual have a sense of urgency or the need to act and bring others together. Some decisions have to be put in abeyance until the individual or family can muster the courage to move forward or until something shifts and pressures lift to help make action more possible. This is a reflection of how our lives work. This ebb and flow is best managed when a facilitator can move easily between different individuals/families within a Family Group according to their current needs and life situation. Members of each Family Group hold an abiding concern for every individual and family within their group. They hear on a monthly basis how each individuals' life is moving forward and they help to carry a vision for a better future alongside the family members. This regular gathering of families is one of the ways that Facilitators stay connected with each individual and their family members needs. Families co-inspire one another to take action and move forward. Facilitators are key to this sense of standing alongside individuals and their families through thick and thin and being willing to respond quickly within the context of an existing relationship. When the organization must rely on fee for service, the Facilitators are less involved on a day to day basis and therefore they are less able to make offers of support to families in a way that would help avoid conflicts or future problems.

- **Not a reliable source of income:** It is extremely difficult if not impossible, to rely primarily on fee for service for staffing and core funding. Demand for hourly Facilitation fluctuates on a monthly and yearly basis. It is not a reliable enough source of income to forecast a yearly budget and maintain staff. It is also not sustainable if an organization must continue to take in or "oversubscribe" or engage "new families" in order to maintain a certain number of "fee for service" hours per month to have a reasonable cash flow.

- **Cannot recoup all of the costs:** The \$60.00 hourly rate is not affordable for many families and yet it does not reflect the actual costs of non-billable hours. The actual cost on an hourly basis is around \$114.00. Other sources of funding are necessary to be able to charge only \$60.00/hour.
- **Unaffordable for most families:** Many families cannot afford the hourly rate and do not have any individualized funding that they can use to pay for it. Those families that do have money from Passports or SSAH often choose not to use it for facilitation because they need that money for direct support. Most families who have a member who has a developmental disability are forced to rely on a single income earner. Existing members, who could not afford fee for service for whatever reason, were put in jeopardy and received no support. Even average income earners can not afford the real costs of support due to the variable and ongoing nature of the need. As a result of the high costs of fee for service most of the individuals and families we serve were excluded from receiving the support they needed and had become accustomed to from Facilitators.
- **Offering Subsidization to families who cannot afford fee for service requires financial disclosure and this causes unintended outcomes:** It is difficult to determine who would be eligible for subsidization. Many of the families who could not afford \$60.00/hour would never be eligible for a typical “financial means test” subsidy where there is an expectation that the income be below the poverty income. The organization has to determine on what grounds a family is eligible. If the grounds are financial than financial disclosure is necessary. Confidentiality around subsidization can be difficult to maintain within a close knit family group.

We did choose to continue to offer support to a few of those families whose income earners were on ODSP. However there are a number of families we could not afford to subsidize who were retired and on fixed income. They were unfairly excluded from receiving “fee for service” facilitation.

- **Cannot be claimed as an out of pocket expense:** Families cannot get a donation receipt from the organization for any of their own money spent on fee for service.
- **Restricted Use:** Those families that did use fee for service used as little hours as possible and in very “restricted” ways. In most cases, when fee for service was used it was used sparingly due to the cost factor. Facilitators were not able to spend the time required to do the work reasonably and soundly the way they had become accustomed to doing it. This had an impact on how able they were to avert a crisis and stay connected to the individual and the family.
- **Family Groups were destabilized without ongoing and regular Facilitation Support:** Family Groups benefit greatly from having a Facilitator present to hear the updates and to offer resources and ideas. Losing Facilitation support at monthly meetings destabilized each of the local Family Groups.

- **Loss of Trust built up over time:** It takes a long time before individuals and families begin inviting Facilitators in to help them think deeply or differently about the way things are in their lives and how they could be different. The “fee for service” model breaks the bonds that have been created over time and leaves families without support to deal with their day to day issues and planning.

Many of the other concerns are significant and related to maintaining the values and principles of the work and the organization. Some of the concerns listed below have been gained from experience with Facilitation outside of the organization.

- **Power Dimension:** There is a conscious/unconscious primacy given to the family as the “employer” and not the individual. Because the family is paying for the work they can feel they are in the driver’s seat and that they should have control “we hired you to do such and such it doesn’t matter what my son or daughter wants or says”- The Facilitators’ relationship sometimes suffers with the son or daughter because they know their parents are paying for your help so they believe that you’re aligned with them.
- **Limited Imagination:** Sometimes families come with preconceived notions of what they want the Facilitator to do based on a limited imagination of what is possible and their previous experience with menu driven supports. Having to pay for Facilitation supports can seriously limit a family’s imagination and thoughts about what needs to be done due to lack of money. Facilitation can be less exploratory and can be more superficial. The “clock is ticking” lets get this done....This can make it more difficult for them to explore with the Facilitator what is really necessary and desirable and to engage the individual in that process. It takes considerable time for Facilitators to help families develop a vision and think differently about what could happen. A fee for service model limits the time needed for this.
- **Unrealistic Initial Expectations:** Many families approach engaging a Facilitator with an expectation that there will be a single issue focus and discover through dialogue that there are multiple issues involved in addressing the situation well. Most are not able and not prepared to spend the funds necessary to address multiple issues. Some families enter into the initial conversation expecting a certain short-term engagement and once they realize that it will take longer they disengage and are never heard from again.
- **Forced into a List of Deliverables:** There is a presumption in a fee for service model of purchasing certain deliverables and products. This can force Facilitators into working from a set menu of supports rather than helping to consider what the next step is and what may be the most useful/powerful intervention to take over time. This works against building a relationship over time.
- **Requirement to Estimate Costs in Advance:** Estimating the time required to support an individual and family is difficult especially for new families- the Facilitator doesn’t know the individual and family and what they are entering into or how complex the situation is. As well there is often a failed planning process the Facilitator must deal with- i.e. new families come to you once

they leave another Facilitator...In addition, one can never know how long it will take to establish trust.

- **Expert model:** A fee for service model is not as collaborative- The Facilitator is viewed as the expert and expected to come up with the answers. Families are not as willing to enter into dialogue and explore issues with other family and friends when the clock is ticking.
- **Documentation not seen as a priority:** Families may be hesitant to have Facilitators document the decisions and key aspects of the work because they don't want to be paying for documentation. They prefer to pay only for direct face-to-face contact.
- **Less time for relationship building:** There is not as much time to build the warmth and trust required to do transformative work. Some families resent any time Facilitators spend alone with the individual building a relationship- it makes relationship and trust building "time pressured" It is very difficult to develop an individual's voice in the decision making because it is so time consuming and costly. It becomes very difficult to create a broader context for supported decision making because that requires involving more people in the conversation and strengthening and deepening the individuals' social network.
- **Economic imperatives drive the work.** Even when there is often much to do, when the money is finished the engagement is also finished, sometimes in midstream. Economics and costs can come to drive the work rather than laying a strong foundation for resiliency and helping build capacity and relationships, Implementation and Facilitation can suffer when families have no or limited capacity to pay. The Facilitator's role in helping people have critical conversations is often seen as not necessary.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Because families are purchasing the service, Facilitators are perceived as trumping up business when they recommend next steps. It is difficult to argue for preventative work to be done. This leads to formulaic costing and not considering the need for leaving a legacy behind. It is harder to challenge families and individuals to take risks and re-imagine their lives.
- **Priority Setting:** Families can't know from the outset how they may be changed by the experience of having facilitation support from a Facilitator. Fee for Service expects them to be articulate about what they're asking the Facilitator to do from the outset. Priorities need to arise out of dialogue and shared learning with the individual and the family and friends. This takes time to build.

- **Non-billable time:** Facilitators are sometimes expected to spend a lot of time with the family when the “clock is not ticking”. Much of what Facilitators do in this model is not billable. Research and travel time is not paid for. It is difficult to have to charge for last minute cancellations however Facilitators cannot afford to be left hanging when they had set aside a block of time and they can not fill it with other work.
- **Significantly more difficult for Facilitators to stand by families during crisis due to the cost:** Facilitators have an important role to play in standing by and being there for individuals and families in their time of need i.e., at major transitions; end of life; hospitalizations and terminal illness. They help in setting up and brokering services and supports; ensuring the individual is not lost in the shuffle and has relevant support; bringing family and friends together to put emergency plans and safeguards in place; offering emotional and moral support, helping people talk about what matters and resolve differences.
- **Accompaniment for Advocacy:** Facilitators can be really helpful when advocacy needs to be undertaken. Not only can they help develop a strategy they can accompany the individual and family as they take up the advocacy. They may also be able to connect individuals and families who have had similar experiences. This may not be viewed as a priority when there are limited funds so advocacy takes a back seat.

As an organization supporting individuals and families we have seen how having to shift to a “fee for service” model has set us “off course” in many respects. We were not able to continue to offer the constancy and steadfast support that families had come to rely on. Individuals and families were forced to put plans on hold because they knew that they did not have the support they needed to implement the plans. Support Circles met much less frequently and in that way individuals did not have as much support from others to make key decisions in their life and take the next step. It became hard to maintain trained, experienced Facilitators who were passionate about the role they were able to play in supporting individuals in a coherent and life changing manner. Many of the solid safeguards that families had put in place and counted on were put in jeopardy.

We urge key decision makers and other organizations to work with us as an organization to take a deeper look at how “fee for service” impacts individuals, families and ultimately the communities we are helping to build.