



## **Reflection on the PEPS 2020-2024 Strategic Direction**

PEPS launched a new strategic direction in January 2020. This summary describes how we worked towards these goals over the past five years. We revisit the goals and strategies planned in 2020, share the current status of these goals at the end of 2024, and provide examples of how we worked towards these goals. We then outline the lessons learned and discuss the path forward.






This reflection was created for PEPS staff and board review as part of our strategic planning process and we wanted to share it with the community. This data is for PEPS review and not for publication.

An important note - the COVID-19 Pandemic was not part of this plan but hit three months into the work and deeply impacted our ability to bring parents together in person, funding, and the mental health and well-being of parents. As a result, some strategies emerged were not initially part of this plan but were weaved into our work.

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 = We put this on hold,  = We changed it

# Goal 1: Grow the PEPS Reach and Impact

PEPS is accessible, inclusive, and reflects our values and commitment to racial equity.



**BUILD ACCESS** We commit to breaking down barriers and making our services accessible to communities who want them.

STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Offer <b>Flexible Pricing</b> fee options on all PEPS Groups		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offered and refined flexible pricing model and language for all programs to balance access and mission sustainability.</li> <li>43% of respondents shared that Flexible Pricing influenced their decision to join PEPS Groups.</li> </ul>
Offer groups in a variety of formats		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pivoted to 100% virtual neighborhood groups through the pandemic (2020-2022), maintaining 70% of groups offered in 2019.</li> <li>Launched 2 PEPS-run sites in North and South Seattle and formed 11 partnerships to offer site-based groups in more areas and new locations.</li> <li>In 2024, PEPS ran 25% virtual groups, 52% of in-home groups, 23% of site-based groups for all programs.</li> </ul>
Ensure growth is intentional and data informed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned to offer Newborn Groups at community sites in all regions to increase accessibility. This plan was interrupted by the pandemic when we pivoted to all virtual groups.</li> <li>In 2022, developed an intentional plan to grow back in-person services based on input from the community (e.g., surveys, registrations, and input from health officials.)</li> <li>Piloted 17 in-person community site groups in 2022 before adding in-person groups in homes in 2023.</li> <li>Used 2022 pulse surveys and 2023 participant surveys to assess comfort levels with in-person groups.</li> <li>Increased in-person services from 36% of groups in 2023 to 75% in 2024 to meet growing demand after the pandemic.</li> </ul>

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**SUPPORT** We will focus our Group Leader access and support, offering learning opportunities that equip them to guide courageous conversations on issues including race, racism, social and racial identity, gender, class, intersectionality and other aspects of identity in the context of parenting.

STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Strengthen Group Leader access, vetting, training, and development	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Leader Commitment Statement grounded in PEPS values and equity commitment into Group Leader onboarding.</li> <li>• Built pool of contract leaders and developed a standardized rate for Group Leader stipends.</li> <li>• Developed approach for conducting contract leader performance reviews.</li> <li>• Developed and implemented process to review around 1500 group member surveys per year to provide midpoint feedback, coach and support individual leaders.</li> <li>• Introduced online meeting reports for Group Leaders.</li> <li>• Conducted surveys with Group Leaders and responded to feedback and ideas to improve leader training and support.</li> <li>• Continuously worked to improve quality and accessibility of leader training and support – and while much was accomplished in this strategy, we also acknowledge that this is work to support our Group Leaders is ongoing and critical!</li> <li>• In 2023 (post-COVID), there was a big increase in demand for in-person groups and it became clear that we needed to focus on building our Group Leader pipeline to meet that demand – as a result we added the strategy “Increase Group Leader Pipeline.”</li> </ul>
Increase Group Leader pipeline		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hired consultant in 2022 to virtually train new leaders, and increased trainings offered by 30%.</li> <li>• Worked with an advisor in 2023 to review Group Leader recruitment systems and identify areas for process improvement.</li> <li>• Developed action plan for strengthening recruitment systems, including creating agreements with two local colleges that have provided more than 200 leaders.</li> <li>• In 2024, re-structured Group Leader recruitment to Operations Teams, and created and hired a new position for Leader Recruiter.</li> </ul>
Implement an online learning management system (LMS) for Group Leader trainings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented a 2.5-hour online LMS training through VAIRRIKO that includes 4 modules to make a portion of the training more accessible through asynchronous learning.</li> <li>• Shifted focus of live training time to facilitation practice and added trainings for new leaders who are not parents or familiar with PEPS.</li> </ul>
Continue to offer advanced facilitation sessions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Served 232 leaders across 13 advanced facilitation trainings to strengthen competency in 10 topic areas, including active and culturally responsive listening, conscious and inclusive facilitation, developmental moments, and more.</li> </ul>

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**CULTIVATE** We believe that we can make generational change by starting with parents who influence the children they raise.






STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Provide parents with tools & <a href="#">resources to raise anti-racist children</a>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed a resource webpage and (3) articles to support parents and shared through ongoing communications.</li> <li>In partnership with Families of Color Seattle, we offered 2 workshops on Undoing Racism and Teaching Equity to our Children for the PEPS Community</li> <li>Distributed more than 2,250 copies of 'Antiracist Baby' by Ibram X. Kendi were sent to participants in PEPS Newborn, Second Time Around, and Baby Peppers Groups, and Group Leaders.</li> </ul>
Ensure PEPS Groups discuss race & social identity development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed &amp; refined curriculum topics on race and social identity.</li> <li>Made Social Identity Development a required topic for PEPS Groups.</li> <li>In partnership with Adana Protonentis &amp; Leilani Mañulu developed foundational video shown in PEPS Groups to start conversations around identity and a leader training video for this topic.</li> <li>In partnership with Leilani Mañulu, offered Advanced Facilitation Trainings for leaders to support race &amp; social identity topics.</li> <li>Provided ongoing training and support to Group Leaders to improve culturally responsive facilitation skills.</li> </ul>
Continue to cultivate a culture of belonging and inclusion for all parents in every PEPS Group		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted 5 anti-bias reviews and updates of the curriculum through various lenses, including race, gender/LGBTQIA+, anti-ableism, socioeconomic status, and trauma-informed language to ensure programming and outreach are inclusive.</li> <li>In partnership with Families of Color Seattle, offered a training on Interrupting Microaggressions for PEPS Group Leaders, Board, and Staff.</li> <li>In partnership with Mike Beebe, offered a training on Conscious and Inclusive Facilitation through the lens of class/income inequality to PEPS Group Leaders and Staff.</li> <li>In partnership with ARC of Washington offered a training for staff on supporting neurodivergent leaders and families</li> <li>Hosted ongoing Leader Chats on topics such as Race &amp; Social Identity, Supporting LGBTQIA+ Families and Guiding Leaders Around Accessibility</li> </ul>

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**COLLABORATE** We will grow our reach to communities we have not historically served through partnerships that combine the deep community expertise of partner organizations and the adaptable PEPS model and curriculum

STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Grow locally and nationally through partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hired Partnership Manager to focus on growing and cultivating partnerships locally with community-based organizations and nationally with our Network Partners.</li> <li>• Grew from 5 to 18 Community partners, collaboratively supporting Spanish, Dari/Farsi speaking and multilingual parents, parents in recovery from substance use disorders, residents in low-income housing complexes, parents of children with learning differences, Black parents, teenage/young adult parents and more.</li> <li>• Grew from 4 to 11 Network Partners reaching families in King and Snohomish Counties, Bainbridge Island, Alaska, Hawaii, Colorado, Washington DC, Texas and North Carolina</li> <li>• Since 2020, more than 4,400 parents were reached through our partnerships.</li> </ul>
Deepen our partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed comprehensive partner training</li> <li>• Utilized a relationship-based approach rooted in listening, learning and seeking to understand how we can improve and adapt the PEPS model to be responsive to the needs of partner communities.</li> <li>• Worked with partners on adaptations including language translation, groups with different age ranges and meeting formats, incentives and more.</li> <li>• Provided fair compensation for partner organizations to ensure sustainability.</li> <li>• Improved evaluation tools to better understand our partnership needs.</li> </ul>
Refine our approach to create authentic and responsive partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined two partnership models and their criteria.</li> <li>• Developed partnership strategy and plan.</li> <li>• Launched monthly PEPS Partner gatherings for training, collaboration, and shared learning.</li> <li>• Integrated our newer programs (Expectant Parents, Parents of Adolescents and Teens, and Affinity Groups) into the partnership offerings.</li> <li>• Gathered consistent feedback from partners.</li> </ul>

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## Goal 2: Innovate Our Approach to Parent Support

PEPS creates multiple opportunities for parents to engage and connect.



**EXPAND** We have heard input from our community and will widen the scope of parenting stages we serve.

STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Launch of peer-support groups for <a href="#">expectant parents</a>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed, piloted, and launched a new 6-week program to support expectant parents during the pandemic and beyond.</li> <li>Served 1,049 parents through the program, which is offered both virtually and in person with an average 65% percent conversion rate to other PEPS programs.</li> </ul>
Launch of peer-support groups for <a href="#">parents of adolescents and teens</a>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied for and received funding to develop a new program for Parents of Adolescents and Teens (PAT).</li> <li>Conducted a landscape analysis and surveys to inform the program.</li> <li>Hired a Program Manager in 2021.</li> <li>Developed curriculum on 16 topics.</li> <li>Piloted with 16 groups in 2021.</li> <li>Fully launched PAT in 2022 and have since offered 42 groups and served 373 parents.</li> <li>Hired a Bilingual Outreach Manager in 2024 to build awareness and partnerships.</li> <li>Offered 4 PAT workshops, serving 363 parents in our community.</li> <li>Offered 6 PAT community events serving 171 parents.</li> </ul>



**ADAPT** We reject the one-size-fits-all approach and will creatively build community and connection for parents around specific identities, including LGBTQIA+, single, working parents, and more.

STRATEGIES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Launch affinity groups.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified and got input from people with lived experience in these affinities to help develop programs and lead groups.</li> <li>Piloted 5 LGBTQIA+ groups, 8 Single Parents, and 18 Working Moms groups and reviewed survey and interview data to guide program improvements.</li> <li>Launched groups for LGBTQIA+, Single Parents and Working Moms as ongoing programs and have offered 8, 3, and 4 groups, respectively, serving a total of 117 parents through these affinity programs.</li> <li>In 2023, launched annual gatherings for community building for LGTBQIA+ &amp; Single Parents, serving 105 families.</li> <li>Initiated development of affinity programs for International and Military Families.</li> <li>Developed workflow, decision-making process, curriculum, evaluation tools, and Leader trainings for each affinity.</li> </ul>

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**CONNECT** While we remain committed to in-person connection, we will explore digital strategies for connecting parents in and outside of PEPS Groups.

OBJECTIVES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Explore digital strategies for connecting parents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quickly adapted all programs and leader trainings to virtual formats because of the pandemic.</li> <li>Experimented with different ways to utilize technology for connection and piloted 8 text-based groups for our affinity programs and some partners.</li> <li>Learned the value of in-person connection through the pandemic and <b>made the decision to focus on bringing back in-person connection instead of further developing this strategy.</b></li> </ul>

### Goal 3: Advocate for Equitable Policies

PEPS shows up for families by taking action on policies that impact equity in our region.



**DEVELOP** We will develop an advocacy strategy and platform and build a culture of advocacy at PEPS.

OBJECTIVES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Develop an advocacy strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hired an advocacy consultant to conduct a landscape analysis and support advocacy at PEPS.</li> <li>Met with 15 stakeholders to help us understand the legislative landscape and where PEPS could have an effective impact.</li> <li>Developed an Advocacy Workgroup which is a cross-functional team of 10 staff and community members learning together and serving as ambassadors for our advocacy work.</li> <li>Surveyed the PEPS Community about advocacy engagement to identify advocacy priorities (400 responses) and workplace support (300 responses) to inform our priorities and share with advocacy partners shaping policies.</li> <li>Developed an annual process to evaluate emerging priorities and determine key policies, including an equity screen.</li> </ul>
Adopt an advocacy platform		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted advocacy priorities focused on policies that provide a foundation of stability for families, like paid family leave, affordable childcare, and affordable housing.</li> <li>Engaged in advocacy coalitions and tables, including Prenatal-to-5 Relational Health Subgroup (of the Children &amp; Youth Behavioral Health Work Group), Prenatal-to-3 Coalition (&amp; Policy &amp; Advocacy Subcommittee), Early Learning Action Alliance, Work &amp; Family Coalition, WA Low-Income Housing Alliance Weekly Advocate Briefing, Childcare for WA, Washington Future Fund Coalition, No on 2109 Campaign Coalition.</li> </ul>
Build a culture of advocacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked to build a culture of advocacy to ensure everyone at PEPS understands why we are engaging in advocacy and our advocacy priorities.</li> <li>Offered annual advocacy learning opportunities and elevator speech practice to Advocacy Workgroup, Staff, and Board.</li> </ul>

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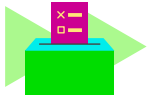


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**ACTIVATE** We will bring awareness to issues that impact families who face the most disparities and about policies that provide a stable foundation for families. We will embrace our responsibility to leverage the large community of parents in our network.

OBJECTIVES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Inform our community about advocacy and key issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed and implemented an annual advocacy communications plan.</li> <li>• Developed an advocacy webpage in 2022 and updated it with PEPS priorities each year.</li> <li>• Published 9 blog posts to increase awareness of PEPS advocacy work and understanding of advocacy priorities.</li> </ul>
Activate our community to take action		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invited the PEPS community to engage and take action on 17 key policies.</li> <li>• Sent 21 communications, including action alerts and emails asking the PEPS community to sign in pro, write to legislators, and more</li> <li>• Developed email templates to be more responsive to evolving initiatives.</li> <li>• Created an advocacy email list with nearly 200 people for ongoing action alerts.</li> <li>• Communicated consistently with the entire PEPS community (21,000 email list) about advocacy.</li> </ul>

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## Goal 4: Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness & Identity

PEPS operates with an equity lens across all areas and continues to invest in building an effective and supportive organizational culture.



**DEVELOP** We will strive to be an organization that lives our values in our organizational culture and internal practices. We will invest in staff and resources to effectively work towards our high-level goals.

OBJECTIVES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Cultivate a workplace culture of trust, flexibility and learning.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and refined policies to better support staff, including increasing paid time off, adding a 4-week paid sabbatical, and developing our workplace accommodations policy.</li> <li>Implemented a sabbatical policy with identified leadership development opportunities.</li> <li>Created Strengths-based learning, assessments, and support for all staff through work with Canon Consulting.</li> <li>Designed remote and hybrid work models with a trust-based flexible approach.</li> <li>Developed staff agreements and consistently revisited them and lifted them up in our work together.</li> <li>Engaged with HR, Benefits, and Organizational Culture Advisors.</li> <li>Completed an equity assessment and review with Monday Morning Consultants.</li> <li>Engaged in frequent collective staff learning opportunities around diversity, equity, and inclusion and offered learning and professional development opportunities for all staff.</li> </ul>
Build organizational capacity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and hired 7 new positions to support strategic direction and emerging needs, including Partnership Manager, Communications and Marketing Manager, PAT Program Manager, PAT Bilingual Outreach Manager, Leader Recruiter, Donor Relations Manager, and Development Manager</li> <li>Restructured teams and roles to more effectively balance workloads.</li> <li>Streamlined data collection process using new software integrations (e.g., PowerBi).</li> <li>Conducted Archbright salary assessments every other year to ensure equitable and competitive compensation.</li> <li>Created new organizational structure visualization.</li> <li>Transitioned and onboarded new Finance and IT managed services.</li> </ul>
Develop and roll out new brand identity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and rolled out a new brand in 2023 to bring our brand into alignment with our mission, vision, and values.</li> </ul>
Develop and launch new website		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to budget constraints and staff capacity, we did not move this project forward.</li> </ul>

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**BUILD** To effectively advance equity in our communities, we will not limit equity focus to one part of the organization and instead, apply an equity lens across the organization.

OBJECTIVES	STATUS	EXAMPLES
Operate with a racial equity lens		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wove our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion into our daily operations, programs, fundraising and communications.</li> <li>• We strive to equip every team member to apply an equity lens in their role and consistently identify opportunities for improvement.</li> <li>• Learned about and utilized community centric fundraising practices.</li> <li>• Weaved equity efforts into annual and quarterly goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Ensured our communications are accessible and represent diverse voices, perspectives and experiences</li> <li>• Reimagined our Board Structure to create a more nimble board and more opportunities for people to engage with PEPS through a new Advisors &amp; Ambassadors Network.</li> </ul>

## Lessons Learned

Our journey over the past five years has transformed PEPS and provided invaluable insights:

**A north star in challenging times:** Our strategic direction was a guide for us during an incredibly challenging time for parents and families. While our high-level goals provided clear direction, our strategies – and when we implemented them – was emergent. That was especially important as we navigated the pandemic.

**Adaptability and responsiveness:** We have strengthened our ability to adapt and respond to changing needs of parents, keeping our values at the forefront of every decision.

**Ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion:** Advancing equity and inclusion is not something that is “accomplished” but takes an ongoing commitment to listening, learning and taking action. This process doesn't lead to perfection but drives meaningful progress.

**Investing in impact and evaluation:** Having an in-house impact and evaluation role has been instrumental in piloting new programs, leader training and curriculum. Streamlined data collection processes have allowed us to be more agile and responsive to feedback from participants, Group Leaders, and partners.

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## Innovative program delivery and the power of in-person connection:

- Through the pandemic, we learned to deliver all programs virtually and experimented with platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp. Virtual continues to be the best option for our affinity groups and parents of adolescents and teens programs.
- As we returned in-person with our groups and our staff, we witnessed the power of in-person connection. This revealed the irreplaceable benefits of organic, face-to-face connection: from the simple joy and confidence built when a new parent discovers they can leave the house to the spontaneous conversations, heartfelt hugs and getting to know the babies.

**Sustainability and financial resilience:** Although sustainability wasn't a stated goal of our strategic direction, it's a critical area for consistent focus. The instability of our program fees and changes in donor and funder priorities during the pandemic highlighted how important this is. By emphasizing diversified revenue streams, transparent communication with staff, the board, and funders, and tying sustainability to our annual goals and quarterly objectives, we've laid a stronger foundation.

## Emerging challenges and opportunities:

- Conversations with potential PEPS Network partners, funders and the office of the US Surgeon General underscored the need to build our research base and emphasize the impact our work as a key to unlocking future growth.
- Rising housing prices in King County are driving families to regions like Pierce and Snohomish Counties, where support services are less abundant. This prompted us to add more groups in Snohomish County where we have some services and start to explore regional expansion to Tacoma.
- As we were building our advocacy platform on issues such as paid family leave and affordable childcare—and launching our affinity program for working moms—we heard passionate feedback from parent surveys. It's clear that parents need more flexible, family-friendly workplaces to support their mental health and well-being. This insight presents a unique opportunity for PEPS to extend its influence to improving workplace culture and policy.

## The Path Forward

In 2025, we're charting our path forward by developing our next strategic direction. Recent insights—including the 2024 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, *Parents Under Pressure*—reveal that parents today face mounting stress, isolation, and mental health challenges that extend far beyond the traditional hurdles of early parenthood. This data reaffirms our long-held belief that strong social connections are essential for both parental well-being and healthy child development.

Too many parents feel alone, stressed, and overwhelmed. The case for our work has never been stronger. Our next strategic direction will guide PEPS growth as we work towards a future where no parent navigates this journey alone, where families have the support they need, and parents and children thrive in connected, resilient communities.

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