



2020-24 Strategic Plan

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency



Board Approved: December 6, 2019

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Board Approval of Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan document has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at their regularly scheduled December 2019 meeting.

Minnie Warren, Chair

Gail Patterson-Gladney, Secretary

Date of the meeting was: December 6, 2019.

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Over the past 37 years, Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA) has been helping people and changing lives through programs based on the individual needs of each community we serve. Although its programs have changed throughout the years, the goal of SMCAA has remained the same: to help provide the tools necessary for low-income individuals to become more self-sufficient.

As SMCAA prepares for the next five (5) years, it is an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the past, to celebrate our successes, and to look to the future. Since its incorporation in 1986, SMCAA now assists more than 4,700 clients each year across Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. This community reach has shaped the agency's programs, services, and the direction of our organization, and SMCAA has created a legacy of programming. Looking forward, we are proud to continue a tradition of excellence by providing human services to Southwest Michigan.



Our strategic plan is informed by community feedback through extensive surveys completed by those representing the public, private, and consumer sectors within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties, as well as SMCAA staff and Board of Directors. While acknowledging the potential challenges to nonprofit organizations in today's world, SMCAA has responded by becoming a vital resource and asset to this community.

The 2020-24 Strategic Plan was developed through in-person sessions of the Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee with members of over 15 stakeholders including staff and Board members. This strategic plan is in compliance with the following Organizational Standards:

- 6.1: The Organization has an agency-wide Strategic Plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past five (5) years.
- 6.2: The approved Strategic Plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.
- 6.3: The approved Strategic Plan contains Family, Agency, and/or Community goals.

The trajectory of this plan offers a glimpse into the potential for an inspiring Community Action Agency within Southwest Michigan. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, I invite you to peruse the plan and share in our excitement about our next steps. We look forward to the years to come in an organization striving to serve the community through impactful human services necessary for low-income individuals to become self-sufficient.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arthur C. Fenrick".

Arthur C. Fenrick, Executive Director

Mission, Vision, & Values

For the 2020-24 Strategic Plan, SMCAA revisited the mission, vision, and values for the organization to set the foundation for establishing the future direction of our Agency.

Purpose of our Mission Statement

In essence, our Mission Statement articulates SMCAA's reason for being and provides the inspiration and direction for doing the work we do in our community.

Purpose of our Vision Statement

Different than our mission, the Vision Statement of SMCAA states the future we want to create for our community in making a difference.

Purpose of our Core Values

The core values are the principles that our Agency stands for and abides by. In their most basic understanding, these values guide our Agency's culture.

The Changes in Our Mission

The Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee evaluated the mission statement used for the Agency from 1998 to 2019 and discussed whether it articulated and related to the Agency with a clear, specific, and flexible manner. It was the Committee's intention that a new mission statement should reflect SMCAA's commitment to its values, beliefs and philosophy of operations as well as serve as an energy source and rallying point for the organization. A new mission statement was created for the upcoming five (5) years:

SMCAA is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security.

The Changes in Our Vision

Prior to discussion for the 2020-24 Strategic Plan, SMCAA did not have a mission-focused vision statement. Similar to the discussion on the mission statement, the Committee reevaluated the necessity of having a mission-focused vision statement. The Committee was dedicated to designing a vision statement that incorporated the Agency's entire programming and painted a clear, forward-looking picture of where SMCAA is headed.

With this purpose in mind, the Committee established a new vision statement for the upcoming five (5) years:

To be a beacon of support in a strong, thriving community by helping people and changing lives.

The Changes in Our Values

Knowing that our core values are as much a part of our strategic foundation as our mission and vision, the Committee reassessed our past values and, with consideration of the changes to our mission and vision statements, established the values of our Agency for the upcoming five (5) years.

The Core Values that guide SMCAA are:

- **Action** – We are committed to setting goals for our programs, and working persistently and sensibly towards meeting benchmarks and facilitating impactful economic and social change.
- **Respect** – We acknowledge and appreciate the dignity, humanity, experience, intelligence, and potential of each member in our community.
- **Stewardship** – We believe we have an obligation to be good stewards and to utilize our resources strategically and thoughtfully.
- **Integrity** – We take responsibility for our actions and the results of those actions with honesty and transparency.
- **Community** - We believe in developing active partnerships in order to build effective solutions and high quality programs for the community we service.

Percent of Occupied Housing Units with One or More *Sub-Standard Conditions

28.5%

Berrien County

26.7%

Cass County

28.5%

Van Buren County

** Home identified as being in substandard conditions are as follows:*

- 1) lacking complete plumbing facilities
- 2) lacking complete kitchen facilities
- 3) with 1.01 or more occupants per room
- 4) selected monthly owner costs vs household income are greater than 30%
- 5) gross rent vs household income is greater than 30%

Percent of Low-Income Population with Low Food Access

22.3%

Berrien County

10.9%

Cass County

2.1%

Van Buren County

After refining the mission, vision, and values, a deeper dive into creating a theory of change within SMCAA identified priority areas in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty within Southwest Michigan. A Community Needs Assessment survey, extensive internal evaluation, and a SWOT Analysis complemented the data reviewed in the strategic planning process to determine programs/services and operational areas of focus for the next five (5) years.

The Community Needs Assessment survey was completed by those representing the public, private, and consumer sectors within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Collectively, these groups identified a number of needs, and analysis of responses clearly indicated five (5) core barriers to self-sufficiency: **Utility Assistance, Food, Housing Repair, Dental Assistance, and Transportation.**

Through our internal evaluation, SMCAA's current programs and services were given an extensive assessment utilizing the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) process. This evaluation allowed the agency to learn more about the impact of the Agency's programs and services are making on the lives of individuals and families, and provided a foundation of understanding that will help shape and mold initiatives to meet ongoing and/or future needs in our communities.

Surveys were electronically distributed across a broad cross-section of community organizations and partners. Distribution lists included educational entities, private agencies, human service organizations, faith-based organizations, and others over a course of one (1) month. Collectively, these groups identified a number of needs and an analysis of the responses identified five (5) core barriers to self-sufficiency: **Safe, Affordable Housing, Transportation, Food, Health Care, and Employment.**

Taking into account the analysis results from both surveys, SMCAA narrowed its focus to three (3) of the best supports for the future of Southwest Michigan: **Utility Assistance, Nutritional and Accessible Food, and Housing Repairs.**

With these "Best Supports" in mind, SMCAA turned inwardly to assess the current programs and services being offered to our service area. Fortunately, there was a range of services the Agency provides which address these critical issues along the continuum:

- Emergency assistance such as food commodities, rent and utilities assistance, and a homeless shelter
- Various supportive housing services
- Counseling services for family self-sufficiency, credit repair, and homeowner preparation
- Energy and housing services such as energy education, weatherization, and housing development

The final survey taken was a SWOT analysis survey with staff and the Board of Directors in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within and outside the Agency. The SWOT analysis provided insight into core competencies, areas for improvement, and opportunities and barriers for growth.

SWOT Analysis Findings:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Staff commitment, staff knowledge on programs, longevity of staff members ➤ Databases and data collection ➤ Compliance to Organizational Standards ➤ Program availability, service credibility, efficiency of programs ➤ State and program training for staff members ➤ Clear audits, no findings during audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limited knowledge on how to utilize data collections, data glitches and errors ➤ Guidelines restrictions, dependency on grant funding alone ➤ Lack of agency succession plan, lack of departmental cross-training ➤ Staff generational transitions (loss of knowledge upon retirement) ➤ Current staff are maxed out, limited staffing for program needs ➤ No grant writer, no human resources ➤ Lack of agency promotion, no social media involvement, limited innovation ➤ Lack of technological capacity for client interfacing, lack of technology knowledge
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New revenue funding, possible fundraising opportunities, potential of new donors ➤ Agency promotion, social media platforms, additional community events ➤ Board Ambassadors ➤ New office space with both office and warehouse together, additional storage space ➤ Expand legislative relationships ➤ Technological training and increased staff expertise with digital databases and computer programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loss of governmental funds ➤ New program guideline restrictions ➤ External factors from the state and federal governments ➤ Nonprofit competitors, duplicated services within service area

Upon seeing the findings of the SWOT analysis, SMCAA acknowledged a number of internal strengths which complement and elevate the impactful services the Agency offers:

- Our diverse staff is committed to the agency, which is evidenced by our high staff retention and staff’s willingness to adapt, learn and grow. Our staff members are also resourceful and determined to find creative solutions in order to serve our clients.
- Other area community human service agencies appreciate our dedication, leadership, and transparent business practices.
- Our agency is in excellent compliance with the state’s Organizational Standards, and our programs receive clear audits with no findings. Both of these practices continue to raise SMCAA’s integrity and standing throughout Southwest Michigan’s community leaders, businesses, legislative representatives, and other human service organizations.

While there are numerous positive internal strengths within SMCAA, there remain areas of internal weaknesses, external threats, and emerging trends which the Agency noted as being strategic priority areas. These **Strategic Priority Areas** are: Quality & Standards, Financial Sustainability, Leadership Development, Culture of Excellence, Facilities & Technology, and Advocacy and Reputation Building.

SMCAA Strategic Priority Areas

- Quality & Standards
- Financial Sustainability
- Leadership Development
- Culture of Excellence Facilities & Technology
- Advocacy and Reputation Building

ROMA National Goals

Goal 1: Low-income people become more self-sufficient. (Family)

Goal 2: The conditions in which low-income people live are improved. (Community)

Goal 3: Low-income people own a stake in their community. (Community)

Goal 4: Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved. (Agency)

Goal 5: Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results. (Agency)

Goal 6: Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems. (Family)

Considering these strategic priority areas, the Committee established six (6) Strategic Goals to intentionally move the Agency towards achieving our mission and vision while emphasizing our core values.

These six (6) Strategic Goals developed by SMCAA reflect and highlight the national goals of the CSBG Monitoring and Assessment Task Force's National Strategic Plan of 1994. The national goals are implemented by **Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA)**, a system for continuous quality improvement to enable the network to measure, analyze, and communicate performance. All Community Action agencies across the country are required to monitor success within these national goals.

Strategy Map

Goal 1: Quality & Standards. Strengthen and improve agency operations assuring exemplary programming and long range stability.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 1, 2, 5

Objective A: Maintain 90% or above on National Organizational Standards Report

Strategy i: Create a cross-departmental Organizational Standards Task Force to focus on successful completion of report per fiscal year

Goal 2: Financial Sustainability. Diversify revenue and expand community partnerships.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 4, 5

Objective A: Research and implement new and ongoing initiatives to raise money and awareness for agency

Strategy i: Develop and organize at least two (2) new fundraisers (partnered giving day, online campaign, community event, etc.) annually

Strategy ii: Identify and hire an experienced grant writer to explore and pursue new funding sources

Objective B: Preserve current and attract new community partnerships

Strategy i: Increase program partnership by 1% annually (Baseline 2019: 158 partnerships)

Goal 3: Leadership Development. Enhance processes, follow through, and development of leadership and Board resulting in increased effectiveness and retention.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 3, 5, 6

Objective A: Develop a written succession plan for all department managers, Finance Director, and Executive Director

Strategy i: Identify leadership talent within staff and provide opportunities for growth and promotion

Strategy ii: Review and revise succession plans every two (2) years

Objective B: Strengthen Board knowledge and governance for agency programs

Strategy i: Host Board meeting at on-site program location twice a year for members to meet and engage with staff

Strategy ii: Each Board member will organize, coordinate, and/or participate in one (1) agency fundraising event annually

Goal 4: Culture of Excellence. Equip employees with principles, systems, and tools that result in sustainable improvement.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 5

Objective A: Capitalize on employee potential through training and mentoring

Strategy i: Set consistent meeting schedules (monthly managerial meetings, quarterly all-staff meetings) to inform staff on current, new, or changing program information, agency principles and procedures, and necessary tools or trainings

Strategy ii: Introduce an Employee Feedback Survey following quarterly meetings to provide opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and suggestions for meeting agendas

Objective B: Establish a professional development plan for each employee

Strategy i: Conduct a talent gaps assessment and identify top talent management goals

Strategy ii: Develop an agency-wide talent management plan

Goal 5: Facilities & Technology. Align our infrastructure with the needs of the agency.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 1, 5

Objective A: Maximize current office facilities while exploring new location opportunities

Strategy i: Reconfigure current main office to maximize client access points, effective employee culture, and useful storage space to increase capacity for excellent customer service

Strategy ii: Explore at least two (2) potential facilities to co-locate main office and warehouse annually until viable decision is made

Goal 6: Advocacy and Reputation Building. Broaden awareness of the agency through marketing and brand promotion.

ROMA Goal(s) Achieved: 2, 5

Objective A: Promote social marketing for agency programs to better engage community members

Strategy i: Increase Facebook reactions by 15% annually (Baseline 2019: 196 Likes)

Strategy ii: Publish a new post on Facebook at least three (3) times weekly

Objective B: Increase advocacy efforts in local communities to provide education about programs, services, and our agency's brand

Strategy i: Recruit one (1) or more community advocates to three (3) fundraising events annually

Strategy ii: Increase reported advocacy efforts (press releases, legislative visits, poverty simulations, etc.) by 2% annually (Baseline 2019: 10 representations)

Implementation & Accountability

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Cycle

Assessment
Community needs and resources, agency data



Planning
Use agency mission statement and data to identify results and strategies



Implementation
Services and strategies produce results



Achievement of Results
Observe and report progress



Evaluation
Analyze data, compare with benchmarks



Back to Assessment and Begin Again



The SMCAA 2020-24 Strategic Plan will be implemented by dedicated staff, the management team, and the executive director. Senior leadership and staff will align annual work plans and budgets within the Agency-wide strategic plan.

SMCAA embraces the principles and strategies of the National Community Action Network Theory of Change, and as a Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) recipient, the 2020-24 Strategic Plan meets expectations of the CSBG Organizational Standards of Performance by incorporating the following:

- 6.1: The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.
- 6.2: The approved strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.
- 6.3: The approved strategic plan contains family, agency, and/or community goals.

The Strategic Plan is a working document intended to reflect current needs and conditions of SMCAA and the Southwest Michigan community. Revisions to the plan will be made as needed to reflect environmental changes and incorporated directly into the Plan.

SMCAA will evaluate, update, and record progress made toward implementation of the Plan for relevancy as follows:

Continuous:

- Data is captured, analyzed, and compared with benchmarks regularly for continuous improvement and responsiveness to gaps in meeting targets
- Data is reviewed internally and shared with departments for continuous improvement of client satisfaction and program information

Monthly:

- Status reports are shared with senior leadership and the Board of Directors to review results at monthly Board meetings through Monthly Scorecards (See Appendix I)

Quarterly:

- Status reports are shared with all staff on a quarterly basis at all-staff meetings

Annually:

- Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee reviews Strategic Plan, and works with departments to reassess annual goals, targets, and actions to achieve agency-wide strategies

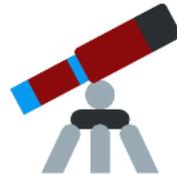
This Strategic Plan recognizes and utilizes the tenants from Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA). As mentioned on Page 5, ROMA is a performance-based initiative designed to preserve the anti-poverty focus of Community Action Agencies to promote greater effectiveness among entities receiving CSBG funds.

At the center of ROMA is its lifecycle with strategic planning lying within its second phase of Planning. In the implementation and accountability of sustaining the SMCAA 2020-24 Strategic Plan, each phase of the ROMA cycle will be explored at various times during its lifecycle.

	Goal	Objectives	Strategies	Performance and Implementation As of: January 31, 2020
Quality & Standards	Strengthen and improve agency operations assuring exemplary programming and long range stability.	Objective A: Maintain 90% or above on National Organizational Standards Report	<u>Strategy i:</u> Create a cross-departmental Organizational Standards Task Force to focus on successful completion of report per fiscal year	
Financial Sustainability	Diversify revenue and expand community partnerships.	Objective A: Research and implement new and ongoing initiatives to raise money and awareness for agency	<u>Strategy i:</u> Develop and organize at least two (2) new fundraisers (partnered giving day, online campaign, community event, etc.) annually <u>Strategy ii:</u> Identify and hire an experienced grant writer to explore and pursue new funding sources	
		Objective B: Preserve current and attract new community partnerships	<u>Strategy i:</u> Increase program partnership by 1% annually	Baseline 2019: 158 partnerships; Goal 2020: 0/160
Leadership Development	Enhance processes, follow through, and development of leadership and Board resulting in increased effectiveness and retention.	Objective A: Develop a written succession plan for all department managers, Finance Director, and Executive Director	<u>Strategy i:</u> Identify leadership talent within staff and provide opportunities for growth and promotion <u>Strategy ii:</u> Review and revise succession plans every two (2) years	
		Objective B: Strengthen Board knowledge and governance for agency programs	<u>Strategy i:</u> Host Board meeting at on-site program location twice a year for members to meet and engage with staff <u>Strategy ii:</u> Each Board member will organize, coordinate, and/or participate in one (1) agency fundraising event annually	
Culture of Excellence	Equip employees with principles, systems, and tools that result in sustainable improvement.	Objective A: Capitalize on employee potential through training and mentoring	<u>Strategy i:</u> Set consistent meeting schedules (monthly managerial meetings, quarterly all-staff meetings) to inform staff on current, new, or changing program information, agency principles and procedures, and necessary tools or trainings <u>Strategy ii:</u> Introduce an Employee Feedback Survey following quarterly meetings to provide opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and suggestions for meeting agendas	
		Objective B: Establish a professional development plan for each employee	<u>Strategy i:</u> Conduct a talent gaps assessment and identify top talent management goals <u>Strategy ii:</u> Develop an agency-wide talent management plan	
Facilities & Technology	Align our infrastructure with the needs of the agency.	Objective A: Maximize current office facilities while exploring new location opportunities	<u>Strategy i:</u> Reconfigure current main office to maximize client access points, effective employee culture, and useful storage space to increase capacity for excellent customer service <u>Strategy ii:</u> Explore at least two (2) potential facilities to co-locate main office and warehouse annually until viable decision is made	
Advocacy & Reputation Building	Broaden awareness of the agency through marketing and brand promotion.	Objective A: Promote social marketing for agency programs to better engage community members	<u>Strategy i:</u> Increase Facebook reactions by 15% annually <u>Strategy ii:</u> Publish a new post on Facebook at least three (3) times weekly	Baseline 2019: 196 Likes; Goal 2020: 0/225
		Objective B: Increase advocacy efforts in local communities to provide education about programs, services, and our agency's brand	<u>Strategy i:</u> Recruit one (1) or more community advocates to three (3) fundraising events annually <u>Strategy ii:</u> Increase reported advocacy efforts (press releases, legislative visits, poverty simulations, etc.) by 2% annually	Baseline 2019: 10 representations; Goal 2020: 0/12

Mission

SMCAA is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security.



Vision

To be a beacon of support in a strong, thriving community by helping people and changing lives.

Core Values

Action

We are committed to setting goals for our programs, and working persistently and sensibly towards meeting benchmarks and facilitating impactful economic and social change.

Respect

We acknowledge and appreciate the dignity, humanity, experience, intelligence, and potential of each member in our community.

Stewardship

We believe we have an obligation to be good stewards and to utilize our resources strategically and thoughtfully.

Integrity

We take responsibility for our actions and the results of those actions with honesty and transparency.

Community

We believe in developing active partnerships in order to build effective solutions and high quality programs for the community we service.

Strategy Map

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
Goal 1: Quality & Standards. Strengthen and improve agency operations assuring exemplary programming and long range stability.	Objective A: Maintain 90% or above on National Organizational Standards Report	Strategy i: Create a cross-departmental Organizational Standards Task Force to focus on successful completion of report per fiscal year
Goal 2: Financial Sustainability. Diversify revenue and expand community partnerships.	Objective A: Research and implement new and ongoing initiatives to raise money and awareness for agency	Strategy i: Develop and organize at least two (2) new fundraisers (partnered giving day, online campaign, community event, etc.) annually; Strategy ii: Identify and hire an experienced grant writer to explore and pursue new funding sources
	Objective B: Preserve current and attract new community partnerships	Strategy i: Increase program partnership by 1% annually
Goal 3: Leadership Development. Enhance processes, follow through, and development of leadership and Board resulting in increased effectiveness and retention.	Objective A: Develop a written succession plan for all department managers, Finance Director, and Executive Director	Strategy i: Identify leadership talent within staff and provide opportunities for growth and promotion; Strategy ii: Review and revise succession plans every two (2) years
	Objective B: Strengthen Board knowledge and governance for agency programs	Strategy i: Host Board meeting at on-site program location twice a year for members to meet and engage with staff; Strategy ii: Each Board member will organize, coordinate, and/or participate in one (1) agency fundraising event annually
Goal 4: Culture of Excellence. Equip employees with principles, systems, and tools that result in sustainable improvement.	Objective A: Capitalize on employee potential through training and mentoring	Strategy i: Set consistent meeting schedules (monthly managerial meetings, quarterly all-staff meetings) to inform staff on current, new, or changing program information, agency principles and procedures, and necessary tools or trainings; Strategy ii: Introduce an Employee Feedback Survey following quarterly meetings to provide opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and suggestions for meeting agendas
	Objective B: Establish a professional development plan for each employee	Strategy i: Conduct a talent gaps assessment and identify top talent management goals; Strategy ii: Develop an agency-wide talent management plan
Goal 5: Facilities & Technology. Align our infrastructure with the needs of the agency.	Objective A: Maximize current office facilities while exploring new location opportunities	Strategy i: Reconfigure current main office to maximize client access points, effective employee culture, and useful storage space to increase capacity for excellent customer service; Strategy ii: Explore at least two (2) potential facilities to co-locate main office and warehouse annually until viable decision is made
Goal 6: Advocacy & Reputation Building. Broaden awareness of the agency through marketing and brand promotion.	Objective A: Promote social marketing for agency programs to better engage community members	Strategy i: Increase Facebook reactions by 15% annually; Strategy ii: Publish a new post on Facebook at least three (3) times weekly
	Objective B: Increase advocacy efforts in local communities to provide education about programs, services, and our agency's brand	Strategy i: Recruit one (1) or more community advocates to three (3) fundraising events annually; Strategy ii: Increase reported advocacy efforts (press releases, legislative visits, poverty simulations, etc.) by 2% annually