

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency
Strategic Plan
2015 -2019

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I. BOARD APPROVAL of STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan document has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at their regularly scheduled December 2014 meeting.

Robert Wooley, *Board Chair*

Marietta Seats, *Board Secretary*

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

II. ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency(SMCAA) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency-part of a state and national network. Incorporated in 1986, it began providing human services to the residents of the rural southwest Michigan counties of Cass and Van Buren. In 1992, Berrien County was officially added to its service delivery area.

The agency is governed by a nine member Board of Directors, bringing together equal representation of the public and private sectors and the clients who receive services. Policy and fiscal matters as well as programmatic and service issues are reviewed by those who have insights to provide meaningful guidance to the Agency.

SMCAA brings together federal and state grant funds as well as dollars from local, private and public sources. These resources are then directed into programs which aid the low income and otherwise disadvantaged throughout the age spectrum, from preschoolers to the elderly of southwest Michigan. The funds include dollars which are targeted at specific problems, as well as dollars which are more flexible in nature.

The Administrative office of SMCAA is in Benton Harbor, Berrien County, which is also where the food warehouse is located. Additional offices are maintained in Cassopolis, Cass County and Hartford, Van Buren County. Community Service workers in all three county offices provide services to the clients including application for all SMCAA Programs and distribution sites for food commodities. These workers also refer to other agencies who provide services that SMCAA does not. The Agency operates a homeless shelter for clients in Cass and Van Buren counties.

MISSION

SMCAA exists to assist people in economic need and enable them to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency while respecting their diversity.

HOUSING VISION

Every person will have access to safe affordable housing. In order to accomplish this, SMCAA will support the development and maintenance of affordable housing in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. This will be done by providing a continuum of housing services and through collaboration and support of governmental units, agencies and organizations in the tri-county area.

VALUES

We believe that...

- As poverty reduction advocates we must listen to our community and our clients and modify our services using that data to effectively empower the individuals and communities we serve to achieve self-sufficiency
- We must assess client needs on client-defined terms, partner with them in the service delivery process and hold them accountable for achieving their own outcomes because they are the experts of their own lives
- We must continually broaden our resource base in order to efficiently deliver goods, products, and services to our community and clients
- Our Board needs adequate information and knowledge to champion the Agency and help effectively chart our policy direction and engage this knowledge within the community
- Our staff need the core competencies, based upon industry best practices, to meet client-defined needs and, to that end must continuously upgrade their skills

GOALS and STRATEGIES

Goal A: *Sustain and/or develop services using an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework that support our mission and respond to community needs*

Strategy A1: Maintain awareness of community assets and needs

Objectives

A1.1 –Management staff will have working knowledge of ABCD principles

A1.2 -All staff will have access to copies of current community needs assessments

A1.3 -All staff will be familiar with both community and client assets

Strategy A2: All programs and services will support our mission and respond to community needs

Objectives

A2.1 -The agency's mission, current community data and demographics will be used to develop and modify program objectives and service outcome goals

A2.2 -Staff, clients, and other human service agencies will contribute to the agency's program development process

Goal B: *Sustain and develop adequate funding to support SMCAA's mission*

Strategy B1: Continually seek to balance administrative costs and increase revenues as possible

Objectives

B1.1 -Ensure administrative costs stay within appropriate, allowable range based upon industry standards

B1.2 -Increase annual unrestricted funding 10% by 2019 with the help of Board Members

Strategy B2: Organizational processes will be efficient and effective

Objectives

B2.1 -Review and modify as needed personnel policies every two years

B2.2 - Review and modify as needed operational policies and processes every two years

B2.3 -Increase volunteer staff by 5%

Goal C: *Develop our Board and staff*

Strategy C1: Staff, board, and volunteers will know enough about agency processes, programs and services to perform their duties

Objectives

C1.1 -New staff, board, and volunteer orientation process will adequately prepare them for their position

Strategy C2: Staff and board professional growth and development will be based upon industry best practices

Objectives

C2.1- All professional growth and development opportunities will help staff and board achieve their professional development objectives

C2.2 -Staff and board will have access to information about industry best practices and client-defined needs

Goal D: *The issue of poverty will be a focus of local debate and action*

Strategy D1: Improve the community's general awareness of poverty issues, poverty reduction best practices, our agency's mission, services and state and national community action agenda

Objectives

D1.1 -Poverty awareness-raising events for the community will be held on a regular basis

D1.2- Staff, board and volunteers will participate in national, state and local poverty reduction initiatives as applicable

Goal E: *Actively promote and increase client self-sufficiency*

Strategy E1: Improve our capacity to meet clients where they are and support them in achieving their self-sufficiency

Objectives

E1.1 -All clients served by SMCAA will create a self-sufficiency matrix through FacsPro

E1.2 -Staff will refer clients to other programs and services that will help them with barriers to self-sufficiency

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS DATA

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- The services we provide address a range of critical issues along the continuum: emergency assistance such as food, rent, utilities, and shelter; supportive services such as supportive housing, Family Self Sufficiency, credit repair and counseling, homeowner preparation; and energy and housing services such as energy education, weatherization, and housing development.
- SMCAA is part of a state and national network that gives us access to information on best practices, training and technical support, peer mentoring, monitoring and accountability.
- Community leaders, businesses and other human service agencies appreciate our vision, leadership, and transparent business practices.
- Our diverse staff is committed to the agency, evidenced by our high staff retention and their willingness to adapt, learn and grow. They are also resourceful and determined to find creative solutions in order to serve our clients.
- Members of the Board of Directors represent the consumers, public and private sectors of our three counties and are diverse ethnically, socio-economically, educationally, and geographically. Despite this diversity the Board works well together and frequently takes advantage of training and networking opportunities.

EMERGING TRENDS

- Client needs are becoming more complex requiring more case management I more holistic methods and focused attention in order to help them achieve self-sufficiency while revenue streams for case management are scarce.
- Income qualifications and eligibility guidelines required by funders are becoming more rigorous and complex.
- The effects of the recent recession on unemployment, poverty, foreclosures and income are still being felt by millions of individuals and families, and the eroding safety net means that while there are more people in need, there are fewer resources to help them. Preserving, extending, and strengthening these solutions can help keep more people from falling into poverty.
- Abundance of foreclosures continue. Limited amount of affordable housing stock. Existing stock is older and in need of repair.
- Energy cost are spiraling upward and impacting all heating utilities (i.e. electricity, propane and fuel oil).

- Baby boomers are beginning to retire and people are generally living longer.
- Increased medical needs for low income individuals while Medicare and Medicaid are being limited.
- Rising costs of higher education.
- According to an EPE Research center report, requirements for high school graduation are becoming more stringent and the high school drop-out rate is increasing due in part to “No Child Left Behind”.
- Non-profit agencies are merging or consolidating in an effort to become “leaner & meaner”.