



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

“It is therefore the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this nation by opening, to everyone, the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.”

Economic Opportunity Act, 1964

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2018-2020 Strategic Plan



OUR MISSION

At Community Action we provide access and opportunity for those we serve and those who support our efforts. Through innovative programs and strong community partnerships we eliminate barriers, establishing clear pathways to economic self-reliance.

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CAI Diversity and Inclusion Expectations



Inclusion is the process of involving and valuing all people in an environment regardless of their differences. Inclusion requires a proactive strategy that reflects a conscious decision to respect individuals by affording them the opportunity to become a valued part of the organization.

In order for inclusion to occur, the environment that is created must reflect these values and those that promote cohesion, as well as equal physical and social access.

- We have a written anti-discrimination policy approved by the Board of Directors.
- We have a written diversity and inclusion statement approved by the Leadership Team which will be provided to all staff and presented in each CAI business location.
- Our Executive Director has 1) articulated a case for why greater diversity is important to the organization's mission and performance, 2) ensured that strategies are in place that strengthen the diversity of the workplace and build an inclusive work environment and 3) dedicated to obtaining the proper resources necessary to achieve results.
- We ensure that racially and ethnically diverse candidates are considered for all job opportunities in the organization to the greatest extent possible.
- We seek out and employ best practices in recruiting, hiring, managing and recognizing diverse employees, and eliminating attitudinal, behavioral, physical and procedural barriers to diversity.
- We implement human resources policies and practices for employees that support a fair workplace, including clear goals and expectations for employees, orientation to the organization and their role, rewards and recognition based on merit, supervisors who provide coaching and feedback on performance, and opportunities for development and advancement.

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OUR VALUES



- ❑ We believe people want access to **opportunities** that will enable them to reach their full potential.
- ❑ The people we serve are our most knowledgeable resource; we need to **engage them and listen to them.**
- ❑ Strong working **relationships** are critical to our success; relationships must be built on a foundation of honesty, compassion and respect.
- ❑ We **respect** and are sensitive to the beliefs, needs and capabilities of our culturally diverse customers and staff.
- ❑ **Collaboration** is essential to building effective poverty solutions.
- ❑ The systems in which we work must be **creative and flexible.**
- ❑ We strive to **develop** an environment that provides support, resources and opportunities for high staff achievement.
- ❑ We must be **accountable** to communities, funders and those we serve and must use our resources strategically and thoughtfully.

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Executive Summary



Community Action, Inc. carried out a Community Needs Assessment in 2016 to determine the top needs and to confirm that CAI's mission is addressing the causes and consequences of poverty in Rock and Walworth Counties. The comprehensive assessment process included focus groups with community members, staff, Board members and stakeholders.

The assessment included a review and analysis of state, regional and local data demographics. Each piece of the assessment process was significant in informing the strategies, plans and approaches that the Agency will take over the next three years to address the top needs identified: Economic Self-Reliance, Lack of Health and Mental Health Support, Affordable Housing, Education and Training and Youth Mentoring and Development.

There are many reasons why poverty still endures, including high housing costs in our service area. It has become very difficult for individuals and families to find adequate, fair market value housing. Many low-income individuals and families simply do not have a "living wage" sufficient to support the housing costs that continue to rise, in the area.

Survey respondent demographics



- ☐ 40.90% of respondents were from Walworth County
- ☐ 50.98% of respondents were from Rock County
- ☐ 100% are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level
- ☐ 38.1% are at or below 100% of the poverty level
- ☐ 66% of respondents have income levels below \$18,310 per year
- ☐ 85.87% of respondents in Rock County are women
- ☐ 68.67% of respondents in Walworth County are women
- ☐ 33%% of respondents in Walworth County are single, living alone
- ☐ 8.15% of respondents in Rock County are single, living alone
- ☐ 53.26% of respondents in Rock County are households with children
- ☐ 24.66% of respondents in Walworth County are households with children
- ☐ 81.9% of respondents are White; 7.56% Black, 6.2% Multiracial and 5.3% Hispanic

Key issues identified by Focus Group Sessions



1. Mental Health (improve access/availability)
2. Financial Literacy (savings, financial mentors)
3. Early Family Intervention
4. Employment (child care, skills, maintaining job, available employment vs. unemployment gap, job skills, soft skills)
5. AODA Services
6. Education and Training (becoming educated to open up more job opportunities)
7. Transportation (car repair, gas money, bus passes)
8. Homelessness/Lack of affordable housing
9. Awareness of agency services/collaboration
10. Youth programming

Top 10 Concerns in Rock County



Rock	2016 Survey Percentage	2016 Survey Rank
Lack of savings	52.72%	1
Have enough money to respond to unexpected emergencies	48.91%	2
Having enough money to pay all the monthly bills	44.02%	3
Cost of heating	41.85%	4
Cost of car repairs	40.76%	5
Finding a dentist who accepts BadgerCare/Medicaid patients	39.67%	6
I cannot afford to buy a decent house	36.96%	7
Paying for school	36.41%	8
Getting a better-paying job	33.70%	9
Cost of maintaining car (insurance, gas)	33.15%	10

Top 10 Concerns in Walworth County



Walworth	2016 Survey Rank	2016 Survey Rank
Lack of savings	54.67%	1
Have enough money to respond to unexpected emergencies	51.33%	2
Having enough money to pay all the monthly bills	42.00%	3
Dental costs	39.33%	4
I cannot afford to buy a decent house	35.33%	5
Cost of car repairs	34.67%	6
Finding a dentist who accepts BadgerCare/Medicaid patients	32.00%	7
Getting a job with health insurance benefits	30.00%	8
Cost of rent	29.33%	9 tie
Medical costs	29.33%	9 tie
Medical/dental insurance costs	29.33%	9 tie
Cost of maintaining car (insurance, gas)	28.67%	10
Getting affordable legal services	28.67%	10

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Program Framework



Client Niche

The programs of Community Action will strive to effectively serve those individuals and families most likely to be living in poverty, including racial and ethnic minorities and single-parent households. We will also work to serve those families with multiple barriers to employment and sufficiency and those who are under- or unsuccessfully served by traditional mainstream systems.

Self-Sufficiency Focus

We acknowledge that poverty-related work can include assisting families to meet their basic needs; assisting families in working their way from poverty to self-sufficiency and challenging and supporting the work of communities to change the underlying conditions that cause poverty. Community Action is committed to investing most heavily on devising solutions that will effectively move individuals and families to self-sufficiency.

Defining Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency includes having the capacity to meet the basic emotional, physical and financial needs of a household/family. For the purposes of our work we will define the income needed to achieve self-sufficiency as 200% of the federal poverty level.

Building Self-Sufficiency: Our Beliefs and Programming Framework

Self-sufficiency is a journey. The length of the journey depends on the individual, their community, their natural supports and the available resources to assist along the way.

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ROMA GOALS

RESULTS ORIENTED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

-A performance-based initiative designed to preserve the anti-poverty focus of community action and to promote greater effectiveness among state and local agencies receiving Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds. CAI has aligned ROMA with CSBG priorities of Family, Community and Agency in developing Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies.

ROMA 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)**



FAMILY GOALS

Goal 1. Low-income people become more self-sufficient.

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

Economic Self-Reliance



National ROMA Goal	Low-income people become more self-sufficient. (Family)
Outcome	Families will increase household income and reduce reliance on public assistance.
Goal (Destination)	CAI will offer a range of services designed to assist low-income consumers to become more self-sufficient; we will prioritize services targeted to needs identified by consumer stakeholders including employment, education, child care, housing stability, health services and financial literacy.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Identified in our 2016 Needs Assessment, individuals indicated lack of access to stable housing, continuing education and living wage employment as barriers to self-sufficiency.
Objective (Performance Target)	During FY2018-2020, CAI will increase by 10% annually the number of low-income individuals or households who acquire permanent housing, higher education/job training and/or employment.

Economic Self-Reliance Annual Goals



FY 2018	Identify resources and partnerships in Walworth County to determine the employment and training needs of the community.	Planning staff will work with the Executive Director and the Deputy Director to develop a timeline and process for employment and training programs in Walworth County.
FY 2019	Implement employment and training programs in Walworth County based on the results of 2018 needs determination and increase awareness of the CAI programs to low-income individuals throughout our service delivery area.	Planning staff will work with the Executive Director and the Deputy Director to expand employment and training programming in Walworth County by a minimum of 1 program.
FY 2020	CAI will evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of Walworth County programming.	Planning staff will work with the Executive Director and the Deputy Director to include program evaluation and report to the Board of Directors.

Adult Preparation



National ROMA Goal	Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems. (Family)
Outcome	Youth will successfully navigate adolescence, avoid risky behaviors and be prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education.
Goal (Destination)	We will increase prevention and early intervention programming for youth to reduce poverty and the impacts of poverty in order to strengthen families to achieve their potential.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Providing evidence-based programming and healthy alternatives to risky behaviors will keep adolescents in the community and out of the juvenile justice system.
Objective (Performance Target)	Continue partnerships with youth serving agencies throughout our service area to enroll a minimum of 300 youth in adult preparation and continuing education programs.

Adult Preparation Annual Goals

FY 2018	Partner with School Districts throughout Rock County to increase PREP curriculum to youth.	Planning and Development Director will work with the Deputy Director and Executive Director to identify and create additional partnerships throughout Rock County by a minimum of one School District.
FY 2018	Submit an application to DOL requesting additional funding for the Fresh Start Program.	The Deputy Director will work with the Executive Director and Program staff to evaluate the program and submit an application to DOL for funding.
FY 2019	Partner with the Delavan School District in Walworth County to increase PREP curriculum to youth.	Planning Director will work with the Deputy Director and Executive Director to develop a partnership with the Delavan School District to provide the PREP curriculum to students.

Financial Literacy

National ROMA Goal	Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems. (Family)
Outcome	Low-income families will be provided with the tools and resources to build financial stability.
Goal (Destination)	We will work with financial institutions and community partners to educate low-income families regarding money management and asset building.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Money management and asset building education are learned skills often unavailable to low-income families
Objective (Performance Target)	CAI will adopt evidence-based financial literacy curricula that will be incorporated into CAI programming by the end of 2018 .

Financial Literacy Annual Goals

FY 2018	Explore evidence-based financial literacy curricula and adopt a curriculum to be implemented into programming.	The Deputy Director will work with the Management team to explore and adopt a financial literacy curriculum to be implemented into programming.
FY 2018	Work with Financial institutions and Community partners to offer Financial Planning workshops to participants and community members.	The Management Team will develop partnerships to provide Financial planning workshops.

Transportation

National ROMA Goal	Low-income people become more self-sufficient. (Family)
Outcome	We will impact the systemic discrimination against low-income families created by eliminating driver's education from public schools.
Goal (Destination)	We will work with community partners to provide driver's education scholarships and courses for low-income youth in Rock and Walworth Counties.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	The unintended consequence of eliminating driver's education from schools created a financial barrier for low-income youth.
Objective (Performance Target)	We will provide driver's education courses and/or scholarships for 15 youth in Rock and Walworth Counties.

Transportation Annual Goals

FY 2018	The Work and Wheels program will be converted to a Driver's Education and License Recovery program.	Deputy Director will work with the Director team to phase out the Work and Wheels program and convert it to a Driver's Education and License Recovery program.
FY 2018	A minimum of 15 individuals will acquire a driver's license.	Deputy Director will work with the Executive Director and program staff to develop policies and procedures for the Driver's Education/License Recovery program.



COMMUNITY GOALS

Goal 2. The conditions in which low-income people live are improved.

Goal 3. Low-income people own a stake in their community.

Cultural Equity Annual Goals



National ROMA Goal	The conditions in which low-income people live are improved. (Community)
Outcome	We will educate and guide conversations to help reduce systemic discrimination in our community.
Goal (Destination)	We will provide culturally competent service delivery and serve as a role model for our community by promoting the importance of cultural competence as a means to eliminate barriers that inhibit progress towards economic self-reliance.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Systemic discrimination creates barriers to economic self-reliance and disproportionately impacts ethnic and cultural minority groups.
Objective (Performance Target)	We will provide cultural equity training for 1000 individuals annually in Rock and Walworth Counties.

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Cultural Equity Annual Goals

FY 2018	Provide Cultural Equity training to a minimum of 1000 individuals in 2018.	Planning and Development Director will work with the Executive Director and the Deputy Director to promote partnerships and schedule trainings throughout the Community.
FY 2018	Ensure that the Board of Director's is reflective of the population served by actively pursuing candidates from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Executive Director will work with the Governance Committee to actively pursue candidates who are reflective of the population served.
FY 2018	Maintain an organization who embraces Diversity by providing on-going training to staff, board members and volunteers.	Planning and Development Director will work with the Executive Director and the Deputy Director to schedule trainings throughout the year.

Housing Stability



National ROMA Goal	The conditions in which low-income people live are improved. (Community)
Outcome	Low-income families will be educated on housing rights and responsibilities.
Goal (Destination)	We will work with private and public sector partners to increase the awareness of safe and affordable housing for low-income families by incorporating Rent Smart curricula into housing programming.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	The lack of knowledge regarding tenant rights and the inability to afford increasing rental payments leads to housing instability and homelessness.
Objective (Performance Target)	Increase participant knowledge regarding tenant rights and responsibilities to support informed housing decisions

Housing Stability Annual Goals

FY 2018-2020	Provide Rent Smart curricula to program participants facing housing instability.	Management Team will oversee implementation of Rent Smart curricula and evaluate for consistency and effectiveness.
FY 2018-2020	Continue to educate local landlords on CAI housing programs and related benefits.	Community Programs Director will work with program staff to ensure that landlords are well informed.

Community Awareness

National ROMA Goal	Low-income people own a stake in their community. (Community)
Outcome	Low-income households increase their participation in local organizations, events and activities.
Goal (Destination)	People are invested in their communities and influence positive change.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Many individuals within our service area are not engaged in affecting change throughout their community.
Objective (Performance Target)	Provide a minimum of 15 community forums annually for individuals to come together and discuss issues affecting their community and implement change.

Community Awareness Annual Goals

FY 2018-2020	Provide annual forums for community engagement opportunities, such as Courageous Conversations, to address issues identified by low-income consumers and program participants.	Director Team in collaboration with the Consumer Advisory determine an approach to collect topics of issue and schedule forums.
FY 2018-2020	Identify service learning opportunities and provide to program participants.	Management Team coordinates with AmeriCorps members to develop community engagement directory of opportunities.



AGENCY GOALS

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

Goal 5. Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.

Early Literacy

National ROMA Goal	Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved. (Agency)
Outcome	Youth will enter school at developmentally appropriate levels regardless of race or class.
Goal (Destination)	Work with partners to provide developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant early childhood education for underserved families.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	To close the achievement gap that exists between privileged populations and traditionally underserved populations.
Objective (Performance Target)	Work with educational institutions as well as private and public sector partners to establish an early literacy initiative for the Beloit community.

Early Literacy Annual Goals

FY 2018	Evaluate the need for expanded Childcare services at Community Kids in Janesville.	Executive Director will work with the Deputy Director and program staff to evaluate the need for expanded services in Janesville.
FY 2018	Work with Beloit Community Stake holders by participating on community committees working towards adopting an early literacy approach for the Beloit Community.	Executive Director will work with the Planning and Development Director to ensure on-going participation at the early literacy initiative committee.
FY 2018	Work with partners to ensure that literacy programs are culturally sensitive and culturally relevant manner.	Planning and Development Director will work with early literacy committee to ensure committee partners adhere to culturally relevant practices.

Fiscal Responsibility

National ROMA Goal	Agency increases their capacity to achieve results (Agency)
Outcome	CAI will pursue discretionary funding to meet emerging needs.
Goal (Destination)	We will maintain our financial strength with an emphasis on building assets and discretionary financial resources.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Financial stability provides opportunity to pursue additional resources for program innovation.
Objective (Performance Target)	We will enhance visibility and increase undesignated funds through fee for service training and technical assistance.

Fiscal Responsibility

FY 2018- 2020	Market fee for service training and technical support to generate a minimum of \$15,000 annually in non-discretionary funds for the agency.	Executive Director will work with the Planning and Development Director to identify a plan for achieving the desired outcome.
FY 2018	Develop a “Signature” fundraiser in Walworth County to replace the current “Golf outing” fundraiser. Reengage with Walworth County Service Clubs to promote the event.	Planning and Development Director will work with the Marketing/Public Relations Manager to identify options and develop Walworth partnerships.
FY 2018	Implement a new Chart of Accounts which will meet funding requirements and allow for better monitoring of contracts by the Director Team.	Finance Director will work with the Executive Director and fiscal staff to accomplish the desired outcome.

Board Development

National ROMA Goal	Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results. (Agency)
Outcome	Board of Directors will provide access to human and financial resources which benefit the organization.
Goal (Destination)	We will maintain a strong Board of Directors that ensures full Board participation in planning and decision making.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	A strong board and fully engaged board is an indicator of the overall stability of an organization.
Objective (Performance Target)	We will provide a minimum of 6 educational sessions annually for our Board of Directors to ensure they are informed advocates of our organization.

Board Development Annual Goals

FY 2018	Board members will be provided a minimum of 6 agency/program presentations and/or Board trainings in order to ensure that they are a prepared and informed Governing body of the Organization.	The Executive Director will work with the Governance committee to schedule program presentations and Board trainings throughout the year.
FY 2019	Utilize both traditional and social media to increase awareness and promote volunteer and donor partners. By December 2019, CAI will have reached 1,500 Facebook likes.	The Development Director will work with the Executive Director and the Public Relations manager to achieve the desired outcome.

Mental Health



National ROMA Goal	Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results. (Agency)
Outcome	Staff will be better equipped to provide services to participants.
Goal (Destination)	We will provide additional support, education and training for staff that engage with participants dealing with mental health issues and battling addiction issues.
Rationale (identifies reason for the goal)	Addressing Mental Health and AOTDA issues are not direct services CAI provides, however, many of our participants struggle with these issues in addition to other barriers.
Objective (Performance Target)	CAI will provide a minimum of 10 hours of evidence-based and best practice education for staff that consistently engage with participants dealing with mental health issues and battling addiction issues.

Mental Health Annual Goals

FY 2018	Partner with Mental Health and AOTDA service providers to provide training during the 2018 All Staff for staff.	Executive Director will work with the Director team to develop a plan for providing Mental Health and AOTDA training for staff in 2018.
FY 2018	Establish partnerships with Mental Health and AOTDA providers to develop a resource list of referrals for staff.	Executive Director will work with the Director team to develop a partnerships with Mental health and AOTDA service providers.



A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

A level playing field is a concept about fairness. A metaphorical playing field is said to be level if no external interference affects the ability of the person to compete fairly, to succeed. Despite efforts to bring greater access and opportunity to our community, too many individuals — especially low-income, ethnic and cultural minority individuals — face greater systemic impediments when striving to succeed. Discrimination and disparities still persist; the playing field is not level. Our mission is to create access and opportunity; to eliminate external interference or barriers, and in effect, level the playing field.

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