

Community Action, Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties

Strategic Plan, 2008 - 2011

The focus of our greatest efforts must be assisting families to achieve self-sufficiency. The path to self-sufficiency will t be built upon a foundation of education and employment.

Mission

Our mission is to empower economically and socially disadvantaged members of our communities to strive for and achieve their highest potential, because we understand that when people succeed, our communities succeed.

Vision

Community Action will be a leader in creating and supporting programs that help individuals and communities to succeed. We will be trusted for our effectiveness and our commitment to quality and we will be recognized for our ability to listen to and empower people.

Values

Strength and Interests of People - We believe that all people desire access to resources that will allow them to meet their basic needs. We believe people want access to opportunities that will empower them to reach their full potential. We believe each and every person possesses an array of strengths and that opportunities always exist to build upon those strengths.

Listening and Learning - The people we serve are our most knowledgeable resource. We will only be effective if we successfully engage and listen to them as we work with them to address the issues that impact their lives.

Relationships – Strong working relationships are critical to our success and these relationships must be built on a foundation of honesty, compassion and respect.

Collaboration – We recognize that developing partnerships and building collaborations are essential to building effective solutions and high quality programs.

Flexibility – We believe that real change can best be achieved when we challenge ourselves and the systems in which we work, to be creative and flexible.

Accountability – We understand that resources are scarce and the needs in our communities are great. We therefore believe we have an obligation to be good stewards and to utilize our resources strategically and thoughtfully.

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.

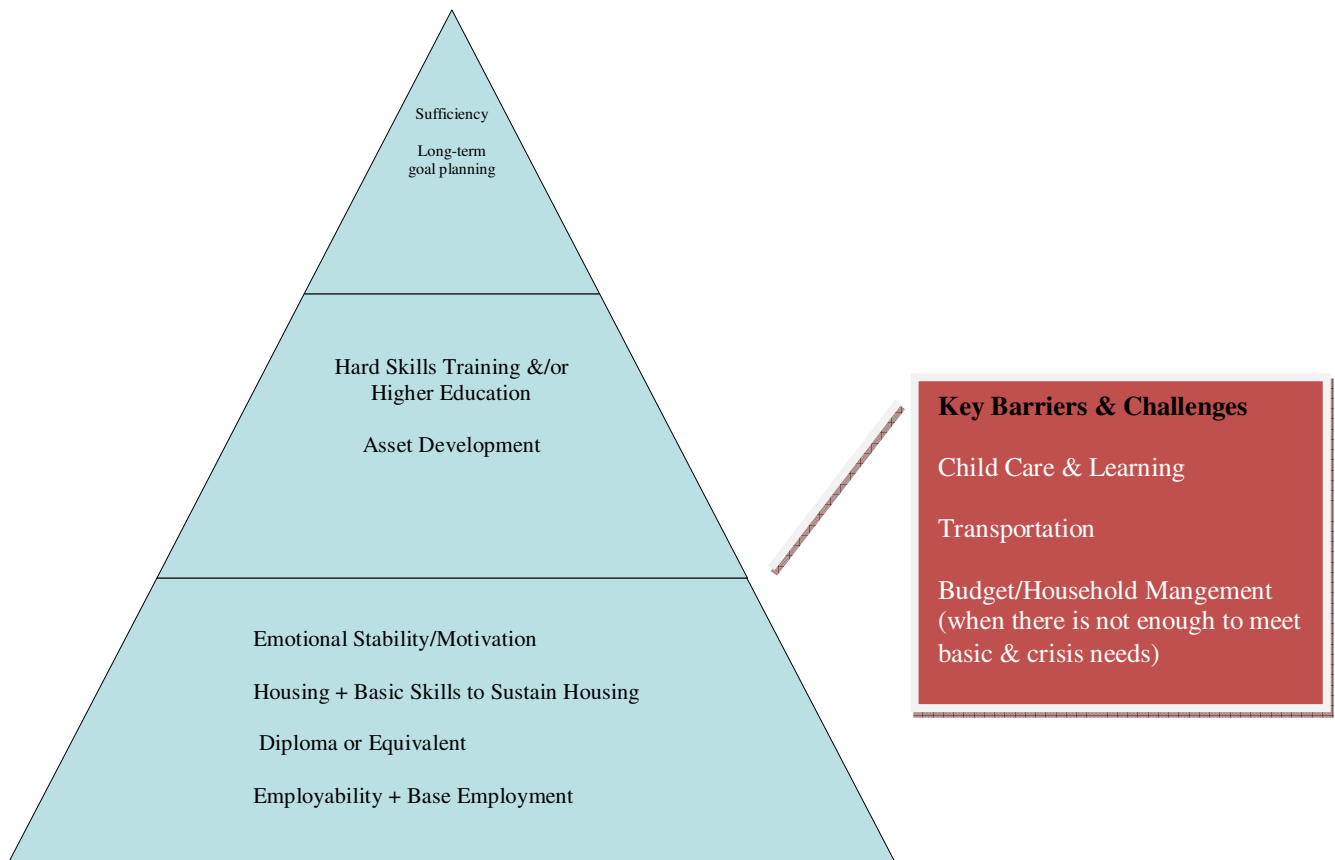
Defining Self-Sufficiency

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.

Exhibit 1: Self-Sufficiency Framework



Poverty Prevention & Community Building

While building self-sufficiency is our most critical objective, antipoverty goals also necessitate understanding and addressing individual, systemic and community conditions and characteristic that causes and create barriers to self-sufficiency. In other words, our solutions must address both individual issues and challenges and system/community challenges and conditions.

Core Goals

1. We will research, plan and implement innovative and effective solutions to reduce and prevent poverty. We will target our efforts to the individuals and groups most significantly impacted by poverty and will maintain those activities that achieve the highest impact and the greatest success.
2. We will sustain & enhance the strength and effectiveness of Community Action.
3. We will support strengthen the capacity of community partners to develop concrete and effective poverty response initiatives.

Core Outcome Measures

- We will position ourselves to move a minimum of 100 individual/families to self-sufficiency annually (200% of poverty).
- We will develop and sustain a network of 1000 “friends” (donors, volunteers, people who can open doors).
- We will raise \$450,000 in private support annually.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goal #1

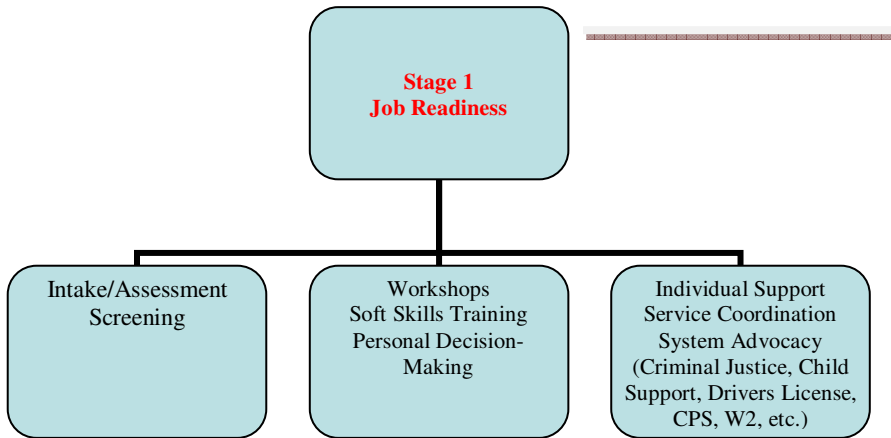
We will research, plan and implement innovative and effective solutions to reduce and prevent poverty. We will target our efforts to the individuals and groups most significantly impacted by poverty and will maintain those activities that achieve the highest impact and the greatest success.

Strategy #1

We will build our role and brand as the most effective self-sufficiency organization in the area (internally and externally);

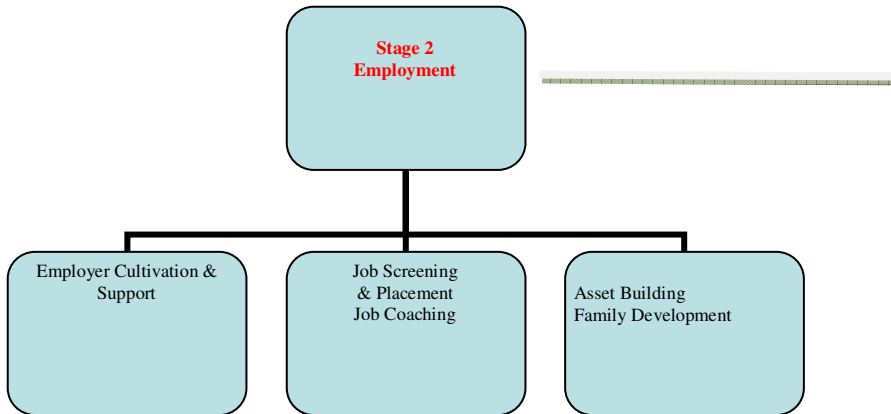
- Build and sustain a foundation of services that allow program participants to meet their basic needs and build the skills and assets necessary to achieve self-sufficiency;
 - Design and implement job training and employment placement services (*See Exhibit 2: Employment Services*)
 - Redesign and re-align case management programs as “wrap-around” to employment services in order to effectively mitigate participant barriers to employment
 - Ensure sustainability of existing Employment & Training programs (Fatherhood, Fresh Start, Skills Enhancement)
 - Successfully complete the rehabilitation of at least 3 homes/year in the Merrill Homeownership project and work with key stakeholders to improve underlying neighborhood conditions that impact poverty
 - Create/implement asset building opportunities and explore options to convert direct assistance to asset building
 - Sustain and expand our willingness and ability to challenge system and community barriers that impact self-sufficiency outcomes and access to resources
 - Capitalize on opportunities to employ participants within CA programs/programming
 - Define and enhance “self-sufficiency” programming within the HUB Teen Parents (TPC) and Transitional Living (TLP) programs.
 - Implement a targeted Jobs and Business Development Program (JBD) to assist low-income individuals to start or expand their own businesses
- Increase our ability to provide holistic services to program participants;
 - Explore options for providing generic (v. program specific) case management
 - Consider “pilot” access/case management initiative in targeted program

Exhibit 2: Employment Services



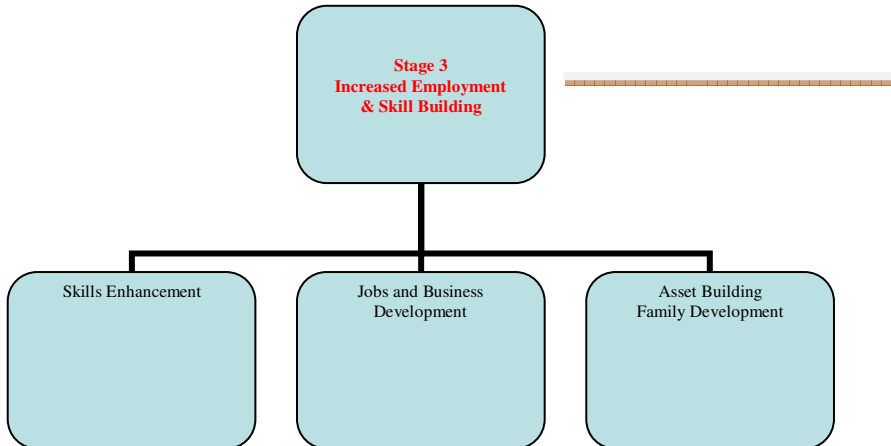
Objectives

- Train all case management staff to perform basic employment assessments; cross-train employment staff re: service delivery
- Explore options to increase access to GED opportunities to allow participants to meet requirements for employers
- Determine workshop structure and delivery options – enhance ability to address “mindset” issues & cultural competence challenges
- Reorganize E&T and case management responsibilities to provide both to all participants; Integrate case staffing model
- Develop supports/partnerships to address mental health challenges
- Determine timing and structure for integration of initial asset development



Objectives

- Increase and formalize relationships with employers
- Centralize employee information to facilitate placements
- Focus on Job Retention Objectives
- Explore opportunities for expansion of placement and coaching beyond CAI participants
- Explore provision of transitional job opportunities for those not yet ready for unsubsidized employment
- Explore opportunities to integrate asset development and family focused activities



Objectives

- Work with employers to identify and support advancement opportunities within existing placement environments
- Secure resources to ensure continuation and support expansion of Skills Enhancement
- Implement “pilot” JBD program and explore opportunities to increase business development as an employment strategy

Strategy #2

We will sustain and enhance existing “employment support programs”

- Expand the Work-n-Wheels Program and collaborate with community partners to increase access to transportation options, particularly to ensure access to employment
- Ensure access to affordable, flexible child care for working parents; Enhance connections to internal partners in order to assist more CK families to move toward self-sufficiency
- Enhance production quality and capacity to bring Weatherization/energy savings to low-income families; Leverage our control to utilize resources to assist our program participants
- Continue efforts to provide homebuyer education and assistance to increase access to homeownership for qualified low and moderate income families

Strategy #3

We will enhance and improve current programs designed to prevent individuals within at-risk populations from entering into a cycle of poverty.

- Community Kids (CK) will enhance program quality in order to ensure that children build the foundation of skills that will allow them to achieve long-term intellectual, social and emotional success.
- Build the capacity of First Choice to help low-income women avoid unintended pregnancies.
 - Provide quality family planning services consistent with Title X requirements. Increase patient service levels to reach unduplicated patient volume of 3,799 by 2011.
 - Build our capacity to reach and serve diverse populations.
 - Implement targeted outreach and marketing to those populations most at risk of experiencing pregnancies that increase risks of falling into poverty.

Strategy #4

We will ensure continuation of key rural programs and build collaborations to enhance the service delivery system in rural communities, specifically Evansville and Walworth County

- Continue programs deemed critical to rural delivery system including Twin Oaks Shelter, the HOME rehabilitation program and AWARE in Evansville
- Develop strategies to increase access and utilization of targeted CAI programs (work-n-wheels; Skills Enhancement, JBD, soft skills training)
- Increase access to quality affordable housing in Walworth County by developing 50 units of rental housing by 2011
- Explore service models and collaborations to provide access to dental care options and access to financial literacy and asset development programs
- Research needs and potential collaborations to reach non-English speaking Hispanics

Goal #2

We will sustain and enhance the strength and effectiveness of Community Action.

Strategy #1

We intend to support, sustain and develop our staff and leadership.

- Ensure support and inspiration for staff willingness to do the “hard stuff”; Appropriately manage and support staff in an environment of increasing participant demands; Identify additional and continuing strategies for building and supporting cultural competence
- Create targeted staff development opportunities focused on core identified needs including CAI services and goals, resources/system navigation, cultural competence, employability
- Define the purpose of Inside Action as a core tool for meeting identified staff objectives (see above); Refine staff orientation process and utilize All-Staff Meetings to meet objectives
- Create a formal staff education loan/funding program

Strategy #2

We will enhance agency visibility and increase access to discretionary resources in order to support and sustain programming.

- Leverage both our work and evolving partnerships to build our reputation and fund development opportunities
 - Implement a formal volunteer program (utilizing technology as base/support) that creatively connects volunteers directly to our work and our consumers
 - Create opportunities to publicly recognize and acknowledge non-traditional poverty partners
 - Create opportunities to connect donors to direct needs of participants
 - Sustain the CAI consumer advisory committee in order to provide substantive feedback to staff and the board related to program policies and operations.
- Increase private donor base including the number of individual, corporate and foundation donors, as well as the total dollars raised
- Revise the CAI mission statement and tagline in order to more effectively solidify the CAI brand as an effective self-sufficiency organization
- Prioritize the housing development activities that can generate discretionary agency revenue.

Strategy #3

Increase our use of technology to increase efficiency, effectiveness and consumer access;

- Establish baseline technology expectations for all positions (job specific) and fully utilize Sharepoint to enhance availability of personnel and agency program information as well as information about community resources
- Evaluate and implement department specific efficiency improvements
- Increase use of technology to improve agency specific data collection efforts
- Explore community partnership opportunities to increase technology access for low-income consumers including opportunities for consumer-accessible information 'kiosks' at program sites and programs to increase access to personal computers
- Utilize technology as a marketing a fund development tool by implementing e-fundraising and e-newsletter communication strategies and continually maintaining an up-to-date website

Strategy #4

We will sustain the financial strength and strengthen programming by focusing on accountability including effectively managing program opportunities, grant resources and internal controls.

- Ensure continuation of key funding streams and creatively manage those resources to achieve goals related to holistic service delivery
- Enhance agency-wide data-gathering strategies to enable the organization to measure program effectiveness. Track program outcomes according to core outcome goals for Community Action and implement systems to track the number of families each year that reach 125%, 150% and 200% of poverty
- Develop, implement and monitor policies related to internal controls, including controls surrounding technology use.
- Strategically develop and measure outcome goals and objectives, integrating milestones within annual workplans.

Strategy #5

Maintain a strong Board of Directors and continue strategies that ensure full Board participation.

- Maintain a committee structure for the Board that assists the Board in fulfilling their responsibilities and ensures that committees are results oriented and accountable to the full board; Utilize non-board member community members to build strength of committees and build a feeder system for future Board participation
- Provide ongoing education opportunities as a means of ensuring that all board members are knowledgeable regarding their roles, the programs of the agency and the needs of low-income individuals and families within our service area
- Enhance board diversity by strengthening consumer and minority participation.

Strategy #6

We will provide and maintain adequate and appropriate space for CAI programs.

- Secure a "permanent" home for Beloit operations

- Increase visibility in Beloit
- Provide adequate space to meet current and anticipated program needs
- Explore opportunities and partnerships to create “campus” for provision of key self-sufficiency resources
- Explore opportunities for more effectively utilizing the Delavan office
- Evaluate the communication and security needs of CK program locations and implement necessary improvements
- Monitor facility improvement needs and integrate ongoing investment/improvement plans in annual budgets and workplans

Goal #3

We will support and strengthen the capacity of community partners to develop concrete and effective poverty response initiatives.

Strategy #1

Provide support to key community partners including administrative support, grant writing and grant management, coordinating and collaboration-building activities, advocacy and special projects.

- Continue operation of the TEFAP program, providing food resources to area food pantries.
- Continue operation of AWARE, strengthening the ability of the Evansville community to meet the needs of low-income individuals within their community.
- Work collaboratively with area homeless service providers to secure and manage grant funding for homeless service providers including State Shelter Subsidy Grant, the Emergency Shelter Grant, the Continuum of Care and the Transitional Living Program, Shelter Plus Care program.

Strategy #2

Enhance community engagement, particularly with non-traditional poverty partners (including consumers and employers) to build creative and collaborative poverty solutions. Partnership efforts will specifically target solutions related to asset development, increased training and education, dental care access, affordable housing, transportation and technology access

- Explore opportunities to implement a technology -based consumer “investment” program (help meet individual needs)
- Create a collaboration to host a community forum showcasing “best practice” poverty solutions
- Capitalize on opportunities to develop pilot projects to meet targeted needs
- Formalize collaborations to enhance rural service delivery system
- Increase and strengthen relationships with employers to support and enhance self-sufficiency goals
- Create and support opportunities for use of volunteers within the Merrill Homeownership Project
- Connect with and support regional collaborations to explore and enhance transportation options for consumers