

**Community Action, Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties**  
**Strategic Plan, 2008 – 2011**  
**Implementation Report, January 2010**

## **SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF FINAL PLAN**

### **Program Framework**

#### **Self-Sufficiency Focus**

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.

#### **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.

#### **Poverty Prevention & Community Building**

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.**
  - We will build our role and brand as the most effective self-sufficiency organization in the area (internally and externally);
  - We will sustain and enhance existing “employment support programs”
  - We will enhance and improve current programs designed to prevent individuals within at-risk populations from entering into a cycle of poverty.
  - 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
  
- 2. We will sustain & enhance the strength and effectiveness of Community Action.**
  - We intend to support, sustain and develop our staff and leadership.
  - We will enhance agency visibility and increase access to discretionary resources in order to support and sustain programming.
  - Increase our use of technology to increase efficiency, effectiveness and consumer access;

- We will sustain the financial strength and strengthen programming by focusing on accountability including effectively managing program opportunities, grant resources and internal controls.
- Maintain a strong Board of Directors and continue strategies that ensure full Board participation.
- We will provide and maintain adequate and appropriate space for CAI programs.

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

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

*Please refer to the final plan document for a detailed list of strategic objectives.*

**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.

*Note: Outcome progress data available in February 2010*

**IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS**

Employment-related objectives

Utilized ARRA funding, as well as United Way and private foundation support, to increase employment related programming and enhance educational outcomes (Front-End Center). The initiatives will not only enable us to enhance services for participants (particularly GED supports and career path planning) but are also intended to build internal systems and collaboration and to ensure that all case management staff have at least a baseline set of employment service competencies. Our goal is to serve 100 individuals through September 2010.

Secured ARRA funding to operate a summer youth employment program serving 35 Beloit youth.

Secured \$96,850 in private support for CAI employment programming and allocated ARRA CSBG and/or regular CSBG to fund a total of 34 Fatherhood slots and 48 Skills Enhancement slots in 2009. Funding for both programs is also in place to ensure a base level continuation through 2010. In addition, CAI secured a federal Youthbuild grant to allow for the continuation of Fresh Start.

Continued system level advocacy, resulting in a collaborative grant application to the Department of Labor by CAI, the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and Blackhawk Technical College targeting chronically underemployed with multiple barriers to employment in the Merrill Neighborhood.

Provided employment (CAI hire) to 3 program participants in 2009; one of three retained employment for more than 6 months.

### Employment Supports

Utilized ARRA funds to implement a pilot Driver's License Recovery Project with a goal of serving 25 individuals through September 2010.

Provided 0% car loans to 18 households to support their ability to work. In addition, staff worked with local transportation providers to begin planning for transportation enhancements to support employment. Coordination (mobility management) will not be funded/continued in 2010.

Continued CK programming and flexibility, despite economic conditions and resulting program hardships.

Completed work on 2 homes in the Merrill Neighborhood. Sold one to a qualified homeowner. Secured a VISTA worker to assist with neighborhood organizing efforts and worked with neighborhood residents to initiate a neighborhood group in the Porter corridor.

Weatherized a total of nearly 300 units in 2008-2009 and have been working to increase capacity. Per month unit capacity in the last contract (including large multifamily dwellings was 22 units/month). Per month capacity over the first half of the new contract has increased to 27.5 units/month with no multifamily units (over 4 units) reported.

Increased patient volume at First Choice by 8.3% to a total of 3424 unduplicated patients. First Choice staff worked collaboratively with HUB staff to provide education and resources to teen parents in order to reduce subsequent pregnancies among HUB participants.

### Agency Effectiveness

CAI updated the agency Mission Statement as an outcome of the 2008 planning process. The new statement, approved in February 2009 is as follows "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." The approved tagline is "Creating Pathways Out of Poverty".

We raised a total of \$543,616 in private support in 2009 which included \$170,375 from United Way organizations and \$373,241 from private donors and foundations.

CAI initiated implementation of an organized volunteer program and work to enhance public profile and publicity for CAI.

### Community Collaboration

Staff participated with a group of Walworth County organizations and individuals to begin exploring options to enhance dental care access in Walworth County.

In collaboration with local partners, CAI provided 501,639 pounds of commodity foods to local pantry and to secured approximately \$750,000 in grant support for local poverty partners.

We collaborated with a variety of local organization to submit a funding request to support a community-wide poverty forum in 2010, showcasing best practice programming. Award decisions are pending.

## CHALLENGES

ARRA funding and associated implementation challenges, coupled with the economy and associated program funding challenges, made it difficult to focus consistently on core strategic objectives in 2009.

Some strategic goals impacted in 2009 and at-risk in 2010 include:

- Development of affordable rental housing in Walworth County
- *Central focus* on quality programming within CK
- Staff development and approval/implementation of a formal employee educational loan fund
- Timing/funding for implementation of a Job and Business Development (JBD) program
- Full use of technology to increase efficiency and enhance outcomes
- Attention and use of outcome measures for PR and program improvements
- Effectively filling consumer Board vacancies
- Progress on long-term space for Beloit programming

Work-n-Wheels and Skills Enhancement participation in Walworth County are still below our goal of at least 25% participation at 16% and 18% respectively.

Internal collaboration around employment related outcomes remains a work in progress. There was an increased workload in 2009 as a result of ARRA issues impacting progress. There are also pockets of staff resistance as well as ongoing staff development issues that will need to be addressed in 2010.

Formal press/PR relationships continue to be strongest in Janesville with ongoing need to build connections/visibility in Beloit, rural Rock and Walworth Counties.