



**CAYUGA / SENECA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY, INC.**

**Vision and Direction: Strategic Plan 2018-2022**



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## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

### Mission

The mission of Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc. (CSCAA) is to cultivate a community where all people are respectfully supported and empowered to embrace opportunities for learning, growth and economic security.

### Vision

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc.'s vision is to be recognized for its:

- Commitment to empowering those seeking assistance to achieve and sustain economic security.
- Organizational excellence and continued improvement working with employees, community, and partners.

### Cayuga / Seneca Community Action Agency (CSCAA) Values Statements

- **Respect:** CSCAA creates a welcoming atmosphere where people seeking support are respected, valued and treated with the utmost dignity. This is a place of non-judgment.
- **Sincerity:** CSCAA cares about the impact of its work on the lives of customers and on the well-being of the communities we serve. Our service activities are sincere efforts to meaningfully support customers as they advance their personal goals.
- **Trust:** CSCAA protects and respects all confidential information. We can be counted on to use the utmost discretion.
- **Quality:** CSCAA works to the highest professional standards of quality in its service disciplines. We prioritize ongoing learning and improvement.
- **Resourcefulness:** At CSCAA, we are efficient stewards of the resources entrusted to our agency. To provide comprehensive, effective service to our customers, we carefully manage every dollar and connect customers with other sources of support.
- **Adaptability:** CSCAA regularly monitors conditions in the service area so we can design programmatic responses to the community's most pressing needs.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** CSCAA fosters strong relationships and partnerships as the foundation of its community-building efforts.

### Theory of Change

A Theory of Change outlines an agency's rationale for how its programs and services lead to intermediate and long-term outcomes relative to its mission and goals. As a Community Action Agency, CSCAA strives to achieve the Goals of the National Community Action Network: (1) Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security; (2) Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity; and (3) People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities. The theory of change depicted on the following page outlines how CSCAA's continuum of programs and services come together to achieve these goals.

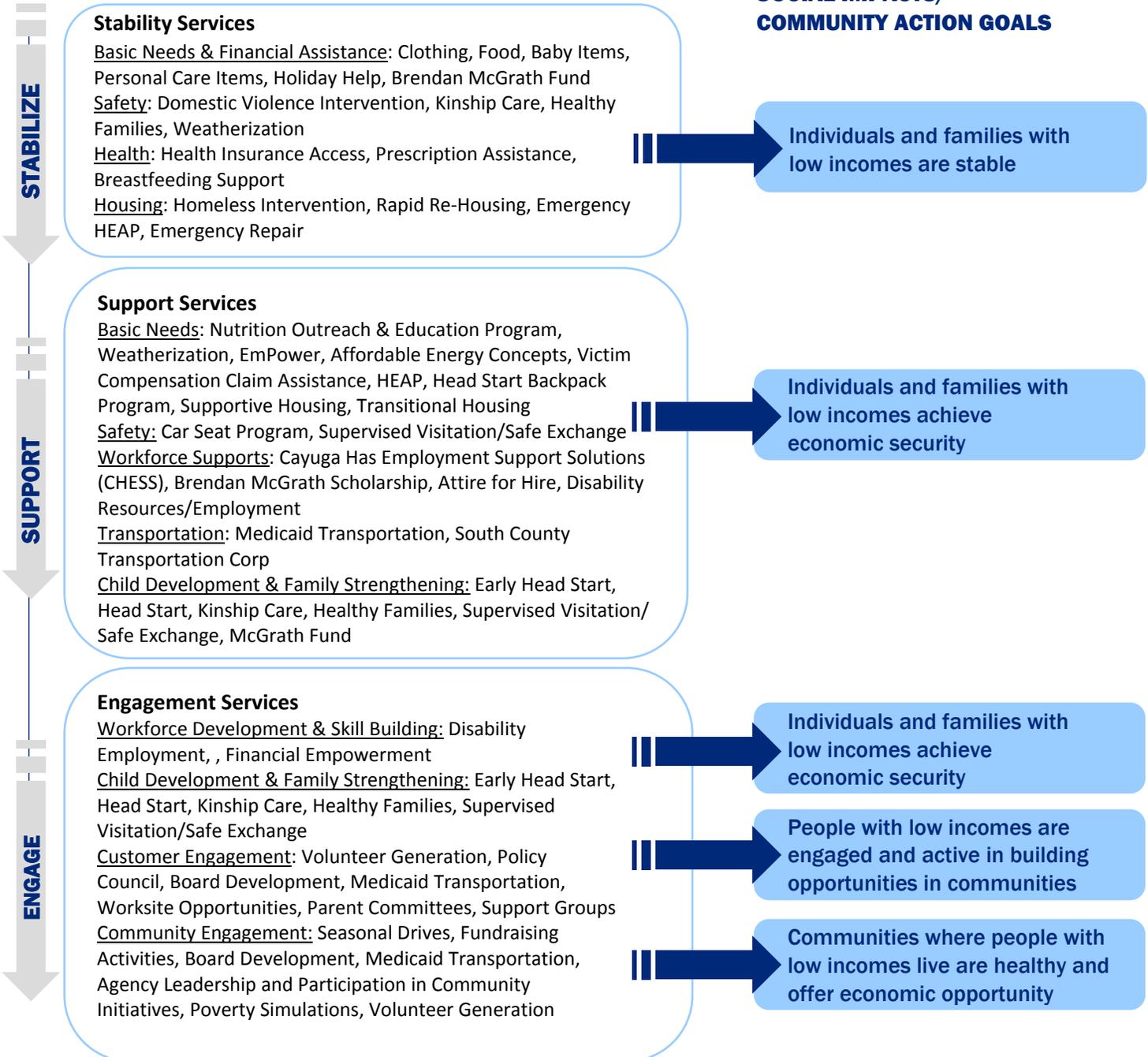


**CAYUGA/SENECA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY:  
THEORY OF CHANGE**

Mission: Cultivate a community where all people are respectfully supported and empowered to embrace opportunities for learning, growth and economic security.

**MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES**

**SOCIAL IMPACTS/  
COMMUNITY ACTION GOALS**



**With stability and support, people can develop themselves, engage more deeply, and make the most of the resources available to reach their goals.**

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

With grant funding secured from the Cayuga Community Fund, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc. (CSCAA) contracted with Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc. to facilitate the strategic planning process in partnership with the Executive Director and the Marketing and Development Director, along with a Strategic Planning Steering Committee formed for this project. The agency's 2016 Community Needs Assessment shaped the process by situating the strategic plan as the agency's response to the top needs identified, including:

- Poverty, Benefit Cliff & Economic Stability
- Transportation
- Housing and Energy
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Child and Family Development/Well-being
- Income & Employment

The process also incorporated input collected through surveys of staff, customers and outside stakeholders. Survey participants answered questions about their perception of the agency's overall performance, challenging conditions in the external and internal environments, agency strengths, mission statement suitability and priorities for agency action. The summarized data was used in conversations with the Steering Committee to organize the plan by agency-level, community-level and family-level goals.

A Strategic Planning Steering Committee involved board and staff leaders in planning sessions to think together in a focused way about the agency mission, theory of change and strategic priorities in the context of identified needs. Committee members participated in an exercise to link agency programs and activities to the achievement of Community Action goals and to the key words in the agency mission statement. During these sessions, committee members decided to change the agency mission statement and to articulate its theory of change. They refined the statement and theory in subsequent sessions.

Two half-day retreats provided the opportunity for additional staff to weigh in on the agency mission, values, assets, and possible strategic responses to needs identified in the Community Needs Assessment. Participants each wrote a "letter to Mom" explaining the work of CSCAA in a true descriptive narrative and their role at CSCAA. Coworkers then highlighted key words that captured the essence of the Agency. These results were used by the Steering Committee as they developed the proposed mission statement. In addition, participants used exercises to envision how the agency's program activities can be augmented or modified to respond to these community needs going forward. They used a work sheet to imagine strategic possibilities and prioritize these by the ones most likely to be effective. In a subsequent session, they refined these ideas by creating a future agency brochure with the ideal array of services to advance the mission, as newly stated.

The Pro Action consultant collated all of the input and brainstorming from the Steering Committee sessions and retreats to draft the goals for Steering Committee feedback and refinement before completing the final version of the plan.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE**

- Greg Hinman, Board Chairman
- Ann Kubarek, Board Member, Director of Employment and Training
- Deborah Patsos, Board Member, Seneca County Representative
- Tim Donovan, Board Member/Head Start Policy Council Liaison, Community Representative
- Laurie A. Piccolo, Executive Director
- Marie Montgomery, Deputy Director
- Tricia Kerr, Marketing and Development Director
- Kathi Craig, Early Childhood Deputy Director
- Chris Ehlers, Community Services Director
- Amy Schiminski, Family & Victim Services Director
- Emily Tortorici, Disability Resource Coordinator
- Anne Wilkes, Seneca Programs Director

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND PLAN

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency leaders have used the strategic planning process as an opportunity to learn about and respond to the environment in which the agency works. Accordingly, the plan highlights the agency's vision and direction to expand upon, add to, augment or optimize its current programming, community partnerships and capacity building work. The goals, objectives and strategies defined in the following sections of the plan do not specify the everyday program operations overseen by the agency. Rather, CSCAA's Strategic Plan contains details about service-level assessment, planning, implementation and achievement of results.

### COMMUNITY LEVEL GOALS

- Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity (Community Action Goal);
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities (Community Action Goal);
- The conditions in which low income people live are improved (Results Oriented Management and Accountability aka ROMA Goal #2); and
- Low-income people own a stake in their community (ROMA Goal #3).

### Community Level Objectives and Strategies

**Objective 1: CSCAA will strengthen partnerships with funders, schools, community-based organizations, municipalities and, especially, businesses to cultivate a healthy, caring community that offers economic opportunity.**

- Participate in, or possibly organize and lead, community initiatives relating to the top concerns identified in the Needs Assessment: Poverty, Benefit Cliff & Economic Stability, Transportation, Housing and Energy, Health, Safety and Nutrition, Child and Family Development/Well-being, Income & Employment.
- Offer Poverty Simulations to educate individuals working in other sectors about the conditions of poverty and improve their understanding of CSCAA customers and the barriers they face (e.g. transportation, child care).
- Advocate with schools, government agencies and businesses to help address customer needs and to improve community systems to better serve customers.
- Explore with community partners the possibility of adding or expanding child care services available to the community.
- Explore with community partners the possibility of adding or expanding programming to provide affordable vehicle purchase and/or repair within the service area.

## **Objective 2: People with low incomes will engage in activities to improve community conditions.**

- Utilize CSCAA programs as opportunities to build leadership skills and positioning among people with low incomes.
- Provide worksite opportunities to people with low incomes.

### **Possible Metrics for Community Level Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

- *Number of community initiatives on which CSCAA is represented;*
- *Number of educational events held by CSCAA or number of attendees at events;*
- *Increase in transportation assets or services in the service area;*
- *Number of homeless housing beds created in the service area;*
- *Percent increase of donated resources to support delivery of services and/or implementation of strategies to address conditions of poverty in the identified community; and*
- *Number of CSCAA program participants who increased skills, knowledge, and abilities to enable them to work with the agency to improve conditions in the community.*

## **AGENCY LEVEL GOALS**

- Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results (ROMA Goal #5; Community Action Network Excellence: Organizational Standards, State and Federal Accountability Measures, ROMA).

### **Agency Level Objectives and Strategies**

#### **Objective 1: Increase agency capacity and mission effectiveness.**

- Evaluate fundraising approaches, establish goals, and prioritize fundraising activities.
- Establish goals and advance strategies for staff recruitment, retention, and professional development.
  - Use available data to inform retention tactics.
- Train agency staff in poverty-informed service approaches.
- Explore the possibility of offering training in trauma-informed service approaches.
- Strategically align services to mission advancement along a continuum from stability through economic security.
- Routinely monitor and evaluate programs in terms of their financial sustainability relative to their mission impact.

**Objective 2: Establish and maintain internal infrastructure and capacity to support the activities of the strategic plan.**

- Define and carry out a maintenance plan for the agency’s technical assets, plant and equipment, buildings and grounds, and vehicles.
- Roll out the new Cayuga Seneca Client Database (CSCD) with the integrated service continuum in mind.
- Define procedures for optimal cross-program coordination in long-range service planning, internal and external referral, and outcome tracking.
- Create a central intake function and develop central intake processes.
- Develop and/or update policies and procedures related to human resources, technology, and other domains.

**Objective 3: Strengthen brand value and positioning.**

- Articulate brand value to include: comprehensive continuum of services, collaborative leadership in the community, agency values, program effectiveness.
- Undertake a rebranding project that results in a name, visual identity and a key message strategy that highlights brand value.
- Structure a comprehensive communications plan toward the goals of increasing brand awareness, knowledge, relevance and esteem among key audiences including: community leaders, partners, sector leaders, funders and customers.

**Possible Metrics for Agency Level Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

- *Growth in unrestricted revenue;*
- *Reduction in employee turnover (or increase in average length of employment);*
- *Decrease in programs that are not financially self-sustaining; and*
- *Documentation of the achievement of selected National Performance Indicators.*

**FAMILY LEVEL GOALS**

- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security (Community Action Goal); and
- Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems (ROMA Goal #6).

## Family Level Objectives and Strategies

### **Objective 1: CSCAA will respectfully and effectively provide to customers an end-to-end continuum of service from basic needs stability to economic security using comprehensive internal and external referral processes and procedures.**

- Establish a central intake process to refer customers to a range of support services that might benefit them.
  - Define and distinguish “information” and “referral”.
  - Standardize processes for formally assessing needs, making internal and external referrals, and closing the loop on referrals.
  - Train case managers, advocates and home visitors on definitions, processes and procedures.
  - Increase skills to properly document internal and external referrals.

### **Objective 2: CSCAA will identify service gaps, explore potential program configurations, and implement any necessary or appropriate program changes or additions.**

- Program enhancements have been suggested for exploration in the areas of family strengthening, employment readiness, housing, volunteer generation and asset development.

### **Objective 3: CSCAA customers will embrace opportunities to engage in activities to improve the community.**

- Explore best practices and select a model for customer engagement and leadership development to incorporate into all CSCAA support and development programs.
- Extend to CSCAA customers opportunities to engage as volunteer leaders on board committees, community committees, seasonal drives and direct service delivery.

## Possible Metrics for Family Level Goals, Objectives and Strategies

*Tie metrics to National performance indicators for stability, support and development, for example:*

- *Number of individuals who achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for 180 days;*
- *Number of individuals engaged with CSCAA who report improved financial well-being;*
- *Number of individuals who obtained a recognized credential, certificate, or degree relating to the achievement of educational or vocational skills;*
- *Number of unemployed adults who obtained employment (up to a living wage; with a living wage or higher);*

- *Number of employed participants in a career-advancement related program who entered or transitioned into a position that provided increased income and/or benefits;*
- *Number of children and youth who demonstrated improved positive approaches toward learning, including improved attention skills;*
- *Number of parents/caregivers who improved their home environments; and*
- *Number of CSCAA participants who increased skills, knowledge, and abilities to enable them to work with the Agency to improve conditions in the community.*

## **PROCEDURES TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE TOWARD GOALS**

Performance toward the goals defined in this Strategic Plan will be evaluated via regularly scheduled Director’s meetings. Directors will add progress notes to a tracking document. Using this status information and relevant customer satisfaction data, the Executive Director will recommend modifications to the strategic plan as needed and at least annually. Versions of the tracking document created throughout the year will serve as documentation of routine assessment of performance toward goals.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS UPDATES TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Executive Director and Marketing & Development Director will present an update annually to the Tripartite Board of Directors, management team and agency staff. At least annually, the goals contained in this plan will be reviewed and modified as needed. Director meeting and board meeting minutes will serve as documentation of these updates and reviews.