

*Schoharie County*

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**Community Action Program, Inc.**

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***Strategic Plan***  
***2013 - 2017***

**Approved by SCCAP Board of Directors**

**February 16, 2016**

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# Introduction

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Schoharie County Community Action Program (SCCAP) was incorporated in September of 1965 as a response to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. The Act established funding for Community Action Agencies (CAA) and Programs (CAP) to address the causes and conditions of poverty. As part of the Agency's self-assessment of fulfilling the intent of the Act, SCCAP utilizes the reporting tool Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) in the reporting of its activities. Areas of agency focus include family self-sufficiency, community revitalization, mobilization of resources, partnerships, and agency accountability.

In 2015 the SCCAP Board of Directors engaged in a review of the community served and current methods of service delivery. The Board included SCCAP's employees in the process to provide a meaningful connection between governance and those who deliver the services to the community. Qualitative and quantitative information from SCCAP's Needs Assessment was utilized in the development of the strategic plan. The assessment process included focus groups and community member/partner surveys. Focus groups were conducted to ascertain community member evaluation of types of agency services provided, the delivery of services, gaps in services and barriers associated with receiving services. Community member and partner survey results also collected similar information and reinforced the identified areas of community concern with the primary concern focused on the barriers surrounding employment - opportunities, wages and quality benefits. However, survey results also indicated a lack of community awareness regarding SCCAP's wide-range of supportive services. This emphasized a need for the agency to actively increase its community engagement efforts as part of SCCAP's Strategic Plan. Increased efforts would be two-fold: 1) the community would be better informed of what services SCCAP offers, and 2) greater awareness of who 'we are and what we do' would also have a positive effect on fundraising efforts.

It was agreed that the needs of the low-income community are greater than economic barriers. The Board and staff felt the mission statement was no longer broad enough to reflect the wrap-around support system SCCAP provides when assisting community members address the issues of social, emotional, and economic instability. While the primary goal of a CAA is to address the causes and conditions of poverty, SCCAP also recognizes the circumstances of poverty are multi-dimensional and families are best served when the agency engages multiple systems of support - internal and external. As a result of this review there was a modification of SCCAP's mission statement.

Impacts to the development of the Strategic Plan should be noted. During late 2011 Schoharie County was severely impacted by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Additionally, the agency underwent changes to its executive director position and due to funding limitations, a restructuring of CSBG positions which included the reduction of the person who assisted with the community assessment and strategic planning processes. Due to these impacts, SCCAP needed more time than originally anticipated to conduct a community assessment and review its strategic plan.

As noted above, the Board of Directors reviewed its Mission Statement in 2015. In 2016 the Board reviewed its Vision and Values Statements. Review concluded the Values Statement is still applicable to SCCAP's purpose. However, much of the Vision Statement needed to be updated based on the accomplishments of the agency since the last Strategic Plan.

Following the principles of ROMA the following report summarizes SCCAP's review of the previous strategic plan, the agency's achievement of stated goals, and the development of new strategies based on community and agency assessment. The Plan includes the CSBG dimensions of Family, Agency, Community and the Six National Goals.

# **Mission, Vision, and Values**

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The board and staff undertook a comprehensive review of the agency Mission statement utilizing ROMA principles. A new mission statement was developed to better represent the broad services needed by the families SCCAP serves. SCCAP's Vision statement also warranted updating as many of the goals noted are no longer applicable. SCCAP's Values statement is still found to be appropriate to SCCAP's purpose and culture.

## **Mission**

Building stronger, healthier communities and empowering families that experience economic and social challenges through strategic partnerships, education, services and compassion. (July 25, 2015)

## **Vision**

We envision a SCCAP that is:

- A community educator on the barriers facing low-income families in achieving self-sufficiency
- Abreast of changing community needs and expands/develops programs to meet those needs
- Financially stable with a healthy financial reserve
- Progressive in meeting the technological needs of the agency
- A leader in quality service delivery

## **Values**

As an organization, SCCAP values:

- Change: We value the ability of people to build on their strengths to move toward healthy interdependence.
- Respect: We value the preservation of personal dignity of our consumers, staff, board and community.
- Innovation: We encourage innovation and commit to professional policies and principles that will meet the challenges of a changing environment.

# **Organizational Strengths and Accomplishments**

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- Governance
  - All board positions are filled in compliance with tri-partite requirements
  - Program Planning/Development Committee created to assist the board in monitoring budgets and program performance
  - Certificate of Incorporation (COI) and Bylaws: Independent review conducted, documents updated in accordance with Revitalization Act, and filed with appropriate authorities
  - Board/staff continue to maintain an excellent working relationship
  - Adoption of Succession Plan and completion of a Risk Management Assessment
  
- Financial Management
  - Contract management relationships with funders remain strong
  - SCCAP has been successful in obtaining additional program funds from foundations, United Way, and the Local Department of Social Services in support of core services
  - Fiscal processes are sound and proven by independent audit review
  - Continued low-risk auditee status by independent audit review
  
- Partnerships
  - SCCAP continues to maintain a strong presence in the community both in funded partnerships and its relationships with other service providers: federal, state, local, foundation, HSCC
  - Excellent coordination of community resources to avoid duplication of services thereby creating efficient use of limited community funds
  
- Technology
  - SCCAP's IT systems continue to stay current
  - Agency now has an in-house IT support specialist
  
- Programming
  - In response to community need SCCAP has expanded its funding partnerships to enhance/or added programming/services
    - Supervised Visitation, Mentoring, Childbirth Education, Breastfeeding Support, Jobs Club, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
  - SCCAP has expanded its space to enhance service delivery
  - Expanded Child Care Resource & Referral services to Otsego County
  
- Human Resources
  - The agency has restructured its services into eight (8) departments based on related services
  - Organizational structure has been defined for both accountability and service delivery
  - Professional development: Staff engaged in ROMA Certification, Emerging Leaders Institute, and department specific training programs
  
- Community Engagement/Outreach
  - In recognition of serving the community SCCAP hosted a 50th Anniversary Dinner
  - Departments increase of outreach efforts
  - SCCAP (staff and space) continues to be seen as a positive, warm and inviting provider of services as evidenced by customer satisfaction surveys
  - Focus is being placed on "branding" SCCAP

# Challenges and Threats

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- **Fund Development:**

- Programming
  - The Displaced Homemaker funding continues to be unstable due to the fact it is not automatically part of the State budget.
  - Level funded contracts: As wage/fringe and other operating costs continue to increase, the challenge is how to continue delivering services at needed levels and retain quality staff.
- General Operation
  - While the agency has increased its outreach efforts in communicating about SCCAP and its programs, the level of donations (donor intent and unrestricted) has not recovered to pre-flood levels.
- Fee-for-Service (FFS)
  - A lack of growth continues in fee-for-service opportunities (where appropriate) as a means to supplement core programming.
  - Energy Services Department's FFS has continued to experience a decrease.
- Fundraising
  - The agency has not yet hit upon a signature event to provide a consistent yearly generation of unrestricted funds.

- **Community Engagement/Outreach**

- While individual departments are engaged in outreach efforts in support of department services, the community at large often is unaware of the agency's larger purpose in the community - addressing the causes and conditions of poverty.
- Due to the use of 'Schoharie County' in the agency name, often community members identify SCCAP as part of county government.

- **Human Resources**

- Lack of funding continues to impact agency key positions. While operating efficiently, effectively, and in compliance as proven by independent audit, the agency is unable to fund the position of finance director.
- Size of the organization also presents challenges when there is employee turnover in key positions or when employees are out for extended periods of time.
- Limited funding creates limited opportunity to provide staff and/or board retreats.

# Strategies for the Future

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The three areas of identified challenges and threats to the agency are inter-related. Since program operations are performing at above average levels due to dedicated and knowledgeable staff, the board chose to identify two strategies which will enhance the foundation of agency operations and community awareness/access to agency services. Each strategy supports the other and will contribute to both agency and programming outcomes. Strategies also support CSBG Work Plan Outcomes and are measurable in order to track success in implementing the strategies.

## Strategy #1 - Community Engagement/Outreach

The message of Community Action needs to be brought to the forefront in Schoharie County. Many community members only know SCCAP by individual services and not as an umbrella organization with an extensive wrap-around service delivery. Decision and policy makers need to be educated on SCCAP's return-on-investment (ROI) to the community, its quality of services which change lives, and debunk the stereo-typical perception of the of the individuals and families SCCAP serves.

Activities in Strategy #1 support CSBG Work Plan

- Goal 1 - Family Outcome: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient
- Goal 4 - Agency Outcomes: Partnerships Among Supporters and Provider of Services to Low-Income People are Achieved
- Goal 6 - Family Outcomes: Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential by Strengthening Family and Other Supportive Systems

Actions to be taken:

- Publish monthly articles which highlight the agency and departments/services
  - Time articles with national or state events
  - Provide factual information regarding the ROI of services - 'Did you know...'
  - Present success stories of how SCCAP's assistance has empowered them and changes their lives
  - Highlight Community Action Program and help the community to see SCCAP as its own entity and not part of county government
- Host an educational event for community members and partners
  - What does struggling with social, emotional, and economic challenges look like for community members
  - How is this impacting our community
  - What is the difference each community member can make to 'Make a difference'
  - Identify programs and partnerships which contribute to revitalization of economically challenged families and communities
  - Create opportunity of access to services
- Engage the business community
  - Distribute SCCAP service information through payroll inserts to raise awareness of systems of support available to community members
  - Build employment partnerships with the Employment Training Center
    - Create the connection between gaining skills and obtaining employment
  - Create sponsor opportunities for SCCAP events
- Develop a signature event

- Community awareness & appreciation
  - Primary focus is not on fundraising but would have sponsorships
- Organize focus groups
  - In preparation for needs assessment
  - To identify gaps in services
  - Increase partnerships
  - Develop volunteer base

## **Strategy #2 - Fund Development**

The agency has struggled to build a healthy reserve of funding which would reduce the use of the LOC or short-term notes during periods of government funding fluctuations. Fee-for-service also continues to be undeveloped especially in the Energy Services Department. The agency needs to continue to explore a signature event.

Activities in Strategy #2 support CSBG Work Plan

- Goal 5 - Agency Outcome: Agencies Increase Their Capacity to Achieve Results

Actions to be taken:

- Develop a signature fundraising event
- Develop a process whereby a percentage of unrestricted donations are set aside to build a reserve separate from general operating accounts
- Fee-for-service
  - Identify areas of services outside of but still related to core service delivery which can be offered to the community in order to enhance core services
  - Develop a marketing plan
    - Businesses
    - Community members
    - Other human service providers
- Educate businesses and their employees about payroll deduction
  - SEFA and other government institutions
  - United Way

## **Conclusion**

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Surveys conducted with community partners and members overwhelming indicated employment as the primary concern and barrier to economic stability; specifically the lack of living wage jobs within the county. SCCAP continues to offer through its Employment Training Center employment skills and support services. Economic development in Schoharie County has been slow in its recovery since the historic floods of 2011. While SCCAP is not considered a lead organization in economic development, it will remain engaged the conversation. Additionally, as a support to families, SCCAP continues to provide wrap-around system of support to not only empower families but to assist with stabilization and efficient use of their limited resources.