Strategic Plan
2022 - 2027

Reviewed & Approved by SCCAP Board of Directors
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Introduction

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 2019 the SCCAP Board of Directors utilized the executive director, a certified ROMA trainer, to perform a review of the community served and current methods of service delivery. Qualitative and quantitative information from SCCAP's Needs Assessment was utilized in the development of the strategic plan. The assessment process included discussion with community member/partners and surveys. Surveys were conducted to ascertain community member evaluation of the types of agency services the agency provides, the delivery of services, gaps in services and barriers associated with receiving services. Survey results continue to indicate the community's primary concern is focused on the barriers surrounding employment - lack of opportunities and low wages. 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. In July 2016 a new mission statement was adopted to include a focus on health.

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 National Goals.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Building stronger, healthier communities and empowering families that experience economic and social challenges through strategic partnerships, education, services and compassion. (July 25, 2016)

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

- Governance
    - All board positions are filled in compliance with tri-partite requirements
    - Board/staff continue to maintain an excellent working relationship
    - There is a high percentage of board member attendance at board meetings
    - Board members participated in community survey event and fundraising efforts

- 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
    - Became approved for billable Medicaid services
    - Fiscal processes are sound and proven by independent audit review
    - Continued low-risk auditee status by independent audit review
    - Was able to hire a finance director to fill the long vacant position

- 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 has contracted with CaseWorthy to build new integrated client data collection/reporting system to enhance service delivery, to support ROMA principles and the Theory of Change, and to streamline data collection process

- 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), and Fee-for-Service projects to support core agency programs
    - The Energy Services Department's Fee-for-Service component has been quite successful operating the Cooling program (installation of air conditioners for persons with medical conditions). The department is also working with local code officers offering our energy audit services which are required for new home builds.

- Human Resources
    - Due to staff turnover in administration, the agency was able to fill its finance director position
    - 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 and other department specific training programs

- o Community Engagement/Outreach
  - o In partnership with SUNY Cobleskill, SCCAP hosted a culinary fundraising event
  - o Departments increase of outreach efforts
  - o SCCAP (staff and space) continues to be seen as a positive, warm and inviting provider of services as evidenced by customer satisfaction surveys
  - o Focus is being place on "branding" SCCAP
  - o SCCAP adopted a new agency logo
  - o Increased efforts are being placed on social media - communicating about upcoming events, program successes, donation opportunities, and highlighting staff's and volunteer's efforts

Challenges and Threats

- **Fund Development**:
  - o Programming
    - o The Displaced Homemaker funding continues to be unstable due to the fact it is not automatically part of the State budget.
    - o Level funded contracts: As wage/fringe and other operating costs continue to increase, the challenge is how to continue delivering services at community needed levels and attract and/or retain quality staff.
    - o SCCAP recognized loss of funding: Schoharie County DSS and Community Services; Nutrition Outreach Education Program (NOEP)
  - o General Operation
    - o 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.
  - o Fee-for-Service (FFS)
    - o Growth continues in fee-for-service opportunities (where appropriate) as a means to supplement core programming has increased, additional efforts need to be made.
  - o Fundraising
    - o The agency has hosted culinary events and they are certainly enjoyed, yet the level of return has remained low. The agency still needs to develop a signature event to provide a consistent yearly generation of unrestricted funds.

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

- **Human Resources**
    - o As minimum wage increases and level funded contracting continues, the agency will remain challenged in its ability to attract and/or retain highly skilled employees.
    - o Staffing size within departments often presents challenges when there is employee turnover in key positions or when employees are out for extended periods of time.
    - o Limited funding creates limited opportunity to provide staff and/or board retreats.

Strategies for the Future

The three areas of identified challenges and threats to the agency are inter-related. Since program operations are still performing at above average levels due to dedicated and knowledgeable staff, the focus will continue to remain on strengthening 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. Due to changes in staffing in recent years the Strategies remain similar to the prior Strategic Plan. With recent new hires, the agency feels refocused efforts can be made toward goal achievement.

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
- o Family Outcomes: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient
- o Agency Outcomes: Partnerships among Supporters and Provider of Services to Low-Income People are Achieved
- o 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
    - o Time articles with national or state events
    - o Provide factual information regarding the ROI of services - 'Did you know…'
    - o Present success stories of how SCCAP's assistance has empowered them and changes their lives
    - o 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
    - o What does struggling with social, emotional, and economic challenges look like for community members
    - o How is this impacting our community
    - o What is the difference each community member can make to 'Make a difference'
    - o Identify programs and partnerships which contribute to revitalization of economically challenged families and communities
    - o Create opportunity of access to services
- Engage the business community
    - o Continue to expand the Fee-for-Service areas as appropriate
    - o Create sponsor opportunities for SCCAP events
- Develop a signature event

- - Community awareness & appreciation
    - This would be coordinated with Strategy #2
- 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 made positive strides toward building a healthy reserve of funding which will help reduce the use of the LOC or short-term notes during periods of government funding fluctuations. However, more can be done in this area. Fee-for-service also continues to be undeveloped especially in the Energy Services Department. The agency needs to continue to explore a signature event. It is felt that increased efforts with Strategy #1 will also help move Strategy #2 forward.

Activities in Strategy #2 support CSBG Work Plan
  - Agency Outcome: Agencies Increase Their Capacity to Achieve Results

<u>Actions to be taken</u>:
  - Develop a signature fundraising event
  - 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
  - Grant Writing and Collaborations
    - Increase efforts to bring additional funds to agency - grants, foundations and partnering

Goal Reporting and Evaluation

Reports and/or review on the Strategic Plan's identified goals will be performed on no less than an annual basis with the Board of Directors, Executive Director and management team.

Board Review
- Activities and progress in support of goal attainment will be reported on during board meetings as progress takes place and/or achievements are met. Activities will be evaluated as follows:
  - Was activity relevant to:
    - Agency mission
    - Strategic Plan
    - CSBG Work Plan
    - Department(s) goals
  - Marketing & Messaging Processes - outreach efforts/outputs:

- Frequency, media, outreach activities, and other methods of communication
  o Level of impact - results/outcomes:
    - Participation rates
    - Feedback by event attendees, program participants, staff and others
      - Measured by surveys - participants, partners, etc.
      - Focus group(s)
      - Other methods which collect feedback e.g. email
    - Financial - sponsors, donations, fee-for-service
    - New or expanded partner relationships and/or initiatives

Evaluation of the Strategic Plan goals will provide direction for any future development of the goal(s) such as the need to refine the process and revisit the goal, incorporate the goal process into agency operations as an ongoing activity, update current agency operations or to abandon the activity.

Management Team, Outreach Committee and Department Review
Activities and progress reports will be reviewed ongoing with the management team, outreach committee and departments relevant to agency and department programming activities which impact the Strategic Plan. Participant and agency feedback will be evaluated to determine the success of activities, room for improvement, challenges of implementation and possible development of future projects. This information will also be provided to the board.

Conclusion

Surveys conducted with community partners and members overwhelming indicated employment as the primary concern and barrier to economic stability; specifically the lack of employment opportunities and living wage jobs within the county. SCCAP continues to offer through its Employment Training Center employment skills and support services. *Note: Employment Services are now under the umbrella of the Community Services Department*. While concerted effort continues surrounding economic development in Schoharie County, the county continues to experience setbacks with cutbacks with large employers and recent announcements of reduced hours and closures.

The Community Needs Assessment also highlighted concern regarding child care - the availability and cost. Lack of child care also impacts individual's ability to obtain stable employment. SCCAP's CCRR program works to provide technical support for current day care providers and also works with individuals who may be interested in starting a home base business. The CCRR department will also be offering baby sitter trainings so that older youth who are assisting with child care for their family and friends are educated child care.

While SCCAP is not considered a lead organization in economic development, it remains engaged in the conversation and seeks opportunities to support economic growth. Additionally, as a support to families, SCCAP continues to provide a wrap-around system of support to not only empower families but to assist with stabilization and efficient use of their limited resources.