



Sangamon County Community Resources

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community-resources](http://www.co.sangamon.il.us/departments/a-c/community-resources)

May 2015

Dear Friends and Community Partners,

Enclosed is your copy of the Sangamon County Department of Community Resources 2014 Annual Report. In 2014, as Community Action agencies, we celebrated our 50th Anniversary of service to our nation. I hope you will take a few moments to read about the many programs and services we have made available to our community. Last year our agency served 12,140 clients from households with low incomes.

Over the last 50 years, Sangamon County Department of Community Resources has developed and provided the types of programs necessary to meet the ever-changing needs of our community and help our residents obtain the opportunities and services they need to become self-sufficient. Sangamon County Community Resources has always been committed to helping our customers on their journey to self-sufficiency.

On behalf of our CSBG Advisory Council, County Oversight Committee and Staff, I wish to express my appreciation for the work you do in our community. We look forward to continuing our relationship with you in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Sharmin Doering

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharmin Doering". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "D" at the end.

Executive Director

Enclosure

2014 Annual Report

CELEBRATING

50

YEARS

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

YEARS

Helping People. Changing Lives.



President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964



Prepare Reauthorization of Plan For Poverty War Grant



Paul Hopt: Full for Home for



Mr. Dr. Harold Avery Clark, Chairman



CITYSTATE Stimulus funding boosts outreach for county webzoochization program



Community Action Group Meet Poverty War Benefits Outlined



123 Graduate, Feast Here In Operation Headstart



Federal Agency Names Randolph To New Post



\$69.478 Federal Grant For City-County Okayed



IMPROVING COMMUNITIES



IMPROVING COMMUNITIES



A Message from CSBG Advisory Council Chair, Brad Mills

Dear Friends,

It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of the Community Resources CSBG Advisory Council for the past 5 years. We have accomplished much of what we set out to do in 2014 and even more that we could not anticipate. Knowing that even harder times are here, agency services provide economic opportunity to hundreds of families with locally-driven programs addressing locally driven needs. In addition, we built successful collaborations with community partners to more effectively serve our most vulnerable residents. Examples include providing financial assistance to former Bel-Aire residents to relocate to new housing in partnership with Fifth Street Renaissance, initiating a senior food program with Senior Services of Central Illinois to make up for cuts in food stamps, continuing the Urban League Head Start pediatric dental anesthesia program to address baby bottle tooth decay and ensure families enrolled in the Springfield Housing Authority Family Self Sufficiency program can continue to strive for their goal of self-sufficiency and not see it derailed due to circumstances out of their control.



Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

Dale Carnegie

Other agency goals met were to re-brand the agency to strengthen our connection to the Community Action Partnership and performing stronger educational advocacy with the Faith Coalition for the Common Good

Education Task Force. Last, our agency partnership with five financial institutions to provide weekly financial literacy workshops brought 343 agency customers the best in financial education in the effort for them to learn to make better decisions with their income. “Helping People Help Themselves” will remain our quest, first and foremost.

Brad Mills

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bradley R Mills". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CSBG Advisory Council Chair

A Message from Sangamon County Board Member and Community Resources Oversight Committee Chairman, Linda Fulgenzi



Dear Friends,

As a Sangamon County board member, former teacher and chairman of the Community Resources committee that oversees spending of Sangamon County Community Action funds, we are resolute in our efforts to ensure funds are used to assist numerous individuals in moving toward attainment of the American Dream. We are committed in our daily efforts to providing a “hand up” rather than a “hand out” in the quest for this dream.

By evaluating our programs each year, we are able to determine how to better serve our customers to help them succeed. One of our highly successful agency services in the past three years is a customized Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.) Program in partnership with Lincoln Land Community College. To prepare our participants for success, the addition of a two-week “academy” provided individuals first with instruction in creating their career goals, as well as workplace, career and personal skills to assist job retention. A 12-hour Money Smart course within the academy included a plan to help save for unexpected events and expenses and the importance of such a plan to better manage money to help meet personal goals. Our banking partners also guided each student through the banking system to reduce or eliminate the need to rely on predatory lending businesses. After the academy, a 6- week module to strengthen math and reading skills ensured that participants would be better prepared to pass the Illinois State Board C.N.A. exam. By the time all courses were completed, students had attained life skills, math and reading review, C.N.A. training and the confidence to pass their exams and join our local workforce.

The 2014 scholarship program was also adjusted by aligning eligibility with areas of study leading to employment. With this change, students had a better chance at becoming educated and employed after earning 2 or 4-year diplomas or certificates earned in short-term training. Ten of thirty 2014 scholarship recipients have graduated, most of who are now working. The remaining 20 scholars are still enrolled and will continue to apply for awards each year until they finish their educations and can seek employment in our local workforce.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

In an era of competing funding priorities, Community Resources will look beyond 2014 with renewed commitment to continue our work to meet the needs of individuals and families with low-incomes by “maximum, feasible participation” by customers served in the development of

agency programs. To this day, Community Action integrates innovative strategies to promote upward mobility throughout the United States of America.

Linda Fulgenzi



Sangamon County Board Member and Community Resources Oversight Committee Chairman



2014 Community Services Block Grant Advisory Council

Front Row: LaVon Wilson, Scholarship Committee Chairman, Sharon Brown (Kumler Outreach Ministries), Michelle Tucker (CATCH), Diane Murphy (WIA), Allissa Hall (Springfield Community Federation). Back Row: Terry Young, (Business Member), Jim Good (County Board Member), Reverend Silas Johnson (Calvary Missionary Baptist Church), Brad Mills (Chairman), Clyde Bunch (County Board Member), Craig Hall (County Board Member), Linda Fulgenzi (County Board Member and County Oversight Committee Chairman). Not pictured: Wes Barr (Sheriff), Eric Long (Business Member), Jason Ratts (County Board Member).

A Letter from Executive Director

As Community Action commemorates its 50th year since the signing of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, we look back on our record of investing in people and communities through education, training, innovation, empowerment and problem solving. Community Action, Inc. started in Springfield, Illinois in 1965 at Iles Elementary School with original programs including Neighborhood Youth Corps and Operation Head Start. Fast forward to 1985 when Sangamon County Community Resources was created, adding new federal anti-poverty programs like LIHEAP, Weatherization and the Community Services Block Grant. As Community



Resources celebrates its 29th year, we look back on our record of offering a wide range of opportunities and assistance to low-income individuals and families. And although the economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, it still has a long way to go and has required the agency continue to offer services that stabilize households like food, clothing and shelter. These households include families where one family member has either lost a job, is in deep debt from medical bills from a major illness suffered or student debt, is one of the 10% of seniors on Medicare in poverty or working poor parents of school-aged children. We must first invest in the stability of our families before they can move toward self-sufficiency with or without agency assistance. Once stable, agency education and training opportunities along with educational scholarships help families look to the future with greater hope of living wage jobs to support their households. Weekly financial literacy classes offered in the agency provide individuals with a personal banker/instructor and reduce or prevent the need to use predatory lending services.

To improve conditions in which low-income people live, Community Resources administers a Weatherization program to significantly reduce monthly utility bills of low-income households living in sub-standard housing. As a result, incomes are increased to better meet basic needs and not have to choose between food and heat. Our GED test assistance programs offers support through partnerships with both Lawrence Education Center and Lincoln Land Community College to remove the increased expense of the new GED tests. Community Advocacy with families is accomplished successfully through our agency membership and active work in the Faith Coalition for the Common Good (FCCG) and has resulted in great strides in the quality of life of low-income families. In 2014, the FCCG Education Task Force successfully advocated for and assisted in the development of a user-friendly District #186 student/family handbook as well as a strong anti-bullying policy and process to protect vulnerable students.

At least every three years, we conduct an assessment of our community to see where there are unmet needs and how we can develop partnerships to close gaps in services. In 2014, a total of 78 different agency collaborations, partnerships and linkages resulted in better and more efficient services for total of 12,140 people. Community Resources partnered with numerous non-profit, faith-based, local, state and federal government entities, for-profit businesses, consortiums,

school districts and financial and health organizations, to help needy families. Examples of agency partnerships include the Senior Services food box program, Headstart Pediatric Dental Anesthesia program, weekly financial literacy workshop partnerships with PNC, UCB, Woodforest and Bank of Springfield, Congressman Rodney Davis's support of the Community Services Block Grant Reauthorization, Pepsi, Lincoln Land Community College and Lawrence Education Center GED and/or C.N.A. programs, support of families in the Springfield Housing Authority Family Self Sufficiency program, and school uniforms and homeless prevention assistance for School District #186 families referred by social workers. Strong, effective partnerships allow the community to work together to reach our most vulnerable residents and provide more efficient services to families working toward self-sufficiency.

In conclusion, we thank the hundreds of people who answered the Community and Inter-Agency Needs Assessment surveys; our customers, community organizations, CSBG Advisory Council, Community Resources County Oversight Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee for their commitment throughout this process. We are moved to hear over and over again from our staff how good they feel about working here. We were pleased to hear from our participants who have said Community Action has made a real difference in their lives. We are challenged to think about how we can do an even better job using the recently implemented Organization Performance Standards and National Performance Indicators, and have emerged as an even stronger organization as a result.

Sharmin Doering



Executive Director

I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.

Mother Teresa

Celebrating 50 Years of Community Action Helping People, Changing Lives, and Improving Communities 1964 – 2014

Sangamon County Department of Community Resources (SCDCR) was established in 1965 with the original name of Springfield-Sangamon County Community Action, Inc. The agency was designated to carry out anti-poverty work in Sangamon County, Illinois. As the agency grew and evolved, it was designated as the Community Action Agency for Sangamon County. In 1985, the legal name was changed to the Sangamon County Department of Community Resources (SCDCR) to manage a wide array of programs. With a tri-partite council, county oversight committee and staff passionately committed to the mission, **the agency spent \$3,667,429.65 to help a total of 12,140 clients through more than 10 programs in 2014.**



The year 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of SCDCR. The War on Poverty was renewed in May, 2014 when 75 community leaders mobilized to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Community Action. SCDCR consistently serves the most vulnerable groups of people in our community with the end goal of self-sufficiency. Since 1964,

the agency has offered locally driven programs addressing locally driven needs covering a wide range of categories including employment, education, housing, nutrition, health care, household finance, and emergency assistance.



Goal 1: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient

In 2014, SCDCR served 30 individuals through the customized **C.N.A. program**. A total of \$44,143 in education assistance and \$7,612.50 in student transportation vouchers were provided to complete the course work. Twenty-two participants passed the completion exam at LLCC, with a success **rate of 73.3%**. Four students passed the C.N.A State Board certificate exam, thirteen will test in early 2015. All are expected to pass obtain C.N.A employment in the near future. Seven students landed and retained nursing jobs, moving up above the Federal Poverty Guideline of \$11,670 per person annually.



C.N.A. (Certified Nursing Assistant) students

Family of Distinction 2014

Brittney Byrd was a single stay-at-home mother of a 7-month old child struggling to find employment. *"I knew I always wanted to be in the health care field. I saw my mother and my sister who are both RNs achieve their dreams of graduating and wanted to do the same. When I heard about the C.N.A. program in Community Resources, I knew it would be hard but I knew I could make it through if I put my mind to it as both my mother and sister had done. The customized course gave me the confidence and knowledge to know I would succeed. It was hard at first but I wanted to be able to set an example for my child. Now I am working as a full-time C.N.A. and am saving for tuition to move forward to earn my RN. This program helped change my life."*

Ms. Brittney Byrd wanted to very much to become independent but knew she could not do it without help. Brittney's family was very supportive but Brittney wanted to be self-sufficient too, like her family members.



Brittney heard about the Sangamon County Community Resources customized C.N.A. program at Lincoln Land Community College Adult Education Department that offered a two-week Academy covering life and workplace skills, an 8-week reading and math module and finally the 8-week C.N.A. course. In addition, all students received a transportation stipend for each day of attendance to assist with travel expenses.

Brittney said, in addition to the academy and reading and math review, one of the most valuable things about the experience was having her own agency contact to talk to about her progress.

After passing her State C.N.A. certification test, she was able to land a job working as a Full-time C.N.A and now enjoys being self-reliant. She is very proud she is able to set a great example for her son, Josiah and achieve the independence she worked so hard to achieve.

The CSBG scholarship committee awarded **\$33,863** to **30** college students in 2014, assisting them in their quest to continue their studies or to acquire diplomas or certificates. Twenty applicants were first-time recipients and 10 were returnees. Ten of the scholarship recipients graduated from schools with diplomas or certificates in 2014, and **10** graduates found jobs. Debt reduction for recipients provided through scholarship awards was between \$500 and \$2,500.



CSBG Scholarship Committee

I always knew I wanted to continue my education after high school and become a registered nurse. My mother was very supportive during that time as she was for my younger siblings. The Community Resources CSBG Scholarship I received each year enabled me to finish timely in four years at Bradley University and reduce the pressure on me and my family. I am now a full-time RN working at Methodist Hospital in Peoria.

Brandis Holloway (2014 Scholarship Recipient)

When I was young, I wanted to go to college. I completed one semester but had to begin working full-time and never finished. I got married and had a family but still had the desire to complete my goal of graduating. It had been so long by the time I went back that I had to take a computer skills course because typewriters were no longer used. My educational journey was a lot of work but I am now using my degree to teach and live my dream of teaching.

Caroline Ziogas (2014 Scholarship Recipient)



CSBG Scholarship recipients and the CSBG Advisory Council

Building Communities
 Financial Fitness
 Money Management
 Making Cents
 Strengthening Families
 Financial Literacy
 Free Knowledge

In 2014, weekly financial literacy workshops were hosted in the agency and presented by banking partners (UCB, PNC, BOS, Woodforest Bank and the IL State Comptroller).



A total of **346 customers** attended the **workshops** and were expected to increase savings, reduce debts, complete and use household budgets.

Financial Literacy Classes



Goal 2: The Conditions in which Low-Income People Live are Improved

The **Weatherization program** provides a variety of repairs to weatherize homes of households with low incomes to improve energy efficiency and reduce monthly utility bills. Weatherization services include furnace repair or replacement and air sealing including adding insulation, caulking or weather stripping windows and doors. This year, **a total of 88 homes were weatherized, resulting in saving both energy and additional income for customers.**

The **GED Test Assistance program** provided financial assistance to individuals who have successfully passed the practice GED test. The program helps individuals with low incomes overcome the barrier of affordability of the test. Those who passed the test became more employable during their job searches. This year, this program provided **\$660 in GED test vouchers to 24 clients.** (Due to the change in the GED test process and increased test difficulty, still, 4 clients passed all four tests and obtained their GEDs.) We anticipate a significant increase GED success in 2015 and beyond.

A tiny change today brings a dramatically different tomorrow.

Richard Bach

The contribution of 151 hours in general and committee meetings by 12 Advisory Council and County Oversight Committee members ensured application of the unique Community action tripartite board structure to bring together community leaders from each of these groups to collaborate on developing responses to local needs. The time spent allowed for **Maximum Feasible Participation in both the creation and administration of Community Action programs.**

Community Resources is a member agency of The Faith Coalition for the Common Good (FCCG). The agency director is an active member of the FCCG Education Task Force and was co-chair of the Anti-Bully subcommittee which provided SPS #186 with additional policy language to meet IL state policy standards.



2014 Faith Coalition for the Common Good Annual Breakfast

Goal 3: Low-Income People Own a Stake in their Community

The FCCG Education Task Force consisted of membership of low-income people and representatives of community agencies like SCDRC. Members participated with input into the SPS #186 Anti-Bully policy additions, Family and Student Handbook language revisions and press conferences regarding proposed Education Senate Bill 16.



Hundreds of FCCG members with low incomes took part to each of the other 4 FCCG Task Forces: City Services, Rail Benefits Agreement, Immigration Reform and Civic Engagement.



Rally at the State Capital to support SB 16

Goal 4: Partnerships are Achieved to Better Serve Low-Income

SCDCR has developed collaborations, partnerships or linkages with 78 organizations, including non-profits, government agencies at all levels, and businesses. Thanks to community partners, SCDCR is able to strengthen the agency mission and services.

| The number of human capital resources available to Community Action that increase agency capacity to achieve family and community outcomes, as measured by one or more of the following: | Resources in Agency (#) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Non-Profit | 10 |
| Faith Based | 7 |
| Local Government | 12 |
| State Government | 4 |
| Federal Government | 2 |
| For-Profit Business or Corporation | 8 |
| Consortiums/Collaboration | 6 |
| Housing Consortiums/Collaboration | 2 |
| School Districts | 3 |
| Institutions of postsecondary education/training | 12 |
| Financial/Banking Institutions | 4 |
| Health Service Institutions | 2 |
| State wide associations or collaborations | 3 |
| Total | 78 |



Congressman
Rodney Davis

Calvary Missionary Baptist Church

Goal 5: Agencies Increase their Capacity to Achieve Results

The human capital resources available to Community Action to increase agency capacity to achieve family and community outcomes include 1 Certified Community Action Professional, 1 Family Development Certified Staff, 12 staff attending 283-hour trainings, and 12 Board Members attending 36-hour trainings. In 2015, four more staff members will become Certified Families and Community Development (FCD).

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie



Staff Members of Sangamon County Community Resources



Kelly Comerford,
Energy Dept. Coordinator



David Petrilli,
Fiscal Officer

Goal 6: Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve their Potential by Agency Programs that Strengthen through Supportive Services

Basic Needs assistance provided services to re-gain family stability.

- \$77,495 in **rental assistance** ensured 199 families including former Bel-Aire Motel Residents obtained and maintained safe and affordable housing.
- \$17,523 helped 199 children obtain **school uniforms and avoid truancy**.
- \$22,124 in **medical assistance** was provided for 212 families.
- \$51,163 assisted 174 families with obtaining **dental services**.
- Utility payment assistance (**the LIHEAP and PIPP programs**) helped 5,056 households with low incomes avoid the risk of disconnection or obtain re-connection assistance.
- 214 **food boxes** fed 46 families consisting of seniors and families with school-aged children.
- \$7,575 in **Pediatric Dental Anesthesia** assistance enabled 19 children to receive oral surgery for the painful condition of baby bottle tooth decay not covered by Medicaid.

The work done by your employees is great. They were all courteous, respectful, and very knowledgeable. The improvements help in a huge way. The refrigerator and thermostat are very nice... Thank you Sangamon County Weatherization.

Paul Cox (Customer)

When James Lewis enrolled in PIPP program, he was struggling to pay his bills. He was behind on his medical bills, and he had almost no money to pay his utilities and gas.

The agency PIPP program coordinator worked with James and came up with a plan – saving \$48 per month for paying bills. As long as he paid \$48 on his bill, he would get \$121 to pay the rest of his bills each month. He worked hard on insisting on the plan for more than 2 years, which increased his credit and brings him stable financial assistance. Now, he is not worried about paying bills. Not only has he savings for bills and emergency, but he also has knowledge on how to plan and save money for future.

SCDCR also provided a series of services to seniors, disabled clients, and caregivers.

- 46 clients obtained **health care services** for themselves or a family member
- 17 senior shut-ins received **food boxes** twice each month to assist with food stamp cuts.
- **LIHEAP or PIPP** energy assistance saved 2,524 households from disconnection.
- 39 homes were **weatherized** to reduce monthly energy bills.
- 1,022 households received **Low-Income Sewer Rebate Assistance** due to increased sewer rates



SCDCR received **3,564 phone call inquiries** from customers about services the agency is not able to provide. SCDCR assessed callers' situations and provided appropriate **information and referral** to other resources.

The staff that works for Sangamon County Department of Community Resources in Springfield is phenomenal and they always treat me and my family with professionalism. I am also grateful for ... introducing me to the school uniform program that has helped me to dress my children for school. It is programs like these and others that give families like mine a chance to enhance and become better people and contribute back to our communities.

Ollivette Reeves and Family (Customer)



Community Garden, Nutrition Education, Fresh Food

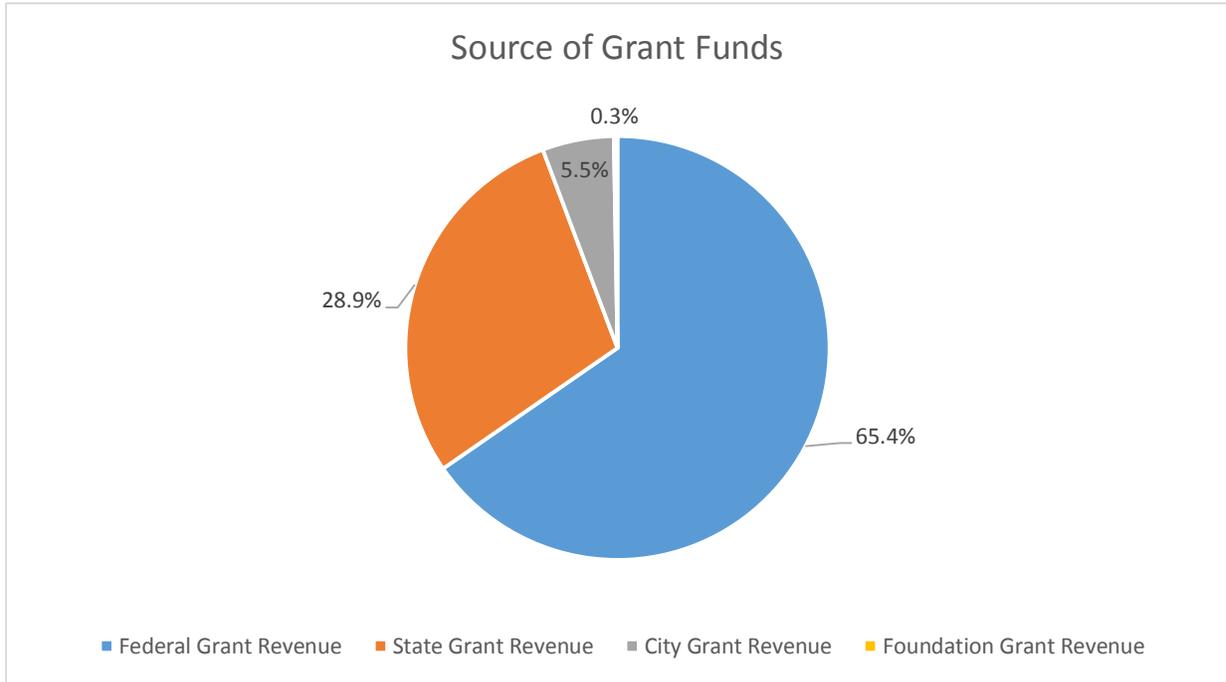
Community Garden, Nutrition Education, Fresh Food is a PNC foundation grant program. SCDCR collaborates with community partners to provide participants an opportunity to enjoy planting in garden, learning about nutrition, harvesting and preparing fresh food.



**COMMUNITY GARDEN/
NUTRITION EDUCATION/
FRESH FOOD**



Agency's Financial Report



Source of Grant Funds

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Federal Grant Revenue | \$2,397,152.11 |
| State Grant Revenue | \$1,060,277.54 |
| City Grant Revenue | \$200,000.00 |
| Foundation Grant Revenue | <u>\$10,000.00</u> |
| Total | \$3,667,429.65 |

2014 Use of Grant Funds

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Low Income Heating/Cooling Assistance | \$2,374,324.10 |
| Home Weatherization & Training | \$447,585.92 |
| Sewer Rebate Assistance | \$126,351.84 |
| Community Services | \$445,171.45 |
| Rollover/Overlapping Grant Funds to Next Fiscal Year | <u>\$273,996.34</u> |
| Total | \$3,667,429.65 |

Low Income Heating/Cooling Assistance, 64.7%

Community Services, 12.1%

Rollover/Overlapping Grant Funds to Next Fiscal Year, 7.5%



Sewer Rebate Assistance, 3.4%

Home Weatherization, 12.2%

Community Action Goals

Six National Goals

1. Individuals with low income become more self-sufficient.
2. The conditions in which low income people live on are improved.
3. Individuals with low income own a stake in their community.
4. Partnerships are achieved.
5. Agencies increase capacity to achieve results.
6. Individuals with low income become more stable.

Why These Goals?

If we expect to achieve results, we must expect change to happen.

In the Community Action network, the results achieved are broadly identified as achievement of the Community Action Six National Goals. The Six National Goals divided into family level, agency level and community level goals.

To achieve these goals the family (or individual), agency, or community will experience a change. This could be a positive change in circumstance, or it could be the prevention of a negative change. It even could be maintenance of a stable condition (which is a neutral change). These changes happen when families receive services from Community Action Agencies or their partners.

One of the primary assumptions in the Community Action National Theory of Change is that family and community successes are interconnected. When families own a stake in their community (Goal Three), they work to assure that community conditions are improved (Goal Two). Additionally, their involvement in community activities provides them with social capital and access to resources that contribute to them becoming more stable (Goal Six) or more self-sufficient (Goal One).

And, of course, the agency is the primary catalyst in family and community change. Stakeholders and other partners (service providers, businesses, government representatives, funders, etc.) must work together with the Community Action Agency (Goal Four) and the CAA must have the capacity (Goal Five) to help facilitate the interactions that most effectively will address complex issues related to the reduction of poverty.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA)

To accomplish these goals, local community action agencies have been encouraged to undertake a number of ROMA implementation actions



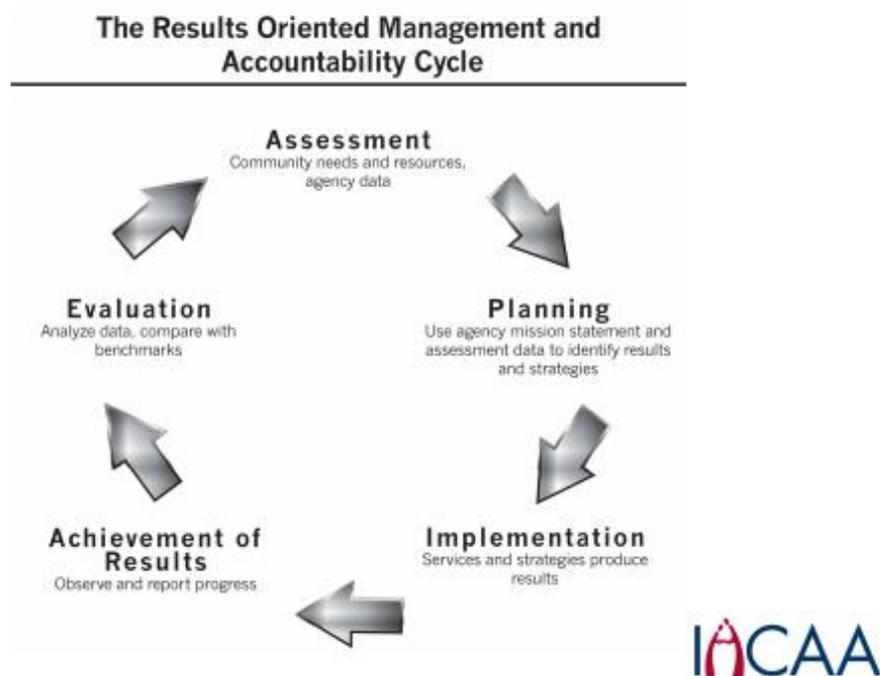
that focus on results-oriented management and results-oriented accountability:

Results-Oriented Management

- Assess poverty needs and conditions within the community;
- Define a clear agency anti-poverty mission for Community Action and a strategy to address those needs, both immediate and longer term, in the context of existing resources and opportunities in the community;
- Identify specific improvements, or results, to be achieved among low-income people and the community; and
- Organize and implement programs, services, and activities, such as advocacy, within the agency and among “partnering” organizations, to achieve anticipated results.

Results-Oriented Accountability

- Develop and implement strategies to measure and record improvements in the condition of low-income people and the communities in which they live that result from Community Action intervention;
- Use information about outcomes, or results, among agency tripartite boards and staff to determine the overall effectiveness, inform annual and long-range planning, support agency advocacy, funding, and community partnership activities.



History of Community Action

What is Community Action?

In 1964, The Great Society, as envisioned by President Lyndon Johnson, was a sweeping plan to improve the lives of all Americans, regardless of their circumstances. Inspired by President Kennedy and his New Frontier, Johnson pledged to fulfill his promise of equal opportunity for all by enacting several comprehensive changes within the federal government. In August of that same year, the Economic Opportunity Act was signed into law by President Johnson creating the nationwide Community Action Network.

The War on Poverty

In 1963, shortly before he was assassinated, President Kennedy had asked his economic advisors to draw up some proposals to address the problem of American poverty. Johnson took up this charge after he succeeded Kennedy as President. In Johnson's first State of the Union address on June 8, 1964, he called for an unconditional war to defeat poverty. He expanded and revised the proposals given to Kennedy and developed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The act included a variety of initiatives:

- Head Start
- Job Corps
- Work-Study program for university students
- VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) - a domestic version of the Peace Corps
- Neighborhood Youth Corps
- Basic education and adult job training
- CAPS (Community Action Programs) - CAPS turned out to be the most controversial part of the package, as it proposed the "maximum feasible participation" by poor people themselves to determine what would help them the most. CAPS were a radical departure from how government had run most social reform programs in the past.

The Economic Opportunity Act was innovative legislation, but it received only about \$1 billion to divide among the various programs and remained critically underfunded. By 1966, Congress appropriated \$4 billion for the programs.

The Start of Community Action

Community Action was a bold idea, especially for the federal government. It handed over control to the local level, so that programs were geared specifically for target population needs. This concept, "maximum feasible participation", represented a new paradigm in the government and many sectors were wary of its innovative ideas. President Johnson selected a member of President Kennedy's inner circle to head up the newly formed "Office of Economic Opportunity" –Sargent Shriver.



President Johnson signing the Economic Opportunity Act, August 1964

Shriver was head of Peace Corps in the Kennedy administration and married to Kennedy's sister, Eunice. He had proved himself to be a capable leader and President Johnson admired his abilities. President Johnson, legendary for his acumen in recruiting key personnel, offered the position to Shriver and would not take no for an answer. Shriver was installed as the first head of the OEO in October 11, 1964 and leapt into action.

Unfortunately for Shriver, he simply did not have adequate funding to begin the process of addressing national poverty issues. However, he assembled an impressive team of advisers, including Michael Harrington, author of *The Other America* and began to implement new policies and actions to resolve these issues.

Community Action was modeled after two fairly successful urban renewal projects, one undertaken by the Ford Foundation and the Mobilization for Youth, a program aimed at juvenile delinquency. Inspiration was also taken from the "Back of the Yards" program in Chicago, which was developed by Saul Alinsky, considered the father of "community development". It should be noted that Alinsky became very critical of the OEO as it developed. The key component was that low-income citizens played an active role in program design and administration, or "maximum feasible participation". The Economic Opportunity Act was amended (known as the Green Amendment) in 1967 to mandate the board structure of community action agencies, with complemented the earlier Quie Amendment which required the tripartite representation, including low-income participation.

In 1981, President Reagan introduced the Block Grant, which dramatically changed the way federal funding was distributed. Programs including Community Action, would now receive

funding through the State Office of Community Action/Services and would be under more intense scrutiny than previous administrations. Illinois Community Action now worked more closely with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to implement the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) and worked to build a strong partnership to provide robust services to Illinois' low-income residents.

Over the past several years, federal funding to support the Community Service Block Grant has been challenged. President George W. Bush denounced Community Action programs as being static. However, Community Action remains an important safety net for many vulnerable individuals and families. Beginning in 2001, Community Action has improved their reporting through the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework and continuously seeks ways to improve outreach and services. The National Community Action Partnership now encourages all Community Action Agencies to embrace the National Standards of Excellence as a pathway to improve and empower agency operations.

The guiding principle of maximum feasible participation continues today in Community Action. Local Community Action boards are tripartite, in other words, have representation from all segments of the local community including their low-income clients.

Why Community Action?

Community Action equips low-income citizens with the tools and potential for becoming self-sufficient. The structure of program is unique – federal dollars are used locally to offer specialized programming in communities. It is a coordinated effort to address the root effects of poverty and to, ultimately, move families and individuals to self-sufficiency.

This work is not easy and demand is always shifting and changing. Over the years, the federal government has changed as well. The funding is now part of the Block Grant System, which allows for the flexibility and specialization of unique programs. Poverty is viewed as a systemic problem and Community Action is a systems approach to resolving those issues. There are now over 1000 Community Action Agencies throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) promote self-sufficiency, not dependency. Among their three key assets are:

FLEXIBILITY - The Community Services Block Grant, which supplies the core CAA funding, is unique; it is flexible, and it primarily funds local investments in services, facilities and partnerships which are particular to the CAA's home community. By adding to and altering government programs' "one-size-fits-all" programming, a community can provide its low-income members the right mix of assistance, encouragement, and incentives to become self-sufficient.

IMMEDIACY - CAAs are located in the areas of greatest need, managed and staffed by community residents and often open far into the evening. Therefore, when a family or an individual faces a crisis, their CAA is able to respond quickly with targeted forms of assistance appropriate to the situation; these may well include the mobilization of help from many of the CAA's private sector partners, volunteers, and faith-based groups.

The goal is to promptly stabilize a family, and thus avoid the long-term consequence of costly dependency. However, Community Action also has the capability to sustain long-term involvement in a family's progress to self-sufficiency, as well as in the development of the low-income community.

COORDINATION - A bedrock principle of Community Action is that resources of all kinds need to be integrated so they can be used in combination to solve community and individual problems. CAAs manage more than \$5.6 billion in public and private resources annually, serving more than 9.3 million low-income persons; the CSBG-funded staff goes into the community and to other government sources to bring in not only leveraged funds but also hundreds of thousands of local volunteers.

So, in other words:

The Community Action Method:

- Prioritizes prevention
- Addresses the causes of poverty
- Involves the Community
- Improves the Community
- Creates Opportunity
- CAA response to clients/customers is:
 - Flexible
 - Coordinated
 - Directed to Long Term Client Development

Typically, the programs and services coordinated, enhanced and offered to the community by its CAA include all or some of the following:

TO HELP AND ENCOURAGE CHILDREN AND YOUTH: Head Start, Literacy Programs, Dropout Prevention, After School Enrichment and Tutoring, Teen Centers, Recreation and Sports Programs, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC), Well-Baby Clinics, Summer Enrichment Programs, Summer Food Programs, Child Care Food Programs, Pregnancy Prevention, Character Education, Substance Abuse Education, Prevention & Counseling, Summer Youth Employment Programs, College Counseling and Placement.

TO SUPPORT THE WORKING POOR: Child Care, Adult Education, GED Preparation, Job Training and On-The-Job Support, Job Search Assistance, Job Placement, Job Creation, Small Business Development, Loan Funds, Senior Community Service Employment, Displaced Homemaker Programs, Budget Counseling, Internet Training and Access.

TO SUPPORT THE POOR FACING CRISIS: Homeless Shelters & Drop-In Centers, Utility Deposits, Eviction Prevention, Domestic Violence Programs & Shelters, Transitional Housing, Food Pantries Energy Crisis Assistance & Shelter, Emergency Food Baskets, Emergency Clothing, Supplies, and Services - including Medical & Legal Volunteer Help.

TO SUSTAIN AND HONOR THE ELDERLY: Meals on Wheels, In-Home Care Programs, Senior Centers, Senior Day Care, Foster Grandparents, Congregate Meals, Medical Transportation, Volunteer Chore Services.

TO STRENGTHEN THE WHOLE FAMILY: Comprehensive Family Development Support, Nutrition Education, Parenting Education, Community Gardens and Canneries, Food Stamps, Health Clinics, Weatherization Assistance, Energy Assistance, Rental Assistance, Home Ownership Programs, Community Centers, Individual Development Accounts.

TO STRENGTHEN THE WHOLE COMMUNITY: Low-Income Housing Development, Economic Development and Support for New Business Ventures, Mobilization of Community-Wide Safety and Crime Prevention Initiatives, Consumer Education and Fraud Prevention, Community Reinvestment Act Partnerships, Support for Groups Working on Neighborhood Improvements, Support for Dialogue and Planning among all Sectors of the Community.

Unique Characteristics of Community Action Agencies

BOARD STRUCTURE - CAAs are required to have a tripartite board consisting of equal parts of local private sector, public sector, and low-income community representatives. This structure brings together community leaders from each of these groups to collaborate on developing responses to local needs. This allows for Maximum Feasible Participation in both the creation and administration of Community Action programs.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT – The CAA network is one of the largest users of volunteer services in the country. In FY 98, CAAs reported that volunteers contributed more than 27 million hours of service, equivalent to more than 13,000 full time employees.

LEVERAGE FOR OTHER RESOURCES – Every Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) dollar spent leverages nearly \$4 of state, local, and private contributions combined. The CAA network administers a total of nearly \$5.6 billion in federal, state, local and private resources.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS – CSBG funds give CAAs the flexibility to design programs that address needs specific to individuals and the local community and to identify specialized resources that fit these needs.





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Office Hours

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Call (217) 535-3120 for appointments

Our Mission

The Sangamon County Department of Community Resources strives to improve the quality of life of residents with low incomes in our county. The goal for our customers is self-sufficiency and is increased by utilizing agency programs and by referrals for customers made by agency staff to community partner organizations.