

Albany Community Action Partnership, Inc.

2013-2015 Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning Committee

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Tracy Calone, Director of Program Evaluation & Development

Terry Kimball, Director of Early Childhood Education

Richard Spoerl, Director of Property Improvement

Nihla Zarook, Director of HR & Finance

Planning Consultant, Meghan Johnston, Johnston & Associates, LLC

I. Introduction

Background and Purpose

In August of 2012, the Albany Community Action Partnership (ACAP) initiated a strategic planning process to identify and establish priorities that will guide the development and utilization of human and financial resources toward greater customer and community impact during the next three years.

This document presents ACAP's affirmation of its mission, a new vision for the organization's future, and nine goals to drive the organization's impact on individuals and families, the community, and the organization's capacity as a service provider, advocate, employer, business operation and community partner. The plan provides a framework for board and staff accountability and communication around a set of shared commitments, and a base from which to respond to anticipated and unanticipated challenges and opportunities.

Data Sources and Planning Activities

ACAP has, during the past two years, generated assessment data from multiple sources to gain a comprehensive picture of the Albany County community's needs and the organization's capacity to respond. This plan's goals are informed, in part, by:

1. NICQUA Assessment, a comprehensive internal scan conducted by outside assessors
2. NYS Community Action Association Needs Assessment Tool, a compilation of census and social indicator data
3. Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment conducted jointly with Siena Research Institute
4. CORE Review conducted by the NYS Department of State, Division of Community Services

In addition, the Board of Directors participated in a written self-assessment in November, and reviewed the aggregated results to inform governance goals, and a focus group discussion was held with program managers in December, the results of which contributed to both program and administrative goals. The senior management staff met with the consultant and/or the committee on four occasions to review and discuss priorities and their implications as the plan was developed. The full Board was invited to participate in two half day planning sessions, one of which also included senior management staff. Regular updates on the process were shared at each board meeting by the committee chair, board president, or planning consultant.

Beyond Infrastructure: Partnerships, Sustainability and Community Needs

ACAP's two previous strategic plans focused primarily on stabilizing and improving program and organizational infrastructure. Their successful implementation resulted in updated fiscal systems and improved oversight of fiscal viability, an expanded program scope and revenues, a re-organization of internal management structures and communication, and updated governance and management policies. As these changes took place, the organization also established an increasingly visible and respected presence as a leader and partner in the local community and within the larger network of Community Action Agencies.

From this growth and visibility, new opportunities for service integration, strategic alliances, capital projects and collaborative community development initiatives have emerged. The agency is positioned to build on its partnerships, refine its programs and focus its resources more strategically to create and track progress in its work with customers and the wider community. At the same time, funding sources traditional to Community Action – notably Weatherization Assistance, Head Start and the Community Services Block Grant - have been threatened and/or cut in the federal budget and sequestration processes. Related changes in funding levels and contracting processes at the state level have further challenged the ability of all CAA's to respond to customer and community needs without disruption.

The Board of Directors and Senior Management Staff, early in the planning process, noted the need to address these organizational priorities:

1. The centralized and in-depth assessment of customer needs across all programs, driving more responsive service delivery and providing outcome data that will contribute to customer, program, agency and community momentum.
2. A more focused governance-management partnership based on clearly established organizational priorities and a shared understanding of role distinctions and their practical application in committee function, management reporting and governance/operational decision-making.

3. The internal capacity to gather, analyze and respond to data that support a sustainable business model and provide a basis for informed and timely corporate decision-making, particularly with regard to strategic corporate alliances and to ACAP's role in collaborative community development initiatives.
4. An active board presence in fund development, engaging individual donors, community groups and other supporters, and generating reliable financial and in-kind support.

The following unmet community needs have also been identified, from the data sources noted above, as priorities for ACAP's attention, as refinements to existing programs, new program development, and/or collaborations with other organizations:

1. Expanded early childhood services, as both a child development and workforce issue.
2. Parent support, including the early identification of the need for support and the availability of options.
3. Community development, including efforts to improve conditions and engage the communities in which ACAP offers services.
4. Safe and affordable housing options, through collaborations with housing providers, landlords and other organizations, to help people establish and maintain stable homes.
5. Closer connections with other providers of complementary services, particularly those that support individual and family assets or address needs in any of the following ten dimensions: childcare, transportation, employment and employment retention, housing, adult education, income, finance, nutrition and energy.
6. Greater volunteer and community involvement, including closer and more informed relationships with customers.
7. An ongoing focus on employability and workforce development to help customers achieve greater economic stability, self-sufficiency and asset development.
8. The ability to provide access to emergency services, directly or through collaborations, that help people through crisis and toward greater stability.

2. Mission and Vision for ACAP's Future

Mission

The mission statement has been reviewed and affirmed as follows: ACAP works in partnership with families and communities to empower people to achieve economic self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life.

Vision for the Future

The Albany Community Action Partnership will be known as:

1. A trusted and reliable partner in our customer and community relationships.
2. A transparent business operation, demonstrating continual improvement in the skills, systems and teamwork that create change.
3. A good neighbor, investing human and financial resources in the communities around us.
4. A leading advocate, naming and breaking down societal barriers to economic self-sufficiency.
5. An innovator and collaborator, allied with other organizations that seek creative, intentional solutions to longtime challenges and changing community needs.

3. Plan Format and Accountability

The plan document follows the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) format, based on the six National Community Action Goals. For each of the three major impact areas described in the national goals – **Family and Individuals, Community, and Agency Capacity/Partnerships** – a statement of strategic direction heads the column in which a program goal, an administrative goal, and a governance goal describe ACAP's intended impact in that area. Each goal is accompanied by one or more strategies.

More detailed action plans for each of the goals and accompanying strategies will be developed at the program management, agency administration and board levels, as indicated in the left hand column. These will include completion and reporting dates, based on regulatory requirements and on a schedule, to be determined, of regular progress updates by each of the responsible groups. These reporting dates will be represented in an annual calendar of key governance and management events.

Staff will align the plan’s program and administrative strategies, to the extent possible, with the Community Services Block Grant work plan format, so that regulatory reporting and internal reporting will not require an unreasonable duplication of effort.

Impact on →	Family & Individuals	Community	Agency Capacity
Accountability ↓	ACAP will provide opportunities for people to become more self-reliant, improve their economic circumstances and make stronger connections to ongoing networks of support.	ACAP’s programs, advocacy and leadership will result in improved community conditions and greater community involvement and influence for low income people.	ACAP will build on its record of growth and capacity development, aligning its mission and programs with sustainable resources, strategic partners, and transparent business systems to address critical community needs.
National CSBG Goals	1 – Low Income People become more self sufficient 6 – Low income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems	2 – The conditions in which low income people live are improved 3 – Low income people own a stake in their community	4 – Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low income people are achieved 5 – Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results