



Community Action Organization of Erie County

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE REPORT

*Sustainability... Growth...
Impact...*

February 2008

Our Vision

To achieve sustainable human development whereby people in our communities build full family equity and fulfill their life needs free from poverty and social exclusion.

Our Mission

To achieve our mission, CAO in the short term will address the most pressing and immediate needs of our customers. In the long term, we will engage, convene, mobilize and utilize practices, programs and available resources that continually demonstrate the ability to build financial, educational, health, safety, and positive social capital in our communities.

We will fulfill this mission through a blend of strategies including targeted outcome based programs, sound management, strong governance and a persistent dedication to achieving results.

Mission critical initiatives include:

- Giving absolute priority to the people we serve
- Ongoing research and analysis of our environment to help determine the most effective poverty fighting strategies
- Working with a broader array of organizations, in partnership, or in alliance, in a more measured way to help create conditions for people to extricate themselves from poverty
- Building a more widespread commitment to overcoming poverty in Erie County
- Constantly involving our customers, encouraging self-reliance and avoiding creation of dependency
- Strengthening preconditions for program development and delivery so that non-planned initiatives correlate to and integrate with existing successful programs
- Increased funding assistance and non-funded resources
- Continuous needs assessment to match our resources to areas that have the greatest impact on eradicating poverty
- Establishment of core results for each program and consistent measurement of results
- Developing high mission impact and high sustaining programs for our clients
- Maximizing our resources (funding, talent, partnerships) in support of our clients
- Maintaining close and respectful relationships with all stakeholders
- Ensuring organizational compliance
- Building and maintaining full organizational capacity

Our Values and Guiding Principles

We are conscious of our role as a community service agency, of the particular importance of the services we provide and the need for those services to be provided with the highest of standards. We realize everyday that poverty is an attack on human dignity and that it is morally and otherwise intolerable. We know that our constant challenge is to provide the right mix of programs, services and support that result in more positive social and economic circumstances for people. We recognize the importance of the shared values, which we bring to the delivery of our business. In carrying out our work, we seek to be guided by the following key values and principles:

Service

We understand that the services we offer impact the lives of people who have complex problems. It therefore challenges us to remain focused on their needs in the most supportive ways possible. Our best decisions will be the decisions that provide the most effective end result for the highest number of our customers, program participants, and the communities in which they live.

Fairness and Respect

We recognize the need for fairness and mutual respect. Therefore, any action taken at CAO will treat all stakeholders involved with, respect, compassion, humanity and grace.

Openness

We are open to change. We give expression to this by encouraging and facilitating the open expression of views and a participative approach. CAO will encourage all customers and stakeholders to share in each other's ideas and wisdom to effect greater change. We will encourage reaching beyond what is expedient to ensure that all stakeholders share ownership of and responsibility for creating a positive future.

Professionalism

We will apply the highest professional standards in every aspect of our work. We will maintain an environment of trust and shared understanding where people are inspired to excellence and have an opportunity, as individuals or team members, to develop and grow. We will expect the highest standard of job performance possible from every person who works in the Agency; supporting each other in delivering quality services and programs. We will ensure clear definitions of ownership and responsibilities through the effective use of performance management where measurable outcomes are used to determine success for the individual, our Agency, our customers and our communities.

Flexibility and Responsiveness

We will respond to challenges in a flexible and creative manner. While we look to the future and higher aims, we will take a practical approach to challenges which arise; being flexible in addressing particular needs when these are required and responding with initiative and creativity. We will utilize the opportunities offered by new technology to improve services, performance and the working environment.

Partnership and Consultation

We recognize that none of us exists in a vacuum. Our potential to create better lives for our customers is greatest when we set aside personal agendas and work together. We recognize that effective delivery of our services and management of our work requires a partnership approach with all stakeholders. We will encourage outreach and collaboration with all existing resources in a collaborative non-competitive manner. We will encourage our customers and the leaders in their communities to do the same.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – 2007 - 2012

1. By 2012, poverty in our communities will decrease by 25%.
2. By 2010, youth violence will be reduced by 35%.
3. By 2012, CAO will have diverse funding streams underpinned by income earning community-based ventures.
4. By year end 2007, CAO will have a formal, high functioning financial system and processes that maintain, analyze, and report the financial status of the organization, its programs and their financial impact.
5. By 2008, the CAO Board will have eliminated all non-productive behaviors and will function from a platform of strategic and mission critical governance, high results expectations, full and effective fiduciary oversight, and personal and team effectiveness.
6. By 2010, affordable housing and home ownership in our communities will increase by 15%.
7. Beginning 2009, CAO's programs to build financial capital will show measurable results in debt reduction and personal savings in our communities.
8. By 2012, CAO will expand access to affordable dependent care with at least 8 new programs in our communities.
9. By 2010, the quality of living in our neighborhoods will increase as demonstrated by an increase in viable services that support, not drain the community.
10. By 2012, CAO jobs programs will have produced a 40% increase in employment for people in our communities.
11. By 2012, 80% of all stakeholders will regard CAO as the area's most effective resource and leading agency that provides poverty reduction and social inclusion solutions.
12. By September 2007, the CAO Head Start strategic plan will be reviewed and approved. By year-end 2007, Action Plans will be developed and implemented and an agreed upon monitoring system is in place to track and measure progress.
13. By 2012, at least 6 ongoing collaboratives and partnerships will be established with key organizations that will support CAO in creating more lasting community health starting with seniors, children and single parents.
14. By 2009, the CAO staff is fully engaged in development processes that increase their talent, skills and abilities to respond more effectively to the needs of our customers and our communities.
15. By June 2008, All CAO programs will have a system of customer feedback and a system to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs on mission critical objectives and strategies.



OUR HIGH-LEVEL GOALS – 2007 - 2012

GOAL 1: OUTCOME BASED PROGRAMS

Focus: Results Orientation

To co-create with the Board an accountability system for monitoring quality of poverty reduction and social inclusion programs and services that covers achievement of objectives, attainment of standards, completeness, comprehensiveness, accessibility, financial impact, number of customers served, and coordination of programs and services with other internal and external functions/agencies.



To ensure all programs address the key levers for poverty reduction: housing, education, building equity, jobs, and health and dependent care.

To use evaluation data to determine the feasibility of continuing, divesting, supporting, adjusting or adding new programs to address anti-poverty needs.

To use evaluation and sound financial management practices to determine when, how and by whom services will be delivered to customers.

GOAL 2: CHILDREN

Focus: Education, Health and Dependent Care

To further support working families and reduce vulnerability of children with unstructured time by greatly expanding and making convenient affordable child and dependent care.

To pursue alliances and programs which create increased opportunities for affordable and preventive healthcare services for families.

To maximize early childhood and parent development programs by implementing the CAO Head Start Strategic Plan.

GOAL 3: POVERTY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND FAMILIES

Focus: Asset Building, Affordable Housing, Jobs

To support and promote families and to attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieving a more inclusive society through coordinating, developing and implementing anti-poverty strategies, and through the provision of support services for people in debt or at risk of experiencing hardship.

To identify income supports and access to relevant services for people of working age who cannot secure an income (or an adequate income) from employment and facilitate them in taking up relevant employment, training, education or development opportunities as appropriate.

To increase work readiness and provide job skill opportunities for the evolving workforce.

GOAL 4: THE DEPARTMENT AND ITS STAFF

Focus: Building Relevant Talent

To develop an effective, adaptable and capable organization and a culture of pride, innovation and performance excellence, with a high level of involvement by people at all levels and a climate which fosters personal and career development.

GOAL 5: ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Focus: Program Support and Delivery

To install and maintain an organizational structure that ensures programs and services are being supported, delivered and monitored in an integrated manner, with understood accountabilities and to the maximum benefit of the customer.

GOAL 6: THE BOARD

Focus: Strategic leadership, Compliance and Oversight

To maintain full compliance with by-laws and function with effective Board governance, targeted financial oversight and focused performance standards and evaluation and short and long-term strategic initiatives that makes full use of the talent and resources of the Board and the CAO staff.

GOAL 7: CAPACITY

Focus: Optimization of all Resources

To build full capacity at CAO.

GOAL 8: FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Focus: Sound Business and Financial Practices

To build and maintain a credible financial system and staff backed by solid technology that provides accurate and timely financial reporting on the status of programs and the operations of the agency.

To develop a funding diversification plan and identify the necessary resources to build and increase funding streams for CAO.

GOAL 9: MARKETING/BRANDING

Focus: Telling a Compelling Story, Garnering Resources

To develop a marketing and branding program aimed at telling the compelling story of CAO and its customers and that aligns the business and private sector in full support of CAO.