



Agency Profile

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. (LCOI) is a Community Action Agency (CAA) established in 1965. CAAs are nonprofit private and public organizations established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. Today there are approximately 1,100 CAAs in the United States covering 96% of the nation's counties. CAAs are a primary source of support for more than 34.5 million people who are living in poverty in the United States. CAAs provide a range of services to meet the unique needs of each community. CAAs have specially constituted tripartite Boards which include representation from elected public officials, low income representatives, and private entities with compassionate interests within the community.

Operational success at LCOI is made possible through the cooperative interaction of our dedicated Board Members, employees, and volunteers. Our annual budget is approximately \$2.4 million; leveraged through Federal, State, and local funding sources. Our primary service area encompasses the entirety of Lewis County. LCOI also provides select housing programs within neighboring Jefferson County.

Our consumers are men, women, and children who are experiencing financial hardship or those who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The typical LCOI consumer is one of the working poor; struggling to escape poverty with limited financial assets and educational opportunities. Being able to assist these families is an honor and a heavy responsibility.

Strategic Methodology

In mid-2016, LCOI established a Community Action Advisory Group (CAAG). CAAG was created to be reflective of agency staff (both admin and front line workers), board members, partner agencies, volunteers, faith based representation, consumers, and small businesses. CAAG first took on the challenge of conducting an assessment of community needs. This assessment was conducted between July 2016 and February 2017. The assessment included collecting US Census data, the United Way A.L.I.C.E. report, and surveys from consumers, our paid and volunteer workforce, and community partners. CAAG reviewed and analyzed the above data, and then provided the resulting report to the agency Board of Directors. The Community Needs Assessment was formally approved by the Board of Directors on March 27th, 2017. CAAG then embarked on subsequent attributes of the strategic planning process; to include review and revision of the agency's mission and vision statement, SWOT analysis, development of objectives and goals, and ultimately the draft Strategic Plan presented to the agency's Board of Directors. Throughout the entire process, CAAG utilized consumer satisfaction surveys collected over the prior year, stakeholder survey collations, and peripheral data to identify social trends and establish needs of low-income people within our service area.

Mission Statement: Working with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community

Vision Statement: A community where people are empowered to live safely without economic barriers

Overview

The following pages identify the various goals of LCOI and provide a framework for continuous growth and improvement over the course of the next three years. These strategic outcomes are consistent with three broad categorical areas related to Community, Agency, and Family. The outcomes and strategies demonstrate the agency's commitment to address reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.

COMMUNITY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
C-1	Commercial services are maintained and/or preserved to promote quality of life benefitting low-income individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset development; continuation of the New Bremen General Store as a community resource Further develop the Thrift Store to provide a community resource for: 1) Acquiring pre-owned, affordable household and essential items; 2) Provide an avenue for the volunteers to give back to the community; and 3) Provide a community resource for workforce development training 	CEO FS
C-2	Community youth mobilize and participate in active citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly assist with the Lewis County Youth Advocacy Board and mentor student representatives with county-wide funding, projects, and monitoring 	CEO
C-3	Specific community concerns related to poverty, victimization, youth, addictions, and other patterned community needs are identified and addressed	Partnerships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Coordinated Response/Multidisciplinary Team(s) and Child Advocacy Center Migrant Worker Coalition Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition Lewis County Chamber of Commerce HPNAP Advisory Board Points North Housing Coalition Lewis County Priorities Council Lewis County Youth Advisory Board Lewis County Transportation Task Force Lewis County Fair Housing Task Force Head Start Advisory Group Lewis County Community Services Board WIOA Workforce Development Board Lewis County CEDS committee (explore benefit of agency representation) 	VS FS HAP-J CEO
C-4	Low-income representation is maintained with formal community organizations, governments, boards or councils that provide input into topics supported by agency mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income individuals take active part as Target Sector representatives on the Board of Directors Low-income individuals participate in the Community Action Advisory Group (CAAG) Low-income individuals actively engage as stake holders within the community through volunteerism 	Board CAAG FS/VS
C-5	The needs of the community are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct community needs assessment in 2019 	CEO

COMMUNITY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
C-6	Low-income individuals are provided the tools and resources to deliver their voice to State and National representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create educational resources for self-advocacy; including elected official points of contact and links to educational resources • Educate consumers on available resources to empower self-advocacy 	CEO Marketing
C-7	College students from the community are empowered to be change agents for self and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding for summer workership position(s) • Provide a meaningful experience and career exploration for youth desiring to work within community services 	CEO DD
C-8	Emerging leaders from the community are mobilized and participate in active citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly assist with the Lewis County Leadership Academy on the Steering Committee and as Facilitator 	CEO

AGENCY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
A-1	The agency revitalizes and maintains an effective volunteer function for coordinated initiatives benefiting low-income individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and implementation of volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thrift Store operation and expansion ○ Food pantry operations assessed ○ 24 hour crisis hotline operation • Develop and implement a volunteer recognition plan • Coordinate and publicize agency volunteering opportunities to the public • Increase volunteer training opportunities 	FS FS VS CEO Marketing CEO
A-2	Community partnerships are developed and maintained to ensure effective services to low-income residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify public/private agencies mutually accessed by our consumers and prioritize those which need inter-agency development and/or strengthening • Establish and maintain a variety of active partnerships 	CEO
A-3	The agency employs a qualified and equipped workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit qualified employees. • Identify and secure quality in-service trainings for employees and volunteers • Provide annual refresher training and SHAP Talks • Identify and attend cost-effective trainings that are reflective of our mission • Review and update the agency Professional Development Plan • Reinforce FDC philosophy throughout workforce • Provide annual report to board on employee turnover • Complete a compensation comparison with that of other similar nonprofit community agencies in 2019 • Review and revise Affirmative Action Plan • Obtain ROMA Implementer certification • Provide ROMA training to appropriate staff • Review employee Job descriptions in 2020 • Review and revise as applicable the Succession Plan 	CEO S&H Com Mgt Team CEO HR CEO DD CEO Mgt Team

AGENCY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
A-4	The internal consumer assessment methodology increases the effectiveness of cross-program service in meeting individual outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the consumer assessment tool within Family Services Department Replicate the tool throughout volunteer Food Pantries where applicable Implement within Victim Services Department Explore further benefits of implementation within WAP and HAP. 	FS FS VS CEO
A-5	The IT function effectively meets the agency's data management and communications needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve infrastructure (hardware and software) to promote the efficiency in the management of consumer data and reporting systems; as well as the overall logistical operation of the agency Maintain and monitor wrap-a-round IT services through an external vendor Replace aging underground wiring and conduit 	DD
A-6	The safety and health needs of the agency's workforce and facilities are addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise the agency Safety and Health Accident Prevention (SHAP) plan annually Maintain the internal Safety and Health committee with a purpose to identify and correct deficiencies Continue to assess the current state of agency facilities Review all accidents and identify root causes Maintain an effective and independent Employee Assistance Program 	S&H Com CEO S&H Com HR
A-7	The agency's marketing function effectively educates the community about the agency's impact within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize media (Facebook, web site, local newspapers, radio, television, printed outreach materials) in an effort to effectively achieve our mission Review and revise the agency marketing plan to deliver a systematic and consistent dissemination of agency outreach materials and information Refresh the agency website with a modern formatting option 	Marketing Marketing DD
A-8	The agency advocates for meaningful change in Federal and State regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach public elected officials to advocate for the effective change of systematic barriers and archaic principles that lessen effectiveness of our mission 	CEO
A-9	The agency maintains fiscal competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise the Financial Procedures Guide in accordance with uniform guidance Submit and Audit Services RFP 	FD
A-10	Maintains competent agency governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the 2-year Risk assessment in 2018 Legal counsel review of Board Bylaws in 2020 Legal counsel review of Personnel Policy Handbook in 2020 	CEO Board

FAMILY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
F-1	Low-income families experience the removal of transportation barriers to: obtain/maintain employment and/or maintain daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment-based: Vehicle repairs, tires, insurance assistance, gas cards, and alternate forms of transportation Daily living needs (independent of employment) 	FS FS

FAMILY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
	living needs	conditions): Vehicle repairs, tires, insurance assistance, gas cards, and alternate forms of transportation	
F-2	Individuals and families increase their ability to manage their finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-establish Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) by increasing the number of IRS trained workers • Provide seasonal space and accommodation for VITA • Deliver State and Federal tax assistance at no charge to consumers • Provide Financial Empowerment Program (FEP) education through individual and group sessions. • Identify and execute methods to increase participation in FEP. • Provide Representative Payee services which promote financial stability of individuals with disabilities and utilize FEP and educational curricula as feasible for building basic financial skills • Explore and secure funding targeting financial education for families exceeding the 125% FPL 	FS CEO FS CEO
F-3	Low-income individuals obtain safe and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish eligibility, conduct HQS inspections, and facilitate the payment of Housing Choice Vouchers in Lewis County and Jefferson County • Collaborate with Lewis County DSS to maintain an apartment for homeless individuals and families • Collaborate with Jefferson County DSS to conduct unit inspections, establish landlord agreements, and facilitate rent/utility payments for chronically homeless individuals and families with pre-existing disability factors • Collaborate with the Jefferson County Veteran Affairs agency to conduct unit inspections, establish landlord agreements, and facilitate rent/utility payments for homeless veterans 	HAP HAP-L HAP-J
F-4	Low-income individuals obtain food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide food items, advocacy, and necessary referrals to consumers through the Pantry Network • Provide oversight and assistance to the entire pantry Network as the established fiscal conduit; ensuring service provisions are being met and best practices are being utilized • Conduct food drives (and other essential items such as hygiene and/or school supplies) in collaboration with United Way and/or other partner agencies 	FS
F-5	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are empowered to regain control of their lives and ultimately move towards healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children • Provide legal and personal advocacy, assistance with restitution and compensation, protection orders, supportive counseling, and accompaniment to court and other needed community services • Provide education (preventive, community, and professional) to the community • Provide outreach (various media outlets, information 	VS

FAMILY			
Outcome		Strategies	POC
		booths, etc.) and awareness to the community • Coordinate the 24 hour crisis Hotline	
F-6	Low-income individuals realize a reduction in energy usage within their homes	• Conduct energy audits and make cost-effective energy efficiency improvements to consumer units • Provide energy reduction education to consumers • Expand the EmPower program to enhance existing weatherization services; therefore increasing the potential impact of energy saving measures • Operate the HEAP Cooling Initiative project for consumers with physician- identified medical conditions	WAP
F-7	Low-income individuals maintain a basic quality of living by obtaining temporary, emergency supports	• Provide Heat/Utility emergency services • Provide for other critical needs not covered under existing grant revenues and resources	HAP-L FS
F-8	Vehicle safety of low-income children is increased	• Provide car seats to low-income parents with children • Provide education to families on proper car seat installation techniques • Provide referral as necessary to fitting stations	FS

Recognition of Development

The agency acknowledges the input and active participation of the developers of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

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