



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 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.

ROMA

LCOI uses Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) principles as a framework for program services and organizational performance. ROMA principles are comprised of six broad anti-poverty goals:

1. Low-income people become more self-sufficient;
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 service to low-income people are achieved;
5. Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results;
6. Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

To accomplish these goals, LCOI:

- Assesses poverty needs and conditions within our unique community;
- Defines a clear agency mission and a strategic plan to address those needs; both immediate and long term;
- Organizes and implement programs, services, and activities within the agency and among collaborative organizations to achieve outcomes.

Strategic Methodology

In early 2013, LCOI began a Strategic Planning process; having identified the prior plan to be nearing the end of useful relevance. A Steering Committee was created to be reflective of the board, administration, supervisory and frontline workforce, volunteers, and consumers. The strategic process was conducted between February and July 2013, and included structured meetings, mission statement review, SWOT analysis, creation of goals, development of strategies, and ultimately creation of the final document for implementation. Throughout the process, consumer assessments collected over the prior year were used to identify social trends and establish needs of low-income people within our service area.

Mission Statement

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. is a Community Action Agency dedicated to working together with those in need. Our employees, Board members, and volunteers use a compassionate and respectful approach to promote a higher quality of life in our community.

Overview

The following pages identify the numerous goals of LCOI and provide a framework for continuous growth and improvement over the course of the next five years. These strategic goals are consistent with the six broad anti-poverty goals developed by the Community Services Network; and therefore are identified accordingly.

Goal #1 Low-income people become more self-sufficient.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Reliable transportation to obtain or maintain employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle repairs, tires, insurance assistance, gas cards, and alternate forms of transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop educational curriculum for preventive maintenance measures • Research potential for revenue targeting transportation issues independent of employment conditions 	FS CEO-CC	40 individuals
Low-income households receive financial assistance and/or financial education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal space and accommodation provided to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) • Expand available hours for VITA consumers • IRS trained VITA workers provide State and Federal tax assistance at no charge to consumers • Research potential for revenues targeting Financial Literacy projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop educational curricula for various financial skill-building • Representative Payee services which promote financial stability of individuals with disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop educational curricula for basic financial skill-building 	FS FS FS CEO-CC FS	75 families 24 individuals

Goal #2: The conditions in which the lives of low-income people are improved.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
The agency will improve its ability to coordinate initiatives benefitting low-income individuals that otherwise would not be possible without volunteer support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and implementation of volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thrift Store operation and expansion ○ Representation of agency at awareness events and/or educational booths ○ Food pantry operations assessed ○ 24 hour crisis hotline operation • Develop and implement a volunteer recognition plan • Build a list of volunteer groups that can be called upon for short term projects • Coordinate and publicize agency volunteering opportunities to the public • Make nearby educational institutions knowledgeable of volunteer and/or intern opportunities 	FS FS FS DVRC CEO FS FS FS	
Maintain/ preserve commercial services and/or neighborhood quality of life services benefitting low-income individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew lease of New Bremen General Store • Continue to develop the Thrift Store to provide a community resource for acquiring pre-owned, affordable household and essential items • Grow our Community Food Garden and attempt to replicate throughout the Food Pantry Network 	CEO FS FS	
Community members mobilize and participate in community revitalization and anti-poverty initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Youth Leadership Academy; constructing a county-wide network of students to start awareness initiatives unique to each school 	DVRC	14 students become Youth Advocates
Through cross-sector coalitions, specific community concerns related to poverty, youth, or community service priorities are addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jefferson-Lewis Workforce Investment Board • Community Coordinated Response/Multi-Disciplinary Teams • Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition • Lewis County Priorities Council • Lewis County Youth Board • HEARTH • North Country Housing Consortium 	CEO DVRC DVRC CEO CEO HAP HAP	
Continue to develop and implement community assessment tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate pilot project consumer assessment underway within Family Services Department and replicate throughout entire agency when possible • Conduct community needs assessment, as applicable, targeting low-income populations 	CEO CEO	

Goal #3: Low-income people own a stake in their community.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Low-income people participate in formal community organizations, governments, boards or councils that provide input into decision making and policy setting supported by LCOI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income individuals take active part as Target Sector representatives on the Board of Directors 	CEO	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income individuals participate in Strategic Planning process 	CEO	3

Goal #3: Continued			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
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 website resources for self-advocacy; including elected official points of contact and links to educational resources • Educate consumers on available resources to empower self-advocacy 	CC CEO	

Goal #4: Partnerships among supporters and providers of service to low-income people are achieved.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Maintain/enhance community partnerships in order to leverage resources to the maximum extent possible with regard to the provision of needed services to low-income residents of Lewis County.	<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 	CEO- CC	
Coordinate and/or improve consumer referral processes between agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a LCOI agency referral document • Work with stakeholders to develop and maintain a Lewis County community service resource guide 	CEO CEO	

Goal #5: Agency increase capacity to achieve results.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Develop and monitor the workforce development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the agency Professional Development Plan • Identify and secure quality in-service trainings for employees and volunteers • Complete a compensation comparison with that of other similar nonprofit community service agencies 	CEO CEO HR	
Enhance the Information and Technology function, to promote efficiency in the management of program data and information.	<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 	CEO- CC	
Maintain and monitor the facilities management function to maintain/enhance agency facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to assess the current state of agency facilities • Continue the internal Building & Grounds committee to identify and correct deficiencies and provide necessary maintenance • Research potential lease options for the Watertown office and/or replacement option of the primary heating system • Research feasibility of better use of overall space for the agency facilities • Research the potential for a dual-zone heat system for the Administration Building 	CEO CEO CEO CEO CEO	

Goal #5: Continued			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Maintain/enhance the marketing function to educate the community about the agency's impact within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize media (agency web site, local newspapers, radio, television, printed outreach materials, social media sites) effectively to achieve our mission Develop agency marketing plan to deliver a systematic and consistent dissemination of agency outreach materials and information 	CEO CEO-CC	
Improve consumer intake efficiency and case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise intake forms Further develop and test the custom Database Integrate Database throughout agency as possible Develop best practices to obtain improved consumer follow-up to quantify outcomes 	CEO FS CEO CEO	

Goal #6: Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
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 	HAP-L	350 families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish eligibility, conduct HQS inspections, and facilitate the payment of Housing Choice Vouchers in Jefferson County 	HAP-J	1000 families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	HAP-J	110 families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with the Jefferson County Veteran Affairs agency to conduct unit inspections, establish landlord agreements, and facilitate rent/utility payments for homeless veterans 	HAP-J	25 families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research potential for revenues targeting security deposit assistance/loans, emergency housing repair assistance, and foreclosure/eviction advocacy 	CEO-CC	
Low-income individuals obtain adequate food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide food items, advocacy, and necessary referrals to consumers through the Pantry Network. 	FS	65,000 meals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	FS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the New Bremen food pantry garden; explore replicating the garden within other pantries in the network. 	FS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct food drives (and other essential items such as hygiene and/or school supplies) in collaboration with United Way and/or other partner agencies. 	CEO	3

Goal #6: Continued			
Goal	Strategies	POC	Annual Target
Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are empowered in regaining control of their lives and ultimately move towards healing.	• Provide safe shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children	DVRC	35 individuals
	• Provide legal and personal advocacy, protection orders, supportive counseling, and accompaniment to court and other needed community services	DVRC	100 individuals
	• Provide education (preventive, community, and professional) to the community	DVRC	30
	• Provide outreach (various media outlets, information booths, etc.) and awareness to the community	DVRC	15 booths, 35 outlets
	• Coordinate the 24 hour crisis Hotline	DVRC	175 consumers
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	WAP	35 families
	• Provide energy reduction education to consumers to adult households members of each unit	WAP	60 families
	• Initiate the EmPower program to enhance existing weatherization services; increasing the potential impact of energy saving measures.	WAP	20 families
Low-income individuals obtain emergency assistance to maintain a basic quality of living	• Provide Heat/Utility emergency services	HAP-L	10 families
	• Provide other critical needs	FS	40 individuals
Programs for low-income youth are developed to empower youth to be change agents for self and community	• Increase prevention programs within local schools	DVRC	
	• Research potential for revenues targeting Career exploration and/or financial literacy programs for youth	FS	
Vehicle safety of low-income children is increased	• Child Passenger Safety Program	FS	140 car seats
	○ Provide car seats to low-income parents with children		
	○ Provide education to families on proper car seat installation techniques	FS	70 parents
	○ Provide referral as necessary to fitting stations	FS	

Recognition of Development

The agency acknowledges the input and active participation of the following developers of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan:

Marilyn Patterson, Board Treasurer
 Scott Mathys, Chief Executive Officer
 Rae Rice, Finance Director
 Kevin Buckingham, Contract Compliance Director
 Mary Interiano, DV-RC Program Manager
 Bev Howlett, Family Services Program Manager
 Brenda Monnat, Housing Program Manager
 Roxanne Putman, Family Services Worker
 Sarah Amelio, DVRC Advocate
 Ann Tuttle, Volunteer and Consumer
 Joy Buckingham, Volunteer and Consumer
 Pat Farney, Volunteer and Consumer