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2016 -2018 Strategic Plan

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Economic Opportunity

In 1964, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, establishing the framework for the creation of the national network of 1,100 Community Action Agencies (CAA) other Community Action Programs such as Head Start. The *War on Poverty* which President Lyndon B. Johnson brought to life through the EOA has faced its share of significant political opposition since the political debates about de-funding the original Act. Federal action resulted in replacing the original Act with the Community Services Act of 1974 which was itself reshaped to become the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act of 1981 which still stands today. The CSBG Act transfers responsibility from the federal government to the state government to monitor CAA efforts.

The CSBG Act requires the CAA to submit “community action plans” to guide its work. These plans should be integrated and living documents, utilizing input from customers and community partners, evidence from the triennial comprehensive needs assessments and a review of community resources. Specific implementation strategies and performance measures to monitor the agency’s progress in achieving its identified outcomes are incorporated into those community action plans. Results-Orientated Management and Accountability (ROMA) is community action’s outcome and performance management framework. ROMA is designed to preserve the anti-poverty focus of community action. The use of ROMA in both the development of the community action plan and as part of a systematic process for tracking progress over time increases the effectiveness of the CSBG dollars being received by CAA’s; to reduce poverty in the communities they serve. Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) Community Services department has identified the Community Services Block Grant work plan as the foot print for the community action plan.

Community Action Promise in Saratoga County

The nature of CAA work is reflected best in the Community Action Promise connecting CAA’s throughout the Nation in the endeavor to be a resource in the War on Poverty. “Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes

America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, as we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”

CAA's are federally designated yet monitored through the states as the frontline resource for people living in poverty, providing direct services and support for education, employment and family support services for low income families. CAA's are leaders in promoting community and economic development through community partnerships and inter-agency collaborations.

The history of how Community Action arrived to Saratoga County is rich. Incorporated in 1965, the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) was created by a group of individuals responding to the Presidential call in 1964 to wage a War on Poverty. The incorporation allowed the agency to operate as a nonprofit however, additional steps still needed to be taken to meet all of the requirement to become a federally designated Community Action Agency. EOC officially opened for business in 1973, with the first Executive Director and Board of Directors in place.

As of October 2015 the EOC mission statement reads: “EOC is dedicated to providing and promoting opportunities for individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.” EOC is not paternalistic about the self-sufficiency process for those who are committing to work through it. EOC encourages, provides services and supports individuals and families to identify and move through their own self-sufficiency journey and supports them to move through it. EOC cannot do this work alone and engages the community through collaboration with local nonprofits, business and individuals from or representing the low-income sector in assessment and solution development. Resources are shared to create the most beneficial impact to people living in poverty in Saratoga County.

ROMA in Strategic Planning

The importance of ROMA in the agency's strategic planning process can be traced back to IM 49, issued by the federal Office of Community Services (OCS) in 2001 which replaced the original Office of Economic Opportunity. OCS set the ROMA framework clearly within the compliance context set by the Government Performance and Accountability Act. IM 123, issued in 2011, emphasized further the importance of building a performance management structure using ROMA and the National Performance Indicators (NPI's). IM 138 issued by OCS in January 2015 with the release of the CSBG Organizational Standards, highlighted the importance of performance management using the Standards, ROMA and state and federal accountability measures.

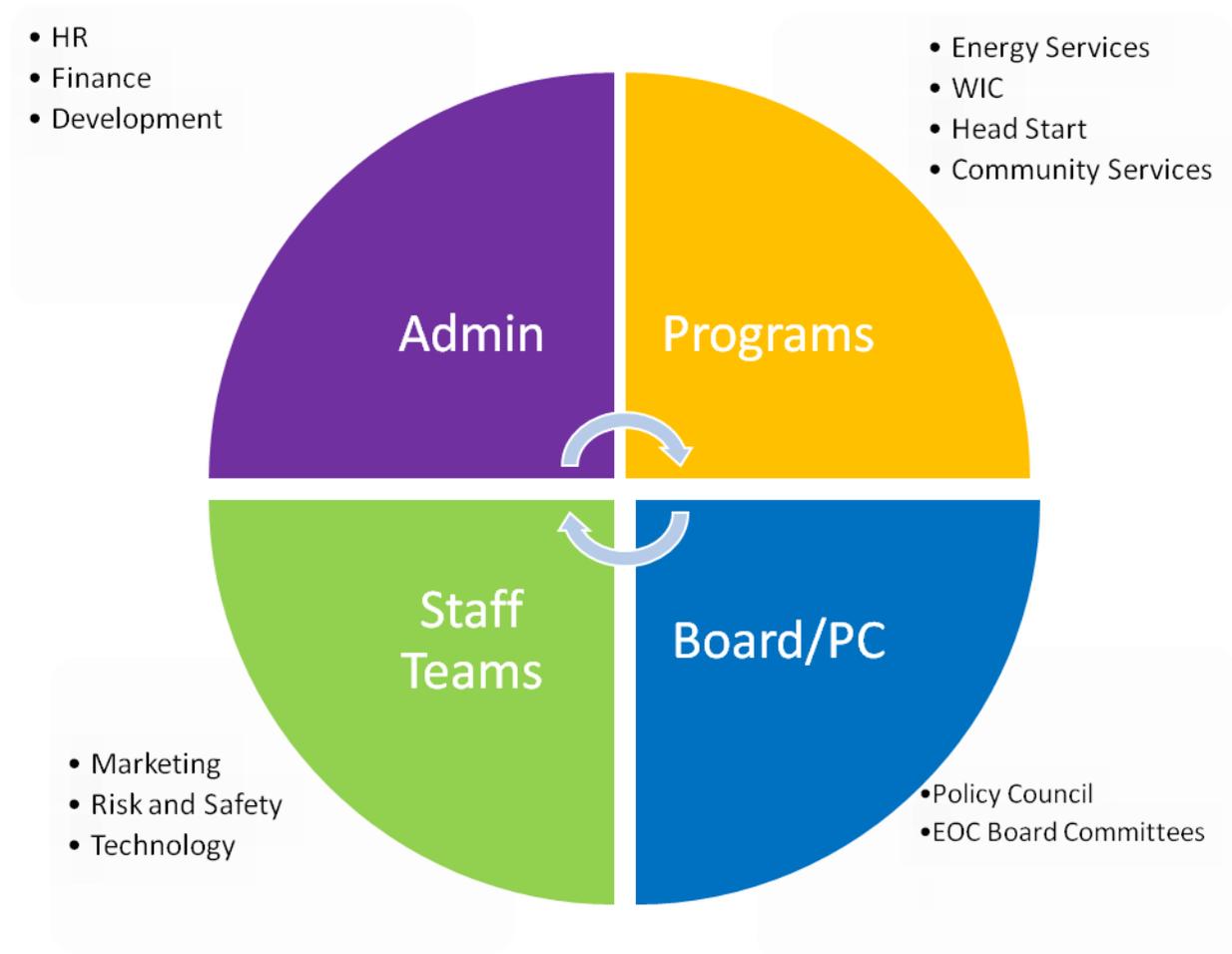
EOC implements ROMA's performance management framework to not only monitoring and tracking program-based delivery systems and outcomes but, to assess how programs work together to promote changes for the customer and community. The effectiveness of EOC programs collectively is measured by the positive impact on the customer resulting from participation in one or multiple programs of the EOC. Consistent with CSBG Standards 6.1 and 6.2, the 2016-2018 EOC Strategic Plan reflects EOC's commitment to improving communities and the lives of people living in poverty, as well as our own management processes. EOC can best be an effective tool for change by ensuring that its own management and program processes and procedures, volunteers and staff, reflect the highest levels of quality and integrity. The success of the interdependent domains of the family, agency and community depends on sound agency management, a perspective supported in Standard 6.3.

EOC efforts are enhanced and success facilitated by working in partnership with other community-based organizations. At times CSBG funds are used to leverage other resources in order to serve the needs of low-income people in the most efficient and effective manner.

An assessment of needs and resources in the community fuel the planning phase of the ROMA cycle and is called for as part of the strategic plan, as reflected in CSBG Standard 6.4. The agency's mission statement provides a foundation for the plan and the needs assessment data shapes the strategies, helps identify the results and outcomes and ensures that the plan

addresses the reduction of poverty, as articulated in CSBG Standard 6.2. Effective implementation of services and strategies begins with measurable outcomes, clear timelines and accountable processes and persons attached to action. Progress is documented through progress reports discussed during the management team, Board Committees, Policy Council and with the larger board through an annual update on the progress, as articulated in the Organizational Standard 6.5.

Plan Responsibilities



Engagement of Data in Development and Reporting

The 2013-15 Strategic Plan identified opportunities to strengthen the Agency to carry out the mission and correlated with the 2014 EOC Board Self-Assessment and 2015 Risk Assessment. These processes created an opportunity to support the continued development of staff, volunteers and Board members and to foster communication about EOC and poverty in the workforce of EOC, with the customer and throughout the community. Program and internal systems evaluation will be incorporated into the plan with an eye on going green to reduce EOC's carbon footprint in Saratoga County as discussed in Board meetings.

The 2016-18 triennial Comprehensive Community Needs assessment includes both qualitative and quantitative data from 1:1 evaluations with the program participants and anonymous customer service surveys. The evaluation tool was developed by Skidmore College and administered by the School of Social Work, Mechanicville Community Center, and multiple nonprofits through the Inter-Agency Awareness Day in 2015.

Priorities were identified and set the tone for intentional programming in the EOC Community Services department and for encouraging opportunities to develop partnerships. EOC also has the responsibility to engage the low-income sector in identifying and developing resolutions for the issues affecting the low-income community and to educate community partners on the issues. Among the prominent issues which are priorities for the low-income community in Saratoga County are:

- 1. Affordable Housing**
- 2. Affordable Child Care**
- 3. Help Finding Employment and Adult Education**
- 4. Dental Care**
- 5. Food/Clothing/Utilities**

Introduction to EOC Strategic Plan Themes

Agency

EOC will maintain a healthy, viable organization by ensuring effective management, board engagement, leadership, staff diversity, professional development and communication in the agency and its constituencies.

Community

EOC will be engaged in the assessment of the needs of the community and will promote awareness of poverty related issues while engaging as an active partner to leverage funds and seek opportunities to strengthen the community.

EOC's Articles of Incorporation give it the capacity to meet the unmet needs of people living in poverty across the Saratoga County line, throughout New York State. This is being done in the efficient weatherization services being provided to meet this unmet need in Schenectady County. In addition the WIC program is located in Saratoga County but can serve anyone in **New York State** who is in need. Based on the community needs assessment, the Program Committee of the EOC Board of Directors will be involved in identifying whether there is a need for EOC to reach outside the designated service areas. In addition, the Community Liaison Committee of the EOC Board would be instrumental in identifying and developing relationships based on recommendations from the Program Committee. Community Liaison will also serve as a Board Committee to identify areas of concern and educate the community on issues related to poverty.

Customer

Our customers are at the center of all we do and are the reason we are in service. Our mission statement was developed with their voice and we support them with services delivered in a positive, respectful manner. An EOC customer is valued and the effort they take to seek our services is remarkable. We treat them with dignity and compassion. In turn, the insight and opinion of the people we serve is integrated into our assessment of the needs of the community and the development of our services. We base our program development on their input. They are involved at our Board meetings and Policy Council.

The community as a whole can also be viewed as a customer. EOC serves both the primary customer who receives the service and the supporting customers, funders, policy makers, family members, community members, community partners and others. In this strategic plan, the customer goals and objectives are related directly to the low-income customer, not funders, policy makers or partners. Our customers are considered to be families as the term is used in the NPI's and ROMA.

EOC programming is based on customer input and assessment and based on the recognition that we need to gain insight from people we serve about what their priority is for their community. The customer identifies their values by participating in the needs assessment and in community collaborations and by communicating with EOC. EOC recognizes customers as actively engaged problem-solvers and policy makers on the Board and through Policy Council.

The Strategic Plan presents its strategies in Agency, Family/Individual and Community Themes, mirroring the Six National Goals and National Performance Indicators and the ROMA framework. The strategies are designed to meet the CSBG Organizational Standards and position EOC not just for compliance but for excellence in our efforts to meet our mission.

SARATOGA COUNTY EOC STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-18

AGENCY THEME A: EOC WILL MAINTAIN A HEALTHY, VIABLE ORGANIZATION BY ENSURING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, BOARD ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, STAFF DIVERSITY, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION AMONG VARIOUS CONSTITUENCIES.

Goal A.1: EOC will have sustainable practices to increase our capacity to achieve results.

Objective A.1.1: EOC will achieve the highest level of efficiency and greatest measure of effectiveness in accounting and reporting practices.

Objective A.1.2: Effective use of departmental budgets.

Objective A.1.3: Secure operational capacity.

Objective A.1.4: Align Agency HR practices to ensure consistency and compliance with grantor, state, Federal requirements.

Objective A.1.5: The EOC Board will be diverse, committed, and engaged in the mission of EOC.

Objective A.1.6: EOC will seek to maximize our capacity to implement our mission statement by seeking alternative funding sources.

Goal A.2: EOC will have a vibrant and strong Community Action workforce.

Objective A.2.1: Improve the hiring process to ensure the highest quality candidates are recruited, hired and retained.

Objective A.2.2: Provide ongoing relevant training to all EOC staff.

Objective A.2.3: Improve communications inside EOC between departments to build collaboration and leverage opportunities for those we serve.

Objective A.2.4: EOC will increase visibility of all Agency Programs through strategic use of social media, outreach, and networking.

Goal A.3: Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved.

Objective A.3.1: Relationships with community partners are cultivated.

Objective A.3.2: Identify potential collaborations to serve the low-income sector.

COMMUNITY Theme B: EOC will be engaged in the assessment of the needs of the community and promote the awareness of poverty related issues while reacting with a partnership mentality to leverage funds and seek opportunities to strengthen the community.

Goal B.1: The conditions in which low-income people lives are improved.

Objective B.1.1: Improve the quality of life and assets in low-income communities through Community Action initiative or advocacy.

Objective B.1.2: Safe and affordable housing units are preserved or improved through weatherization and other construction grants.

Objective B.1.3: Accessible safe & affordable child care/development placement opportunities for low-income families are created or maintained.

Goal B.2: Low-income people own a stake in their community.

Objective B.2.1: Engage customer(s) and other low-income groups to identify their community needs and in formulating opportunities.

Objective B.2.2: Identify a marketing plan to encourage low-income volunteer participation in the community to include EOC.

CUSTOMER Theme C: Our customers are at the center of all we do and are treated equally with dignity and respect. EOC serves both the primary customer who receives the service and the supporting customers who are funders, policy makers, family members, partners and others who have input on services.

The EOC customer is valued and the effort they take to seek our services to support them or their constituents toward self-sufficiency is remarkable. Customers make Community Action work important. Our customers are considered to be families by ROMA standards and EOC does recognize it may be offensive for a single person who is not in a family to be considered a family.

EOC programming is based on customer input and assessment and reflects our commitment to engage the people we serve in order to gain insight on what is the priority for them in their community. The customer identifies their values by participating in the needs assessment and communicating with EOC on the solution as actively empowered problem-solvers and policy makers on our Board and through Policy Council.

Goal C.1: Low-income people will become more self-sufficient.

Objective C.1.1: 180 low-income customers who participate in VITA preparation will receive financial literacy training.

Objective C.1.2: 140 limited English proficient individuals will acquire English skills to reduce barriers to employment, education and daily living activities.

Objective C. 1.3: Emergency Food Program customers will develop a self-sufficiency plan.

Objective C. 1.4: Individuals keep or obtain safe and affordable housing.

Objective C. 1.5: Individuals volunteer inside EOC food programs to prepare for work force, receive coaching, and practice soft skills.

Goal C.2: Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other support systems.

Objective C.2.1: An average of 1,800 Women, Infants and Children will participate in the WIC program per quarter and have their health and physical development improved as a result of adequate nutrition.

Objective C.2.2: 140 of 200 households in Saratoga and Schenectady Counties will have weatherization work completed to maintain individuals living situations.

Objective C. 2.3: 584 students will participate in pre-school activities to develop school readiness.

CUSTOMER Theme C: Our customers are at the center of all we do and are treated equally with dignity and respect. EOC serves both the primary customer who receives the service and the supporting customers who are funders, policy makers, family members, partners and others who have input on services.

Goal C.2: Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other support systems.

Objective C. 2.4: 3,000 families will receive a 3-day supply of food to help alleviate hunger and receive referrals to help eliminate or identify a barrier.

Objective C. 2.5: Soup Kitchen participants will have the opportunity to receive services, referrals, and meet community partners' onsite.