



2022-2024 Strategic Plan



**Ohio Community Action
Training Organization**

Growing organizations one result at a time

Prepared by the Ohio Community Action Training
Organization (OCATO)
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Executive Summary:

The Northwestern Ohio Community Action Commission (NOCAC) engaged in Strategic Planning with The Ohio Community Action Training Organization (OCATO) from May 2021 to September 2021.

On June 7, 2021, a preliminary focus group with four NOCAC board members and the executive director was held via Zoom to establish the foundation for the plan. As part of the five questions posed by the facilitator, participants explained their expectations for the strategic plan and shared their thoughts on NOCAC's accomplishments and challenges.

The agency then conducted three electronic surveys as part of the strategic planning process. Unique surveys were produced for the general community partners, agency employees and the board of directors. In total, 100 electronic surveys were completed.

Finally, three focus groups were conducted – August 24 for selected staff; August 25 for community partners; and a third focus group for the board and senior management on August 25.

As a result of these efforts, the NOCAC Board of Directors reaffirmed its current mission statement and established five priority goals for the three-year period. These goals address both programmatic maintenance and expansion (based on needs assessments) and enhancing organizational/staff operations to address the evolving needs of the six-county area, focusing on the primary customers of the agency -- low-income individuals and families.

This strategic planning process was met with great commitment from the management and executive director of NOCAC to involve various levels of staff and the community in the strategic planning process.

The following five strategic goals (in no particular order) were established for the next three-plus years:

Goal #1 -- NOCAC will be recognized as a top employer with an engaged and retained workforce. All employees will experience a culture of mutual respect, trust and teamwork.

Goal #2 -- Build, communicate and promote an agency brand that is visible, supports the mission and effectively engages the board, staff, customers and the community.

Goal #3 -- Program services and agency operations will continuously be responsive to the most critical needs of low-income families and individuals. NOCAC services successfully support participants through crisis and guide them to success.

Goal #4 -- Enhance and expand agency facilities to support new and current services. Every site will be accessible, comfortable, modern, and branded as a NOCAC program.

Goal #5 -- Secure adequate funding to sustain essential programs and expand organizational capacity to achieve results.

Strategic Planning and Organizational Standards

All Community Action Agencies must be in compliance with the National Organizational Standards as set forth by IM 138 -- State Establishment of Organizational Standards for CSBG Eligible Entities -- as formally established in 2016. The purpose of the standards is to ensure that all agencies have appropriate organizational capacity, in both critical financial and administrative areas, as well as areas of unique importance to the mission of the Community Action Network.

The Standards were developed by the Organizational Standards Center Excellence at the office of the National Community Action Partnership. These were designed to strengthen the capacity of eligible entities to fulfill their anti-poverty missions. Organizational Performance Standards serve as a capacity-building tool to help agencies provide comprehensive and coordinated anti-poverty services across America.

- ✓ **Standard 6.1** The Organization has an agency-wide Strategic Plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.
- ✓ **Standard 6.2** The approved Strategic Plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.
- ✓ **Standard 6.3** The approved Strategic Plan contains Family, Agency, and/or Community goals.
- ✓ **Standard 6.4** Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the Community Assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.
- ✓ **Standard 6.5** The governing board has received an update(s) on meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan within the past 12 months.

Electronic and In-person Surveys:

PROCESS OVERVIEW:

The consultant worked with the executive director on the questions that would be used in the electronic and in-person surveys. Three sets of questions were developed. A set of questions was produced for the members of the general community, the entire staff of NOCAC and the board of directors. A total of 100 surveys were completed by the three groups.

Survey Results:

Northwestern Ohio Community Action Commission, Inc.
Survey Summary, August 2021

Analysis by Jeffrey Diver, OCATO

Surveys Completed:

8 - Board

59 - Staff

33 - Community

Question	Summary of Comments	Analysis
In your opinion, what is the number one recent accomplishment of NOCAC?	<p>Board – 3 of 8 said NOCAC keeping its doors open during the pandemic was the number one recent accomplishment.</p> <p>Staff – 24 of 59 said NOCAC keeping its doors open during the pandemic was the number one recent accomplishment.</p> <p>Community – Most responses dealt with COVID-related accomplishments (funding, keeping doors open and Head Start operating)</p>	NOCAC overcame challenges to continue serving individuals during pandemic.
If you could change one thing about NOCAC, what would it be?	<p>Board – Many items mentioned, including more advertising, diversifying the board and agency funding, and improving physical facilities.</p> <p>..Staff – Examining wages and enhancing internal communications were most frequently mentioned.</p> <p>Community – Many items mentioned, including increasing housing availability, updating the website and greater awareness of community resources.</p>	No clear theme between the groups.

<p>In what ways should NOCAC help with affordable housing in Northwest Ohio?</p>	<p>..Board – Help with housing infrastructure, coordinate with others. ..Staff – Partner/collaborate with others to expand affordable housing, including possibly NOCAC building units. ..Community – Generally, comments reflected need for more affordable housing and the belief that NOCAC should either build it (home ownership and rentals), especially in Williams County, or partner with others to provide such housing.</p>	<p>Strong belief in all three groups that partnerships/collaborations are possible to expand affordable housing.</p>
<p>In what ways can NOCAC play a role in helping to support access to jobs that pay a living wage?</p>	<p>..Board – Comments included providing job related services (so clients can access better paying jobs) and working with County JFS units to expand services. ..Staff – Many job supports mentioned. Transportation and job training most frequent. Also, NOCAC’s wages should be examined. ..Community – Seven comments mention providing/expanding employment transportation. Other job supports (case management, job coaching, job search, resume writing, etc.) also mentioned.</p>	<p>Many services may be needed across the service area. Challenge is determining the specific service gap in each county. One staff transportation suggestion was for a car repair/purchase program.</p>
<p>In what ways should NOCAC support the expansion of transportation options in Northwest Ohio?</p>	<p>..Board – Consider greater collaboration with the Maumee Valley Planning Organization and look at Henry County’s transportation program for ideas. ..Staff – Offer more transportation and work with others who are providing it. Consider a matched savings program for car purchase. ..Community – either providing referrals or actually providing the transportation mentioned. Also advocating more for transportation. Consider Henry County’s transportation system. Establish a Defiance transportation network?</p>	<p>Majority agree that transportation is critical in Northwestern Ohio. What role NOCAC can play may take more investigation.</p>
<p>In what ways could NOCAC improve the agency’s visibility with</p>	<p>..Board – Community meetings; posting information in laundromats, grocery stores, churches and with self-help</p>	<p>Lots of suggestions made; most dealt with billboards and social media.</p>

<p>the target population (low-income individuals and families?)</p>	<p>groups (AA/NA); more social media; joint marketing with other social service agencies. Idea: small referral fee for family and friends of clients? ..Staff – Billboards, participating in or holding more community events, more social media, and mass media (i.e. radio). ..Community – Four respondents believe NOCAC already does a great job with visibility. Other items are similar to the ones listed above (billboards, social media, etc.).</p>	
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Focus Groups:

PROCESS OVERVIEW:

On June 7, 2021, a preliminary focus group with four NOCAC board members and the executive director was held via Zoom to establish the foundation for the plan. As part of the five questions posed by the facilitator, participants explained their expectations for the strategic plan and shared their thoughts on NOCAC's accomplishments and challenges. In attendance were: Ron Etzler, Tiffany Dargenson, Robert Hastedt, Lucia Myers and Executive Director Angie Franklin.

Highlights of the June 7 Zoom call:

- When asked about the number one recent accomplishment of NOCAC, Board members were happy that the agency stayed open and available to assist clients during the pandemic;
- Board members also expressed satisfaction in the smooth transition of the new executive director;
- One board member posed a thought-provoking question: how many people do we get out of poverty?
- Board members recognized that that agency is lacking in space and in need of larger facilities; and
- Participating board members were enthusiastic about the strategic plan, which they want to set the tone and foundation for NOCAC.

After the electronic surveying was concluded, three focus groups were conducted – August 24 for selected staff; August 25 for community partners; and a third focus group for the board and senior management on August 25.

With each focus group, the consultant reviewed the process of strategic planning, the role of the participants, and the importance of their input into the process. As part of strategic planning, it was imperative to involve all in the process; those who were involved in the process had an opportunity to express their opinions as well as gain buy-in to the process that the administration is pursuing.

In attendance at the August 24 staff focus group were: Sheana Behringer, Kaitlin Faber, Kelly Monnin, Megan Robinette, Courtney Bice, Danielle Gurwell, Rachel Palmer, Jacki Teegarden, Angie Bilow, Brandy Johnson, Patty Porter, Virginia Zuniga, Shelia Elston, Kevin Koithahan, and Sarah Ricica.

Participants of the staff focus group were challenged to think of a desired newspaper headline for NOCAC in five years. The appendices have all of the responses. In addition to reviewing NOCAC's community assessment, electronic survey results and the outcomes of the last strategic plan, participants were asked to respond to the following three questions:

1. What is NOCAC doing right?

2. What are the threats/risks to NOCAC and its programs?
3. What opportunities should the agency focus on from 2022-2024?

In attendance at the August 25 community partner focus group were: Pheba Banerjee-Sam – The Sanctuary; Sibin Sam – The Sanctuary; Kelli Burkholder - Together We Make a Difference; Vince Cantu – Hebron Ministries, Mindy Edwards- Edon Local School District, Susan Gall – YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral; Heather Dunzweiler - YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral; Barbara Hoffman – Pillars of Success; Katye Katterheinrich – RAVENS Care; Raquel Mendoza – Fulton County DJFS; Erin Sellers – Van Wert County DJFS; Teresa Shafer – First United Methodist Church; Dottie Volmer – Maumee Valley Planning Organization; Abby Wolfrum – United Way of Defiance County; Marsha Yuetter – Paulding County Senior Center; Jeff Owens – Mercy Hospital; Julie Landoll – Mercy Hospital; Lea Fisher – Mercy Hospital; and Tami Lantow – The Dream Center.

Participants of the community partner focus group were asked to explain how their organization currently interacts with NOCAC. Then the outcomes of NOCAC’s community assessment and electronic surveying were shared. Participants were then asked the following three questions:

1. What other things should be noted in the Community Assessment?
2. What should the agency focus more on from 2022-2024?
3. Are there new ways in which your organization can partner with NOCAC?

In attendance at the Board of Directors/Senior Management focus group was: Penni Bostelman, Ron Etzler, Tiffany Dargenson, Dean Genter, Robert Hastedt, Lew Hilker, Mark Holtsberry, David Kern, David Miller, Angie Franklin, Erica Wehri, Heidi Keween, Susan Cheeseman, Kelly Feeney, Teresa Taylor, and Amber Simmons

Board members and senior management were challenged to come up with a desired newspaper headline for NOCAC in five years. Called “Read All About It”, the exercise demonstrated how optimistic the board and senior management are about the agency. Also, the focus group reviewed the outcomes of the community assessment, electronic surveys and the last strategic plan.

The board/senior management was then asked the following key discussion questions:

1. What do you think of the direction of NOCAC?
2. What should the agency focus on from 2022-2024?
3. What resources should we tap into for focuses?
4. What challenges should we be aware of and be prepared to address?

The complete results of the three focus groups can be found in Appendix A.

Customer Input

NOCAC produced a thorough Community Assessment for 2021-2023 which includes customer input on the needs in the six-county area. This data was used as part of the strategic planning

process. One hundred and seven customers completed the survey which included questions on housing, utility costs, employment, childcare, food, healthcare, and transportation.

The results of the needs assessment “provided new information that supported previously identified trends and illustrated new opportunities to address emerging needs. Affordable housing, jobs that pay a living wage, and transportation....continue to be a problem however, households appear to be more cognizant of their credit history and debt accumulations than in previous years.”

Due to the customer surveys, NOCAC incorporated strategies for many of the areas highlighted in the survey results into its new plan.

Mission Statement:

The NOCAC Board of Directors reaffirmed NOCAC’s Mission Statement through its focus group. In addition, they expressed their commitment to the mission through comments about how the agency best serves the six counties in Northwestern Ohio.

Existing Mission Statement

“The mission of Northwestern Ohio Community Action Commission, Inc. (NOCAC) is to plan, develop and coordinate programs and services designed to combat conditions related to poverty in Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Paulding, Van Wert and Williams Counties. NOCAC provides opportunities to attain the necessary skills, knowledge and motivation to consumers that are necessary to become self-sufficient members of the communities in which they live.”

Consultant Analysis:

The OACATO Consultant, Jeffrey Diver, working with senior management, took into consideration all of the previous information and information in the appendices to provide the following synopsis and outcomes:

In summary, NOCAC is a well-regarded, effective organization with dedicated and creative staff members. It manages its resources well and strives to provide quality services in all areas to clients. Its staff members appear to be committed to their jobs and support the agency mission. The community has a favorable impression of the agency with many community members seemingly vested in NOCAC's success.

Both the board and staff are optimistic and forward thinking about the organization's future. **(See Appendices A and B)**

There are outcomes that participants agree can be implemented. These areas include:

- All employees will experience a culture of mutual respect, trust and teamwork. *(Organizational Standards Area: Agency)*
- NOCAC will have adequate staff resources to plan and implement more fund development and marketing communications. *(Organizational Standards Area: Agency)*
- NOCAC services successfully support participants through crisis and guide them to success. *(Organizational Standards Area: Family)*
- Every NOCAC site will be accessible, comfortable, modern, and branded as a NOCAC program. *(Organizational Standards Areas: Family, Community)*
- NOCAC will develop and implement a diverse fundraising plan. *(Organizational Standards Areas: Community, Family)*

Based on the above information from the planning process, the following goals are being pursued:

Goal #1 -- NOCAC will be recognized as a top employer with an engaged and retained workforce. All employees will experience a culture of mutual respect, trust and teamwork.

Goal #2 -- Build, communicate and promote an agency brand that is visible, supports the mission and effectively engages the board, staff, customers and the community.

Goal #3 -- Program services and agency operations will continuously be responsive to the most critical needs of low-income families and individuals. NOCAC services successfully support participants through crisis and guide them to success.

Goal #4 -- Enhance and expand agency facilities to support new and current services. Every site will be accessible, comfortable, modern, and branded as a NOCAC program.

Goal #5 -- Secure adequate funding to sustain essential programs and expand organizational capacity to achieve results.

Development of Action Plans:

PROCESS OVERVIEW:

To arrive at the targeted five goals and multiple strategies, the participants of the three focus groups answered key discussion questions. The complete results of those discussions are listed in the appendices. They can be used for clarification and/or revisions of the strategies.

It should be understood that action plans such as these are living, breathing documents that may change based on expected and/or unexpected circumstances. It is recommended by the consultant that the plans be re-evaluated at least quarterly, and the progress of the strategies communicated at least quarterly.

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Goal #1: NOCAC will be recognized as a top employer with an engaged and retained workforce.

Outcome		Rationale (Identifies the reason (motivation) for the goal)					
All employees will experience a culture of mutual respect, trust and teamwork.		NOCAC desires to retain staff and will examine ways to improve staff pay, benefits, training, recognition and wellness.					
Objective: (Performance Target) - Must be stated in quantifiable or measurable terms and must be date bound; measures success.							
Within six months, NOCAC will have analyzed and revised, as possible, its wage and salary plan.							
Strategies - Ideas on "What to Do"	Responsible Party	01/22 - 12/22				2023	2024
		Jan-Mar	April-Jun	July-Sep	Oct-Dec		
1.1 Analyze salary surveys from other like organizations. Propose competitive pay and benefit packages. Analyze pay and benefits every two years.	HR Director, Executive Director and NOCAC Board						
1.2 Create an exceptional onboarding experience that motivates the employee to embrace the agency mission and goals.	HR Director and Executive Director						
1.3 Support an employee recognition program to promote a positive work culture and to identify and develop future leaders.	HR Director and Management team						
1.4 Implement an evaluation process that provides clear objectives, recognizes and rewards contributions and encourages growth.	HR Director						

<p>1.5 Develop and implement strategies for staff wellness activities.</p>	<p>HR Director and Management Team</p>						
<p>1.6 Manage to retain. Invest in supervisory and management support to enhance communication, leadership, and teamwork throughout the organization.</p>	<p>Management Team and Supervisors</p>						
<p>1.7 Develop and budget for an agency wide training and development plan that is responsive to the needs and interests of employees.</p>	<p>HR Director, Fiscal Director, Management Team</p>						

Goal #2: Build, communicate and promote an agency brand that is visible, supports the mission and effectively engages the board, staff, customers and the community.

Outcome		Rationale (Identifies the reason (motivation) for the goal)					
NOCAC will have adequate staff resources to plan and implement more fund development and marketing communications.		NOCAC offers many programs and services to residents in six counties. Sometimes it is difficult to make the connection between certain programs and NOCAC, necessitating better branding and communications.					
Objective: (Performance Target) - Must be stated in quantifiable or measurable terms and must be date bound; measures success.							
Within one year, NOCAC will add a position that will coordinate marketing, internal and external communications and fund development.							
Strategies - Ideas on "What to Do"	Responsible Party	01/22 - 12/22				2023	2024
		Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sep	Oct-Dec		
2.1 Add a position that will coordinate marketing, communications, and fund development.	Executive Director						
2.2 Develop and implement an agency logo and marketing tools that promote agency cohesiveness.	Executive Director and Management Team.						
2.3 Develop internal and external communications plan to increase knowledge of agency information, services, outcomes, and opportunities.	Management Team						
2.4 Maximize use of social media platforms for fundraising, recruitment, and agency awareness.	Management Team						
2.5 Position NOCAC to be recognized as the leader in	Management						

alleviating poverty by increasing partnerships, services, and outreach efforts in every community in our service area.	Team						
2.6 Increase community visibility by coordinating family and community events.	Management Team						
2.7 Plan for NOCAC's 60 th anniversary in 2025.	Executive Director – Management Team						

Goal #3: Program services and agency operations will continuously be responsive to the most critical needs of low-income families and individuals.

Outcome		Rationale (Identifies the reason (motivation) for the goal)					
NOCAC services successfully support participants through crisis and guide them to success.		CAA Standards require agencies to evaluate and improve, as possible, their programs, services and procedures. NOCAC wishes to enhance its programs and ensure more customers access all services.					
Objective: (Performance Target) - Must be stated in quantifiable or measurable terms and must be date bound; measures success.							
Within the three-year period, NOCAC will develop a coordinated intake and case management system.							
Strategies - Ideas on "What to Do"	Responsible Party	01/22 - 12/22				2023	2024
		Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sep	Oct-Dec		
3.1. Develop a coordinated intake and "case management" system to better connect and support clients in accessing multiple services within NOCAC and other partners.	Director of Community Services – Management Team						
3.2 Improve access to quality, affordable housing by researching best practices for housing development, developing a plan, and applying for funding for at least one housing development project.	Director of Homeless Services						
3.3. Improve access to reliable transportation through collaboration with the local Active Transportation Plan committee. Develop or support at least one program/project that improves access to transportation for low-income persons.	Executive Director – Management Team						

3.4 Improve the financial stability of low-income households by supporting a Financial Opportunity Center in every county. Add a certified credit counselor to the FOC team.	Director of Community Services						
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Goal #4: Enhance and expand agency facilities to support new and current services.

Outcome		Rationale (Identifies the reason (motivation) for the goal)					
Every NOCAC site will be accessible, comfortable, modern, and branded as a NOCAC program.		NOCAC has outgrown some of its offices and others need to be reconfigured for maximum use. NOCAC will go through a methodical process to evaluate space needs and prepare a plan to address the needs.					
Objective: (Performance Target) - Must be stated in quantifiable or measurable terms and must be date bound; measures success.							
Within three years, NOCAC will prepare and implement a plan for development of new space options.							
Strategies - Ideas on "What to Do"	Responsible Party	01/22 - 12/22				2023	2024
		Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sep	Oct-Dec		
4.1 Convene an internal committee to focus on space planning.	Executive Director – Management Team						
4.2 Develop ideas for space reconfiguration and/or new space for program enhancements.	Management Team						
4.3 Develop plan for the potential of expanding Head Start program to full day classrooms and additional Early Head Start services.	Director of Child Development						
4.4 Utilize space to be family/community resource centers that offer an activity, training, and support hub.	Director of Child Development –						

	Management Team						
4.5 Prepare a plan for the development of new space options. Evaluate need for and feasibility of a capital campaign for future space.	Executive Director – Management Team						
4.6 Implement and evaluate plan for reconfigured and/or new space.	Executive Director – Management Team						

Goal #5: Secure adequate funding to sustain essential programs and expand organizational capacity to achieve results.

Outcome		Rationale (Identifies the reason (motivation) for the goal)					
NOCAC will develop and implement a diverse fundraising plan.		While NOCAC has excellent programs, diversifying its funding will broaden program impact and provide flexible resources to supplement grants and contracts.					
Objective: (Performance Target) - Must be stated in quantifiable or measurable terms and must be date bound; measures success.							
Within three years, NOCAC will diversify funding sources to secure at least 15% in additional revenue.							
Strategies - Ideas on "What to Do"	Responsible Party	01/22 - 12/22				2023	2024
		Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sep	Oct-Dec		
5.1 Add a position that will coordinate marketing, communications, and fund development.	Executive Director						
5.2 Develop and implement a fund development plan/fundraising strategy.	Fiscal Director Management Team						
5.3. Increase visibility/marketing of NOCAC's mission to a broader population of potential donors.	Management Team						
5.4 Increase efforts to generate specific donations of time, space, and goods to support non-federal match requirements.	Director of Child Development Fiscal Director						
5.5 Diversify funding sources to secure at least 15% in additional revenue from private, corporate, foundation and individual support sources.	Fiscal Director Management Team						

OCATO

The Ohio Community Action Training Organization has a training and technical assistance grant from the Ohio Development Services Agency, Office of Community Assistance, to provide training and technical assistance to Community Action Agencies in the Ohio Community Services Network.

OCATO has assisted many agencies in completing or revising their strategic plans. The model utilized by OCATO is adapted from ***The Institute of Cultural Affairs, Technology of Participation: Participatory Strategic Planning.***

The focus of this methodology is on getting maximum interaction and participation from various levels of the community and organization. This is done through both focus groups, survey tools, and follow-up encounters. Below is a summary of the five principal areas of the work OCATO engages with agencies to develop their strategic plans, and their strategic thinking:

- Vision
- Current Reality
- Goals
- Action Plans
- Commitment

The Action Plans are customized to meet the ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability) Model that Ohio CAAs utilize as a requirement of their CSBG (Community Services Block Grant) funding.

OCATO Consultant

The OCATO Consultant that provided the Strategic Planning Services is Jeffrey Diver. Mr. Diver has been an OCATO Consultant for more than 10 years. His areas of expertise include: strategic planning, grant writing/fundraising, public relations, family development and Bridges Out of Poverty.

He has 25 years' experience in Community Action. Programs under his purview have received 23 "best practice" awards from local, state and national organizations, including 18 from the John Glenn Institute for Public Policy and Public Service at The Ohio State University.

Prior to coming back to Ohio, he served as the field director of a national child safety campaign headquartered in Washington, DC. His department provided technical assistance and training to chapters across the country through workshops, site visits and verbal and written communications on membership growth and development, public/private partnerships, public awareness campaigns, and advocacy issues.

While in Washington, he authored by invitation nine articles and presented at 50 state and national conferences on building successful public/private partnerships, positive leadership, and grassroots organizing. A taped copy of one presentation was a top-seller with the American Society of Association Executives in 1996.

APPENDIX A

August 24 Staff Focus Group

“Read All About It” Exercise

NOCAC programs have been successful at eliminating all poverty in the 4-5 county area and there are zero new reports of homelessness

NOCAC has grown to help over 80% of population in one way or another with their following programs: housing, education/work training, transportation, health

Apartment complex created to assist the homeless

NOCAC brings accessible transportation and low income housing to Defiance!

NOCAC Head Start opens classroom in building that is shared with a FQHC (Federally Qualified Health Center)

It Matters! NOCAC provides accessible, effective and valuable services that have combatted the conditions of poverty in NW Ohio and improved lives

NOCAC helps kids and families thrive and gain skills/resources to succeed

NOCAC develops a 52-unit housing property serving a six-county area

NOCAC rated #1 in Ohio for their reputation and success in serving the public's needs

NOCAC to open larger homeless shelter

NOCAC helped with the affordable housing shortage! They bought an old building to renovate into low-income apartments!

NOCAC opens new Head Start and EHS centers with natural playgrounds

NOCAC expands its Early Head Start program with full day childcare services available for infants/toddlers

NOCAC has expanded services by purchasing a larger facility that includes in-house medical, dental, mental health and housing services

NOCAC: They did it again!! Predicting the needs of the community and financial planning so families become independent

Another family helped by NOCAC, family in need received clothing and housing for a family that experienced weather damage

Key Words/Phrases in “Read All About It” Exercise

Homeless supports
Housing – medical/dental/mental health
FQHC Sharing space?
Transportation and low-income housing
Housing/apartments
Financial independence
No Poverty
Families in need get help
Full day child care/Head Start
New EHS/Head Start classrooms with natural playgrounds
Larger homeless shelter
Helping over 80% of residents
NOCAC #1
Improved clients’ lives
Childcare/expanded services
52 unit apartment community

Staff Discussion Question #1: What is NOCAC Doing Right?

Meals for families – breakfast, lunch, snack, weekend meals, socialization meals
Provide assistance in all areas of life: commodities, school, summer foods, home improvements, help with utility bills, child care, financial classes
Keeping staff that have many years of experience
Helping parents educate pre-school children
Helping with COVID-impacted households, rent/mortgage/utilities
Low admin and operating costs, more money goes into direct services
Adapting to the ever-changing needs in regards to the pandemic and the new needs of the community
Tax services – confusing area that can intimidate people
Helping and meeting the needs of the community
Keeping staff safe
Fostering a culture of caring amongst its employees
Financial Opportunity Center expansion and classes
NOCAC provides consumers with dignity when others do not
Providing services to low-income families, referring people to other agencies when we are unable to help
Retention and hiring of not only qualified, but invested staff members
Professional development opportunities and coaching for staff that want it
Providing transportation to families for dental and physical appointments
Providing EHS and HS services along with health requirements and transportation
Make sure children receive all around physical/mental health
In home services – home visits, FAs working on goals with families
Offer opportunities for flu vaccines at agency in-service
New executive director seems to be genuinely interested in improving program operations.
Open minded to new ideas and eliminate old ways of thinking
Changes in directors and management
Providing services to low-income households through our programs and partnerships

Making homes more energy efficient
Seeking out ways to continually serve communities (strategic plans, needs assessments)
Serve communities in NW Ohio with Head Start services
Creating partnerships
NOCAC provides fantastic wrap around services
Finding housing for homeless in tough housing market
Lots of social media and newspaper communication
Working on improving staff wellness by offering fun games and competitions/activities
Servicing large volumes of clients and families
Trainings
Providing educational materials along with programs
Today! Using agency staff to help in planning the agency's future – valuing staff input
Notifying all staff members know what good things our other programs are doing (emails, newsletters)
EHS – going in homes to work directly with parents of 0-3 year olds to help them as first educators
Community Resource Guide online
Advocacy
Ensure fiscal stability within NOCAC with very few audit findings in past
Accepting responsibility for delivery services when need is identified (taking on more!), staff and programs
Provide bus transportation for most of Head Start classrooms
Offers great benefits package to employees, 401(k)
Transportation services for HS kids to school, to socializations
Trying to resolve more problems everyday or come up with solutions!
Meeting the general need of the families we serve
NOCAC treats employees well
Getting in the homes to help with family needs
NOCAC does amazing work serving the community on many platforms – education, health, finance, shelter, etc.
Including multiple members of the community/outside agencies to help NOCAC achieve goals/address mission statement
Accessibility to multiple programs to serve a designated “target” population (poverty, low income)
Clients aren't held to being served by only one option
Having discussion about needs. Considering responses from clients, board, employees, partners
Diversity of services
Serving the whole family through Head Start
Serving people in communities and/or directing them to services that can help
In network meetings – need more information on other programs
Listening to employees – understanding hardships of pandemic as it relates to employees
Positive role changes in staff management and directors
Implementing new programs to service the changing needs of the world
Providing central air unit repair
Providing furnace repair or replacement
Provide shelter for the homeless
Providing programs to meet needs within the community
Providing programs to empower individuals
Identifying needs in the community
Promoting healthy families
Educating households on utility payment plans and programs

Educating children
Educating households on resources available in the community
Targeting the right population
Provide case management in some areas of the agency
Helping children and families succeed
Qualified teachers
Collaborate with several agencies
Training provided on many topics according to need
Great teamwork!
Providing weekend meals to families
Great staff – some with years of experience but also great new staff with fresh ideas
Relationships between the staff and families!
Going above and beyond to get extra services for our families such as utility, rent, assistance, etc.

Staff Discussion Question #2:

What are the threats/risks to NOCAC and its programs?

Funding not renewed (3)
Loss of grant funding due to economic events
More floats or staff to help those who flex or need to be in a home
Employee turnover – less trained and skilled workers
Running programs while understaffed – creating possible burn out of those who are stepping in/doing more
Staff doing many jobs to cover absent staff – no subs
Employee burn out – more and more funds, more and more programs, more clients – limited staff
Staff wages/qualifications for our staff
Duplication of services, risk of clients going elsewhere
Losing staff to other places because of pay
Below #s on enrollment – are we reaching the right areas?
Unable to go in homes
Inflation – higher costs mean less money for resources, greater unemployment and homelessness
Price of gas going up, other costs going up, bus routes decreased
Unforeseen environmental impacts – tornados, floods
Confidentiality – client and employee
Lack of space
Facilities needed for further expansion of services
Losing seasoned employees to retirement
Loss of employees due to preventable situations
All of our clients reach self-sufficiency
Keeping up with technology and changes in how people receive information
Competitive job market – change in expectations (flexibility, pay, benefits, etc.)
Loss of management experience
Universal preschool mandates
Increase in public pre-school options will change how Head Start services are received.
Public schools offering universal preschool = no Head Start
Vicarious trauma
No more poverty, no more need for NOCAC
Lack of external communication regarding the resources we offer

Communication across the board, not just within but with families as well (maybe aware but unsure of all the details)
Communication between field staff and central office
Staff burn out, understaffed (4)
Hiring qualified staff (assistants)
No longer a need in the community
Time constraints – deadlines to spend funds in programs, especially temporary
Not enough or no clients – fewer choosing to fulfill requirements of services
Trainers – designated staff to train
All the stimulus money, extra SNAP benefits – may not show all the money was needed.
Putting staff into the field before they're ready or haven't had proper onboarding
Growth in media and communications needed to further awareness – Threat – lack of public awareness to offerings
Safety violation at one classroom, jeopardize entire programs
Lack of marketing and advertising – hiring a dedicated marketing staff member
Pool of applicants
Staff shortages and/or unwillingness to work
Too many chiefs and not enough Indians
Union for Head Start
Addressing perceptions that we provide handouts – you help those people
Losing customer service during remote appointments
Lack of cultural diversity training – pronouns – verbiage asked in our program softwares
No consistency following some policies and procedures
Hiring quality staff not just bodies
No clear chain of command and disciplinary action
Putting staff in classrooms before being trained
Increased funding and additional services will go away – expectations may not. How do we prepare to go back to the way it was or adapt?
Staff who feel “under valued” and choose to do only what's expected (bare minimum)
Bring back bus monitors so assistants can help in classroom
Allow staff to make overtime rather than flexing or under certain circumstances
New staff do training and Northwest State before starting at site
Workers comp filings (injuries)
New government (governor, president)
Client discouragement of not being helped quick enough
Unable to refer, client discouragement
Wages to keep staff
Employee satisfaction, competitive wages
Another group duplicating services
Better pay somewhere else

Staff Discussion Question #3:

What opportunities should the agency focus on from 2022-2024?

Transportation

- Public transportation

- Transportation services within all served counties

- Continue transportation focus

- Transportation

- Continue to work toward transportation

Staff Training

- More involved onboarding of new staff/professional development for veteran staff
- Inservice meetings, speakers on matters needing reviewing (i.e. communication)
- Cultural diversity for all staff
- Trainings for staff – allow staff to choose trainings
- Cross training and ongoing
- Staff training, onboarding, professional development, cross training
- More cross training
- More ongoing training
- Getting Ahead for staff
- Work/focus on mental health improvements for staff and clients
- Opportunities for staff experiencing burn out to talk or turn their burn out around
- Better vetting of new hires if able

Marketing/Communication (internal/external)

- Better communication between programs
- Development and public relations planning options
- Commercial advertising or radio interview talking about what all NOCAC offers
- Internal communication to spotlight different service areas on a regular basis.
- With multiple ways to communicate staff can be better connected

Head Start

- Child care full day/full year
- Transitioning EHS from HV to FD
- Opportunities for parents to receive a CDL and drive. Job opportunities. Life homeless parents.
- Child care – all day infant/toddler program
- New Head Start centers in Napoleon and Wauseon
- New locations for Head Start schools – allowing for growth

Facilities

- Space and facilities – quality, accessible, comfortable, quality signage
- Increase space for staff by putting together a committee to find locations/buildings
- Updated buildings or new locations to provide services in and for staff space
- Expanding our programs and new facilities

Employee pay/benefits

- Increased pay to retain staff
- Delegated a set amount of mental health days for each employee
- Ways needed to retain and train staff
- Wage and benefit changes – staff retention and staff recognition
- Employee relations – increase wages for all employees
- Wage increase for staff each year not same
- Offer health insurance for staff to retire after 30 years
- Paying our staff during summer break and offer health care benefits
- Offer health insurance when staff are laid off
- Retaining employees
- More pay

Housing

More community partners in housing

Housing sustainable

Housing for homeless

Housing developments – affordable housing

If we were to build or buy housing for the homeless, how do we maintain that?

More housing for the homeless

What can we do about housing needs in our communities?

Looking at possibly purchasing homes/old buildings to help with apartments or partnering with hotels more

Other

Increase the amount of dollars per client in rapid re-housing to keep them housed

Increase the amount of time a client can be in a particular program to help combat recidivism

Devise/develop systems to truly lift folks out of poverty rather than program band aids

More evening or other times for events to engage people and families

Request extension of funds to be spent past deadlines – into 2022 – 2024

Education through FOC for those struggling with poverty

Local health and dental availability

More marketing

Look at COVID and long-term effects on the community

More feedback from staff to implement new programs or tweak current programs

Transition programs to better promote self-sufficiency

Animal assistance

Continued rent, water, etc. payments

Commodity distribution, other counties

Printed resource guide

Expansion of home repair programs, self-help housing

Access to fresh fruits and vegetables through existing programs

Expanding help for older children and families (including more middle class), afterschool

Partner, partner, partner – do not reinvent the wheel when it comes to programming, don't look at it as competition

Stimulus checks and refund checks – help them manage

Staffing – keep the staff that we have!

Keep staff employed

Getting away from low-income wording to income eligible households

Taking referrals from current clients to work with in 2022-2024

August 25 Community Focus Group

Community Partner Discussion Question #1:

What other things should be noted in the Community Assessment?

Navigating social services especially for seniors

How to bridge partnerships in Henry County especially

Ensuring equitable distribution of funds across all counties, all equally visible

Mental health case management

Bugs, fleas and lice
Network for resources
Ways to motivate those not asking for help
Transportation for 50 – 60-year-olds
Affordable housing for Henry, Williams and VanWert counties, especially Section 8) – lack of rentals there especially
Car purchase and repair
NOCAC look at wages/salaries
Update key resource people list (“cheat sheet”)
More coordination
Better resource guides (online needs updating) – look at Williams Co.
Affordable child care – also evening/weekend care
Awareness of child tax credit
In-home health care for seniors

Community Partner Discussion Question #2:
What should the agency focus more on from 2022-2024?

Programs to assist mobile homeowners on rented lots (ramps, roofs, no heat)
Homeowner maintenance training
More low-income housing!
 More apartment/rentals
 Work with developer and counties
 Contact those who have done it
 Work with Habitat
 Assisted living
 More chronic homeless housing

Make program requirements clearer (coordinated entry system for homeless)
More homeless shelters and coordination
Expand Getting Ahead?
More addiction services (especially dual diagnosis and chronic)
More staff so shorter appointment times
More staff for school services (screenings)

Community Partner Discussion Question #3:
Are there new ways in which your organization can partner with NOCAC?

Housing in Defiance (working with Hebron and Miami Valley Planning Organization)
Financial empowerment for younger folks (matched savings and simulations) Eden School District
Workforce development (ages 18-35) referrals from NOCAC to the Dream Center and Getting Ahead referrals to NOCAC from the Dream Center
More crockpot classes with Ravens
Shared opportunities between counties
Organization chart for NOCAC
Decision tree for program services
County networks of providers
Local resource commercials

August 25 Board/Senior Management Focus Group

“Read All About It” Exercise

NOCAC becomes leaders in Community Action programs in the region
The end of poverty for all
NOCAC expands to offer center-based service for the Early Head Start program
Paulding County homes repaired for senior citizens to boost valuation of property
Poverty levels have decreased area wide due to NOCAC’s trainings and financial support to its members of the community
Homeless shelter doubles its capacity!
NOCAC shuts its doors, no more need
NOCAC continuing to lead in providing vital services for low-income population
Expansion of NOCAC building to allow larger board room and additional office space
NOCAC has helped over 95% of the community
Homeless numbers in NW Ohio hit all time low due to work by NOCAC
NOCAC exceeds five years goals in serving the 6-county area
NOCAC does it again – poverty level has dropped below expected numbers
NOCAC is providing transportation for non-seniors in the 6-county area
NOCAC opening Financial Opportunity Centers in all 6 counties
NOCAC Emergency Services now offers financial assistance for car repair

Board of Directors Discussion Question #1:

What do you think of the direction of NOCAC?

Adaptation good – grants and programs
Behavior vs. Band Aids
Proactive with programs and services
Innovative with funding
Flexibility to serve
Reflective – willing to change
How to find people who are income eligible
Employee retention – issues? Is culture supportive?

Board of Directors Discussion Question #2:

What should the agency focus on from 2022-2024?

Job shadowing before hiring

Housing

- Paperwork challenges
- Reach out to developers
- Partnerships with other organizations
- Look at past NOCAC projects
- Area Council on Aging
- Expand SROs
- Increase shelter capacity (16 to 24 beds, family suites)

Expand offices

Childhood development – partner with the schools, earlier access, CCP partnerships

Financial Opportunity Center

- Better marketing

- Stable staff

- Increased savings, decrease debt, increase credit scores

- Fundraising

- Behavior vs. Band Aids

Job retention for NOCAC

- Look at wages and benefits – how to sustain

- Restructure

- Examine culture/flexibility

Marketing/social media – new hire for agency

Health care onsite (campus) at Head Start sites

Maumee Valley Guidance Center partnership – does NOCAC have one?

Mental health

Educating parents on all services

More cross training!

Mentoring program for adults – build upon Getting Ahead

Transportation (look differently at NOCAC)

- Continue Maumee Valley Planning Organization committee

Broadband access – obtain devices

Private endowments - fundraising

Board of Directors Discussion Question #3:

What challenges should we be aware of and be prepared to address?

Quality childcare center partnerships

Lack of qualified personnel

Competitive salaries

Resistance to change

Generational barriers

Disasters

Finding adequate funding

Board of Directors Discussion Question #4:

What resources should we tap into for focuses?

Private endowments

Private and corporate foundations (i.e. VanWert)

American Rescue Funds, especially child care

Digital navigation – how to provide services/access vs. appointment in person

APPENDIX B

Electronic Survey Results Board, Staff, Community