



**Blue Water  
Community Action...**

*Helping People.  
Changing Lives.*

2022-2027  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**

Facilitated By

*Rebecca Kraus & Associates LLC*

## Table of Contents

<i>Section 1: Executive Summary</i> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Section 2: History</i> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Section 3: The Strategic Planning Process</i> .....	<b>5</b>
<i>Section 4: Core Values</i> . .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Section 5: The Agency’s Social Challenge</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Section 6: The Agency’s Unique Value Proposition</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Section 7: The Agency Mission</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Section 8: The Environmental Scan – Trends Analysis</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Section 9: Greatest Emerging Needs</i> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Section 10: The Vision</i> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Section 11: The SWOT &amp; The Agency’s Key Expertise</i> .....	<b>9</b>
<i>Section 12: The Strategic Result</i> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Section 13: Impact Areas</i> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Section 14: Strategic Priorities and Strategies</i> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Section 15: 2022-2027 Implementation Targets</i> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>Section 16: Alignment with Communication Action Network Goals, ROMA and CSBG Standards</i> .....	<b>16</b>
<i>Section 17: Integrating Programmatic Services to the Agency Plan</i> .....	<b>18</b>

## **Section 1: Executive Summary**

In collaboration with consultant Rebecca Kraus, Rebecca Kraus & Associates, Blue Water Community Action (BWCA) developed a five-year strategic plan with adaptive strategies to better position the agency to reduce poverty in its service area. The plan is the result of a comprehensive process inclusive of stakeholder engagement and participation including clients, governing board, funders, collaborative partners, and staff. The planning process utilized information from the 2020 Community Needs Assessment and other data-driven sources to determine how to best meet the needs of our clients and the community.

In tandem with the drive to deliver sustainable solutions is the need to demonstrate impact. The plan utilizes an adaptive strategy model and Result Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) balance scorecard approach to track goal attainment on related agency-wide core strategies. Agency and program strategies unify the Agency with a focus on achieving impact in four targeted areas – Organizational Capacity, Coordination of Services, Community Contributions and Rebuilding Programs for people and communities with low incomes in the Blue Water region.

The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan represents the next cycle of growth for the Agency moving to a more adaptive organization. The implementation phase will support a culture where all levels of the Agency think in terms of impact, real-time action, and results through cross-matrixed agency collaboration, streamlined operations, and data-driven decision making led by highly trained staff.

As a community action agency, the mission of BWCA is rooted in the principles of the Community Action Network, and a commitment to the Promise of Community Action. As the plan serves as a guide to ensure infrastructures are in place to reduce poverty, staff and Board of Directors will assure the plan is implemented using ROMA monitoring and assessment processes to achieve organizational and program goals. This strategic plan is a roadmap to help drive actions toward alleviating the causes and conditions of poverty in our region.

We extend our gratitude to our stakeholders including members of the Board of Directors, strategic planning committee, staff, and clients for their time, expertise, and effort to ensure a quality strategic plan.

Melinda Johnson  
Executive Director  
Blue Water Community Action Agency  
February 2022

## Section 2: History

In 1964, The Great Society, as envisioned by President Lyndon Johnson, was a sweeping plan to improve the lives of all Americans, regardless of their circumstances. Inspired by President Kennedy and his New Frontier, Johnson pledged to fulfill his promise of equal opportunity for all by enacting several comprehensive changes within the federal government. In August of that same year, the Economic Opportunity Act was signed into law by President Johnson creating the nationwide Community Action Network.

In 1963, shortly before he was assassinated, President Kennedy had asked his economic advisors to draw up some proposals to address the problem of American poverty. Johnson took up this charge after he succeeded Kennedy as President. In Johnson's first State of the Union address in 1964 he called for an unconditional war to defeat poverty. He expanded and revised the proposals given to Kennedy and developed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The act included a variety of initiatives including Head Start; Job Corps; Work-Study program for university students; VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) - a domestic version of the Peace Corps; Neighborhood Youth Corps; Basic education and adult job training and Community Action Programs (CAPS) which turned out to be the most controversial part of the package, as it proposed the "**maximum feasible participation**" by poor people themselves to determine what would help them the most. CAPS were a radical departure from how government had run most social reform programs in the past.

Community Action is a coordinated effort to address the root effects of poverty and to, ultimately, move families and individuals to self-sufficiency, rather than foster dependency. There are now over 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. (6,755).

Blue Water Community Action (BWCA), a 501(c) 3 private, non-profit community action agency, has been empowering people to become self-sufficient since 1965 through a variety of programs and services that have evolved over the years. BWCA is one of 28 community action agencies in the State of Michigan, and one of over 1,100 nationwide. Community Action Agencies are non-profit, private, and public organizations established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. BWCA has over 55 years history of successfully providing a variety of programs that assist low-income individuals, seniors, and families to become economically self-sufficient and advocating on their behalf. These programs have focused on early childhood education, parenting and relationship education, health and nutrition, new home construction, home repairs and weatherization, homebuyer and mortgage foreclosure prevention education, financial literacy education, a protective payee program, homelessness, and emergency assistance services.

BWCA operates primarily in St. Clair County, Michigan. Some of BWCA's programs extend to surrounding counties.

St. Clair County is in the thumb area of the eastern lower peninsula of Michigan, bordering Canada. St. Clair County is one of five counties that form the peninsula, known as "[the Thumb](#)," that projects into [Lake Huron](#). It is at the mouth of Lake Huron and along the St. Clair River, which is part of the St. Lawrence Seaway. St. Clair County has a total of 58 miles of shoreline along Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and Lake St. Clair. St. Clair County is the principal county in [The Blue Water Area](#), a sub-region of the Thumb.

St. Clair County covers an area of 837 square miles – 722 square miles is land, and the remaining 115 square miles is water. The City of Port Huron serves as the county seat. There are 23 townships, eight cities, and two villages.

Detroit, the largest city in Michigan, is within 25 miles of southern St. Clair County. Many county residents commute daily to the metro Detroit area where they are employed.

According to the 2019 St. Clair County Report Card, St. Clair County's population for 2018 was estimated at 161,121. The City of Port Huron is the most densely populated area of the county with 18.3% of the county's population. The projected age group changes from 2015 to 2025 include a 3.4% decrease for children, an 18.9% decrease for those ages 18 to 24, a 4.1% decrease for the 25 to 64 age group, and a 48.9% increase for those 65 and older.

St. Clair County is closely connected in terms of economy with its neighbors, [Metropolitan Detroit](#) and [Sanilac County](#) in Michigan, and [Lambton County](#) in [Ontario, Canada](#). St. Clair County is part of the [Detroit-Warren-Dearborn](#), Michigan [Metropolitan Statistical Area](#).

A tri-partite board comprised of one-third low-income/low-income representatives, one-third elected officials or their designee, and one-third from the private sector, oversees the operations of BWCA.

### Section 3: The Strategic Planning Process

**“Strategic planning is the task of thinking through the mission of the business, that is of asking the question ‘what is our business and what should it be?’ This leads to the setting of objectives, the development of strategies and plans and the making of today’s decisions for tomorrow’s results.**

**Peter Drucker**

The Blue Water strategic planning process was designed for broad stakeholder engagement, thorough analysis of data and increased strategic focus on the most critical needs of those served by the agency. Ten agency leaders and several Board members representing the breadth of programs and services comprised the Strategic Planning Committee. As a result of COVID-19, the originally proposed face-to-face meetings were conducted via ZOOM over eight meetings from November 11-January 31, 2022.

We thank the following individuals for their participation on the Strategic Planning Committee:

Amy Bark  
Julia Guttierrez  
Stephanie Armstrong Helton  
Melinda Johnson  
Karen Lake  
Stephanie Kesner  
Darlene Kramp  
Bernie Newby  
Julie Pemberton  
Pam Sommerville

The planning process was conducted in four phases:

1. Phase I: Prepare to Plan - Final Contracting, Data Collection, Logistics, and Board Representatives Conversation
2. Phase II: Theory of Change, Values, Mission, Key Customer/Community Needs (Board Kickoff (Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, followed by two meetings- November 2021.)
3. Phase III: Trends/Forecast, Agency Positioning Relative to Needs (SWOT), Agency Vision (Total of 3 meetings: Two 3-hr, One 2-hr. meetings)
4. Phase IV: Determine Strategies to Achieve Your Agency’s Desired Strategic Result  
Prioritize Strategies and Develop First 18 Month Implementation Plan, (Total 4 meetings)
5. Phase V: Implementation Consulting, Board Presentation, February 2022

Specifically, the steps of the planning process included:

- Embracing the Theory of Change and adaptive planning
- Refined agency values and mission
- Increased clarity on the agency vision
- Assessed environmental trends, risk factors
- Identified the most critical areas of need and agency core areas of expertise
- Reviewed Community Network Goals and ROMA principles
- Completed a SWOT analysis
- Determined the Strategic Result to be achieved by the overall plan
- Identified the Key Impact Areas of focus to achieve the result

- Determined the overarching Priorities (goals) to drive the plan
- Identified the strategies required to realize the Strategic Result and address the Impact areas
- Prioritized the strategies to set the first 18 month of the plan period with plan actions, measurements of success and owners.

### **Plan Stakeholders/Contributors**

- BWCAA Strategic Planning Members and Staff
- Board Members
- Customers
- Funders
- Community Partners

### **Data Sources**

Data from a number of sources was utilized in the development of this strategic plan. The 2020 St. Clair County-BWCAA Community Needs Assessment Community was fundamental to understanding the needs of agency customers and the surrounding communities. A BWCA Board, Partner, Funder Survey was completed in preparation for planning from October-November 2021. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from key supporter stakeholders relative to perception of clarity of purpose, overall image, differentiators, strengths, areas for service need/enhancement, strategic opportunities, most critical issues facing BWCA in the next 12-18 months, desired achievements, trends with greatest potential impact, and knowledge of BWCA programs and services, etc. A representative body of staff served on the Strategic Planning Committee and continuously sought feedback and input into the planning discussions.

### **Section 4: Core Values**

Core Values serves as the foundation of an organization. It identifies beliefs that an agency holds dear and strives to uphold in action every day. Every decision is ultimately held up to the litmus test of whether or not it aligns or is contrary to agency values. It underpins and shapes the philosophical attitudes of the culture.

The 2022-2027 process held thoughtful discussions on the agency’s values and confirmed the Code of Conduct:

### **PROPOSED BLUE WATER CODE OF CONDUCT**



We encourage initiative and forward thinking.

We set challenging, realistic goals and deliver on our commitments.

We regularly communicate with each other on important issues and developments.

We develop and leverage the abilities and perspectives of all individuals in our diverse organization.

We make decisions that consider both the short-term and long-term needs of the agency and those we serve.

We involve the right people in making decisions and base them on what is best for the entire agency and those we serve.

We require and demonstrate ethical behavior and integrity in all our interactions at every level in the organization.

## Section 5: The Agency's Social Challenge

The planning process explored the question of “What social challenge is Blue Water Community Action Agency, through your existence, striving to address?” It was determined that this social challenge was founded in self-sufficiency, empowering families, and creating avenues for their success. Specifically, the three challenges are:

- Breaking the cycle of poverty through empowerment tools to help low-income families move from poverty and generational poverty to self-sufficiency.
- Empowering vulnerable families to create their own social change.
- Creating methods and community impact for our people to be successful.

## Section 6: The Agency's Unique Value Proposition

Planning members discussed how their agency is positioned to provide unique help and support, their value proposition, to their customers, community, and key stakeholders. These unique capacities are:

- We provide a holistic approach to helping our families. We have wrap-around services.
- We work with families on how to move from poverty through poverty education as well as educating the community.

## Section 7: The Agency Mission

The planning process further confirmed the Agency's purpose and mission – it's reason for existence.

### **The Blue Water Community Action Mission**

*The Mission of Blue Water Community Action is to advocate for and provide individuals with limited income an opportunity to become socially and economically self-sufficient in their community.*

## Section 8: The Environmental Scan – Trends Analysis

The environmental scan considers learnings from the Community Needs Assessment, The Board, Partner, Funder Survey and Trends analysis completed by the Planning Committee. As a result, assumptions relative to poverty within the region are made by key stakeholders. Particularly powerful is the voice of the client. The most critical trends emerging through the Committee's work were seen as:

- Agency quality staffing shortages.
- Continued housing crises.
- Substance abuse issues.
- Behavioral issues of students in the classrooms as well as adults and parents.
- Trauma based mental health issues.
- The potential of funding dropping off after the pandemic passes.
- Client's over-building dependencies on available funding.
- Our continued utilization of the expanded use of technology.

- Expansion of rural broadband access.
- Growing aging population and staff increasing in the County.
- Increase in age 0-3 funding.
- The increasing housing cost burden.
- High potential for increased home foreclosures.
- Increasing cost of utilities.
- The number of people who are choosing a different path due to mandates. This may be a boon for some, negative for others with potential new clients. Could benefit smaller employers.
- There is a growing decline in the number of children and young adults age 20-29.
- The Increase in mental health issues due to pandemic.
- The increase in domestic violence and child abuse.
- We will struggle with education for a number of years with students falling behind due to the impact of COVID and disruptive educations.
- There is a loss of critical thinking skills in our youth due to little interaction with each other.
- Programs of 2 days on 2 days off causes skill/knowledge loss of retention.
- Loss of social skills, ability to interact with others applies to all school age groups. This is social regression.
- Increase of a national minimum wage may possibly impact future eligibility.
- There is a heightened sense of disparities, per race, access, etc. and the need to be addressed.
- Possibility of increased funding through the Build Back Better program, ex. universal pre-school, childcare, etc.
- Continued attempt to balance based on political party goals and objectives with wide pendulum swings.
- Increasing tensions and divisiveness, us vs. them in our society. Example - vaccine mandates.

## Section 9: Greatest Emerging Needs

Based upon data from the Community Needs Assessment, client input, the Board, Partner, Funder Survey, staff and committee feedback the Committee summarized what they believed to be the most critical needs their customers had to further focus agency resources upon:

- Customers and communities need a consistent source for childcare and pre-school with transportation. This frees them for getting a job, education.
- They need a one-stop shop for paperwork, resources, 1 application, 1 trip... 1 contact coordinator of resources, case management.
- They need to have us help them become self-sufficient. We have to get them out of crisis first to be able to work on self-sufficiency.
- We need to better link our programs together with an increased focus on y financial literacy to create a path toward self-sufficiency.
- They need us to deal with crisis intervention first. We can then address education, financial literacy.
- They need our staff to be well trained to help them with the best approaches to serve them.
- They need someone to advocate for them to get the programs they actually need.

## Section 10: The Vision

A vision is an organizations' desired future. It looks to the future and articulates what an entity aspires to ultimately achieve through its efforts. Visions state the hopes and dreams people strive for through their daily work. Based on the work to date, the Planning Committee proposes the following vision:



## Proposed Blue Water Community Action Vision Statement

*By 2026...*

*We aspire to be recognized as the leader in educating and empowering people while strengthening the community.*

### Section 11: The SWOT & The Agency's Key Expertise

The planning process assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Agency relative to its capacity to realize the vision. This work serves to lay the initial groundwork for plan strategies and action planning.

#### SWOT Findings

##### Strengths:

- Our staff truly care about our clientele.
- Our Head Start team is being trained on Trauma Smart and becoming more aware/sensitive to their own and co-workers emotions.
- Our staff's ability to be flexible, going from in person to virtual, changing policies.
- We tackle challenges as they come. People have a new stamina with an attitude of "we can do this" and do it well.
- We have many strong staff members (seasoned).
- There is an overall level of support from other organizations. We are well regarded.
- The new building is a launch point for many exciting new opportunities including partnerships, collaborations.
- We have many good partnerships in the area that will last for a long time with access to resources we did not have before.
- The use of technology was embraced by the agency.
- We have a great Board! Very helpful these last several years. Not a rubber stamp group, they are very involved.
- Great leadership and management at the agency level. Supportive, empathetic... "We are team Gumby."
- The leadership team is willing to see failure and be accountable and step up to correct it to get it right. We are increasing our "vulnerability."
- We are willing to accept and stretch, stretch and possibly even fail to ultimately grow.

##### Weaknesses:

- Staffing shortages.
- New staff who are still learning.
- Continued new staff causes us to have to retrain over and over again... ratio of new/experienced has shifted.
- Loss of people due to mandates, other opportunities – more money, benefits, less paperwork, oversight, fed guidelines.
- Unpredictability – lack of control as to what is coming...
- Marketing – need to increase communication and understanding of what we do and don't do.
- Wage issues relative to the competition.
- Ancillary benefits weaknesses – work requirements, flex hours, etc.

**Opportunities:**

- Connecting with other agencies as an example a community health rep here with more seamlessness.
- Marketing- we need a marketing person who can address/develop our marketing message and materials, etc. incl. social media, web, presentation, church outreach etc.
- Greater clarity on program promotion.
- Need to strengthen our relationships with other agencies in our County. There are lots of new people in these agencies who do not know what we do. Traditional strong relationships now need some attention and care. This will help us get our name out there.
- Funding has given us the opportunity to do more in the community. Transportation as well as just basic things people need such as repair washers and dryers
- Housing beyond HARA. There will be more money likely coming down. We are not fixing the problem with CERA, we need affordable housing. Possibly join with others to help make this happen as it is outside of our wheelhouse. We need to understand this world before we would jump in.
- Provide additional/more flexible child care services, ex. before and after care.
- We will be building a kitchen and down the road after pandemic we will have opportunities with the communities. We could possibly offer classes, catering, incubator, etc.
- New staff, particularly in Early Childhood are seeking education. Consider forming a partnership to expand local availability to higher education.

**Threats:**

- Threats of losing staff to other programs.
- Amount of new staff and the training necessary as well as the loss of experienced staff.
- Uptick in monitoring findings that are not typical for our agencies by funding sources due to lack of staff experience knowing funding requirements.
- Loss of students due to lack of transportation, cancellation, etc. to the public schools.
- Concern over end of pandemic funding. What happens when it dries up?
- Hiring and supporting programs with the influx of fed monies – ex. Weatherization will get infusion of money. Highly regulated.
- Finding qualified people to work.

**Key Expertise**

Deep discussion determined key areas of expertise the Agency possesses to impact particular areas of need. By understanding what these capabilities are the Agency can powerfully focus their efforts on the areas that align with the voice of the client and their greatest needs. This expertise can be leveraged in-house or through partnerships.

**These areas of expertise include:**

- We are financially very strong - we know regulations.
- The staff is extremely knowledgeable of the curriculum with many certified trainers.
- Foreclosure counseling.
- Home buyer education.
- Weatherization department.
- Protective payee program.
- Ability to collaborate with other agencies in times of need.
- Lack of need to be in the spotlight so some may not know us as we are often a silent partner.
- Homeless and housing – started programs in 2018.
- Staff is dedicated and caring. We connect strongly to clients and want to see our clients succeed.
- Knowledge of available resources to link to help clients.
- Our network and contacts to get help fast for a client.
- Staff is extremely adaptable.

## Section 12: The Strategic Result

Having considered the data findings, environmental scan, SWOT, and key areas of expertise, the Planning Committee determined the Strategic Result – the overarching three-year plan goal. The Strategic Result is the culmination of discussions that determined the need to drive cultural change within the Agency by targeting systems and processes crucial to seamless client service. By streamlining and coordinating services, clients are more greatly empowered to realize their desired goals. Critical to further empowering clients is enhancing the Agency’s organizational capacity to lead and galvanize staff toward goals and strategies and managing change. These findings resulted in the 2022-2025 plans’ Strategic Result:

*A strong, stable, cohesive agency through service coordination, and the rebuilding of programs, organizational capacity, and the contributions we provide in the communities we serve.*

## Section 13: Impact Areas

Thus, four areas emerged as most critical to focus upon over the next three years in the march toward helping to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty.

The Focus/Impact Areas were determined to be:

- **Organizational Capacity**  
(Staffing: Recruitment/Hiring/Retention/Morale Building)  
(Staff Education: Restructured Internal Training, Scaffolding, Maintenance, Higher Education opportunities) (Marketing)
- **Coordination of Services**  
(Internal and External Processes and Relationships Helping Clients)
- **Community Contributions**  
(Community Connection-Living-Wage Community, Housing, Child Care)
- **Rebuilding Programs**  
(Utilizing data informed decision making)

## Section 14: Strategic Priorities and Strategies

The 2022-2027 priorities emerged over extensive planning, thoughtful consideration, and a passion to best serve families and individuals. This effort resulted in the realization that the Agency is at a crucial life-cycle moment in its history that affords the opportunity to energize its culture and its mission by realigning its structural processes and systems - its operational capacity - while strengthening its staff capabilities and leadership to best serve clients, community, and its key stakeholders. Thus, the priorities and strategies that follow reflect the need to define, create, collect, and assess its organizational and human capacity to achieve its vision of “*we aspire to be recognized as the leader in educating and empowering people while strengthening the community.*” In essence, at this point in its history, the Agency is reconfirming and strengthening its structural and human capacity for the future to provide extraordinary service to those in need.

**Strategic Priorities (Goals)** are broad statements of what the organization will achieve. They state what must be done, not how it is done. They are the foundation of the plan. They are measurable and quantifiable points on the way to reaching our objectives.

The 2022-2027 plan identifies four Agency priorities. Each priority will be achieved by their supporting strategies.

**Priority 1: Enhance our organizational capacity for greater impact and stability.**

**Priority 2: Strengthen our coordination of services to better serve our customers through a holistic approach by utilizing internal and community resources.**

**Priority 3: Focus efforts on making data informed decisions to strengthen and rebuild programs, processes and customers services.**

**Priority 4: Expand programming to better meet identified needs in the community.**

The **Strategies** to support these four priorities were determined to be:

**Priority 1: Enhance our organizational capacity for greater impact and stability.**

**Strategy 1:** Develop and implement improved recruitment/hiring process to fill job positions with sufficient and qualified employees to successfully operate programming.

**Strategy 2:** Develop and implement a plan to improve retention and morale.

**Strategy 3:** Restructure internal training plans for new-hire on-boarding, job specific and agency-identified trainings using cross-training, scaffolded learning, and higher-level maintenance training.

**Strategy 4:** Increase awareness of BWCA through marketing and promotion.

**Priority 2: Strengthen our coordination of services to better serve our customers through a holistic approach by utilizing internal and community resources.**

**Strategy 1:** Develop and implement a holistic approach for connecting customers to all agency services for which they are qualified to move them toward self-sufficiency.

**Strategy 2:** Develop and implement a holistic approach for connecting customers to community resources for which they are qualified to move them towards self-sufficiency.

**Priority 3: Focus efforts on making data informed decisions to strengthen and rebuild programs, processes and customers services.**

**Strategy 1:** Strengthen and rebuild programs that have been negatively impacted by staffing issues and/or the pandemic.

**Strategy 2:** Improve processes to expedite services and increase efficiencies

**Strategy 3:** Improve customer service.

**Priority 4: Expand programming to better meet identified needs in the community.**

**Strategy 1:** Expand involvement in community development and the creation of employment opportunities that provide living wages.

**Strategy 2:** Expand childcare opportunities in the county for low/moderate income residents.

**Strategy 3:** Expand housing opportunities in the county for homeless and low/moderate income residents.

**Section 15: 2022-2023 Implementation Targets**

Experience has shown that a successfully implemented plan focuses an organizational combined efforts on select aspects of planning per phase rather than attempting to implement an entire three or five-year plan and all its supporting strategies immediately. Realistically, certain actions must occur, frameworks established, research and planning completed to set the stage for the implementation of next level strategies. This approach contributes to a far greater likelihood of implementation success, an organizational sharing of achievement and pride and fuels the efforts required for the next planning stage. Thus, planning is thoughtful, thorough with each step integrally linked to a solid foundation that supports it.

The 2022-2027 plan has further identified select priorities and strategies for agency focus during an approximate period of eighteen months for 2022-2023. Specifically, implementation will focus on the following priorities, select strategies and actions:

**The 2022-2023 Targets with Actions and Champions are:**

**Priority 1: Enhance our organizational capacity for greater impact and stability.**

***Strategy 1: Develop and implement improved recruitment/hiring process to fill job positions with sufficient and qualified employees to successfully operate programming.***

**Champion: Amy Burns**

Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions for strategy.

Action 2: Research, including survey of staff, to determine strategies used by job hunters primarily in St. Clair County area. Include MiWorks as a partner for learning about opportunities job hunters use for job searches.

Action 3: Develop a written hiring plan.

Action 4: Implement hiring plan.

Action 5: Review and revise plan and outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Potential childcare benefit for staff linked to P4S2.
- Wages linked to P4S1.
- Advertising linked to P1S4 and P1S2.
- Increase advertising and diversify strategies.
- Looking outside of community- offering perks, etc.
- Costs to move to area.
- Apprenticeships – promise of education, training, etc. workforce money.

***Strategy 2: Development and implement a plan to improve retention and morale.***

**Champion: Amy Burns**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions for strategy.
- Action 2: Research methods for improving retention, including a staff survey.
- Action 3: Research methods for improving morale, including a staff survey.
- Action 4: Develop a written plan to improve retention.
- Action 5: Implement retention plan.
- Action 6: Develop a written plan to improve morale.
- Action 7: Implement plan to improve morale.
- Action 8: Review and revise retention plan and morale improvement plan and outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Potential childcare benefit for staff linked to P4S2.
- Wages linked to P4S1.
- Revision of on-boarding process linked to P1S3.
- Morale improvement plans should include community-building activities.

**Strategy 3: Restructure internal training plans for new-hire on-boarding, job specific and agency-identified trainings using cross-training, scaffolded learning, and higher-level maintenance training.**

**Champion: Pam Sommerville**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Review current training plans for on-boarding, job specific, and agency identified and methods for training delivery.
- Action 3: Assess effectiveness of trainings.
- Action 4: Review and analyze staff professional development plans.
- Action 5: Identify training needs based on staff input, funding source and licensing requirements, best practices, etc.
- Action 6: Develop training plans and implementation processes.
- Action 7: Implement plans.
- Action 8: Review and revise plans and outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Include internal training on internal programs.
- Include a variety of methods to include cross training, scaffolding, higher level maintenance training, coach/mentor.
- Remember to include the why/how chart on the back of the PD form when developing scaffolding (why-awareness/knowledge, skill demonstration, use in context & how-low, medium, high).
- Collaborate with higher education to reinstate early childhood education locally.
  - Offer training to external community members – CDA, etc.

**Priority 2: Strengthen our coordination of services to better serve our customers through a holistic approach by utilizing internal and community resources.**

Strategy 1: Develop and implement a holistic approach for connecting customers to all agency services for which they are qualified to move them toward self-sufficiency.

**Champion: Melinda Johnson/Amy Bark**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Research potential processes and how we work.
- Action 3: Identify technology needs.

- Action 4: Develop process and tools needed to implement holistic approach by all departments.
- Action 5: Train staff.
- Action 6: Implement holistic approach
- Action 7: Review and revise holistic approach and outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Data needs link to P3.
- Notary on-site – training link to P1S3.
- MiBridges navigators – training link to P1S3.
- Central access location, internal pt. of contact for each program, program ends info.
- Centralized intake process, accessible on the website.
- Use of internal FB page.
- Newsletter linked to P1S4.
- Need to maintain list of gaps in community resources linked to P2S2.
- Crisis – Stability – Self-sufficiency process.
- Case management – develop pilot project to create system and look for best practice examples.

**Priority 3: Focus efforts on making data informed decisions to strengthen and rebuild programs, processes and customers services.**

**Strategy 1: Strengthen and rebuild programs that have been negatively impacted by staffing issues and/or the pandemic.**

**Champions: Pam Sommerville and Darlene Kramp**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Determine what data we can mine and how to best utilize it.
- Action 3: Educate committee members on data analysis.
- Action 4: Identify areas needing analysis and analyze.
- Action 5: Make recommendations based on data analysis for program/staff improvements.
- Action 6: Review and revise recommendations based on the outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Identify all agency data systems and what they collect and available reports
- Can basic info be filtered into one or do any of them coordinate?
- Is there something we should be collecting that we aren't?
- Consider especially areas that need to be changed or we expect to be monitored of which we are concerned

**Priority 4: Expand programming to better meet identified needs in the community.**

**Strategy 1: Expand involvement in community development and the creation of employment opportunities that provide living wages.**

**Champion: Karen Lake**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Educate committee on Living Wage.
- Action 3: Complete BWCA plan through budget revisions and funding opportunities for lowest paid employee to be a minimum of \$15/hour.
- Action 4: Develop and implement an advocacy plan to encourage living wages in St. Clair County.
- Action 5: Review and revise plan as needed, but no less than annually.

**Strategy 2: Expand childcare opportunities in the county for low/moderate income residents.**

**Champion: Sherry Beiser**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Analyze childcare needs in the county.
- Action 3: Identify partnership opportunities.
- Action 4: Identify training needs of childcare directors/employees.
- Action 5: Identify available funding opportunities for opening/operating.
- Action 6: Develop and implement a plan for expanding childcare opportunities.
- Action 7: Review and revise for optimal outcomes as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Identify methods to ensure employees can earn a living wage.
- Options could include BWCA expanding and/or helping others to expand into childcare.
- Consider providing education to parents on how to find a quality childcare.
- Consider value-added items that include community building – parent activities, field trips, sports, etc.
- Childcare start-up supports
- Use childcare employees as a starting point for training
- Include a business plan development as a part of the process
- Childcare for employees links to P1S1&2

**Strategy 3: Expand housing opportunities in the county for homeless and low/moderate income residents.**

**Champion: Melinda Johnson**

- Action 1: Determine committee to oversee actions related to strategy.
- Action 2: Identify and participate in training/education opportunities related to housing and community development.
- Action 3: Understand housing market and data for St. Clair County to include zoning regs, rental regulations, housing stock information, Sec. 8, transportation (BWAT)
- Action 4: Research potential projects, partners, and funding opportunities for housing.
- Action 5: Identify supports needed by housing customers.
- Action 6: Research potential partners, projects, and funding opportunities for supports.
- Action 7: Collaborate with community partners to ensure sheltering of homeless men.
- Action 8: Select and implement a housing project.
- Action 9: Review and revise plans as needed, but no less than annually.

Considerations:

- Case management should be fully implemented so that housing supports will be successful

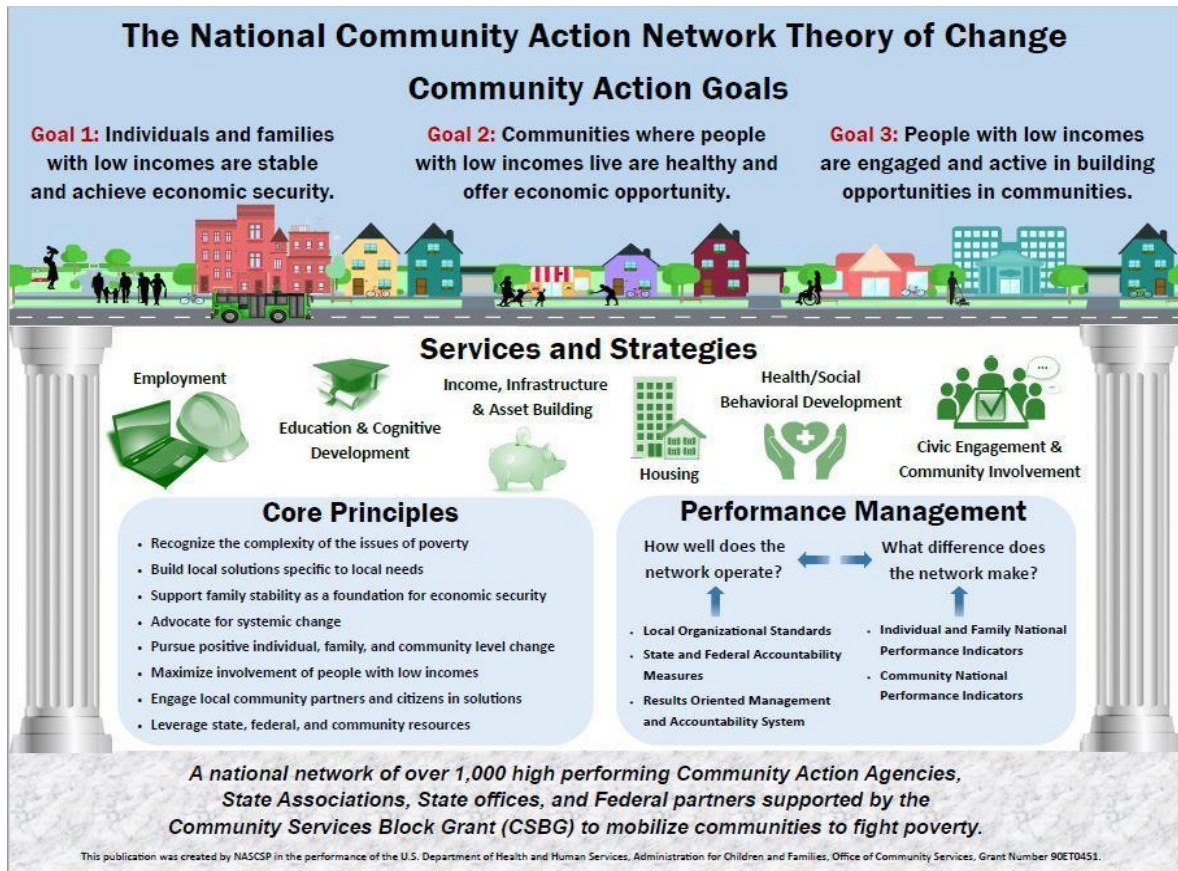
**Section 16: Alignment with Communication Action Network Goals, ROMA and CSBG Standards**

***Community Action Network Goals and Organizational Standards Alignment***

The Blue Water Community Action plan is rooted in the three Community Action National Goals:

1. Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
2. Communities where people with low incomes live are health and offer economic opportunity.
3. People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.





Supporting these three goals are organizational standards set forth by the Network:

- The Strategic plan addresses family, agency, and/or community.
- The plan assesses performance toward meeting goals.
- A structure and process is in place to analyze customer satisfaction and recommend changes to strategic plan goals, programs, and services based on results.
- Monitoring of progress on strategic plan goals through scorecards, evaluation committee, or mechanisms to help implementation.

Alignment of the Blue Water plan to each of these goals and standards can be confirmed through review of the strategy section of this plan.

#### ***Results Oriented Management and Accountability System (ROMA)***

Blue Water's 2022-2027 priorities, strategies, action plans and its increased focus on measurement through data based decision making complements the ROMA performance management model of assess, plan, implement, achieve results and evaluate via logic modeling utilized within the individual program delivery areas.

#### ***Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Standards Alignment***

In an effort to help the CSBG Network increase accountability and achieve results, OCS launched several initiatives in 2012. One focused on establishing organizational standards for eligible entities. Under this effort, CSBG Network leaders developed and recommended a set of organizational standards to strengthen the capacity of the more than 1,000 eligible entities providing services across the country.

A second performance management initiative focused on enhancing the CSBG Network's performance and outcomes measurement system for local eligible entities – identified in the CSBG Act as Results Oriented Management and Accountability System (ROMA- see above.) Finally, a third initiative focused on creating State

and Federal-level accountability measures to track and measure organizational performance by State CSBG Lead Agencies and OCS. The BWCA strategic plan achieves each of the following requirements as a recipient of CSBG funds. They adhere to and will continue to perform the following initiatives in support of requirements as set down by the organizational standards by the Centers of Excellence body. These standards include:

- Maximum Feasible Participation
  - Consumer Input and Involvement
  - Community Engagement
  - Community Assessment
- Vision and Direction
  - Organizational Leadership
  - Board Governance
  - Strategic Planning
- Operations and Accountability
  - Human Resource Management
  - Financial Operations and Oversight
  - Data and Analysis

## Section 17: Integrating Programmatic Services to the Agency Plan

The strategic plan will guide agency-wide planning. It is a living document integrated into routine operations and management as part of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework. Blue Water Community Action utilizes the ROMA framework starting with conducting the community needs assessment to determine the needs and service gaps in its service area. The three-year strategic plan adopted an adaptive strategies model to be relevant, flexible, and responsive to the changing needs of internal and external environments.

Annually, the Agency-wide integrated strategies will be reviewed to ensure relevancy and progress toward achieving the strategic result. Annual planning will be connected to the Community Action Plan (CAP), submitted annually to the State CSBG Lead Agency, detailing specific program activities and performance indicators. A new balance scorecard will be created to reflect new strategies, targets, and actions focusing on agency-wide strategies for organizational capacity, coordination of internal and external services and individual and family client success.

Staff and the Board of Directors will assure the plan is implemented using a monitoring and assessment process to achieve organizational and program goals. The ROMA cycle provides an understanding of how programs are producing results and strategic planning goals are being met. The ROMA Balance Scorecard for Agency-wide strategies will track performance a



Blue Water will communicate and cascade strategies, goals, targets, and actions. The implementation plan incorporates other actions such as coordinating partnerships, managing initiatives and identifying specific improvements to achieve the strategic result:” *A strong, stable, cohesive agency through service coordination, and the rebuilding of programs, organizational capacity and the contributions we provide in the communities we serve.*”

\Using the ROMA cycle for operational and program goals ensures structures and processes are in place to implement actions and evaluate performance.

#### Qualitative and Quantitative Data Assessment – Quarterly-Ongoing

- \* The 2022-2027 plan highlights the emphasis on gathering and assessing data to improve the client experience and increase proactiveness in determining clients and community need. The emphasis on furthering the use of technology, establishment of benchmarks through surveying, refining the Agency’s processes and structures will all result in greater access to data and enhanced decision making. As these “new foundations” are constructed and implemented within Blue Water client services will be more effectively delivered, increasing customer experience, speed of response and greater integration of services across the agency. Ultimately the initiatives of this plan will drive toward increased client wrap-around services and the client experience of a one-stop shop. internal data collection and sharing of information with departments for continuous improvement.
- \* Designated agency representatives will continuously collect and review community level and program/services data for awareness of changing needs and opportunities in the community. Results will be monitored to assess progress on meeting targets and where actions and targets may need to be adjusted.

#### Planning - Annually

- \* Each core service department develops National Performance Indicators (NPIs) and logic models for programs and services. They develop their individual programmatic plans while linking these plans to one or more specific agency-wide strategies to contribute to its’ achievement. Thus the agency and department plans become further integrated.
- \* Senior leadership and strategic planning staff representatives will review progress to-date and work with departments to develop annual goals, targets, and actions to link to achieve agencywide strategies.
- \* Each core department will track their performance in helping to achieve agency-wide strategies.

#### Implementation

- \* Committees and task-force teams consisting of a cross-section of the staff are created to implement actions and review progress.
- \* Trained process-mapping staff as well as certified trainers will be assisting with the implementation of the strategic plan.
- \* Staff will be engaged in diverse actions to achieve goals, increasing engagement and diversity of result.

#### Achievement of Results

- \* The Agency will typically share feedback on results with staff and the Board annually, at a minimum.
- \* Departments will track the status of their contribution to the agency-wide strategies.
- \* Internal and external communication (i.e., Newsletters, website, annual meeting) will be used to share the progress of the strategic plan.

#### Evaluation - Continuous

- \* Data will be captured, analyzed, and compared with benchmarks regularly for continuous improvement and responsiveness to gaps in meeting targets.
- \* Goals, targets, and actions may be updated to meet current needs of the internal and external environments.