



Agency Profile

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. (LCOI) is a Community Action Agency (CAA) established in 1965. CAAs are nonprofit private and public organizations established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. Today there are approximately 1,100 CAAs in the United States, covering 96% of the nation's counties. CAAs are a primary source of support for more than 38 million people who are living in poverty in the United States. CAAs provide a range of services to meet the unique needs of each community. CAAs have specially constituted tripartite Boards which include representation from elected public officials, low-income representatives, and private entities with compassionate interests within the community.

Operational success at LCOI is made possible through the cooperative interaction of our dedicated Board Members, employees, and volunteers. Our annual budget is approximately \$2.8 million; this is leveraged through Federal, State, and local funding sources. Our primary service area encompasses the entirety of Lewis County. LCOI also provides select housing programs within neighboring Jefferson County.

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

Strategic Methodology

Since 2016, LCOI's Community Action Advisory Group (CAAG) has served as the conduit in developing the agency's Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and Strategic Plan. The CAAG is reflective of the agency's workforce (Board Members, employees, and community volunteers), community partners, faith-based organizations, the educational sector, private sector, and low-income families. The most recent CNA was conducted in the January – April 2023 timeframe and included collecting US Census data, consumer surveys and consumer service data, survey data from workforce (Board members, employees, and community volunteers), and survey data from community partners. Surveys included both quantitative and qualitative data. The CAAG reviewed and analyzed the above data, identified key findings and related needs statements, and identified program priorities under each needs statement. A draft of the CNA was then presented to the agency's Board of Directors and was approved on May 22, 2023. The CAAG then embarked on the strategic planning process which included the review of the agency's mission and vision statements, SWOT analysis, and the development of outcomes and strategies into a draft Strategic Plan. Throughout the entire process, CAAG utilized consumer satisfaction surveys collected over the prior year, stakeholder survey collations from the CNA, insights provided by the Management Team, and peripheral data to identify social trends and establish needs of low-income families within our service area. The draft of the Strategic Plan was approved by the agency's Board of Directors on September 25, 2023.

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

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

Overview

The following pages identify the various goals of LCOI and provide a framework for continuous growth and improvement over the course of the next three years. These strategic outcomes are organized by CSBG Domains and contain strategies and/or services at the family, agency, and community levels; denoted as (F), (A), or (C) respectively. Specific, measurable objectives are then derived from these strategies/services and included in the subsequent Community Action Plan. Taken together, the Strategic Plan and Community Action Plan demonstrate the agency’s commitment to address reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.

CSBG Domain: Employment			
<u>Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):</u>			
<i>Low-income individuals lack transportation and other workforce development supports to obtain or maintain employment.</i>			
(F) = Family level services			
SP#	Goal/Outcome	Services/strategies	POC
EMP.1	Low-income families experience the removal of transportation barriers to obtain/maintain employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) As a workforce development support, transportation assistance is provided in the form of vehicle repairs, tires, registration, insurance assistance, gas cards, bus fare, and alternate forms of transportation. 	FS

CSBG Domain: Education/Cognitive Development			
<u>Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):</u>			
<i>Low-income families lack education about child passenger safety, as well as access to affordable car seats that meet current regulatory standards.</i>			
(F) = Family level services			
SP#	Goal/Outcome	Services/strategies	POC
EDU.1	Low-income families experience increased safety for their children while traveling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Standards-compliant car seats are provided to low-income families; (F) Education on how to properly install a car seat for their child is provided to low-income families. 	Program staff

CSBG Domain: Income, Infrastructure and Asset Management			
<u>Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):</u>			
<i>Low-income families lack education/skill development for basic management of their household budgets.</i>			
(F) = Family level services			
SP#	Goal/Outcome	Services/strategies	POC
INC.1	Individuals and/or families maintain finances and increase their financial literacy where applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Money Management for Representative Payee consumers (Social Security funds). 	FS

CSBG Domain: Housing			
<u>Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):</u>			
<i>Low-income families lack safe and affordable housing.</i>			
(F) = Family level services			
SP#	Goal/Outcome	Services /strategies	POC
HOUS.1	Low-income families obtain safe and affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Housing Choice Vouchers; > Family Self Sufficiency; > Homeownership (as applicable); > VASH (as applicable); (F) Home Modification program to promote aging in place; (F) Emergency Utility/Rent/Mortgage assistance; (F) NYS Rent Supplement program. 	HAP WAP FS HAP
HOUS.2	Low-income families realize a reduction in energy usage within their homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Weatherization/EmPower to promote energy efficiency and affordability; (F) Cooling Initiative to promote health and safety. 	WAP WAP

CSBG Domain: Health/Social Development

Needs Statement #1 (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):

Low-income families lack food security.

Needs Statement #2 (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment):

There is a need for a locally based victim services program in Lewis County to ensure families who have been victimized by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other crimes can access help to improve their safety.

(F) = Family level services

SP#	Goal/Outcome	Services/strategies	POC
HLTH.1	Low-income individuals obtain temporary food security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Emergency food assistance via food pantries, mobile food pantry, or food drives. 	FS
HLTH.2	Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes are empowered to regain control of their lives and ultimately move towards healing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Victim Services (Residential and Non-residential), including 24/7 Hotline, Safe Dwelling, Advocacy, Counseling, and Criminal/Family/Hospital Accompaniment for victims; age-appropriate Primary Prevention Education to students in area schools; community education and training. 	VS

CSBG Domain: Multiple Domains

Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):

Additional community resources are needed to address the daily living concerns of low-income residents.

(A) = Agency level strategy
(F) = Family level service
(C) = Community level strategy/resource

SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
MULT.1	Low-income families experience the removal of transportation barriers to maintain daily living needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Transportation assistance to address daily living needs such as vehicle repairs, tires, registration, insurance assistance, gas cards, bus fares, and alternate forms of transportation. 	FS
MULT.2	Low-income families maintain a basic quality of living by obtaining temporary, emergency supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Miscellaneous critical needs not falling under any other domain; (F) Vouchers to access needed items at the Thrift Store. 	All staff All staff
MULT.3	The digital divide is removed for low-income families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (F) Technology assistance and training supports to low-income families to access online school work, employment, or daily living needs. 	FS

CSBG Domain: Linkages

Needs Statement (deciphered from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):

The agency needs the support of community partners as well as active partnerships to effectively meet its mission.

(F) = Family level strategy
 (A) = Agency level strategy
 (C) = Community level strategy

SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
LINK.1	Linkages/partnerships necessary to meet the agency’s mission are identified within the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A) Identify public/private agencies mutually accessed by our consumers and prioritize those which need inter-agency development and/or strengthening. 	Mgt Team
LINK.2	Linkages/partnerships are maintained at the local, state, and Federal level to ensure advocacy efforts and/or effective strategies and meaningful outcomes related to poverty, victimization, youth, substance use disorders, addictions, and other patterned community needs at the Family/Individual, Agency, and/or Community levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (F)(A)(C) Active engagement in consortia/partnerships at the local, state, and/or Federal level to address barriers/issues experienced by low-income families identified with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mental/Behavioral Health; ○ Workforce development (job training) and other supports; ○ Local traffic safety/transportation; ○ Macro issues related to financial stability/well-being among low-income families, and how Getting Ahead/Bridges Out of Poverty could interplay with these issues; ○ Homelessness/Safe and affordable housing/Fair housing, Warming Center; ○ Energy efficiency (including audits); ○ Food security/technical oversight of applicable local food pantries; ○ Affordable health insurance; ○ Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; Primary Prevention Education; Community education/training; ○ Migrant rights; ○ Language interpretation services; ○ Racial justice; ○ Suicide prevention; ○ Early childhood intervention; ○ Leadership development (volunteers); ○ Youth development; ○ County-wide emergency response; ○ County-wide human services priorities; ○ Information and Technology. 	Mgt Team and front-line employees, as applicable
LINK.3	Consumers have access to additional support services within the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A) An effective referral process with community partners to ensure consumers have access to needed support services is in place. 	Mgt Team

CSBG Domain: Agency Capacity

Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):

Agency capacity-building is needed in order to address program priorities and implement effective strategies for successful program operation.

SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
AGY.1	The agency demonstrates effective Results Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) principles and strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2023 Community Needs Assessment is utilized in the development of the 2024-2027 Agency Strategic Plan; • Development, approval, and implementation of the 2024-2027 Agency Strategic Plan; • Revisit/expand a more integrated intake process to more holistically assess family needs where possible; • Continued development of the internal Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to promote a more all-inclusive service provision approach toward families; • Implementation of scales to trend the family's progress in moving from poverty across multiple domains (as appropriate); • As applicable, meetings to evaluate effectiveness of program strategies; • Annually, apprise Board of Directors and CAAG on Strategic Plan effectiveness (through existing reports); • Board of Directors review the CSBG work plan on an annual basis, with emphasis on over-performing and underperforming output/outcome indicators. • Development of the 2026 Community Needs Assessment. 	<p>CAAG</p> <p>CAAG, Board of Directors</p> <p>Mgt Team</p> <p>Direct service employees</p> <p>MDT + FS</p> <p>Mgt Team (as applicable); staff</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>Board of Directors</p> <p>CAAG</p>

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SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
AGY.2	The agency employs qualified employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit qualified employees; • Provide annual reports to board on employee turnover and workforce climate; • Maintain/further develop the agency training program for mission-critical topics (including new areas such as trauma-informed, ACES, technology skill sets, etc.) which reinforce consumer-centered service delivery throughout the agency; capitalize online training; • Document training attendance; • Provide annual refresher training and SHAP Talks (as applicable); • Provide ROMA training to appropriate staff; • Retain ROMA Implementer certification, and implement succession strategies as applicable; • Include shadowing in employee orientation and professional development; with opportunities for internal exploration to management level succession; • Monitor training investments with workforce and review/revise the agency Professional Development Plan as necessary; • Review/revise employee job descriptions as applicable; • Review/revise the Succession Plan as applicable. 	<p>CEO, HR</p> <p>HR Director</p> <p>Mgt Team</p> <p>Mgt Team</p> <p>CEO/HR/Mgt Team</p> <p>CEO/ROMA Implementers</p> <p>CEO/ROMA Implementers</p> <p>Mgt Team</p> <p>Mgt Team</p> <p>CEO/HR Director</p>
AGY.3	The agency maintains an effective volunteer function for coordinated initiatives benefiting low-income individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and implementation of volunteers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Board members; ○ Thrift Store operation; ○ Food pantry operations; ○ 24-hour crisis hotline operation; • Identify and provide/offer continuing Board development; • Maintain Board of Directors Reference Center as an information resource for Board members; • Ensure continuing volunteer development; • Increase/ensure effective communication to volunteers; • Conduct volunteer recognition; • Review/revise the volunteer recognition plan as necessary. 	<p>BOD</p> <p>FS</p> <p>FS</p> <p>VS</p> <p>CEO, HR Director</p> <p>IT Liaison, HR Director</p> <p>FS, VS</p> <p>FS, VS</p> <p>Mgt Team</p>

CSBG Domain: Agency Capacity

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SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
AGY.4	Training venues are provided for consumer and/or internship work skills development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued availability of the Thrift Store or agency programs as a venue for work skills development via Lewis County One Stop, BOCES (ACES), Pratt Northam Foundation internships, etc. 	Mgt Team
AGY.5	The agency maintains (or increases as applicable) its on-site availability within the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agency retains the capacity to provide mobile food pantries to low-income families in order to access emergency food without the need to travel; Maintain the Thrift Store to provide a community resource for acquiring affordable clothing and household items; Site space at the Lowville Library, and other public places when able, to meet with localized consumers unable to travel to LCOI offices for services; (C) Lease continuation with the New Bremen General Store to operate as a neighborhood resource for groceries. 	FS Mgt Team Mgt Team CEO
AGY.6	The IT function effectively meets the agency's data management and communications needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve infrastructure (hardware and software) to promote the efficiency in the management of consumer data and reporting systems, as well as the overall logistical operation of the agency; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency legacy databases; Agency Intranet; Agency next generation network; OppNet to SharePoint conversion to ensure an ongoing information resource for employees; Maintain and monitor wrap-a-round IT services through an external vendor; Ensure compliance with NYS SHIELD Act for businesses of 50 employees or fewer. 	CEO, IT Liaison
AGY.7	The safety and health needs of the agency's workforce and facilities are addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise the agency Safety and Health Accident Prevention (SHAP) plan annually; Maintain the internal Safety and Health committee with a purpose of identifying and correcting deficiencies; Continue to assess the current state of agency facilities; Review all accidents and identify root causes; Maintain an effective and independent Employee Assistance Program; 	S&H Committee CEO, HR S&H Committee, HR Director S&H Committee, HR Director CEO, HR Director

CSBG Domain: Agency Capacity

Needs Statement (from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment and Addendum):

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SP#	Goal/Outcome	Strategies	POC
AGY.8	The community is educated about the agency’s mission, services, impacts, and relevant community awareness issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review/revise the agency marketing plan to deliver a systematic and consistent dissemination of agency outreach materials and information; Utilize media (Facebook, Instagram, web site, local newspapers, radio, television, printed outreach materials, LC Public Transportation) in an effort to effectively communicate services and awareness issues; Maintain the agency website, ensuring a user-friendly interface with both computer and mobile devices; Conduct information booths within the community; Conduct trainings for community stakeholders. 	<p>Marketing Committee</p> <p>Programmatic staff</p> <p>Mgt Team with staff support</p> <p>Programmatic staff</p> <p>Programmatic staff</p>
AGY.9	The agency maintains fiscal competency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review/revise the Finance Policy Manual in accordance with uniform guidance as necessary; Develop/coordinate Audit Services RFP and selection process; participate in annual audits. 	<p>Finance Director, CEO,</p> <p>CEO, Finance Director</p>
AGY.10	The agency maintains competent agency governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the 2-year Risk assessment in 2024 and 2026; Legal counsel review of Board Bylaws in 2024; Legal counsel review of Personnel Policy Handbook in 2024; Annual ACROS and tri-annual STAR completion/competency. 	<p>CEO, Deputy Director, HR Director, Finance Director</p>
AGY.11	Low-income representation is maintained with formal community organizations, governments, boards or councils that provide input into topics supported by agency mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income individuals take active part as Target Sector representatives on the Board of Directors; Low-income individuals participate in the Community Action Advisory Group (CAAG). 	<p>Board of Directors</p> <p>CAAG</p>

Evaluation Process: The principle document in which to measure progress will be through the Community Action Plan which contains strategies, services, and measurable outcomes from the Strategic Plan. Progress toward meeting outcomes of the Strategic Plan will be evaluated on an on-going basis via bi-monthly updates by the Chief Executive Officer to the Board of Directors, and annually by the Chief Executive Officer or designee to the CAAG. Board of Directors and CAAG members will be encouraged to offer their input via questions, comments, and recommendations as applicable.

Recognition of Development: The agency acknowledges the input and active participation of the developers of the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

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