

Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley

Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017

PREAMBLE

The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) was created in 1965 to work with and for the low-income residents of the Lehigh Valley in order to overcome poverty. A national program, Community Action was designed to offer "maximum feasible participation" to all whose lives would be touched by its activities. CACLV's mission statement, adopted in June, 1993, and ratified in this document, reflects the understanding of the Board of Directors and the staff that CACLV will strive to include our constituents in full partnership with the agency, melding service provision, community education, advocacy and engagement. Despite our efforts and the efforts of others, poverty continues to increase.

CACLV recognizes that people in crisis cannot move toward a vision of individual achievement while their immediate needs - hunger, homelessness, or other dire predicament, remain unresolved. Foremost among our goals is to help individuals empower themselves and learn to use available resources to overcome current and future obstacles that stand in the way of their progress as an individual or a family. Thriving individuals and families are the foundation of thriving businesses and communities.

Programs that we typically refer to as "human services" are important, but no level of "human services" funding can solve problems such as the lack of jobs, lack of availability of decent, affordable housing in safe, functioning neighborhoods that are close to places of employment. CACLV will seek out the best tools to combat those problems.

Equally important, as an agency, we place a high priority on creating and maintaining strong communities across the Lehigh Valley. Our mission is not to help people escape impoverished neighborhoods, but to stand squarely on the side of uplifting neighborhoods so that "winners" want to stay, there are no "losers," and we do not leave entire neighborhoods impoverished.

Further, we believe that the divide between social classes in this country has become dangerously large, and should be addressed through changes in social policy. All people deserve decent, affordable housing a short distance from where they work, and access to high quality medical services and good public schools. Education forms the cornerstone of our communities, and all residents of the Lehigh Valley deserve the opportunity to receive a quality education where they live.

In this plan, we further stress our commitment to an anti-poverty agenda that emphasizes economic opportunity, encourages personal responsibility, builds assets, strengthens neighborhoods, grows the tax bases of our urbanized municipalities, encourages the accumulation of wealth, including ownership of homes and businesses, and creates positive role models. Perhaps most importantly, we stress civic participation as the highest form of self-sufficiency, with power – political power and self-determination – at the top of our own pyramid.

The agency's annual work plans will set measurable, results-oriented objectives so that CACLV will be able to demonstrate that people's lives and their neighborhoods have improved because of the agency's efforts. The plan that follows is built on a framework provided by the mission statement. Equally important to the mission statement is the set of values that the agency embraces. We believe that there can be too much complacency in the areas that we think are important. Our agency runs counter to that trend. Every dollar counts, and every minute counts to those who need our help. We will drive our agenda with urgency as we seek to push the Lehigh Valley in the direction of social and economic justice.

In the world that we hope to achieve, there would be no class struggle, no barriers to suitable employment and no one would be forced to choose between paying for food or medicine. No one would be forced to live in an unsafe neighborhood, no worker would be exploited and no community would be left behind. In the world that we envision, CACLV would not need to exist.

MISSION STATEMENT

CACLV will improve the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley by building a community in which all people have...

- access to economic opportunity,
- the ability to pursue that opportunity, and
- a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

VALUES STATEMENT

As an advocate, CACLV is the leading economic and social justice conscience of the Lehigh Valley.

- We are partners, coalition-builders and team players.
- We conduct professional research on poverty and its causes, understanding issues as the first step in the problem-solving process.
- We define the cutting edge in the problem-solving process.
- We speak out, challenging government, social and economic institutions to move towards social and economic justice, even at the expense of our own institutional preservation.
- We pursue justice.
- We believe charity is something a society must provide when there is no justice.

As a community and economic development organization, CACLV values neighborhoods that are economically self-sustainable.

- We encourage all people to participate in civic life because we believe that good citizenship is the highest form of self-sufficiency.
- We believe that it is far more threatening for society when poverty leads to apathy and dependence than when it leads to anger and activism.
- We want businesses to make a fair and honest profit in our neighborhoods.

- We want jobs that pay wages that enable workers to maintain safe, self-sufficient households that are within reasonable proximity to neighborhoods.
- We want institutions to be humane, respectful and responsive to human needs.
- We want neighborhoods to be culturally rich, fun and healthy.

As a human services agency, CACLV values people.

- We first seek to identify needs and to push the community to respond to the needs of its residents, rather than offering less critical services simply because resources for those services are easier to come by.
- We give people the tools to solve their own problems, rather than solve those problems for them. We treat people equally, with courtesy, compassion, respect, patience and dignity.
- We safeguard our clients' confidentiality.
- We believe that people deserve another chance but expect personal responsibility in taking advantage of that extra chance.

As a non-profit corporation, CACLV values responsible stewardship of the funds entrusted to us and the resources available to us.

- We want taxpayers and our donors to be certain that their funds are invested wisely.
- We will not waste resources, including natural ones.
- We expect our Board of Directors to maintain the highest ethical standards.
- We want our audits to be flawless.
- We strive to maintain a balanced budget.

As an employer, CACLV values our employees.

- We respect the needs of our employees and their families.
- We offer employment opportunities that are personally fulfilling.
- We strive to pay fair wages and offer good benefits.
- We strive to make our workplace safe.
- We value longevity, creativity, dedication, honesty and hard work.
- We are serious about equal opportunity and celebrate diversity.
- We have high standards of personal and professional conduct and ethics.
- We expect our employees to understand that they are role models.
- We respect our co-workers and treat them as we would want to be treated.
- We have fun.

STRATEGIC PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

- Governments at all levels are unlikely to invest the financial resources needed to aggressively confront the challenges we face. Further, philanthropic and institutional giving will also continue to become more difficult to come by as more and more need competes for fewer and fewer dollars. Consequently, community-based institutions will continue to weaken, and possibly even disappear.
- In difficult financial times, we must challenge ourselves to look increasingly toward creating self-sustaining programs that don't depend on outside funds as heavily as traditional programs.
- The middle class is shrinking at an alarming rate, adding substantially to the number of low-income individuals and families.
- Lehigh Valley communities will continue to face unprecedented challenges due to the failures of public policies.
- The purchasing power of wages will continue to decline due to the devaluation of labor and increased costs of goods and services.
- Government subsidies designed to offset increasing costs will continue to decline.
- The costs of commuting will present a continuing strain on household budgets.
- Real estate values will not recover fully within the timeframe of this strategic plan.
- The result of the loss of homeowner equity will continue to function as a drag on the economy.
- The future of health care is uncertain as the health care industry strives to cut costs, improve care, and prepare for changes tied to the federal health-care overhaul.
- Demand for mental health services is increasing, stemming partly from low-income and unemployed people's inability to cope with their financial distress.
- Problems created by many years of inadequacy in the behavioral health system are currently manifesting as greater challenges for our staff and community.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- We will be capacity-builders and rain-makers for the community.
- We will be advocates to promote solutions to the issues raised in this plan.
- We will work harder at community organizing so that the neighborhoods' collective voices are louder than ever.
- We will take a market-oriented approach, but we will insist on and fight for a level playing field.
- We are committed to stewardship, while maintaining a healthy balance between program delivery and administration.
- We will shift our portfolio from programs with high reliance on government subsidies to a model that includes more sustainable programs that pay for themselves.
- We will explore and pursue neighborhood-based opportunities to develop real estate where for-profit developers fail to see opportunity, hoping that others will follow suit.
- We will seek creative approaches to stemming the tide of foreclosures and reversing recent losses in home ownership.
- We will seek strategic alliances and opportunities to merge with like-minded

organizations with which we share values, strategy and agendas and where we can show net value-added.

- We will be stronger, have more net assets, and offer more consequential programming.
- We will develop the organization consistent with achieving the agency goals, including developing a plan for the succession of the future leadership of the organization.
- We are committed to continuous improvement in everything that we do.
- We will seek out and support creative programs to help accomplish our goals.

5 Year Strategy for Mission Implementation

CACLV will work to ensure that all people of the Lehigh Valley have access to economic opportunity.

- The Lehigh Valley's neighborhoods should be productive places in which to live and work.
 1. CACLV will assess local needs through regular, ongoing, and systematic contacts with residents, businesses, and government.
 2. CACLV will explore and facilitate innovative approaches to improve local economic conditions that sustain and/or improve the quality of life, lead to full employment, encourage local ownership of businesses, provide safe, affordable residential options, remove blight, and make the Lehigh Valley a prosperous, commercially viable place to live and work.
 3. CACLV will advocate for innovative public and private programs to enhance local economic conditions.
 4. CACLV will advocate for patterns of regional economic growth that facilitate equity in the efficiency and cost of services among municipalities and educational opportunity among school districts, minimize suburban sprawl, preserve the environment and foster the revitalization of older, urbanized municipalities.
- All residents of the Lehigh Valley should have the opportunity to have access to capital, to find job satisfaction, and to be fully employed at work that provides a living wage.
 1. CACLV will assist entrepreneurs in the establishment of businesses within lower-income neighborhoods, provide technical assistance to establish and expand neighborhood-owned businesses, and encourage the employment of neighborhood residents. (CADCA, CADCB, RTCLF, WWNP)
 2. CACLV will ensure that competitively-priced capital is available to lower-income people and their neighborhoods, either by providing it directly or by insisting conventional lenders and investors utilize appropriate underwriting policies and practices. (CP&A, RTCLF)
 3. CACLV will assess the skills and interests of people living in low-income

neighborhoods and provide and/or advocate for services including vocational goal-setting, training, and assistance in finding employment. (CADCA, CADCB, SSS, WR, WWNP)

4. CACLV will advocate for improvements within the existing job market so that people who are fully employed will earn livable wages and fair benefits (including health care) and have access to affordable, quality child care. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, SSS, WR, WWNP)
5. CACLV will advocate for economic development strategies that reduce cost and the time involved in commuting to and from work. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, SSS, WR, WWNP)

CACLV will work to ensure that all people of the Lehigh Valley have the ability to pursue that economic opportunity.

- All residents of the Lehigh Valley should be able to identify personal goals and implement strategies to achieve those goals.
 1. CACLV will assist with goal-setting and help participants to establish a plan to achieve these goals. (CADCA, CADCB, CAFS, RTCLF, SSS, WR, WWNP)
 2. CACLV will promote fair and adequate funding and public policies to ensure all people have access to quality public education. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, SSS, WR, WWNP)
 3. CACLV will provide opportunities for training in skills for living and working, including opportunities for children and youth. (CADCA, CADCB, SSS, WR, WWNP)
 4. CACLV will educate consumers about finances and credit, major purchases, shopping for food and clothing, nutrition, housing, energy, and other consumer choices and will intervene or advocate on their behalf as needed. (CADCA, CADCB, CAFS, EP, LVCLT, SHFB, SSS, WR, WWNP)
 5. CACLV will advocate for a service delivery system that is humane, ethical, professional and responsive to human needs, conduct frequent assessments of the needs of individuals and families and assist individuals and families to access community services. (CP&A)
 6. CACLV will advocate for health care that is available to everyone regardless of ability to pay for it, offers the same quality of care to everyone, and focuses on prevention. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, SSS, WR, WWNP)
- All residents of the Lehigh Valley should have access to affordable, safe, sanitary, energy efficient and appropriate housing.
 1. CACLV will continue to improve the Lehigh Valley housing stock's affordability,

livability and energy efficiency. (CADCA, CADCB, CAFS, CP&A, EP, LVCLT, SSS, WWNP)

2. CACLV will advocate for the development and retention of affordable housing, both rental and owner-occupied. (CADCA, CADCB, CAFS, CP&A, EP, LVCLT, SSS, WWNP)

CACLV will work to ensure that all people have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

- All of the Lehigh Valley's neighborhoods should be viable places in which to live and work.
 1. CACLV will encourage and support residents in participating in the civic life of their neighborhoods. We will help organize residents to act together to solve problems that stifle investment and diminish quality of life in their neighborhoods. (CADCA, CADCB, WWNP)
 2. CACLV will help identify, train and support neighborhood leaders who have the ability to create and sustain neighborhood groups. (CADCA, CADCB, WWNP)
 3. CACLV will encourage residents to celebrate diversity and strive to eliminate barriers of hatred and suspicion. (CADCA, CADCB, WWNP)
 4. CACLV will advocate for public and private strategies which make urban neighborhoods the centers of social, cultural, artistic, recreational and educational activities. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, WWNP)

CACLV will ensure that those whose personal limitations prevent them from being fully employed or self-sufficient will not be hungry, homeless, or forgotten.

- All residents of the Lehigh Valley should have access to emergency housing and heating assistance.
 1. CACLV will advocate and provide for individuals and families in crisis through heating assistance, shelter and/or transitional housing, case management services, and assistance in the search for permanent housing. (EP, SSS, WR)
- All residents of the Lehigh Valley should be adequately nourished.
 1. CACLV will advocate for innovative solutions and community problem-solving that contribute to food security. (CP&A, SHFB)
 2. CACLV will continue to be the cornerstone of the emergency food distribution network in the Lehigh Valley. (SHFB)
 3. CACLV will strengthen services throughout the region by enabling service providers to

redirect savings on food costs. (SHFB)

- All residents of the Lehigh Valley will have access to quality mental health services regardless of their ability to pay.
 1. CACLV will advocate for available, accessible, and affordable mental health services. (CADCA, CADCB, CP&A, SSS, WR, WWNP)

CACLV will be operated for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

- All staff members will have access to training, professional development, and a voice in agency decision-making. (Admin/Fiscal)
- Fiscal policies and procedures will be sound and prudent. (Admin/Fiscal)
- An active, informed Board of Directors will have the fiduciary responsibility to oversee the management of the agency. (Admin/Fiscal)
- We encourage spirited dialogue, respect differences of opinion and seek consensus among board members. (Admin/Fiscal)
- Fiscal stability will be maintained through consistent annual fundraising and grant writing; the agency will explore the establishment of social enterprises that generate profits as well as a long-term, planned giving program. (Admin/Fiscal)
- Personnel policies will be progressive and uniformly administered; salaries, wages, and benefits will be competitive with market rates. (Admin/Fiscal)
- A strong system of data collection and dissemination will be maintained; we will control technology; it will not control us. (Admin/Fiscal)
- CACLV will provide a welcoming atmosphere, training, and appreciation for volunteers at all sites. (Admin/Fiscal)
- Program decisions and agency policies will be strengthened by rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluation. (Admin/Fiscal)
- We will strive to hold an operating reserve that would ensure we can sustain the agency for three months under an emergency spending plan. (Admin/Fiscal)
- We will strive to hold capital reserves that are appropriate for the value of our real estate holdings. (Admin/Fiscal)
- We will continue to maintain a high profile and will work to use all available media outlets in our public relations efforts. (Admin/Fiscal)

CACLV PROGRAMS

Admin/Fiscal: Administration and Fiscal
CADCA: Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown
CADCB: Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem
CP&A: Community Planning and Advocacy
CAFS: Community Action Financial Services
EP: Energy Partnership
LVCLT: Lehigh Valley Community Land Trust
RTCLF: Rising Tide Community Loan Fund
SHFB: Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley & Northeast Pennsylvania
SSS: Sixth Street Shelter/Turner Street Apartments/Ferry Street Apartments
WWNP: West Ward Neighborhood Partnership
WR: Work Ready

Notes

¹ **The respective program(s) responsible for the listed actions are in parentheses.
When there is no program listed, the agency as a whole is responsible.**