

**Strategic Plan**  
**Division of Community Action Agencies**  
**Iowa Department of Human Rights**  
**7/1/03**

**I. VISION STATEMENT:**

DCAA will be a recognized leader on issues affecting low-income Iowans. We will support and create partnerships with strong, accountable community action agencies and other community based organizations that provide superior services resulting in an improved quality of life for Iowa's low-income families.

**II. MISSION STATEMENT:**

To support community action agencies and other community based organizations efforts to assist low-income families with basic energy, food, and shelter needs and in working towards achieving self-sufficiency.

**III. CORE FUNCTIONS**

Core functions for the Division include advocacy, community coordination, and economic support.

**IV. GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**GOAL #1:**

*Communities and community-based organizations will be strengthened in their efforts to alleviate the effects of poverty.*

**Strategies:**

1. We will conduct assessment of training needs for community action agencies and community-based organizations served by the Division.
2. We will develop and provide training and support to facilitate the learning and program improvement for local agencies.
3. Local agencies will adopt results-based management and accountability tools and measures.

**Performance Measures:**

1. Assessment of training needs of local agencies will be conducted annually.
2. DCAA will co-sponsor three training and/or technical assistance opportunities annually addressing local agency training needs.
3. DCAA will develop in cooperation with local agencies a results-oriented management tool for local agencies and provide necessary training.

**GOAL #2:**

*We will a recognized leader on issues affecting low-income Iowans.*

**Strategies:**

1. We will develop partnerships with other state and community organizations to educate and advocate for the interests of low-income Iowans.
2. Utilize the opportunities available (i.e. utility restructuring, welfare reform, Empowerment) to assure that low-income interests are represented.
3. Increase visibility in state government and throughout the state.

**Performance Measures:**

1. A minimum of three communication/education strategies will be initiated re: the needs of low-income Iowans to decision-makers.
2. A minimum of four new partnerships will be developed between DCAA and other agencies/organizations to strengthen services to low-income Iowans.

**GOAL #3:**

Low-income Iowa households will become more energy self-sufficient.

**Strategies:**

1. DCAA will increase funds available for energy assistance to low-income families.
2. DCAA will increase training and technical assistance opportunities for local agencies and low-income families to improve energy efficiency efforts.

**Performance Measures:**

1. Energy assistance funds leveraged beyond the federal grant will increase by minimum of \$300,000.
2. Energy savings per home weatherized will be \$350 annually.

## **V. Who are our Customers?**

Our customers include low-income citizens, community action agencies, other community-based organizations, utility providers, vendors, the Department of Human Rights Director, U.S. Dept. of Energy, U. S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, the Governor, Legislature, Department of Management, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Human Services, the Family Development Self- Sufficiency Program (FaDSS) Council and the Community Action Agency Commission.

## **VI. Guiding Principles**

### *Customer Focus*

Customer focus means engaging our customers in:  
the identification of agreed upon individualized results  
the planning, design, and delivery of the processes, supports, services and products to achieve results  
the allocation of resources in a cost effective manner  
the evaluation of our services, supports and results

### *Results/Outcomes Orientation*

Results/Outcomes based decisions are based on the end results or impact that the activities, programs, and services are making on the families, communities, and agencies that we serve.

### *Empowerment*

Empowerment is information, training, resources and the authority that enables us and our customers to innovate, make decisions and act responsibly to achieve results

### *Collaboration*

Collaboration means sharing expertise and resources in reaching mutual goals.

### *Process Improvement*

Process Improvement is outstanding performance achieved through the application of quality principles in all our processes as we respond to our customers

### *Long-term thinking*

Long-term thinking means concentrating our efforts to the future regarding trends in policy and our "environment"

### *Data Based Decisions*

Data Based Decisions are decisions made based on information received from internal or external sources

### *Strength Focus*

Interactions with customers will focus and build on strengths.

## **VII. SWOT ANALYSIS**

### **A. Internal analysis**

#### ***Strengths***

- flexibility of management and block grants, collaborative partnerships, desire to serve the poor, staff expertise, low administrative costs, high customer satisfaction

#### ***Opportunities***

- current and potential partnerships, movement to results oriented management, grass roots advocacy, welfare reform, improved technology, block grants

#### ***Threats***

- Budget cuts, political climate, aging population (changing demographics), nature and causes of poverty (low wage jobs, low job skills, lack of affordable and available child care, high cost of health care and insurance, unaffordable energy, family instability, poor transportation, etc.)

### **B. External analysis**

#### ***Statewide Needs Assessment***

Health care, employment, housing, and transportation are the top four areas of need identified in a 1996 study, updated in 2000, of low income Iowans. Among health care issues, affordable health care was of greatest concern. Three of every five respondents in the study said affordable health care was a "very important" need. The 1996 study included 2,108 respondents. All are participants in programs available through Iowa's 19 Community Action Agencies. The purpose of the study was to gather information for program planning, and was a collaborative effort between the 19 Community Action Agencies, the Iowa Department of Human Rights, and Iowa State University Extension to Communities.

In addition to the top four concerns, issues about child care, parenting, legal/financial advice, education, food/nutrition and personal and household concern were also identified. One-fourth of the respondents indicated they experienced an emergency in at least one of the need categories during the past year. A food emergency was the specific need most often cited.

Regarding employment, the primary concern is not simply "getting a job", but rather finding a full-time job that pays an adequate salary to support a household.

Dependable transportation to and from work was the most important transportation need identified.

#### ***Dialogue on Poverty***

Over 3,000 Iowa citizens from all walks of life participated in conversations about poverty problems and solutions sponsored by the Iowa Association of Community Action Agencies. The meetings, held during the summer of 2000, were part of the "National Dialogue on Poverty" sponsored by the National Association of Community Action Agencies.

When asked what were top priorities, two issues clearly ranked above others according to the Iowa participants. The first was increasing the number of full time jobs with wages adequate to support the individual that offer health insurance and other benefits. The second was increasing the percentage of citizens who have their basic need met (adequate food, clothing, and shelter).

