

Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley

Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

MISSION

The mission of CACLV is to 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.

PREFACE ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

CACLV has an impressive history of working for fairness for all in our communities. Where there is injustice, where there is despair, where there is alienation and where there is lack of opportunity, CACLV will stand up, grab the hands of those who have been relegated to their knees and raise our voice in harmony with those too many would leave behind. We will do it well, we will do it efficiently and we will do it without apology to those who stood in the way.

We will never have every voice singing from the same song sheet but we can drown out the voices of those who somehow cannot understand that we are all in this together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CACLV would like to thank the following individuals who contributed to the development of our strategic plan.

Our Board of Directors

Stakeholder Focus Group Participants

Don Bernhard, Downtown Allentown Community Development Initiative

Christopher Borick, Muhlenberg College

Bonnie Coyle, St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network

Tim Fallon, PBS39

Tim Herrlinger, Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development

Charles Marcon, Duggan & Marcon, Inc.

Fred McGrail, Lehigh University

Lori Molloy, North Penn Legal Services, Inc.

Robert Motley, Lehigh Valley Health Network

Tim Mulligan, Communities in Schools

Olga Negron, Haggerty, Goldberg, Schleifer & Kupersmith, P.C.

Jeffrey Parks, ArtsQuest Foundation

Marci Ronald, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Robin Zmoda, Borough of Pen Argyl

Stakeholder Focus Groups' Facilitator

David Rabaut, retired United Way allocations guru

Employee Focus Groups' Facilitator

Michele Moser Deegan, *Professor of Political Science, Muhlenberg College*

Board Retreat Facilitator

Christopher Borick, *Professor of Political Science and Director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, Muhlenberg College*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 1965 by the Lehigh Valley Community Council with the support of county commissioners in both Lehigh and Northampton counties, the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley is a mature but brash, stable and restless, robust but vulnerable change agent that is constantly challenged to back off of its aggressive community problem-solving agenda. With a \$25 million annual budget when combining the agency with its four subsidiaries, a solid balance sheet with \$8 million in real estate, 100 committed employees, powerful allies throughout the community, statewide, and even national reach.

Yet, we are never satisfied.

The five years ahead of us that are covered in this latest strategic plan bring plenty of reason for anxiety over divided partisan government, confused markets, and technology that is on the verge of making many of our skills and abilities obsolete.

CACLV has chosen to continue its focus on the following issues:

Food Insecurity

The agency will work to reduce the occurrence of food insecurity.

Housing

The agency will reduce the demand for emergency housing assistance, promote the availability of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing and develop, if necessary, even finance, affordable homes for owner-occupancy.

Community and Economic Development

CACLV stands taller than ever with the capacity, know-how and will to intervene in the marketplace to attract investment back into our urbanized municipalities.

Community Engagement

Many low-income people have been so disconnected from mainstream communities that they lack a real sense of belonging. CACLV will seek and incorporate as many ways as possible to open doors to this population. We will also expect them to boldly step up to participate and to lead.

Community Problem Solving

CACLV is the premier change agent in the Lehigh Valley and that will, without equivocation, not change. CACLV will keep a close watch on emerging problems and consider its role on a problem-by-problem basis.

To be sure, this agency is never stagnant, but is always determined to challenge this community to do better. There is nothing in this plan that should be interpreted as surrender, turning back, or even pausing.

Many key people – from smart academics to CEO’s from all kinds of companies, from neighborhood residents to those who represent them in the legislatures – are solid allies. The need obligates us to cooperate fully.

The plan presents a series of prognostics that frame the challenges facing us now as well as over the next five years. Time will judge us as brilliant or foolish, prescient or way off the mark.

The responses to these forecasts include a series of goals the board and staff have set for the agency. Among them:

- Seek sources of earned revenue to further diversify funding;
- Significantly expand housing rehabilitation efforts;
- Develop housing for impact (not small, scattered site projects but larger projects, even whole subdivisions);
- Seek opportunities to acquire, rescue, or merge with like-minded groups that will improve our collective services’ efficiency going forward;
- Recommit the agency to the original War on Poverty’s concept of “maximum feasible participation,” fully engaging those we serve to take ownership of the problem-solving process;
- In anticipation of the departure of our long-serving executive director, ensure a seamless transition to a new generation of leadership.

Hundreds of people contributed to the development of this plan.

For a complete 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, visit CACLV’s website at www.caclv.org

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 lead the way by employing new and sometimes untested strategies, in the problem-solving process.
- We use data in the problem-solving process relating to poverty and its causes.
- We speak out, challenging government, social and economic institutions, and ourselves to move towards social and economic justice, even when it is at the expense of our own institutional preservation.
- We pursue justice.
- We believe charity is something a society provides in the absence of 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 engagement 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 safe, stable, culturally rich, fun, and healthy.
- We believe self-reliant communities must include housing and amenities that can support a mixture of income levels.

As a human services agency, CACLV values people.

- We believe that knowledge and education are essential tools that empower people to access opportunities and begin to solve their own problems.
- We first seek to identify needs and inspire the community to respond to the needs of its residents.
- We teach people strategies 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 program participants' confidentiality.
- We believe people deserve another chance, but expect personal responsibility for all actions.

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 their funds are invested wisely.
- We do not waste resources, including natural ones.
- We strive to maintain the highest ethical standards.
- We want our audits to be flawless.
- We strive to maintain a balanced budget.
- We set our priorities based on the needs of the communities rather than the availability of funding.
- We have an entrepreneurial approach to problem-solving.

As an employer, CACLV values our employees.

- We value our employees and their families.
- We strive to offer employment opportunities that are personally fulfilling.
- We strive to pay fair wages, and offer good benefits and reasonable job security.
- We strive to make our workplace safe.
- We value creativity, dedication, honesty and hard work.
- We value equal opportunity and diversity.
- We value high standards of personal and professional conduct and ethics.
- We respect our co-workers and treat them as we want to be treated.
- We value fun!

TRENDS

Strategic planning, by its nature, casts the thoughts of those involved into the future. Therefore, it is critical that the organization have a sober view of the direction society is leading in the absence of any effort by the organization to redirect, intercept or accelerate that direction. These are the assumptions that inform our proposed strategies over the next five years:

Political Trends

Ordinarily, we wouldn't start with politics. However, in light of how different the political process is from the past administrations, it is exceedingly difficult to plan for outcomes. Nevertheless, we think that the following assumptions are fairly safe:

The schism of our divided society will widen, even if weary voters move to the middle. Our role is to find common ground between all the sides.

Our society is divided, in part, because various demographic groups with legitimate claims to right historic wrongs are seen as getting something from their society that they have been denied in the past. Others who have historically been the beneficiary of that injustice are now feeling the economy is leaving them behind, too. They may all be correct, but some are clearly more left

behind than others and the data reflects that. This agency is on the side of those left behind, whether they be white, black or brown, male or female, young or old. This country has a race problem and there is at least tacit if not blatant approval coming from the highest places in American politics; CACLV has a role to play.

Macro- and Micro-Economic Trends

“Full employment” will accelerate the development of automation in order to keep productivity high without putting pressure on wages.

Climate change will force changes in the market. Property and casualty insurance will drag all insurance costs higher. A warming and unstable climate will drive the emergence, resurgence, and redistribution of infectious diseases. Job opportunities will shift as geographic areas are affected and costs of living will increase more in some places than others.

Food pantries will continue to be regular sources of on-going household subsidy rather than rare sources of assistance in crisis.

“Educational apartheid” will continue to widen disparities between lower-income youth and their suburban counterparts.

The market value of skills will continue to be erratic, placing some in very advantageous positions but most at a disadvantage. That means poor people will get poorer.

The continued diminution of the middle class will reduce the broad tax base, placing the burden of funding government on fewer people; this may well result in additional pressure to cut public funding.

Millennials will alter broad swaths of the landscape. While not necessarily demanding more funding (they won't want to pay more in taxes than any other generation). The following are some best guesses of how their role will manifest itself:

- Their student loans will diminish their ability to afford big-ticket purchases like homes, expensive cars, or vacations;
- They will continue to drive the redevelopment of some cities;
- Their lower birth rate will affect employment and, possibly, wages;
- While not necessarily impacting wages, their perspective on a healthier work/play balance will affect the workplace;
- Watch, though, whether their decisions on having children and getting their children educated in the suburbs will cause a plunge in demand for the apartments being built at a break-neck pace;
- If they do not depart, their presence in the urban environment is likely to result in an array of improved quality of life, including quality child care and early childhood education, bike- and pedestrian-friendly streets and sidewalks, pocket parks and other places to allow their dogs to co-exist.

The impact of e-commerce on the retail sector is likely to strengthen urban commerce as the only safe environment for local, unique products; it is also likely to be devastating to suburban shopping centers.

Urban revitalization could finally increase property values and, with it, the assets of property owners, reducing wealth disparity.

The Lehigh Valley's quality of life is going to decline due to the proliferation of massive "logistics" businesses, diminished air quality, longer commuting times, and the loss of open space, to name a few. These companies are also unlikely to offset any of these trends with charitable contributions because their headquarters are not located here.

Social Trends

Alienated teens and adults will find self-destructive alternatives in order to self-medicate; if economic vitality is not restored in high-poverty neighborhoods, anti-social behavior could counter the revitalization of urban communities.

Due to unaddressed behavioral health problems, often the result of limited availability of services, "incidents" are more likely to occur.

Violence, which should be seen as aberrant behavior, is becoming an increasingly common form of self-promotion for those who are alienated from civil society.

Millennials' tolerance of those who are "different" from themselves should reduce the symptoms of racism.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley's vast and diverse array of activities fit into the following broad categories:

- Food insecurity
- Housing
- Community and economic development
- Community engagement ("a voice in the decisions that affect their lives")
- Community problem-solving
- Organizational sustainability

Over the next five years, the agency will focus its work on these issues. In the process, our intent is to encourage or motivate lower-income people to overcome the obstacles to financial self-sufficiency, support their efforts to earn a livable wage and gain assets that can become equity or wealth, strengthen neighborhoods and, perhaps most importantly, have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

Food Insecurity

The agency will work to reduce the occurrence of food insecurity with the following actions:

- Ensure there is enough food in the food assistance network so not one person will get turned away due to the lack of food available;
- Support the availability of as much nutritionally meaningful product as possible;
- Train our constituents in cooking tasteful, nutritionally meaningful product;
- Reduce the demand for emergency assistance through job creation, increases in wages and the availability of publicly-sponsored assistance like WIC, SNAP and school nutrition programs;
- Meet the expectations dictated by Feeding America;
- Implement the Second Harvest Food Bank strategic plan (see Appendix);
- Promote public policies that reduce or even eliminate the need for the Second Harvest Food Bank;
- Promote progressive, sustainable food systems that offer affordable, locally-grown, nutritious food.

Housing

The agency will reduce the demand for emergency housing assistance, promote the availability of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing and develop and, if necessary, even finance, affordable homes for owner-occupancy.

- The agency will operate short- and long-term transitional housing programs for homeless families designed to change the behavior and circumstances that led to their crises;
- CACLV will advocate for accessible, quality affordable rental housing but not develop or manage it ourselves;
- While we will look for ways to advance fair housing, we will also insist that tenants behave responsibly;
- The agency will work with one or more public housing authorities to develop an “Opportunity Campus” that offers subsidized housing as a tool to move toward financial self-sufficiency;
- The agency will develop for impact, focusing on homeownership, neighborhood quality-of-life and volume of units added to the market.
- CACLV will pursue with vigor any opportunity to rehabilitate substandard housing in our urbanized communities, including our third class cities as well as our boroughs; if/when the opportunity to strengthen our position by taking over municipal housing rehab programs comes, pursue those opportunities.

Community and Economic Development

The late Hubert H. Humphrey noted that the best anti-poverty program is a job. We might say that the best anti-poverty program is a profit because, if people could make money solving problems, there would be no problems.

CACLV stands taller than ever with the capacity, know-how and will to intervene in the marketplace to attract investment back into our urbanized municipalities. Our strategic direction in community and economic development includes the following elements:

- Ensure the flow of capital into neighborhoods and central business districts by promoting adherence by banks to the Community Reinvestment Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and other statutes and regulations designed to enhance economic opportunities;
- Challenge financial services companies such as credit unions to serve the community with a commitment to the spirit of those laws and regulations;
- Focus our many tools on those neighborhoods where owner-occupied housing has fallen below half;
- Develop sources of capital to offer products and services where unmet credit needs stifle viable markets;
- Create or find opportunities to increase access to markets for women- and, especially, minority-owned businesses. For example, develop a model of a supportive purchasing policy and promote its adoption in the region;
- Promote or facilitate access to technology for all, regardless of their income or location;
- Promote a built environment that enhances quality of life, including parks, playgrounds and other open spaces;
- Promote a “home-grown economy” that recirculates money for the benefit of locally-owned businesses and their communities.

Community Engagement

CACLV is committed to the old War on Poverty concept of “maximum feasible participation.” Many low-income people have been so disconnected from mainstream communities that they lack a real sense of belonging. They also have a very limited concept of what is possible. Indeed, we can only help people who are willing to help themselves.

CACLV will look for as many ways as possible to open doors to this population. We will also expect them to boldly step up to participate and to lead.

We will make a special effort to engage young people to take the steps that will advance their chances of success rather than self-destructing.

Community Problem Solving

CACLV is the premier change agent in the Lehigh Valley. Without equivocation, that will not change! It is impossible to predict the many opportunities CACLV will pursue, including those that present themselves and those CACLV will generate. Surely, issues that fall into the realm presented in this plan are all in play, as is behavioral health. But others will certainly develop. CACLV will keep a close watch on emerging problems and consider its role on a problem-by-problem basis.

Organizational Sustainability

Public funding is inadequate to meet the needs of all Americans whose gifts fall short of those needed to fully participate in our economy. That may never change. These strategic moves are necessary over the five years covered by this plan.

- Add a senior-level director of development and a senior-level communications professional who specializes in digital marketing;
- Identify new sources of private revenue and pursue them;
- Identify ways to earn income (for example, training other nonprofits' direct service staff, managers and resource development staff or, through real estate development, generate developers' fees);
- Implement plan to have a seamless succession for a new executive director by 2021;
- Seek opportunities to save, improve and/or expand programs and services through mergers with nonprofits with complementary agendas;
- Develop a much stronger and more ubiquitous digital presence;
- Ensure broad input in decision-making, especially on new issues and on program development.
- Cross-train more staff for better flexibility and agility;
- Given the unprecedented size of the millennial generation and the impact it will have on all aspects of our economy and culture, make a deliberate effort to strengthen the role of millennial employees by focusing attention and resources on their presence working with lower-income people;
- Create a "pipeline" of well-developed ideas for new initiatives to take advantage of offers of major gifts.

APPENDICES

Agency Services

Strategic Plan Survey Results

Strategic Plan Survey Instrument

Stakeholder Focus Group Results

Employee Focus Group Results

Board SWOT Analysis

Board Core Priorities

Secondary Data Summary

Secondary Data

Program- and Subsidiary-Specific Strategic Plans

Community Revitalization Plans