

Schuylkill Community Action

Strategic Plan July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2025



Introduction: Purpose and Process

Schuylkill Community Action (SCA) has developed this 5-year strategic plan to provide core guidance for the organization, as it fulfills its primary mission. That mission being:

"Our mission is to focus all available resources on low-income Schuylkill County residents empowering them to achieve self-sufficiency."

The strategic plan was developed through a multi-step process, which included the collection of available poverty, housing, and other relevant data for our service area. The plan has incorporated information from our comprehensive 2018 Community Needs Assessment, as well as, the subsequent April 2020 update that was developed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Community Needs Assessment obtained input from three populations: low-income clients of Schuylkill Community Action, social service and other community organizations, and community stakeholders and businesses. This input, along with the data collected, was utilized to develop the needs assessment, which provided framework throughout the strategic plan process.

In addition to the Community Needs Assessment, the Board of Directors and entire SCA staff completed an assessment of agency strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The information collected was reviewed and evaluated by the Board's Planning and Evaluation Committee and staff Strategic Plan Workgroup which developed a priority list for each area. The Planning and Evaluation Committee and Strategic Plan workgroup were also responsible for reviewing the mission statement and developing a list of core agency values.

The intention is to utilize this plan as a primary guide for the future direction of the agency. Progress will be reported and assessed annually to ensure the agency stays on mission and fulfills the vision as outlined in this plan.

Mandates

As a Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funded entity, SCA is mandated to have an organizational mission aimed at reducing poverty, revitalizing low-income communities, and empowering low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient. Additional mandates, require the agency to meet the CSBG organizational standards. In regards to Strategic Planning, SCA is required to develop a Strategic Plan that meets the following requirements established by the Organizational Standards:

Standard Summary of Strategic Planning requirements

- 4.3 To develop a Community Action Plan and Strategic Plan document using the full ROMA cycle and the services of a ROMA-certified trainer to assist in implementation.
- To have an agency-wide Strategic Plan in place, approved by the governing board, within the past 5 years.
- To develop a Strategic Plan that addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low-incomes to become more self-sufficient.
- 6.3 To have a Strategic P-lan that contains family, agency, and/or community goals.
- To include customer satisfaction data and customer input collected through the Community Needs Assessment in the strategic planning process.
- To have the governing board advisory body receive an update(s) on meeting the goals of the strategic planning document within the past 12 months.

Mission and Values

As part of the 2020 Strategic Planning process, the Planning and Evaluation Committee and SCA Staff Work Group reviewed the agency's Mission to evaluate whether or not the agency's current mission statement remained relevant. SCA's Mission Statement stated "The primary purpose of SCA shall be to coordinate and focus all available resources upon the needs of low -income Schuylkill County residents enabling them to obtain adequate, affordable housing and secure the opportunities necessary to achieve self-sufficiency." Upon review of the Mission Statement, each group determined the mission statement needed to be refocused to provide more buy-in from agency staff, Board of Directors, stakeholders, and the customers we serve.

The groups were able to collectively provide input on a revised Mission Statement that was recommended for board approval by the Planning and Evaluation Committee and formally adopted by the Board of Directors at the April 2020 board meeting. SCA's newly adopted Mission Statement reads, "Our mission is to focus all available resources on low-income Schuylkill County residents empowering them to achieve self-sufficiency." Although revised, the Mission Statement encompasses agency programs, services, and outcomes we continue to strive for.

Along with the review of the agency Mission, the SCA staff work group aimed to develop a list of core agency values. The core values will be utilized in our approach to serving our customers and local communities. SCA's core agency values include:

- We will treat our customers with respect, dignity, and with empathy for their situation.
- ❖ We will treat our employees professionally and be transparent as we work together as an agency.
- We will be knowledgeable and efficient as we serve our customers, partners, and communities.
- We will take pride in being a part of Schuylkill Community Action and the positive changes we can make in our communities.

Having a dedicated list of core values will serve as a consistent reminder of who we want to be as an agency and what we want to accomplish.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges

Information was collected from the Board of Directors (October 2019 Board Meeting) and agency personnel (September 2019 staff training day) to identify agency strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The collected information was disseminated to the Planning and Evaluation Committee and Staff Workgroup to review each strength, weakness, opportunity, and challenge. The group was collectively able to identify a list of key factors and ranked each of those factors in terms of priority. Below is a breakdown of those factors.

Agency Strengths

Ranking	Strength
1	Dedicated, trained, and knowledgeable staff that are able to handle multiple roles and have
	experience working with the local low-income population on a daily basis.
2	Recognizable and respected "face" in the community.
3	Offer a wide variety of programs and services to meet the needs of low-income Schuylkill County residents.
4	Strong, working relationships/partnerships with other providers/agencies.

5	Aggressive in pursuing funding opportunities to expand programs and services for our customers and communities.
6	Strong, dedicated, and supportive Board of Directors
7	Agency stays up to date with community needs and adjusting programming to meet those needs.
8	The programs goal is always self-sufficiency and focused on improving the lives of the members of the community.

Agency Weaknesses

Ranking	Weaknesses
1	Agency staff need to spend more time with clients to properly assess needs and make appropriate referrals.
2	Agency needs to better cross-train personnel with improved communication and make staff aware of all agency programs and community resources.
3	Agency needs to strengthen and provide a uniform agency orientation to all new employees.
4	Agency needs to increase public program awareness through marketing and outreach.
5	Agency needs to increase client follow-up to assess program results and client progress towards goals.
6	Agency needs an upgraded client tracking system to adhere to current reporting standards.
7	Agency needs a bilingual employee to address growing Spanish speaking population in our local community.

Agency- Future Services and Opportunities

Ranking	Services and Opportunities
1	Explore future housing development opportunities to increase the safe and affordable housing stock in Schuylkill County.
2	Expansion of housing programs and support services to allow elderly households to age in place.
3	Expansion of the Bridge House program.
4	Emergency home repair programs to help preserve current housing stock.
5	Continue to explore different options for serving the homeless population in Schuylkill County.
6	Utility assistance to help with water, sewer, trash, etc.
7	Expand financial education and budget counseling to reach more families and serve as an advocate for adoption into school curriculums.
8	Increase transportation routes and services to better provide access to employment opportunities.
9	Explore opportunities to add programming to better serve children in low-income situations.
10	Increase support services for Schuylkill County residents struggling with drug and alcohol issues.

Agency Challenges

Ranking	Challenges
1	Funding uncertainty, limited funding sources, and financial sustainability in the event of funding
	cuts.
2	Retaining and recruiting motivated and dedicated staff is a challenge.
3	Finding time to provide meaningful service follow up.

4	Limited resources for necessary infrastructure upgrades.
5	Providing outreach and growing program awareness to people in need of available services.
6	Developing new and innovative ways to address the ever-changing dynamics of our local community.
7	Transition plan to maintain continuity of all agency personnel.
8	Breaking the cycle of poverty for our customers and communities.

Summary of Internal and External Factors

SCA's Strategic Plan Staff Work Group and administrative team developed a comprehensive list of internal and external factors that may impact the agency. The below charts identify a factor, an agency strength or weakness related to the factor, and opportunities to take advantage of the strength or address the weakness for each identified area.

Internal Assessment

Topic	Issues- (Strength)	Issues (Weaknesses)	Options to take advantage of strengths or overcome weaknesses
Programs and Services	 Wide-range of program and services that address various needs facing our customers and communities Services are mission focused Very experienced in delivering programs and adhering to stringent program guidelines 	 Limited capacity to take on new programming Programming is single service focused too often, rather than bundling and focused on self-sufficiency Limited capability for customer follow-up to measure true impact of programming Program that address gaps in services, i.e. eviction prevention and unregulated utility assistance Limited programming addressing community level initiatives 	 Explore the addition of new staff to help address program and customer follow-up Explore the addition of program focused supervisors to help administer new programming Utilize the Community Needs Assessment to identify service gaps, work with community partners to address, and explore flexible funding opportunities to start new programming Review various community level and community development initiatives and explore opportunities to play a role in this

Financial	 Agency is in a strong financial position with substantial savings Funding is diversified with Federal, State, Local, and Private funding helping to support agency programming Annual Audits have reflected fiscal integrity in agency spending Strong internal financial controls 	 Large reliance on government funding Staffing largely contingent on funding 	 Increase donor solicitations and explore fundraising opportunities Explore more private funding opportunities Explore social enterprise opportunities that may provide a revenue stream to support the agency's mission
Human Resources	 Strong relationship and confidence with our contracted Human Resource provider Good internal recordkeeping and confidentiality controls 	No unit/person solely focused on HR activities	 Research different Human Resource contractors periodically to help ensure our agent continues to be the best for the agency. Explore the financial feasibility of adding a Human Resource professional to the staff complement
Leadership	 Experienced organization leadership Board of Directors and agency staff have great working relationship Supportive work environment 	Expected transitions of key personnel in leadership positions in the agency	Establish transition committees at the Board level to help with the expected transition of leadership personnel.
Operations	Day-to-day business duties are completed effectively	 Customer parking Shredder in case manager's office is inadequate to deal with increased shredding of documents Inconsistent data collection Staff should be better crosstrained regarding program and job tasks Information should be more clearly 	 Explore opportunities to create additional parking spots to address the addition of staff and to deal with parking restrictions around the offices Purchase a commercial shredder Improve internal communications Implement a newsletter to share information

		and consistently communicated.	internally and externally
Information Technology	 Computer systems all upgraded to Windows 10 Network server protections through IT provider Functional data management system 	 Limited remote capabilities Limited supply of computer microphones and webcams Outdated data management system that does not adhere to all current CSBG reporting standards Update website to include employment application submissions, program application submissions, and the ability to accept donations directly through the website 	 Develop some capacity to have mobile computer equipment Purchase webcams and microphones to allow remote service delivery Continue to work with Next Shift, LLC. As we are in the process of upgrading to CTS 2.0. Discuss with American computers about adding online application submission and the ability to accept donations on-line securely.

External Assessment

Topic	Strength	Weakness	Options to address:
Economic Climate	CARES stimulus funding	 Economic uncertainty due to COVID-19 Closing of local businesses High-rate of unemployment 	 Continue to evaluate and address community needs to ensure we are prioritizing changing needs because of the economic uncertainty Explore funding diversification
Political Climate	 Strong agency support from local government officials Active participation from local government officials on the Board of Directors 	 Political divide between parties has never been greater CSBG funding has been "zeroed" out on the past two Presidential budget proposal 	 Continue to foster relationships with local government officials Use both data driven and agency impact stories to promote the agency

		Presidential election uncertainty	
Social	 Strong sense of community support Agency is partnership focused 	 Increased crime rates Drug addiction continues to be high 	 Look to expand agency personnel being involved in different boards, coalitions, and collaboratives to keep current on addressing social needs in our community Expand Social Media platforms and frequency
Demographic	Diverse Board of Directors and staff with emphasis on increasing diversity	 Increase in Spanish speaking residents No formal representation from LGQTB community 	 Explore the addition of a Bi-lingual Spanish speaking Case Manager to more adequately serve the increasing Spanish speaking population in the County. Continue to explore opportunities to diversify the Board of Directors and agency staff representation Expand outreach services and partnerships in communities with larger Spanish Speaking populations
Legal	 Strong relationship with agency solicitor Meticulous and proper record keeping that allows us to maintain federal tax-exemption Compliance with employment laws 	Rise in costs of legal fees	 Periodically review of legal representation to ensure we are being adequately represented at a fair cost Keep up-to-date with CAP Law as they are on the forefront of legal issues facing CSBG funded entities. Attend CAP Law Conference when they are held regionally
Technology	Technology that has been developed allows for remote service delivery	 Technology is always changing and advancing, which makes it difficult to deal with 	Work with our IT provider to ensure we are adequately protected against cyber attacks

		rising costs of the technology • Data security with increase of cyber crimes	Institute 2-factor authentication to access network
Budget	 CARES stimulus funding has increased funding to serve our customers 	Budget uncertainty due to political and economic uncertainty.	 Continue the practice of reviewing short, medium, and long-term budgets to stay prepared for budgeting issues that may arise.

Summary of Key Strategic Issues

In order to maximize our ability to serve our customers and communities effectively moving forward, SCA has identified ten key issues and action steps to begin addressing the issues. Below is a breakdown of those issues and action steps:

- 1. Increasing program outcomes
 - Improve customer follow-up
 - Improved use of Clients-to-Success Client Tracking System as a case management tool
 - Continual program improvement based on the evaluation of results
 - Have a staff member complete the National ROMA Implementer certification process
- 2. Increase agency personnel's ability to effectively serve our customers
 - Improve orientation and training programs to improve our ability to serve our customers
 - Increased focus on customer service
 - Increased emphasis on initial client intake to more effectively assess customer needs and make program referrals
 - Increase customer follow-up to address service impact, customer needs, and improve customer relations
- 3. Increase agency personnel cross-training
 - Improve internal communications
 - Implement monthly team/staff meetings
 - Increase interagency training to increase external program awareness
- 4. Improve organizational systems
 - Implement upgraded Client to Success Tracking System to adhere to reporting requirements
 - Train staff on the upgraded system
 - Improve data collection and data quality control checks
- 5. Increase agency awareness and presence in the community
 - Increased presence in local publications through press releases
 - Expand social media presence across multiple platforms and increase postings
 - Improve community outreach through increased presentations and presence at community gatherings
 - Institute a quarterly agency newsletter to promote agency programming and success stories
 - Increase outreach efforts in rural and underserved communities
- 6. Funding uncertainty, limited funding sources, and financial sustainability in the event of funding cuts
 - Increase donor solicitations and explore fundraising opportunities

- Explore more private funding opportunities
- Explore Social Enterprise opportunities that may provide a revenue stream to support the agency's mission
- 7. Improve agency information technology
 - Develop some capacity to have mobile computer equipment and remote service capabilities
 - Increase office work station infrastructure to be able to provide remote services
 - Work with IT security provider to continue to stay up-to-date on cyber protections
 - Continue to work with Next Shift, LLC on upgraded Client to Success tracking system with webbased access
 - Incorporate more electronic application submissions for programs via the agency website
- 8. Improve staff recruitment efforts
 - Develop relationships with higher educational institutions for internship opportunities
 - Make connections with the Schuylkill Technology Center for work study/internship opportunities
 - Work with CareerLink on recruiting agency talent
 - Participate in Job Fairs to disseminate information about jobs and establish connections with job seekers
- 9. Expand housing rehabilitation and development programs
 - Expand housing modification and home repair programs for Senior and Disabled households
 - Explore future housing rehabilitation programs
 - Explore the continuation of Weatherization Repair Programs
 - Explore the feasibility of adding a housing developer to the staff complement
 - Explore future housing development opportunities to increase safe and affordable housing in Schuylkill County
- 10. Community Needs Assessment
 - Establish a board/staff committee to help develop a Community Needs Assessment Plan
 - Implement a timeline to complete the Community Needs Assessment
 - Utilize the results of the Community Needs Assessment in the Planning and Program evaluation process to review programs that need to be strengthen, developed, or eliminated

Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan goals outlined in the SCA Strategic Plan are consistent and align with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act and the anti-poverty goals developed by the Community Services Network. These ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability) Goals provide a framework for continuous growth and improvement for community action agencies across the nation, touching on all levels of need: Family, Agency and Community. The SCA Board of Directors, Administrative team, and Staff Work group have developed six goals that will strategically move the agency towards achieving its vision and mission.

2020 Strategic Plan Goals

- 1. Schuylkill Community Action will increase program outcomes and improve organizational systems to maximize program impact and effectiveness.
- 2. Schuylkill Community Action will improve efforts to increase agency awareness and presence in local communities throughout Schuylkill County.
- 3. Schuylkill Community will increase efforts in the recruitment, retention, and development of staff to continue to serve our customers and community effectively.
- 4. Schuylkill Community Action will explore avenues to increase agency revenue to expand mission driven activities and services.
- 5. Schuylkill Community Action will utilize the Community Needs
 Assessment to pursue funding and partnerships to address unmet needs
 and service gaps in Schuylkill County.
- 6. Schuylkill Community Action will formulate a strategic response to address the adverse economic and safety impacts of COVID-19 and utilize the response to help prepare for potential future crisis.

Provided next is a layout for each of the goals and action steps and strategies to achieve each of the goals.

- I. Schuylkill Community Action will increase program outcomes and improve organizational systems to maximize program impact and effectiveness.
 - Develop a plan to increase customer follow-up
 - Create and utilize a follow-up survey to measure impact of services and further needs
 - Conduct annual evaluations of program results and have meaningful discussions with the Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Board of Directors on any recommendations to strengthen programming
 - Shift the organization's focus from services to outcomes
 - Work with Next Shift, LLC. and Bucks County Opportunity Council to complete the Clients to Success (CTS) 2.0 Client Tracking System update.
 - Implement upgraded CTS Tracking System to adhere to report requirements
 - Improve data collection and quality control checks to promote more accurate data collection
 - Continued Adherence to the Organizational Standards
 - Nationally Certified ROMA Trainer complete the recertification process
 - Identify a staff member to complete the certification process to become a Nationally Certified ROMA Implementer
 - Review the Certified Community Action Professionals (CCAP) and identify staff that may be interested in completing the certification process
- II. Schuylkill Community Action will improve efforts to increase agency awareness and presence in local communities throughout Schuylkill County.
 - Articulate a new shared mission and core values for the agency
 - Increase presence in local publications through press releases
 - Expand social media presence across multiple platforms and increase postings

- Improve community outreach through increased presentations and presence at community gatherings
- Institute a quarterly agency newsletter to promote agency programming and success stories
- Increase outreach efforts in rural and underserved communities

III. Schuylkill Community will increase efforts in the recruitment, retention, and development of staff to continue to serve our customers and community effectively.

- Develop relationships with higher educational institutions for internship opportunities
- Make connections with the Schuylkill Technology Center for work study/internship opportunities
- Work with CareerLink on recruiting agency talent
- Participate in job fairs to disseminate information about jobs and establish connections with job seekers
- Improve orientation and training programs to improve our ability to serve our customers
- Increased focus on customer service delivery
- Increased emphasis on initial client intake to more effectively assess customer needs and make program referrals
- Improve working conditions and staff skill development
 - o Periodic review of staff salary structure
 - Explore creative ways to boost employee morale
 - o Address staff wellness more comprehensively
 - Review flexible work schedules to see if they can be implemented effectively (i.e. 4-day work week and remote work options)
- Institute leadership development, at all levels, so staff feel empowered and engaged.
- Develop communication systems which ensure that ideas for improving practice and management are surfacing and being heard, at all levels
- Institute monthly staff meetings to improve communication and increase transparency

IV. Schuylkill Community Action will explore avenues to increase agency revenue to expand mission driven activities and services.

- Increase donor solicitations and explore fundraising opportunities
- Explore more private funding opportunities that can support the agency mission
- Explore federal, state, and local funding opportunities that can support the agency mission
- Work with the agency IT provider to set up the ability to accept donations directly on the agency website
- Explore Social Enterprise opportunities that may provide a revenue stream to support the agency's mission
- Expand community partnerships with public and private entities to increase agency resources and revenue

V. Schuylkill Community Action will utilize the Community Needs Assessment to pursue funding and partnerships to address unmet needs and service gaps in Schuylkill County.

- Families need home heating assistance to help reduce energy burden.
 - o Maintain current Customer Assistance Programs benefitting PPL and UGI customers.
 - Maintain current customer grant programs benefitting PPL and UGI customers.
 - Develop programs benefitting heating customers in communities that have Borough regulated electric providers.
 - Refer and promote mainstream heating assistance programs (LIHEAP and LIHEAP Crisis).
 - Maintain Weatherization Programs and refer income eligible customers to the program.

- Community needs increased transportation routes for employment.
 - Maintain board representation from Schuylkill Transportation System (local public transportation provider).
 - Continue to participate in quarterly Schuylkill County Transportation Authority Transportation Advisory Committee Meetings.
 - Research available Ride Share opportunities for employers in Schuylkill County to make customers aware of available transportation opportunities.
 - Provide STS bus tickets to customers for employment purposes
 - Explore opportunities that may be provided through private transportation providers, i.e. Uber and Lyft.
- Families lack food security
 - Maintain administration and oversight of the Schuylkill Food Network and the twenty (20) locally volunteer operated food pantries
 - Increase monetary donations to offset the costs of food purchase, delivery fees, and operating expenses of the refrigerated food truck.
 - Increase food resources and food commodities donated by local businesses to distribute at food pantries.
 - Increase access to emergency food distributions.
 - Explore the feasibility of adding an emergency food pantry access site
 - Maintain working relationship with Helping Harvest Food Bank to purchase food at low or at no costs
- Community need increase access to Mental Health services
 - Assist customers apply for mainstream health insurance benefits.
 - Assist customers with health insurance applications available through the Affordable Health Care Act.
 - Refer customers in need of Mental Health related services to Service Access Management, Inc. for Mental Health specific case management.
 - o Maintain representation on the Federally Qualified Health Center Board.
 - Advocate for customers through participation in health care forums and workshops
- Families need utility assistance to alleviate household utility burden.
 - Advocate for utility assistance programs and protections for unregulated utility customers.
 - Work with the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project and local legal services groups to help establish programs and customer protections for utility customers.
 - Develop a plan to secure funding to help implement water and/or sewer assistance programs for customers.
 - Develop a plan to secure funding to help with emergency electric payments for customers in communities with unregulated utilities.
 - Increase knowledge and referrals for customers of regulated water companies.
- Senior families need support services and home modifications to allow them to age in place.
 - Plan to secure additional resources for moderate home repair programs for senior households.
 - Work with office of Senior Services to provide financial education services to seniors.
 - o Connect Senior customers to available community resources
 - Complete cross training with office of Senior Services, Diakon, and Geisinger LIFE to learn more about available services for seniors.
 - Research available senior housing resources in our community so we can better connect our customers to housing.
- VI. Schuylkill Community Action will formulate a strategic response to address the adverse economic and safety impacts of COVID-19 and utilize the response to help prepare for potential future crisis.
 - Maximize agency ability to provide services remotely

- Retrofit offices to safely provide services directly (i.e. hand sanitizing stations, masks, and barriers at staff desks)
- Develop and implement a service delivery plan for safe reopening of offices to customers
- Develop a safety plan for providing services to customers in home
- Utilize CARES Act stimulus funds and other COVID-19 funding to address pressing customer and community needs as a result of the pandemic
- Develop and gain board approval on a pandemic response plan and update current crisis response plans to have in place in the event of COVID-19 resurgence and/or other new outbreaks or crises.

Next Steps

Rather than a final product, the 2020 Strategic Plan will serve as a roadmap for the continuous improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the agency's operations to deliver high quality services, advocacy and commitment of resources to our customers and communities. Agency leaders will use this information to steer the organization toward the fulfillment of its mission. Changing economic, political and cultural climate will require the review and re-evaluation of the plan on an annual basis.

The administrative team will work on developing an implementation plan centered around the goals and action steps to complete the goals, as well as, assigning individual responsibilities for each of the action step areas. Bi-annual reviews of Strategic Plan progress will be completed by the administrative team in January and July. An annual progress update and review will be presented to the Planning and Evaluation Committee and Board of Directors in August of each year.