Alabama Council on Human Relations

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2026

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ALABAMA COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS 2024-2026 THEORY OF CHANGE

The Problem

27,482 residents are unable to afford their basic household needs. Primary concerns include housing, childcare, transportation, food insecurity, and physical/mental health.

The Vision

A community where every individual and family has access to the education, resources, and support needed to achieve lasting self-sufficiency, fulfilling their potential and contributing to a thriving, equitable, and inclusive society.

The Mission

Empowering low-income individuals and families in our community to break the cycle of poverty through education, emergency services, and partnerships that foster self-sufficiency and community well-being.

Integrity 🙌 Empowerment 🙌 Equity 🙌 Compassion 🙌 Community

1 Family Level

- Children demonstrate improved school readiness (F)
- Mothers obtain prenatal support (F)
- Families obtain access to childcare (F)
- Children improve food security (F)
- Individuals improve parenting skills (F)
- Individuals obtain/maintain basic needs (F)
- Individuals experience improved home energy efficiency (F)
- Father/father figures improve parental engagement (F)
- Individuals improve self-sufficiency (F)

2 Community Level

- The commuinity experiences an increase in the number of available affordable housing units (C)

3 Agency Level

- The board is adequately structured and engaged to fulfill its governance roll (A)
- The organization has an adequate number of qualified team members to fulfill its purpose (A)
- The organization is actively engaged, improving awareness and building partnerships (A)
- The organization has adequate unrestricted funding to support operations and strategic goals (A)

Welcome

Welcome to the 2024 Strategic Plan for **Alabama Council on Human Relations**. This document serves as a comprehensive guide for organizational leaders to fulfill our mission of breaking the cycle of poverty, fostering self-sufficiency, and enhancing community well-being. The plan outlines our strategic direction for the next three years, designed to overcome barriers that hinder our success at the family, community, and organizational levels.

The agency's planning team and governing body developed this document under the consultation of Shawn Howell, a Nationally Certified ROMA Master Trainer and Implementer.

Preplanning surveys were distributed to members of the governing body and staff to gather insights and perspectives. The results of these surveys formed the foundation for productive discussions during the planning session, ensuring that a broad range of viewpoints were considered in the decision-making process.

Goals, outcomes, and strategies were carefully selected based on the prioritized needs identified through the survey analysis. The final report, which includes comprehensive data and insights, was presented to the governing body and received majority approval, validating its alignment with the agency's mission and strategic direction.

Board Officers

- George Allen: President
- Suzanne Shaw: First Vice President
- Ruth Cole: Second Vice President
- Rick Ebbinghouse: Treasurer
- Charles Ingram, Jr: Attorney
- Lisa Harrelson: Secretary
- Virginia Transue: Secretary

Board Members

- Kimberly Berry
- Micah Bonner
- Harlee Crowder
- Bettye King
- Cheryl Mason
- Kim Roberts
- Robert Torbert, Jr

Planning Team

- Anthony Brock
- Glenda H. Campbell
- Dr. Nate Dunlap
- Tina Evans
- Geraldine Hale
- Tammy Hall
- Argentina Harris
- Pam Heartsill
- Cassandra Hill
- Felicia Johnson
- Angela Lawrence
- Michael Perry
- Yolanda Pittman
- Theresa Sampson
- Elsie Widener
- Stacey Winslett

Plan Moderator

- Shawn Howell, NCRMT
- Angela Howell, RN

The Problem

In Lee County, the resilient spirit of our community is evident in the rich heritage and potential for growth. However, beneath this vibrancy lies a pressing narrative of economic hardship and silent battles against poverty. Our commitment to transformative change requires us to look beyond mere statistics to see the real faces behind the numbers – individuals and families striving for stability and a better future.

Recent data indicates that 27,482 of the community's residents have incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level, representing an estimated 15.0% of the population. This poverty rate is slightly lower than the state average of 16.1%, yet higher than the national average of 12.4%. The region's median income is $60,358 annually, which is lower than the state ($62,212) and national ($77,719) averages. These economic challenges manifest in various critical conditions that our community faces.

Food insecurity affects 27,170 residents, or 15.5% of the population. This condition is driven by insufficient income, forcing households to make difficult choices between food and other essential expenses such as housing and utilities. Vulnerable groups, including 6,620 children and 2,184 senior citizens, are particularly impacted, leading to developmental delays, health issues, and increased healthcare costs.

Nearly one-fifth of adults, approximately 24,676 individuals, report having poor to fair health. This public health concern is linked to inadequate income, limiting access to essential healthcare services, nutritious food, and medications. Additionally, 17,419 individuals experience significant physical health distress every month. Disabilities, affecting 24,398 individuals, further complicate economic stability and access to healthcare.

Mental health issues are prevalent, with 24,676 adults experiencing more than fourteen days of mental distress each month, representing 17% of the adult population. Financial strain exacerbates these issues, limiting access to necessary mental health services and support.

Housing insecurity is a significant issue, with 16,856 households spending more than one-third of their income on housing and utilities and 9,661 households spending more than half. The region faces a surplus of substandard housing units, and affordability remains a challenge, with median annual rents at $11,748. High housing costs strain budgets, leading to frequent moves, overcrowding, and, in severe cases, homelessness.

High utility costs in Alabama, averaging $4,800 annually, pose a significant financial burden. This often forces families to choose between paying for utilities and other critical needs. The risk of utility disconnection is severe, affecting health, safety, and quality of life.

These interconnected issues underscore the urgent need for comprehensive, data-driven, and mission-aligned actions. Addressing these barriers is crucial to creating pathways to economic security and self-sufficiency, ultimately improving the quality of life for all residents in the service area.

The Purpose

The Vision

A community where every individual and family has access to the education, resources, and support needed to achieve lasting self-sufficiency, fulfilling their potential and contributing to a thriving, equitable, and inclusive society.

The Mission

Empowering low-income individuals and families in our community to break the cycle of poverty through education, emergency services, and partnerships that foster self-sufficiency and community well-being.

The Goals

(1) Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security (F)

(2) Communities where people with low-incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity (C)

(3) The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver quality services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness (A)

Values and Beliefs

Integrity
We believe in upholding the highest standards of honesty and ethics in all our actions, ensuring trust and transparency with our clients and partners.

Empowerment
We believe in equipping individuals and families with the knowledge, resources, and opportunities to overcome barriers and achieve self-sufficiency.

Equity
We believe in bridging societal gaps by providing equal opportunities for all, promoting justice, and respecting every person's potential.

Compassion
We believe in approaching every person with understanding and kindness, recognizing the unique challenges they face and supporting them with dignity.

Community
We believe that lasting change requires collaboration and strong partnerships, working together to mitigate the causes and conditions of poverty.

The Barriers

Children are not ready for school (F)

The 2023-2024 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) reveals that nearly 24.6% of children under age five in the local community live in poverty, contributing to developmental delays and a lack of preparedness for kindergarten. Limited access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education, compounded by economic challenges and resource constraints, presents significant barriers for families, leaving many children unprepared to succeed in school.

Expectant mothers lack prenatal support for health childbirth (F)

Research indicates that inadequate prenatal care is strongly associated with adverse birth outcomes, including low birth weight and preterm birth, which negatively affect a child's cognitive development and future educational attainment. A study published in the Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal highlights that prenatal stress, compounded by poverty, contributes to developmental disadvantages, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting long-term opportunities for children.

Families lack childcare (F)

The ACHR Community Needs Assessment identifies a significant gap in access to affordable and reliable childcare, particularly for low-income families. In the service area, there are only 3,260 childcare slots available for 9,507 children, leaving a deficit of 6,247 slots. This lack of options limits parents' ability to maintain stable employment or pursue education, directly impacting family stability and economic growth. The Wrap Around Day Care program addresses this gap by providing childcare solutions that enable parents to work or study, supporting family financial security.

Children are food insecure (F)

In the local community, 6,620 children (18.1%) are food insecure, lacking consistent access to nutritious meals that are essential for healthy development and learning. Food insecurity can severely impact children's physical and cognitive growth, limiting their ability to focus, retain information, and perform well in educational settings. Research shows that malnourished children are more likely to experience developmental delays, behavioral challenges, and lower academic achievement. Inadequate nutrition also affects children's energy levels, immune system function, and long-term health outcomes.

Individuals lack parenting skills (F)

Research shows that early intervention through programs like Conscious Discipline significantly improves children's behavior and social-emotional skills. A study published in the Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning found that Conscious Discipline enhances children's emotional management, self-regulation, and social interactions. These skills are essential for academic success and long-term emotional well-being, especially for children in low-income families where additional barriers to positive development exist.

Fathers/father figures lack parental engagement (F)

Research demonstrates that active father involvement significantly enhances children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, leading to better academic performance and improved life skills. A study published in Early Child Development and Care found that fathers' participation in early childhood programs positively influences children's language skills, school readiness, and overall development. Additionally, increased father engagement is linked to higher educational attainment and lower poverty rates among children as they grow, reinforcing the importance of fostering father involvement in low-income communities.

Individuals lack adequate income to meet basic needs (F)

In the area, 27,482 residents (15% of the population) live in poverty, exceeding the national rate of 12.4%. Local economic conditions exacerbate this issue, as the median income of $60,358 falls short of the average cost of living at $70,083. Single parents are at the highest risk, with a median income of $31,335 compared to an average cost of living of $86,486, placing them at a severe disadvantage. There are 4,271 households living in poverty and 17,420 households earning below the average cost of living, highlighting the widespread need for support to achieve economic security.

Individuals live in homes that are energy inefficient (F)

In the local community, the average monthly utility cost is $400 ($4,800 annually), which exacerbates the high cost of housing. Poorly insulated homes increase energy consumption, leading to higher utility expenses. Additionally, inadequate insulation contributes to health issues such as respiratory problems caused by mold growth and poor indoor air quality. Research published in the BMJ indicates that insulating existing houses significantly improves indoor temperatures and enhances the health and well-being of occupants.

The community lacks an adequate number of affordable housing units (C)

In the area served by the organization, the community faces a severe shortage of safe and affordable housing. Of the 81,890 housing units, 18,406 are sub-standard, leaving only 63,484 safe housing units to accommodate the 74,799 households in the area. This results in a deficit of 11,315 safe housing units, forcing many residents into inadequate living conditions. Furthermore, 13.94% of homeowners and 37.43% of renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing and utilities. Severe cost burdens affect 6.35% of homeowners and 24.9% of renters, who dedicate over 50% of their income to housing, leaving little for other essentials. These challenges underscore the urgent need to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing.

The board is in need of restructuring and consistent engagement (A)

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified the need for restructuring and consistent engagement within the board of directors. A well-structured and engaged board is critical for ensuring effective governance, compliance, and strategic oversight. Currently, gaps in board engagement and alignment with governance best practices hinder the organization's ability to meet regulatory requirements, achieve strategic objectives, and effectively advocate for the community it serves.

The organization has a lack of qualified team members to fulfill its purpose (A)

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified a shortage of qualified team members, which hinders the agency's ability to sustain operations and fulfill its mission. The lack of sufficient staffing undermines the delivery of effective programs, limits innovation, and prevents the organization from fully addressing community needs. Compounding these challenges are issues related to staff recruitment, engagement, and training, which have contributed to high turnover rates and reduced overall organizational capacity. A comprehensive approach to improving staff recruitment, engagement, and retention is critical to building a capable and committed workforce. Including training questions in staff surveys will help identify key areas for professional development and ensure alignment with the organization's goals.

The organization lacks community engagement, leading to low awareness and insufficient partnerships (A)

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified insufficient community engagement as a significant barrier to achieving organizational goals. Low awareness among target populations and weak partnerships with community stakeholders limit the agency's ability to effectively deliver services, advocate for resources, and build lasting collaborations. Without a strategic approach to community engagement, the organization risks missing opportunities to expand its reach, enhance its impact, and foster mutual support with key partners. Addressing these challenges is essential for improving visibility, strengthening relationships, and creating a more informed and engaged community.

The organization lacks sufficient unrestricted funding to sustain its operations (A)

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified a critical gap in unrestricted funding, which limits the agency's ability to sustain operations and achieve strategic goals. Without adequate unrestricted funds, the organization struggles to address emerging community needs, maintain infrastructure, and ensure financial stability. Unrestricted funding is essential for covering administrative costs, innovating programs, and maintaining flexibility in the face of economic challenges, making this a priority for organizational improvement.

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Financial Resources

The organization has an annual agency-wide budget of $11,015,116 that consists of $423,777 in Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds along with more than $10,591,339 in leveraged Federal, State, Local, and Private monies. This is based on historic grants that include carryover amounts and amendments.

- Community Services Block Grant...$423,777

- Head Start/Early Head Start...$8,128,457
- CACFP...$413,925
- LIHEAP..$1,452,971
- LIWAP...$526,147
- ABC Trust Fund...$33,047
- CAAAA...$14,292
- City of Opelika..$22,500

Human Resources

The organization is supported by a dedicated team of 122 members who contribute to its mission and operations. This includes nine team members in administration, five in community services, four in facilities, and the remainder in Early Childhood Development programs. More than half of the team members hold a bachelor's degree or higher, with nearly a quarter earning master's degrees, and two members holding Doctorate/PhD degrees in education. The diverse expertise of the team spans fields such as Early Childhood Education, Business Administration, Organizational Leadership, Sociology, Social Work, Education, Counseling, Accounting, Computer Science, Legal Studies, Psychology, Public Administration, Human Development, Family Studies, Spanish, Religion, Social Science, Administration of Justice, and Conflict Transformation.

Additionally, team members hold certifications in Child Development, Family Development, CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), CPR, and Social Work, ensuring that the agency is well-equipped to deliver high-quality services and programs. This robust human resource base reflects the agency's commitment to professional excellence and its capacity to meet community needs effectively.

Capital Resources

The organization owns 4 buildings, 13 buses, 3 agency vehicles, and 3 trailers.

Technological Resources

Programs operated under the Community Services Department are documented in Lit. This software uses customer demographics to identify household needs, track services, financial expendures, and outcome achievement. Head Start activities are documented in ChildPlus. GMS is used to monitor agency finances.

Head Start Program:

Children demonstrate improved school readiness

Early Head Start Education Program:

Children demonstrate improved school readiness

Early Head Start Pregnant Mother Program:

Mothers obtain prenatal support

Wrap Around Day Care:

Families obtain access to childcare

CACFP:

Children improve food security

Conscious Discipline Parenting Classes:

Individuals improve parenting skills

Fatherhood/Male Involvement Program:

Father/father figures improve parental engagement

Emergency Services Program:

Individuals obtain/maintain basic needs

Case Management Program:

Individuals improve economic security

Weatherization Program:

Individuals experience improved home energy efficiency

Affordable Housing Properties Initiative:

The community experiences an increase in the number of available affordable housing units

Board Development Initiative:

The board is adequately structured and engaged to fulfill its governance roll

Team Development and Retention Initiative:

The organization has an adequate number of qualified team members to fulfill its purpose

Civic Engagement Initiative:

The organization is actively engaged, improving awareness and building partnerships

Funding Initiative:

The organization has adequate unrestricted funding to support operations and strategic goals

Head Start Program (F)

Problem Addressed: Children are not ready for school

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Children demonstrate improved school readiness

Measurement Tool(s): Pre/Post Tests, Staff Evaluations

Verification of Need:
The 2023-2024 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) reveals that nearly 24.6% of children under age five in the local community live in poverty, contributing to developmental delays and a lack of preparedness for kindergarten. Limited access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education, compounded by economic challenges and resource constraints, presents significant barriers for families, leaving many children unprepared to succeed in school.

Strategy Description:
The Head Start program serves low-income families with children aged 3-5, offering comprehensive early education, health, and family support services to promote school readiness and holistic development. Seventy-four staff members across four locations implement the program, which includes daily classroom activities, health and developmental screenings, nutritional support, and family engagement initiatives. Families are identified through outreach at community centers, schools, and partnerships with social service agencies. Progress is tracked through ongoing assessments, pre/post evaluations, and regular parent-teacher conferences. Funded by Head Start grants, the program leverages partnerships with local health and educational providers to enhance its services and ensure that families receive the support they need.

Action Steps:

- Educational services
- Health and nutritional screenings
- Developmental screenings
- Parenting classes
- Kindergarten transition assistance
- Transportation
- Behavioral and mental health services

Problem Addressed: Children are not ready for school

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Children demonstrate improved school readiness

Measurement Tool(s): Pre/Post Tests, Staff Evaluation

Verification of Need:

According to the ACHR Community Needs Assessment, early childhood development is critical for families in poverty, where resources for child development are severely limited. Poverty impacts families' ability to access high-quality early childhood education, leading to developmental delays and lack of school readiness. Comprehensive early education programs, such as Early Head Start, address these gaps by providing tailored support to promote developmental milestones and prepare children for long-term success.

Strategy Description:

The Early Head Start program serves low-income families with children from birth to age three, offering both center-based and home-based services to support developmental, educational, and health outcomes. Home visitors deliver personalized education, health, and nutritional services, including developmental screenings, socializations, and transition support. Families are identified through community outreach, social services, and healthcare partnerships. Progress is tracked through assessments and evaluations. The program relies on federal grants and local partnerships to provide comprehensive services.

Action Steps:

- Educational services
- Health and nutritional screenings
- Developmental screenings
- Parenting classes
- Head Start transition assistance
- Home-based education services
- Home-based health and nutrition services
- Home-based developmental screeningss
- Socializations
- Center-based Head Start transition services
- Home-based family transportation
- Behavioral and mental health services

Early Head Start Pregnant Mother Program (F)

Problem Addressed: Expectant mothers lack prenatal support for health childbirth

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Mothers obtain prenatal support

Measurement Tool(s):   Health Assessments, Staff Evaluation

Verification of Need:
Research indicates that inadequate prenatal care is strongly associated with adverse birth outcomes, including low birth weight and preterm birth, which negatively affect a child's cognitive development and future educational attainment. A study published in the Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal highlights that prenatal stress, compounded by poverty, contributes to developmental disadvantages, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting long-term opportunities for children.

Strategy Description:
The Early Head Start Pregnant Mother Program provides comprehensive prenatal support to low-income expectant mothers, helping them access healthcare, nutrition, and wellness resources. Mothers are identified through community outreach, healthcare provider partnerships, and social services. Enrolled participants receive individualized care plans, attend regular health visits, and participate in educational workshops. Funded by Early Head Start grants and supported by local health partnerships, this program ensures healthy childbirth outcomes and promotes early child development.

Action Steps:

- Prenatal health assessments
- Health and wellness plans
- Resource coordination
- Post-partum assessments
- Home-based family transportation

Problem Addressed: Families lack childcare

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Families obtain access to childcare

Measurement Tool(s):   Staff Evaluation, Customer Statements

Verification of Need:
The ACHR Community Needs Assessment identifies a significant gap in access to affordable and reliable childcare, particularly for low-income families. In the service area, there are only 3,260 childcare slots available for 9,507 children, leaving a deficit of 6,247 slots. This lack of options limits parents' ability to maintain stable employment or pursue education, directly impacting family stability and economic growth. The Wrap Around Day Care program addresses this gap by providing childcare solutions that enable parents to work or study, supporting family financial security.

Strategy Description:
The Wrap Around Day Care program offers flexible, affordable childcare designed to meet the needs of low-income families. Services include extended care hours, nutritious meals, and educational activities to promote children's development. Families are identified through community outreach, local schools, and social service partnerships. Enrolled children benefit from a safe, structured environment, and program quality is tracked through regular family feedback and staff evaluations.

Action Steps:

- Childcare services

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CACFP (F)

Problem Addressed: Children are food insecure

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Children improve food security

Measurement Tool(s): Staff Evaluation

Verification of Need:

In the local community, 6,620 children (18.1%) are food insecure, lacking consistent access to nutritious meals that are essential for healthy development and learning. Food insecurity can severely impact children's physical and cognitive growth, limiting their ability to focus, retain information, and perform well in educational settings. Research shows that malnourished children are more likely to experience developmental delays, behavioral challenges, and lower academic achievement. Inadequate nutrition also affects children's energy levels, immune system function, and long-term health outcomes.

Strategy Description:

The CACFP serves licensed child care providers, including centers and family day care homes, that care for low-income children. Providers are identified through state agencies and must meet specific eligibility criteria to participate. Enrolled providers receive reimbursements for serving meals and snacks that comply with USDA nutritional guidelines. The program is funded by the USDA and administered at the state level, ensuring that children in care receive the nutrition they need for proper development.

Action Steps:

- Food assistance

Conscious Discipline Parenting Classes (F)

Problem Addressed: Individuals lack parenting skills

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Individuals improve parenting skills

Measurement Tool(s): Staff Evaluation, Customer Statement

Verification of Need:

Research shows that early intervention through programs like Conscious Discipline significantly improves children's behavior and social-emotional skills. A study published in the Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning found that Conscious Discipline enhances children's emotional management, self-regulation, and social interactions. These skills are essential for academic success and long-term emotional well-being, especially for children in low-income families where additional barriers to positive development exist.

Strategy Description:

The Conscious Discipline Program is a trauma-informed social-emotional learning initiative implemented in ACHR's Child Development Programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start. The program supports low-income families by training parents and teachers in self-regulation and positive discipline techniques through parent workshops and follow-up support. It equips children with skills to manage emotions, adapt to change, and build social-emotional competence. Families are identified through outreach efforts, and progress is tracked via workshop participation and family engagement evaluations.

Action Steps:

- Parent workshops

Fatherhood/Male Involvement Program (F)

Problem Addressed: Father/father figures lack parental engagement

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Father/father figures improve parental engagement

Measurement Tool(s): Staff Evaluation, Customer Statement

Verification of Need:
Research demonstrates that active father involvement significantly enhances children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, leading to better academic performance and improved life skills. A study published in Early Child Development and Care found that fathers' participation in early childhood programs positively influences children's language skills, school readiness, and overall development. Additionally, increased father engagement is linked to higher educational attainment and lower poverty rates among children as they grow, reinforcing the importance of fostering father involvement in low-income communities.

Strategy Description:
The Fatherhood Program encourages and supports responsible fathering by engaging fathers and father figures in their children's lives, regardless of their living situation. Monthly meetings are held at each center, addressing topics such as supporting children's learning, fostering a love of literacy, and personal development, including job exploration and educational advancement. Families are identified through outreach and Head Start program referrals. The program provides fathers with tools and resources to enhance parenting skills, with progress tracked through participation, feedback, and staff evaluations. By equipping fathers to be actively involved, the program aims to improve child development outcomes and break cycles of poverty within the community.

Action Steps:

- Fatherhood group facilitation

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Problem Addressed: Individuals lack adequate income to meet basic needs

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Individuals obtain/maintain basic needs

Measurement Tool(s): Vendor Statements, Customer Statements

Verification of Need:

In the area, 27,482 residents (15% of the population) live in poverty, exceeding the national rate of 12.4%. Housing and utility costs far outpace local incomes, leaving many at risk of eviction or foreclosure. Among the 47,427 homeowners, 6,613 spend more than 30% of their income on housing and utilities, while 3,012 exceed 50%. For the 27,372 renters, 10,238 allocate more than 30%, and 6,636 exceed 50%, reflecting critical levels of housing cost burden.

Strategy Description:

The Emergency Services Program uses funding from CSBG, LIHEAP, EFSP, Alabama Business Charitable Trust Fund, and other federal, state, local, and private resources to assist residents at risk of housing loss and utility disconnection. Five dedicated staff members, located at the King Center, implement the program. By making direct payments to vendors on behalf of eligible households, the program helps maintain essential services and prevent disconnection or eviction. Customers are identified through outreach and referrals, with follow-up assessments ensuring ongoing support. This program addresses an essential community need for housing stability.

Action Steps:

- Utility payments
- Rent payments

Case Management Program (F)

Problem Addressed: Individuals lack adequate income to meet basic needs

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Individuals improve economic security

Measurement Tool(s):   Income Documents, Household Budget

Verification of Need:
In the area, 27,482 residents (15% of the population) live in poverty, exceeding the national rate of 12.4%. Local economic conditions exacerbate this issue, as the median income of $60,358 falls short of the average cost of living at $70,083. Single parents are at the highest risk, with a median income of $31,335 compared to an average cost of living of $86,486, placing them at a severe disadvantage. There are 4,271 households living in poverty and 17,420 households earning below the average cost of living, highlighting the widespread need for support to achieve economic security.

Strategy Description:
The Case Management Program uses funding from CSBG, LIHEAP, EFSP, Alabama Business Charitable Trust Fund, and other federal, state, local, and private resources. Five dedicated staff members, located at the King Center, implement the program by evaluating customer needs and barriers to economic security. They assist clients in developing personalized case plans and provide referrals to internal and external resources as necessary to meet needs and remove barriers. This program is critical in helping individuals and families improve their economic security by addressing immediate challenges and fostering long-term stability.

Action Steps:

- Case management services
- Referrals

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Problem Addressed: Individuals live in homes that are energy inefficient

Strategic Goal: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

Primary Outcome: Individuals experience improved home energy efficiency

Measurement Tool(s): Blower Door Tests

Verification of Need:

In the local community, the average monthly utility cost is $400 ($4,800 annually), which exacerbates the high cost of housing. Poorly insulated homes increase energy consumption, leading to higher utility expenses. Additionally, inadequate insulation contributes to health issues such as respiratory problems caused by mold growth and poor indoor air quality. Research published in the BMJ indicates that insulating existing houses significantly improves indoor temperatures and enhances the health and well-being of occupants.

Strategy Description:

The Weatherization Program provides energy-saving services such as insulation installation, caulking, and other efficiency improvements to low-income homeowners. Eligible homes undergo assessments to identify necessary upgrades, focusing on enhancing energy efficiency and ensuring health and safety. While the program does not cover major repairs like roof replacements, it addresses critical areas that directly impact energy consumption. Due to high demand, a waiting list is maintained, and applicants must update their information annually to remain eligible. By reducing energy usage, the program helps lower utility bills and mitigates health risks associated with poorly insulated homes.

Action Steps:

- Home energy efficiency repairs
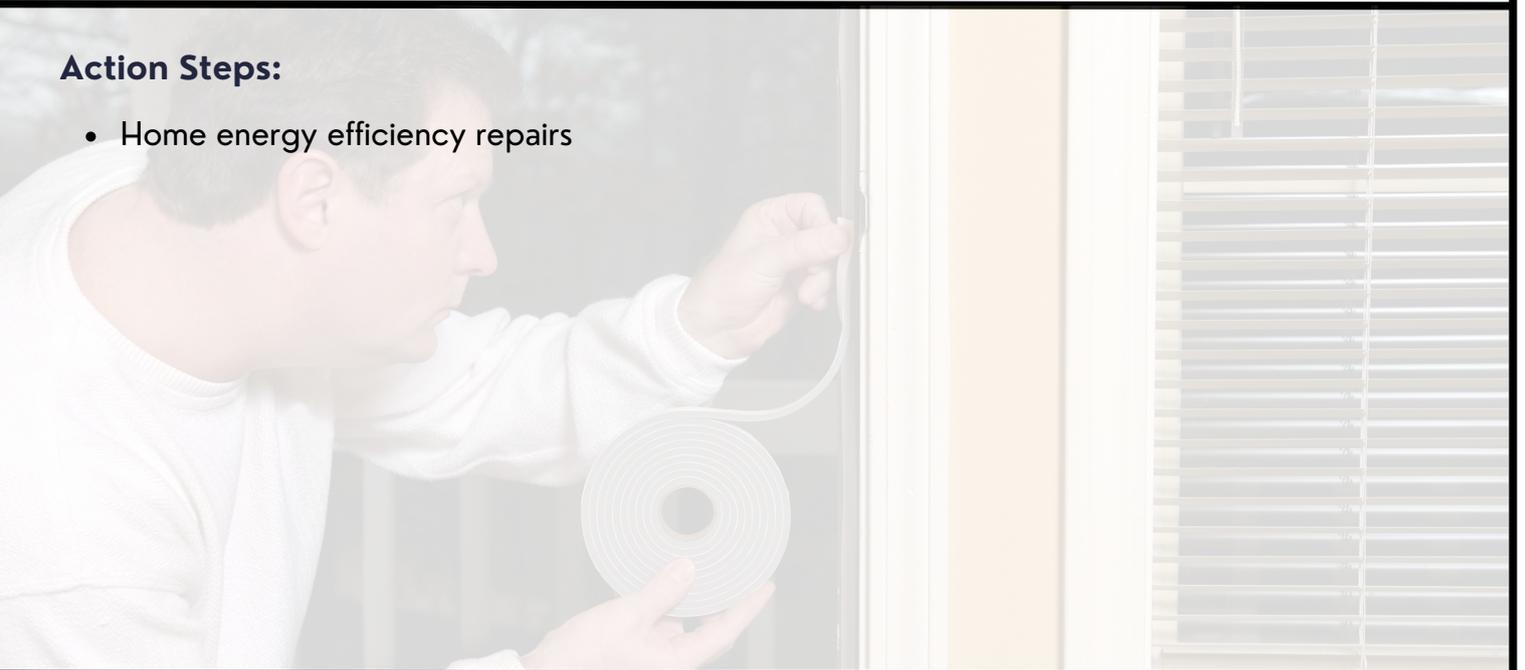
Affordable Housing Properties Initiative (C)

Problem Addressed: The community lacks an adequate number of affordable housing units

Strategic Goal: Communities where people with low-incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity

Primary Outcome: The community experiences an increased # of available housing units

Measurement Tool(s): Housing Development Reports, Resident Feedback

Verification of Need:

In the area served by the organization, the community faces a severe shortage of safe and affordable housing. Of the 81,890 housing units, 18,406 are sub-standard, leaving only 63,484 safe housing units to accommodate the 74,799 households in the area. This results in a deficit of 11,315 safe housing units, forcing many residents into inadequate living conditions. Furthermore, 13.94% of homeowners and 37.43% of renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing and utilities. Severe cost burdens affect 6.35% of homeowners and 24.9% of renters, who dedicate over 50% of their income to housing, leaving little for other essentials.

Strategy Description:

The Affordable Housing Properties Initiative, managed by ACHR, develops and maintains affordable housing complexes across Alabama to serve low-income families and individuals. Currently, ACHR operates 12 properties, including five in Lee County, providing over 400 housing units with options for seniors and residents with disabilities. Customers are identified through local outreach, referrals, and partnerships with community organizations. The initiative collaborates with private developers and federal programs, such as HUD's HOME Investment Partnerships, to expand access to affordable housing.

Action Steps:

- Housing development
- Housing maintenance
- Housing management

Problem Addressed: The board is in need of restructuring and consistent engagement

Strategic Goal: The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver quality services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness

Primary Outcome: The board is adequately structured and engaged to fulfill its governance role

Measurement Tool(s): Board Attendance Logs, Self-Evaluation Surveys

Verification of Need:

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified the need for restructuring and consistent engagement within the board of directors. A well-structured and engaged board is critical for ensuring effective governance, compliance, and strategic oversight. Currently, gaps in board engagement and alignment with governance best practices hinder the organization's ability to meet regulatory requirements, achieve strategic objectives, and effectively advocate for the community it serves. Addressing these challenges will strengthen the board's capacity to support organizational goals and uphold its fiduciary responsibilities.

Strategy Description:

The Board Development Initiative will focus on improving board structure, compliance, and engagement. Key actions include presenting revised bylaws and articles of incorporation for approval, submitting updated documents to the Secretary of State, and recruiting new board members to meet compliance requirements. A comprehensive board training calendar will be developed, with options for virtual training researched and implemented to ensure ongoing professional development. These efforts, led by the CEO and board leadership, will establish a governance structure that supports effective decision-making and sustained engagement, enabling the board to fulfill its role in advancing the organization's mission.

Action Steps:

- Present bylaw revision to the governing body for approval
- Make revisions to the Articles of Incorporation
- Present Articles of Incorporation to the governing body for approval
- Submit Articles of Incorporation to the Secretary of State
- Recruit new board members to ensure compliance
- Develop board training calendar
- Research options for virtual board trainings

Team Development and Retention Initiative (A)

Problem Addressed: The organization has a lack of qualified team members to fulfill its purpose

Strategic Goal: The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver quality services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness

Primary Outcome: The organization has an adequate number of qualified team members to fulfill its purpose

Measurement Tool(s): Human Resource Reports, Staff Surveys

Verification of Need:

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified a shortage of qualified team members, which hinders the agency's ability to sustain operations and fulfill its mission. The lack of sufficient staffing undermines the delivery of effective programs, limits innovation, and prevents the organization from fully addressing community needs. Compounding these challenges are issues related to staff recruitment, engagement, and training, which have contributed to high turnover rates and reduced overall organizational capacity.

Strategy Description:

The Team Development and Retention Initiative will address staffing challenges by implementing a structured plan to recruit, engage, and retain qualified personnel. Key actions include developing a process for staff engagement surveys to identify needs and priorities, creating a staff recruitment plan to attract talent, and designing a staff training calendar to address skill gaps and enhance professional development. Staffing levels and skill alignment will be re-evaluated annually to ensure ongoing improvement. These efforts, coordinated by the personnel manager, managers, and program directors, will strengthen the organization's workforce and enhance its capacity to fulfill its mission.

Action Steps:

- Develop process for staff engagement surveys
- Develop staff recruitment plan
- Develop staff training calendar
- Re-evaluate staffing/skill levels in one year

Problem Addressed: The organization lacks community engagement, leading to low awareness and insufficient partnerships

Strategic Goal: The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver quality services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness

Primary Outcome: The organization is actively engaged, improving awareness and building partnerships

Measurement Tool(s): Partner Logs, Community Surveys

Verification of Need:

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified insufficient community engagement as a significant barrier to achieving organizational goals. Low awareness among target populations and weak partnerships with community stakeholders limit the agency's ability to effectively deliver services, advocate for resources, and build lasting collaborations. Without a strategic approach to community engagement, the organization risks missing opportunities to expand its reach, enhance its impact, and foster mutual support with key partners.

Strategy Description:

The Community Engagement Initiative aims to improve awareness and foster partnerships through targeted outreach and strategic communication. The leadership team will identify key target populations, research their demographics, and develop tailored messages to address their specific needs and priorities. Additionally, the most effective communication channels will be determined for each audience to ensure meaningful connections. The initiative will culminate in the implementation of a comprehensive engagement plan, using data and feedback to refine strategies over time. These efforts will enhance the organization's capacity to build stronger community ties and maximize its impact.

Action Steps:

- Identify target populations that need to be reached
- Research demographics of target populations
- Create specific messages for each target population
- Identify the best channel of communication for each target population
- Implement the plan

ACHR
STRATEGIC PLAN

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Funding Initiative (A)

Problem Addressed: The organization lacks sufficient unrestricted funding to sustain its operations

Strategic Goal: The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver quality services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness

Primary Outcome: The organization has adequate unrestricted funding to support operations and strategic goals

Measurement Tool(s):   Staff Evaluations, Financial Reports

Verification of Need:

The 2024 Organizational Evaluation identified a critical gap in unrestricted funding, which limits the agency's ability to sustain operations and achieve strategic goals. Without adequate unrestricted funds, the organization struggles to address emerging community needs, maintain infrastructure, and ensure financial stability. Unrestricted funding is essential for covering administrative costs, innovating programs, and maintaining flexibility in the face of economic challenges, making this a priority for organizational improvement.

Strategy Description:

The Funding Initiative focuses on strengthening the organization's financial foundation by increasing unrestricted funding through research, planning, and outreach. The agency will research housing development programs to identify funding availablity, establish an agency-wide budget, and set clear fundraising goals.The communication plan established in the Civic Engagement Initiative will be used to enhance awareness of organizational needs among stakeholders. Additionally, the CEO, CFO, and board will collaborate to develop a fundraising plan while evaluating unrestricted funding levels annually to ensure progress and sustainability. These steps will enable the organization to address its financial needs and achieve strategic goals.

Action Steps:

- Research housing development program to identify funding availability
- Establish an agency-wide budget
- Establish a fundraising target/goal
- Use communication plan to enhance organizational awareness
- Use communication plan to enhance awareness of agency needs
- Develop a fundraising plan
- Re-evaluate unrestricted funding annually

Customer

Analysis

STRATEGY

Teamwork

Development

Standard 4.1: The governing board has reviewed the organization's mission statement within the past five years.

The planning team reviewed the organization's mission statement to ensure it (1) addresses poverty, (2) effectively communicates the agency's purpose, (3) includes the basic ROMA elements, and (4) represents all agency strategies. Recommendations were made to the governing body for revisions based on team member feedback.

Standard 4.2: The organization's Community Action Plan is outcome-based, anti-poverty focused, and ties directly to the Community Assessment.

The Strategic Plan serves as the foundation for the Community Action Plan, documenting primary outcomes that will be used to measure success in the removal of barriers preventing low-income individuals from moving out of poverty. Each family level strategy in this plan includes a statement of need determination that is directly associated with data documented in the agency's latest community assessment.

Standard 4.1: The organization's Community Action Plan and Strategic Plan document the continuous use of the ROMA Cycle or a comparable system. In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA Certified Trainer or equivalent to assist in implementation.

Community needs were identified through a community assessment conducted by the organization. A secondary assessment evaluated the governing body, leadership team, finances, human resources, facilities, programs and initiatives, technology, marketing strategies, and reporting/analytics processes.

Highlights from the community and organizational assessments were reviewed with the planning team to identify family, community, and agency-level barriers that could potentially impact fulfillment of the agency's purpose.

Development of the plan included a review of the agency's mission statement, establishment of goals, and identification of outcomes/strategies that will guide the organization's direction over the next three years.

Action plans, complete with integrated scorecards, were developed in coordination with the agency's strategic plan. These documents will be available to monitor program progress for reporting to the governing body throughout implementation.

The plan will act as a guide for implementing all strategies, with services, outcomes, and customer demographics documented in various software systems. The organization will utilize the Consultant as needed throughout implementation.

Program data will be reviewed by the CEO and governing body at each regularly scheduled meeting to monitor organizational achievements and prevent unexpected performance targeting concerns. Reports will be submitted to program funders on a monthly basis.

Data will be evaluated annually to identify the success of each strategy based on the primary outcome established during the planning process, the cost of each strategy, and the secondary outcomes achieved. This data will be included in future community assessments to assist with the identification of customer needs and specific populations impacted by these needs.

Standard 6.1: The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan that has been approved by the governing board within the past five years.

The agency's strategic plan was completed in December of 2024 for the three-year period of 2024-2026. It was approved by the governing body on _____. An official review of the document will be conducted by the Board of Directors at the end of each year. When necessary, this review will be accompanied by revisions to the plan and/or reallocation of organizational resources to ensure success.

Standard 6.2: The approved strategic plan addresses the reduction of poverty, revitalization of communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become self-sufficient.

All agency programs and initiatives are designed to promote the reduction of poverty and empowerment of people by either (1) ensuring that basic needs are met so that customers can focus on long-term solutions to their situations, (2) identifying and eliminating immediate barriers to self-sufficiency, or (3) by identifying and removing the issues promoting the continuation of generational poverty.

Standard 6.3: The approved strategic plan contains family, agency, and/or community-level goals.

The organization adopted three goals that represent the Family (F), Community (C), and Agency (A) levels.

(1) Individuals and families with low-incomes are stable and achieve economic security (F)

(2) Communities where people with low-incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity (C)

(3) The organization is compliant and has established an accountability framework to deliver services promoting self-determination with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness (A)

Standard 6.4: Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as a part of the Community Assessment, is included in the Strategic Planning Process.

Customer input and satisfaction data, along with feedback from team members, was discussed and considered during the SWOT Analysis portion of the Strategic Planning process to help guide the selection of agency programs and initiatives.

Standard 6.5: The governing body has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan within the past 12 months.

Although the governing body will monitor the progress of planned achievements at every regularly scheduled meeting, an official review of the document will be conducted at the end of each year. When necessary, this review will be accompanied by revisions and/or resource reallocation. The review will be documented in official minutes and will be accompanied by a vote approving the Community Action Plan for the following year. All strategies included in the Strategic Plan will be reviewed every three years along with the new Community Assessment to determine if changes in organizational programs and initiatives are needed.