

HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.  
**SPRINGFIELD PARTNERS**  
*for Community Action*

**Community Action Plan**  
**2009 - 2011**

**Mission Statement:**

*As the designated Community Action Agency for Springfield, the mission of Springfield Partners for Community Action is to empower people in need to attain self-sufficiency and economic stability.*

## **Community Profile:**

Springfield is one of the oldest settlements in America (established in 1636) and the third largest city in Massachusetts. Historically, Springfield is known as *the city of firsts*: it is the first Springfield in the United States and the largest. Situated on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River in the southwestern corner of the state; its location on interstate roadways and rail lines makes the city the wholesale and retail trade center for western Massachusetts.

Springfield is the county seat of Hampden County, and the regional center of the Pioneer Valley—the designation for the three counties (Hampden, Franklin, and Hampshire) of Western Massachusetts that lie within the Connecticut River Valley. The city is home to 17 neighborhoods—from the older neighborhoods of the South End, McKnight and Forest Park (McKnight and Forest Park Heights are Historic Districts) in the western part of the city, to the more recently-constructed neighborhoods of Sixteen Acres, including the Outer Belt, in the easternmost area of the city.

Major employers in the city include the Bay State Health System, Mercy Medical Center, the Springfield Public Schools, the MassMutual Financial Group, and Springfield City government. In addition, several institutions of higher education—Springfield Technical Community College, Western New England College and Law School, Springfield College, and American International College, with a combined total of more than 15,250 undergraduates and graduate students—are based in the city.

At the time of the last Community Action Plan the City was suffering from severe financial deficits. After serious consideration the city council, mayor and local legislators petitioned the state for assistance. After many negotiations the state decided to provide funding but all monies would be regulated by a state appointed Finance Control Board. The board is comprised of three appointed representatives from the state, the mayor and the city council president.

The hard work, perseverance and accomplishments of the Finance Control Board were acknowledged when the City of Springfield was recognized with the 2007 Municipal Leadership Award. This was presented to Springfield City Government for its “efforts to reform its finances, administration, public safety and schools,” said a press release from the Pioneer Institute, and recognizes “tremendous progress and innovation in municipal operations.”

Since the Finance Control Board took the reins of the city with Mayor Charles Ryan in July 2004, great strides have been taken toward improvement. The city’s finances were reevaluated, bringing Springfield out of a \$41 million budget shortfall, saving more than \$18 million in health insurance costs, increasing retirement earnings by \$25 million, implementing an integrated financial management system for the School Department and collecting more than \$25 million in back taxes. Also among the city’s improvements were the successful negotiation of all city and school department labor contracts, an increase in the city’s fire and police personnel, greater accountability for city employees with personnel policies and performance measures, and an upgrade of the city’s bond rating from junk status. “The Mayor and the Control Board have given Springfield hope by taking city government in a new direction,” said Jim Stergios,

executive director of the Pioneer Institute. “Springfield was a city in crisis and now, in many respects, it is better managed than other Massachusetts cities.”

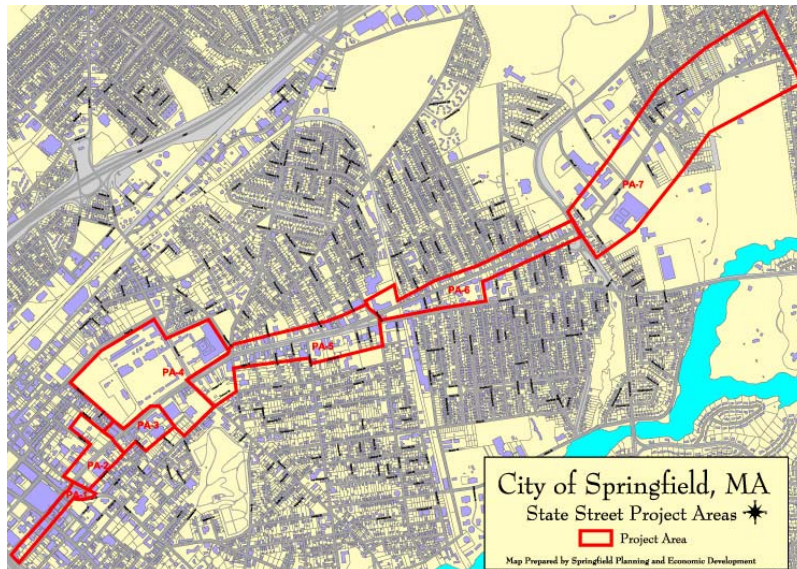
Now, Springfield has a new mayor and many people hope that he can extricate Springfield from the rule of the Finance Control Board while keeping taxes and fees from overwhelming everyone.

We have a State Street Corridor initiative thanks mainly to the building of the \$67 million federal court house on State Street and the \$13 million in federal monies for roadway improvement of the street. Many have seen this as the means to really make improvements to this east-west connecting road in the city. This commercial and mixed-use redevelopment initiative has been formulated to complement the roadway reconstruction project that will soon be under way.

The Corridor Redevelopment Program is a highly targeted effort that has evaluated pertinent market, economic and physical conditions affecting redevelopment. The program sets forth the framework for implementing a series of strategic redevelopment initiatives that are market-driven, financially feasible and based on sound development principles, and is intended as a blueprint for future development along the State Street Corridor.

The State Street Corridor Project will address the physical conditions and transportation issues along the entire 3.2 mile corridor. These changes will include improved traffic flow, guidelines for corridor aesthetics, a plan for streetscape features, improved safety and transportation for pedestrian and bicycle, and innovative parking solutions. The goal of this project is for State Street to continue to be a vital and proud link between the residents, local businesses, and area institutions. The vision is an urban boulevard with strong visual appeal that will act as a front door to neighborhoods, key institutions and employers.

*The Seven Geographic Project Areas  
State Street Corridor*



**HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES:** According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, in 2006 there were 55,000 households in Springfield with an average household size of 2.6 people.

Families made up 60 percent of the households. This figure includes both married-couple families (28 percent) and other families (32 percent). Nonfamily households made up 40 percent of all households in Springfield. Most of the nonfamily households were people living alone, but some were composed of people living in households in which no one was related to the householder.

**NATIVITY AND LANGUAGE:** Ten percent of the people living in Springfield in 2006 were foreign born. Ninety percent was native, including 58 percent who were born in Massachusetts.

Among people at least five years old living in Springfield, 28 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 76 percent spoke Spanish and 24 percent spoke some other language; 47 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well." These numbers have actually increased since the last Community Action Plan, when 24.18 percent spoke a language other than English at home and only 14 percent reported speaking English less than very well. Springfield Partners has worked diligently to keep pace with the issue of language by hiring bilingual staff and through such programs as the Low-Income Tax Clinic and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

**GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY:** A central issue in provision of services is outreach to new families and consistent services for those previously contacted. The population we are now serving exhibits growing mobility due to housing and income. As the economy begins to go down this issue grows and we are constantly dealing with new populations. Our staff spends a great deal of time validating residences and trying to contact previous customers. In 2006, 83 percent of the people at least one year old were living in the same residence one year earlier; 13 percent had moved during the past year from another residence in the same county, 1 percent from another county in the same state, 2 percent from another state, and 1 percent from abroad.

**EDUCATION:** The total school enrollment in Springfield was 45,000 in 2006. Nursery school and kindergarten enrollment was 4,600 and elementary or high school enrollment was 27,000 children. College or graduate school enrollment was 13,000. Springfield is typical of large urban school districts working to overcome money, staffing and violence issues. Gang violence has increased throughout the local community. Recent funding from the Shannon Anti-Gang state monies has enabled our police department to reengage the Mayor's Citywide Violence Prevention Task Force.

Our school system struggles yearly with serious budget deficits and teacher/administrator turnover is indicative of the discontent among the staff. The present superintendent has been interviewing for new positions for the past two years and has finally been replaced with a new superintendent who released his "Plan of Entry" on the school district website just one week after his hire date of July 1, 2008. An article on the new superintendent on the Reminder's website stated that "Dr. Alan Ingram pledged to solicit input and ideas from elected officials, parents, teachers, students, principals, employee groups, business leaders and others through a

series of private meetings and two to four public forums this autumn. There will also be a major effort to communicate with the public through the news media. Ingram said he wants to engage the media ‘in the discourse around educational improvement and the future of the Springfield Public Schools.’”

In 2006, 75 percent of people 25 years and older had at least graduated from high school. 16 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher. 25 percent were dropouts; they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school. This has a major impact on economics and a person’s ability to earn a living. This was also expressed at a recent meeting of Springfield’s Planning and Economic Development Committee, where they highlighted the need for an educated workforce. The U.S. Census Bureau’s figures show that workers 18 and over with a bachelor’s degree earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those without a high school diploma average only \$18,734.

**INDUSTRIES:** In 2006, for the employed population 16 years and older, the leading industries in Springfield were educational services, health care, social assistance, and manufacturing.

A recent *Business West* article said, “In Springfield, the employment-to-population ratios of teens declined from 37% in 2000 to 32% in 2005. Male high school students and dropouts across Massachusetts have found it particularly difficult to find work over the past six years, often increasing their involvement in gang and criminal activities.”

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County reported, “Our region’s two Career Centers served nearly 21,000 Hampden County residents last year and half of those came from Springfield. **Yet under half were able to find employment.** At the same time, we have persistently high job vacancy rates, particularly in such high growth industry sectors as health care, human services, precision manufacturing, and financial and business services; with good-paying jobs going unfilled. Putting further strains on employers who are trying to remain competitive in the marketplace are aging baby boomers retiring in large numbers while other older workers are looking to stay longer, but with a more flexible schedule.”

**INCOME:** The median income of households in Springfield was \$31,046. Seventy-one percent of the households received earnings and 15 percent received retirement income other than Social Security. Twenty-nine percent of the households received Social Security. The average income from Social Security was \$11,760. These income sources are not mutually exclusive; that is, some households received income from more than one source.

**POVERTY AND PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS:** In 2006, 28 percent of Springfield residents were in poverty. The city has jumped from 33.9 percent of children under 18 living in poverty as reported in Census 2002 to Forty-four percent, giving Springfield one of the highest child poverty rates in the country. Nineteen percent of people 65 years old and over were living below the poverty level. Twenty-five percent of all families and 46 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level.

**POPULATION:** In 2006, Springfield had a total population of 150,000 - 79,000 (52 percent) females and 72,000 (48 percent) males. The median age was 32.5 years. Twenty-six percent of the population was under 18 years and 11 percent was 65 years and older.

For people reporting one race alone, 54 percent reported White; 21 percent Black or African American; less than 0.5 percent reported American Indian and Alaska Native; 2 percent Asian; less than 0.5 percent Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 22 percent reported some other race. Three percent reported two or more races. Thirty-two percent reported Hispanic. Forty-three percent of the people in Springfield reported White non-Hispanic.

**HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS:** Our HUD certified Housing Counseling program is seeing a growing number of clients coming for assistance with foreclosure issues. Hampden County Register of Deeds, Donald Ashe was quoted in a *Republican* article on June 17, 2008 saying, "Mortgage foreclosures in the county are on a pace to break a ten year old record. The office recorded 500 foreclosures in the first five months of 2008 compared with the high of 818 in all 12 months of 1997." According to Christopher Lee, Director of the Springfield office of Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America, "It appears that this is going to be ongoing at least through 2009. The price of gas has gone up, the overall economy is in terrible shape and unemployment is going up." In 2006, Springfield had a total of 63,000 housing units, 12 percent of which were vacant. This leaves 8,000 units of housing available for rehab and possible reconstruction that could provide shelter in connection with the local efforts to house the homeless and possibly partner this with the IDA program to provide a home for a first time home buyer. Of the total housing units, 47 percent was in single-unit structures, 52 percent was in multi-unit structures, and 1 percent was mobile homes. Six percent of the housing units were built since 1990.

**OCCUPIED HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS:** In 2006, Springfield had 55,000 occupied housing units - 29,000 (52 percent) owner occupied and 27,000 (48 percent) renter occupied.

**HOUSING COSTS:** The median monthly housing costs for mortgaged owners was \$1,320, nonmortgaged owners \$465, and renters \$665. Forty-five percent of owners with mortgages, 21 percent of owners without mortgages, and 58 percent of renters in Springfield spent 30 percent or more of household income on housing.

**HEALTH ISSUES:** The Asthma and Allergy Foundation puts out a list of the top 100 challenging places to live with asthma each year, which they call "Asthma Capitals." This is an annual research project to call attention to the asthma epidemic and to advocate for changes in each city to improve the quality of life for people with asthma. Rankings are based on: Prevalence Factors (morbidity and mortality statistics), Risk Factors (air quality, pollen, "100% smoke-free" laws, poverty and more) and Medical Factors (medication usage and access to specialists). The 2008 list shows Springfield moving up from its position last year as #55 to its current ranking of #32, surpassing Boston.

## **Community Needs Assessment:**

We distributed surveys to everyone who walked through our doors from January through May. We also emailed surveys to several area agencies.

Data and demographics were gleaned from various secondary data sources:

- American Obesity Association
- Answers.com
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
- Business West
- DHCD's Community Profiles
- Economic Policy Institute
- Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Latino View Blog
- Massachusetts Department of Education
- MassLive.com
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth
- Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER)
- National Center for Healthy Housing
- New Routes to Community Health
- New England Journal of Public Policy
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Regional Employment Board of Hampden County
- Springfield Public Schools
- Springfield Office of Health and Human Services
- Springfield Reminder, the weekly local newspaper
- Springfield Republican, the daily local newspaper
- Urban Compass Blog
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- The Warren Group
- Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network
- Western Mass Politics and Insight Blog
- Wider Opportunities for Women

### **Primary Data – Survey Summaries**

In order to gather and process customer satisfaction data and to use this information to improve programs, outreach and other efforts, we surveyed clients for a four month period. Not only was this a recommendation in the Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action (NIQCA) report but it is a format we have always used to collect information for the Community Needs Assessment. It is the simplest way of reaching our clients and by keeping the questions to one page more people are inclined to complete the surveys.

All surveys maintained the standard approach of asking simple questions. The questions were intended to make people think in a positive manner rather than immediately looking for faults, problems, and areas of concern. We realized that question number 4 has caused some confusion and will reword or eliminate it next time. Surveys were available in Spanish for those who needed or preferred them.

*Surveys by email* – simple one-page surveys were emailed to other providers, funders, businesses, and various contacts seeking basic information regarding participants’ knowledge of our services, suggestions for improvement of services, as well as community resources. In general the comments indicate a lack of knowledge regarding our range of services offered. The comments also indicate an interest in having our agency provide a larger variety of programming.

### **Statistical Summaries** (Total surveys returned = 1025)

1. How did you hear about us?
  - Word of mouth – 465
  - Referred from other agencies/businesses – 180
  - Repeat client – 175
  - Walked past and saw our sign – 124
  - Newspaper article/advertising – 53
  - Fliers/mailings – 21
  - Church – 4
  - Hot line/citizens information line/211 referral line – 4
  - Website – 4
  - Community event – 3

It is obvious from the results of this survey that our customers are sharing their information with others in their community. If they find services that are responsive to their needs this will happen. Now the question is how can we capitalize on this positive result? This result also points out how important word of mouth referrals are to our business. It means we must be careful at all times to provide consistent, quality services to everyone who walks through our doors. We cannot afford to make mistakes because negative word of mouth could cost us clients. Word of mouth is positive but not enough to reach all the segments of the population that we need to serve. We are now challenged to develop outreach that will capitalize on word of mouth referrals but develop innovative methods to advertise and brand our services.

We are doing well with referrals from other sources and our signage is working. Articles in the local newspapers are also working to our advantage so we must maintain our contacts with the local media.

2. What is your opinion of our services?
  - Good/Great/Excellent – 743
  - First time client so no opinion – 103
  - Satisfactory/helpful – 30
  - Poor/fair – 9

- Needs improvement – 5
- Need better communication - 4

Most people replied with a positive opinion of our services. However, we have to do some work in customer service because 18 people were not favorably impressed and 30 rated our services as simply adequate. We must all offer consistent services to all clients all the time. Many of our customers have responded that our service is Good/Great/ Excellent but have few experiences with agencies for comparison. We are realistic about this result and plan to keep our focus on quality and meeting customer needs as our primary objective.

3. How can we improve or add to our services?

- Weekend hours – 228
- Education – 212
- Increase hours – 198
- after school programs – 193
- Furniture program – 144
- Basic Ed/GED/adult ed – 50
- ESL/Spanish – 28
- Advertise/promote programs – 21
- Increase staffing – 16
- Decrease wait time/schedule appointments better – 13
- SAT prep/homework help/youth programs – 11
- Computer classes – 11
- Job training of various kinds – 10
- Teen jobs – 6
- Budgeting/financial literacy – 5
- Sex ed – 3
- Elderly programs – 2

These answers show where we need to improve. Unfortunately, the biggest need that our clients see – offer weekend hours and increase our hours – is not cost effective for us at this point. However, we will need to come up with a strategy to better serve those clients who need programs after regular business hours.

There is an obvious need for various education programs in this city. From basic education to ESL, to after school and even sex education, our clients see education as extremely important.

4. What are some positive things in your neighborhood or in the city that you would like to see expanded? This is the question where we feel that people were confused and really answering about needs rather than positives that should be expanded. We will seek to correct this for next time.

- Jobs – 469
- Education - 282
- Community policing/crime watch/community activism – 279
- Childcare – 222

Our economy is in a terrible state. Unemployment rates continue to rise and manufacturing jobs are available but there is only one training program available and the waiting list is long. Our neighboring state, Connecticut, has more than 68 training programs and the community college system provides manufacturing shop training. Connecticut has made training for manufacturing a priority and all of their graduates are employed before graduation. Allied Health training is another type of education that is in short supply. There are numerous jobs available in various types of healthcare but few that don't require specific training or certification.

In general there are few ways for our customers to access even the most basic types of education. GED programs throughout the city have long waiting lists and there are few that are still operating.

5. What are some of the needs of your neighborhood or of the city?

- Security issues/police/crime watch – 221
- Jobs – 157
- Improve streets/fix pot holes/better snow plowing – 86
- Programs/services/ for youth – 79
- Recycling/fix dilapidated buildings – 60
- Housing – 55
- Education/ESL/better schools – 45
- Parks/recreation activities – 37
- Homeless shelters and programs – 25
- Childcare/after hours childcare/workplace childcare – 19
- Better public transportation – 13
- Fuel assistance/utility help/rental assistance – 12
- Elder services/housing – 11
- Health/health insurance/dental – 11
- Food and food pantries/grocery store – 10

Our agency is conveniently located for our consumers. The neighborhood has an increasing crime rate with assault, gang, and drug offenses on a steady increase. The city has formed a special gang task force but is concentrating their efforts in a different part of the city. The streets are not safe at night and most residents do not want to walk alone. School busing is now limited due to budgetary issues and children are forced to walk home in the dark during the winter. Local agencies are making efforts to support families with after school programming but this remains a serious problem.

The city has serious financial limitations which prevent quick response or any response to citizen concerns regarding street repairs, snow removal, and other types of infrastructure concerns. Empty buildings remain a concern. Safety issues with these structures center around gang members having meetings in the buildings, drug users/sellers using the houses, and in general the existence of a dilapidated building that lowers the value of other homes.

A facilitator from Uncommon Clarity, a consulting group from Westhampton, MA conducted focus groups with community leaders, senior citizens, non-profit peer leaders, and clients. The

objective was to obtain input from clients, potential clients and stakeholders so that the strategic plan can be reconsidered in light of that input.

Three focus groups were held to ask questions such as:

- What do people know about Springfield Partners for Community Action? Is the message getting out? How do they hear?
- What are we doing well? What aren't we providing that would make sense? What might make us more effective?
- And for our partners, how can we help them be more effective?

The focus groups among other things, showed that marketing and promotion of the agency and our programs were imperative and that we were definitely headed in the right direction when we identified a marketing plan as a priority for the agency.

People at the focus groups had more awareness of individual programs than the agency overall. Sometimes they were surprised that a particular program was one of ours. They did not associate the program with the agency. Many had suggestions for promotion:

- Put brochures on a table in the senior center or in the mail
- Bring applications to the senior center
- Encourage more word-of-mouth marketing by clients
- Get more exposure at community and school events
- Hold an Open House or a cook-out
- Collect and share the success stories
- Put up a more colorful and informative sign out front
- Come tell us at the senior center after lunch or classes

Non-profit peer leaders were quite familiar with the programs at the agency. However, they had questions about objectives, target audience, Community Action Agencies in general, and the best role for Springfield Partners:

- What area is covered? Mason Square vs. whole city vs. wider area?
- If Springfield-only, are there areas not served by CAP agencies?
- Since the concentration of poverty in Springfield is highest in the county, a Springfield focus is certainly justified. However, clarity is important for all.
- Within the defined area, who is the target audience? Who isn't?
- With so many services mentioned, what exactly is a CAP agency?
- Is it the only one designated and dedicated for an area?
- What is the CAP advantage?
- Why Springfield Partners?
- Why so many other agencies with similar services?

This also goes along with our desire to better market the agency and programs, but it seems that overall CAAs are not very well known and when they are known they are accompanied by confusion and questions.

The questions brought up at the focus group meeting led to a discussion about how Springfield Partners could be more effective. It seems that others would like to see Springfield Partners take a stronger leadership role in fighting poverty.

They suggested that Springfield Partners could become a stronger voice for poverty:

- Communicate the growth of poverty in Springfield overall to mobilize resources.
- Communicate community needs.
- Advocate for legislation and resources.
- The executive director, in particular, could become a more visible voice for poverty.

Each agency felt that they were so busy day-to-day that they have difficulty being strategic. They would welcome the leadership from Springfield Partners to pave the way to bigger things:

- Be the leader and convener of anti-poverty agencies. Facilitate the creation and execution of more comprehensive plans to reduce poverty.
- Become a neutral convener around grant opportunities.
- Become the singular voice leveraging individual agencies.
- Take back the lead from United Way (which filled a vacuum) and hold United Way accountable for distributing money to right places.
- Our region is the model in the state for planning to reduce homelessness. There is no single voice and model for poverty. Springfield Partners could create and become the model.

It seems that as the anti-poverty agency, other agencies look to us to do much more around advocacy and expect us to take a leadership or strategic position in the fight against poverty.

The consultant summarized all the input from the three focus groups in the following manner:

“While my responsibility was to collect information, not to make recommendations, I would like to touch on what I consider your top four issues.”

1. Focus on value, not programs.
2. Encapsulate your value in a simple short message.
3. Examine your client management and be sure all clients get all the help they need.
4. Someone needs to be more strategic! Perhaps it should be Springfield Partners.

#### 1. Focus on Value, not Programs

Shift your focus from a list of services to the value you provide. Program names, such as weatherization, IDA, phone assurance all require explanation. The value they provide is not immediately apparent.

However, if you talk about "helping you acquire, maintain and keep your house" you may be referring to several programs but potential clients don't need to know that. You will catch their attention and they can readily decide whether they are interested and desire more information.

Furthermore, there are just too many programs. Many don't seem to apply, so it is hard for potential clients to figure out what they might need. In addition, many potential benefits don't appear on the list of services.

## 2. Encapsulate your Value in a Simple, Short Message

Step up a notch from all the services and consider creating one simple, short message about Springfield Partners that you want potential clients to know and pass on to their friends. For example:

- Springfield Partners will tell you about benefits and opportunities that you didn't know that you could get. You'd be crazy not to talk to them.
- Springfield Partners is the single point of contact to get your life back together again.
- Springfield Partners = Help.

It doesn't matter if people know everything you do. It matters that they know when and how to call. A simple message "the place to call when you need help" can then be reinforced with more specific statements of value: help buying a house, help going back to school, etc.

## 3. Client Management

Examine your client management practices. Does every touch provide an opportunity for you to understand their needs and point them to the opportunities that will be most helpful?

## 4. On Being More Strategic

Start soon in developing a more comprehensive strategy. Whether you end up taking a stronger leadership role as suggested by the stakeholders or not, it seems you have some questions to answer about the nature and direction of your organization – questions too big to answer for your current round of strategic planning.

## **Internal Needs Assessment:**

The Chairman of the Program and Planning Committee worked with the Executive Director and the Director of Planning and Development, to decide the best way to move the board and the agency into the first steps of the Community Action Plan. It was decided to again hire consultant Deborah Reidy of Reidy Associates to work with us to develop tactics that would best meet the agency's needs.

After an initial meeting with the consultant and members of the Program and Planning Committee, including the Executive Director and the Director of Planning and Development, it was agreed that the priorities for the planning process would be primarily internal. This decision also reiterated the recommendations made by the Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action (NIQCA) to:

- Improve agency visibility by developing a marketing plan to target key community audiences and lay the foundation for improved fundraising
- Seek consultation on the development of a capital financing plan to renovate the new building with realistic goals and timetables
- Effectively utilize the Community Action Plan as an operational tool to guide decision-making and focus energy and resources on products versus people and accomplishments versus acrimony.

To start with we would review and analyze the previous Community Action Plan, providing us with programmatic goals for the next three-year cycle. Additionally, it was decided that emphasis needed to be placed on fundraising, marketing and "planning to plan" a capital campaign for the recently purchased building. It was agreed that the focus must be programmatic in order to raise the necessary funds to renovate and move programs into the new building, as well as meet the Corrective Action Plan mandated as a result of the recent review by the Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action team.

Additionally, the board decided that this would be the most opportune time to self-evaluate and they chose the Self-Evaluation Instrument on the NIQCA website.

Seven of the thirteen board members have completed and returned the self-evaluation instrument.

### **I Board Roles and Responsibilities:**

- 3 agreed that the *board members understand their primary role as policy-makers and delegate day-to-day management of the agency to the executive director.*
- 4 agree that the *board recognizes its responsibility to hire a competent executive director and prior to reviewing his employment contract, conducts an annual performance appraisal that recognizes areas of achievement and sets contract goals.*
- 2 agree that the *board recognizes the importance of strategic planning and has participated in the development of and/or approved an agency strategic plan within the last five years.*
- 0 agree that *on a regular basis (at least annually) the board monitors the agency's progress in achieving the strategic objectives outlined in its strategic plan.*

## **II Financial Oversight:**

- 4 said that *within the last year, utilizing recommendations of its auditor, the board reviewed and revised as necessary the agency's financial management policies and procedures.*
- 5 members said that *the board monitors the agency's financial situation by approving the annual budget, monitoring monthly/quarterly financial reports and ensuring the completion of an annual audit.*
- 6 agreed that *the board carefully reviews the audit report and ensures actions to correct findings, disallowed costs, and/or material weaknesses are completed in a timely manner.*
- 4 members said that *using a competitive negotiation procurement process, audit services are re-bid every three to five years to help ensure audits are reasonably priced and to infuse the audit process with fresh views and new perspectives.*

## **III Program Oversight:**

- Only 3 members agreed that *the board regularly reviews internal staff reports to ensure program-related goals and targets are achieved and to ensure that problems in program administration are quickly identified and corrected.*
- 2 said that *the board reviews external monitoring reports completed by program funding sources and ensures appropriate and effective action is taken to correct identified deficiencies and findings.*
- Only 2 members agreed that *the board regularly evaluated the effectiveness of agency programs, eliminating programs that are not effective or needed and adding new programs or services that are needed.*
- 3 agreed that *if administering a federally-funded Head Start program, the board ensures certain governance functions are shared jointly with the Head Start Policy Council or Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards.* One person indicated that this question was not applicable.

## **IV Managing the Risks of Board Service:**

- 5 board members agreed with the statement that they *review By-Laws annually to make sure they are in compliance with the law, do not conflict with articles of incorporation, and are consistent with board practice.*
- 5 agree that *board members are covered by Directors and Officers insurance.*
- 5 agree that *the board seeks legal counsel when necessary*
- Only 2 said that *with the advice of an attorney or consultant that specializes in personnel law, the board has reviewed the agency's personnel policies and procedures within the last year and approved whatever revisions were necessary.*
- 6 out of 7 agreed that *the board understands its meeting minutes are the only legal record of the actions it has taken and, therefore, carefully reviews the minutes for accuracy before voting to approve them.*
- Again, 6 out of 7 agreed that *the board has a policy that requires members to disclose any conflict of interest involving an issue before the board, and to abstain from discussion or voting on this issue.*

## **V Committee Operations:**

- Only 1 board member agreed with the statement that *each standing board committee has a written job description from the full board and reports regularly to the full board.*
- 5 board members agreed with the statement that *ad hoc committees are occasionally appointed to carry out specific, time-limited projects on behalf of the board.*
- 5 members said the *board committees save time by performing detailed and time-consuming work that could not be accomplished as efficiently by the full board.*
- 5 said that *committee members understand that all final decisions rest with the full board.*
- 4 members said that *each committee meeting is organized around an agenda, a copy of which is provided to each committee member prior to the meeting.*
- 4 members said that *in most cases, written committee minutes/reports are submitted in time to be sent to board members with the board meeting agenda packet.*
- Only 3 members agreed with the statement that *committee members are chosen for high interest and/or expertise in the committee's area of responsibility.*
- Only 2 members agreed with the statement that *all members of each committee attended 90% of their respective committee meetings.*

## **VI Board/Administrator/Staff Relations:**

- 5 members said that *board members consider the executive director to be an integral part of the board team and its decision-making process on all issues affecting the agency.*
- 6 said that *the executive director or staff members delegated by the executive director provide staff resources and support to the board and its committees.*
- 5 members said that *this board does not hold closed meetings excluding the executive director except on those rare occasions when it is appropriate.*
- 3 members agreed that the *board understands the importance of the agency's chain of command policy and refers all complaints, concerns, or comments from staff, the public, or those we serve to the executive director.*
- 2 said that *board members show concern for the well-being of staff, recognize their outstanding performance, and encourage their development by supporting job-related training activities.*

## **VII Board Service Effectiveness:**

- 3 said that the *board monitors its membership to ensure it is in compliance with federal state law pertaining to the tri-partite composition requirements and term limit restrictions if community action boards in Mass.*
- 5 said that the *board achieved a quorum at all of its meetings during the past year.*
- 6 agreed that, *using procedures outlined in the agency By-Laws, inactive board members are removed and replaced.*
- Only 2 persons said that *members of the board always base their decisions on what is best for all those whom we serve, not on special interests or personal agenda.*
- 4 indicated agreement with the statement that *individual board members understand that they can act on the agency's behalf only with the consent or authority of the full board.*
- 3 members agreed that *while always seeking a genuine consensus, our board members understand that while we don't agree on every issue, we must support all majority decisions of the full board.*

- 3 said that *the board values the contributions of all its members and accepts the fact that board members for a given sector (i.e. – locally elected public officials, low-income representatives. Or the private sector) have no more power than board members from the other sectors.*
- 4 said that *our board has adopted a code of ethics or code of conduct and reviews it annually.*
- Not one member agreed with the statement that *the board occasionally plans teambuilding activities such as social outings, retreats, or special presentations to build the spirit of teamwork.*
- 4 said that *new board members are oriented to the organization, including the agency's mission, by-laws, policies, and programs, as well as their roles and responsibilities as board members.*
- 4 said that *board members are active advocates who promote the interests of the agency and the people we serve.*

Areas or topics about which you feel the board needs additional training:

- Board members are responsible for the agency
- Understand and fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities
- Understand their position and responsibilities including chairpersons
- Overall mission of the board
- Working with the executive director's role and responsibilities
- Program review
- Board training
- Staff development
- Working totally together
- Learn to look forward
- Need additional training/on the same accord
- Communication skills
- What are the roles of the director (macro-micro)
- Board members invited to understand re integral part re executive director
- Retreat from office setting, more teamwork building
- Board needs to create/implement review annually a code of conduct
- Build capacity for agency staff/board members/executive director to interact and develop valuable time
- Improved understanding of board's role pertaining to responsibilities and day-to-day operation of agency.

Only seven of the thirteen board members have completed and returned the self-evaluation instrument. This low return rate could be caused by the length of the self-evaluation form. Perhaps it should be shorter next time. Board members are busy people and that should be considered when asking them to complete surveys or attend various functions and workshops. If the board can make this process easier, they will get a better response and increased participation.

It was decided that although all board members would be invited to attend the five scheduled meetings necessary to help with planning, that the key people who would need to play an active role in developing this plan were: members of the Finance Committee; members of the Building Committee; members of the Program and Planning Committee; the Executive Director and senior staff – Director of Planning and Development, Director of Administration and Finance, Director of Community Services, Director of Childcare Services, and the Director of Energy Programs.

The process would be best accomplished by holding five extremely focused meetings:

1. An After Action Review to look at the impact of the Strategic Plan formulated three years ago.
2. A Capital Campaign infrastructure meeting. This, it was agreed, needed to be the primary emphasis of the coming Plan and of every staff and board member. This meeting would build the foundation and direct us toward a Feasibility Study that would determine the success of such a campaign.
3. A Marketing Plan for the agency.
4. A fundraising plan to raise money that would not be targeted to the renovations of the new building but to specific programs and services, as well as for the agency as a whole.
5. A final meeting that would integrate all the previous meetings and help formulate the entire plan.

The first session was held in December 2007 followed by monthly meetings through May 2008. After each meeting, a summary was sent to everyone who attended as well as those board members unable to attend with the purpose of keeping everyone informed and aware at each step of the process and familiarize everyone with the plan before seeing it in draft form.

A staff meeting for all except union employees was held to ensure that everyone was informed and updated about the progress made for the Plan and for building renovations. This meeting provided an opportunity for staff to ask questions about both. Union members were not in attendance simply because their presence was required in the classrooms and because all of their monthly in-service trainings for the rest of the year are already completely scheduled.

After the meeting staff members were given surveys to complete and return within the week. We kept the same questions that we used with general surveys but because of our desire to beef up our marketing we added a question seeking suggestions on ways to promote the agency.

All 19 non-union staff members responded:

1. Ways to promote the agency:
  - Television commercials and ads on local cable channels
  - More features in print media
  - Radio ads
  - Better communication between departments
  - Increased visibility throughout the city
  - Educational presentations at schools around energy efficiency

- Attend meetings at other agencies
- Additional outreach opportunities with more staff attending events
- Write letters to the editor
- Host forums and keep poverty issues in the limelight
- Have same message that identifies who we are and what we do
- One point of contact for promotional, marketing and outreach materials
- Do more in way of advocacy
- Hold key major events

2. Ways to improve personal job satisfaction:

- Equal communication for all programs
- Human resource person
- More all staff meetings
- Quarterly staff meetings
- Fair wage and salary scale
- Staff should have updated organization chart with clearly identified authority and responsibility
- Allow directors to fully participate in managing their program budgets including staff training
- Improve communication
- Fiscal department should be more support and not the ones to decide if a cost is allowable particularly when that cost is provided for in the budget
- Updated computers; computers that work efficiently; up to date equipment
- Fax machine on each floor
- Increase mileage reimbursement; mileage commensurate with the cost of gas
- No lies
- Raises; yearly raises

3. Improve on client services:

- New programs that meet the need of the community; programs that meet basic needs; programs that truly allow for economic and social growth
- Expand open pantries with the cost of food so high
- Add evening hours at least one night/week
- Be consistent with clients; treat all with respect
- Explain programs and resources
- Quicker response to client questions, concerns
- Provide an area with light refreshments, newspaper and housing search materials
- Make improvements to the sidewalk especially in the winter as it is rough for clients - particularly the elderly – to get to the door

- Advocate for clients
  - Build staffing capacity
  - Open offices in areas where we do not have a presence; open office in Pine Point; open office in Forest Park
4. Positive things in the city that could be expanded upon: (many respondents, 9 or 50%, did not answer this question)
- Programs for teens
  - Homelessness initiative
  - Fixing and improving State Street
  - Mason Square Farmers' Market
  - Food vouchers
  - Weatherization; if everyone had weatherization we could save energy, pollute less and help the economy
  - Health care and Food Stamps
  - Police visibility
  - Great training programs and continuing education classes but they need more convenient hours
  - School uniforms and new school superintendent
  - New police commissioner
  - New mayor
5. Some needs of the city:
- Positive role models for youth
  - Recreation for adults and youth
  - Social education
  - General information and referral
  - More services for elderly and handicapped
  - More stores and restaurants downtown
  - Better code enforcement
  - Affordable housing; affordable rents; high efficiency, low-income housing that is already happening in Worcester
  - Better after school programs; more programs for youth; more programs for children transitioning from middle school to high school
  - Better prepared police officers
  - Better health insurance programs
  - Drug clean-up
  - Better public transportation
  - Better paved streets

- Reduction of crime
- Additional fire fighters
- Furniture program
- An economy boost
- Organizations need to work together
- Job opportunities; jobs for youth
- Homeless programs
- Education; training for youth

6. Other comments:

- We don't do enough to help with poor people's basic needs
- We have a two party system that makes it impossible to work as a team and this system should be dissolved for the long-term sake of the agency
- Staff should be deployed appropriately, i.e. fiscal staff should not operate programs and volunteers should not be treated separately

As would be expected there are some negative comments but for the most part the staff appears to have good ideas and suggestions on improvements for the agency.

The After Action Review resulted in goals for the next three years which can be read in the section titled Identification and Evaluation of National Indicators and CSBG National Goals and Outcome Measures and Three Year Goals and Strategy Development. The other meetings led not only to internal and programmatic goals, but also devised a timetable with intermediate steps necessary for accomplishing the stated goals (see attachment). All agreed that the most important steps were to hire a fundraising staff person, to contract with a consultant who would devise a Feasibility Study to determine readiness for the Capital Campaign, and to focus on raising the necessary monies to revamp the building at 721 State Street.

Benchmarks for achievement of certain goals will need to be renegotiated to dates that are attainable.

## **Service Delivery System:**

Since the onset of the War on Poverty in 1964 when our purpose was established we have continued to follow that vision, “To encourage and promote the improvement of community life in the area of Springfield, Massachusetts, with special emphasis upon but not limited to the initiation of programs in education, social services, youth employment and related fields.”

Currently, Springfield Partners provides the following programs and services:

### **Community Services**

#### *Telephone Reassurance*

Springfield Partners provides telephone contact for elderly participants. Each day, a senior aide calls elderly, disabled, and otherwise medically challenged persons, to “Check and Chat.” This enables the clients to continue their independent living situations while still having supportive services just a phone call away. This program is provided through our Senior Community Employment program in partnership with Citizens for Citizens.

#### *Scholarships*

We have awarded Community Scholarships every year since 2003 and have distributed a total of 113 scholarships to Springfield residents. 93 of the awardees have attended college or university while twenty recipients attended training and vocational schools. The twenty studied various fields ranging from truck driving to hair styling to medical billing and coding. College studies have ranged from business and accounting, pharmacy, nursing and other health areas, criminal justice and legal studies, journalism and communications, education, and more.

Citizens Bank has partnered with us since the beginning with scholarships for deserving students interested in a banking related field. Local TV anchorman Ray Hershel has been the master of ceremonies giving us media exposure and name recognition. Educators from the public school system and from the local community college have been the keynote speakers.

#### *Housing Counseling*

In April 2004, we received certification from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a Housing Counseling entity. This program provides homebuyer education, pre-purchase counseling, and displacement and relocation services for clients in danger of losing their homes. Since June 2007 we have seen a steady rise in clients in need of foreclosure counseling and assistance.

#### *Community Health Advocacy*

Our certified Community Health Outreach Worker provides clients with information on various health and mental health issues, substance abuse and other issues affecting their overall welfare.

Much of her time goes to assisting clients with applications for food stamps, MassHealth and other health insurance options.

### *Financial Literacy*

Financial Literacy Workshops show participants how to save, budget, build and maintain credit, and save for the future as well as for emergencies. This program is part of our IDA component and is required before participants can receive matching savings.

### *Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)*

IDAs are matched savings accounts that encourage and promote saving as a lifelong habit. Each person saves for a specific goal, buying a house, establishing a small business, or pursuing an education. The match amount comes from local financial institutions and grant monies from the federal government. This is usually a two-year program because of the amount of money necessary to reach a goal. We also provide IDA accounts for residents of three public housing developments in collaboration with the Springfield Housing Authority. Participants may only save towards the purchase of a home.

## **Energy Programs**

### *Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)*

WAP provides energy conservation services such as insulation, interior storm windows, weather stripping, and pipe and duct wrap to renters and homeowners in Hampden County. WAP works in conjunction with the utility companies to provide these services. Priority is given to households with elderly, disabled, and young children. Tenants and homeowners are eligible for these services. Almost one thousand homes were serviced during the past year.

### *Appliance Management Program (AMPS)*

AMPS staff check the efficiency of appliances and offer replacement of old appliances with rebuilt newer appliances. This program provides services to approximately 100 residents per year.

### *Bay State Gas Partners in Energy*

This provides a whole house evaluation for energy efficiency and purchase options for energy efficient products. Our energy crews, in cooperation with the Bay State Gas Company, provide energy efficiency options to sixty homes each year.

### *Energy Savings Program*

This is similar to the program offered by the gas company but is offered to consumers of Northeast Utilities.

## **Health Services**

We recently established the Springfield Food Policy Council in collaboration with several local agencies that focus on health and nutrition. The mission of the Council is to serve as a city-wide forum in which diverse stakeholders partner with businesses, community groups, and public officials to advocate and ensure a more comprehensive examination of our food system, and to continuously analyze issues that impact food insecurity and food systems.

We work as members of the Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities affected by asthma. Coalition partners work together to raise community awareness of asthma as a serious chronic disease, to educate community members about asthma (i.e. symptoms, management, home environmental triggers and methods of remediation) and to promote the sharing and leveraging of asthma-related community resources.

## **Childcare**

New Beginnings Child Care Center gives families a warm, responsive childcare environment where qualified teaching staff and assistants guide the children in an adventure through learning and discovering. The curriculum is directed by the needs and ages of the children. New Beginnings is fully licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to provide year-round care for children ages one month to five years. Staff members are working towards National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. This process requires several years of work including extensive curriculums designed for each age group.

## **Tax Assistance**

### *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)*

IRS certified volunteers provide free tax assistance to low-income workers at various sites throughout the city. This program saves the working poor in Springfield millions of dollars by taking advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. VITA strengthens families, reduces pressure on city services, and brings significant federal dollars into the local economy. Participants are encouraged to use their tax refund money to establish bank accounts, start Individual Development Accounts, or reduce outstanding financial debts. During the past year we served 1,519 low-income taxpayers resulting in \$1,085,705 in Earned Income Tax Credits, \$274,921 in state rebates, and a further \$1,832,806 in total Federal returns. Additionally, we saved these taxpayers \$261,825 in tax preparation fees.

### *Low-Income Tax Clinic*

This program works primarily with clients that have current issues with the IRS. The focus of the assistance is to educate the individual regarding their responsibilities regarding taxes and providing them with a plan to solve their situation. Many times we provide them with referrals to other sources that are needed for specific issues.

## **Identification and Evaluation of National Indicators and Outcome Measures**

### ***Goal 1: Low-income people become more self-sufficient***

#### **National Performance Indicator 1.2 – Employment Supports**

*The number and percentage of low-income participants for whom barriers to initial or continuous employment are reduced or eliminated through assistance from community action*

E. Obtained care for child or other dependant in order to acquire or maintain employment.

New Beginnings Childcare Center provides safe, affordable, quality child care for eligible low-income parents. Care is offered year-round and is licensed through the state Department of Early Education and Care.

#### **National Performance Indicator 1.3 – Economic Asset Enhancement and Utilization**

*The number and percentage of low-income households that achieve an increase in financial assets and/or financial skills as a result of community action assistance*

##### **A. Enhancement**

1. Number and percent of participants in tax preparation programs who identify any type of federal or state tax credit and the aggregated dollar amount of credits.

Our *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)* program provides free tax preparation assistance from IRS-certified tax preparers saving money that would otherwise be spent in preparation fees and returning substantial amounts in tax credits.

The *Low-Income Tax Clinics (LITC)* provide assistance for those who have IRS problems. Through this program we explain IRS notices, help amend tax returns and set up payment plans.

3. Number and percentage enrolled in telephone lifeline and/or energy discounts with the assistance of the agency and the expected aggregated dollar amount of savings.

*Weatherization* programs continue to provide necessary energy saving services via linkages with the utility companies. Last year we provided energy conservation measures to more than one thousand renters and homeowners in Hampden County. These services reduce average annual energy costs by \$218 per household. That number will surely increase given the rising cost of oil.

##### **B. Utilization**

1. Number and percentage demonstrating ability to complete and maintain a budget for over 90 days.

*Financial Literacy* workshops are designed to help participants clean up their credit, establish a budget and savings schedule, and manage their money over the long term. This is the basis for the IDA program and it is the beginning of long-term goal setting for the participants.

2. Number and percent opening an Individual Development Account (IDA) or other savings account and increased savings, and the aggregated amount of savings.

*Individual Development Accounts* allow participants to save towards one of three goals and to have their savings matched by the program to help them reach that goal. For 25 participants saving per year, that amounts to \$17,500 saved.

3. Of participants in a community action asset development program:

a. Number and percent capitalizing a small business with accumulated savings

Ten clients (40%) enrolled in the *IDA* program save for small business start up costs.

b. Number and percent pursuing post-secondary education with accumulated savings.

Of our 25 participants saving through the *IDA program*, five (20%) save for college.

c. Number and percent purchasing a home with accumulated savings.

Ten clients (40%) save toward the purchase of a home using the *IDA* matched savings.

## ***Goal 2: The Conditions in which Low-income people live are improved***

### **National Performance Indicator 2.1 – Community Improvement and Revitalization**

*Increase in, or preservation of opportunities and community resources or services for low-income people in the community as a result of community action projects/initiatives or advocacy with other public and private agencies*

C. Safe and affordable housing units preserved or improved through construction, Weatherization or rehabilitation achieved by community action activity or advocacy.

Through the *Homeownership Program*, the agency purchases distressed housing for rehabilitation and sale to a low-income first time homebuyer.

As part of our *Weatherization* program we install interior and exterior security lighting fixtures for low-income and elderly housing units. This as well as all our Weatherization activities saves money on utilities and provides an extra measure of safety for the residents.

E. Accessible safe and affordable childcare or child development placement opportunities for low-income families created or maintained.

*New Beginnings Childcare* provides year round, safe and affordable childcare programs for 90 children between the ages of one month and five years.

H. Accessible or increased educational and training placement opportunities, or those that are saved from reduction or elimination, that are available for low-income people in the community, including vocational, literacy, and life skill training, ABE/GED, and post-secondary education.

*Community Scholarships* are awarded to adults and high school graduating seniors for GED preparation, training programs, vocational schools and post-secondary education. Last year, we presented 21 scholarships.

## **National Performance Indicator 2.2 – Community Quality of Life and Assets**

*The quality of life in low-income neighborhoods is improved by community action initiative or advocacy*

C. Increase in the availability or preservation of community services to improve public health and safety.

The main thrust of the *Community Health Advocacy program* is to do outreach in the community to enroll folks in Mass Health or other types of health insurances available. At the same time we are informing consumers of other programs that can improve the health of their families, e.g. Food Stamps, community programs for special health needs.

E. Increase or preservation of neighborhood quality-of-life resources.

*A new project in partnership with the Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition and Bay State Health System* will provide a part time outreach worker to follow-up on patients that have been treated at Emergency Rooms for asthma and then admitted for further care. The purpose of this is to provide comprehensive outreach to insure a continuum of care following their release from the hospital.

We initiated the development of the *Springfield Food Policy Council* in an effort to educate, reduce healthcare disparities, and providing an annual conference the community on conquering obesity. The conference provided information for attendees on diabetes, healthy ethnic foods, exercise, medications/testing methods, food preparation, and reading food labels. A large part of the take away information dealt with how to access information and assistance from web sites and community resources.

## **Goal 3: Low-Income People Own a Stake in Their Community**

### **National Performance Indicator 3.1 – Civic Involvement**

*The number of volunteer hours donated to Community Action*

Besides our dedicated volunteers who serve on our board of directors, we have volunteers at New Beginnings Childcare, Telephone Reassurance, Community Health Advocacy, the Scholarship Selection Committee, and Springfield Food Policy Council. There are also many

volunteers who donate hundreds of hours to the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program as well as the time necessary to be trained as tax preparers.

### **National Performance Indicator 3.2 – Community Empowerment through Maximum Feasible Participation**

*The number of low-income people mobilized as a direct result of community action initiative to engage in activities that support and promote their own well-being and that of their community*

A. Number of low-income people participating in formal community organizations, government, boards or councils that provide input to decision-making and policy setting through community action efforts.

One third of our tripartite board is composed of members elected from low-income neighborhoods. Additionally, several staff members serve on local neighborhood councils, which partner with the agency to provide services, as well as on the local office of the Department of Transitional Assistance, which cross-refers clients with the agency.

B. Number of low-income people acquiring businesses in their community as a result of community action assistance.

By establishing *Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)* participants can save towards the goal of starting a small business.

C. Number of low-income people purchasing their own homes in their community as a result of community action assistance.

*IDA* participants save towards purchase of a first time home in the city.

Our *HUD-certified Housing Counseling* program assists those interested in purchasing a home through homebuyer workshops and one-on-one counseling.

***Goal 4: Partnerships Among Supporters and Providers of Service to Low-Income People are Achieved***

### **National Performance Indicator 4.1 – Expanding Opportunities through Community-Wide Partnerships**

*The number of organizations, both public and private, community action works with to expand resources and opportunities in order to achieve family and community outcomes*

The agency has formal agreements in place with:

- Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- HAP, the Region's Housing Partnership
- Mason Square Senior Center

- New England Farm Workers Council
- Partners for a Healthier Community
- Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services
- Springfield Redevelopment Authority
- Square One
- Valley Opportunity Council

We have financial agreements with:

- Massachusetts Electric
- Baystate Gas
- Northeast Utilities
- Massachusetts Technology Coalition
- Hampden Bank
- Citizens Bank
- Citizens for Citizens
- Partners for a Healthier Community
- WestBank
- Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- United Way of the Pioneer Valley

The agency has working relationships with many other organizations and service providers throughout the greater Springfield area including:

- Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
- Regional Employment Board
- Concerned Citizens of Mason Square
- Early Intervention Program
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Department of Early Education and Care
- Pre-School Enrichment Team
- Springfield Early Care and Education Partnership
- HAP, the Region's Housing Partnership
- Health New England
- Mason Square Neighborhood Health Center
- Bay State Health Systems Diabetes Clinic
- New North Citizens Council
- Holyoke Chicopee Springfield Head Start
- Springfield Housing Authority
- Western Mass Housing Court
- Massachusetts Justice Project
- Springfield Technical Community College
- American International College
- Neighborhood Councils
- WIC
- Pioneer Valley Project

- A New Leaf/Campaign for Human Development
- Step Up Springfield
- Insurance Partnership
- Cherish Every Child
- Health Access Network
- Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center
- Massachusetts Community Health Workers Association
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- North End Outreach Network
- Springfield Department of Health and Human Services
- Caring Health Center
- Community Survival Center
- Open Pantry
- Springfield Continuum of Care Provider Group
- Springfield Public Schools
- Human Service Forum
- Department of Social Services
- Greater Springfield Council of Churches
- Spanish Merchants Association
- Springfield College
- Springfield Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services
- Western Massachusetts Legal Services

These working relationships help us provide expanded services for our participants so that they receive the necessary and appropriate help.

***Goal 5: Agencies Increase Their Capacity to Achieve Results***

**National Performance Indicator 5.1 – Broadening the Resource Base**

*The number of dollars mobilized by community action, including amounts and percentages*

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) = \$559,149 or 19%

Non-CSBG Federal Programs = \$91,285 or 3%

State Programs = \$1,200,656 or 40%

Private Sources (including foundations and individual contributors, goods and services donated)  
= \$1,067,061 or 38%

Value (at Federal minimum wage) of volunteer time = \$6,593

***Goal 6: Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential by Strengthening Family and Other Supportive Systems***

## **National Performance Indicator 6.1 – Independent Living for Senior Citizens**

*The number of vulnerable individuals receiving services from community action that maintain an independent living situation as a result of those services*

### **A. Senior Citizens**

*Telephone Reassurance* makes daily “Check and Chat” calls to socially isolated elderly assisting them in maintaining independent living.

The *Senior Community Employment Program* provides subsidized on-the-job training for adults 55 years and older, throughout Hampden County.

### **B. Individuals with Disabilities**

*Telephone Reassurance* continues to be a vital service to our consumers and the greater community. Individuals with disabilities are a priority for program services and receive daily calls to ensure their safety and well being.

## **National Performance Indicator 6.2 – Emergency Assistance**

*The number of low-income individuals or families served by community action that sought emergency assistance and the percentage of those households for which assistance was provided*

### **A. Food**

The Food Pantry Eligibility program continues to be one of the most utilized services. We service an average of 25 walk-ins a day with that number increasing as prices rise and unemployment grows. The agency verifies food pantry eligibility and provides vouchers to each food pantry in the city validating that eligibility and enabling low-income resident to access these resources.

## **National Performance Indicator 6.3 – Child and Family Development**

*The number and percentage of all children, youth, parents, and other adults participating in developmental or enrichment programs that achieve program goals*

### **A. Infants and Children**

3. Children participate in pre-school activities to develop school readiness skills.

*New Beginnings Childcare* programs work with the pre-schoolers to ensure that they develop the appropriate school readiness skills namely pre-reading, pre-letters, and pre-numbers.

Children who participate in pre-school activities are developmentally ready to enter Kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

*New Beginnings Childcare* prepares pre-school children for Kindergarten by ensuring that they have reading readiness skills, science and math skills, and social skills.

## **Three Year Goals and Strategy Development**

One of the first of the Strategic Planning meetings consisted of an After Action Review (AAR). This was facilitated by Deborah Reidy of Reidy Associates, the consultant hired to assist with the strategic planning process. This meeting went so well that it was agreed this should be a yearly exercise to keep the agency on track with the strategic plan and particularly with agency goals.

Although many outcomes had been reached, we knew that we could do better and holding an annual AAR would keep us focused and help us to better reach our goals.

The group looked at each goal from the previous strategic plan, listed the actual results, good and not so good, as well as the causes of each result. We then decided on the results we needed to sustain and the areas we wanted to improve. We also realized that many of the results, although positive, were not outcomes that we had listed as hoping to reach in our previous plan; another reason to keep focused with an annual After Action Review.

At a final meeting designed to integrate all the elements discussed at previous meetings, the Planning Committee agreed that adopting and formalizing regular periods of check-in with our goals will lead to success and ensure accountability. Since we have a complex and inter-related set of activities, careful tracking is important.

### **PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

***Previous Goal: Springfield Partners will identify services available in the area of employment support and play a proactive role in partnering with other organizations to produce stronger linkages.***

We listed the outcomes that we had achieved over the past three years:

- Executive Director is a member of the Regional Employment Board
- We started the Senior Employment Program
- We worked with Massachusetts Career Development Institute's summer youth and have provided youth opportunities for several years now
- We utilized summer youth from the School to Career program of Springfield Public Schools
- In partnership with Reliable Temps and Small Smiles, we held several successful job fairs
- We participated in a workforce development needs assessment for the area facilitated by the REB

Looking at the causes of these results helped us decide where we needed to improve, what we needed to sustain and strategies for reaching this goal. For example, Reliable Temps noticed several of our press releases in local newspapers. They thought we would be a good venue for

job fairs and approached us about holding an initial job fair to see if they would get more job seekers at our offices than the numbers they were seeing. We held two fairs that were so successful Reliable Temps wants to make the job fairs a regular event. This also shows that our press releases are having a positive impact and so we want to maintain and strengthen media relations.

*Strategies:*

1. Identify potential partners to further employment/employability outcomes
2. Create linkages with higher education around employment
3. Maintain and strengthen partnerships with employment providers
4. Maintain and strengthen media relations
5. Hire additional staff to strengthen capacity around employment related development

*Outcomes:*

- Additional staff will be hired for employment related development ( this outcome will be suspended until rehabilitation of our new site is completed)
- Summer youth opportunities will continue to be offered
- Networking will be ongoing with other agencies

*Goals:*

**Explore possible role for Springfield Partners in the area of education.**

**Increase applicant pool of high school seniors for the scholarship program**

**Broaden the range of applicant schools for scholarship program**

**Enhance networking with organizations that have an education mandate to explore possibilities for partnerships and enhance existing agency programs**

*Actual results from previous plan:*

- increased number of applications from graduating seniors for scholarships
- met with guidance counselors at four high schools
- Increased participation in Youth IDA through heavy promotion
- Improved relationships with two of the four local colleges resulting in:
  - Football team from Western New England College (WNEC) worked on playground project for New Beginnings Childcare Center
  - accounting students from WNEC volunteered as tax preparers in VITA
  - Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) students used our childcare center for the observation part of their curriculum

*Strategies:*

1. Develop a marketing campaign that is both focused and strategic and has dollars behind it
2. Enlist board members to approach their contacts
3. Meet with high school guidance counselors
4. Advertise program more widely
5. Follow up on mailings with personal contacts

6. Hold personal meetings to explain agency programs and mission and see how partnership is working

*Outcomes:*

- Receive applications from 15 high school seniors for scholarships
- Response from every Springfield high school to increase pool of candidates
- Each high school in Hampden County will be contacted to promote Youth IDAs
- Partnership with American International College (AIC) and Western New England College (WNEC) to assist in volunteering and serving on board
- We will have a clearly defined marketing plan that will promote IDAs and scholarships

**Goal: Identify aspects of current childcare program that can be enhanced to better support the goal of self-sufficiency**

*Actual results from previous plan:*

- new dental curriculum in partnership with Partners for a Healthier Community
- center has eliminated its deficit over the past five years
- all teachers are earning certification (went from 50% certification rate five years ago to 95% rate currently)
- parent involvement has increased greatly through special projects
- instituted a newsletter primarily for parents
- increase in retention rates via children staying from infancy through graduation from preschool (instituted an infant program)
- working on National Association for the Advancement of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation

*Strategies:*

1. Continue to enhance curriculum through field trips, guest speakers, books, and stories
2. Keep moving forward with staff education and push all staff to pursue a degree
3. Promote parent participation through structured events and seek new avenues for participation opportunities
4. Seek funding sources for parenting support programs

*Outcomes:*

- All teaching staff will be certified
- Retention rates will stabilize at optimal capacity
- We will achieve NAEYC accreditation

All of these outcomes will produce a higher quality childcare program to serve our community.

**Goal: Explore feasibility of reinstating the furniture program**

*Actual Results from Previous plan:*

- discussion with board members, asked interested board members to do cost analysis, fund raising

Unfortunately, the board members had a lack of expertise in cost analysis and fundraising and the project floundered. The question remains whether we have the capacity, the need or the interest to bring back the furniture program. Perhaps we cannot adequately operate this program at this point in time.

The Planning Committee ultimately decided that while this program met a community need at the time it was offered, it is no longer necessary and should be removed as one of our ultimate goals.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Goal: Enhance board participation and training**

*Actual Results from Previous plan:*

- attendance has improved in the last couple of years
- limited board training
- no CPA or attorney on board
- not all positions are filled
- has not been a functioning board
- new president starting to hit his stride

*Strategies:*

1. Enforce board attendance policy as per NIQCA policy
2. Ensure that each committee member has responsibilities and tasks
3. Conduct continuous board training – duties and responsibilities of board, overview of agency, etc. (Training plan in progress)
4. Conduct in depth board member orientation as members join
5. Brainstorm other strategies at a board meeting
6. Establish an Advisory Committee with roles for board members who have served their terms.

*Outcomes:*

- New board members recruited with targeted expertise
- Composition remains diverse
- All 18 mandated positions are filled
- All standing committees are active and submit written reports each month
- All board members serve on a committee
- Revision of bylaws will be completed

- Board members will be involved and maintain attendance
- Board orientation will be in depth and board training will be continuous
- Board will have set goals especially around fundraising

**Goal: Continue to cultivate relationships with political and corporate entities in Springfield**

*Actual Results from Previous plan:*

- Some relationships happened accidentally, no plan
- Political figures have attended some events
- Some serve on board/committees
- Working on relation with new mayor
- Annual report sent to politicians and corporate players
- No increase in funding from city

*Strategies:*

1. Distribute information about agency on ongoing basis (newsletter)
2. Invite political figures and corporate executives to annual meeting
3. Send annual report to these same people
4. Recruit board members who are elected officials and corporate executives or ask them to make recommendations
5. Create marketing plan with a budget that incorporates cultivation of relationships and personnel with visibility
6. Hold interesting annual event at a good time
7. Track volunteer and in-kind support

*Outcomes:*

- Political appointees to the board will come from several sources; first Springfield’s Mayor and if necessary, other sources of elected officials (e.g. state rep/senator, U.S. congressperson)
- Increased city financial support
- Consistent presence of the public, the media and political figures at events
- Increased volunteers and in-kind support
- Increased board participation
- Continued advocacy with HUD and other funders

## **INCREASE AND IMPROVE AGENCY CAPACITY**

**Goal: Organizational structure supports effective implementation of mission**

*Actual Results from Previous plan:*

- Funding has increased
- Consultant working with ED to restructure
- Good press coverage, events and partnerships but need more awareness of the agency; “People don’t know us until they need us.”

- Lack of focused strategy for marketing and public relations with money behind it, both internal and external
- ED becoming more visible

*Strategy:*

1. Ensure that all grant applications and funding opportunities are mission driven
2. Improve both internal and external communications
3. Devise a focused overall agency marketing plan
4. Improve staffing capacity
5. Ensure that board understands their role in marketing and public relations
6. Maintain press coverage to improve agency awareness

*Outcomes:*

- Greater ED visibility
- Greater awareness of agency
- More funding
- More things will get done on a timelier basis because duties will be shared more evenly
- Board will become more involved in public relations; a marketing committee will be established
- Board and staff will understand their role in marketing and image

**Goal: Capitalize on natural opportunities to increase recognition and visibility of agency**

*Actual Results from Previous plan:*

- ED became more visible
- Funding has increased
- Consultant working with ED to restructure
- Good press coverage, events and partnerships but need more awareness of the agency; “People don’t know us until they need us.”
- Lack of focused strategy for marketing and public relations with money behind it, both internal and external

*Strategies:*

1. When agency and other relevant functions occur, bring “goodies” (story boards, easels describing programs, program applications, etc.)
2. Set up agency display board as permanent fixture at neighborhood councils
3. At annual meeting, have a celebration and invite community people
4. Standardize media “formula” to maintain balance between focus on people served while promoting agency
5. Ensure all staff know mission and other programs
6. Continue to “cross promote” programs
7. Board members advertise on bulletin boards in community gathering places
8. Revise “elevator speech” to give to board members

9. Improve the structure of our volunteer program
10. Increase staff capacity to better manage programs
11. Board members will work to make annual meeting a community celebration
12. Develop a marketing plan to better focus energies on agency recognition and awareness

*Outcomes:*

- More clients
- More awareness in community
- More volunteers
- More money
- Increased staff capacity
- Annual meeting will be a community celebration

We realize that the After Action Review has presented us with several priorities for overall agency and goal improvement:

- Coherent marketing plan with a budget
- Staff capacity and staff development
- Board development
- Fundraising
- Anti-poverty plan

By keeping these five priorities in mind, and by utilizing the AAR process on a yearly basis, we will be much more likely to keep ourselves focused and to meet the goals of our strategic plan.

It is crucial for the ongoing growth of our agency and for continued community credibility that we prepare a yearly After Action Review. This will keep our staff and leadership on task and provide the board with vital information for our performance reviews and agency efficiency reports.

This After Action Review will be researched and written by the Director of Planning and Development and the Executive Director. After collaboration on the initial draft the planning committee will review the document and a final draft will be presented to all board members and staff.

## **Linkages:**

The very words that name our agency should tell the public what we do. We are here to provide the greater Springfield community with various actions that will improve lives. This can only be done by reaching out to other agencies, partnering with them to enhance efforts and expand the possibilities of reaching all those in need.

We work with **HAP, the Region's Housing Partnership** and **Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services** to provide first time homebuyer workshops for Housing Counseling clients. The **Mass Justice Project** provides staff training for landlord tenant mediation. Our mediator assists clients with an application to determine eligibility for court mediation. This is provided on a weekly basis at the **Western Massachusetts Housing Court**. We are working closely with the **Mass Justice Project, Western Mass Legal Services** and the **Housing Court** to implement a weekly eviction clinic. **Mass Housing**, the state's affordable housing bank, facilitates first time homebuyer classes and provides staff training around homeownership.

The **Tenant Assistance Program (TAP)** offers an effective and innovative way to stabilize and enrich affordable housing developments serving diverse populations. Now in its 25th year, TAP strengthens housing communities by promoting direct communication, early intervention, conflict resolution, education and wellness through membership benefits that include:

We work directly with **Valley Opportunity Council, New England Farm Workers, Springfield's Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services, Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO), National Grid, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Bay State Gas, the Department of Energy**, and all Massachusetts CAP Agencies to achieve our goals in the Weatherization Department. Each of these partners enhances our present programming. We also provide the Money Smart curriculum to consumers who default on their utility payments to WMECO.

Emergency/referral/and day-to-day case management for walk-in clients is part of the normal course of activities. Many residents of our community use our facility as their source of information on their entitlements. We are in close association with the **Salvation Army, Open Pantry, St. Johns Congregational Church Food Pantry**, and other food sources in the city, and provide vouchers that allow our participants the opportunity to access this service on the basis of individual need. We also cross-refer with the **Community Survival Center, New England Farm Workers Council, Catholic Charities, Greater Springfield Council of Churches, Jewish Family Services**, and others.

We initiated the Springfield Food Policy Council in collaboration with the **Food Bank of Western Massachusetts** and **Partners for a Healthier Community**, a Baystate Health Systems offshoot, and other local health focused agencies. We refer consumers to the many farmers' markets throughout the city and particularly to the new Mason Square Farmers' Market which is operated by **Concerned Citizens of Mason Square**.

Our Community Health Advocacy program works with many agencies and providers in the region including the **Health Access Network, Project Bread**, and the local **Department of**

**Transitional Assistance.** We are members of the **Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers**, which is a resource and support group for health workers throughout the Commonwealth. Our Community Health Outreach worker was elected to the board of Directors for the Association. This program also performs outreach and enrollment via the **Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Massachusetts** to target uninsured and underinsured folks.

New Beginnings Childcare Center is fully licensed through the **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC)** and is working toward accreditation from the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** with assistance from our local resource and referral agency, the **Preschool Enrichment Team**. Our Childcare Director is an active member in the **Springfield Early Care and Education Partnership**, which provides support funding for the program through the previously mentioned DEEC. Special needs children at New Beginnings are provided with services from the **Springfield Public Schools**, the **Child Guidance Program**, and the **Comprehensive Health Team. Square One**, formerly the Springfield Day Nursery, also provides assistance with curriculum development.

The **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** trains and certifies tax preparers for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. Volunteers assist with taxes at several sites throughout the area: **YMCA, Palmer Library, ACORN, McKnight Neighborhood Council, and the Spanish American Union.**

Financial Literacy workshops are provided in collaboration with **Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services.**

**Citizens Bank** has provided money for additional Scholarship awards for the past three years. We are fortunate to have the continued support of local television personality **ABC 40 Anchor/Reporter Ray Hershel**, who has brought with him coverage for each event as well as continued name recognition.

Many staff members are active participants in various boards and committees providing the agency with ready made linkages and potential partners:

### **Executive Director**

New England Community Action Agency Association  
Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield  
National Community Action Foundation  
National Community Action Partnership  
Massachusetts Chapter, National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials  
Massachusetts Individual Development Account Society (MIDAS)  
Citizens Housing and Planning Association  
Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Finance Committee and Youth Council  
Massachusetts Community Action Programs (MASSCAP), Secretary  
City of Springfield Mayor's Homelessness Strategy Committee  
State Street Corridor Strategic Planning Committee

### **Director of Planning and Development**

Department of Transitional Assistance Advisory Board – Chair  
Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action – Certified Peer Reviewer  
Human Service Forum’s Leadership Development Institute  
Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition  
Western Mass Homelessness Task Force  
Information Sharing Network

### **Director of Community Services**

Massachusetts Individual Development Account Society (MIDAS)  
Step Up Springfield  
McKnight Neighborhood Council  
Holyoke Food Policy Council  
Mason Square Neighborhood Health Center Advisory Board  
Mason Square Health Task Force  
Community Access Project  
Faith in Action Program  
Mason Square Weed and Seed Coalition  
Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition  
Target: Hunger Regional (Berkshire County and Mason Square) Steering Committee

### **Community Health Outreach Worker**

Massachusetts Association for Community Health Workers  
Community Outreach Workers Network Training  
Mass Health Training Forums  
Mason Square Neighborhood Health Center  
Community Health Network Association Greater Springfield Region

### **Childcare Director**

Springfield Early Care and Education Partnership  
Cherish Every Child

### **Energy Director**

Low-income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN)  
Western Massachusetts Electric Company

### **Energy Auditor**

Department of Energy’s Contractor Procurement Committee

**Director of Administration and Finance**

Massachusetts VITA Coalition  
Fiscal Officer Round Table

## Funding Strategies:

Springfield Partners receives funds from federal, state, private, and local sources.

Funder	Program Subsidized
Community Service Block Grant(CSBG)	Via DHCD for overall administrative purposes
CSBG Special Project	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
MA Department of Early Education and Care	New Beginnings Childcare Center
Partners for a Healthier Community	Total Health Network/Food Policy Council
Springfield Early Care and Education Partnership (SECEP)	Monies for New Beginnings Childcare graduation
New England Farm Workers Council	New Beginnings Childcare
USDA via Child & Adult Care Food Program	Subsidized meals for childcare
United Way of the Pioneer Valley via donor choice	New Beginnings Childcare
US Department of Health and Human Services	Via an Assets For Independence grant for IDAs
Department of Energy	Weatherization
Northeast Utilities/Western Mass Electric Co.	Weatherization
Bay State Gas	Weatherization
Massachusetts Electric	Weatherization
Massachusetts Technology Collaborative	Weatherization
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA Foundation	MassHealth Outreach
Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation	VITA
Westbank	Matching funds for IDAs
Hampden Bank	Matching funds for IDAs
IRS	Low Income Taxpayer Clinic
Citizens for Citizens	Senior Employment Program
South Congregational Church	New Beginnings Childcare
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts	Total Health Network/Food Policy Council
City of Springfield	Administration – 721 Facility

In FY 2008, 19% of CSBG funds was used toward administrative and program expenses, and in FY 2009, we believe that it will be the same percentage of our CSBG funding.

We held a Capital Campaign Infrastructure meeting to help us decide on action steps to raise money for the necessary renovations for the new building. We started by developing a case statement:

- Better appearance will improve neighborhood and nearby businesses
- Stimulate entrepreneurship and local business opportunities
- Better meet standards of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Attract more students and additional funding

- Students will better achieve long term goals as a result of a stronger foundation in pre-school
- Be more cost effective for Springfield Partners in the long run
- Will enable new programming and new equipment.

These points helped everyone better understand the importance of the Capital Campaign and provided all of us with talking points for neighbors, businesses, donors, stakeholders, legislators and anyone else who will be impacted by this building.

It was agreed that we needed a feasibility study to determine if the agency is ready for a Capital Campaign. We discussed whether or not to hire a consultant to help implement a feasibility study. We realized that the right consultant would have the needed expertise to take on this study and could provide a better turn-around time than we could expect by using existing staff members who are pretty much working to capacity. We finished this meeting by developing an action plan with due dates and an outline of necessary steps to help us reach the first part of this process.

It was also decided that we needed to approach the Capital Campaign Scheduling Committee, a group formed to review requests for financial assistance from educational, hospitals and health institutions, civic and welfare organizations, as well as any other type of organization requesting public support through any type of fund raising activity for capital purposes. The members are:

- The Davis Foundation
- The Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation
- Big Y Foods
- FL Roberts
- Banknorth
- Friendly Ice Cream Corporation
- Hasbro
- Mass Mutual
- Peter Pan Bus Lines, Inc.
- Sovereign Bank
- Spaulding Sports Worldwide
- Springfield Newspapers
- United Bank
- Western Massachusetts Electric
- Westfield Bank
- Woronoco Charitable Foundation.

Their mission is to provide for the orderly access to philanthropic capital for needed plant and equipment by not for profit, non-governmental agencies. The individual members will not provide capital to an agency or organization unless that agency goes through the Capital Campaign Scheduling Committee application process. The application is actually quite helpful in laying out the necessary steps for raising capital funds especially for an organization that has no experience with a capital campaign.

We dedicated the next meeting to fundraising for needs outside of the capital campaign. This meeting focused on developing an appropriate plan to help us reach fundraising goals. This

resulted in benchmarks for implementing the fundraising plan along with a timeline that will keep us on track.

We started the process by determining the amounts of money we want to raise and deciding which program or service we wanted/needed to raise it for. Then we looked at typical sources of funding to determine what we already know about each source in specific categories. After matching the amounts with the categories, and selecting and evaluating fundraising activities, we set goals. We prioritized based on whether a category was a short or long term need, sustainability, community need, the risk versus the benefits and funder mandates.

Initially, we decided that we needed to raise **one and a half million dollars**. That number matched the amount we need for renovations of our newly purchased building and left everyone feeling quite overwhelmed. When we looked more closely at the individual categories, we realized that some categories were actually part of the capital campaign and should be relegated there.

Ultimately, it was decided that the most important thing we could do to meet our fundraising goals was to hire a new staff person with that expertise who would do only fundraising. This person would also be a huge asset with the capital campaign and it was decided to start looking for someone immediately.

The next step was to winnow down the one and half million dollars to a more realistic and hopefully achievable amount. We subtracted various amounts; some more properly fit into the capital campaign, some were amounts for items that we could seek as donations and therefore not have to purchase, some categories were already being achieved and not appropriate to include; some were not a fit with fundraising but were really pie in the sky and best left for another day. At the final meeting, it was decided to omit one goal entirely because it was already maintained by the agency on a regular basis. That saved us \$30,000.

We did however, decide that we needed to raise a total of \$525,000 and we broke that amount down in the following categories:

<b>Housing Counseling Program</b>	<b>\$75K</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased staff to deliver comprehensive services</li><li>• Staff training</li><li>• New programming</li></ul>	
<b>IDA Program</b>	<b>\$90K</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuation of program</li><li>• Matching funds</li></ul>	
<b>Development and Fundraising</b>	<b>\$45K</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heighten capacity</li></ul>	
<b>New Beginnings Childcare</b>	<b>\$250K</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New playground</li></ul>	

- New equipment for every classroom

**Overall agency**

- Up-to-date Office equipment and furniture **\$80K**
- Networking (fold into building capital campaign)
- Moving costs and daycare disruption **\$50K**
- Special projects **\$25K**

## **Vision Statement:**

Our vision statement needs no updating. We know that we still want to deliver quality services each and every day and support our clients every way we can. We want to continue to work with other agencies and businesses to secure additional resources that will help us work toward our mission: To empower people in need to attain self-sufficiency & economic stability.

Our vision for the next three years remains:

- We will provide a safety net for less fortunate people
- We will help people strive for self sufficiency
- We will assist people in need to improve their self-sufficiency
- We will empower residents toward self-sufficiency, economic growth & stability.

The ultimate goal for anyone in Community Action is the eradication of poverty. Until that happens we will work to help all those in need of our services and programs, we will seek out collaborations that will improve those services, and we will continue to battle the effects of poverty with the aim of bringing our clients out of poverty.

## **Program and Community Action Plan Evaluation:**

### *Individual Development Accounts (IDAs):*

Description: We have been providing this program for the past five years. We started with \$411,000 in federal funds from an Assets for Independence (AFI) grant. This money is administered by the Office of Community Services (OCS), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. We have been fortunate to receive matching funds from Citizens Bank, Hampden Bank and Bank of America. We have also received funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Target population for this program is established by having the participants meet certain financial/employment/criteria.

IDA eligible participants must have an income of some kind, preferably through working. They save money every month towards one of three goals: homeownership, education/training or small business start-up. The agency matches their money with the rate depending on their savings goal.

1. Goals: The goal of the IDA program is for each participant to reach their targeted savings goal and to purchase a house, establish a small business, or to further their education and training. Ultimately, we want people to see saving as extremely important and to continue saving even after leaving the program.
2. Measurable objectives: The program objectives are for ten clients to save toward the purchase of a home, five clients will save for college expenses and ten clients to save for small business startup costs.
3. Evaluation Process: The major consideration in evaluating the IDA program is length of time in reaching the goals and low program participation. Since we are asking low-income people to set aside some of their money each month to save for a goal that has previously been seen as beyond their grasp, many potential participants consider this program to have unattainable goals. The time involved in reaching these goals has also caused possible funders to question the program. Evaluation is based on successful completion of monthly set asides.
4. Pre-established program goals: We consider consistency and positive intent a measure of success and that is indicated by participants consistently meeting program goals by their financial commitment and by meeting with coordinator and other participants.
5. Recommendations: Potential areas for improvement of the IDA program include increasing advertising to reach additional clients, and a marketing plan that would point out the benefits of a monthly saving plan. Improvement of our linkages with other referral sources and possible partners will enhance our outreach.

### *Housing Counseling:*

Description: We were certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide Housing Counseling services in 2004. As a HUD-approved Local Housing Counseling Agency, we provide Homebuyer Education, Pre-purchase Counseling, Mobility and Relocation Assistance, Renter Assistance/Section 8 and Public Housing, and Money/Debt Management. HUD provides partial funding for Housing Counseling and the agency uses CSBG funds and in-kind donations to take up the slack. In-kind donations consist of speakers from financial institutions, real estate brokerages, and various types of lenders.

Housing Counseling is provided to clients via group sessions/workshops and individual counseling sessions. Although most clients are renters, we have been seeing more and more homeowners over the past year due to the foreclosure issues that have been plaguing low-income folks but particularly those with Adjustable Rate Mortgages.

1. Goals: The goal of the homebuyer education component is to make all the participants more informed about the home buying process. That means we bring in realtors, attorneys, housing inspectors and other experts to our workshops. It also means that we stress the importance of maintaining their home and the associated costs incurred in doing so.
2. Measurable objectives: We point out that buying a home is much more than just a down payment and making the monthly mortgage, they now have to pay utilities, water and sewer, taxes, and all the necessary repairs that a house always seems to need. To that end, one of our goals is that 18 participants will decide, after completing the homebuyer education workshop series, that they are not ready to purchase a home. These participants continue with pre-purchase counseling, and are referred to financial literacy. Another objective is that fifty people will complete the home buyer workshops. We also refer 29 other workshop participants to financial literacy and ultimately to IDAs. And of course, we estimate that 3 out of 50 participants will actually purchase their own homes as a result of participation in this program.
3. Evaluation: This is based on the number of participants who successfully complete each phase of the program and purchase a home due to the program. If they complete the workshops and decide that they are not ready to buy a home and assume all of those responsibilities this is also considered a positive result.
4. Pre-established program goals: All goals for present program were achieved for 2007.
5. Recommendations: The main recommendation for Housing Counseling is to add additional staff. We are seeing so many people now for foreclosures and other housing issues that more Housing Counselors are needed to ensure we keep on track and meet the program goals. We continue to see numerous individuals for pre-purchase assistance and those seeking new housing. This increases the number of individuals to be served that we

originally estimated and we see that an additional staff member is needed to accommodate this overflow.

*Community Health Advocacy:*

Description: funding for this program is provided through the Massachusetts Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, CSBG funds and Partners for a Healthier Community. Many of our consumers lack access to preventive health care information and services. This lack of preventive health care has long-term, debilitating effects on the entire family. We have had a Community Health Outreach Worker since 2000. She has proven herself to be adept at outreach and an outspoken advocate for the low-income families we serve. Her expertise and experience has helped the agency align itself with several partners that have in turn assisted us with programs and even included us in funding proposals.

The Community Health Outreach Worker is primarily responsible for identifying, educating and enrolling low-income and working poor families in the state sponsored health insurance programs, but she also provides those families with health care information and educates them about the importance of having a primary care provider. This means fewer visits to emergency rooms resulting in a better use of everyone's resources.

1. Goals: Our strategy is to reach out to these families and to advocate for them particularly in the areas of health insurance benefits and to make them aware of the benefits of having a primary care provider. The overall goal for this program is to reach 500 low income families and to provide them with some kind of information related to health, whether it be health insurance, food stamp enrollment assistance, information about primary care providers, help with addiction issues and anything else health related.
2. Measurable Objectives in this program are based on numbers of clients enrolled. Objectives that are difficult to measure and that vary with the population shifts would include outreach numbers, assistance that we provide for mental health issues, substance abuse needs, domestic abuse, and helping families and individuals to find and use a primary doctor and avoid using the emergency room in that role.
3. Evaluation: At the end of the year we report on the number of individuals and families enrolled in Mass Health and other insurance options.
4. Pre-established program goals: The main objective was to enroll 500 clients in MassHealth or other appropriate state sponsored or federal health insurance programs. This was achieved.
5. Recommendations: The main recommendation for this program is to change its status to full time. Right now the Community Health Outreach Worker is allocated to this program on a part time basis and to other programs also on the same basis. In order to reach the goal number of participants, the worker really needs to be full time in her outreach and education. This is a program that would benefit from expansion.

### *Weatherization Assistance Program:*

Description: This program was started in 1976 through the assistance of the Department of Energy to assist low-income families who lacked resources to invest in energy efficiency. Much of the low-income housing in Hampden County needs assistance with energy efficiency measures. Funding is provided through the Massachusetts Department of Energy and through the local utility companies, Western Massachusetts Electric Company, Baystate Gas, North East Utilities, and Massachusetts Electric. Our clients cannot afford to insulate their homes, replace their old windows or address the many other factors that increase their heating and cooling costs. Through the Weatherization Assistance Program we can provide air sealing, attic and/or sidewall insulation, weatherstripping, and other minor repairs that will make their homes more energy efficient.

Households with incomes up to 200% of the Federal Poverty level are eligible for the Weatherization Assistance program. Participants must first be approved for Fuel Assistance. Priority is given to household with elderly, disabled, and who have children under seven years old. Renters and homeowners throughout Hampden County are eligible for Weatherization Assistance.

1. Goals: our goal is to reach 1100 homes throughout Hampden County and preserve or improve them through Weatherization Assistance.
2. Measurable objectives include:
  - 229 units will be weatherized under the Department of Energy's Weatherization program
  - Of these 229, 70 units will receive additional services through Baystate Gas Partners in Energy program
  - 864 units will receive services through Western Mass Electric Energy Savings Program
  - 80 units will be serviced via Mass Electric's low-income Weatherization program
  - 30 of the DOE Weatherization units will receive other services through Mass Electric's low-income program
  - 80 units will receive appliance management services through Mass Electric AMPs.
3. Evaluation: Energy auditors track and evaluate all the work done by contractors.
4. Pre-established program goals: This is our largest program in terms of services and funding and they consistently meet their goals.
5. Recommendations: This program also could use additional staffing to make their goals more reachable especially because we have only two auditors to cover all of Hampden County. We could be more efficient with the addition of even one more auditor.

### *New Beginnings Childcare:*

Description: We have offered childcare in various forms for approximately 40 years. Currently, we provide care for 91 infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Childcare is year-round and is fully licensed and funded by the state Office of Education and Care. Additional funding from

coalitions to support slots and some programming, USDA provides some funding toward lunch and snacks.

New Beginnings is open to low-income families where the parent is working, attending school or training, or looking for employment.

1. Goals: The primary goal of New Beginnings Childcare is to foster children's self-awareness and self-esteem, to build their sense of trust, to encourage their creativity, and to nurture empathy. In support of this goal, the program:
  - Includes tasks children can practice and muster
  - Provides appropriate challenges
  - Provides choices and open-ended activities
  - Makes available a wide array of materials to encourage self-expression.
  - Encourages children's social, physical and cognitive problem-solving
  - Develops activities and projects that evolve from the interests of the children
  - Promotes cooperation and collaboration
  - Provides for privacy and quiet as well as active play.
2. Measurable Objectives: objectives for this program are easily measured through attendance. New Beginnings Childcare provides safe and affordable childcare placement opportunities for 100 low-income families.
3. Evaluation: this is also achieved through tracking attendance and through the numbers of children who graduate each year and move on to kindergarten. There are of course, lulls in attendance and we always lose numbers right around graduation. The staff members do a great job in outreach and recruitment to build attendance back up to the preferred number.
4. Pre-established program goals: Enrollment, graduation and curriculum goals are met on a consistent basis.
5. Recommendations: New Beginnings could use some assistance in recruitment, allowing them to concentrate more on the curriculum and the needs of the children.

#### *Telephone Reassurance:*

Description: Telephone Reassurance is funded by Citizens for Citizens via the Senior Community Employment Program. Additional funds are provided by CSBG monies. This program has been providing services to the elderly, disabled and medically challenged in Springfield for the past twenty five years. Most of the program participants live alone but some have family members who have to work and leave their parent alone during the day. Having a senior aide call to check on their family member just reassures everyone. The senior aide discusses important issues with clients such as keeping medical appointments, taking necessary medications, eating habits, contact with family members and socialization opportunities. Senior aides also maintain contact through regular mailing to clients.

1. Goals: The daily goal for Telephone Reassurance is to make phone calls to 85 clients to “Check and Chat” with them.
2. Measurable objectives: for this program the objectives are that 80 vulnerable individuals will receive services from community action that will enable them to maintain an independent living situation as a result of those services.
3. Evaluation: This program evaluates through telephone call logs that track and document contacts, and consumer response surveys.
4. Pre-established program goals: All goals are met for Telephone Reassurance on a regular basis.
5. Recommendations: This program needs additional funding for field trips, group meals, and opportunities for socialization for the seniors. Trips and events that would get them out of their homes, allow them to meet and socialize with each other, and improve their overall health all require funding.

*Financial Literacy:*

Description: Springfield Partners has been providing financial literacy workshops for the past four years as a requirement for participation in the IDA program. Funding comes from CSBG monies and partially through the IDA budget.

1. Goals: The overall goal of financial literacy is that participants will understand the importance of personal fiscal responsibility, budgeting and goal setting to achieve financial goals.
2. Measurable objectives: these include: 65 participants will work on credit repair, 125 will demonstrate an increased understanding of credit and its importance, and 25 clients will open a savings account.
3. Evaluation: this is achieved through monthly case management meetings, attendance at workshops, and credit reports for each participant. This also includes those who successfully transition into the IDA program.
4. Pre-established program goals: Anecdotal records show individual progress and that is the core of the program. Year end goals were met for this program.
5. Recommendations: This program needs few changes. An additional counselor for case management however, would allow more people to enter the program.

*Low-Income Tax Clinic (LITC):*

Description: We have offered these clinics for the past four years primarily to those with limited English skills. Funding is from a Low Income Tax Clinic grant through the IRS.

1. Goals: The clinics provide assistance with IRS problems. Many clients need help understanding their IRS notice, amending their tax returns, or setting up payment plans.
2. Measurable objectives: 75 clients will know about the clinic and its offerings, 50 individuals will receive assistance with IRS notices, and 4 volunteers will be recruited for assisting individuals with tax problems.
3. Evaluation: this is accomplished through attendance records at the clinics and via numbers served.
4. Pre-established program goals: Numbers served vary because of specific problems and issues with the IRS. To date all goals have been met.
5. Recommendations: There are no recommendations for change.

*Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA):*

Description: VITA has been provided for the past five years. It is funded by the IRS, CSBG and the Davis Foundation. Services are provided for low-income taxpayers throughout Hampden County.

1. Goals: The overall goal is to ensure that taxpayers take advantage of all tax credits available and get the appropriate tax refund.
2. Measurable objectives: Participants will not have to pay tax preparation fees, they will get additional rebates because of various tax credits and will be given information on the IDA program.
3. Evaluation: This project is strictly numbers driven, returns are filed electronically and receipts verify numbers filed.
4. Pre-established program goals: Numbers and outcomes are satisfactory for this program.
5. Recommendations: We need to improve outreach to enlist volunteers to achieve greater numbers.

*Senior Community Service Employment:*

Description: This program is funded through Citizens for Citizens and augmented with CSBG monies. It is offered to low-income Hampden County residents who are 55 and older. Seniors are placed at non-profit agencies at no cost to the agency and in return they receive a small stipend for their services.

1. Goals: The goal is to provide a productive work experience for the senior and alleviate expenses for local non-profits.

2. Measurable Objectives: these are for 25 seniors to update their job skills by participating in on-the-job training.
3. Evaluation: this is via participant surveys and work supervisors' reports.
4. Pre-established program goals: We have only offered this program for a short time but goals have been met.
5. Recommendations: We need to hire a part-time outreach person dedicated to this program. This would provide consistent outreach and bring additional agencies into the network.

### **Community Action Plan Evaluation**

We have indicated previously, the importance of reviewing the Community Action Plan and decided that an annual After Action Review will be conducted to keep us focused on the goals, programs and changes referred to in the plan. This will keep us focused as a team and will bring a sense of cohesiveness to the board and staff. A healthy approach to keep current with our community needs is to leave our goals open to renegotiation at any time. As a result we revisit each program's goals yearly in completion of our work plan at which time we look for goals that are no longer effective or that need to be revised. Both board and staff members have agreed that this is important for Springfield Partners and will work to ensure that our clients will be served appropriately.

We will also review the Mission Statement each year to make sure that it accurately reflects our goals and will make changes and adjustment to that statement if necessary.

Many of our programs assess the needs of their clients on an ongoing basis. Pulling this information together regularly with the Community Needs Assessment is also a means of ensuring that we are continuing to address the needs of clients and the community we serve. This is an extremely important component of the Community Action Plan and prioritizes areas that need to be immediately addressed and areas to which we need to refer clients to assure that their needs are met.

An important part of the Community Needs Assessment this time, and one that was revelatory for us, was the information learned from the focus groups. This is definitely an evaluation tool that we will use again and probably on an annual basis. It was somewhat surprising as well as exciting to hear that other agency executives looked to Springfield Partners to take a leadership role in fighting poverty. That they have confidence in our ability to be effective leaders really was inspiring and energizing. The focus group meetings also validated our decision to more aggressively market the agency. It is imperative for success to have the community in agreement with our various plans.

The Internal Needs Assessment is ongoing. One of the NIQCA recommendations was for the Community Action Plan "...to become the essential, transparent blueprint for addressing agency and community needs and measuring performance and achievements." We realize the

importance of constantly and consistently referring to the Plan to ensure that we remain focused. This plan has been produced by the Director of Planning and Development with the assistance of the planning committee, senior staff, the Executive Director, numerous consultants, and important input from community members. Reviewing the Internal Needs on a regular basis and addressing any issues immediately will keep this agency vital.

Our Service Delivery System is adequate to meet current needs of our clients. Regular review by the Planning Committee along with staff will ensure that we continue to meet client needs even as they change. Identifying strengths and weaknesses through regular evaluation means that we can enhance the first and work to improve the latter.

Springfield Partners fosters partnerships and collaborations with other agencies so that our clients receive a comprehensive continuum of services. This allows us to refer clients appropriately when we cannot fill a need directly. Having board members participate in a regular review of our Service Delivery System will also assist with suggestions of partners to help fill in the gaps in service.

As previously mentioned we realized that holding an annual After Action Review will help us with our goals and strategies. We can identify goals reached, changes that need to be made Identification and Evaluation of National Indicators and three year goals and strategies

Our Linkages are enhanced or modified by the needs of our clients. Some of our newest linkages are with Concerned Citizens of Mason Square, Citizens for Citizens, and the Pioneer Valley Asthma Project. To insure that clients are receiving the services that we have referred them for we are doing random phone checks to insure follow up.

Our Funding Strategy is now in place and will be revisited regularly, certainly more often than annually because of its importance.

Our Vision Statement remains vital and will be revisited each year to consider the need for changes or updates.