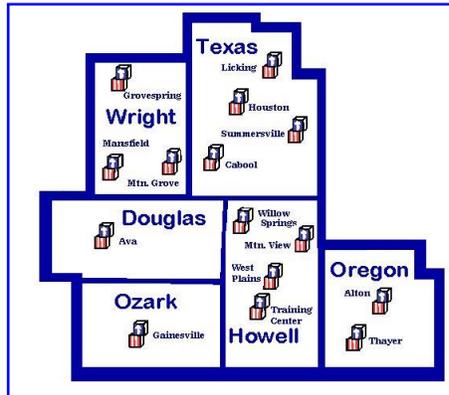


Ozark Action, Inc.

Strategic Plan

Fy2019





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Leadership Message

As Ozark Action, Inc. (OAI) moves into its 54th year of service, we have continued to look to the future. This strategic plan is the result of many months of reflection, research, and refinement. OAI Agency's Board of Directors and staff reflected on the history and future of OAI within the context of the communities we serve. By looking closely at the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and current trends, we could evaluate the ways in which we are meeting the needs of those we serve and the ways in which we can improve.

Within this plan, you will find our mission, vision, and core values, which have all been strongly reaffirmed by this strategic planning process that is lead by the performance based system of management and accountability known as ROMA-Results Oriented Management and Accountability. You will also find our agency priorities, built around the needs of our communities. These agency priorities encompass the agencies many programs along with the objectives and outcomes for each program over the next five years. Finally, you will find implementation and accountability measures for each of these strategic priorities.

This plan will help to guide our work in the coming years as we continue to assist and empower people to achieve social and economic well-being in partnership with our community. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those who participated in this strategic planning process. This plan required much dedication and insight, and the result reflects that commitment and dedication. Our gratitude also goes out to all agency staff, volunteers, community partners, and donors, without whom none of this work would be possible.

Sincerely,

Bryan Adcock – Executive Director

Sincerely,

Terril Shull – Board Chair

Agency History

By late 1965, every county in Missouri was served by its own Community Action Agency and/or an Economic Opportunity Corporation. Due to lack of funds to sustain single-county operations and administrations, mergers occurred. The counties of Howell, Oregon, and Texas merged in November 1965 and Douglas, Ozark, and Wright counties merged in 1968. Each County office did community service programs and had a form of Head Start. Usually these were in the basement of a church building or community building. Once again, mergers occurred and in July 1965, Ozark Action, Inc. (OAI) was created to serve all six counties under one governing agency.

The first OAI programs focused on basic needs of getting persons basic food and clothing and teaching people in each community how to set up direct assistance such as food commodities. By 1968, Head Start (OAI has provided since its inception), Neighborhood Youth Corps and Adult Basic Education were funded as part of this “War on Poverty” in our service area.

In 1973-74, under President Richard Nixon’s “New Federalism” Community Action Agencies were almost closed. National leadership including Missouri’s Charles Braithwait of West Central Missouri Community Action Agency in Appleton City and the late E.C. Walker provided a combination of legal and legislative victories defeating those efforts. Daryl Andrews, director of a Joplin-based agency played a key role, serving as the first president of the Missouri Association for Community Action (MACA).

In 1970, OAI programs expanded to include Weatherization help and then in 1978 the Housing Rental Assistance programs began. Throughout the 1970’s, the core funding for operation of OAI outreach continued under the Community Service Act of 1974. OAI services then expanded to include various Comprehensive Employment and Training Programs funded by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1983. In 1998, JTPA was changed to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In late 2010, OAI began to provide services at the NGCC in Poplar Bluff expanding the reach of its organization and services.

Starting in 1981, the Community Services Act was terminated by President Ronald Reagan. In its place the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was established under the assistance of David Bradley with Community Action Agencies being the presumed recipients. In and after 1994, many of the Community Action programs were under Federal attack and various levels of reconstruction occurred.

Beginning in the 1990’s and continuing through the new Millennium, most all federally funded programs have moved towards those of integration, collaboration and greater conservation of financial and human resources, in tax-payer dollars. OAI plays an integral role in collaboration with partner agencies and will continually increase these roles to contribute towards its primary role in serving constituent in our service area and helping them move towards maximum self-sufficiency.

After moving through the Y2K period of worry and approaching the year 2000 many of the programs remained the same. Other programs and opportunities have developed since the turn of the century. One of the biggest was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 commonly known as ARRA which was a part of the Stimulus package. A significant focus turned to health care and OAI has added several health-related programs such as CLAIM and the Affordable Health Care Act where they provide education and enrollment assistance.

2018-2019 Ozark Action, Inc. Board Members

Douglas County- Laura Stillings (Public); Terri Fossett (Low -Income); Vacant (Private)

Howell County – Bill Lovelace (Public); Gale Wooten (Low-Income); Terrill Shull (Private)

Oregon County – Jon Hollis (Public); Randall Combs (Low-Income); Richard Haigwood (Private)

Ozark County – Gary Collins (Public); Douglas Hawkins (Low-Income); Raymond Gross (Private)

Texas County – Doyle Heiney (Public); Treena Heiney (Low-Income); Dana McCloud (Private)

Wright County – Zach Williams (Public); Patricia Mares (Low-Income); Jeannie Johnston (Private)

OUR MISSION

The mission of Ozark Action, Inc. is to coordinate and provide services for people with needs so that they can improve their quality of life. (reviewed by Board November 10, 2015)

OUR VISION

Communities throughout the South-Central Ozarks in which:

The opportunity and resources are present for individuals and families to move from poverty to self-sufficiency, and where all citizens are empowered to realize their full potential and participate in decisions that affect them, and communities mobilize broad partnerships involving the public and private sectors together with those affected, to build full individual, family and community self-sufficiency.

OUR VALUES

- Caring and empathy for all we serve.
- Honesty and integrity in all we do, utilizing our resources wisely.
- Concern, respect, and teamwork among co-workers.
- Commitment to provide an appropriate referral to those we are unable to directly serve.

Service Area Profile

Ozark Action, Inc.'s central office is located in Howell County, Missouri and services five additional counties, Douglas, Oregon, Ozark, Texas and Wright—an area nestled in the rolling hills surrounding the beautiful Ozark Mountains. Each county is picturesque with historic buildings displaying beautiful landscapes and architecture. Looking closer at this area, however, is like peeling off the first layer of paint on one of the aging structures. Underneath, many problems exist. The area is quite distressed and has experienced a significant number of plant closing and layoffs over the past several years. Historically, most of the area hosted needle trades, and since 1993, there has been fluctuating unemployment throughout the region as these industries closed. Large proportions of those working in the needle trades had low education levels and the high school dropout per capita rate was over 30% of the population throughout most of the region. While there has been significant re-training of the needle trade workers, the region is still far behind its neighbors to the north and west. The area is, quite simply, consumed by poverty.

Keep in mind that this is just a snap shot in time and that other community related needs will arise as issues are identified and as needs change. One example that has occurred during the collection of this data was the 2017 major flood. We are not sure at this time all the unresolved or unmet needs that this flooding has created but will continue to follow the situation and attempt to address the needs that surface during the upcoming months and years. These items will need to also be considered in our strategic planning and overall assessment of needs for our six-county service area.

The area is, quite simply, consumed by poverty. All six of the Counties poverty rates at both 100% and 200% of the federal poverty levels far surpass the state and national averages. In fact, the county's median income is 32% less than the states and nearly 37% less than the national median income. Incredibly, the counties surrounding Howell show poverty rates even higher, providing no relief to this plight. The list below of the State Per Capita Income Ten Lowest Counties easily demonstrates the incredible poverty of this region:

Population change within the report area from 2000-2015 is shown below. During the fourteen-year period, total population estimates for the report area grew by 6.64 percent, increasing from 111,166 persons in 2000 to 118,542 persons in 2015.

Population Change	Total Population 2015	Total Population 2000	Population Change from 2000-2015	Percent Change from 2000-2015
Report Area	118,542	111,166	7,376	6.64%
Douglas County	13,516	13,084	432	3.3%
Howell County	40,326	37,238	3,088	8.29%
Oregon County	10,979	10,344	635	6.14%
Ozark County	9,537	9,542	-5	-0.05%
Texas County	25,735	23,003	2,732	11.88%
Wright County	18,449	17,955	494	2.75%
Missouri	6,045,448	5,595,211	450,237	8.05%
United States	316,515,021	281,421,906	35,093,115	12.47%

Poverty-2015 poverty estimates show a total of 26,013 persons living below the poverty level in the report area. Poverty information is at 100% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

Individuals in Poverty	All Ages # of Persons	All Ages Poverty Rate	Age 0-17 # of Persons	Age 0-17 Poverty Rate	Age 5-17 # of Persons	Age 5-17 Poverty Rate
Report Area	26,013	21.94%	9,016	32.46%	6,224	30.46%
Douglas County	3,053	23.1%	978	35.5%	656	32.9%
Howell County	7,856	19.9%	2,818	30%	1,978	28.9%
Oregon County	2,665	24.7%	979	39.8%	658	36.9%
Ozark County	2,578	27.7%	737	41.3%	528	38.7%
Texas County	5,524	23.3%	1,812	33.4%	1,242	31.4%
Wright County	4,337	24.1%	1,692	37.5%	1,162	34.7%
Missouri	1,751,404	14.49%	555,371	19.83%	374,632	18.29%
United States	46,153,077	14.58%	15,000,273	20.36%	10,245,028	19.05%

Poverty rate change in the report area from 2000 to 2015 is shown below. According to the U.S. Census, the poverty rate for the area increased by 4.09%, compared to a national increase of 3.4%.

Report Area	Persons in Poverty 2000	Poverty Rate 2000	Persons in Poverty 2015	Poverty Rate 2015	Change in Poverty Rate 2000-2015
Report Area	20,478	18.63%	26,013	22.72%	4.09%
Douglas County	2,419	18.4%	3,053	23.1%	4.7%
Howell County	6,231	17%	7,856	19.9%	2.9%
Oregon County	2,139	21%	2,665	24.7%	3.7%
Ozark County	1,879	20%	2,578	27.7%	7.7%
Texas County	4,420	19.4%	5,524	23.3%	3.9%
Wright County	3,390	19.1%	4,337	24.1%	5%
Missouri	1,162,419	10.58%	1,751,404	14.81%	4.23%
United States	31,581,086	11.3%	46,153,077	14.7%	3.4%

Child Poverty Rate-Population and poverty estimates for children age 0-5 are shown for the report area. Per the American Community Survey 5-year data, an average of 36% percent of children lived in a state of poverty during the survey calendar year. The poverty rate for children living in the report area is greater than the national average of 24.3 percent.

By Age	Ages 0-5 Total Population	Ages 0-5 In Poverty	Ages 0-5 Poverty Rate
Report Area	8,321	2,993	36%
Douglas County	926	287	31%
Howell County	3,079	1,288	41.8%
Oregon County	691	298	43.1%
Ozark County	485	165	34%
Texas County	1,920	540	28.1%
Wright County	1,220	415	34%
Missouri	446,091	113,339	25.4%
United States	23,620,492	5,748,795	24.3%

Strategic Planning Process

Results Oriented Management & Accountability (ROMA)

ROMA was created in 1994 and provides a framework for growth, focus and improvement for community action agencies. The strategic planning process, under the direction of two Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers and one dually Nationally Certified ROMA Trainer/Implementer incorporates the full continual use of the ROMA cycle as follows:

- Assessment-Gather and consider data on community needs and resources and review agency data resulting in Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment.
- Planning-Use agency's mission statement and assessment data to identify results and strategies to include in Strategic Plan.
- Implementation-Strategies and services are put in place and they produce results that are documented in the Community Action Implementation/Workplan.
- Achievement of Results-Observe and report progress towards achievement of results by submitting quarterly reports and Annual Report data to the State CSBG Office.
- Evaluation-Analyze data and compare with benchmarks that were set in the planning step by utilizing Logic Models.

Customer Data and Input

The Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) gathered primary and secondary data to assist us in looking at and identifying the issues that are being experienced by our six-county service area. A total of 103 individuals participated in community focus groups. The focus groups included customers, Head Start parents, community partners and OAI staff. Focus Groups were held in Mtn. Grove, Gainesville, Thayer, Willow Springs, Houston and at the Head Start Policy Council Meeting in West Plains. During April 2017 customer and community surveys were distributed in our six-county service area. Surveys could be taken on the Survey Monkey website or by paper copy. 516 Customers and 238 Community Members completed surveys during this time. Once the CCNA was completed it was presented to the Board of Directors on July 25, 2017 and approved.

The CCNA showed notable trends in the following areas: 1. Housing and housing related needs 2. Food and healthy nutrition options 3. Healthcare and health insurance 4. Finances and economic assistance 5. Transportation access 6. Child care 7. Homelessness 8. Education 9. Employment.

Program Specific Meeting Highlights

Additionally, each of the program directors met with their staff to discuss additional trends, programs that were working, needed to be improved and programs needing to be retired. On May 24, 2018 agency staff met with two other agencies for a regional convening to discuss trends for the region, program ideas and to finalize the planning process. Ideas reports, needs assessments and planning efforts were shared. All this information was implemented in finalizing our Strategic Plan with a draft being presented to the board on July 24, 2018 for final review.

Administrative items that need to be addressed in the next 3-5 years: Continue to cross-train staff, update desk reference manuals, finalize the phone system, look at the purchasing process and bring it online. Cosmetic changes to the agency include: replacing or fixing the agency sign, get a new roof for the central office, replace flooring in the old lobby and throughout the lower floor of the central office building, repair and resurface the parking area around the central office.

Head Start – Continue to work on Head Start expansion, build on the Trauma Smart program, prepare for five years recomplete process and submit recomplete application. Pilot early Head Start programming in year 2018-2019 in preparation for converting more regular Head Start slots to Early Head Start Programming. Review facilities and transition from the Thayer location to a new location that is more reasonable.

CSBG – Explore programs that address the needs of youth and seniors. (Mentoring, Cyber Seniors, expanding CLAIM program, homeless youth). Programs that need to continue: LIHEAP, Energy Assistance, Emergency Shelter Grant for Homeless (look to transition to Samaritan Outreach Center within the next two years), continue to be the Coordinated Entry Network location for the MHDC Homeless Prevention program, transition the Missouri Foundation for Health program into the agency by applying for the “expanded coverage grant”, look at the Tax Preparation process to see if it can be run differently and improve the scheduling. Continue providing Poverty and REALL simulations to the community. Look at redesigning the Vehicle Repair program or retiring it. Look at reintroducing life skills and soft skills training classes.

Workforce Development – Continue to facilitate the Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker Program as the program operator and the One Stop operator functional leader. Continue to provide location and job center fairs with area industry and businesses, work with the business incubator and the advanced manufacturing center to identify our role in expanding these services. Because of the recent flooding in 2015 and 2017 we began to conduct the Disaster Recovery Jobs Program we will continue to facilitate this program until the end of its programming sometime in 2019-2020.

Housing and Weatherization - Continue to administer the HUD Section 8 program and work with the newly formed board process, continue to conduct the Weatherization, Shelter Plus Care, RAP, and HeRO programming efforts. Program retirement efforts: Work with board of directors and agency attorneys to transition the Ava, Licking, Thayer and West Plains apartment complexes to new ownership. Find a buyer and sell the structurally insulated panel home in Theodosia. New initiatives being considered during this strategic planning period: Housing Rehab with the Federal Home Loan Bank, Healthy Homes initiative to include staff training and design and development of the program. Research and explore the building of tiny homes for transitional housing, develop and conduct meetings and training to improve the relationships with the HUD Section 8 program and Landlord.

Strategic Priorities

The following priorities have been developed to meet our mission, vision, core values as well as address the reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities and empower people with low-incomes to achieve economic security:

1. Advocate on behalf of low to moderate income individuals. Agency goal that addresses the reduction of poverty and empowerment of people with low incomes to achieve economic security.
2. Increase the visibility of agency programs and resources. Agency goal that addresses the reduction of poverty and the revitalization of low-income communities.
3. Seek funding for Transitional and Temporary Housing. Family and Community goal that addresses the reduction of poverty and the revitalization of low-income communities.
4. Work with communities for community and economic growth. Community goal that addresses the revitalization of low-income communities.
5. Expand children services to Early Childhood education (0-3). Family goal that addresses the empowerment of people with low incomes to achieve economic security.
6. Develop programs and service initiative to address other listed priorities from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. (pages 66-68). Family and Community goals that addresses the reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities and empower people with low-incomes to achieve economic security.

The Community Action Work Plan (CAWP) will be developed in the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) department and will be primary document used to implement and report the family and community strategies. Along with the CAWP the CSBG Annual Report will assist in the implementation and documentation of the achievements of all strategic priorities. The CAWP will detail the specific needs, interventions and strategies not reflected in this strategic planning document. Below is a breakdown of possible interventions that will be used to meet each priority:

1. Advocate on behalf of low to moderate income individuals.
 - Agency CEO and staff, individually and in combination with the Missouri Community Action Network, will actively educate at the state, local and federal level to impart a wider understanding of current program obstacles to state lawmakers and state agency leadership.
 - Implement targeted outreach to underserved and emerging populations.
 - Review current outreach materials and update based on evolving program changes.
2. Increase visibility of agency programs and resources.
 - Develop regular press releases for local publications, columns, and city websites with a focus on human interest and client outcomes.
 - Improve our agency social media to be more current, interactive, informative, and useful to our partners, donors, volunteers and clients.

- Increase public awareness and fundraising opportunities by partnering with the current community partners as well as engagement with new partners
 - Lead discussions within each county as well as other nonprofit and community partners to strengthen our relationships.
3. Seek funding for Transitional and Temporary Housing.
 - Research foundations and local state and federal grant opportunities.
 4. Work with communities for community and economic growth
 - Work with community businesses and stake holders to access community and economic opportunities.
 5. Expand children services to Early Childhood education (0-3).
 - Explore early Head Start funding opportunities through regular Head Start continuation grant and State funded Early Head Start programming.
 6. Develop programs and service initiative to address listed priorities from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. (pages 66-68).