



NORTHERN
KENTUCKY
Community
Action
Commission

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission Strategic Plan

2018 - 2022

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission

Strategic Plan – 2018-2022

Executive Summary

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission (NKCAC) embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2012 to have a greater community impact in an ever-changing and increasingly uncertain economic, social, and political environment. That process resulted in a living document, with ever increasing outcomes and impacts for families in our region. It has been updated twice during the five-year span in response to changing organizational realities. Quite simply, the plan works.

The Board of Directors decided, therefore, to use the 2012 plan, with revisions, as a starting point for the 2018-2022 plan.

The 2018 process included staff conversations to learn how the environment has changed since our strategic process began in 2012. Executive staff met with various work groups to learn about common challenges; discuss programmatic responses to those challenges; and draw conclusions about the challenges and issues that are internal to the agency and those that are internal to the families and communities we serve.

Core Principles

We recognize that as part of a national network of community action agencies we have the opportunity and an obligation to implement best practices in our work with families. Program staff across the agency will, therefore, embrace the National Performance Indicators (NPI) of the Office of Community Services; and the performance standards for the Office of Head Start; YouthBuild; and the Senior Community Services Employment Program, among others.

Further, Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission supports the Community Action Theory of Change as described by NASCSP (National Association for State Community Service Programs) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services (2016). Through these core principles, we embrace the need to:

- Recognize the complexity of the issues of poverty
- Build local solutions specific to local needs
- Support family stability as a foundation for economic security
- Advocate for systemic change
- Pursue positive individual, family, and community level change
- Maximize involvement of people with low incomes
- Engage local community partners and citizens in solutions
- Leverage state, federal, and community resources

Environmental Scan

Environmental Scan: Staff participated in an environmental scan that considered Societal, Technological, Economic, and Political (STEP) trends affecting the agency and our customers. Those results were then compared with the scan from 2012 and updated to include new and emerging issues that were identified.

Leadership staff input: Beyond the environmental scan, agency managers were asked to review their current services and program components to determine how they are functioning in relation to our key strategy of moving families toward self-reliance and what challenges they face toward that end – both internally and externally.

Key insights were recorded and compared with 2012 results to determine the changes in the environment with which families must contend and in which our staff must work.

2018 Environmental Scan Results

Societal:

- Substance abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Incarcerated parents
- Increase of children in foster care
- Stigma of Poverty
- Life skills
- Family issues are increasingly complicated
- Immigration/treats of deportation
- Racism

Technological:

- Access to tech - school, home, libraries
- Internet is a basic requirement
- Cell phones (plans; minutes)
- Services must be accessible from Apps
- Generational tech literacy
- Communication through text messages
- Social media ubiquitous
- Addiction to tech

Economic:

- Access to health care
- Cost of living is rising
- Entry-level wages stagnant
- Working but still poor
- Transportation barriers : cost;cDistance from employment, services
- Affordable housing, especially for single men
- Home repair needed
- Increased homelessness
- Rural opportunities lacking

Political:

- Devisive political environment
- Social media impact on politics
- *Us versus Them* mentality
- Blaming/stigmatation of the poor
- Fear of deportation
- Services for youth lacking
- Uncertainty regarding health care
- Uncertainty regarding safety net services

Findings and Key Assumptions

- Key stakeholders (staff, volunteers, and board) are aligned in the goal of ‘thriving’ as the ultimate community impact (outcome) for customers. Along the continuum from struggling to thriving, the key stakeholders recognize that it is not always a linear process, but that all families have the innate ability to move ***from struggling to surviving to basic self-reliance and ultimately to thriving***.
- There is general agreement that while self-reliance and prosperity is the goal, supportive (safety net) services are an important component of NKCAC’s work with families. Not only do safety net services serve as the entry point for many families, it can also be vital for family well-being while they work toward their goals of self-reliance. A family who is struggling to secure their basic needs – food, rent, utility service, etc. – cannot truly begin to thrive.
- Motivating customers to see beyond their immediate needs (food, rent, utilities) to work toward a better future through financial empowerment, employment, and education are a key part of NKCAC’s service model that will be continued in 2018 and beyond.
- Trauma, and adverse childhood experiences (known as ACEs) are affecting families’ ability to become self-reliant and must be comprehensively addressed by NKCAC and the wider community.
- Likewise, the Opioid Crisis affecting our region is similarly impacting the families we serve and must be addressed as we help families achieve success. While NKCAC is not engaged in treatment, we must recognize that substance abuse issues in families, in neighborhoods, and in the region as a whole can and will impact a family’s success and must be tackled.
- Significant levels of generational poverty in the region continue to stand in the way of thriving in today’s economy.
- The needs and barriers prevalent within the whole family – and in many cases, the extended family – must be considered and addressed for permanent change to occur. Consequently, NKCAC can make the most significant impact by offering multiple, holistic services for families that lead toward, and ultimately create, true prosperity.
- Recruitment, wages, retention, and succession are continuing issues that threaten to affect our impact with families and in communities.

Vision, Mission, Values

For the 2018 Strategic Plan, the Board of Directors reaffirmed the mission and vision that will guide the agency's work over the next five years.

Vision

Ours is a thriving community where all members are self-reliant, capable of helping themselves and offering support to their neighbors with any life challenges they may face.

Mission

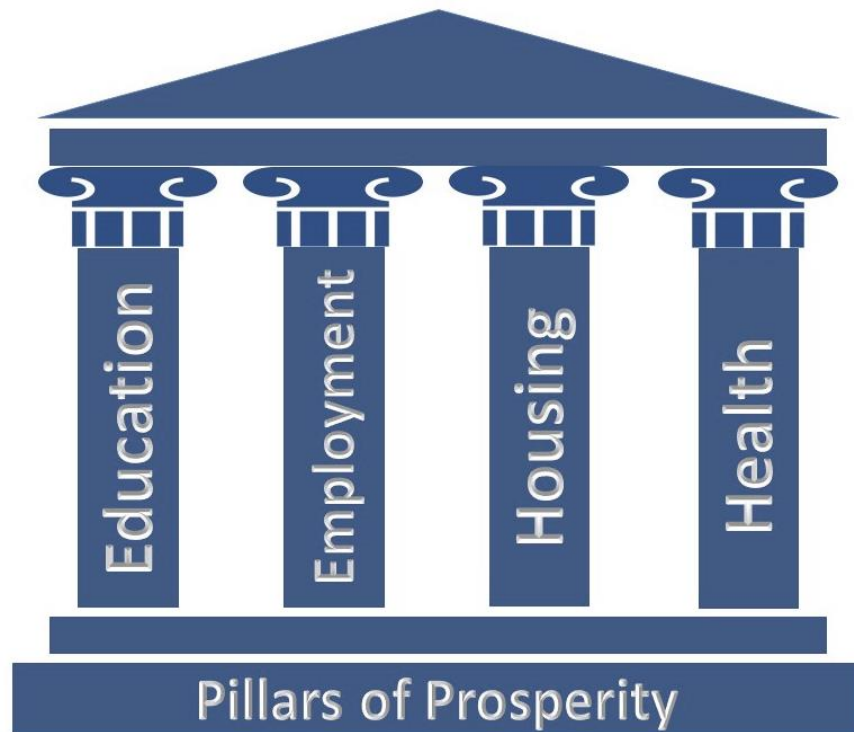
Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission helps low income individuals and families develop the knowledge, opportunities, and resources they need to achieve self-reliance.

Values

- Empathy: meet every customer with openness and understanding of their situation and challenges.
- Dignity: respect every human being and believe in their innate strength and will to face their challenges.
- Independence: help each customer define and achieve their own self-reliance.
- Accountability: hold ourselves and our customers accountable for life-changing outcomes.

Our Four Pillars

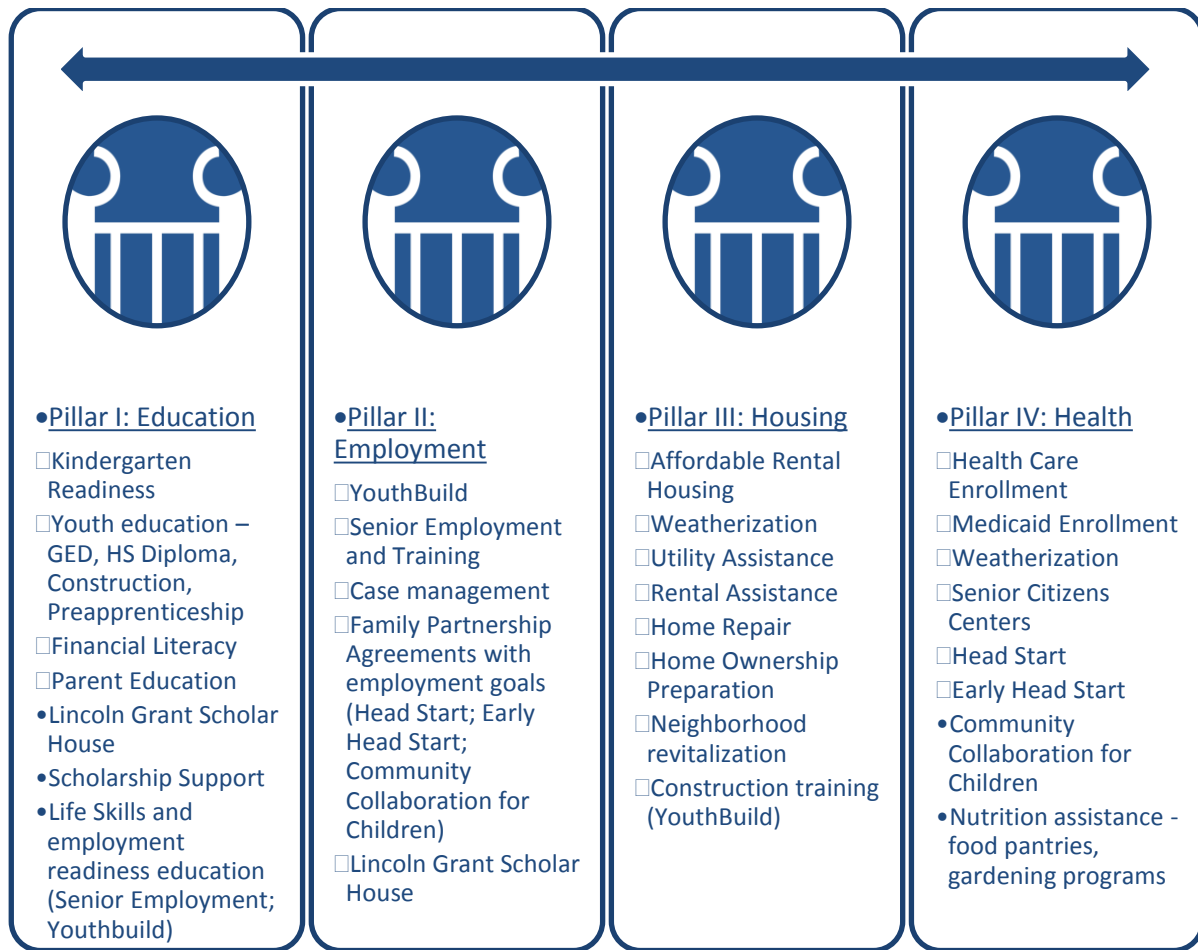
Through NKCAC's 50 years of experience, we have come to recognize that the most direct and reliable pathways out of poverty (and toward prosperity) are along four primary avenues – Education; Employment; Housing, and Health. These ***Pillars of Prosperity*** will directly define our work with families over the next five years.



Within these pillars are our transformational program and services that align with each pillar in one or more ways. Our strategy for the next five years will include developing and enhancing programs and services that strengthen families and individuals in the areas of education, employment, housing, and health.

By using the Pillars of Prosperity language, NKCAC will more specifically focus our internal and external communications in more results-based and outcomes-oriented ways.

As NKCAC begins its new five-year planning period, our services are aligned within these four pillars, as graphically represented below. We recognize that circumstances, programs, and funder priorities may change, resulting in revisions to the alignment of services along the Pillars of Prosperity.



Commitment to Quality

Just as we have done over the fifty years, NKCAC will hold itself accountable for continuous improvement. We recognize that we may not be the best at everything we do as an agency and as individuals, but through our commitment to quality, we will strive to get better at everything. To that end, programs within the agency will develop and implement ambitious outcome measures for their range of services and constituents and report progress at least annually to the Executive Team and Board of Directors. These measures will embrace this commitment to continuous quality improvement through outcomes that are relevant, individualized, and progressive.

Self-Reliance: Our Primary Goal

The overarching goal of helping families achieve self-reliance governs all the services we provide with the resources entrusted to Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission. Therefore, it is important to specify exactly what we mean when we talk about – and work toward – self-reliance.

Self-reliance: Using our abilities and developing the resources to find solutions to our problems and to care for ourselves and our families with little income volatility and little to no reliance upon crisis assistance.

This definition is inclusive of the need all families have for a support system, but recognizes that the goal is for reducing assistance needs over time. We do not mean to imply that self-reliance is an on-and-off state, but rather can be a process. We recognize that an individual may move toward self-reliance gradually over time and even have set-backs that present new challenges and require new efforts.

From Surviving to Thriving: Our Key Strategy

The Key Strategy that emerged during the 2012 planning process was stated as this primary strategic goal:

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission’s Strategic Goal: We will help customers improve their self-reliance by emphasizing restoration rather than relief; by focusing on integration, and by seeking opportunities for collaborative action.

Our work since 2012 has revolved around this key strategy, with the agency more fully integrating services; concentrating on implementing more developmental services that lead directly and deliberately toward self-reliance, and concentrating on comprehensive approaches that engage multiple generations, multiple components, and multiple departments.

As the agency and community have evolved, the staff and board have recognized that the *Relief to Restoration* strategy, while a successful initiative over the last five years, is no longer enough. What becomes the logical progression of that strategy for 2018 and beyond is this:

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission’s Strategic Goal for 2018-2022: We will help families move beyond their current circumstances (surviving) to help them thrive. We will emphasize continuous improvement, integrated services, and community-based approaches.

The findings, environmental scan, and stakeholder surveys were analyzed along with the findings to determine the key strategy on which to focus over the next five years.

NKCAC’s strategic focus over the past five years provided “relieve-to-restore” services that reoriented our service approach to more effectively help families on their journey toward self-reliance. As our

work and expertise with this approach has evolved, so has our commitment to moving families beyond restoration, toward prosperity. **Restoration is an important first step, but prosperity is the ultimate goal.** We believe that we must channel our resources, our network of services, and our staff toward helping families, not only survive, but thrive.

Therefore, our key strategy for 2018-22 will go beyond restoration to focus on a **Surviving to Thriving** approach. “Surviving” is defined as addressing or stabilizing a significant and immediate threat or challenge to family well-being. “Thriving” is defined as helping families move toward self-reliance by focusing on facilitating a change in the circumstances and behaviors that have interfered with the path toward prosperity.

Key Result Areas (KRAs)

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.” - Winston Churchill

With our focus on the key result area of **Surviving to Thriving**, the agency’s Leadership has developed two goals and twelve strategies that will move the agency toward excellence and its constituents toward self-reliance. The first goal is focused on program services as they relate to the constituents we serve and includes four strategies. While recognizing that all families are different with varied needs and challenges, the agency will consider each service’s overall success (or failure) for moving families along the continuum from crisis to surviving to thriving. The second goal, with its eight strategies, relates to governance, processes, and operations, all of which are meant to serve the needs of program staff who are focusing on the key result area of Surviving to Thriving.

KRA 1: Surviving to Thriving
<p>GOAL NKCAC will move more families from basic survival toward prosperity.</p>
<p>Strategy 1: Services (Family) We will implement a systematic approach to delivering services that will move more people from their challenging economic conditions toward less dependence on community support, greater self-reliance, and economic success.</p>
<p>Strategy 2: Integration (Agency) We will intentionally work with and between the various agency departments to integrate services for families to implement a holistic approach for both the individual and for the agency as a whole.</p>
<p>Strategy 3: Collaboration (Community) Staff will intentionally and routinely engage with other agency departments and community organizations to provide holistic services for families, improve our effectiveness, and raise awareness for the needs of low income families.</p>
<p>Strategy 4: Trauma-Informed Approaches (Agency) Staff will employ comprehensive, trauma-informed approaches to help families overcome the stress-related barriers to prosperity.</p>

KRA 2: Governance and Operations	
GOAL	NKCAC will take a continuous improvement approach across the organization, maintaining and enhancing effective leadership and management of the organization through effective governance and operations.
Strategy 1: Governance (Agency)	The Board and Executive Team will develop policies and systematic approaches to strategic issues impacting community outcomes and organizational sustainability.
Strategy 2: Operations (Agency)	Agency leaders will focus on sound management practices that improve employee retention and performance; result in demonstrable outcomes for families and communities; and result in stable and sustainable programs.
Strategy 3: Information Technology (Agency)	NKCAC will maintain and enhance an information technology system to capture, analyze, summarize, track and report all data necessary for effective and efficient mission-critical outcomes delivery. This strategy includes a continuing effort to more fully engage and communicate with families via technology.
Strategy 4: Financial Management (Agency)	NKCAC will establish effective and efficient systems to support to mission-critical programs through financial management processes that are accurate, well-documented, and responsive to program, board, and funding source needs and requirements.
Strategy 5: Compliance (Agency)	Program staff across the agency will maintain timely and accurate documentation and reporting of both program/service outputs and community outcomes, assuring 100% compliance with funding guidelines.
Strategy 6: Revenue diversification (Agency)	While recognizing that federal sources will continue to make up the vast majority of our funding, we will reduce reliance on government funding for operations by diversifying funding sources to include more private, corporate, foundation, individual support and earned income.
Strategy 7: Human Resources (Agency)	NKCAC will attract and retain qualified and motivated staff who are fairly compensated, continuously trained, and are accountable for competently and effectively carrying out the agency mission.
Strategy 8: Advocacy (Community)	NKCAC will assume a leadership position to promote greater understanding among policy-makers and other key stakeholders on the critical social, economic, technological, and policy issues and their impact on low income families and organizational effectiveness.

Each department/program within the agency will work with the Executive Team to define its own role in achieving these goals. To that end, program staff will develop an action plan for their department and customers using the Pillars, KRAs, Goals, and Strategies as their guide. Specific objectives and measurements, guided by our core principles, best practices, funding source requirements, and executive staff feedback, will lead toward achievement of the agency-wide strategic plan. The specific

outcomes and measures are not included within the plan itself because the program requirements and funding streams vary from year to year, a lesson we learned during the 2012-2017 planning period.

Both the five year and specific operating plans will be reviewed and approved by the agency's Executive Team and reported annually to the Board of Directors. Staff will provide the Board of Directors with a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) report at each board meeting as an ongoing gauge of our progress with families. This will enable the board to monitor our strategy implementation and our impact on families and communities within the four pillars and the Key Result Areas.

Conclusion

NKCAC has achieved considerable success over the past five years due to our focus on strategy and execution. With a renewed commitment and refreshed strategy, NKCAC is positioned to achieve even greater outcomes for the families and communities we are called to serve.



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