

2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



A Community Action Agency



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CEO SPOTLIGHT

“As OLHSA’s CEO, I am proud to introduce our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan, a transformative step forward in addressing poverty and driving meaningful community impact. Building on the strong foundation laid by the 2020–2024 plan—which expanded local housing stability, improved financial security, and increased educational opportunities—this new plan ensures every initiative is shaped by meaningful collaboration with community members and stakeholders. The 2025 Strategic Plan introduces our updated mission: “we strengthen pathways to shared prosperity and drive community impact by providing innovative services, advocacy, and collaborative solutions for people and communities,” reflecting a broader, more inclusive vision. It emphasizes both individual empowerment and systemic change to create lasting benefits for Oakland and Livingston Counties.

Key to the success of this plan will be the leadership of dedicated champions—community leaders, stakeholders, and experts—who will oversee its strategic focus areas. Their guidance will ensure accountability, track progress, and maintain alignment with community needs. By improving client services, expanding housing pathways, and strengthening community awareness, OLHSA will address immediate needs while building sustainable, collaborative solutions. Together, we will drive measurable reductions in poverty, revitalize our communities, and empower individuals to achieve shared prosperity.”



Sincerely,

Susan Harding, PhD, CCAP
OLHSA Chief Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 1964, the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA) has been an essential part of the fight against poverty in Michigan as a dedicated Community Action Agency. OLHSA has worked to empower Oakland and Livingston Counties residents, providing targeted assistance that addresses the root causes of poverty and fosters meaningful, lasting change in individuals' lives.



As part of a national network of over 1,000 Community Action Agencies, OLHSA collaborates with individuals, families, and communities to tackle poverty's systemic challenges and create more equitable opportunities for everyone. OLHSA's comprehensive services span early childhood education, energy burden reduction, financial counseling, health and nutrition support, housing stability assistance, and older adult advocacy, all reflecting the commitment to address diverse needs in the community.

Central to OLHSA's approach is the belief that community-driven impact is achieved through robust partnerships with local organizations, dedicated team members, and community advocates. These partnerships allow OLHSA to enhance its reach and effectiveness, ensuring that everyone seeking support receives compassionate, respectful, and empowering assistance. Guided by a clear Theory of Change, OLHSA focuses on breaking down systemic barriers, increasing economic security, and fostering educational and employment opportunities that lead to sustainable livelihoods.

Strategic planning is critical for OLHSA as it ensures that the organization remains responsive, effective, and aligned with the evolving needs of the communities it serves. As an organization dedicated to addressing the root causes of poverty, OLHSA understands the value of a community-led, data-driven approach to assessing local needs and setting strategic priorities. This process enabled OLHSA to craft a well-structured and visionary roadmap that guides its efforts, helps optimize resources, and enhances the impact of its programs.

The strategic planning process was integrated with a comprehensive community needs assessment, typically conducted every three years. This dual approach ensures that OLHSA's objectives remain relevant, grounded in current realities, and aligned with the community's aspirations. OLHSA is committed to using the Strategic Plan and Needs Assessment as foundational tools to drive sustainable growth, address community challenges more effectively, and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

This strategic plan allows OLHSA to adapt proactively, make informed decisions, and pursue innovative solutions to poverty in a rapidly changing world. It ensures that our mission is more than just words—it is a continuously evolving promise to uplift every individual and family in Oakland and Livingston Counties, fostering resilience, equity, and opportunities for all.



THE IMPACT OF OLHSA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESSES OF THE PREVIOUS STRATEGIC PLAN

OLHSA's previous strategic plan set ambitious goals to improve housing, financial stability, education, and access to living wages for the communities we serve. Throughout the implementation of the previous plan, OLHSA made progress in each of these areas.



HOUSING

OLHSA ensured access to safe and affordable housing by securing funding for and piloting a Master Lease program, which provided stable housing options for individuals and families in need. Additionally, OLHSA increased the availability of Fair Housing information to clients, empowering them to understand their rights and make informed decisions about their housing.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

To strengthen financial stability for clients and staff, OLHSA embraced forward-thinking strategies. The agency provided Trauma-Informed Care training to all employees, creating a more supportive and empathetic environment for clients. This training is now a standard practice for new hires within their first year of employment. Additionally, OLHSA established an Employee Loan Fund, enabling staff to borrow up to \$1,000 through a confidential process, promoting financial security and resilience among employees.



EDUCATION

OLHSA expanded educational opportunities through strategic partnerships. A grant-funded collaboration with the Oakland Literacy Council provided laptops and literacy classes for Veterans, enhancing their literacy skills and job prospects. OLHSA also partnered with Oakland University to produce an educational video on the legislative process, equipping citizens with the knowledge to advocate for themselves and engage effectively with state legislators.



LIVING WAGE

OLHSA took steps to ensure individuals have access to work that offers a living wage. The organization developed and implemented a plan to raise its minimum wage from just over \$10.00 to \$16.00 per hour by 2024, underscoring its commitment to equitable compensation. Furthermore, OLHSA established a Hall of Fame to recognize and honor long-term employees, fostering a sense of pride and encouraging others to pursue a lasting career within the organization.

These successes reflect OLHSA's unwavering dedication to its mission and highlight the tangible outcomes of strategic planning and collaborative action. As we embark on a new strategic plan, these accomplishments serve as both inspiration and a foundation for continued progress.

PREPARING FOR FUTURE SUCCESS WITH OLHSA'S 2025-2028 PLAN

OLHSA's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan is crafted with clear aspirations: to make a lasting and measurable impact on poverty reduction, community revitalization, and individual empowerment for low-income residents of Oakland and Livingston Counties. In an effort to make strides in these areas, the strategic planning team identified the top three root causes of poverty in Oakland and Livingston Counties. Root causes of poverty look beyond the conditions to the deeper issues that lead to and keep people in poverty.

By addressing the root causes of poverty, OLHSA's Strategic Plan is expected to make a measurable impact on individuals and families in the communities it serves. Specifically, the plan guides our effort to make strides toward reducing poverty, revitalizing low-income communities, and empowering low-income individuals.



● REDUCING POVERTY

A cornerstone of the strategic plan is the improvement of service delivery through an integrated system of care approach to assisting clients that ensures consistent and high-quality services across all client interactions. By implementing a standardized process and using automation to streamline care, OLHSA can serve clients more efficiently, ensuring they receive the necessary support to improve their financial stability and build assets. This system fosters inter-departmental and community partner linkages, allowing clients to access multiple services that address their diverse needs holistically, helping them break the cycle of poverty. Additionally, collaboration with workforce partners will help increase clients' earned income, supporting a pathway out of poverty by promoting sustainable economic empowerment.

● REVITALIZING LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

The strategic plan prioritizes expanding housing options for low- and underserved residents, a critical factor in community revitalization. By securing funding to pilot innovative housing solutions, OLHSA can offer affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing opportunities tailored to the needs of underserved populations. These housing options not only provide stability but also foster a sense of community ownership and pride, which can lead to broader neighborhood revitalization. OLHSA's efforts to increase housing choices and financial health resources—such as homebuyer education—equip residents with the tools to build and maintain stable lives, contributing to the economic and social vitality of their communities.

● EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS

OLHSA's plan also emphasizes the importance of empowering low-income individuals through strong community relationships. By increasing awareness and access to services, particularly for underserved populations, OLHSA can connect more individuals with the resources they need. Strengthening partnerships with local agencies and organizations through formal agreements and co-location arrangements enhances OLHSA's ability to reach underserved populations. Deploying community organizers to build connections within specific populations ensures that individuals feel supported and valued within their community, fostering a sense of empowerment and inclusion.

The plan's goals address the immediate needs of those experiencing poverty while also laying the groundwork for long-term economic stability, revitalized communities, and empowered residents. Through these strategic efforts, OLHSA is committed to the Community Action Promise:

“Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The 2025-28 Strategic Plan is rooted in comprehensive data and feedback from the 2024 Community Needs Assessment (CNA). This assessment serves as the driving evidence for the Strategic Plan, providing a systematic profile of the needs, resources, and challenges faced by individuals, families, and communities across Oakland and Livingston Counties. As a Community Action Agency (CAA), OLHSA conducts a CNA every three years, following a standardized process to gather input directly from the community. This approach allows us to identify barriers, and the perspectives of those we serve, ensuring that our strategic direction aligns with community priorities.

The 2024 CNA revealed several high-priority programmatic and community needs, including:

- ✔ **Family Supports and Early Learning:** Family Supports and Early Learning: Expanding space for more Head Start classrooms, addressing the teacher shortage caused by low pay, and accommodating increased demand for early learning support.
- ✔ **Housing:** Addressing issues such as lack of affordable housing, high rent costs, inadequate housing conditions, predatory landlord practices, and the need for repairs on aging housing units, particularly among low-income homeowners.
- ✔ **Community Relations:** Awareness and access to services can be improved by developing stronger collaborative partnerships and lead coalitions.

The CNA process also identified internal priorities, such as:

- ✔ Enhancing service delivery systems,
- ✔ Reaching underserved populations, and
- ✔ Overcoming language and cultural barriers to engage immigrant communities and other marginalized groups.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The development of OLHSA's Strategic Plan was a collaborative effort involving board members, clients, staff, and community partners. The Board of Directors played an essential role throughout the process, contributing ideas through interviews and focus groups, and having representatives from the board participate in the design and planning stages of both the CNA and Strategic Plan. The board's insights were invaluable, as they offered multiple rounds of feedback, ensuring that the Strategic Plan aligns with OLHSA's mission and the needs of our community. Moving forward, board members will remain a vital part of the implementation and monitoring processes.

To incorporate diverse perspectives, OLHSA collected feedback from various other stakeholders through:

- ✔ **Staff Feedback Sessions:** Facilitated discussions with staff across departments (e.g., Economic Security, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Health) to review CNA findings, identify strategic priorities, and establish success measures.
- ✔ **Leadership Staff Interviews:** One-on-one discussions with formal and informal OLHSA leadership to highlight core strengths, areas for improvement, growth opportunities, and potential external challenges.
- ✔ **Focus Groups with Board Members:** Virtual sessions to gain the board's perspective on current programming and operations, identify future opportunities, and discuss strategies to address challenges.
- ✔ **Stakeholder Survey:** A survey of staff, clients, board members, and community partners to gather quantitative and qualitative input on potential strategic priorities. The survey's feedback played a critical role in ensuring that OLHSA's strategic direction remains client-centered and responsive to the needs of the broader community.



CLIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

OLHSA's Strategic Plan is deeply rooted in client experiences, satisfaction, and feedback. Through surveys, listening sessions, and other methods, clients shared their insights on current services, identified areas for improvement, and helped prioritize key areas of focus. This client-centered approach reinforces OLHSA's commitment to fostering a community-driven impact, where each decision is informed by those we serve. Additional data from clients can be found in the "OLHSA CLIENT SATISFACTION" section of the 2024 Community Needs Assessment.

FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The development of OLHSA's 2025 - 2028 Strategic Plan involved a series of structured planning meetings facilitated by JFM Consulting Group, bringing together senior and front-line staff as well as board members. These sessions provided an inclusive environment for sharing insights, aligning on strategic priorities, and collaboratively shaping the organization's direction. Each meeting built upon the previous discussions, allowing participants to refine ideas, coalesce around shared goals, and ultimately create a unified vision for OLHSA's future impact.

Meeting 1: Strategic Planning Visioning Retreat (September 16, 2024)

The first session served as a foundational retreat where participants reviewed key findings from the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and OLHSA's Theory of Change. A visioning exercise allowed the group to explore long-term aspirations and identify the root causes of poverty that OLHSA aims to address. Through these discussions, participants reached a consensus on three primary areas for strategic focus:

- Decrease Racial and Economic Disparities by ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.
- Reduce Low Wages and Unemployment by promoting opportunities for sustainable economic empowerment.
- Combat Generational Poverty by building legacies of financial resilience and opportunity.

This session set the stage for a shared commitment to addressing systemic challenges and inspired a collective resolve to advance OLHSA's mission in a meaningful, equitable way.

Meeting 2: Mission, Vision, and Values (October 9, 2024)

In the second meeting, participants shifted focus to OLHSA's core mission, vision, and values. By reviewing statements from other organizations and reflecting on OLHSA's unique role in the community, the group discussed potential updates to better reflect current priorities and the evolving needs of the communities OLHSA serves. This session marked the beginning of drafting desired outcomes that align with OLHSA's values and commitment to transformative change.

Meeting 3: Goal Development (October 14, 2024)

Building on the foundational work from the first two meetings, participants in the third session focused on goal development. They reviewed the desired outcomes, incorporating feedback from various stakeholders, including clients, staff, and community partners. Through collaborative discussions, the group identified and prioritized goals that would drive OLHSA's strategic efforts, ensuring alignment with the broader mission and vision.

Meeting 4: Wrap-Up and Finalization (November 12, 2024)

The final session brought together all the insights and decisions made during the previous meetings. Participants reviewed additional feedback from a recent stakeholder survey to ensure the strategic plan remained responsive to community needs and expectations. The group then finalized OLHSA's priority goals, mission, vision, and values, creating a cohesive strategic framework that will guide the organization's work in the years to come.

These facilitated discussions provided OLHSA with a clear and comprehensive strategic plan, rooted in community input and a shared vision among staff and board members. The collaborative approach ensures that OLHSA's strategic direction is well-informed, responsive, and aligned with the needs of Oakland and Livingston County residents.



ROMA FRAMEWORK AND CERTIFIED LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The development of OLHSA's new Strategic Plan was deeply informed by the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework, a cornerstone of effective Community Action Agency planning. Dr. Susan Harding, OLHSA's CEO and a National Certified ROMA Trainer (NCRT), conducted a comprehensive review of the ROMA cycle and ensured its principles were fully integrated into the strategic planning process.

Additionally, the strategic planning process benefited from the expertise of three Certified Community Action Professionals (CCAPs) who played pivotal roles in leading and shaping the project. As mentioned above, Dr. Susan Harding served as a key project advisor, lending her extensive experience and strategic vision. Erica Karfonta, a lead consultant for OLHSA, contributed her extensive leadership expertise in community action and organizational development, while Elena Steele, OLHSA's Communications and Donor Development Manager, ensured a cohesive approach to messaging and centered stakeholder outcomes.

The involvement of these certified leaders underscores OLHSA's commitment to leveraging nationally recognized best practices and leadership credentials to create a strategic plan that is both effective and grounded in the principles of accountability, community responsiveness, and sustainable impact.





2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

The following section presents the essential components of OLHSA's 2025 - 2028 Strategic Plan, including the updated mission, vision, and values that define our commitment to serving Oakland and Livingston Counties. This section also outlines OLHSA's three organizational goals, each accompanied by specific strategies designed to drive success and meaningful impact. To ensure accountability and progress, we have established three-year metrics and targets for each goal, providing clear benchmarks to measure our achievements and guide continuous improvement in our work to combat poverty and empower our community.



MISSION

We strengthen pathways to shared prosperity and drive community impact by providing innovative services, advocacy, and collaborative solutions for people and communities.



VISION

A future where poverty's root causes are eliminated, and all people and communities have the resources and opportunities to thrive.



VALUES

Compassion

Serving people with dignity, respect, and care.

Collaboration

Partnering with all who can help us help others.

Progress

Pushing ourselves toward thoughtful, creative, long-term solutions.

Stewardship

Managing fiscal and programmatic resources responsibly and ethically.

Diversity

Embracing a wide array of viewpoints and possibilities.

Advocacy

Putting voice with action in pursuit of our vision.

Integrity

Doing the right thing in all we do.

OLHSA 3-YEAR GOALS

Goal Focus Area: Services

Domain Levels: Client and Agency

Improve client outcomes by establishing and implementing a coordinated system of care that seamlessly connects services, resources, and supports across multiple providers and departments.

OLHSA is committed to enhancing the quality and consistency of services provided to our clients. By establishing a comprehensive case management system, we aim to set a high standard of care across all interactions, ensuring each client receives integrated, personalized support. This goal focuses on streamlining our processes through automation and fostering stronger connections between departments, enabling us to address client needs holistically and efficiently. Improved service delivery is central to OLHSA's mission of empowering individuals and families by providing reliable, accessible pathways to resources and support.

Goal Focus Area: Housing

Domain Levels: Client, Agency, and Community

Expand housing pathways and affordable options for low-income residents in targeted communities.

Identified as a top priority in the Community Needs Assessment, housing stability is a critical foundation for economic and social well-being. OLHSA's goal to improve housing choice is aimed at expanding affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing options for low- and very low-income residents. By securing funding for innovative housing solutions and collaborating with workforce partners, OLHSA seeks to offer individuals and families greater opportunities for stable living arrangements. Through this focus, OLHSA intends to reduce housing insecurity, support homeownership, and strengthen financial health, all of which contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities.

Focus Area: Community Relations

Domain Levels: Client, Agency, and Community

Increase awareness and access to services, especially for underserved populations, by strengthening collaborative partnerships with local agencies and organizations, building coalitions, and organizing those in underserved communities.

Strong community relationships are essential to OLHSA's mission of reaching and effectively serving low-income individuals. This goal emphasizes expanding awareness and access to services, especially for underserved populations, by cultivating partnerships with local agencies and organizations. Through formal agreements, co-location initiatives, and the deployment of community organizers, OLHSA aims to build trust and enhance service delivery within targeted communities. By strengthening these connections, OLHSA not only increases its impact but also empowers individuals to feel more supported and valued within their communities.

Each goal is supported by carefully crafted strategies and measurable targets, ensuring clarity and accountability. In the sections below, we delve deeper into each goal, exploring the specific actions, targets, and expected outcomes that will guide our work over the next three years.

Goal #1 - SERVICES

Improve client outcomes by establishing and implementing a coordinated system of care that seamlessly connects services, resources, and supports across multiple providers and departments.

Champions

Implementation: Management, Data Team, and ROMA Implementer

Monitoring & Data Collection: Program Directors/Deputy Directors

Key Strategies

- Identify and assess at least three coordinated system of care models
- Use EmpowOR software to develop automations and interdepartmental linkages
- Create and train staff on curriculum of selected model
- Identify and assess at least two universal screening tools
- Assess and improve phone and online points of system access

Measurable	2028 Target	Monitoring Method
# of case management models (vendors) identified	3	Procurement Records
% increase of very-low income clients receiving more than one service	20%	Program Records or Annual Client Survey
% clients managed by new case management model	50%	Client Action Plans and Program Records
% of target program clients moving away from crisis (baseline)	15%	Program Records

Goal #2 - HOUSING

Expand housing pathways and affordable options for low-income residents in targeted communities.

Champions

Implementation: Housing and Workforce Development Management, Data Team, and ROMA Implementer

Monitoring & Data Collection: HHN Director, CES Director, and Venture President

Key Strategies

- Building on current work, seek out additional innovative housing pilots with developers
- Integrate homeless prevention services/supports with workforce development department and external partners
- Expand co-locating of housing services and homeless supports in targeted communities
- Expand reach and scope of financial health resources, including homebuyer education courses
- Advocate for legislation and policy that increases support of diverse housing options for people of all income levels
- Secure \$2 million for innovative housing solutions

Measurable	2028 Target	Monitoring Method
% decrease of clients paying more than 30% of income towards housing	15%	Program records, Case management records, or client survey
% increase of referrals to workforce departments and partners	30%	Referral records
# of client action plans containing both housing and income program outcomes	30%	Program records and/or client survey
# of new innovative pilot projects established	1	Program records
\$ raised for Venture	\$2 million	Program budget and board reports

Goal #3 – COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Increase awareness, access to services, and participatory-based engagement of low-income people, especially for underserved populations.

Champions

Implementation: Management and Communications Dept.

Monitoring & Data Collection: CEO and Consultant

Key Strategies

- Improve external referral and follow-up systems
- Formalize partnerships through written MOUs
- Secure formal co-location arrangement(s)
- Deploy culturally sensitive community organizers to build relationships within specific populations
- Updating newsletter distribution lists to target desired new partners
- Start a community-organizing coalition

Measurable	2028 Target	Monitoring Method
% increase in partners with formal MOU	30%	Quarterly Reports from EmpowOR
% increase in successful referrals	50%	Program records
Co-location established	1 Completed	Agreements executed and move-in dates
# of community organizers	4	Employee and volunteer records
% increase in clients from underserved populations	50%	Agreements with organizations serving underserved populations, and program records
\$ raised to hire community organizers	\$75,000	Executive Budget and board reports