

Merced County Community Action Agency



Strategic Plan 2008~2014

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FOREWORD

In January 2007, the Merced County Community Action Board (CAB) approved the 2008-2014 Strategic Planning project with a one-year timeframe. The previous Strategic Plan covered the timeframe 2001-2007 and was therefore in need of updating.

The planning process entailed presentations and interactive discussion at CAB meetings, meetings with management staff, and review and feedback of written documentation developed based on meetings and discussions.

The authors wish to acknowledge the input and active participation of the Merced County Community Action Board and the management staff in the development of the 2008 – 2014 Merced County Community Action Agency Strategic Plan.

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SECTION 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Action Agencies reach out to low-income people in their communities, address multiple needs through a comprehensive approach, develop partnerships with other community organizations, involve low-income clients in Agency operations, and administer a full range of coordinated programs designed to have a measurable impact on poverty. Since 1965, Merced County Community Action Board, Inc. has been providing a broad range of community service programs to assist economically disadvantaged individuals and communities in Merced County.

In January 2007, the Merced County Community Action Board (CAB) approved the 2008-2014 Strategic Planning project to update its previous Strategic Plan that covered the timeframe 2001-2007. The end result is a useful, consistent tool that can be used Agency-wide throughout the planning period to document achievements of goals and to use as a starting point when it is time to begin the next strategic planning process.

The planning process entailed presentations and interactive discussion at CAB meetings, meetings with management staff, and review and feedback of written documentation developed based on meetings and discussions. The following Planning Principles were utilized throughout the planning process:

- Respectful Communication
- Inclusive
- Realistic
- Focus on Serving Clients
- Collaboration/Teamwork

The 2008-2014 Strategic Plan establishes goals, objectives, and strategies for the Agency. Each objective and strategy is linked with a responsible party, indicators, a timeframe for completion, and the desired outcome. Objectives and strategies were developed around seven major goals. Each of these goals falls into one of three goal areas: Agency specific, Programmatic, and those that relate to the Community.

The seven goals set forth in Merced County Community Action Board, Inc.'s 2008-2014 Strategic Plan are:

1. Build the Agency's assets
2. Increase the Agency's operating income
3. Promote effective, qualified leadership
4. Increase the Agency's marketing
5. Establish a Political Advisory Component
6. Expand current programs and services to meet community needs
7. Offer exemplary programs

Each of these goals, along with related objectives, strategies, indicators, timeframes, responsible parties, and outcomes, is presented in detailed tables on pages 19-29.

SECTION 2 – PROFILE OF MERCED COUNTY

The County of Merced (pop. 251,510) includes the cities of Atwater (27,618), Dos Palos (4,899), Gustine (5,152), Livingston (13,287), Los Banos (35,211), and Merced (79,715), as well as the unincorporated towns/communities of Ballico, Cressey, Delhi, Hilmar, Le Grand, Planada, Santa Nella, Snelling, South Dos Palos, Stevinson, and Winton.¹ Covering an area of just under 2,000 square miles, Merced County is located in one of the most agriculturally productive regions of the country: California's San Joaquin Valley. Like many other communities in this region, Merced County is faced with numerous socioeconomic and environmental challenges, including rapid population growth, economic hardships, significant ethnic diversity, a need for additional licensed childcare services, poor educational achievement, and numerous health and healthcare obstacles.

In 2005, the Congressional Research Service prepared a report in support of a Presidential Executive Order acknowledging the need for more concentrated Federal resources in the San Joaquin Valley Region. The report, concluded that, "By a wide range of indicators, the San Joaquin Valley is one of the most economically depressed regions of the United States."

2.1 Rapid Population Growth

A contributing factor to the Valley's challenges is the extremely fast paced population growth. With a *population increase of 30% percent* between 1990 and 2003, Merced County substantially outpaced the statewide (19%) and national (17%) growth rates.¹ Furthermore, the County's population is *projected to grow by 56%* between 2003 and 2020, compared to projected growth rates of 24% for California and 16% for the United States.



Map Highlighting Merced County
Source: Wikipedia.com

Merced County's population is significantly younger than the rest of the state: *30% are 14 years of age or younger*, compared to 23% for California as a whole. With approximately 20,000 residents aged 65 years and over, the senior population comprises 9% of the total population.²

2.2 Economic Hardships

In 2005, the median family income was \$44,447; 28% lower than the statewide median and 20% lower than the national median. The *County's poverty rate reached 18%, a substantially higher rate than Californian (13%) and national averages (10%)*. Furthermore, while some Valley counties saw improvements in their poverty rates and income levels between 2005 and 2006, Merced's numbers worsened: by 2006, one in five residents were living below the poverty line³.

¹ California Department of Finance. E-1 City/County Population Estimates, January 2007.

² US Census Bureau. 2005 American Community Survey. <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

³ Merced Sun Star. "Number of poor in county on rise." August 29, 2007.

Merced County's economy is still largely agriculturally-based. In 2006, *farm-related jobs comprised 16% of the total occupations* in Merced County, compared to less than 3% statewide.⁴ The unemployment rate in 2006 was more than 9%, compared to California's 5%.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Merced County residents have higher proportions of food stamp recipients and higher average public assistance income than state and national averages. In fact, the proportion of *the population that received food stamps from 2001-2003 (8.9%) was almost triple the statewide rate (3.8%).*⁵ Average public assistance income in 2000 in Merced County exceeded \$5,000, while the national average was just over \$3,000. Countywide, *71% of students in the 2005-2006 school year qualified for free or reduced-price meals* based on income eligibility, compared to 50% statewide⁶.

Affordability is clearly the most significant housing issue facing high need/low resource individuals in Merced County. A 2005 Wall Street Journal article listed *Merced as "the least affordable housing market in the United States,"* based on how many people earning the median income can afford a median-priced house (17.6% in Merced County).⁷ According to a July 2007 article in the Modesto Bee, Merced County ranked *second-worst in the entire nation for the number of homes in the foreclosure process,* with 1 in 121 homes countywide being foreclosed.⁸ This trend disproportionately affects low-income households, who pay a greater portion of their incomes to mortgage payments, forcing them into debt and undesirable housing situations.

Homelessness is a continuous challenge or very real threat for a significant portion of the County's population. A January 2006 survey concluded that there are *more than 2,600 homeless individuals in the County,* including women, children, veterans, and mentally ill persons⁹. *Only 8% of the homeless population is sheltered,* while approximately 25% of the County's homeless population is thought to be "chronically homeless," meaning they have been continually homeless or have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness in recent years.

2.3.1 Federal Poverty Guidelines

The federal poverty guidelines are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). They are used for administrative purposes such as determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. The 2007 Federal Poverty Guidelines for all states except Alaska and Hawaii, are illustrated in the table below¹⁰:

Persons in Family or Household	Federal Poverty Guideline Annual Income	Persons in Family or Household	Federal Poverty Guideline Annual Income
1	\$10,210	5	24,130
2	13,690	6	27,610
3	17,170	7	31,090
4	20,650	8	\$34,750
For each additional person, add			\$3,480

⁴ California Employment Development Department: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>.

⁵ Congressional Research Service. California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region in Transition. December, 2005.

⁶ Educational Data Partnership: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us.

⁷ Wall Street Journal, July 14, 2005.

⁸ Modesto Bee, July, 2007. Figures calculated by RealtyTrac.

⁹ Merced County 2006 Continuum of Care Plan.

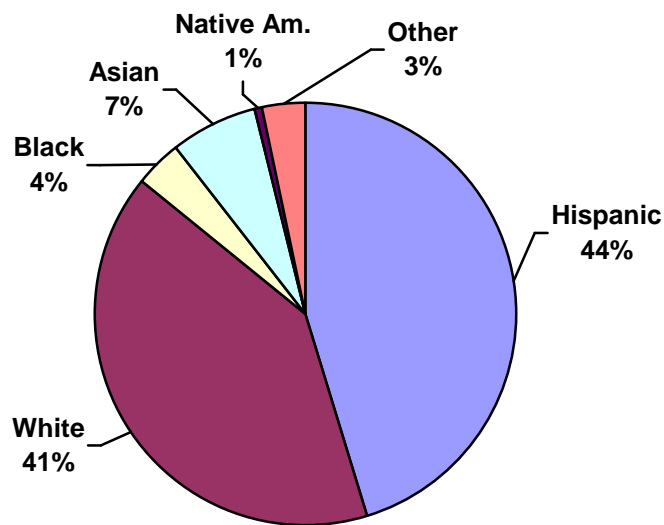
¹⁰ Department of Health & Human Services. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/07poverty.shtml>.

2.3 Ethnic Diversity

Immigration is a major source of the population growth in the Merced County: *one-quarter of the population is foreign born*. This trend is typical of agriculturally-based communities that offer low-skill (and low-wage) jobs.

In 2000, approximately 45% of the County's population was Hispanic in origin, compared to 32% in California and 13% for the nation.¹¹ A significant influx of Hmong and Laotian immigrants increased the County's Asian/Pacific Islander population from just 2% in 1980 to 7% by 2000. The figure below illustrates the ethnic composition of Merced County.

Regional schools are faced with the challenges of serving large proportions of English Language Learner (ELL) students due to the high number of foreign-born residents. In fact, almost *one in three (32%) Merced County students are ELL*, compared to the statewide rate of 25%.¹² In the 2005-2006 school year, 60% of Merced County students were Hispanic.



Merced County Ethnic Composition

2.4 Childcare Needs

According to the Merced County First Five Commission's Strategic Plan, "Over half (51.5%) of all parents in the county with children under 6 years old are in the workforce, but they are faced with high costs and a limited supply of care that does not meet the demand." In 2003, there were 6,772 licensed childcare slots available in Merced County. By age group, licensed center-based care is available for only 4% of the County's infants, and 34% of the County's preschool-aged children¹³. The average annual cost of licensed preschool care in the County is \$5,076, or 36% of a single-parent's annual income earning minimum wage.

2.5 Poor Educational Achievement

Nearly *one in three Merced adults over age 25 do not have a high school diploma*, and one in five Merced adults has not been educated past 9th grade.¹⁴ Just 11% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 24% nationally.

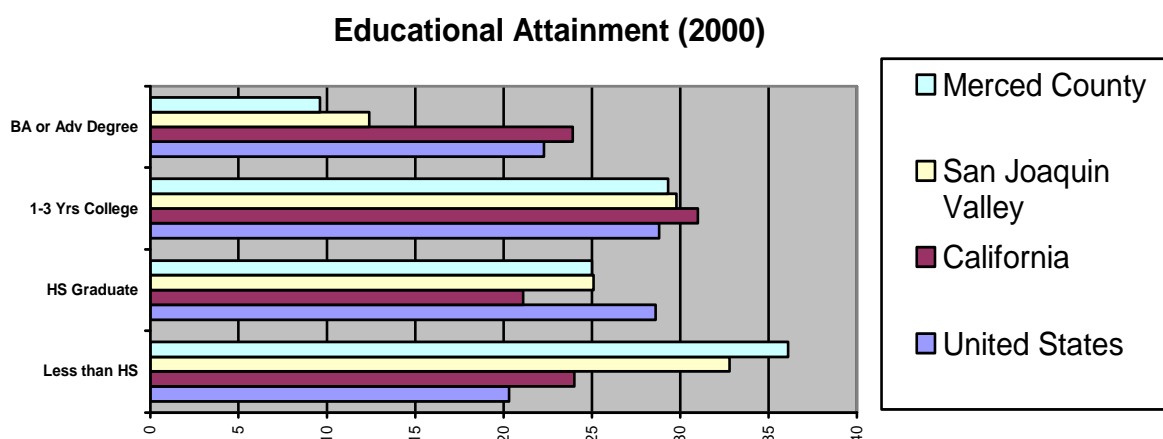
¹¹ Congressional Research Service. California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region in Transition. December, 2005.

¹² Educational Data Partnership: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us.

¹³ California Child Care Resource and Referral Network: "The 2003 California Child Care Portfolio."

¹⁴ US Census Bureau. American Fact Finder: <http://www.census.gov>.

The following chart illustrates the levels of education earned by adults in Merced County, the San Joaquin Valley, California, and the United States, indicating the County's comparatively low educational attainment levels.



Low educational levels are directly related to low income levels and also prevent many County residents from obtaining adequate employment, thereby furthering the cycle of poverty and/or dependence on government assistance.

2.6 Health & Healthcare Obstacles

The tremendous shortage of healthcare providers in Merced County and the San Joaquin Valley compounds the various socioeconomic disadvantages that continue to challenge the region. On a population basis, the San Joaquin Valley has approximately 30% fewer primary care physicians than the rest of California, and approximately 50% fewer specialists. In Merced County, there is *only 1.0 active doctor per 1,000 residents*, compared to 2.5 for California and 2.6 for the nation.¹⁵ Increasing physician shortages nationwide are likely to disproportionately affect areas of California that are already underserved such as Merced County.

As of 2003, *one-quarter of Merced County's population was enrolled in Medicaid*. Nationwide, children with non-citizen parents are far more likely to be uninsured medically. Given the high proportion of immigrants in Merced County, this raises particular concern regarding healthcare status of this population. A 2004 report issued by California State University, Fresno, confirmed that 70% of Merced County farmworkers lacked health insurance¹⁶.

While the County's teen birth rate has improved somewhat since peaking in the 1990s, teen pregnancy continues to present educational and socioeconomic challenges for the area's young women and their families. In 2003, Merced County's teen birth rate was 53.4, which is still substantially higher than the statewide and national averages (38.9 and 41.7, respectively)¹⁷. In addition, Merced County ranks at the bottom (58th) of all California counties for the proportion of women receiving prenatal care.

¹⁵ Congressional Research Service. California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region in Transition. December, 2005.

¹⁶ California State University, Fresno: "Health in the Heartland, the Crisis Continues."

¹⁷ Congressional Research Service. California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region in Transition. December, 2005.

SECTION 3 – BACKGROUND

3.1 Overview

Community Action Agencies are private non-profit or public organizations created by the federal government beginning in 1964 to combat poverty in geographically designated areas. Status as a Community Action Agency is the result of an explicit designation by local or state government. Since 1965, Merced County Community Action Board, Inc. has been providing a broad range of community service programs to assist economically disadvantaged individuals and communities in Merced County. Community Action Agencies reach out to low-income people in their communities, address multiple needs through a comprehensive approach, develop partnerships with other community organizations, involve low-income clients in Agency operations, and administer a full range of coordinated programs designed to have a measurable impact on poverty.

One-third of the Community Action Board (CAB) Directors are publicly elected officials, one-third is selected by low-income residents of Merced County and one-third is appointed by major organizations. The CAB Executive Director, appointed by the CAB, is a non-voting member of the Board, responsible directly to the CAB for executing and overseeing the implementation of approved CAB policies, programs and strategic plans.

3.2 Programs and Services

Merced County Community Action Board, Inc. (MCCAB) has provided the community with a variety of programs and services for more than forty years. Using funds gained through State and Federal grants and the generosity of the community, the Agency successfully operates numerous community programs.

Programs and services are divided into four main divisions, as outlined below:

- Community Self-Sufficiency Division**
 - ★ *Utilities Assistance*
 - ★ *Weatherization*
 - ★ *Homeless Shelters and Services*
 - ★ *Permanent Supportive Housing*
 - ★ *Employment*
 - ★ *Outreach*
- Child and Family Division**
 - ★ *State Preschool*
 - ★ *Child Development*
- Nutrition and Health Division**
 - ★ *Women Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition*
 - ★ *Senior Nutrition Program - Project Cherish and Meals-on-Wheels*
- Support Services Division**
 - ★ *Fiscal Services*
 - ★ *Human Resources*
 - ★ *Employment*
 - ★ *Information Systems*

3.2.1 Community Self-Sufficiency Division

Utilities Assistance The Utilities Assistance Program prevents utility shut-offs due to inability to pay and provides an annual utility credit to very low-income families with high utility bills. The program serves approximately 2,000 families annually.

Weatherization Program The MCCAB Weatherization Program was started in 1982 to assist the Agency's disadvantaged clients. Many thousands of homes have been made much more comfortable during the past 20 years and the utility bills of these dwellings more manageable. The program's goal is to help families control their energy costs, thereby freeing income for other essential expenditures.



Weatherization services consist of activities such as installing door weather stripping, low flow shower heads, aerators, caulking, and attic insulation; replacing broken glass; conducting minor home repairs; and installing new refrigerators, microwave, electric water heaters, and fluorescent lights. Currently, weatherization services are for income eligible low-income customers only; low income is considered 60% of the State Median Income (adjusted for family size). Emphasis is placed on serving senior citizens and families with "at risk" members of their household. Approximately 300 homes in Merced and Madera counties are served annually.

Homeless Shelters and Services MCCAB Housing Services has been addressing the needs of the homeless since 1987. MCCAB helps families with eviction prevention, deposit/rental assistance, temporary motel vouchers and a cold weather shelter for homeless single individuals. Over the past decade, the homeless population utilizing shelters in Merced County has more than tripled. The Housing Department provides over 10,000 shelter bed nights annually.



Havenwood Homeless Shelter

In 1991, MCCAB opened its first year-round shelter, **Havenwood**, a 20-bed emergency shelter for women and women with children twelve and under. The Havenwood Shelter is pictured at right.

In 1993, MCCAB opened **New Hope House**, a 24-bed transitional shelter for families with children, married couples, and single male individuals. This is a 24-month program that leads the homeless to self-sufficiency.

In May 2001, MCCAB opened **COTS Day Center**, a full-service day shelter that serves 85 homeless families. Services provided at COTS include showers, laundry, telephones, computer access and a message and mail service.

For many years, Housing Services has operated the **Armory Cold Weather Shelter** during the colder months of the year (November-April) from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am. This shelter provides 100 beds. However, construction of a new year-round emergency shelter is underway, scheduled to

open in December 2007, which will replace the costly operations of the Armory. A \$1 million grant from the State, along with \$700,000 in local government funds, was awarded to MCCAB for this project. Furthermore, the Agency was recently awarded a \$690,000 grant to purchase property for **Canal Creek**, a 16-bed emergency shelter for women and children.

MCCAB implements the countywide **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** software that tracks homeless statistics and needs and participates in the Merced County Continuum of Care Collaborative project.

Finally, **Homeless Prevention Funds** are offered in the form of a one-time cash payment to place the homeless in permanent housing, or to maintain current housing. This program is available on an on-going basis until funds are exhausted. All programs are designed to be a temporary fix to alleviate the discomforts associated with homelessness, while attempting to place the customers in permanent, long-term housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing In partnership with Merced County Department of Mental Health, the Agency provides 4 apartments for chronically homeless mentally ill individuals. This is Merced County's first and only permanent supportive housing project.

Employment The Agency employs former clients as an opportunity for self-sufficiency. A training site is also provided for community partners who assist with employment training.

Outreach The staff and Board members of MCCAB participate in over 30 events annually outside of business hours. These events bring opportunities to increase public awareness regarding poverty, the economically disadvantaged individuals and communities in Merced County, and the programs and services offered by MCCAB.

3.2.2 Child and Families Division

The Child and Families Division's goal is to provide comprehensive, top quality services to participating children and families. The Agency has two primary childcare programs: State Preschool and Child Development.



State Preschool The State Preschool program serves children who are 3 to 5 years of age whose families meet the economic guidelines as established by the California Department of Education. Qualifying families must be at or below 60% of the State Median Income (less than \$30,000). The program begins with assessment and includes planned experiences with self-directed play in language, mathematics, art, science, music and multicultural education. The program also provides parent training and education. Seventy-two families are served annually by preschools located in Delhi, Stevenson and Le Grand. There are no fees for the parents in this program.

Child Development The Child Development program serves children who are 3 to 5 years of age whose families are at or below 84% of the State Median Income (less than \$40,000).

To participate in the Child Development program, parents must have a childcare need and meet one of the following conditions:

1. Enrolled in an Education / Training Program,
2. Currently working,
3. Seeking employment, or
4. Medically incapacitated.

The program also provides parent training and education. One hundred and ninety-six families are served each year by centers located in Merced and Los Banos.

3.2.3 Nutrition and Health Division

The Nutrition and Health Division provides complete nutrition-related supportive services. The agency has two primary programs: Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Senior Nutrition.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) The Special Supplemental Food Program for WIC is a nutritional feeding program for low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women; as well as for infants and children under five who are at nutritional risk. WIC is unique among the federally-administered food assistance programs in that it provides specific supplemental nutritious foods and nutrition education to a specific target population as an addition to ongoing health care.



The purpose of the WIC program is to prevent health problems and to improve the health of program participants during critical times of growth and development. With a staff of 47, the agency's WIC program serves over 15,000 customers monthly in Merced and Mariposa counties. The WIC division administers over \$1 million in food vouchers ever month.

Senior Nutrition MCCAB developed and implemented a Senior Nutrition Program beginning in 1974 through a contract with the Merced County Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Originally, the program served the cities of Atwater, Los Banos, and Merced; however, by 1986, the program had grown to nine sites strategically located throughout the County. These sites provide on site meals through **Project CHERISH**, as well as delivered meals to homebound seniors through the **Meals-on-Wheels** program. Over 46,000 meals are served annually through Project CHERISH and over 43,000 meals annually through the Meals-on-Wheels program. Project CHERISH and Meals-on-Wheels serve the following communities:

- Atwater
- Dos Palos
- Gustine
- Hilmar
- Livingston
- Los Banos
- Merced
- Planada
- Winton



The Senior Nutrition program provides nutrition services to older individuals who live independently and reduces isolation through socialization programs. Staff provides outreach information and referrals to appropriate programs and works closely with community partners to provide seamless services to the senior population as needs arise.

3.2.4 Support Services Division

The Support Services Division manages MCCAB's Financial Services, Human Resources, Employment, and Information Systems Departments.

Financial Services The Agency's Fiscal Department is responsible for providing support services to all facets of the financial operations of the MCCAB. These include, but are not limited to, cost accounting, budget monitoring and reporting, payroll, financial accounting, audits, and budget management technical assistance. The department routinely provides information that accurately reflects the financial position of the Agency as a whole, as well as details of its various programs individually. Since CAP program funding sources and requirements are multiple and diverse, the department is central to the financial health and cost effectiveness of the agency.

Human Resources The Human Resources Department provides Agency-wide program support through the recruitment and screening of applicants for positions within the Agency. The department keeps up to date on laws regulating the workplace, workers and management; advising programs of any changes or issues. Employees are provided information in regards to work, benefits, leaves and similar issues. An employee database is maintained to assure employee evaluations and timeliness of annual salary increases when merited. The MCCAB Human Resources Director is a part of the negotiating team for employee bargaining agreements. The department oversees updates and revisions of the agency's Human Resources Policies, health & safety manual and agency job descriptions.

CAA Human Resources is a monitor of and conduit for, employee-employer relations. The department maintains current personnel data, information and resources needed to provide timely and accurate personnel support to programs and employees. The department monitors changes, trends and opportunities to be innovative in benefits, shared information and mutual communication throughout the Agency's workforce.

Employment The Agency's staff positions in almost all programs consist of a variety of workers, from semi-skilled to professionals. Positions require a minimum of a high-school education or GED, while approximately 20% of the MCCAB workforce requires a minimum of an Associate Arts degree. Positions within the Agency vary from Custodial, Cooks (and Assistants), Delivery Drivers, Preschool Teachers, Nutrition Educators (including Registered Dietitians), Clerical (consisting of clerk, secretarial and accounting staff), Mid-management and Management.

Information Systems The Management Information System (MIS) and Technology Department provides support activities for the MCCAB divisions. The intent of the support services is to reduce agency duplication of documentation activities, increase staff productivity by adapting routine procedures and practices for Information and Technology systems, and coordinate a common back office technology-based staffing and support system across all MCCAB program areas and operations.



The support group's principle service is providing comprehensive corporate MIS and Technology support to MCCAB operations. Quality assurance for this support group is monitored and managed by the MCCAB Executive Management Team.

Beginning in 2003, MIS and Technology services began conducting an inventory and mapping of the agency computer and networking technology, providing help desk assistance to Department Directors, and offering staff technical assistance with computer problem solving and maintenance. In addition, MIS and Technology services began providing Agency forms in electronic format, simple training modules in electronic format for agency staff to use as self-paced learning modules, and developing internal agency email capability and Local Area Networks for Agency Departments.

SECTION 4 – BOARD MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Overview

As stated earlier, a Community Action Board, Inc. has a tripartite board structure that is designated to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty.

One-third of the Community Action Board (CAB) Members are publicly elected officials, one-third is selected by low-income residents of Merced County and one-third is appointed by major organizations. The CAB Executive Director, appointed by the CAB, is a non-voting member of the Board, responsible directly to the CAB for executing and overseeing the implementation of approved CAB policies, programs and strategic plans. Following are statements describing each of the Merced County CAB Members, including qualities or experiences that make a valuable contribution to the Board.

4.2 Member Profiles

Adam Cox (Public Representative) representing Mayor Ellie Wooten, Mayor of Merced
Mr. Cox is a full-time college student, who graduated from Merced High School. He served a two-year tenure on the Student Council, and since graduation has taken a vested interest in the community. He is a member of the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce, and serves on the Merced County Fair Board, the Merced County Mental Health Advisory Council, and the City of Merced Charter Review Committee. He is very interested in serving his community and has decided to pursue a public service career. Mr. Cox is interested in creating and maintaining organizational effectiveness of the Agency to ensure the homeless population is served.

Yvonne Davis (Private Representative) St. Matthews Baptist Church
Ms. Davis has a degree in Social Science – Psychology, and has worked in education for 35 years, specifically with handicapped learners. She served on the Merced County Fair Board for eight years and chaired the Board for one year, where she helped to integrate handicap issues to the Board. Ms. Davis also chaired the Multicultural Connection Organization for 12 years, guiding young students to prepare themselves for college. She currently works with Vision and Image Association that assists low-income minority young men and women with their self-esteem and cultural experiences. Ms. Davis is a member of the Merced Chamber of Commerce, NAACP, and attends St. Matthew Baptist Church. She has also served on the Girl Scout Council where she organized a special project to feed the homeless.

Joan Faul (Public Representative) Mayor, City of Atwater
Ms. Faul has lived in Merced County for over 40 years. She has served as a school administrator for 30 years and enjoys working with children. She currently serves as Mayor of the City of Atwater and is proud that she is the first woman to hold that position. She holds two Master's Degrees and is a strong advocate of education. Ms. Faul's organizational involvement is too numerous to mention. Joan has always volunteered and had a special interest in making the lives of the low-income and immigrant populations better through community activism.

Pat Garcia (Low-income Representative) City of Merced
Mr. Garcia has been a real estate agent for 27 years. Being fluent in Spanish has helped him to educate Hispanic clients and take the fear out of buying their first home. Mr. Garcia has served on the Association of Realtors Ethics Committee. He participates in the realtors annual canned

food drive to help the needy. Mr. Garcia also helps low-income families by participating in the Big Brother program.

Rosa Gomez (Low-income Representative) City of Livingston

Ms. Gomez is the mother of five. Three of her children went to Head Start where she also served as a volunteer. She has volunteered for city and community clean-ups and as a youth, volunteered often at a convalescent hospital. Ms. Gomez currently serves on the Recreation Committee in Livingston. She found her way to the Community Action Board through volunteer efforts for other boards and councils; the CAB presented an effective way to meet her desire for helping low-income people. As a fairly new resident to Merced County, Ms. Gomez is committed to making it a better place to live. She enjoys working with people.

Rebecca Guerra (Low-income Representative) Unincorporated areas

Ms. Guerra has lived in Merced since 1975, and has raised her three children here. She was active at her children's school as a room parent and Site Council member. She worked in the nutritional and community service sector in her local area for a number of years, and currently is an Independent Living Counselor for developmentally disabled adults throughout the community. Ms. Guerra lives and works in a low-income area. Her goal is to help disadvantaged people in the community reach their full potential.

Mary Henderson (Public Representative) Representing Supervisor Jerry O'Banion

Ms. Henderson is an elementary school teacher in the community of Dos Pals. She is a community leader who has been very effective in organizing and recruiting volunteers to work with the local Senior and childcare programs. A CAB Member since 1993, Mary is currently the longest sitting member of the Board. She is very committed to helping the people from her district and is a strong advocate for community action.

Dave Honey (Public Representative) Merced Union High School District Trustee

Mr. Honey is a life-long Merced County resident and has served on various school boards in the County, including the Merced Union High School District Board and Atwater Elementary School Board. He currently works for Winton School District as the Assistant Superintendent, where he oversees various categorical programs. Other than a four year period where he was in the Air Force, Mr. Honey has lived in the Valley his entire life. He has been involved with numerous community service organizations and wanted to be involved with the Community Action Agency because it works with the most needy and helpless of people in the community. Mr. Honey is also the President of the Winton Cemetery District.

Margaret "Peggy" Merritt (Private Representative) AARP

Ms. Merritt was born in the old General Hospital in Merced, and has lived here all her life. She takes a vested interest in the community where she raised her children. She has been involved with schools and community associations for many years, and is committed to improving the area where her family lives with issues such as poverty. Ms. Merritt is an active member of the local AARP and volunteers for many community groups.

Carole Roberds (Low-income Representative) City of Atwater

Ms. Roberds has a Master's Degree in Special Education and Educational Management. She is Principal of Merced Adult School and has been in education for 32 years. She is very interested in issues facing the poor, immigrant populations, housing, and employment strategies. She is interested in helping the mentally ill deal with challenges they face. She wants to contribute to the organizational effectiveness of the Agency.

Joe Sousa (Public Representative) Los Banos City Council

Mr. Sousa was employed with the City of Los Banos for 26 years. During his tenure as Director of Special Services he was committed to providing quality child care to low-income families and instrumental in the newly constructed childcare center that will serve Agency's Child Development program. Since his retirement Mr. Sousa was elected to the Los Banos City Council and is dedicated to helping the homeless and low-income families.

Anthony Tessaro (Private Representative) State of California Parole Office

Mr. Tessaro has been employed with the State of California for 20 years. He is employed with the Division of Adult Parole Operations. He works on a daily basis with the parole population of Merced County and deals with their families who are in need of low income services. He holds two bachelor's degrees in Criminal Justice and Administrative Justice. He has lived in Merced County intermittently for the past 20 years.

SECTION 5 – 2001-2007 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MCCAB's previous Strategic Plan covered the period 2001-2007. During this time, the Agency achieved significant accomplishments, some of which are described below:

- The Agency **separated from Merced County**, freeing approximately \$200,000 in annual administrative fees and allowing the Agency to pursue for-profit entrepreneurial business interests.
- Earned **unrestricted income** through catering of childcare center meals and private catering, which will be expanded once the private deli opens in winter 2008.
- Began operating **transitional housing** and has been granted funds to partner for the County's first **permanent supportive housing** program.
- Began **construction of a permanent emergency shelter** to replace the Armory, which will include a day center (completion date 2007).
- Expanded **partnerships** within the community.
- **Technology** has greatly grown in the Agency with every department having some form of internet capacity. The Agency has new equipment in many programs and has hired a full-time MIS Manager.
- Received a \$690,000 State grant to purchase property to use for a new 16-bed **emergency shelter for women and children**.



Given these accomplishments, the Agency successfully met the following desired outcomes as stated in the previous Strategic Plan:

- ✓ Outcome: CAB is conducting its non-profit operations as a business independent of Merced County Systems.
- ✓ Outcome: CAB is earning its own unrestricted agency income and is assisting in community currency projects.
- ✓ Outcome: CAB is operating transitional housing and supportive housing for transition.
- ✓ Outcome: Constructing a new homeless shelter with homeless day center.
- ✓ Outcome: More partnerships within the community
- ✓ Outcome: Technology competency in agency (CAB).

SECTION 6 – STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In January 2007, the Merced County Community Action Board (CAB) approved the Strategic Planning project with a one-year timeframe. The previous Strategic Plan covered the timeframe 2001-2007 and was therefore in need of updating.

6.1 Benefits of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning benefits organizations in multiple ways, including:

- Focuses energy, time, and resources of the agency in the same direction;
- Provides a framework for decision making and a plan for agency goals;
- Provides board members with a better understanding of the agency's operations; and
- Creates teamwork among board members.

6.2 Planning Process

The planning process entailed presentations and interactive discussion at CAB meetings, meetings with management staff, and review and feedback of written documentation developed based on meetings and discussions. Each Board meeting discussion began with an ice-breaker or team building activity. This was an important part of the process as it fostered group discussion and collaboration, enabled Board members to get to know each other better, and promoted an energetic atmosphere.

The following Planning Principles were utilized throughout the planning process:

- Respectful Communication
- Inclusive
- Realistic
- Focus on Serving Clients
- Collaboration/Teamwork

Following is an outline of the strategic planning meetings, the information covered, and the outcomes of each. In addition, a Strategic Planning Flowchart is included in Appendix B

6.2.1 Strategic Planning Meetings

- *Initial meeting with Board Chair and Agency Executive Director:* purpose was to review intended planning process, receive input on desired outcomes, discuss goal areas and goal development criteria.
- *February CAB Meeting:* Introduction to Strategic Planning Process; discussed purpose, benefits, and contents of a strategic plan; reviewed planning terminology, goal areas, and goal development criteria.
- *March CAB Meeting:* Board members shared biographies; reviewed Agency vision and mission statements; presented overview of agency programs and services to gain deeper understanding of current level of activity, which helps with determining needs/gaps and setting future goals.
- *April CAB Meeting:* Discussed proposed list of goals; reviewed how to develop effective objectives, strategies, outcomes and indicators; studied the SMART analysis; Board members completed Self-Assessment surveys.
- *April & May Meetings with Management Staff:* Using previously-reviewed list of goals from the Board, management staff met to develop objectives, strategies, outcomes and

indicators for each goal. This was accomplished at numerous meetings lasting several hours.

- *May CAB Meeting:* Reported on progress at meetings with staff; discussed benefits of serving on the Board; reviewed results of Board self-assessment survey; participated in Merced County demographics activity to refresh or deepen knowledge about the area served by the Agency.
- *September CAB Meeting:* Presented Objectives, Strategies, Outcomes and Indicators for each goal developed by staff.
- *October CAB Meeting:* Present Initial Draft Plan.
- *November CAB Meeting:* Present Final Plan.
- *December 2007:* Final Plan published.

The end result is a useful, consistent tool that can be used Agency-wide throughout the planning period to document achievements of goals and to use as a starting point when it is time to begin the next strategic planning process.

SECTION 7 – VISION, MISSION, PROMISE

An effective, useful Strategic Plan begins with a vision and a mission. The vision is a broad, general statement of the Agency's ideal or desired outcome. The mission is the Agency's specific statement of purpose. The promise is the Agency's pledge to the people and communities it serves. Merced County Community Action Agency's Vision, Mission, and Promise are listed below.

Vision

"To eliminate poverty in Merced County through individual and organizational dedication, collaboration, and innovation."

Mission

"To serve, advocate, and collaborate for those in need by developing innovative strategies for self-empowerment."

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."



SECTION 8 – STRATEGIC PLAN MATRIX

Goal #1: Build the Agency's Assets					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Acquire three more properties during the strategic planning period.	a. Build available funding for purchases, including matching funds for building purchase grants.	Executive Director & Chief Financial Officer	Capacity building funding increased by 2% per year throughout the planning period.	2008-2014	Three additional properties are owned by the Agency.
	b. Identify properties the Agency needs to expand, relocate, or acquire; including opportunities for lease conversions to purchase.	Executive Director & Program Directors	List of properties for expansion, relocation, acquisition and/or lease conversion to purchase is developed and kept up to date.	January 2008	

Goal # 2: Increase the Agency's Operating Income					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Establish a stream of private funds	a. Consider developing a for-profit arm for the Agency that can generate private funding	Executive Director & Chief Financial Officer	Organizational structure and separate accounting system is established for private arm.	January 2011	Private funding in Agency's budget is increased by 20% by 2014.
	b. Begin operating Deli-catering business to private clients.	Executive Director and Deputy Director	Income generated from Deli-catering business.	January 2008	
	c. Consider expanding childcare slots to offer for-profit childcare services.	Executive Director and Childcare Program Director	Needs assessment/market analysis completed by Jan 2010.	December 2010	
	d. Consider offering weatherization services outside of means-tested/low-income clients.	Executive Director and Deputy Director	Needs assessment/market analysis completed by Jan 2010.	December 2010	
2. Consider hiring a grant writer	a. Research list of funding opportunities that Agency could access if grant writer was hired.	Executive Director & Program Directors	List of funding opportunities and cost-benefit analysis developed.	December 2008	The Agency's grant funding is increased annually by \$100,000, for a target of \$700,000 by 2014.
	b. Assess the need and feasibility of hiring grant writer; consider combining with PR position.	Executive Director & Chief Financial Officer	Needs assessment & cost-benefit analysis conducted.	July 2009	
	c. Identify funds in the budget.	Chief Financial Officer	Funding available in 09-10 budget.	July 2009	
3. Develop a major fundraising campaign	a. Determine Board members' role in fundraising efforts.	Board & Board Chair	Fundraising Policy established.	July 2008	Four major fundraising events are conducted from 2010 to 2014 (one per year).
	b. Develop a calendar of fundraising events.	Public Relations Director & Grant Writer	Fundraising event calendar developed each year.	Starts in 2010; annually thereafter.	

Goal # 3: Promote effective qualified leadership					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Maintain a full Board with an interest list of potential Board members	a. Develop recruitment materials such as "Benefits of Serving on the Board."	Board of Directors and Executive Director	Materials are included in application package and posted on website.	January 2008	Alternates Board members are identified and regularly attend Board meetings.
	b. Establish a Membership Committee on the Board.	Board Chair	Membership Committee meets quarterly.	January 2008	
	c. Establish a Board Alternate list	Executive Director and Membership Committee	Board Alternate list is established and maintained	January 2008	
	d. Attend community events; speak at service clubs to increase interest in Board membership.	Executive Director & Program Directors	List of events attended is presented to Board; Directors are evaluated on outreach efforts	Annually	
2. Regularly assess effectiveness of the Board.	a. Conduct annual Board Self-Assessment surveys.	Board of Directors	Surveys completed each Spring.	Annually	Board is aware of its strengths and works to improve areas identified as weaknesses.
	b. Annually review the Strategic Plan to assess progress towards attaining goals relating to the Board.	Board of Directors	Strategic Plan review discussion scheduled on Board agenda.		
3. Ensure that all Board members are knowledgeable about the Agency and its programs and services.	a. Invite Board members to program site visits; ask participants to report on the visit at next Board meeting.	Program Directors	Calendar of site visits developed each year; Board reports scheduled on agenda.	Annually	Board members are able to make informed decisions for the Agency based on knowledge of the Agency's programs and services.
	b. Directors rotate presenting a summary/update of their department at Board meetings.	Program Directors	Directors presentations scheduled on Board agendas.	Monthly	

Goal # 3: Promote effective, qualified leadership <u>cont'd</u>					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
4. All program directors attend at least one Community Action Agency National, State or Regional conference annually.	a. Identify and communicate availability of appropriate CAA trainings to Program Directors	Executive Director	Information regarding appropriate trainings sent to Project Directors.	On-going	Directors are informed of National, State, and Regional issues relating to Community Action Agencies.
	b. Ensure funds are available for staff development.	Program Directors	Program budgets include staff development funds.	Annually	
	c. Include attendance at conferences in Directors' job descriptions and evaluations.	Executive Director and Human Resources Manager	Job descriptions and evaluations updated.	January 2008	
5. Establish cross-programmatic training.	a. Schedule site visits at each department that all Directors and Board members are encouraged to attend.	Program Directors	Calendar of site visits completed by January of each year.	Annually	Directors increase their knowledge of the Agency, particularly programs/departments other than their own.
	b. Directors prepare update/summary of their departments to present to Board and other directors at Board meetings.	Program Directors	Presentations are scheduled on Board agendas.	One presentation per month	
6. Ensure the agency offers competitive salaries.	a. Keep a file of position announcements; review once a year for each managerial position.	Human Resources Manager	File is kept in Human Resources Office.	On-going	Agency is able to recruit and retain highly qualified managers.
	b. Ensure funding is appropriately designated.	Chief Financial Officer & Program Directors	Budget reflects competitive salary.	Annually	

Goal # 4: Increase the Agency's Marketing					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcome
1. Hire a public relations staff person.	a. Develop job description; advertise position.	Executive Director and Human Resources Manager	Job description completed and ads placed.	July 2009	Permanent Public Relations position that promotes Agency visibility.
	b. Hire and train new PR staff person.	Executive Director and Human Resources Manager	New PR staff person begins employment.	October 2009	
	c. Increase funding available for marketing through soliciting donations/in-kind funds.	Public Relations Director	In-kind marketing donations valued at \$6,000 are committed by outside agencies.	January 2011	
2. Increase advertising efforts.	a. Increase funding for community education and outreach in the Agency's budget.	Chief Financial Officer	Community Education and Outreach line increased by 50%.	FY 2008-2009	Agency advertising is increased by 20% as evidenced by the number of ads placed annually and the diversity of ad placements.
	b. Create an Agency newsletter for staff and strategic partners.	Program Directors and Public Relations Director	Newsletter printed and distributed.	Starts in 2010; Quarterly thereafter	
	b. All Directors record min. one Public Service Announcement.	Program Directors and Public Relations Director	One PSA recorded each year by each Program Director.	Annually	
	c. Assess advertising done by agency for effectiveness and report on assessment and provide recommendation	Public Relations Director	Advertising is assessed to maintain effectiveness.	Annually	
	d. Install Agency logos on signage/doorways at sites, etc.	Program Directors and Public Relations Director	Logos are clearly displayed at each site.	2014	

Goal # 4: Increase the Agency's Marketing <u>cont'd</u>					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcome
3. Solidify and improve Agency representation.	a. Standardize agency documentation/materials to reflect Agency as a whole; use agency name & logo.	Public Relations Director	Agency materials standardized.	January 2011	Increased Agency visibility in the community.
	b. Create a central hub/process to check information representing agency before it is published/distributed.	Public Relations Director	Agency staff are informed and utilize new process for checking materials.	January 2011	
	c. Purchase stickers that can easily be applied to items distributed by the Agency (ex. Food bags).	Program Directors	Agency materials or give-aways display logo and name.	January 2008	
	d. Make Agency t-shirts and encourage staff to wear them one day/month and at community events.	WIC Director and Deputy Director	75% of the Agency's staff are wearing T-shirts on site check days.	January 2008	
4. Develop individualized community reports that demonstrate the economic impact of services provided by the Agency.	a. Gather data regarding availability and benefits/economic impact of services offered in each community.	Executive Director and Consultant	Community reports are developed for each of the Supervisoral Districts served by the Agency.	FY 2008-2009	Community representatives have an increased understanding of the Agency and the economic benefits it provides to the community through its programs and services.
	b. Distribute reports to city staff, County Supervisors, and at strategic locations in the community.	Program Directors	Copies of the five reports are distributed.	July 2009-December 2014	

Goal # 4: Increase the Agency's Marketing <u>cont'd</u>					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcome
5. Increase staff involvement in community events.	a. Include community participation in Director's job descriptions and evaluations.	Executive Director and Human Resources Manager	Job descriptions and evaluations are updated as necessary.	January 2008	Increased Agency visibility in the community as reflected by the number of Agency staff that attended community events reported on the Agency's website.
	b. Promote participation in community events and fundraisers.	Executive Director & Program Directors	List of community events and involvement is included in presentations to Board.	On-going	
6. Ensure the Agency is linked in with other community resources.	a. Periodically check for websites where a link to the Agency's website would be appropriate.	Program Directors	Resources are reviewed and discussed bi-annually at staff meetings.	On-going	A list of appropriate websites and directories is identified and contacted is generated and updated annually.
	b. Ensure Agency contact information is available in community directories.	Program Directors	Directories are reviewed and discussed bi-annually at staff meetings.	On-going	

Goal # 5: Establish a Political Advisory Component (PAC)					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Establish a separate arm to serve as a PAC.	a. Investigate structure of private non-profit arm to see if it could serve as PAC.	Chief Financial Officer	Report on PAC formation.	Jan 2011	A minimum of three political campaigns are supported annually as selected by the PAC Board.
	b. Establish Allocation Committee on how funds are distributed.	PAC Board	Committee established.	July 2011	
	c. Raise money for PAC uses (political campaigns/events, lobbying, etc.).	PAC Board and Committee	Bank account opened and funds deposited into account.	2011-2014	

Goal # 6: Expand current programs and services to fulfill Agency's mission					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Increase the number of childcare slots by 50.	a. Conduct a needs assessment to determine specifics of unmet need.	Childcare Program Director	Needs assessment completed.	January 2010	Childcare slots increased by fifty (50).
	b. Identify and secure a location.	Childcare Program Director	Appropriate location for expanded services secured.	2014	
	c. Secure additional operating funds.	Childcare Program Director	Operating funding increased to provide for 50 new slots.	2014	
2. Consider developing a Southeast Asian Cherish program site.	a. Conduct an assessment to determine extent of need, identify a location, and to research healthy, ethnically-appropriate food choices.	Deputy Director	Assessment is completed.	FY 2008-2009	A new Cherish site is opened that increases accessibility to the Agency's target population.
	b. Secure additional funding.	Deputy Director	Funding is increased.	FY 2009-2010	
	c. Begin operations at new site.	Deputy Director	Ethnically-appropriate food is offered at a new site.	FY 2009-2010	

Goal # 7: Offer exemplary programs					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
1. Evaluate value of new grant programs, partnerships etc. before applying or participating.	a. Develop a benefits/risk analysis process that is conducted prior to taking on new programs/grants.	Executive Director & Program Directors	Analysis process is developed.	January 2008	New ventures are assessed to ensure they are in line with the Agency's mission; at least two are pursued after passing the assessment during the planning period.
	b. Begin using process to assess value of potential programs/ partnerships .	Executive Director & Program Directors	Potential programs and grants are analyzed before commitment is made.	On-going	
2. Re-evaluate programs with low participation and/or fiscal deficits.	a. Develop assessment report based on review and analysis of each program's monthly reports.	Program Directors	Assessment report completed.	Annually	Minimum of three of the Agency's existing programs are evaluated during the planning period.
	b. Relocate sites or consolidate unproductive programs.	Program Directors	Issues outlined in assessment reports are addressed.	2014	
3. Provide soft-skills training to Agency staff.	a. Identify specific training needs (ex. quality assurance, customer service, supervisor training) and opportunities.	Program Directors	Training needs and opportunities are assessed.	Annually	25% of the Agency's staff attend soft-skills training during the planning period.
	b. Identify funding for training in program budgets.	Program Directors	Staff development funds available in budget.	Annually	

Goal # 7: Offer exemplary programs <u>cont'd</u>					
Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Indicators	Timeframe	Outcomes
4. Implement best practices for each of the Agency's departments/ programs.	a. Research and develop best practice programs throughout the State and nation.	Program Directors	An inventory of best practice reference and sample materials is developed for each department.	January 2008; update annually	Programs exhibit evidence of best practice implementation as reflected by a 15% increase in total Agency clientele during the planning period.
	b. Attend and present at program-specific conferences and trainings; participate in networking opportunities.	Program Directors	Conference attendance reported in update to Board.	Annually	
	c. Develop an internal monitoring/assessment process that mirrors grant funding agency's monitoring for each dept.	Program Directors	Internal assessment procedures and tools are completed.	January 2008	

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Strategic Plan:	A framework for decision making and a plan for agency goals.
Vision:	A broad general statement of the desired future. A vision is the ideal outcome.
Mission:	A specific statement of purpose.
Promise:	A pledge or guarantee that something specific will be done.
Goal:	A long-term statement (5-10 years) of desired change based upon the vision and mission.
Objective:	A precise description of a short-range (1-4 years) desired change that supports the attainment of a goal.
Strategy:	The course of action to achieve an Objective.
Outcome:	The actual measure of the extent to which programs, services, or projects are achieving objectives.
Indicator:	Specific process and/or performance measure used to determine whether programs, services, or projects are achieving goals and objectives.
SMART Analysis:	Used to ensure that goals, objectives, and strategies are <u>S</u> pecific, <u>M</u> easurable, <u>A</u> ttainable, identify a <u>R</u> esponsible person and are <u>T</u> ime specific.

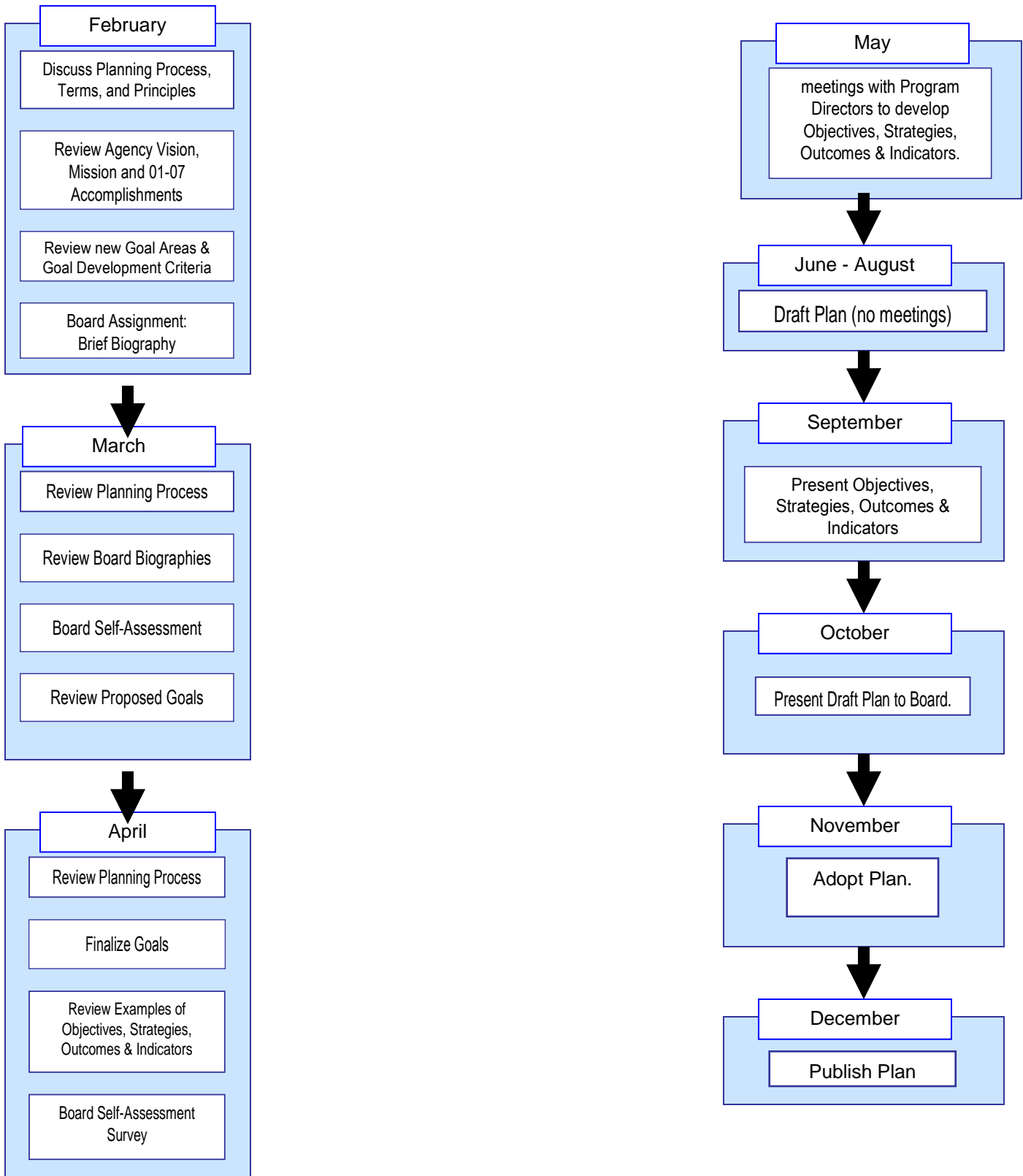
APPENDIX B – BENEFITS OF SERVING ON THE BOARD

Benefits of Serving on the Merced County Community Action Agency Board

- ❖ Strengthen your connection to the community
 - ❖ Training Opportunities
- ❖ Participate in important decision-making regarding services for low-income residents
 - ❖ Have a voice in shaping policies that affect the Agency's programs
 - ❖ Make a positive difference in the community
- ❖ Great networking – meet and build relationships with interesting and diverse people
 - ❖ Learn more about the community
 - ❖ Learn advocacy skills



APPENDIX C – STRATEGIC PLANNING FLOW CHART



APPENDIX D – ORGANZATIONAL CHART

