



# 2023 - 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

Nevada County – Adult & Family Services Commission/Community Action Agency



## WITH GRATITUDE

The Nevada County Health & Human Services Agency would like to thank:

The **Community Action Network** of grantees for sharing their experiences and providing feedback to inform our planning efforts

The **Nevada County Service Providers** for providing valuable insight into the communities needs and help in identifying gaps

**Staff** for their contributions, guidance, and support; and

The **Adult & Family Services Commission** as the advising board for their thoughtful dialogue, editing, and decision-making.



This plan was developed with guidance from Silk Consulting Group under contract with the Nevada County Health & Human Services Agency-Nevada County Community Action Partnership

## ABOUT US

The Nevada County Adult and Family Services Commission (AFSC) serves as the Community Action Agency advising board through the Nevada County Health and Human Services, a public county agency federally funded through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The AFSC is uniquely positioned and is committed to partnering with community-based organizations to create programs and pathways that lead to social and economic empowerment and prosperity, with the aim of ending poverty within the County of Nevada.

In 2011, the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency began implementing CSBG funding under the Federal economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The public agency, through its housing and community services division, contracts with local service providers to provide free services to low-income resident in Nevada County who have experienced social, economic, and educational barriers to self-sufficiency. Recognizing that a variety of services already exist in Nevada County to address the effects of poverty, the Adult and Family Services Commission has decided to address poverty using the most impactful strategies. This approach has improved access to a coordinated continuum of comprehensive programs and services designed to support families and strengthen economic security.

Rooted in assessing and analyzing the needs of the community, the Nevada County AFSC strategic plan centers around funding local community level initiatives that align with the agency's priority focus areas while addressing basic human needs that will improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and the community. These focus areas are all aimed at eradicating poverty through an equity lens while embracing diversity, promoting empowerment and self-sufficiency, and demonstrating programmatic impact.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Community Action Agency is governed by a Board of Supervisor's approved a 12-member, tripartite board/commission comprised of individuals from three community sectors: private enterprise, public sector and low-income.

Private Enterprise Representatives:

- Cindy Wilson
- Barbara Larsen

Public Sector Representatives:

- Lindy Beatie
- Kimberly Grant
- Kathleen Shaffer

Low-Income Representatives:

- Nicole McNeely
- Anne Mikal Heine
- Dena Malakian

There are currently four (4) vacant seats on the Commission.

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

We are excited to continue this important work. We realize that although we have seen a lot of progress over the years, there is still much work to be done. This strategic plan is a commitment to take a fresh look at our community, especially since the pandemic, so that we can refine our priorities and seek out innovative solutions.

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan represents the cycle of growth for the agency moving to a more inclusive and trauma-informed culture where all levels of the organization think in terms of impact, results through cross-agency collaboration and data-driven decision-making.

Throughout this strategic planning process, we

have taken the time to engage all of our stakeholders and partners and were careful to listen to what they are concerned about, what we can address and how we can do a better job with a focus on regular improvement. This plan outlines specific areas that the Commission plans to address over the next 5 years.

## A MESSAGE TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The management, staff and Commission members of the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency and the Nevada County Adult and Family Services Commission understands that though we may all face uncertainties in life, few are more daunting than those encountered by persons living in poverty. Often there is no one solution, intervention or remediation that enables an individual or family to achieve the desired goal of self-sufficiency. As a result, we believe that holistic success on such a journey most often requires creative strategies leveraged with the strengths of community collaborations.

Over the next five years, the Commission will be actively engaged as Ambassadors for the Mission of Community Action, relentlessly striving to offer the best services possible as value partners. The future will present many opportunities to make our community a better place to live, learn and work towards unified goals. We are grateful for the support that we receive and hope to champion change.

## HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Since 1982, the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency, a public agency, through its Adult and Family Services Commission (AFSC) has been a part of the broad national Community Action Partnership (CAP) network of nearly 1,000 agencies that are embedded throughout communities all across the United States. This network was created by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the 1964 national War on Poverty.

As the issue of social and economic inequities continues to impact our low-income communities and families, the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP) network association has adopted the following three overarching goals: 1) Individuals and families with low-incomes are stable and achieve economic security; 2) Communities where people with low-income live are healthy and offered economic opportunity; and 3) People with low-income are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

These goals and the network Theory of Change were considered throughout the Nevada County strategic planning process. Additionally, the agency is guided by national organizational standards that are organized in three thematic groups and broken into five categories to guide maximum feasible participation and organizational vision and direction. These standards include commitments to guide consumer input and involvement, community engagement, community assessment, organizational leadership, and board governance.

CSBG organizational standards require a new strategic plan every five years, while a community needs assessment is required by the organizational standards every three years. This strategic plan is also aligned with ROMA and ROMA Next Generation goals as described below.



## RESULTS ORIENTED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (ROMA)

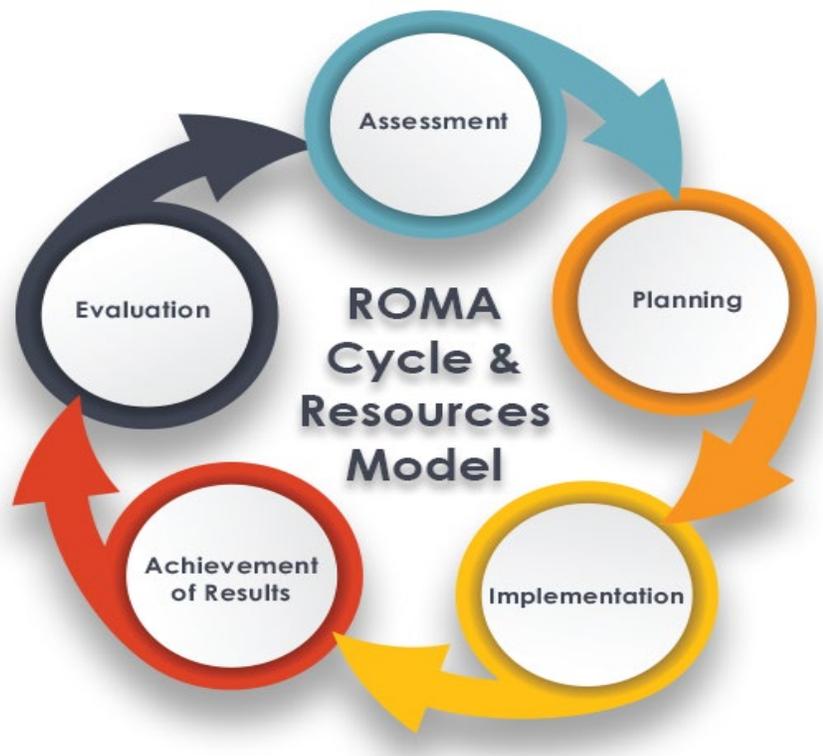
Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) provides a framework for continuous growth and improvement among hundreds of community action agencies and are the basis for state leadership and assistance toward those ends. It contains six anti-poverty performance indicators/goals:

- Low-income people become more self-sufficient.
- The conditions in which low-income people live are improved.
- Low-income people own a stake in their community.
- Partnerships among supporters and providers of service to low-income people are achieved.
- Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.
- Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

Tangible, realistic, specific, and measurable goals integrating the ROMA performance indicators have been developed in this Strategic Plan, which offers strategic objectives, timelines, and an accountability framework.

### ROMA Next Generation (ROMA NG)

In addition to the ROMA anti-poverty performance indicators, this strategic plan was informed by the ROMA Next Generation (ROMA NG) a supplemental system for continuous quality improvement established in 2018 that enables the network of community action agencies to measure, analyze, and communicate performance. As a continuous learning and improvement agency, AFSC has aligned this plan's strategic goals with the proposed ROMA NG framework,



which identifies three Performance indicators:

- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic

opportunity.

- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in their communities.

## INTRODUCTION

The Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency completes a Strategic Plan based on an assessment of community needs and the internal/external capacity to deliver services in response to those needs through an effective alignment of the organization's mission. The Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency is a recipient of Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds that are administered by the State of California Community Services and Development Department and funded by the federal Office of Community Services. This strategic plan is intended to provide a five-year roadmap for programming, civil leadership, emerging client and community needs, governance and operations and data use. The plan addresses how the agency will address the reduction of poverty for low-income residents of the county.

The strategic plan of the Community Action Agency of Nevada County is intended to provide a five-year roadmap for programming, civic leadership, emerging client needs, governance and operations and data use as a basis for outcomes. To produce this plan, staff met with the consultant to reflect on the mission, vision and core operating values and assumptions underlying the organization's approach to its work. This meeting set the stage for a work session of the full board to loosely define the organization's strategic direction. Staff then helped coordinate the planning process and provided important support and analysis to complete the plan.

The strategic planning process was facilitated by Silk Consulting Group and was supplemented by the triannual Community Needs Assessment conducted by the consulting firm. Internal organizational assessments were conducted by staff. The CNA included key expert interviews, stakeholder and community surveys and listening sessions, as well as a review of demographic and market data.

Information from the CNA and the internal assessments helped the AFSC assess both the challenges and opportunities the organization is likely to face over the next five years and sets the context for choices reflected in this plan. The plan identifies poverty-related needs and resources in the community, establishes goals and priorities for delivering those services to households of individuals and families that are most affected by poverty. The plan also cooperates with the federal organizational standards set forth for CSBG funding, as well as complying with state and federal laws. The Nevada County Community Action Agency supports activities that assist low-income families and individuals, homeless families and individuals, new immigrant populations and elderly low-income individuals and families by removing obstacles and solving problems that stall their achievement of self-sufficiency.

Through the Nevada County Health & Human Services Agency, the AFSC contracts CSBG services to individuals and families through outreach, food support and employment development programs.

# THE CURRENT STRATEGIC RESPONSE

## GUIDED BY CORE VALUES

The AFSC Advisory Board, comprised of local community members, elected officials, and community partners, identified the following four core values as a declaration to intentionally guide how the agency moves forward in implementing its strategic plan.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### Respect

We value the strengths and assets of all people and organizations with whom we partner.

### Integrity

We believe in modeling trustworthiness and accountability through honest listening, accurate information processing and following through on our commitments.

### Responsible Stewardship

We are committed to careful stewardship of all human, natural and financial resources; we are environmentally responsible, and we spend wisely the funds that are entrusted to us to invest.

### Optimism

We believe that we can create a better future through innovation and societal change resulting in an improved quality of life for everyone.

## OUR MISSION

It is the mission of the Nevada County Community Action Agency to engage and

empower our community to eliminate poverty, to create equity and prosperity, and to assist people in achieving self-sufficiency through direct services, advocacy, and community partnerships.

## OUR VISION

The Nevada County Community Action Agency envisions communities where all residents have access to quality education, affordable housing, healthcare, transportation, healthy food, and a living wage.

- Through partnerships, people with low-income find resources, support, relations, and opportunities that aid them in overcoming economic and cultural barriers to establishing and maintaining self-sufficient lives
- Commitment to empowering those seeking assistance to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency
- Organizational excellence and continued improvement working with employees, the community, and partners



## LOCALLY INITIATED COMMUNITY SURVEY

Nevada County's strategic planning processes are informed by the ROMA cycle every three years, starting with the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, a major data collection effort aimed at garnering the needs of Nevada County's low-income community and incorporates community voices into the AFSC work.

The primary purpose of this assessment is to ensure that the AFSC provides responsive services that meet community needs. To this end, the results from the assessment were incorporated into the AFSC strategic plan.

The data collection process consisted of five parts: a community profile, a survey of low-income individuals and service providers that provide services to low-income households, customer satisfaction data, and feedback from community members.

The community profile used publicly available data to outline the realities of poverty in Nevada County. Paper and electronic surveys were offered in both English and Spanish and were provided to the community via hard copies at service provider locations, via a Survey Monkey link shared in public, social media opportunities and in the local newspapers. The survey asked low-income residents and advocates to reflect upon their experiences with poverty and unmet service needs. Phone interviews were conducted with a handful of community experts, including representatives from the private, public, community and faith-based sectors. The gathered quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed and reported in the 2023 Nevada County Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and accompanying appendices, which was approved by the Adult and Family Services Commission in May 2023, as well as approved by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors in June 2023.

## FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN OUR COMMUNITY

The Nevada County AFSC is results-oriented and conducts a comprehensive community needs

assessment every three years to update its community profile and identify areas of need for clients and the community.

The results of the 2023 Community Needs Assessment were divided into four topics for further analysis: Most Frequently Unmet Needs, Barriers to Access, Factors that Reinforce Barriers and Opportunities for Action.

### Most Frequent Unmet Needs

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to review a list of potential services and were asked which of the services they need but were not currently receiving. The most frequent unmet service needs were in the areas of transportation, financial wellness/security, mental health, utility assistance and housing. In the area of transportation, the primary unmet need was financial assistance with car repairs, even minor repairs, and a bus schedule with more routes/buses with 78% of respondents stating that they needed, but were not receiving this service, or that the service was inadequate. In the area of financial wellness/security, an overwhelming percentage of respondents commented that the public assistance, including SSI/SSDI that they receive monthly cannot keep up with the growing costs of insurance and medications, gasoline, utility costs and monthly rent. With respect to mental health, households do not feel that accessing county provided behavioral health services is realistic especially when at a lower level of need or when an individual hasn't met the high benchmarks to receive services. In the area of utility assistance, households of all ages commented about the continuous increases in utility costs across the state and for low-income households, the inability to keep pace with those increases is a huge burden, and even more of a burden for seniors who rely on electricity to operate medical equipment. In the area of housing, help with home maintenance and repairs (62%) and assistance with utility payments (92%), and affordable housing (89%) were the top unmet needs. Homeless services continue to be an unmet and top need in Nevada County and across the state. Survey respondents feel that many systems will need to be addressed on a large scale (statewide and nationwide) to address the homeless crisis beyond building affordable housing.

Through interviews and surveys, respondents were asked to identify barriers in a variety of service areas. The results

presented a complex picture of interconnected barriers to Nevada County’s low-income community’s access to economic opportunities. Poverty hinders access to many services, which in turn hinders the receipt of other services and further reinforces poverty. For example, the growing costs of car ownership, including fuel, repairs, and insurance were identified as a financial burden, but also seen as a major barrier to accessing higher wages, employment opportunities, educational opportunities, training, and health care, all of which sends low-income households deeper into poverty.

### Factors that Reinforce Barriers

The Community Needs Assessment process also identified what community members felt were the causes of poverty or the barriers to economic opportunity improved quality of life. Respondents particularly indicated that criminal records prevented residents from accessing employment, housing, and other key services thus reinforcing the cycle of poverty.

Community members also pointed to the interconnectedness of low wages, lack of affordable housing (primarily for seniors), and health conditions are reinforcing barriers. Several respondents commented during interviews that minimum wage may only meet basic needs thus forcing households into affordable housing options which are often less safe and lower quality environments. Living on a minimum wage salary also results in households having no financial safety net (savings) when household emergencies arise or when health issues present themselves.

### Opportunities for Action

Community members identified several opportunities for the community. When asked for suggestions on how to improve the community some respondents stated a desire to see more of a variety of community-established solutions that leverage the community’s strengths. More generalized suggestions included asking service providers to phase out supports more slowly when they are running out of funding; for service providers to garner more feedback on services-what worked/didn’t work and to request that service providers work more in unison together-to create a safety net of needed services where no gaps exist.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

### ABOUT THIS PLAN

The purpose of developing a strategic plan is to identify specific, key changes needed to move the needle on low-income programs and services in Nevada County, as well as to aligned resources to support those key changes and to build a roadmap for implementing those changes.

Among the primary goals of the planning process were to:

- Establish achievable goals that align with state and federal Community Action Plans to reduce or eliminate poverty
- Build and enhance partnerships.
- Determine funding needs and identify potential resource and strategies; and
- Development metrics to evaluate and track progress.

### WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Strategic planning is an important process that builds consensus on goals, facilitates group prioritization of key actions, fosters creative and collaborative problem-solving, and provides a platform for considering resources, needs and opportunities. Strategic plans are central to qualifying for the funding that sustains the systems that operate in Nevada County, such as the homeless response system, the welfare system, veteran’s services, and many other systems. Having an intentional,

coordinated and collaborative plan for responding to local needs will better position Nevada County, its jurisdictions, and stakeholders to pursue funding and other resources to build system capacity to respond to those needs.

A well-developed strategic plan:

- Lays out a shared vision and commitment to effectively respond to needs.
- Establishes attainable goals and benchmarks to ensure accountability and define success.
- Serves as a roadmap for reaching those goals.

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED-the next five years

The Nevada County Community Action Strategic Plan is the result of a community-based process. During the creation of the 2023-2027 strategic plan goals, the AFSC utilized the Results Oriented Management and accountability (ROMA) Cycle and Logic Model for Planning framework. The framework ensures that each goal is SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to the mission and vision, and time-oriented), and sustainable by aligning them with targeted activities, inputs, outcomes, and indicators, informed by the community needs assessment.

The ROMA Cycle begins with Assessment, where community needs, resources, and agency data are assessed. Then the cycle moves to Planning, using the agency mission statement and assessment data to identify results and strategies. Following is Implementation where services and strategies produce results, and Achievement of Results occurs when progress is observed and reported out. The last element of the cycle is Evaluation, in which data is analyzed and compared with benchmarks. This final element feeds back into the Assessment stage and the cycle repeats to foster continuous improvement in achieving equitable results, improving management, and increasing accountability. During the strategic planning process, the AFSC modified its focus areas to narrow in and create impactful and results-driven goals that aligned with the agency's community-driven approach. The related strategies and outcomes have been summarized on the following pages.



AFSC-Nevada County’s highest standards for excellence in programming, civic leadership, addressing emerging needs, governance and operations, and data use will be sought through close attention to the following strategic goals:

## 2023-2027 Goals & Strategic Objectives

Responsive Programming	
Objective: Maximize AFSCs potential for growth and capacity building	
<b>1. Responsible Stewardship</b>	<p><b>ROMA GOAL 5: Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.</b>  <b>National Goal: Communities where people with low incomes live, are healthy and offer economic opportunity.</b></p>
<p><b>1.1:</b> Contract for delivery of high-quality services that meet family and individual needs as identified by the Community Needs Assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program monitoring reports reflect achievement of program objectives.</li> <li>• All programs maintain a low-risk status with funders.</li> <li>• AFSC services are culturally informed.</li> <li>• All programs are operated and managed in alignment with authorized revenues and expenses.</li> <li>• Staff capacity is maximized to ensure high-quality program administration.</li> <li>• AFSC is able to examine, refine, and create programming that serves individual and family needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.2:</b> Continue to expand resources to increase AFSC’s ability to leverage funds and build capacity to serve the community (eg, affordable housing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to partner with the Nevada County Housing Authority and Health and Human Services to apply for capital development grant funds for affordable housing.</li> <li>• Continue to reinforce availability of affordable housing as the most basic need for low-income households; increase affordable and deeply affordable housing units</li> <li>• Funding for program expansion is acquired.</li> </ul>
Civic Leadership	
Objective: Promote opportunities for community engagement	
<b>2. Community Engagement and Advocacy</b>	<p><b>ROMA GOAL 3: Low-income people own a stake in their community.</b>  <b>National Goal: People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.</b></p>
<p><b>2.1:</b> Engage low-income communities in developing solutions to address poverty, revitalization of their communities and empower low-income residents to become more self-sufficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership development and advocacy tools for community members are available.</li> <li>• Community members continue to inform the Community Needs Assessment process.</li> <li>• Community members take action to improve their lives.</li> <li>• Listening sessions with community members are convened bi-annually.</li> <li>• Satisfaction reports indicate that community members trust AFSC.</li> <li>• Community members are engaged in AFSC activities.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2.2:</b> Support civic engagement efforts within the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The U.S Census efforts to effectively count all Nevada County community members is supported.</li> <li>• Community leadership development opportunities at AFSC are available.</li> <li>• Individuals and families have a sense of influence over events that affect them and can take action.</li> </ul>
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## Governance

### Objective: Promote accountability and decision-making leadership

<p><b>3. Organizational Excellence</b></p>	<p><b>ROMA GOAL 5: Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.</b>  <b>National Goal: Communities where people with low incomes live, are healthy and offer economic opportunity.</b></p>
<p><b>3.1:</b> Maintain effective governance and organizational compliance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AFS Commission has used the necessary recruitment and onboarding tools to maintain full membership of a tri-partite board.</li> <li>• Ensure that all Commission members understand the core messaging of the organization.</li> <li>• Establish and maintain a tradition that Commission members serve as Community Action ambassadors.</li> <li>• The board and agency staff provide two-way communication that ensures clear direction on key programmatic issues.</li> <li>• Organizational standards compliance meets the criteria defined by the Office of Economic Opportunity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2:</b> Continue to incorporate industry best practices into the organization’s daily operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain regular board training opportunities.</li> <li>• Review program evaluation methods/performance management.</li> <li>• Maintain diverse funding sources for best leveraging opportunities.</li> <li>• Leverage existing networks and fund trusted and proven CBOs that empower and advocate for low-income communities/persons.</li> </ul>

## Data Management

### Objective: Develop program benchmarks and markers for success

<p><b>4. Strategic and Data-Driven Decision Making</b></p>	<p><b>ROMA GOAL 5: Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results</b>  <b>National Goal: Communities where people with low incomes live, are healthy and offer economic opportunity</b></p>
<p><b>4.1:</b> Regularly revisit policies and procedures for data-collection, reporting and management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AFSC Board of Directors has used the necessary recruitment and onboarding tools to maintain a tri-partite board.</li> <li>• The board maintains full membership and regular attendance at monthly board meetings.</li> <li>• The board and agency staff provide two-way communication that ensures clear direction on key programmatic issues.</li> <li>• Organizational standards compliance meets the criteria defined by the Office of Economic Opportunity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2</b> Regularly assess community, programmatic and agency-level data that inform programming decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs’ effectiveness is regularly evaluated through ongoing and effective data collection, data are used to maintain and improve quality.</li> <li>• AFSC makes efforts to assess the community impact of its programming and services.</li> <li>• AFSC prioritizes the need for low-income households to improve their household income and resources.</li> <li>• AFSC is able to integrate and align some of the program needs with available grants and better select program partners.</li> </ul>

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