BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL
COMMUNITY PLAN FOR 2018-2020

Community Driven....Community Strong!
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- Graphs of Community Needs Surveys
- Copies of Surveys
  - Community Needs
  - Employee Satisfaction
  - Consumer Satisfaction
- Top Needs Identified and Summary Plan Forms
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We at Berkshire Community Action Council, embrace our role in the community to act as a catalyst to help alleviate the most immediate, destabilizing effects of poverty in the lives of individuals and families. Over the years we have interpreted our mission broadly to include all needs impacting the quality of life of our low-income neighbors. Our ultimate goal is to help secure the future prosperity of the Berkshire community. It compels us to work collaboratively with other agencies and businesses to find creative and sustainable solutions to break down the barriers that keep our neighbors from fully experiencing a stable and self-sufficient future and to offer innovative solutions to the problems facing our community.

To accomplish this, we performed an extensive COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT throughout all the regions of Berkshire County. Since Poverty takes on different characteristics throughout the County, we focused our efforts on the Northern-Central-Southern Regions. The process included holding televised community conversations in Northern, Central and South County. We conducted surveys regarding community needs and ascertained that the responses fairly represented a cross-section of that area’s population. Numerous meetings were held with the Strategic Planning Committee to analyze the data and to seek other data to fill gaps before we used the information in our goal setting and planning. We reviewed the indicators provided by external sources to better understand and draw correlations to the data we collected.

Our data revealed that although varying slightly in order of importance, throughout the county the primary needs emerged as Affordable Housing, Transportation, Workforce Development and Financial Stability.

We also performed an INTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT help clarify our goals, objectives and methods. We assessed our staff’s satisfaction through a survey and how we interact with clients through our customer satisfaction survey. We held a staff retreat to solicit ideas for improving our internal processes and received many useful suggestions that will improve our efficacy moving forward. We asked key Community Partners to engage in a SWOT analysis with us to help us identify the community’s perception of our Strengths and Weaknesses and to also help us identify any threats and opportunities that we could not see on our own. We also created a risk committee and formulated our first Risk Management Plan which addressed all areas of risk from board operations to technology. These risks will be reviewed quarterly with an emphasis on developing plans to address risks before they emerge.

Our data revealed a very satisfied and respectful staff dedicated to strong customer service and a financially solid organization positioned to assume some future risk.

We had identified Eight (8) Critical Needs facing our County. Through our conversations, surveys, discussions with other service providers, we knew that BCAC had to assume a role in addressing all of these needs since they all impacted the lives of the low-income community.

We chose 3 areas of Need in which we would take a lead role and asked the lead agencies that address the other 5 areas of need (our linkages) how they would like BCAC to contribute to their efforts. Most of these suggestions and requests are included in our community plan. BCAC realizes that to effect long-term sustainable change in people’s lives, we cannot do it alone. It takes the collaboration between all providers and community members to improve the conditions in which we all live.

Once the three areas of Need were identified, the Board and Staff met to establish our primary programmatic goals for the next 3 years. The areas of Need for which BCAC will assume a lead role in addressing are:
Our programmatic goals will also include supportive and expanded roles working with our Linkages in addressing the following areas:

- Housing
- Affordable Child Care
- Food Security
- Opioid/Addictions
- Crime

Our agency wide goals remain to:

1. **Strengthen our Community Programming and Partnerships**
   
   A. Expand the Community Connector Partnership to include a broader range of human service providers to improve our capacity as a lead agency for collective impact. Our strength is our partnerships...through these and the referral system known as Benefits Hub, we can connect our families to resources throughout the county. We will attempt to address issues of financial insecurity in a holistic manner, recognizing that merely putting emergency resources into the hands of the under-resourced will only stabilize them for a short time. Through our community partnerships we will create "Individualized plans for Success"
   
   B. Work within our community to find solutions to mutual problems facing human service providers, thereby expanding capacity for all. This may include coalitions for purchasing goods and services, establishment of a nonprofit management company to provide Administrative Services and/or a Centralized fundraising effort.
   
   C. Improve the quality and efficacy of our programming. Through continuous feedback collected from Surveys, community conversations and focus groups, BCAC will commit to a process of Continuous Quality Improvement in the delivery of services to our constituents.

2. **Strengthen our Board of Directors and Staff**

   A. Increase Board to full capacity with ACTIVE members from all 3 sectors ... North, Central and South County. Ensure Board members possess specific useful knowledge beneficial to the agency (accounting, programs, fundraising, etc.) Provide training for Board members so they understand the agency and the programs and services provided to the community.

   B. Create opportunities for staff development, raise the standard of expectation, and minimize complacency by creating incentives for excellence/higher standards.

   C. Improve morale and interagency networking by providing fun activities and opportunities for Board/Staff interaction.

   D. Develop Board of Director’s marketing sub-committee or expand the role of the fundraising subcommittee to include the marketing aspect.

   E. Require board members & program directors to become active players in the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and with other Human Service Providers - serving on boards, committees, volunteering for events management, etc.
3. **Improve Public Awareness of BCAC and its programming**

   A. Utilize Billboards to bring attention to programs and opportunities
   B. Update Website regularly to provide timely information on programs and events
   C. Increase presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
   D. Establish relationships with the press; issue regular press releases
   E. Expand outreach and participation in community events
   F. Join Boards/volunteer with other organizations (Be sure that when participating people know we are from BCAC)
   G. Improve BCAC’s internal and external communications and information sharing
   H. Program directors & managers develop a “wants & needs” list regarding internal communication aspects (internal).
   I. Develop tangible partnerships with other respected community organizations. (external)
   J. Improve BCAC’s ability to attract private funding/contributions
   K. Present quarterly profile (Eagle or other media outlets) of a family or individual who has seen their lives improve from the services offered through BCAC
   L. Develop a community entrepreneurial initiative or business.
   M. Find community service projects that include our clients as volunteers and that also impacts the community.

4. **Agency Financial Stability**

   A. Increase Fundraising
   B. Seek out more grant opportunities
   C. Develop new programs or social enterprises to provide unrestricted funds
   D. Establish partnerships within the community, which allow us to increase income and share expense.
BOARD AUTHORIZATION

THIS PLAN WAS AUTHORIZED BY THE BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON JULY 6, 2017

JOHN-ARTHUR MILLER, CHAIR
CASSANDRA MARK, VICE CHAIR
WALTER ORENSTEIN, CPA, TREASURER
SUSAN SMITH, SECRETARY
MICHAEL TAYLOR
DARLENE OLSEN
STEPHEN RADIN
LISA FLETCHER-UDEL
JEFFREY LOWENSTEIN
ALFRED ENCHILL
BARBARA PROPER
BONNIE HOWLAND
ARSEMA ABEGAZ

WE RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT DO ALL THINGS ALONE...BUT TOGETHER THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS.

We stand committed to our Mission to address the needs of the low income, elderly and working poor within the communities we serve and we hold that mission at the center of all our decisions and planning
AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC), incorporated in 1966 as a non-profit human service organization was designated the anti-poverty Community Action Agency for Berkshire County, Massachusetts. The administrative office is located at 1531 East Street, Pittsfield, with satellite offices at 85 Main Street in North Adams, and 141 North Street in Pittsfield. The role of BCAC is to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty. Through assisting residents with low incomes, the elderly and working-poor of Berkshire County, and by working to better focus available local, state, federal and private resources, BCAC supports these residents in their journey towards achieving sustainability and self-sufficiency.

Through the work and support of BCAC’s Board of Directors, program directors, front line staff, and committed volunteers, BCAC incorporates a wide range of activities that directly align with the agency’s goals and shared vision.

OUR PROGRAMMING

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR
FUEL ASSISTANCE
WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE
ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS
HEATING SYSTEM REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT
VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE
MICRO LOAN PROGRAM
REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE PROGRAM
NEW C.A.R.S. (COMMUNITY ACTION RIDES)
FINANCIAL LITERACY
THE FOOD DEPOT
COAT DRIVE
HOLIDAY ELF WARM CLOTHING PROGRAM
PROJECT RECONNECT
SUMMER CHILDREN’S ADVENTURE
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FRONT LAWN FOOD PROJECT
MISSION STATEMENT

Berkshire Community Action works with our Community to find creative and sustainable solutions that promote economic stability and alleviate the destabilizing effects of poverty on our neighbors here in the Berkshires. (adopted July 28, 2016)

We are dedicated to:

MINIMIZING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON PEOPLE’S LIVES
HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER
MAKING BERKSHIRE COUNTY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

TAGLINE: COMMUNITY DRIVEN...COMMUNITY STRONG!
VISION STATEMENT

SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND DIGNITY FOR ALL

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL CONTINUES TO BE COMMITTED TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING POVERTY BY FOSTERING AND ENHANCING SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

BCAC CONTINUES TO COLLABORATE IN THE COLLECTION AND PUBLICATION OF DATA THAT ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THE COMMUNITY NEEDS AND EFFECTS OF POVERTY IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

BCAC CONTINUES TO INNOVATE AND CREATE ACCESS TO ITS SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM, BY CONTINUING TO EXPERIMENT WITH CO-LOCATION AND COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS, AS WELL AS BY RESEARCHING AND IMPLEMENTING THE MOST EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAM MODELS.

BCAC FOCUSES ON BUILDING CAPACITY AND ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY BY CREATING REVENUE-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS AS WELL AS DEVELOPING FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS.

BCAC INCREASES ACCESS TO SERVICES AND PROVIDES A MORE HOLISTIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ITS CLIENTS BY STREAMLINING PROGRAMS AND CREATING CROSS PROGRAM SERVICES THAT ENABLE STAFF TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY AND CREATIVELY TO RESOLVE ISSUES OF POVERTY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

BCAC CONTINUES TO WORK WITH PARTNERS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY TEN YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS.
Berkshire County is the westernmost county in Massachusetts. It borders New York State on the west, Vermont to the north and Connecticut on the south. Berkshire County offers the best of both city and rural living encompassing 30 towns and 2 cities spread over 931 square miles. Pittsfield, a city of 44,737 people, serves as the commercial and healthcare center for the county. Pittsfield is also home to the historic Colonial Theatre, the Berkshire Museum, Hancock Shaker Village, and the Barrington Stage Company. North Adams, the smallest city in Massachusetts with a population of 13,708, lies to the north and is home to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

Great Barrington, a town of 7,003, is representative of the cultural and recreational atmosphere of South County that includes art galleries, music, performing arts, dining, and unique shopping. Some of these attractions include The Norman Rockwell museum, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, and The Berkshire Theatre Festival. The remaining communities include Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesboro, Lee, Monterey, New Ashford, New Marlboro, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Tyringham, Washington, West Stockbridge, and Windsor.

Located 50 miles from Albany, and less than 150 miles from Boston and New York City, Berkshire County has easy access to large metropolitan areas, and four international airports making it a natural destination for tourists, residents, and business. Tourism remains as an economic strength throughout the county with five ski areas, museums, theaters, concerts, and other cultural events available throughout the year. Tanglewood in Lenox is the summer home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and three music Schools. Tanglewood hosts classical music, jazz and contemporary music festivals, and popular artist’s concerts throughout the summer.

Adding to the tourism in Berkshire County are the ski areas and resorts offering cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking that attract visitors each winter. Bousquet’s, Catamount, Jiminy Peak, Otis Ridge, and Butternut offer affordable family skiing and snowboarding in the winter, and often other activities during the remaining seasons.

Berkshire County is home to three local airports, the Pittsfield Municipal Airport, Harriman & West Airport in North Adams, and the Great Barrington Airport. Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) provides bus service throughout Berkshire County, Mondays through Saturdays. The Intermodal Center provides connectivity between local BRTA bus service, Amtrak rail service, and commuter bus services to surrounding regions.
Berkshire County trains, bus and air connections to other parts of the region, it is somewhat limited in local public transportation options that are both adequate and convenient. Many residents rely on cars for transportation, and this has a negative impact on low-income residents who often cannot afford the costs associated with owning and maintaining a vehicle.

While steeped in history and cultural activities, the Berkshires is also home to four colleges, Williams College Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Community College, and Simon’s Rock College of Bard. Twelve school districts support 58 public schools, all offering the school choice option and performing above average in Massachusetts and national standards. There are also 15 private, parochial, and charter schools available.

The large manufacturing companies of the past such as General Electric that employed the majority of the Berkshires’ workforce have downsized or moved away. Today Berkshire County’s largest employers include Berkshire Health Systems, Williams College, public school systems, General Dynamics, Canyon Ranch, Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort, and nonprofits. The new diversity in this economic base can play in several directions. Schools and hospitals can be susceptible to economic changes when dependent on state and local governments funding. Businesses that rely on travel and leisure, a major part of a Berkshires economy, are subject to consumer spending and disposable income, which can change rapidly with economy shifts.
BERKSHIRE COUNTY'S POPULATION HAS BEEN DECLINING SINCE 1970. THE REGION IS CURRENTLY LOSING MORE PEOPLE AT A HIGHER RATE THAN ANY OTHER AREA OF MASSACHUSETTS, ACCORDING TO U.S. CENSUS BUREAU FIGURES.

A total of 737 people left the Berkshires in the 12 months ending on July 1, 2015, a drop of 0.6 percent in one year. Berkshire County has been experiencing a decline in population since the 1970’s. In 1970, the population of the county was 149,402. In 2016, the population has declined to 126,903, a decrease of 22,499 people, or 15%. The current population brings the County back to a level last seen in the late 1940s. The population decline is different from what has happened in the State and nationally. Since 1970, the State growth rate has exceeded 19.7% (this represents a difference of almost 35%) and the national growth rate has been 10.7% (a difference of over 25%).

AGE - The population of Berkshire County, when examined by age, shows a picture of uneven age groups and a difference to what is happening in Massachusetts and nationally. Berkshire County exhibits a much lower birth rate (8.6 births/1,000 people) as compared to Massachusetts (11.5 births/1,000 people.), so the population starts out well below the state and the nation. The county then catches up to Massachusetts and the U.S. at age 19. From age 20 to 32, the county exhibits a steep decline in population, far steeper than the state and nation, and continues to be significantly less than the state and nation until the mid 40’s, where the county catches up. From the age 47 on, the county has a larger share of the population than the state and nation. All of these age group discrepancies relate to each other. The lower birthrate in the region relates to the significant deficit in young
families of childbearing age. The region catches up to the state and nation by the time college begins due to the presence of local colleges attracting new students, however the decline starting at age 20 is caused by local students moving away for college and not coming back as well as the students who moved here for college moving away when they graduate. On top of that, some people who attend college locally or do not attend college move away for new opportunities. The population over age 47, which has a larger share of the population than the state or nation, is the population most affected by the layoffs that occurred in the 1970’s and 1980’s, yet their population has actually stayed in the region. The children of that population has moved away and helped to lead to the decline in the overall population. This older group in the population exhibits an expected steady decline as they age.

![Change in Population age over 25 years](chart)

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2014

**NATURAL CHANGE** - The natural change in population is the number of births and deaths. As can be seen in the chart below, the number of deaths is more than the number of births. This results in a natural decrease in the region’s population.

**MIGRATION** - In addition to births and deaths, migration, both in and out affects the population. As shown below. Berkshire County has consistently been having more residents move out of the region than those that is moving in. The trend for both in and out migration is going down, but the county is still experiencing a net loss of population.

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2014
RACE - Berkshire County’s racial makeup is homogeneous in nature with 88.5% of the population identified as white. The remaining 11.5% is a mix of races, predominately black or African American alone (2.7%), two, or more races (2.1%). 3.9% of the population considers themselves as Hispanic. Racial diversity is changing in the county. While the total population has dropped 3,734 between years 2000 and 2015, the white population has dropped over 12,000. All other races have seen increases. The population that considers itself Hispanic has more than doubled in 10 years. Those identifying as “other race” and “two or more races” are a small part of the population but have also almost doubled. This trend will lead to a more diverse population in the decades ahead.

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2014

OUTLOOK- The imbalance of age groups in Berkshire County has the potential to cause significant population change going forward. With the significantly larger portion of our population getting older, the number of deaths will only rise over the next few decades. The number of births however, will either stay steady or continue to decline. Normally the number of births offsets the number of deaths, but due to the region’s unnatural age imbalance, this will not happen. The only way a region can make up for this deficit is through a net gain in migration. Berkshire County, however, has a net loss in migration, further exasperating the problem. Combining births, deaths and net migration, presents a picture of continued further decline in the population over the coming decades. Based on these trends the population will continue to decline in Berkshire County unless there are significant increases in migration. The one area of the population that could contribute to an increase is the growing immigrant migration. Institutions of Higher Education, community agencies, governments and the local school districts are actively working on plans to increase the number of students attending college and tailoring educational programs and workforce development initiatives to meet the local business’s employment needs. As the population ages, it becomes essential to retain the younger workers to fill the jobs available in the region.

In Berkshire County as in Massachusetts, 10 years from now the anticipated “silver tsunami,” is expected to hit suggesting that a "tidal wave" of college-educated workers both here at home and across the state will be leaving their jobs for retirement —we need a young educated and suitably trained workforce if we are to retain businesses here in the Berkshires.
POVERTY IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY

POPULATION - Overall, the latest information shows that 14.3% of the population in Berkshire County is below poverty, which is significantly higher than the Massachusetts rate of 11.7%. However, poverty in the Berkshires is a more complex issue than just total population below poverty. Within the county, the larger communities tend to have the higher poverty rate. Much of this poverty has to do with the fact that the larger cities in the Berkshires have lost 78 percent of their manufacturing jobs since the 1970s. Retail trade and hospitality jobs helped replace them but often at a minimum wage or one third of which they were making.

KEY: RESIDENTS 16-64 POVERTY RATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 15% Poverty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15% Poverty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2011-2014

The Berkshires experience a high rate of poverty within the younger age cohorts, while a lower rate of poverty among the older age cohorts. The percent of the population below 17 that is in poverty 19.7%, 4.5% higher than the state rate of 15.2%. The rate for the working age group of 16 to 64 is 12.6%, higher than the state rate of 10.9%. The age cohort of age 65 and older has a poverty rate of 8.2%, which is lower than the state rate of 9.2%. The below 17 age group’s poverty rate is over twice the amount of the over 65 age group. In examining further breakdowns of the age groups, a couple of trends are noticeable. In the age under 17 cohort, poverty rates tend to go down as you get older. The age under 5 rate is at 26.6% and the rate goes down throughout the age groups. This would indicate that families with children struggle more financially to meet their needs when the children are younger. This may also be related to parents staying home with their children when they are
young, but going back to work as the children get older. A similar trend to the children in poverty can be seen in adults of working age. Adults 25 to 34 have the highest rate of poverty but the rate goes down at age 55 to 64. This would indicate that as the population ages, there tends to be less people in poverty. The age 25 to 34 age group are in the early stages of their careers or are not suitably trained for the jobs that exist and are in service-industry employment. As the population ages, they start earning more money and are less likely to be in poverty. Parents who had stayed home in their 20’s and /or 30’s, meaning less income for the family, most likely have gotten back into the workforce in their 40’s and 50’s and are contributing financially to their family. The rate continues to decline after age 65 until age 75, when the rate goes up. This is most likely due to the fact that the population has stopped working completely, may have depleted their savings and are more reliant on social security incomes.

**AGE** - Berkshire County experiences a high rate of poverty within the younger age groups, while a lower rate of poverty among the older age groups. Poverty during child bearing years increases dramatically for females and remains level for their male counterparts.
### Poverty Statistics by City/Town

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Community</th>
<th>Children Under Age 17</th>
<th>People 16-64</th>
<th>Elders 65+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alford</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becket</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11.1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<td>2.9%</td>
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<td>North Adams</td>
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<td>Pittsfield</td>
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<td>16.1%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
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<td>Richmond</td>
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<td>Sandisfield</td>
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<td>9.9%</td>
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<td>Savoy</td>
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<td>5.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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<td>5.1%</td>
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<td>Stockbridge</td>
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<td>12.5%</td>
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<td>9.9%</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
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<td>3.8%</td>
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<td>West Stockbridge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Massachusetts</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender** - The sex of an individual also has a bearing on poverty. In general, females have a higher rate of poverty than males. This could be due to several reasons including females receiving lower wages than males, women staying home to
raise children more often than men do, lack of child support, their education levels, or less income from their chosen job field. In Berkshire County, Males earn 1.3 times as much as their female counterparts.

**EDUCATION** - The population in poverty is also heavily dependent one’s degree of education. A person who does not finish high school has two times a greater chance of being in poverty than those who receive a high school diploma or has had some college education or degree. For a person with a bachelor’s degree or higher, the poverty rate is four times less than those who do not finish high school. In all areas of post-secondary education, Berkshire County trails the State averages, but exceeds the national averages on all levels and the graduation rate in Berkshire County is higher than both the state and National Averages.

**FAMILIES** - Another component of poverty is family structure. Poverty for a married-couple family residing in Berkshire County is only 3.6%. When a married-couple has children under 18, the rate goes up to 4.8%. When those children are under five, the rate is at 5.1%, A single female head-of-household in Berkshire County with children under 18 has a poverty rate of 41.7%. When those children are under five, the rate increases to 53.1% This is significantly higher than the state averages as can be seen below:
**Married Families in Poverty**

- Married Couples
- Married Couples with Children under 18
- Married Couples with Children under 5

**Female Head of Households in Poverty**

- Female Households
- Female HH with Children under 18
- Female HH with Children under 5

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2011-2014
ASSESSMENT PROCESS (COMMUNITY)

OVERVIEW
Berkshire Community Action works in collaboration with over two dozen other agencies in the county in a collective impact process designed to empower and create opportunities for families struggling with financial stability. We recognize that the lofty goal of “eliminating poverty in Berkshire County” can never be accomplished through the action of only one agency but takes the coordinated and collegial work of the community to create substantive change. As a result, our community needs assessment involved a wide variety of our partners in this endeavor and although the needs may not be addressed directly by BCAC, our partners provide other resources that are essential to our citizens’ success so their active participation was necessary for a successful planning process. The result is not only a Strategic Plan for BCAC but rather a Community-Wide strategic plan to address economic stability and mobility for all residents of Berkshire County.

THE TEAM
To represent the work of the entire community, the Committee included:

- BCAC’s Executive Director and Management Team (7)
- 5 Board members
- 3 Community Members
- The Program Coordinator for the CPCI (Community Partners Collective Impact)

DATA COLLECTION-INDIVIDUALS

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

Demographic Data was provided by Berkshire Benchmarks, this data is collected from multiple sources and compiled for the entire county. Their sources include:

- American Community Survey
- American Census
- Information provided by multiple county-wide service providers
- University of Massachusetts

PROGRAMMATIC SERVICE DATA:

- Octopia provides service related statistics for BCAC
- Benefits-Hub provides referral and service related statistics for the CPCI
- NPI and IS surveys
PERCEIVED ECONOMIC/SOCIAL NEEDS

- A cross-section of consumers, businesses, human service partners, community leaders, members of the clergy, Berkshire Interfaith Organizing, Institutions of Higher Education, elected officials as well as the general public were invited to attend 3 “Community Conversations. Each conversation included 60 to 120 community representatives. The dates of the meeting were:
  - February 24th, North County, Williams College
  - April 13th, Central County, Berkshire Community
  - April 28th, South County, The Guthrie Center

During these conversations, a panel was formed representing all of the perceived “major” needs of the community to outline the need and the assets available to meet those needs.

Prior to the conversation, attendees were asked to prioritize the needs on a short survey and then we will conduct the same exit survey to see if the information shared at these meetings changed their perception of their priority of needs.

During these meetings we requested attendees to access our online survey and ask members of their families, agency staff and friends to complete it as well.

_All conversations were video-taped and shown on public access television with a link to our online survey._

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SURVEYS

HOT SPOTS

Given that BCAC’s catchment area encompasses 931 square miles, we focused our efforts on “hot spots”. In North County these were clear from the indicators and BCAC’s experience with these communities. We defined “Hot Spots” as communities that consistently exceed the State and/or County Poverty Indicators, fall short of the median income indicators and have a population significant to the total. Also taken into consideration is the access to Governmental assistance.

The surveys were collected as both paper and online (Facebook and our website). The information was sorted by zip code. To determine whether or not the survey sample represented the population, BCAC used the Educational Attainment indicators to measure against the survey sample. For North Adams and Adams which were determined to be the North County “hot spots” the correlation was very strong, leading to the conclusion that the data fairly represented a good cross-section of the population.
In Central County (Pittsfield as the identified “hot spot”) our original sample was skewed towards the more educated members of our population. We then sent out a team of outreach workers to collect surveys from food pantries and low-income housing units from our designated Hot Spot of Pittsfield. The result was to yield a sample for which the correlation was very strong, leading to the conclusion that the data fairly represented a good cross-section of the population.

In South County, we went through the same process, using Great Barrington as a benchmark since it is regarded as the hub of South County. Here again there was a strong correlation. No “Hot Spot” was identified in South County, however there are pockets of poverty in most of the communities.
Statistical data was collected from the CPCI partners and other sources including

- Berkshire Housing (housing instability/evictions)
- Sheriff’s Department/Local Law Officials (crime)
- Ecuhealth and AHEC (access to health care)
- Brein Center and the Northern Berkshire Coalition (substance abuse)
- Berkshire Regional Planning reports on public resources, plans for infrastructure improvements, etc.
- MCLA and BCC (resources for low income residents to achieve degrees and certificates)
- Child Care of the Berkshires, Berkshire Children and Families and Head Start (affordable childcare)
- Berkshire Works (unemployment and employment/training opportunities and trends)
- Client surveys were distributed at all partner sites or a link to online survey provided

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Data was compiled from:

- Client and Community Surveys
- Statistics received from Community Partners
- Businesses
- Planning Commission
- External sources from Berkshire Benchmarks

Also, information was collected on Community Assets:

- Panel discussions from the 3 Community Conversations
- CPCI information contained in Benefits Hub

From this information, BCAC reviewed the results to:

- Examine trends
- Identify data gaps
- Determined whether perceptions are in alignment with statistical information
- Determined whether better education, outreach and communication about resources are needed rather than new programming.
- Determined which areas are facing real service gaps
- Determined the role BCAC will play in each of the identified areas of need.
ASSESSMENT PROCESS (INTERNAL)

BCAC conducted an Internal Needs Assessment to help clarify our goals, objectives and methods. We wanted to know how we are meeting these goals and what impact they have had on reaching our desired outcomes.

To approach the internal needs assessment, we wanted to test our assumptions that our staff, here at BCAC, is our strongest asset. To do this we asked our customers and our staff. We also conducted a staff retreat, a board/staff retreat and a board/staff/community SWOT analysis.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

BCAC prepared a Customer Satisfaction Survey for the months of January -May of 2017. Of the 500 surveys distributed, 236 were completed. Heating Systems and ESP included the surveys in a promotional mailing. We distributed some of the surveys at program events, and others at food pantries located at other agencies. VITA and Fuel Assistance brought in the most applications since this is a busy time for these programs.

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY

The agency also conducted an “Employee Satisfaction Survey” in March 2017. We compared the results of that survey with the answers received in March of 2014 to measure any changes in satisfaction over the last three years. All employees (100% excluding the Executive Director) participated in the survey.

EMPLOYEE RETREAT

On May 12, 2017, BCAC held a Staff Retreat, facilitated by the Executive Director. Staff members sat in small groups formed so that each group represented a sampling of different departments. A list of questions was distributed for discussion. Employees were also asked to bring their best ideas to improve efficiencies to the meeting. Prizes were awarded for the best ideas.
COMMUNITY BASED SWOT ANALYSIS

On June 1st 2017, members of the Board of Directors, Staff and some Community Agency leaders met to discuss BCAC’s perceived Strengths and Weaknesses and offered insight into potential opportunities and threats. That information was used to inform the strategic plan.

ANALYSIS OF FISCAL STRENGTH AND CAPACITY

Every month the Finance Committee of BCAC’s Board of Directors reviews and presents the financial package. Included in this report is a Narrative Summary, a Balance Sheet, Statement of Revenue and Expenditures, an Accounts Receivable and Payable Aging and a ratio analysis spreadsheet. The finance committee, chaired by a CPA takes great care to analyze the financial strength and capacity on an ongoing basis.

RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW

This year BCAC established a Risk Management Committee. This committee adopted a plan for risk management that includes the following areas:

- Board Operations
- Human Resources
- Programs and Services
- Client Safety
- Emergency Procedures
- Building Security
- Financial Management
- Technology
- Transportation

This committee meets quarterly to review existing and emerging risks with the goal of preparing timely responses to risks BEFORE they emerge.
On June 10, 2017, the Board and Staff met to set the agency’s Strategic ROMA goals in the areas of:
- Financial Stability
- Workforce Development
- Transportation

Although 8 critical needs were identified through our Community Conversations, BCAC chose to go about the work of setting goals around the areas we have traditionally taken a leadership role in. For the remaining 5 goals, we solicited the input of the region’s lead agency(s) (our linkages) in the specific area and asked how THEY would like BCAC to contribute to the efforts and close service gaps in that specific area.

We asked:

- Crime: Sheriff’s Department, Local Police Departments
- Opioid: Brien Center, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
- Affordable Childcare: Berkshire County Head Start, Berkshire County United Way
- Housing: Berkshire County Housing
- Food Insecurity: Western Mass Food Bank

These responses are incorporated in our Strategic Goals.
INTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

BCAC conducted an Internal Needs Assessment to help to clarify our goals, objectives, and methods. We wanted to know how we are meeting these goals, and what impact they have had on reaching our desired outcomes. The assessment required that we determine how staff and the Board of Directors viewed our progress, and how the community responds to the services we provide.

BCAC conducted an “Employee Satisfaction Survey” in March 2017. We compared the results of the survey with those received in March 2014 and were pleasantly surprised to note that in almost all areas, the staff responses showed significant positive improvement. 95% of employees responded and the results were generally positive. To illustrate the agency’s improvement, the results are shown for both periods (2014 shown below in blue):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Half the Time</th>
<th>Once in a While</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How meaningful do you feel your work is?</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your employee benefits,</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, are you satisfied with your job?</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How skilled at their jobs are the members of your team</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How efficiently are team meetings conducted</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How easy is it to get help from your supervisor when you want it</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How available to employees is your supervisor</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, are you satisfied with your supervisor</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees treat each other with respect</td>
<td>5% 6%</td>
<td>0% 13%</td>
<td>5% 21%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coworkers and I have a good working relationship</td>
<td>5% 5%</td>
<td>0% 13%</td>
<td>0% 13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness</td>
<td>0% 5%</td>
<td>0% 28%</td>
<td>5% 47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the culture of my workplace</td>
<td>0% 2%</td>
<td>4% 6%</td>
<td>9% 33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization’s work positively impacts people’s lives</td>
<td>0% 5%</td>
<td>0% 2%</td>
<td>0% 14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between senior leaders and employees is good in my organization</td>
<td>10% 4%</td>
<td>6% 25%</td>
<td>2% 44%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERNAL PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT**

On May 12, 2017, we held a Staff Training Retreat at a local restaurant that was facilitated by Executive Director Deb Leonczyk. Staff members sat in small groups and by drawing table numbers, the groups represented a sampling of different departments. A list of questions was distributed and each group discussed and listed their thoughts and ideas. Each group later shared their answers to the entire gathering. Staff's thoughts about BCAC were:

**WHAT BCAC DOES WELL (IN ORDER OF POPULARITY)**

- BCAC serves clients with respect in a timely manner
- The staff is well-trained and flexible
- Our LIHEAP department is one of our greatest strengths
- Our staff functions well as a team both internally and externally
- Our Weatherization Auditors are resilient
- Our Team is good at identifying new opportunities to serve clients
- We have a strong fiscal team
- The agency is efficient at utilizing limited resources
- BCAC enjoys greater visibility in the community
- Our facilities are welcoming and clean
• Our van drivers care about our clients and the community
• We are achieving a greater impact in the community through our Community Connector Partnership
• We are enjoying a strong growth in VITA services

WHAT BCAC COULD DO BETTER (IN ORDER OF POPULARITY)

• More all-staff meetings
• Improve our community branding
• Improve our staff development and cross-training efforts
• Improve our Employee recognition (newsletters, etc.)
• Improve phone system and add message about other programs while clients are on hold
• Add intercom services to phone system
• List North County’s telephone number in the phone book
• Improve our outreach to other agencies
• Create an internal resource guide for all staff
• Coordinate our outreach events to include other departments
• Clean up the Octopia data base and create consistencies with address standardizations

Employees had been asked to bring their best ideas to improve efficiencies to the meeting. Each staff brought an idea and was given a raffle ticket for each idea and a vote was taken to award the grand prize for the best idea.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE DURING THE NEXT 3 YEARS

The Top 6 ideas were:

1. More all staff meetings! (no winner….too many suggested the same)

2. **Message on Hold was the winner!**

3. Employee recognition program to include newsletters
4. Staff/volunteer stationed at front desk to take ESP/AMP applications
5. Voicemail to be more specific such as “If you are looking to schedule an energy audit, dial xxx.”
6. Add intercom to the phone system
BCAC prepared a Customer Satisfaction Survey for the months of January -May of 2017. Of the 600+ surveys distributed, 336 were completed. Heating Systems Repair and Replacement Department and the Energy Conservation Programs (ESP/AMPS) included the surveys in a promotional mailing. We distributed some of the surveys at program events, and others at food pantries located at other agencies. VITA and Fuel Assistance brought in the most completed surveys since this is a busy time for these programs. The survey was deliberately kept short, only 5 questions were posed to encourage participation. The results of the survey are shown below:

### QUESTION 1: HOW RESPONSIVE ARE BCAC STAFF TO YOUR NEEDS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Responsive</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Responsive</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Responsive</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Responsive</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Responsive</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTION 2: HOW WELL DO BCAC STAFF ANSWER QUESTIONS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Well</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Well</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Well</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTION 3: HOW CONVENIENT ARE BCAC’S PROGRAMS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUESTION 4: HOW PROFESSIONAL ARE BCAC STAFF?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTION 5: COMPARED TO OTHER AGENCIES, RATE THE QUALITY OF BCAC SERVICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much Better</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Better</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Better</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Same</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much Worse</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the community respondents think that BCAC does an excellent job in meeting the needs of low-income residents with courtesy and professionalism. We see this same response repeated in the very high satisfaction rate given to staff for their responsiveness and customer service. These positive responses remind us that the strength of the agency is only as good as the strength of its staff.
During 2016, BCAC established a Risk Management Committee and Established Policies to Control Risk and established a schedule to review those risks on a quarterly basis. If Policies had not currently existed, they were established and voted on by the Board of Directors. The Committee meets quarterly to review the risks. Our stated philosophy:

**BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL ASPIRES TO OPERATE IN A WAY THAT PROTECTS THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CLIENTS, STAFF MEMBERS AND VOLUNTERS WHILE ADHERING TO THE ORGANIZATION’S MISSION AND SAFEGUARDING ASSETS NEEDED FOR MISSION-CRITICAL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

1. **GOVERNANCE**: Board policies on Conflict of Interest, Board Development, Board Assessment, Board Recruitment, Board Minutes and Bylaws
2. **HUMAN RESOURCES**: Employment Policies, Communication, Employee Orientation, Staff Supervision, Performance Appraisals, Code of Conduct
3. **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**: Policies regarding the administration of programs stipulated by funding sources, customer satisfaction and continuous quality control efforts
4. **CLIENT SAFETY**: Procedures to ensure client safety while on premise or participating in BCAC sponsored programs
5. **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**: Establishment of accurate and timely budgets, monthly financial statements, ascertaining a strict internal control environment, undergoing an annual audit with no qualifications
6. **FACILITY RISKS**: Preventative maintenance schedules, Inspections, lease policies, fire control and emergency procedures
7. **TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**: Systems backup, disaster Recovery plan, Internet security, policies regarding internet/social media use.
8. **TRANSPORTATION**: Background checks, trainings to include CPR, Universal procedures, Defensive Driving, Use of Safety Equipment
10. **VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**: Supervision, Background Checks, Code of Conduct
11. **INSURANCE PROGRAM**: Review annual coverage, premium and loss reports, engage in loss-control activities, educational trainings
12. **SAFEGUARDING EQUIPMENT**: Control of building access via keys, codes. Fire alarms, smoke detectors, inventory of moveable items.
**COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

**PREFACE**

**BERKSHIRE COUNTY ENCOMPASSES OVER 931 SQUARE MILES AND POVERTY TAKES ON DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY. FOR GENERATIONS, THE RESIDENTS HAVE CATEGORIZED THEIR COMMUNITIES AS NORTH, CENTRAL OR SOUTH COUNTY. OUR APPROACH, AS AN AGENCY, HAS BEEN TO TAILOR OUR PROGRAMMING TO MEET THE UNIQUE AND DISTINCT NEEDS OF THESE SECTIONS, AND THAT APPROACH DROVE OUR DATA ANALYSIS AND ULTIMATE PROGRAMMING.**

**NORTH COUNTY**

The data collection for North County was performed in two ways, first we held the Community Conversation at Williams College, and secondly we conducted an online or paper survey.

**COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

Over 100 individuals from Business, the Human Service Sector, Education, Low-Income Clients, elected officials and the general population attended this event. After registering, they were asked to Prioritize 8 identified community needs and they were asked again to prioritize them after the conversation.

A panel was assembled to represent those 8 needs. They included:

- Affordable Childcare-Childcare of the Berkshires
- Affordable Housing-Berkshire Housing
- Opioid Addiction-Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
- Affordable Transportation-Jana Hunkler
- Job Training Programs-Berkshire-Works
- Food Insecurity-Friendship Center
- Crime-Sheriff’s Department
- Financial Stability-Berkshire Community Action

Each panelist was asked to present the “State of the Need”, field questions and lead discussion but just as important, they were asked to inform the community as to the assets available to meet these needs such as existing programs, grant opportunities and collaborations. After the discussion, we observed that when the short prioritization survey was tallied, the prioritization changed. It was also observed that many in the conversation were unaware of some of the assets that existed to address particular needs. The information that they received from the panelists, influenced their second survey.
As is evidenced by the chart, the discussion around Housing had a significant impact on what finally emerged as the highest priority. The final prioritization that emerged from this discussion was:

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Workforce Development
4. Financial Stability
5. Food Insecurity
6. Opioid Crisis
7. Affordable Childcare
8. Crime

When the group was polled, it was clear that many were not aware of the extent of the housing shortages in North County and once the knowledge was shared, they changed their perceptions. This leads us to believe that more advocacy and outreach needs to reach the public in order for public sentiment to change and push for more affordable housing options.
*NORTH ADAMS AND ADAMS IDENTIFIED AS “HOT SPOTS”*
Again, as in North County the data collection for Central County was performed in two ways, first we held the Community Conversation at Berkshire Community College, and secondly we conducted an online or paper survey.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Over 90 individuals from Business, the Human Service Sector, Education, Low-Income Clients, elected officials and the general population attended this event. After registering, they were asked to Prioritize 8 identified community needs and they were asked again to prioritize them after the conversation.

A panel was assembled to represent those 8 needs. They included:

- Affordable Childcare-Berkshire Children and Families
- Affordable Housing and Housing Issues for Domestic Violence Victims-Elizabeth Freeman
- Low-Income Higher Ed Opportunities-Berkshire Community College
- Opioid Addiction-The Brien Center
- Affordable Transportation-Regional Coordinating Council, BCAC
- Job Training Programs-Berkshire-Works
- Food Insecurity-Western Mass Food Bank
- Access to Healthcare-Berkshire Medical Systems
- Crime-Pittsfield Police Chief and the Sheriff's department

As in North County, each panelist was asked to present the “State of the Need”, field questions and lead discussion but just as important, they were asked to inform the community as to the assets available to meet these needs such as existing programs, grant opportunities and collaborations. After the discussion, we observed that when the short prioritization survey was tallied, the prioritization changed. It was also observed that many in the conversation were unaware of some of the assets that existed to address particular needs. The information that they received from the panelists, influenced their second survey.
As is evidenced by the chart, even after the discussion initiated by the panel, Housing remained the top priority.

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Opioid Crisis
4. Financial Stability
5. Crime
6. Workforce Development
7. Food Insecurity
8. Affordable Childcare

With a few changes, (Opioid moving from 2-3 exchanging places with transportation moving from 3-2) and workforce development moving from 4-6, resulting in small changes in Financial Stability and Crime), there were no significant changes in public perception of need….the top three remained the same but differed from North County in that Workforce development was included in the top 3 needs, while Opioid scored at number 6 in North County.

SURVEYS

HOT SPOTS

Again, given that BCAC’s catchment area encompasses 931 square miles, we focused our efforts on “hot spots”. In Central County this were clear from the indicators and BCAC’s experience with these communities that Pittsfield was a designated Hot Spot and although Dalton’s poverty rate approaches the county average, the population does not support that designation. We defined “Hot Spots” as communities that consistently exceed the State and/or County Poverty Indicators, fall short of the median income indicators and have a population significant to the total. Also taken into consideration is the access to Governmental assistance. On the next page is a sample of some of the indicators we reviewed when assessing our focus areas.
PITTSFIELD WAS IDENTIFIED AS A "HOT SPOT"
Again, as in North County the data collection for South County was performed in two ways, first we held the Community Conversation at the Guthrie Center, and secondly we conducted an online or paper survey.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Over 90 individuals from Business, the Human Service Sector, Education, Low-Income Clients, elected officials and the general population attended this event. After registering, they were asked to Prioritize 8 identified community needs and they were asked again to prioritize them after the conversation.

A panel was assembled to represent those 8 needs. They included:

- Affordable Childcare-Berkshire County Head Start
- Affordable Housing-Berkshire Regional Housing
- Low-Income Higher Ed Opportunities
- Opioid Addiction-The Brien Center
- Affordable Transportation-BCAC
- Job Training Programs-Berkshire-Works
- Food Insecurity-Western Mass Food Bank
- Access to Healthcare-Berkshire Medical Systems
- Crime- Sheriff’s department

As in the other parts of the County, each panelist was asked to present the “State of the Need”, field questions and lead discussion but just as important, they were asked to inform the community as to the assets available to meet these needs such as existing programs, grant opportunities and collaborations. After the discussion, we observed that when the short prioritization survey was tallied, the prioritization changed. It was also observed that many in the conversation were unaware of some of the assets that existed to address particular needs. The information that they received from the panelists, influenced their second survey.
As is evidenced by the chart, even after the discussion initiated by the panel, Housing remained the top priority.

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Financial Stability
4. Opioid
5. Workforce Development
6. Crime
7. Food Insecurity
8. Affordable Childcare

With a few changes, (Opioid moving from 5-4, Transportation moving up from 3-2 and workforce development moving from 4-5, resulting in downward changes in Financial Stability and Crime and Food Insecurity), there were one significant change in public perception of need….the top three remained changed to include Opioid Addiction.

SURVEYS
HOT SPOTS

In South County we did not find a “hot spot”, many populations of the towns are relatively small so they were eliminated based on size. There exists pockets of poverty in most of the South County communities.

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2014

FEELING CONFIDENT THAT THE DATA REPRESENTED A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF THE POPULATION, THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY WERE ANALYZED AGAINST THE INDICATORS WE COLLECTED FROM NUMEROUS SOURCES
EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

NORTH

Clearly between these two communities, unemployment is significantly higher than the County or State average at 5% and less than 3% respectively. Our surveys indicated this as only 50% of respondents in North Adams and 33% in Adams reported having full time employment. (see appendix for survey results) Many factors can influence this self-reported number...stay at home parents, the disabled, seasonal and sporadic employment, etc. However, the most recent indicators show that the unemployment rate for Adams was 6.6% and for North Adams 8.4% Also in response to the question about the availability of Living Wage Employment, 46% of the respondents from Adams and 63% of the respondents from North Adams indicated that the opportunities to earn a living wage were INADEQUATE. The Department of Employment & Training reports as of May 2017 there are 642 unemployed workers within these two communities.

CENTRAL

Clearly in this community, unemployment is higher than the County or State average with just over 50% of respondents reporting that they have full time employment. However, the most recent indicators show that the unemployment rate for Pittsfield is 5.4% compared to the state average of 3.6% Although Pittsfield has a lower unemployment rate than the North County Communities, the number of unemployed workers is nearly double that of Adams and North Adams combined at 1,176. This is in direct relation to its population and that its labor force is nearly double that of North Adams and Adams combined.

SOUTH

According to the latest figures, unemployment rates for South County are lower than we are seeing in North and Central County. They range from a high of 5.5% in Becket to a low of 3.2 in West Stockbridge. The average rate for this part of the county more closely match the state average. For the entire Southern region, the latest estimates from the Department of Employment and training indicate that there are less than 350 job seekers.

Although the Berkshire Regional Employment Board reports that there are consistently between 1700-1900 jobs posted on Job Quest, the employers are reporting that the population seeking employment do not have the requisite skills to fill these jobs. Upon further analysis we examined the data projections from the DUA’s Operational Employment Statistics to look at the “quality” of the open jobs. Nearly 16% of the jobs paid wages below the federal poverty guidelines for a family of 4....and a surprising 90% of jobs paid wages below the 200% poverty guidelines for a family of 4. Only 132 jobs or less than 10% of the projected 1,391 openings paid wages (that would support a family of four) in excess of our agency’s guidelines for eligibility!
Affordable Housing is clearly a vital need in North County as is indicated by our survey results and the Indicators bear this out. According to Berkshire Benchmarks the available housing units for rent in Adams represents 1% of the total units available and 2% in the city of North Adams.

NORTH

Between 50-73% of respondents stated that affordable housing is either not available or inadequate. Berkshire Regional Housing’s statistics reveal that the percentage of renters in North Adams is 48% and for Adams this number is 41%. This statistic takes on serious implication when taken with the fact that 56% of renters are “rent burdened” (rents more than 30% of monthly income) and 29% of Berkshire residents are “severely rent burdened” (rents over 50% of their monthly income). Only 13% of the housing stock in North Adams is subsidized and only 7.5% of the housing stock in Adams is subsidized.

CENTRAL AND SOUTH

According to Berkshire Benchmarks the available housing units for rent in Pittsfield represents 2% of the total units available. In 2016, nearly 400 households in Central/South County were served with Eviction notices and over 200 foreclosures for this same area, not a surprising statistic when you realize that 35% of homeowners are “mortgage burdened” (mortgages that are more than 30% of monthly income)

68% of respondents stated that affordable housing is either not available or inadequate. This confirms the prioritization established at the Community Conversation.
In Berkshire County, a person earning minimum wage, an individual would have to work:

- 53 hours to afford a one bedroom
- 65 hours to afford a two bedroom
- 80 hours to afford a three bedroom

To exasperate the housing shortage, Berkshire County has an aging stock. Nearly 46% of all housing was built prior to 1940 with an average median year built of 1952 vs the national average of 1974. As a result, many of the housing options are in disrepair, contain lead paint, knob and tube wiring and other dangerous conditions. The shortage is a growing problem. The vacancy rate measured with the 2010 census indicated that 8.8% of units were available, vs. the 5.4% measured in 2015.

All of this information confirms the prioritization established at the Community Conversation.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**NORTH**

The need for affordable transportation has plagued North County for decades. Limited public transportation services to communities outside the central corridor, lack of affordable options and inconvenient public transportation schedules have presented a barrier to many North County residents who seek to acquire or maintain employment. In North County, for over 13 years *Berkshire Rides* offered transportation to work and job training for low income individuals, but due to a loss of funding, first at the federal level (JARC) and then at the State level, this service was eliminated in late 2016. This service offered 135 low-income riders an affordable ride to work. In reviewing the responses to our survey, nearly 50% of respondents agree that affordable transportation options are either not available or inadequate, confirming the prioritization established after the Community Conversation.

**CENTRAL**

Pittsfield residents are fortunate to have the greatest access to public transportation through the Regional Transit Authority, but if they do not have access to a vehicle they are precluded from obtaining second or third shift employment which pays higher wages. There is also limited access to employment transportation on weekends. This schedule is very restrictive especially to service and retail workers that often work evening and weekend hours. BRTA schedules their routes Monday through Friday from 5:45-7:20, with no service on Sunday. In reviewing the responses to our survey, over 50% of respondents agree that affordable transportation options are either not available or inadequate, once again confirming the prioritization established after the Community Conversation.

BRTA Service Area (green)
Source: Mass DOT
Perhaps the hardest hit area of the county is the South with the majority of communities receiving no public transit options (with the exception of MassHealth and Disability options). Low income workers who do not have access to a vehicle need to rely on neighbors and/or family for transportation since a taxi, the only other available option is unaffordable. For example, if a resident of Sandisfield wanted to take a taxi to the Mall in Lanesboro for employment, it would cost over $85 one way.

In 2015 BCAC conducted a survey with nearly 600 respondents and although transportation to employment was of high importance to our population the need for transportation to medical appointments eclipsed job-related transportation. What may be indicated here is the lack of knowledge around the ability to access transportation for health related reasons through MassHealth. Through the “Prescription for Transportation” application, low-income residents may access free transportation to doctor’s appointments, counseling and day habilitation through a number of providers in the county.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The interpretation of this data, taken with the high unemployment rates, leads to the conclusion that workforce development is being interpreted as “good jobs”. The diagram below, taken from the data provided by the Department of Employment and Training, clearly indicates that the majority of available jobs in the County are coming from the service-industries paying low wages. A high percentage (averaging over 50% of respondents) county-wide do not feel that there are enough employment opportunities that provide a living wage. The respondents also show a lack of awareness around the job training and placement programs being offered by Berkshire Works. This was indicated through our survey by over 30% of respondents county-wide saying that they were unsure of the existence of training opportunities. This area should engage in more outreach and community awareness programming. This is of particular significance because if employers are reporting that the population seeking employment do not have the requisite skills to fill their better-paying jobs, Berkshire County is in danger of having these employers leave the county to pursue a more suitably trained workforce.

Source: Massachusetts DET
FINANCIAL STABILITY

NORTH

In North County, the responses to this survey question were remarkable. Although poverty rates are 27% and 36% for these communities, 70% of the respondents stated that they lived from paycheck to paycheck. This is the culmination of the lack of “good jobs” that pay a living wage. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue that lists all cities and town’s median income ranks Adams at #330 and North Adams at #343 out of 351 communities, putting Adams in the bottom 10% and North Adams in the bottom 5% of statewide median income. It is a staggering statistic that the median income of a Berkshire Family has dropped by 28% over the last 15 years.

CENTRAL

Although poverty rates reach as high as 34% for Pittsfield, 67% of the respondents stated that they lived from paycheck to paycheck. According to the Department of Revenue, Pittsfield’s median family income is ranked 324th out of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth, placing it at the bottom 10%.

SOUTH

Our sampling for the Southern Communities also indicated that 62% of respondents reported living paycheck to paycheck even though communities in the Southern Region report median household incomes in excess of the County average with a combined rate approximating the State-wide rate.

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2014
It is a staggering statistic that the median income of a Berkshire Family at $49,956 is 27% lower than the state average of $68,563.

**FOOD INSECURITY**

**NORTH**

Food Insecurity is more than just hunger, it puts people at risk of long-term, irreversible health problems, as well as having damaging socio-economic consequences on families. The response to our survey indicates that food insecurity is more prevalent than the indicators suggest. Our survey showed that over 50% of respondents from both Adams and North Adams had trouble putting food on the table. The indicators for Adams and North Adams show only 6% and 13% of their respective residents access SNAP benefits. This response may indicate that more outreach needs to occur to connect the food-insecure with available benefits.

**CENTRAL**

This response here indicated that 44% of respondents have trouble putting food on the table. Again, this seems to indicate that food insecurity is more prevalent than the indicators suggest. The Western Mass Food Bank reports that the food insecurity rate for Berkshire County is 13%. This response seems to indicate that the community needs to do a better job at outreach and getting Snap benefits to more food-insecure families.

**SOUTH**

Our survey showed that 38% of respondents had difficulty putting food on the table. Although this statistic is lower than the rest of the county, that statistic is still too high.

Western Mass Food Bank indicates that nearly 2 million pounds of food was distributed to Berkshire County in 2016. According to the Food Bank nearly 17,000 Berkshire County Residents struggle with food security. They also report that the monthly SNAP population is 18,276.

Elder Services of Berkshire County report having provided 211,461 meals either through meals on wheels or their congregate sites.

**Food Insecurity in Berkshire County**

- 55% Adults
- 31% Children
- 14% Seniors

Source: Western Mass Food Bank

**OPIOID ADDICTION**

**COUNTY WIDE**

Opioid addiction underlies many of our Poverty Issues. The Brien Center reports that the majority of their patients are no longer being treated for alcoholism, but opioid addiction. The
District Attorney and Berkshire County Sheriff’s office refer to this as a “Crisis”. *Over the past decade (2002-2013) heroin use has risen by 113% in Berkshire County*. Opiate users are at a much greater risk of overdose and of needing medical intervention (in 2013 approximately 20% of all opiate abusers needed Emergency Room intervention vs 0.2% of all Cannabis/Crack/Cocaine users). Locally the number of deaths attributed to opiate use (both accidental and purposeful) has increased dramatically in recent years. In June 2014, The Brien Center, Berkshire County’s largest substance abuse treatment services program, reported that heroin and associated opioids surpassed alcohol to become the No. 1 substance abuse treatment sought at the Center. Forty-six percent of the facility’s patients were treated for heroin and/or opioid abuse in the first six months of the year, versus forty-three percent for alcohol. Berkshire County had 16 heroin overdose deaths in 2013. According to Dr. Jennifer Michaels, the Brien Center’s medical director, the Center treats 1,500 patients annually through a variety of heroin/opioid treatment programs. According to Dr. Michaels, there is no longer a typical profile for a heroin/opioid user in Berkshire County. The tip of the iceberg is seniors in high school and it expands considerably after that and includes professionals, spouses, and parents. (*The Berkshire Eagle, June 27, 2014 "Heroin, Opioids Now Top Alcohol as No. 1 Substance Abuse Treatment at Brien Center.").

In order to combat the destabilizing effects of poverty, we need to address some of the underlying causes and clearly Opiate abuse is a major cause. The opioid abuse rate according to the latest Berkshire Health Systems Needs Assessment, is 11.5%, this is higher than the state average of 10.9% and is a growing problem in Berkshire County.

Our respondents indicated that between 40% in South County to over 50% in Central County that there are not enough resources to deal with the Substance Abuse issue in the county.

**This is a GROWING NEED** that requires the work of an entire community...Hospitals, clinics, social service agencies, the criminal justice systems, families, schools, churches, etc. This is an area that requires complete collaboration and cooperation of the entire community.

### CRIME

In Pittsfield, Crime scored within the top 5 priorities while it was dead last in North County. From Police Reports, FBI Statistics obtained from Berkshire Benchmarks and from the Sheriff’s department, the existence of Gang activity in Pittsfield is growing. Although this question was not included in our survey, it is of significant importance in Central County for BCAC to address their role in the community in respect to this need. On a scale of 1-100 (100 being the safest, Pittsfield scores a 14). Crime is so inextricably linked to poverty. It is also linked to the Opioid crisis the county is experiencing. Our linkages in the sheriff’s department and the police department are working closely with the human service network to assure that recent parolees are afforded the opportunity to connect with resources and services before they are released.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting FBI
AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

COUNTY-WIDE

The responses to our surveys county wide showed a high degree of uncertainty regarding the availability of affordable childcare. Looking at the demographics of the respondents, we noticed that the average age was above the age of a young parent needing these services. This information is supplemented with information from Childcare of the Berkshires and the Berkshire United Way.

Our partners identified two issues that are dominant in this area.

a. There isn’t one agency that oversees all the Birth to Five programming in the state. It is a mixed bag of Department of Early Education and Care, Department of Public Health, and Department of Mental Health. The Community’s initiative work is trying to create county-wide and regional systems that bring together all the partners in this work.

b. Childcare is expensive. With no vouchers available, it is challenging for families to come up with $12,000 a year. Local agencies are fighting for universal pre-k. The community has developed plans for both North Adams and Pittsfield, but these plans cannot be realized without state or federal funding.

With no available childcare vouchers, how is a family struggling in poverty expected to be able to pay upwards of $12,000 a year, when nearly 90% of available jobs pay a wage that is less than 200% of poverty.
In light of the data that was collected during our assessment process, BCAC chose to focus on the three major areas of need that we have traditionally taken a leadership role in addressing. They are Financial Stability, Workforce Development and Transportation. These goals were established at the Board/Staff Retreat.

**FINANCIAL STABILITY GOALS**

**GOAL 1**
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION WILL CONNECT FAMILIES WITH RESOURCES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO AID IN THEIR ACHIEVEMENT OF FINANCIAL STABILITY

**GOAL 2**
INCREASE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRONTLINE STAFF IN THE AREAS OF FINANCIAL LITERACY, BUDGETING AND THE REFERRAL NETWORK

**GOAL 3**
BCAC WILL INCREASE OUTREACH FOR OUR PROGRAMS AND OUR PARTNERS’ PROGRAMS TO THE FULL COMMUNITY TO ASSURE MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION AND UTILIZATION OF SERVICES AVAILABLE TO AID IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FINANCIAL STABILITY

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**GOAL 1**
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION WILL DEVELOP A JOB TRAINING THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM PROGRAM

**GOAL 2**
WE WILL, THROUGH OUTREACH, EXPAND THE AWARENESS OF THE COMMUNITY OF TRAINING PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

**GOAL 3**
BCAC WILL CONNECT FAMILIES TO JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PREPARE THEM FOR BETTER EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS
TRANSPORTATION GOALS

GOAL 1

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION WILL COMMIT TO INCREASE THE FACILITATION OF COMMUNITY DISCUSSION WITH STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL DELEGATIONS REGARDING THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES

GOAL 2

WE WILL SEEK TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

GOAL 3

WE WILL PARTNER WITH OTHER GROUPS WORKING ON TRANSPORTATION TO ENHANCE OUR AWARENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE.

In the other need categories we asked the lead agency(s) in the county what efforts BCAC could perform in order to increase the efficacy of their work. Based upon the agencies’ responses, BCAC will commit the following to assist in closing service gaps and to achieve the goal of providing a bundled service delivery system.

HOUSING

- Continue as a resource to address some of the underlying drivers of housing instability
- Utility, energy and weatherization issues
- Provide Flexible Transportation Supports
- Provide tax preparation and IDA opportunities so families can transition into home ownership
- Assume/continue role as lead convener of anti-poverty forums and strategies

AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

- Continue to serve as lead agency of the community connector partnership to connect low-income families with the community supports needed to provide a safe, warm and well-nourished home for children
- To work with MASSCAP to provide advocacy services on behalf of low-income families accessing state voucher supports
CRIME

- To provide life skills training - managing life within a disciplined well thought out plan
- To continue to work with the sheriff’s department to provide supports including financial literacy skills to the incarcerated so that upon reentry they will have the skills necessary to help reduce the rate of recidivism

FOOD SECURITY

- To increase the capacity of the food Depot by providing dry storage, additional freezers, staffing and other equipment
- Reopen an East Street Pantry at the depot location

OPIOID

- BCAC is positioned to help address opioid abuse by offering supports to persons in early recovery in order to prevent relapse.
- Case management, financial literacy classes, emergency food/housing assistance would all be valuable to persons leaving programs
Berkshire Community Action Council’s programs have touched the lives of 12,000 Berkshire residents facing urgent financial needs. Berkshire Community Action is Berkshire County’s designated Anti-Poverty agency. We exist to serve the community – to provide hope, stability and the skills to overcome financial obstacles. We do this by providing programs such as Fuel Assistance, Asset Development, Weatherization Services, Emergency Heating System Replacements, RECONNET youth programs, Holiday Warm Clothing (ELF) program, Transportation and a myriad of other grass-roots initiatives. This full range of services does not even begin to address all of the needs of the low-income population of Berkshire County. It is only through community involvement and fundraising that we can begin to address the unmet needs that go unfunded at the state and federal levels.

- The Community Services Block Grant funds critical administrative and support costs that allow Berkshire Community Action Council to expand our services. It allows us to explore new funding opportunities to help us develop new programming that can give our clients greater economic freedom.
- Some of the programs that the CSBG dollars currently fund are RECONNECT VITA, Emergency Services, Financial Literacy and the Greenagers Garden Project
- CSBG provides the funds that help to sustain other funded programs so important to our low-income population.

FUNDING GOALS FOR FY 2018–FY2020:

- To develop and implement another annual community fundraising event to raise unrestricted funds for the purpose of general agency operations and building improvements
- To continue our annual mailing campaign, and build on our donor list
- To host an Annual Legislative Luncheon in October to keep local and State representatives informed of the current status of poverty in Berkshire County to support funding requests
- To continue to maintain and/or enhance the efficiency of CSBG funding through leveraging and by increasing non-CSBG funding in the next three years
- To continue to act on grant opportunities that will expand resources for our clients and the community
- To pursue new collaborations maintain existing partnerships to leverage community resources
- To investigate fee-generating programming
Berkshire Community Action Council’s management team conducts the day-to-day service delivery of the agency programming. Together with 80 part and full-time staff, the Executive Director, two Deputy Directors, and seven Directors provide the services that address poverty to the low-income families of Berkshire County. Volunteers are also an integral part of BCAC’s service delivery. Over 100 community volunteers, including work-study and interns, provide hours to help maintain our programs.

Our main office is located at 1531 East Street in Pittsfield. BRTA buses pass by our office every half hour, heading out to the surrounding towns and back into Pittsfield. During the past year many long-awaited improvements have occurred. The parking lot was repaved, the loading dock rebuilt, and many improvements were made to the interior. The “new look” has helped in improving services, as well as increasing morale for staff and client.

Our North Adams office is located at 85 Main Street. The new space accommodates day-to-day operations as well providing extra areas for workshops, programming and special projects.

Project RECONNECT (150 North Street, Pittsfield) continues its services to Berkshire County.

BCAC’s service delivery encompasses a broad range of programs for low-income families and individuals that help move people from vulnerability to economic security. BCAC continues to build a set of programming using partnerships and collaborations to move families closer to self-sufficiency.

Our programs work towards empowering our customers by building on such areas as education, job placement, financial security, asset building, food security and energy independence that provided opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and a way out of poverty.
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE THESE PROGRAMS:

ASSET DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL LITERACY:
CentsAbility classes and case management sets a goal of decreasing the number of repeat customers seeking services and resources from the agency. Workshops provide resources, tools, and support to individuals and families to assist them in gaining financial control of their lives. The number of classes required varies with each individual and their needs. Topics such as budgeting, including completing a budget, obtaining and using credit, credit reports, credit scores, and credit repair are covered.

VITA
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance offers free Federal & State tax return preparation for low-income families in Berkshire County provided by trained volunteers. The program increases the capacity for low-income families to file returns, and improves the accuracy of the returns. Its goal is to place much-needed EITC dollars into the hands of the poor. The VITA program operates at many locations, North Adams, two Pittsfield sites and at various partner sites throughout the county. Day, evening, and weekend hours are available during the tax season.

C.A.R.S
C.A.R.S or Community Action Rides is a partnership with Greylock Federal Credit Union and Haddad Auto to close the transportation gap in Berkshire County. The CARS program supports individuals and families on a journey toward self-reliance. Participants complete an intensive financial literacy program focusing on developing financial literacy skills, budgeting skills and improving credit scores. After completing the course and demonstrating the ability to maintain a sustainable budget (which includes monthly loan payments, insurance and maintenance costs), BCAC will guarantee a vehicle loan through Greylock Federal Credit Union at a 1.5%APR and Haddad Motors then matches them with a safe, clean and reliable Used Car.

MICRO-LOAN FUND
BCAC offers a micro-loan program through Berkshire Bank. This fund helps families surmount immediate financial barriers while helping to rebuild credit.
Emergency Assistance & Referral

The Emergency Assistance and Referral program assists families who are facing crisis. Emergency Services helps families and individuals get through the immediate, short-term crisis when all other resources are exhausted. Assistance provided is limited to the funding that is currently available, which can include community and business donations, EFSP funds, Citizen’s Energy, Joe for Oil, etc. We make referrals to other agencies that may have available funding.

Services can include utility shut-off prevention, additional fuel purchases when LIHEAP funds are exhausted, emergency prescription expense, etc. Case management and financial literacy are required for most families who receive assistance.

FEMA RENTAL AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE:

The FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) grant provides one-time emergency assistance such as payment of rental arrears for those facing eviction, utility assistance to those in imminent danger of shut-off, or food assistance for those who have no other resources. In addition, other emergencies are eligible for assistance, such as natural disasters. Funds are limited and not always available. Eligibility recipients must prove that their situation is an emergency, and do not need to meet low-income guidelines.

FOOD INSECURITY

FOOD DEPOT

BCAC operates the food depot with the Western Massachusetts Food Bank. The food depot located at the BCAC central office serves as a central clearinghouse for all food bank resources in Berkshire County. BCAC provides the office and storage space, refrigeration, moving equipment, van and a volunteer, The WMFB provides a manager, who oversees all technical assistance to the local food pantries in terms of best practices, data collection, reporting, and distribution. Each week we receive USDA, MEFAP, salvage, and buy-in foods at BCAC for distribution to food pantries and meal sites in Berkshire County. This year we distributed nearly 2 million pounds of food to 18 food pantries and meal sites.

BCAC manages food drives and participates in the annual one-day National Association of Letter Carriers’ food drive each May. The “Stamp Out” Hunger food drive campaign results in the collection of more than 70,000 pounds of food from households throughout Berkshire County. We deliver the collected food to local food pantries and meal sites.
GREENAGERS GARDEN PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

This a unique strategy to fight against rural food insecurity while increasing the self-sufficiency of low-income households and communities. The program markets compact garden beds, including soil and vegetable starts, which convert into a greenhouse during the cooler months, to higher income residents. Built into the cost of each bed is the cost of another bed, which the purchaser donates to a low-income family in Berkshire County. Low-income residents will receive technical support with their beds throughout the season. When a low-income household bed enters the second season, that household will act as a mentor to new bed owners in their neighborhood. Through this program, residents will gain greater access to fresh food, increase in overall health, and learn basic vegetable propagation skills. BCAC started this program three years ago with a Special Projects Grant from DHCD and now help fund it through the Greenagers Volunteer-Based organization.

COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

RULERS-FOR-SCHOOLERS

This program collects school supplies and distributes these supplies to children from low-income families at the beginning of the school year. Individuals and local retail stores donate school supplies for distribution to students grade K-12. Cash donations from local businesses help to supplement the school supply packages with the higher priced items, such as calculators, dictionaries and backpacks.

THE HOLIDAY ELF WARM CLOTHING PROGRAM

This is a 36-year signature program of the agency that sponsors more than 2000 children each year. The two part program features “The Giving Tree,” located at the Berkshire Mall and the North Adams Walmart, where volunteers assist individuals in selecting children to sponsor, and “Sponsor-a-Child,” has area businesses, organizations, and their employees, sponsoring children and/or their families. This unfunded program relies on many community volunteers such as student and community groups, scouting troops, and individuals who provide innumerable hours collecting, wrapping and distributing gifts, shopping for clothes, helping community sponsors select names, and soliciting cash donations for support of this program. The community continues to show its tremendous support for this program as BCAC continues to promote its mission of self-sufficiency for these working families who need to direct their paychecks to rent, food and utilities.

CHILDREN’S ADVENTURE

During the summer, BCAC sponsors children and their parents who are living in area homeless shelters for a special adventure day at a family-oriented event. Staff, children, and parents spend a
day participating together in activities that are not always financially available to low-income families. BCAC staff plan fundraising events throughout the year to support this special day.

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**COAT DRIVE**

Berkshire Community Action and Village Ambulance work together to help keep residents warm during the cold winter months. Village Ambulance collects used clean coats from residents in the north county area. During the month of November, we distribute the coats to families at our North Adams location.

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**ENERGY PROGRAMMING**

**LIHEAP - FUEL ASSISTANCE**

Fuel Assistance, also known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a federally funded program to help low-income households with their heating bills. The program begins November 1 and ends April 30 each year. All heating types may be eligible for assistance: oil, propane, kerosene, coal, cordwood, wood pellets, natural gas, electric and even some households that have heat included in their rent. Fuel assistance will assist with the cost of the heat you actually use up to the amount you are eligible for during the program. Any low-income household whose gross yearly income falls at or below the income guidelines may be eligible.

**WEATHERIZATION:**

Since 1979, BCAC has weatherized over 8000 homes in Berkshire County with the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). This program operates with a combination of federal and utility company funding. This program saves low-income families heating dollars by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes and apartments. BCAC provides a complete technical analysis of the property and a prioritized scope of work. Qualified contractors perform the eligible work that can include insulation, heating system pipes or ducts, weather-stripping, air sealing, and minor repairs related to saving energy. They perform the work at no cost to the homeowner or tenant. Liheap eligible customers and qualified applicants are eligible for this program. The federally funded portion of this program gives priority to households with elderly or handicapped individuals, families with children aged 6 or less, and "high energy users." Electricity savings programs, AMPS/ESP, are also available.
to qualified households, and measures may include installing high efficiency light bulbs and replacing energy glutton refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners.

**HEATING SYSTEM REPAIR & REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS:**

This program helps with emergency "no heat" services. Clients who are eligible for Fuel Assistance and own their homes can have their heating systems repaired through this program. Services are also available to tenants if both they and the property owner are eligible for Liheap. If unable to repair the heating system, assistance with the replacement of the system may be available. At the end of the heating season, there may be funds available for routine cleanings. Electric conservation programs are available through both National Grid and Western Massachusetts Electric Company. Services include energy efficient light bulbs and replacement of refrigerators, freezers and window air conditioners, which are high-energy users.

**ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAMS**

Those families who are eligible for Fuel Assistance or who are on a discounted electric rate qualify for BCAC’s energy conservation programs. We provide energy efficient light bulbs, replace inefficient refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners. The Utility Companies, National Grid and Eversource provide the funding for these programs.

**YOUTH PROGRAMMING-PROJECT RECONNECT**

**DROP-IN CENTER/HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT AND MENTORING:**

This program connects youth to community and creates an ongoing dialogue that teaches situational leadership and critical thinking skills. The daytime drop-in center is a place where at-risk young adults and vulnerable peoples can

- explore their options and strategies before dropping out of school or as soon as possible
- receive vocational orientation and work preparation skills and
- receive mentoring and career counseling from qualified professionals
- pursue GED instruction and attend seminars at BCC on how to connect to college

RECONNECT offers Holistic case management and mentoring services are offered to all people who participate in RECONNECT activities and/or programming. PR clients work with the counselors to develop an Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) that identifies strategies, goals and objectives that are specific to each individual’s needs. Counselors provide mentoring as well as educational and job search, securement and retention assistance. Once participating individuals connect with vocational
and educational opportunities and meet their goals, staff assists in transitioning clients toward self-sufficiency. PR staff makes appropriate referrals to employers, training programs, social service
agencies and schools to ensure there is a sufficient network of support in place for the individual to succeed. Clients are oriented to follow up services with PR staff for the long term, including having the invitation to try alternate strategies when previous ones have not met with success. PR staff schedule appointments with youth to provide follow-up service coordination prior to exiting the program.

CAREER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING PROGRAM

This program operates through a partnership with Project RECONNECT and the Adult Learning Center of Pittsfield Public Schools to address the issue of disadvantaged young people enrolled in GED programming lacking the professional skills and career preparedness training to secure and sustain employment upon completion of their GED certificate.

Project RECONNECT’s CPT Program is a four week, comprehensive program designed to prepare individuals to enter the workforce. We train the participants utilizing a four-module curriculum and individualized case management sessions that facilitates the development of their professional skills and expertise. In addition to the career preparedness, training and holistic case management, participants in the CPTP program partake in career exploration through employer engagement sessions that include on site tours and informational sessions that address workforce opportunities specific to the host organization. Throughout the program, participants complete a personalized education and career plan and build a professional portfolio; including an updated resume, cover letter and reference sheet.

Graduates of the program receive a Career Preparedness Certificate and extended case management through RECONNECT’s drop in center.

RECONNECT VOCATIONAL PROJECT…BRIDGING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP (BOG):

The RECONNECT Vocational Project (RVP) is a collaboration of public and private Berkshire County organizations providing services in alternative education and training, family supports, counseling, job development, and holistic mentoring. The program supports the development of vulnerable youth under the care of the Department of Youth Services.

The program provides 30 hours of career readiness training and development by integrating classroom, job shadowing, employer engagement, and team building activities. The DYS BOG Career
Readiness Curriculum Guide is a primary resource in providing this employability training to the Vocational Program youth. The Pittsfield Public Schools (PPS) provides over 100 hours of certified vocational instruction through this program. Students receive hands-on training in the Carpentry and Culinary trades at Taconic High School. All participants work towards earning an OSHA-5 Safety Awareness Training certificate and a ServSafe Food Handler certificate during the program. Placement in a subsidized employment opportunity at the completion of vocational training is part of the program.

RECONNECT staff develops employment matches for participants throughout the program. The subsidized work component offers safe, no-nonsense, real-life work experiences for the program youth.

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**COMMUNITY CONNECTOR PARTNERSHIP**

BCAC serves as the lead agent of The Community Connector Partnership, which collectively provides resources and integrated/bundled services and develops the trusting relationships that will support families and individuals to build the foundational skills that will lead to increased assets, better employment opportunities through education and training, family well-being, and more independence, in the community where they live.

BCAC and its partnering agencies (24 to date and growing) seek to establish and implement coordinated programming to support individuals and families on the road to financial stability through improved utilization of existing services and a streamlined referral system. Each partner has access to the *Benefits Hub* (electronic referral system) and provides on-site intake workers. The Benefits Hub system helps to identify all potential related services a family or individual might need and ensures that the agency follows up with all outside referrals to minimize the number of appointments and missed services that can occur due to lack of transportation, lack of child care, or other situations.
Berkshire Community Action Council maintains partnerships and collaborations with many organizations, businesses and local agencies in Berkshire County... Over the next three years, BCAC will continue coordinating with our existing partnerships, and pursue new collaborations that will coordinate services, share resources, and expand programming that will help lift the low-income families of Berkshire County out of poverty.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Program(s)</th>
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<td>Community Programs</td>
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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

SEE MATRIX ON FOLLOWING PAGE
### Financial Stability Goals

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<th>Goal 1</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
<th>Funding Strategies/Sources</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Community Action will connect families with resources within the community to aid in their achievement of financial stability</td>
<td>Community Connector partners, Municipalities, State Government</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize the Benefits Hub and work with local foundations to provide &quot;capacity building&quot; resources to adapt the system to better meet our needs</td>
<td>Expand the CCP membership to include a wider variety of agencies and services</td>
<td>Work with Community Software to allow partners access to Octopix for enhanced community-based case management</td>
<td>Through a true shared data collection system, we will be able to track outcomes for the community wide effort</td>
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<th>Goal 2</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
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<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increase training opportunities for frontline staff in the areas of financial literacy, budgeting and the referral network</td>
<td>DHCD, Bridges out of Poverty, Working Cities group</td>
<td>BCAC will seek funding from local banks to pay for training in a more comprehensive financial literacy model</td>
<td>Three staff will be trained in the &quot;Bridges out of Poverty&quot; model</td>
<td>Expand our financial literacy training to include a wide range of financial literacy training opportunities</td>
<td>With an increased number of consumers being trained with a more intensive model, we can expand our CARs programming in year 3</td>
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<th>Goal 3</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
<th>Funding Strategies/Sources</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>BCAC will increase outreach for our programs and our partners’ programs to the full community to assure maximum participation and utilization of services available to aid in the achievement of financial stability</td>
<td>Berkshire Community College, MCLA, Williams college, Berkshire Works and the Regional Employment Board</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize the Community Services Block Grant to fund outreach for our programs and seek to leverage our resources with other partners’ resources for events</td>
<td>BCAC will distribute pamphlets, advertise programs and training opportunities through Berkshire Works on its website and take applications for SNAP and WIC where appropriate</td>
<td>BCAC will donate a billboard for one month to advertise job training opportunities and one billboard to advertise a for WIC and SNAP</td>
<td>BCAC will create a community resource website for all of Berkshire County Human Service Providers with links to the various websites...Where to go if you...</td>
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### Workforce Development Goals

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<th>Year 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Berkshire Community Action will develop a job training through volunteerism program</td>
<td>Berkshire Community College, MCLA, Williams college, Berkshire Works and the Regional Employment Board</td>
<td>This program will actually provide resources by having local job-seekers learn how nonprofits operate while working through volunteerism</td>
<td>BCAC will start the program with interns from local colleges</td>
<td>BCAC will expand the program to include local job-seekers</td>
<td>BCAC will provide structured learning opportunities in nonprofit accounting and fiscal operations</td>
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<td>We will, through outreach, expand the awareness of the community of training programs available throughout the county</td>
<td>Berkshire Works, Goodwill, Berkshire Community College, MCLA, Berkshire Health Systems</td>
<td>We will leverage our outreach efforts with those provided by our partners. Funding for outreach will come primarily from CSBG sources with additional funding from private donations</td>
<td>BCAC will host two large outreach events to promote the services of all CCP providers including those offering job training and soft skills training</td>
<td>BCAC will donate a billboard for one month to advertise job training opportunities and</td>
<td>BCAC will create a community resource website for all of Berkshire County Human Service Providers with links to the various websites...Where to go if you...</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCAC will connect families to job training and educational opportunities to prepare them for better employment options</td>
<td>Businesses, government agencies, other Human Service Providers, Berkshire Works and the Regional Employment Board and Goodwill</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize CSBG resources and seek to obtain funding from the Berkshire United Ways to be used to offer tuition assistance, test fees and scrubs and shoes for low-income workers</td>
<td>BCAC will connect at least 20 individuals with skills readiness training and another 20 to job skills or educational training</td>
<td>BCAC will provide for better case management and outcomes tracking for those getting jobs through sharing the Octopix database with those connecting individuals with jobs</td>
<td>BCAC will establish a CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANT training program to replace the one formerly run by the Red Cross</td>
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### Transportation Goals

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<th>Goal 1</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
<th>Funding Strategies/Sources</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Community Action will commit to increase the facilitation of community discussion with state, local and federal delegations regarding the transportation needs of our rural communities</td>
<td>Regional Coordinating Council, Berkshire Interfaith Organizing, Berkshire Works, Regional Employment Board, local government and the legislative delegation</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize existing resources and request special funding through the legislative budget process to develop a coordinated plan to close service gaps.</td>
<td>BCAC will continue the dialogue with many of the same legislators (2) new and keep this a priority for them through advocacy and education</td>
<td>BCAC will work on a plan with the delegation to earmark an amount from the transportation budget so that local providers can respond to an RFP to propose a solution</td>
<td>BCAC will propose a cost-effective and comprehensive solution to closing the Wide Service Gap in transportation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
<th>Funding Strategies/Sources</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will seek to increase affordable transportation options for low-income residents</td>
<td>Area banks, area car dealerships, taxi companies, BRTA, United Way and local governments</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize the special projects funding received from DHCD and seek bank support through their Community Reinvestment Act activities</td>
<td>BCAC will increase the number of affordable car loans by 5</td>
<td>BCAC will explore the opportunity to match cars with entrepreneurs who would be able to function as UBER drivers</td>
<td>BCAC will expand the CARS program with other banks and car dealerships throughout the county</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 3</th>
<th>Linkages</th>
<th>Funding Strategies/Sources</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will partner with other groups working on transportation to enhance our awareness and effectiveness in addressing this issue.</td>
<td>Regional Coordinating Council, Berkshire Interfaith Organizing, Berkshire Works, Regional Employment Board, local government and the legislative delegation</td>
<td>BCAC will utilize CSBG funding as a core to our collaborative and advocacy work</td>
<td>BCAC will rejoin the Regional Coordinating Council and take an active role</td>
<td>BCAC will perform an indepth study with information obtained from all to partners to identify transportation assets that can be used to help close gaps</td>
<td>Attend all Ongoing monthly meetings of both the RCC and BICOS transportation committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This plan will be monitored on a semi-annual basis by a report of the Executive Director and Management Team. The report shall clearly outline the progress against the stated goals and if there is a need for any revisions to goals or objectives.

Revisions to this plan shall only be made upon the recommendation of the Executive Director to the Board of Directors and shall require a full vote of the Board to adopt any changes.

This plan is intended to be a dynamic guide for the operations of the Berkshire Community Action Council and shall guide programmatic planning for the next three years.
Appendix
Summary Responses to Community Survey Questionnaire

**What is your gender?**
- Male: 28.6%
- Female: 71.4%

**What is your highest level of education?**
- Less than 9th grade: 16.7%
- Some high school: 24.8%
- High school graduate or GED: 20.1%
- Some college, no degree: 18.2%
- Associates Degree: 10.3%
- Bachelors Degree: 6.2%
- Graduate Degree: 1.4%

**In your community, affordable transportation is:**
- Not Available: 26.6%
- Available but inadequate: 28.4%
- Sufficient: 42.2%
- Unsure: 0.0%

**Which word most accurately portrays your race?**
- Black/African American: 2.6%
- White American: 8.5%
- American Indian/Alaskan Native: 29.1%
- Asian: 24.6%
- Other: 9.2%
- Hispanic: 15.2%
- Unsure: 10.7%

**What is your employment status?**
- Full time: 42.7%
- Part time: 17.7%
- Seasonal: 1.4%
- Not working, retired: 17.7%
- Not working, unemployed: 20.5%

**In your community, affordable childcare is:**
- Not available: 46.5%
- Available but inadequate: 28.5%
- Sufficient: 15.5%
- Unsure: 11.7%

**In your community, access to mental health and addiction support services is:**
- Not available: 7.1%
- Available but inadequate: 13.3%
- Sufficient: 60.6%
- Unsure: 19.0%

**In your community, access to affordable health care is:**
- Not available: 5.9%
- Available but I cannot access it: 7.1%
- Available: 57.8%
- Unsure: 29.1%

**In your community, access to Adult Education is:**
- Not available: 1.5%
- Available but I cannot access it: 13.8%
- Available: 27.9%
- Unsure: 56.8%

**Opportunities for "living wage" employment in your area are:**
- Excellent: 2.7%
- Good: 13.9%
- Adequate: 23.3%
- Inadequate: 31.7%
- Unsure: 28.5%

**Opportunities to access job training programs are:**
- Excellent: 43.3%
- Good: 56.7%
- Adequate: 0.0%
- Inadequate: 1.5%
- Unsure: 0.0%

**In the past 12 months did you receive any government assistance? (SNAP, TANF, SSI etc)**
- Yes: 71.6%
- No: 28.4%

**Are you living paycheck to paycheck?**
- Yes: 71.6%
- No: 28.4%

**At any time during the past year did you have trouble putting food on the table?**
- Yes: 43.5%
- No: 56.5%

**Over the past year, have you received any services from BCAC?**
- Yes: 93.2%
- No: 6.5%
Survey Results for Poverty "Hot Spots" - North Adams

North Adams Employment Status
- Full time: 26.5%
- Part time: 13.3%
- Seasonal: 12.9%
- Not working, not in labor force: 2.0%
- Not working, unemployed: 2.6%

North Adams Affordable Transportation
- Not available: 42.6%
- Available but inadequate: 41.0%
- Sufficient: 17.2%
- Unsure: 5.2%

North Adams Available Job Training programs
- Excellent: 33.1%
- Good: 21.2%
- Adequate: 20.3%
- Not available: 0.0%
- Unsure: 10.1%

North Adams Available Affordable Housing
- Not available: 36.5%
- Available but inadequate: 35.1%
- Sufficient: 16.5%
- Unsure: 12.2%

North Adams Employment Status
- Full time: 11.1%
- Part time: 37.4%
- Seasonal: 17.2%
- Not working, retired: 34.3%
- Not working, unemployed: 11.1%

North Adams Affordable Transportation
- Not available: 23.0%
- Available but inadequate: 42.0%
- Sufficient: 17.0%
- Unsure: 53.0%

North Adams Affordable Childcare
- Not available: 63.5%
- Available but inadequate: 17.0%
- Sufficient: 24.0%
- Unsure: 3.0%

North Adams Available Mental Health & Addiction Services
- Not available: 6.1%
- Available but inadequate: 14.1%
- Sufficient: 60.6%
- Unsure: 19.2%

North Adams Affordable Healthcare
- Not available: 6.1%
- Available but I cannot access it: 34.0%
- Available: 22.4%
- Unsure: 35.2%

North Adams Access to Adult Education?
- Not available: 68.9%
- Available but I cannot access: 31.1%
- Available: 60.6%
- Unsure: 28.6%

North Adams Available Job Training programs
- Excellent: 63.9%
- Good: 22.4%
- Adequate: 15.0%
- Inadequate: 0.0%
- Unsure: 0.0%

North Adams Available Affordable Housing
- Not available: 63.3%
- Available but inadequate: 19.1%
- Sufficient: 15.0%
- Unsure: 21.0%

North Adams Affordable Childcare
- Not available: 7.0%
- Available but inadequate: 23.0%
- Sufficient: 17.0%
- Unsure: 53.0%

North Adams Available Mental Health & Addiction Services
- Not available: 1.0%
- Available but inadequate: 13.3%
- Sufficient: 22.4%
- Unsure: 60.6%

North Adams Affordable Healthcare
- Not available: 1.0%
- Available but I cannot access it: 34.0%
- Available: 22.4%
- Unsure: 35.2%

North Adams Access to Adult Education?
- Not available: 68.9%
- Available but I cannot access: 31.1%
- Available: 60.6%
- Unsure: 28.6%

North Adams Affordable Healthcare
- Not available: 6.1%
- Available but I cannot access it: 34.0%
- Available: 22.4%
- Unsure: 35.2%

North Adams Access to Adult Education?
- Not available: 68.9%
- Available but I cannot access: 31.1%
- Available: 60.6%
- Unsure: 28.6%

North Adams Affordable Childcare
- Not available: 7.0%
- Available but inadequate: 23.0%
- Sufficient: 17.0%
- Unsure: 53.0%

North Adams Available Mental Health & Addiction Services
- Not available: 1.0%
- Available but inadequate: 13.3%
- Sufficient: 22.4%
- Unsure: 60.6%

North Adams Affordable Healthcare
- Not available: 6.1%
- Available but I cannot access it: 34.0%
- Available: 22.4%
- Unsure: 35.2%

North Adams Access to Adult Education?
- Not available: 68.9%
- Available but I cannot access: 31.1%
- Available: 60.6%
- Unsure: 28.6%
Survey Results for Poverty "Hot Spots" - Adams

Adams Employment Status
- Full time: 39.3%
- Part time: 15.4%
- Seasonal: 18.8%
- Not working, retired: 10.8%
- Not working, unemployed: 0.6%

Adams Affordable Transportation
- Not Available: 25.1%
- Available but inadequate: 31.1%
- Sufficient: 21.1%
- Unsure: 22.7%

Adams Available Job Training programs
- Excellent: 24.4%
- Good: 33.3%
- Adequate: 25.0%
- Inadequate: 13.3%
- Unsure: 3.0%

Adams Available Affordable Housing
- Not Available: 19.2%
- Available but inadequate: 12.5%
- Sufficient: 40.6%
- Unsure: 27.7%

Adams Affordable Childcare
- Not available: 12.5%
- Available but Inadequate: 53.8%
- Sufficient: 23.1%
- Unsure: 10.6%

Adams Available Mental Health & Addiction Services
- Not available: 28.6%
- Available but Inadequate: 21.3%
- Sufficient: 41.7%
- Unsure: 8.4%

Adams Affordable Healthcare
- Not available: 28.6%
- Available but I cannot access it: 15.4%
- Available: 53.8%
- Unsure: 2.4%

Adams Available Living Wage Employment
- Excellent: 14.4%
- Good: 42.7%
- Adequate: 16.0%
- Inadequate: 25.0%
- Unsure: 3.0%

Adams Living Paycheck to Paycheck?
- Yes: 42.3%
- No: 57.7%

Adams Accessing Government Assistance?
- Yes: 53.8%
- No: 46.2%

Adams Have Trouble Putting Food on the Table?
- Yes: 19.2%
- No: 80.8%

Adams Access to Adult Education?
- Not available: 19.2%
- Available but I cannot access it: 42.3%
- Available: 40.6%
### Survey Results for Poverty "Hot Spots" - Pittsfield

#### Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working, retired</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working, unemployed</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
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</table>

#### Affordable Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available but inadequate</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
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#### Available Job Training programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequacy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Affordable Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available but Inadequate</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
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</table>

#### Affordable Childcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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</table>

#### Mental Health & Addiction Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequacy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
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</table>

#### Affordable Healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available but I cannot access it</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Living Paycheck to Paycheck?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Accessing Government Assistance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Access to Adult Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
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#### Living Paycheck to Paycheck?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Access to Adult Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Needs Survey

1. In what Zip Code is your home located? _______________

2. How old are you? ____________________________________

3. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

4. What word most accurately portrays your race?
   a. Black/African American
   b. White
   c. American Indian/Alaskan Native
   d. Asian
   e. Other

5. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Less than 9th grade
   b. Some high school
   c. High School graduate or GED
   d. Some College, no degree
   e. Associates Degree
   f. Bachelors Degree
   g. Graduate Degree

6. What is your employment status?
   a. Full time
   b. Part time
c. Seasonal

d. Not working, retired

e. Not working, unemployed

7. In your community, affordable transportation is:
   a. Not available
   b. Available but inadequate
   c. Sufficient
   d. Unsure

8. In your community, affordable housing is:
   a. Not available
   b. Available but inadequate
   c. Sufficient
   d. Unsure

9. In your community, affordable childcare is:
   a. Not available
   b. Available but inadequate
   c. Sufficient
   d. Unsure

10. In your community, access to mental health and addiction support services is:
    a. Not available
    b. Available but inadequate
    c. Sufficient
    d. Unsure

11. In your community, access to affordable health care is:
    a. Not available
    b. Available but inadequate
    c. Sufficient
    d. Unsure
12. In your community, access to Adult Education is:
   a. Not available
   b. Available but inadequate
   c. Sufficient
   d. Unsure

13. How many adults living in your household are currently employed?

14. Opportunities to earn a living wage employment in your area are:
   a. Excellent
   b. Good
   c. Adequate
   d. Inadequate

15. Opportunities to access Job training programs are:
   a. Excellent
   b. Good
   c. Adequate
   d. Inadequate

16. In the past 12 months, did you receive any government assistance (SNAP, TANF, SSI etc)
   a. Yes
   b. No

17. Are you living paycheck to paycheck?
   a. Yes
   b. No

18. At any time during the past year did you have trouble putting food on the table?
   a. Yes
   b. No
19. Over the past year have you received any services from BCAC?
   a. Yes
   b. No

20. Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Satisfaction Survey</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Half the Time</th>
<th>Once in a While</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How meaningful do you feel your work is?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your employee benefits,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, are you satisfied with your job?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How skilled at their jobs are the members of your team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How efficiently are team meetings conducted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How easy is it to get help from your supervisor when you want it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How available to employees is your supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, are you satisfied with your supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees treat each other with respect</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coworkers and I have a good working relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the culture of my workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization's work positively impacts people's lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between senior leaders and employees is good in my organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Customer Satisfaction Survey

1. What BCAC programs have you accessed?
   - ASAMPS/ESP (provide energy efficient lighting, refrigerators, etc)
   - Asset Development (VITA, CARS, Financial Literacy)
   - Emergency Assistance and Referral (financial assistance)
   - The Food Depot
   - Fuel Assistance
   - HEARTWAP (replace Repair heating systems)
   - Holiday Warm Clothing Program
   - Project Reconnect
   - Transportation
   - Weatherization

2. How did you hear about the program(s) you accessed?
   - BCAC Website
   - Newspaper
   - Other Service Agency
   - Social Media (Facebook)
   - Friends, neighbors, word of mouth

3. Regarding the programs you have accessed, how responsive is BCAC?
   - Extremely responsive
   - Very Responsive
   - Moderately responsive
   - Slightly responsive
   - Not at all responsive

4. How convenient to access are BCAC programs
   - Extremely convenient
   - Very convenient
   - Moderately convenient
   - Slightly convenient
   - Not at all convenient

5. How well do staff representatives at BCAC answer your questions?
   - Extremely well
   - Very well
   - Moderately well
   - Slightly well
   - Not at all well
6. How professional are BCAC staff?
   - Extremely professional
   - Very professional
   - Moderately professional
   - Slightly professional
   - Not at all professional

7. Compared to other service agencies, is the quality of BCAC services better, worse or about the same?
   - Much better
   - Somewhat better
   - Slightly better
   - About the same
   - Slightly worse
   - Somewhat worse
   - Much worse

8. Overall, are you satisfied with our service at BCAC?
   - Extremely satisfied
   - Moderately satisfied
   - Slightly satisfied
   - Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
   - Slightly dissatisfied
   - Moderately dissatisfied
   - Extremely dissatisfied

9. How likely are you to recommend BCAC programs and services to people you know?
   - Extremely likely
   - Very likely
   - Slightly likely
   - Not at all likely

10. Please provide any additional comments regarding your experience with Berkshire Community Action and or any suggestions for improvement. THANK YOU!

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
**Need #1: Financial Stability**

**Strategic Three Year Goal Statement**

*BCAC will connect families with resources within the community to aid in their achievement of financial stability.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate whether the goal addresses (check all the apply):</th>
<th>Org. Standard 6.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☒ Reduction of Poverty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☒ Revitalization of low-income communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☒ Empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self sufficient</td>
<td></td>
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**Specific Objectives**

Insert additional rows if needed

**Fiscal Year 2018**

- Expand Community Connector Partnership membership to include a wider variety of agencies and services
- Increase client access to financial services

**Fiscal Year 2019**

- Work with Community Software Group (CSG) to allow partners access to OctoPia for enhanced community-based case management

**Fiscal Year 2020**

- Utilize a true shared data collection system, to track outcomes for the community wide effort
### Need #2: Financial Stability

#### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

**BCAC will increase training opportunities for frontline staff in the areas of financial literacy, budgeting, and the referral network.**

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**Specific Objectives**

**Fiscal Year 2018**

Three staff will be trained in the “Bridges Out of Poverty” model

**Fiscal Year 2019**

Expand our financial literacy training to include a wide range of financial literacy training opportunities

**Fiscal Year 2020**

With an increased number of consumers being trained with a more intensive model, we can expand our CARs Program in year 3
### Need #3: Financial Stability

#### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

*BCAC will increase outreach for our programs and our partners’ programs to the full community to assure maximum participation and utilization of services available to aid in the achievement of financial stability.*

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**Specific Objectives**

*Insert additional rows if needed*

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<th>Fiscal Year 2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency will distribute pamphlets, advertise programs and training opportunities through Berkshire Works on its website and take applications for SNAP and WIC where appropriate</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year 2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCAC will donate a billboard for one month to advertise job training opportunities and one billboard to advertise for SNAP and WIC services</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCAC will collaborate with partner agencies to offer expanded VITA services</td>
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<th>Fiscal Year 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>BCAC will create a community resource website for all of Berkshire County Human Service providers with links to the various websites...Where to go if you...</td>
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Need #4: Workforce Development

Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

BCAC will develop a “Job Training through Volunteerism” Program

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Specific Objectives

Fiscal Year 2018

- BCAC will start the program with interns from local colleges

Fiscal Year 2019

- BCAC will expand the program to include local job seekers

Fiscal Year 2020

- BCAC will provide structured learning opportunities in nonprofit accounting and fiscal operations

Need #5: Workforce Development

Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

Through networking and outreach, BCAC will expand the awareness of available training programs in the Berkshire community

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Specific Objectives

Fiscal Year 2018

- BCAC will host 2 large outreach events to promote the services of all CCP providers, including those offering job training and soft skills training
- Formalize a partnership with the local One-Stop Career Center for utilization of shared space and services

Fiscal Year 2019

- BCAC will donate a billboard for one month to advertise job training opportunities
- Increase linkages to Leadership Training providers and programs

Fiscal Year 2020

- BCAC will create a community resource website for all of Berkshire County Human Service providers with links to the various websites...Where to go if you...
- Increase the agency’s participation on local workforce development boards
# Need 6: Workforce Development

### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

**BCAC will connect families to job training and educational opportunities to prepare them for better employment options.**

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### Specific Objectives

**Fiscal Year 2018**

BCAC will connect at least 20 individuals with job readiness training and another 20 will be connected to education/training programs.

**Fiscal Year 2019**

BCAC will provide enhanced case management and outcomes tracking for those getting jobs through sharing the Octopia database with those Agencies connecting individuals with jobs.

**Fiscal Year 2020**

BCAC will establish a Certified Nurse Assistance training program to replace the one formerly run by the Red Cross.

# Need 7: Transportation

### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

**BCAC will commit to increase the facilitation of the Community discussion with state, federal, and local delegations regarding the transportation needs of our rural communities.**

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### Specific Objectives

**Fiscal Year 2018**

BCAC will continue the dialogue with many of the same legislators (2 new) and keep this a priority for them through advocacy and education.

**Fiscal Year 2019**

BCAC will work on a plan with the delegation to earmark an amount from the transportation budget so that local providers can respond to an RFP to purpose a solution.

**Fiscal Year 2020**

BCAC will propose a cost-effective and comprehensive solution to closing the wide service gap in transportation.
### Need #8: Transportation

#### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

**BCAC will seek to increase affordable transportation options for residents with low incomes**

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<tr>
<td>BCAC will increase the number of affordable car loans by 5</td>
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**Fiscal Year 2019**

BCAC will explore the opportunity to match cars with entrepreneurs who would be able to function as UBER drivers.

**Fiscal Year 2020**

BCAC will expand the CARs Program with other banks and car dealerships throughout the county.

### Need #9: Transportation

#### Strategic Three Year Goal Statement

**BCAC will partner with other groups working on transportation to enhance our awareness and effectiveness in addressing this issue.**

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<td>BCAC will rejoin the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and take on an active role</td>
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**Fiscal Year 2019**

BCAC will perform an in depth study with information obtained from all partners to identify transportation assets that can be used to help close gaps.

**Fiscal Year 2020**

BCAC representatives will attend all ongoing monthly meetings of both the RCC and Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO) transportation committees.