



COMMUNITY TEAMWORK, INC.
STRATEGIC PLAN
2021-2023



Community Teamwork, Inc. Strategic Plan

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Community Teamwork Strategic Planning Process

Community Teamwork, Inc. was founded in 1965 through the Economic Opportunity Act, created by President Lyndon B. Johnson and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to end poverty in Greater Lowell and Northeastern Massachusetts. The agency also deep historical ties to the civil rights movement; in particular, the expansion of the Economic Opportunity Act to include the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Community Teamwork's Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) supports the agency's anti-poverty services in the City of Lowell and the seven surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford. Community Teamwork's Energy and Community Resources Division and the Housing and Homeless Services Division serve 72 communities across the Merrimack Valley and Northeastern Massachusetts. With an annual operating budget of \$103M (FY'21 Budget), Community Teamwork is the largest human services nonprofit provider in Greater Lowell and the second-largest Community Action Agency in Massachusetts. We provide services to nearly 55,000 unduplicated individuals annually. We are a leader in the work to provide housing and end homelessness in Northeast Massachusetts. As the area's Regional Housing Agency, we work with over 4,000 housing providers and are engaged in fair housing practices.

To formulate the Strategic Plan for Community Teamwork for the next three years, following the submission of the Community Needs Assessment to our funding agency, the Division of Community Services (OCD) of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in the Commonwealth, Strategic Planning Sub Committees were set up, with leadership and staff members who participated in the initial planning process, and then augmented with selected staff with expertise in the areas of review. Over fifty (50) staff members, community representatives, and Board Members participated in the Strategic Planning Sub Committee process to inform and develop the Community Teamwork Strategic Plan. The Agency set up eight (8) Sub Committees as follows:

- Full Strategic Planning Team
- Housing Affordability Sub Committee
- Employment and Training Sub Committee- to address: Living Wages, Education & Training, Industry & Employment
- Employment and Stabilization Supports Sub Committee – to address Affordable Childcare, Transportation, and Emergency Assistance
- Behavioral Health and Counseling Sub Committee
- Racial Equity Sub Committee
- Systems Change and Advocacy Sub Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee of the Community Teamwork Board of Directors

The charge of these teams was to review the identified needs, and to generate strategic plan goals, objectives, and activities (benchmarks) to track implementation and successes. The initial plans were reviewed by Executive Management, adjusted for attainment balance, and presented to the Strategic Planning Sub Committee of the Board.

As part of this process, and to ensure Board ongoing engagement throughout this section of our work, the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Directors met three (3) times during the Strategic Planning phase to review the agency's Mission and Vision and to give feedback on Strategic Plan goals and objectives as they were being developed. The committee consisted of the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, the Board Clerk, one co-Chair of the joint staff/board Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and an additional low-income member of the board.

Following adjustment and feedback from the Board Committee, the Executive and Fiscal Board Committees reviewed the Strategic Plan, and approved it for review by the full Board of Directors at the June, 2021 meeting.

An important component of the Strategic Planning Process for the Executive Management and Board of Directors was a review of Community Teamwork’s Vision and Mission overall. A survey of Community Teamwork staff occurred in the Spring of 2021, with seventy-eight (78) responses, (slightly more than a 15% return rate). When asked, nearly 83% stated they could relate to Community Teamwork’s mission statement to the work they do at the agency. The survey also requested the respondent to rank components of the current mission statement, in an effort to inform areas where there was little resonance. Additionally, respondents were asked to rank other areas that are not in our mission statement that are important to include. An impressive 47.3% requested the addition of some social justice/equity language. Finally, an open-ended question was offered for additional feedback. Utilizing these survey results, a smaller staff team drafted revised vision and mission statements, which was further reviewed and revised by the Executive Management team.

The following presentation and recommendation for change was made to the Board of Directors on June 30th 2021 for review:

VISION

<p>Current: Our vision is a community of opportunity where fewer people live in poverty.</p>	<p>Proposed: <i>We envision a community whose institutions, systems, and people support everyone’s opportunity to thrive.</i></p>
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MISSION

<p>Current: Community Teamwork is a catalyst for social change. We strengthen communities and reduce poverty by delivering vital services and collaborating with key stakeholders to create housing, education and economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Proposed: <i>Community Teamwork is a catalyst for social change. We leverage our programs, partnerships, and a collective voice to reduce poverty and foster equity, respect, and community engagement by creating housing, education, and economic opportunities.</i></p>
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The Community Teamwork Board of Directors approved the proposed Vision and Mission statements by unanimous vote at their June 30, 2021 meeting.

[Community Needs Assessment Summary](#)

Community Teamwork completed an extensive Community Needs Assessment, submitted to DHCD in late December, approved by DHCD in late February, 2021, and released to the public in March of 2021. The full Community Needs Assessment can be found on the Community Teamwork website at <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf> ; additionally under the publications tab, Town Summaries have been created for the eight communities within our CSBG Service area. The Executive Summary and overview of the Needs Assessment below, is provided as

background to the Strategic Plan and the full assessment was utilized as the base for data for the goals and objectives presented herein.

Executive Summary *

Established in 1965, Community Teamwork is a non- profit Community Action Agency (CAA) serving the City of Lowell and the seven surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford. Community Teamwork also serves as a Community Development Corporation and as the Regional Housing Agency for the Merrimack Valley and the rest of Northeastern Massachusetts, including 64 cities and towns inclusive of the North Shore and Cape Ann.

Community Teamwork’s mission is to serve as a catalyst for social change. We strengthen communities and reduce poverty by delivering vital services and collaborating with key stakeholders to create housing, education, and economic opportunities.

Every three years, in its capacity as the Community Action Agency, Community Teamwork conducts a Community Needs Assessment. Through a variety of data collection tools, Community Teamwork gathers information on the causes and conditions of poverty directly from the communities we serve. It is these causes and conditions of poverty and the greatest needs facing our community that drive our Strategic Plan and ensures that our progress is community-informed.

Engaging the community is critically important to the work of the agency. Through the Community Needs Assessment process, we collect and analyze the community’s perception of Greater Lowell’s unmet needs, and combine their feedback with data gathered from a variety of public data sources. The Community Needs Assessment serves as the foundation of Community Teamwork’s three-year Strategic Plan. We tailor our existing programs and create new offerings to meet the needs that arise from the Assessment.

In conducting the Community Needs Assessment, we targeted a wide range of businesses, organizations, and public offices across many sectors of our community action service footprint. We are deeply grateful for all the individuals and organizations who lent their time, talents, and expertise, whether as a participant in our assessment tools or as a collaborator in this work. In particular, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all members of the Strategic Planning Committee, Dr. Leland Ackerson of UMass Lowell, Gisela Yeboah, and MASSCAP.

With input from these many stakeholders, this document reflects the complex and wonderful fabric of Greater Lowell. We believe that Community Teamwork grows stronger through diversity. The top needs identified in this 2021 Community Needs Assessment are as follows:

Top Needs: Individual Level

1. Housing Affordability
2. Living Wages
3. Education and Training
4. Employment Supports
5. Affordable Childcare

* Please note, all citations have been removed from this section. Refer to full Community Needs Assessment for complete references and citations.

Top Needs: Community Level

1. Creation of Quality, Affordable Housing
2. Industry and Employment
3. Mental Health and Counseling

Overview of Process

In August of 2019, Community Teamwork began its Planning to Plan phase for the development of its 2021- 2023 Community Assessment Report and Strategic Plan (CARSP). Community Teamwork Board Member Dr. Leland Ackerson chaired the CARSP process. As a professor of Public Health at UMass Lowell, Dr. Ackerson brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the data collection and analysis process. Dr. Ackerson also trained 24 of his graduate and undergraduate students to conduct Key Informant interviews for the Community Needs Assessment.

At the onset of the Needs Assessment, we assembled the Strategic Planning Committee and from this group we established sub-committees. The Strategic Planning Committee also conducted a SWOT analysis of Community Teamwork’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The Strategic Planning Committee conducted its assessment during the fall and winter of 2019. The agency had originally planned to conduct its analysis of the collected data in the winter of 2020 and publicly report its findings in summer of 2020, but per the Department of Housing and Community Development’s response to COVID-19, the analysis was delayed.

Per the federal guidance for Community Action Agencies, the bulk of our assessment took place in the first quarter of 2020 – before COVID-19 and the current national conversation on race. As such, the data presented here outside of the COVID-19-specific section should be considered “pre-pandemic.” Likewise, we have attempted to call out racial inequities in each of our Topic Briefs in addition to the section dedicated to Racial Inequity in Greater Lowell.

Methodology

We approached this Community Needs Assessment with an emphasis on diversity and representation in order to gain a response that closely reflects the communities and demographics of Greater Lowell. We recognize that our internal capacity allowed us to collect a convenience sample rather than a statistically significant response. Recognizing these limitations when we designed this process, we targeted a diverse sample population in order to yield more accurate and applicable findings. As such, we carefully selected our Community Needs Assessment Survey recipients, Key Informants, and Focus Groups, as well as the makeup of our Strategic Planning Committee, with an intent to engage a diverse audience.

The Community Needs Assessment examines and identifies major causes and conditions of poverty in Greater Lowell. In conducting our assessment, we used a variety of data collection tools and activities. The results of these tools were analyzed collectively in order to arrive at the major causes and conditions of poverty. Descriptions of the assessments and data collection tools are as follows.

Community Needs Assessment Survey: The Community Needs Assessment Survey captures the perspective of residents of our CSBG service area as to their perception of the community’s top needs as related to poverty and community resources. The Community Needs Assessment Sub-Committee developed a survey instrument for distribution throughout Greater Lowell. Individuals living and working

in Greater Lowell were invited to complete the survey. The survey had a twofold objective: to gather data on individual and community needs and the greatest barriers to financial stability, and to gather demographic data of respondents. In total, 1,482 surveys were completed and entered into Survey Monkey for analysis. Please refer to the Key Findings: Community Needs Assessment Survey section for information on the results of the Community Needs Assessment Survey.

- **Key Informant Interviews:** In order to gain the perspective of community stakeholders and leaders from their specialized lens, we conducted Key Informant Interviews. With the assistance of Dr. Ackerson's Public Health students at UMass Lowell, we interviewed 19 Key Informants representing 17 organizations. The objective of these interviews was to learn Informants' views of the top needs in Greater Lowell and the most effective means of reducing poverty. Please see the Key Findings: Key Informant Interviews section for more information.
- **Focus Groups:** The Focus Groups brought rich qualitative data to the Community Needs Assessment. While the Key Informants were primarily comprised of sector professionals, the Focus Groups afforded an in-depth conversation with a spectrum of community members. In particular, Focus Groups captured the voice of low-income individuals. The Focus Group Sub Committee conducted fifteen Focus Groups consisting of 133 individuals. All participants were provided the Community Needs Assessment Survey. Focus Group questions were aligned with the Key Informant Interviews questions, and also complement the Survey. Please refer to the Key Findings: Focus Groups section for more information.

Secondary Data Analysis

Because the data collected through our Needs Assessment represents a convenience sample, we paired our findings with publicly available empirical datasets.

- **SMC Partners Community Data:** We would like to thank MASSCAP for hiring SMC Partners to compile a wealth of data points for Massachusetts Community Action Agencies' use in their CARSP process. One of our most important sources of empirical data provided by SMC Partners is their town-level core data set derived from the American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (2014-2018) as well as other sources. This data was critical to the development of our analyses and Topic Briefs.
- **Greater Lowell Health Alliance:** We would also like to thank the Greater Lowell Health Alliance for their excellent Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which we consulted when preparing our Health Topic Brief on the Greater Lowell area. We also compared the greatest needs as evidenced by our Community Needs Assessment Survey with the greatest needs presented in the CHNA. These two assessments, when examined alongside each other, provide a comprehensive overview of our shared community's greatest needs through two specialized lenses: poverty and health.

Identifying Greatest Needs

The Strategic Planning Committee analyzed each of the aforementioned assessment tools and secondary data sources alongside each other in order to arrive at the greatest needs of individuals, families, and the Greater Lowell community at large; the strengths of the community; the most vulnerable subsets of the general population; the causes and conditions of poverty; and the most effective means to reduce poverty.

Generally, there was consensus across these assessment tools and data resources, particularly regarding the greatest needs of individuals and the community. Among our assessment tools, the surveys lent quantitative data to the analysis, while conversational tools such as Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews lent an in-depth qualitative perspective to the hard data points.

Top Individual and Community Needs

After conducting various assessment tools and examining the publicly available data, we examined trends across these tools and arrived at the following top needs at the individual and community levels:

Top Needs: Individual Level

1. Housing Affordability
2. Living Wages
3. Education and Training
4. Employment Supports
5. Affordable Childcare

Top Needs: Community Level

1. Creation of Quality, Affordable Housing
2. Industry and Employment
3. Mental Health and Counseling

It is important to note that the bulk of our assessment occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on poverty in the Greater Lowell area, please read the COVID-19 Addendum.

Individual Need 1: Housing Affordability

For the second consecutive cycle, the unaffordability of housing and the lack of affordable housing is the dominant need among Greater Lowell residents. Respondents to the Community Needs Assessment agreed across race, gender, ethnicity, and age that housing is their top need. Broken out by towns in Greater Lowell, respondents predominantly selected housing in their top two needs.

Additionally, the Community Needs Assessment Survey asked what barriers preclude respondents' households from financial stability. Again, across race, ethnicity, income bracket, gender, the majority of towns, and the majority of age brackets, housing expenses were a top trend. Many respondents cited that "My living expenses (rent/mortgage, heat, food) are too high," to the extent that most of the aforementioned populations cited living expenses, inclusive of rent, in their top one or two barriers.

Focus groups presented the lack of affordable housing as a significant obstacle to households' financial stability. Key Informant interviewees also cited Housing as a concern, but within the context of community-wide need.

An examination of publicly available empirical data sources reinforces the prevalent and growing issue of housing unaffordability and inadequate housing stock. The Housing in Greater Lowell Topic Brief outlines the convergence of the following factors:

- Greater Lowell has a very low percentage of rental housing units within the total housing stock.
- While rental housing stock is growing, demand far outpaces capacity.
- The overall housing stock in Greater Lowell is aging, creating problems of poor-quality housing.
- De-leading in particular presents a barrier to renters with children.
- In most Greater Lowell communities, approximately half of renters are considered rent-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30% of their income in housing. This speaks to the lack of affordable units.
- Minimum wage is inadequate to afford the median gross rent in the Greater Lowell area.
- The cost of home ownership is above the national average in every Greater Lowell community and above the state average in 7 out of 9 communities.
- The barriers to homeownership are exacerbated among BIPOC residents. A disproportionately high percentage of BIPOC households are renters, while a disproportionately high percentage of White, Non-Hispanic households are homeowners.

In short, there are few options for affordable, high-quality units for renters, and few pathways to homeownership for most households. This poses a considerable strain on household budgets and jeopardizes families' housing security and ability to afford other necessary expenses.

Individual Need 2: Living Wages

While the national median home price has risen by 47% since 2009, the federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25 since 2009. The rate of wage increases is more consistent with home appreciation in Massachusetts; from 2010 to 2020, the Massachusetts minimum wage has increased from \$8.00 per hour to \$12.75, a 59% increase, while homes appreciated by 39%. However, as previously mentioned, the cost of homeownership and even rental units is unaffordable for families earning the minimum wage.

According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's living wage calculator, in Middlesex County, a family with two adults and two children would need to work 40 hours per week at \$20.67 per hour in order to make a living wage. This is a considerably higher rate than the Massachusetts minimum wage. In keeping with this trend, 32% of Community Needs Assessment Survey respondents noted that they work full-time but their pay doesn't cover their expenses, in addition to the 42% referenced earlier who noted that their living expenses (rent/mortgage, heat, food) are too high.

Low wages necessitate that many low-income individuals and families rely on public benefits, such as housing vouchers and Fuel Assistance, to make ends meet. Over time, many households eventually increase their earned income, to the point that they exceed income eligibility requirements for public assistance programs. At that point, households can lose those benefits, and thereby lose income that was critical to their sufficiency. Indeed, the lost income of benefits may be greater than the increase in earned income, effectively de-incentivizing workers to earn more income. The result is that families and

individuals can feel trapped in their low-income situation. Furthermore, because Massachusetts has a considerably higher minimum wage (\$12.75) than the federal minimum wage (\$7.25), Massachusetts residents are often ineligible for public benefits provided through federal resources because their income is higher than the income restrictions that are calculated on the federal wage level. Therefore, there are many households who have too little income to thrive, but too much income to receive many supports.

Individual Need 3: Education and Training

Education is essential for individuals to increase their employment opportunities, obtain better-paying jobs, and earn higher lifetime earnings which contributes to wealth growth. Our qualitative data assessment highlighted the issue of education and opportunities and the impact on reducing poverty. In particular, our Key Informants identified poor education quality and low wages as a cause of poverty. One Key Informant stated that Massachusetts has very high education rates compared to national averages, yet Lowell's education rate is far lower than that of Massachusetts. Additionally, respondents to our Community Needs Assessment Survey, when asked what barriers impede their household's financial stability, one-fifth of respondents reported that they "need more education or training to get work or better work." When broken down by race, BIPOC respondents were more likely to cite education or training (or lack thereof) as a barrier to their financial wellbeing.

Educational attainment is a major contributor to the cycle of poverty; children who grow up in poverty are less likely to graduate high school, and in turn, they continue the cycle of poverty as adults. Adult educational attainment is strongly correlated to future income earnings and employment status; it also impacts an individual's health outcomes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that, "persons with low levels of education and income generally experience increased rates of mortality, morbidity, and risk-taking behaviors and decreased access to and quality of health care."

Individual Need 4: Employment Supports

In addition to education opportunities, employment supports are needed in order to increase income at the individual level. Most often, Community Needs Assessment Survey respondents, Key Informants, and Focus Groups cited childcare as a barrier to their ability to work full time. Specifically, one-third of survey respondents cited a need for "After School/Summer Programs for Children/Youth," which differs from the need for childcare for young children. While childcare may be accessible to a working parent or guardian in terms of available times, it may be difficult to find care for older children before or after school when their parent or guardian is working or commuting. BIPOC respondents also cited "Child Care/Early Childhood Education" as a top need.

Transportation also is a barrier to employment, particularly to those individuals who live outside of fixed public transportation routes or whose shifts do not align with the timeline of transportation. In this regard, minimum wage earners are likely to be most impacted by limited bus schedules, as they are more likely to work non-traditional hours than a moderate-income worker working a 9-to-5 office job, for example.

Individual Need 5: Affordable Childcare

Child care is highly expensive, costing as much or more than rent. The Economic Policy Institute shows that in single parent households, actual child care costs were only \$74 less than housing costs; for two-

parent households, child care exceeded housing costs by \$858. In particular, Lowell families earning the median household income spend between 30-50% of their income on child care. viii

Data from 2017 show Middlesex County as the most expensive center-based care in the state, at \$22,232 per year for infant care and \$16,541 for 4-Year-Old care. This becomes an even more important issue when considering median income within the county. Middlesex County ranks 5th at 16.4% of median income, signifying that while child care is the most expensive in the service area, family income is insufficient to pay these high costs. Family Child Care within the county is slightly more affordable as the third most expensive in the State. Furthermore, even when families are able to find affordable childcare, the lack of evening childcare, early shift childcare, or after-school and summer care for school-age youth poses another barrier to working parents.

Community Need 1: Creation of Quality, Affordable Housing

In addition to the issue of housing affordability at the individual level, we also see an inadequate supply of affordable housing at the community level. A majority of Key Informants cited housing as the most prevalent cause of poverty that the Greater Lowell community faces, at nearly twice the rate of the second-most prevalent causes of poverty (education and low wages). Furthermore, when asked what would end poverty, the most common answers were affordable housing and jobs/workforce training (tied), which was cited at twice the rate of the second-most common answer, which was mental health services.

There is a lack of affordable housing units in Greater Lowell which can be alleviated by the creation of additional affordable housing units by developers receiving an incentive from the state to designate units specifically for low- to moderate-income households. There are currently not enough units or affordable housing vouchers to meet the demand for low-income individuals. Community Teamwork's own Section 8 waiting list is currently nearly fifteen years long. In a more general sense, the community also lacks affordable housing units that are not dedicated to a specific program; rather, developers create units and charge a rent in line with Fair Market Rent.

Community Need 2: Industry and Employment

In keeping with the clear need for employment supports to increase wages and income at the individual level, the Greater Lowell community lacks adequate employment resources and jobs that pay living wages to sustain a healthier moderate-income population. It is important to note that this was the climate of employment prior to COVID- 19. Since the pandemic, unemployment rates have skyrocketed as many traditional employers in industries with opportunities for entry-level to mid-level workers have implemented lay-offs, furloughs, or have closed completely. Women in particular are leaving the workforce in staggering rates, likely to care for children as childcare centers close and schools move to remote learning. Even prior to the pandemic, the community has experienced a decrease in funding support for employment programs. The most prominent program for workforce development, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding, has seen a decrease in Greater Lowell in recent years, as unemployment had been on a downward trend and the economy was strong. Despite these apparently positive employment metrics, our assessment of the community indicates that the effects of a strong economy and workforce are not equally felt across the socioeconomic spectrum. Please refer to the Topic Briefs and Racial Inequity in Greater Lowell sections for more information.

Again, a significant rate of Community Needs Assessment Survey respondents indicated that they “can’t find work,”

“need more education or training to get work or more work,” or “work full-time but [their] pay doesn’t cover [their] expenses.” Additionally, Focus Groups and Key Informants also cited employment and wages as a primary factor of poverty across the community. As one Key Informant noted, the unemployment rate is very low but the wages are stagnant and a lot of people have to work more than one job just to pay for housing.” While unemployment was low (prior to March of 2020), the implication is that many jobs do not pay a living wage.

Community Need 3: Mental Health and Counseling

For the second Community Needs Assessment cycle in a row, mental health has emerged as a prominent community need. In fact, our Survey shows mental health jumped from the fourth-most cited need to the second-most cited need from the prior cycle. Key Informants also cited mental health as the most pressing issue in the community behind the need for better Housing. Additionally, many Survey respondents and multiple Key Informants linked individual homelessness with mental health issues and substance use disorder. As noted in the Greater Lowell Health Alliance’s 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment (GLCHNA), the community at large is susceptible to stigmatizing mental illness and substance use disorder, as well as dismissing or minimizing the importance of mental health.

As a result, our community’s practices and our mental health system is inadequate to tackle urgent needs. For example, Lowell has a crisis response team that is dispatched when an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis, but is not able to respond to situations in which the individual is dysregulated or presenting a physical threat; instead, the police are dispatched. Moreover, as stated in the GLCHNA, “Most clients have co-occurring mental and behavioral health concerns and the health care system is unfortunately limited in treatment of co-morbidities in a concurrent manner.”

Though Mental Health is not within Community Teamwork’s primary focus, the agency recognizes the critical importance of addressing social determinations of health (SDOH) in order to end poverty. According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, “social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.” This relationship means that financial status and mental health impact each other. For example, it is difficult for a person with dysregulated mental illness to keep a job, and therefore they are vulnerable to poverty. Conversely, a person struggling with poverty may develop mental health concerns. As such, Community Teamwork is dedicated to taking an SDOH approach to combatting poverty in Greater Lowell.

Distribution of Community Needs Assessment

Community Teamwork submitted our full Community Needs Assessment to our funder, the Division of Community Services, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in late December, 2020 as required. Following approval in early February 2021, Community Teamwork planned for a robust release of the full Community Needs Assessment.

Internally, the Community Needs Assessment summary was presented to an all staff Town Hall, a forum the agency has utilized during this remote work period with much success. The presentation focused on the methodology for data collection, the support and participation of staff and community members, the priority needs as identified, and the next steps in the process, i.e. the Strategic Planning process.

Additionally, staff members who had participated in the data collection and analysis process, including members of the Strategic Planning group and focus groups, received an electronic version of the Community Needs Assessment.

A large public forum was developed to facilitate the release to the broader public. On May 3, 2021, through a Zoom event with special guest Congresswoman Lori Trahan, MA-003, representatives of our Board of Directors, and the Executive Director of the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF), Community Teamwork released the full Community Needs Assessment document and activated the link on our website.

The announcement of the release of the Community Needs Assessment was conducted through an electronic newsletter through our Constant Contact platform. The Constant Contact platform has over 15,500 active email addresses. Our communications team also posted the release announcement and the active link to the publication on our website to the other Community Teamwork social media platforms. The platforms (and # of followers) include: Facebook (3,583); Instagram (981); Twitter (1,103); and Linked In (645), as examples of our reach.

Our website provides direct access to the complete Community Needs Assessment (under *Publications*), and additionally, Town Summaries for the eight (8) cities and towns in our CSBG region are also available. Our website tracks over 82,600 users, and of note, we are on track to have a more than 10% increase in website utilization from calendar year 2020 to calendar year 2021.

In addition to our own distribution and announcement, our partners and supporters at the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF), released their own announcement about the Community Needs Assessment availability. The GLCF May 2021 e-newsletter, sent to over 6,000 email contacts, included a directed link to the digital copy on the Community Teamwork website.

On June 21st, 2021, the paper of record for the Greater Lowell area, *The Lowell Sun*, published an article on the Community Needs Assessment and the data related to the need for affordable housing in Greater Lowell (<https://www.lowellsun.com/2021/06/21/cti-community-needs-assessment-underscores-need-for-affordable-housing-in-greater-lowell/>). This article also had an embedded link to the Community Needs Assessment digital version on the Community Teamwork website.

Community Teamwork also completed a wide release of hard copies, mailing hard copies, primarily to Elected Officials, City and Town Administrative personnel, key Community Agency Leads, and to our primary Foundations and Funders. Following this release, Community Teamwork has offered to conduct overviews of the data and/or highlight certain components of data (such as Housing Affordability in Merrimack Valley) to partner agencies.

Service Gaps Identified

In defining service gaps which have been identified through the Strategic Planning process, Community Teamwork is targeting those areas where specific programming is not available through either our Agency, or the need is so great that partner agencies cannot keep up with the demand at their current capacity. There are also gaps that have become more significant due to the pandemic, and thus, our planning focus and resources must take the availability into consideration as we implement our mission and programming in the next three to five years.

An interesting set of questions presented in the Community Needs Survey were focused on household financial stability, including the ability to pay bills and having some funds set aside for emergencies. Only 34% of our respondents indicated that their households' finances improved over the past three year. A key area of concern for our constituents, coupled with programming to address it, is that while 60% of the respondents said they could pay their bills on time, an alarming 48% indicated they did not have \$500 set aside for emergencies. This highlights that most households do not have modest savings and it may indicate they are living paycheck to paycheck. While not able to directly fund emergency cash for households, this issue can be mitigated through an emergency plan of service for those catastrophic events that potentially hit families. Providing additional wrap-around services that increase the ability of families to save is one; the provision of financial education and budgeting training is another; and finally, determining needed usage of the funds coming to communities through the American Rescue Plan may impact this financial insecurity area for low-income families.

For the second Needs Assessment cycle in a row, the issue of lack of Mental Health and Counseling availability rose to the surface. In this cycle, it went from fourth to second in importance to the respondents. The service gap in our region, and statewide, is based in both the lack of providers and the difficulty in provider fee/payment structures. As noted in our assessment document, *"Though Mental Health is not within Community Teamwork's primary focus, the agency recognizes the critical importance of addressing social determinations of health (SDOH) in order to end poverty."* There have been some positive trends due to COVID – the acceptance of Tele-Health visits into the reimbursable pay structure and the decrease in missed visits due to the convenience of Tele-Health, included. However, needs have also increased in Behavioral Health and Counseling due to trauma, isolation, prevalence of illness and death, related to the COVID pandemic experience.

A third significant service gap identified is the availability of childcare for non-traditional hours of operation, and the gap in childcare for older youth (based on ages and programming). The need for afterschool programming, and increased summer programming for children and youth was raised in this assessment, and this issue, coupled with the wrap-around services to support child care (transportation, hours of operation, food, financial assistance), highlights an area that is not being met by current services, agencies, and/or service structures. As noted in the full assessment, *"the federal government recommends families spend no more than 7% of their income on childcare (HHS Affordability Standard); however, Lowell families earning the median income with children spend between 30 – 59% of their income on childcare (page 51).*

While the Community Needs Assessment survey data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of COVID-19, the closure of schools, daycares, and businesses exacerbated the issues around childcare. Many childcare centers closed, and for those heads of households that had to go to work, finding childcare became even more difficult. Additionally, for those parents with children learning through a completely remote model, being able to work became even more difficult.

Another area where the pandemic highlighted a service gap was in the area of food security (access). With the need for limited community excursions to stop and slow the spread in the initial weeks and months of the COVID emergency, access to food increasingly became an issue. The COVID section of the Community Teamwork Community Needs Assessment highlighted the partnerships and varied methodologies utilized to support our residents in need of food – including grocery bag food delivery, meals to vulnerable Seniors, grocery gift card distribution, prepared meals delivered to families in Residential Shelters, increased utilization of our partnership with the Merrimack Valley Food Bank- all

innovative and new services that became critical for the well-being of our constituents. The food issue also brought new families to our services, and focused new funding as food insecurity became a major issue across the Commonwealth. The pandemic highlighted the fragility of food stability in families and the lack of structure in our communities for stronger food supports and access, beyond the early nutritional assistance from WIC and the safety net of SNAP.

Finally, presciently, Community Teamwork had determined that within our Needs Assessment data, issues of disproportionate poverty impact on communities of color was rampant in the quantitative data, and that equity issues needed to be highlighted throughout the document. Not just as a highlighting of the issue, but as a mechanism to incorporate addressing inequity into our Agency Strategic Plan moving forward. To obtain DEI specific qualitative data to support our work understanding how poverty impacts people of color, Community Teamwork conducted three Focus Groups with an emphasis on diversity and obtaining experience-based feedback (Please refer to the Community Teamwork Community Needs Assessment Racial Inequity section).

The recognition of these service and issue gaps as highlighted through the comprehensive Community Teamwork Community Needs Assessment ensured that the Strategic Planning process included goals and objectives or activities to address the service gaps. Specific Sub Committee(s) were charged to include review of these areas, and Sub Committee members focused on the provision of mitigation, partnership, recommendations for program expansion, or other methodologies to address these gaps.

[Community Teamwork Strategic Plan](#)

The Community Teamwork Strategic Plan provides the Agency and its leadership with support in decision making on program expansion, resource utilization, and future resource development. The plan presents the Agency's mission and vision, and provides a connection with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and the areas of focus in the Community Action Network plans to address poverty. The plan goals and objectives may be broader than those areas of focus, but a direct connection is made between the Community Teamwork Strategic Plan Goals and the domains which organize work of Community Action Agencies (CAAs). As outlined in the CSBG Guidance, CAAs must report out on areas of focus as follows:

“Module 4: Individual and Family Level collects information on Family National Performance Indicators (FNPIs), Services (SRVs) provided to individuals and families, and demographic characteristics of people served by CSBG Eligible Entities. All individual and family-level performance indicators and services are categorized within seven of the nine domains that organize the work of the Community Action Network. Community Service Block Grant Domains:

1. Employment
2. Education and Cognitive Development
3. Income and Asset Building
4. Housing
5. Health and Social/Behavioral Development
6. Civic Engagement and Community Involvement
7. Outcomes and Services Across Multiple Domains”

The structure of our plan below, highlights first, the Goals, Objectives, and timeline for activities; second, the resources and partnerships in place to support our Agency goals; third, the resources and partnerships that the Sub Committees identified as lacking; and finally, the Community Teamwork Programs that support these areas of focus, as then documented and evaluated by mid- year and annual reports on performance against the ROMA/CSBG National Performance Indicators.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CREATION

The Strategic Goals to increase affordable housing are focused on housing creation for seniors and individuals, and on addressing the racial equity gap in homeownership. The first goals of the Community Teamwork Strategic Plan are focused on these areas in Housing as follows:

- Goal 1: Increase affordable housing units for seniors and individuals;
- Goal 2: Narrow the racial equity gap in home ownership; and
- Goal 3: Advocate for anti-racist fair housing.

Listed below are the goals and objectives identified to specifically address these issues.

Goal 1: Increase affordable housing units for seniors and individuals
Objective A: Develop 100 additional units of affordable senior housing in our service area

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Start construction of 31 units in Acton	Bring projects online and begin leasing	Operate at full capacity and achieve financial stability
Secure financing for 60 units in Dracut	Begin Construction Secure financing for additional project	Bring project online and begin leasing Begin construction

Goal 1: Increase affordable housing units for seniors and individuals

Objective B: Increase the number of efficiency and one-bedroom units for individuals

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Hire Real Estate Project/Development role charged with developing efficiency/one-bedroom units</p> <p>Upon hiring for role, identify one project in Year 1</p>	<p>Identify additional project(s)</p> <p>Secure funding for project identified in Year 1</p>	<p>Identify additional project(s)</p> <p>Secure funding for project identified in Year 2</p>

HOUSING

Goal 2: Narrow the racial equity gap in home ownership

Objective A: Create and scale equitable homeownership education and supportive services for low-income and BIPOC communities in a regional approach, either by scaling internal program, becoming a HUD counseling agency, or exploring partnership opportunities with MVHP

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Plan for expansion of programming.</p> <p>Strategize with MVHP to design regional programming.</p> <p>Secure funds to expand.</p>	<p>Implement programming in regional approach</p>	<p>Evaluate program effectiveness in increasing homeownership among low-income and BIPOC communities</p>

Goal 2: Narrow the racial equity gap in home ownership

Objective B: Advocate for municipalities in Greater Lowell to support policies that encourage home ownership, particularly in low-income and BIPOC communities (e.g. down payment assistance, interest forgiveness, matched savings, etc.)

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Identify municipalities for advocacy focus</p> <p>Engage with municipalities and DPDs to allocate funds to adopting the program.</p>	<p>CTI or MVHP administers funds to clients</p>	<p>Evaluate program effectiveness in increasing number of BIPOC households served</p>

Goal 2: Narrow the racial equity gap in home ownership

Objective C: Advocate for an increased number of banks and lenders to offer low-income and first-time homebuyer mortgage products

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Identify mortgage products and which lenders already offer FTHB products.</p> <p>Engage with lenders with existing FTHB products who CTI does not partner with currently.</p> <p>Identify new lenders who do not offer FTHB products and engage with them to adopt the program.</p>	<p>Refer FTHB clients to lenders with said mortgage products.</p> <p>Provide case management support to clients in mortgage process.</p>	<p>Refer FTHB clients to lenders with said mortgage products.</p> <p>Provide case management support to clients in mortgage process.</p>

Goal 3: Advocate for anti-racist fair housing

Objective A: Strengthen 40B by advocating with the state to enforce 40B quotas

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Advocate on municipality and state level to ensure local municipalities are meeting 40B quotas	Conduct quarterly advocacy activities	Conduct quarterly advocacy activities in 2-3 targeted municipalities

Goal 3: Advocate for anti-racist fair housing

Objective B: Increase public knowledge of anti-racist practices in housing

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Identify or secure funding for Fair Housing Client and Landlord advocacy Create marketing materials to increase public knowledge of antiracist practice	Secure funding Create tracking system	Implement bi-annual public awareness activities

Goal 3: Advocate for anti-racist fair housing

Objective C: Advocate for municipalities to review their zoning practices to create more housing opportunities

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Advocate on municipality level to create zoning reform	Conduct quarterly advocacy activities	Conduct quarterly advocacy activities in 2-3 targeted municipalities

Goal 3: Advocate for anti-racist fair housing

Objective D: Create Fair Housing Incentive Program to support Goals B, C, and D

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Secure funding	Implement new programming	Evaluate program effectiveness

Resources/Partnerships in Place:	<p>Individual Homelessness program, funders [DHCD, Continuum of Care (CoC) City of Lowell, Private Foundations), and partnerships (Life Connections, Lowell Transitional Living Center, SMOC, House of Hope)</p> <p>Housing Search Committee Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership (MVHP) and its programs City of Lowell</p> <p>Mass Housing Existing Fair Housing Programming Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consortium of Lowell (DEICL) and Community Teamwork Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Committee</p> <p>Relationship with City of Lowell Department of Public Works and City Council supporting housing inventory upgrades and policies.</p>
Resources/ Partnerships Needed:	<p>Increased funding Enhanced relationship with Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC and SMOC) Internal and external partnerships, funding for stabilization services DHCD and Tax Credit Funding secured for housing development Local Officials as advocates for Community Teamwork Housing work Strengthened relationships with other Cities and towns. Enhanced relationships with CHAPA, MHSA, CDCs and other advocacy partners Municipal Planning Departments, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and enhanced relationship with Northeast Legal Aid Providers in the Merrimack Valley and North Shore Broader relationships with lenders, banks, and realtors</p>

Domains and National Performance Indicators for review and evaluation:	<p>FNPI 4a. The number of individuals experiencing homelessness who obtained safe temporary shelter.</p> <p>FNPI 4b. The number of individuals who obtained safe and affordable housing.</p> <p>FNPI 4e. The number of individuals who avoided eviction.</p> <p>FNPI 4z: The number of individuals that purchased their own home in their</p>
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	community.
Community Teamwork Programs that Impact this Goal:	Common Ground Development Corporation (CGDC) Residential Shelter programs; Section 8; MRVP; HomeBase; Youth Services; Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC); Family Self-Sufficiency (SSP) programming; SNO-Mass; and the new Individual Homelessness program.

EMPLOMENT AND TRAINING

In reviewing the need for increased financial stability and pathways for success for our individuals, families, and households, issues around living wages, life-long learning, and access to additional education and training opportunities came to the fore. As an employer of over 530 staff, it was also vital to review our own internal ability to offer access to our employees. Despite having a robust training system (through Relias), and a recent focus on succession planning (including staff talent cards and identification of pathways for advancement), within this goal area, Community Teamwork will also strategically strive to strengthen partnerships that can support residents as well as our own staff. This is reflected below in the goals and objectives. The Community Teamwork goal focused on employment and training, as follows:

Goal 4: Increased access to education and training opportunities for clients and staff of Community Teamwork

Goal 4: Increase access to education and training opportunities for clients and staff of Community Teamwork
Objective A: Increase access to ESOL, High School Credential, and HiSET Programming

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Conduct internal review of current ESOL and HiSET offerings and gaps in access	Implement additional ESOL and HiSET offerings in needed areas	Adjust delivery based on registration and attendance analysis
Develop plan to increase access to ESOL and HiSET in needed areas	Analyze registration and attendance information to determine ongoing need	

Goal 4: Increase access to education and training opportunities for clients and staff of Community Teamwork

Objective B: Increase through partnerships, access to post-secondary education programming including apprenticeships, occupational skills training, and certifications.

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Document Baseline Partnerships for Post-Secondary Programming	Track from Baseline, and report on increases in programming, partnerships, and grants	Track from Baseline, and report on increases in programming, partnerships, and grants
Design an outreach plan with goals to increase partnerships and connections		

Goal 4: Increase access to education and training opportunities for clients and staff of Community Teamwork

Objective C: Systematize and expand access to work experience, volunteer, and internship opportunities within CTI Departments and programs

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Review ability and need for a position in HR to oversee internships, volunteers, and to develop work experience opportunities within Community Teamwork for partner agency graduates.	Develop System and Policies for the following opportunities: Volunteers; Work Experience; Job Shadowing; Internships; and Informational Interviewing.	Review New System, determine increase in opportunities and utilization by programming from Year Two to Year Three
If approved, Develop Job Description, include current programming that work with volunteers, and those in need of participant placement opportunities.	Determine regional programming with occupational and educational training that aligns with Community Teamwork hiring needs (i.e. childcare, transportation, social work, case management, etc.).	Add an additional 10% to partner Agencies/Training Programs to effort.
Post and Hire for Position.	Increase partnerships with above providers.	

Resources/Partnerships in Place:	<p>City of Lowell, Abisi Learning Center MassHire Greater Lowell Career Center MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board Middlesex Community College Greater Lowell Technical School Shawsheen Valley Technical School</p>
Resources/ Partnerships Needed:	<p>Increased Funding New partnerships with other regional HiSET and Occupational Skills Training Programs for out of school youth and adults (American Training, Inc., Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium, Northern Essex Community College, Greater Lawrence Technical School, Nashoba Valley Technical School) University of Massachusetts – Lowell Rivier College Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Development Board MassHire Northshore Career Center MassHire Northshore Valley Workforce Development Board</p>

Domains and National Performance Indicators for review and evaluation:	<p>FNPI 1a. The number of unemployed youth who obtain employment to gain skills or income. FNPI 1b. The number of unemployed participants who obtain employment to gain skills or income (up to a Living Wage- defined by Community Teamwork using the <i>MIT Living Wage calculator</i>). FNPI 1h. The number of employed participants in a career-advancement related program who entered or transitioned into a position that provided increased income and/or benefits. FNPI 1h.1. The number of employed participants who increased income from employment through wage or salary amount increase. FNPA 2g. The number of individuals who obtained a high school diploma and/or obtained an equivalency certificate or diploma.</p>
Community Teamwork Programs that Impact this Goal:	<p>Community Teamwork Human Resources Department Secure Jobs; YouthBuild Lowell; Youth Services; Family Self-Sufficiency Programs (2) Volunteer Center (Spindle City, Mill City Mentors, Senior Volunteer Programs)</p>

EMPLOMENT AND STABILIZATION SUPPORTS

The review of supports necessary for individuals and families working, but potentially being one emergency away from financial catastrophe, provides for the inclusion of those services which offer financial support, as well as access to financial education and assistance to remain housed. Different from our Housing Goals, these include supports in energy, maintaining the household in safety, and other cost-efficient measurements. For those families living paycheck to paycheck, having assistance with Fuel, or Weatherization, or food, as example, may provide needed stabilization services. Stabilization also includes well-being, and thus, Behavioral Health and the emotional well-being of families is critical. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the need for individuals in the community to be able to access these essential services electronically, requiring Community Teamwork to enhance our ability to provide electronic access to applications and other processes, as well as to increase participant access to the technology required to access services both from Community Teamwork and other providers.

The Community Teamwork goals are focused on employment and stabilization supports to provide wrap-around services addressing those working families in need of additional programming to help maintain employment, as follows:

Goal 5: Increased access to affordable childcare for families unable to access care within the current system (s).

Goal 6: Increase access to supportive services needed to maintain employment and household stability.

Goal 7: Increase the access, availability, and utilization of behavioral health and counseling services for our clients.

Goal 5: Increase access to affordable childcare for families unable to access care within the current system(s)
Objective A: Return and maintain enrollment across all childcare program options to pre-pandemic levels

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Develop and implement comprehensive recruitment plan for children, particularly targeting groups that have been under-represented (e.g. teen parents) including efforts within and outside the agency</p> <p>Develop comprehensive workforce development plan to encourage more educators to enter the field, and better recruit and retain current educators</p>	<p>Implement recruitment plan for children, including tracking of strategies and outcomes of individual strategies</p> <p>Analyze agency package (salary, benefits, professional development, diversity) in comparison to other local providers. Promote areas in which we exceed area norms and develop plan to improve areas in which we lag behind and utilize Clear Company to monitor retention and filling of open positions.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of implementation and enrollment numbers; adjustments made as needed</p> <p>Develop and implement plan to respond to data collected and analyzed in year 2.</p>

Goal 5: Increase access to affordable childcare for families unable to access care within the current system(s)
Objective B: Increase access to supervised, age-appropriate, activities for children aged 13-17, both internally and with community partners

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Identify needed/desired services for youth in identified age group</p> <p>Identify existing partners and resources</p> <p>Identify costs/service models and potential funding sources</p>	<p>Secure location, resources, and staff</p>	<p>Provide services to 25 youth</p>

Goal 6: Increase access to supportive services needed to maintain employment and household stability
Objective A: Maintain and enhance the ability of low-income community members to access resources electronically

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Determine community need for access and resources	Update Needs Assessment	Update Needs Assessment
Increase number of Community Teamwork programs with online applications	Increase client-access to self-serve computers/printers, with appropriate staff support	Provide educational materials regarding accessing resources electronically
	Increase availability of programmatic required forms available on the website (electronic completion and submission)	

Goal 6: Increase access to supportive services needed to maintain employment and household stability
Objective B: Increase flexible funding supports to assist clients in emergencies

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Create inventory of flexible-funding supports and requirements to access and train staff on how to access those resources	Develop tracking system for how flexible funds are spent (or what we are unable to pay for) to identify funding holes	Identify sources and secure funding for identified needs and continued flexible funding

Goal 7: Increase the access, availability, and utilization of behavioral health and counseling services for our clients

Objective A: Conduct analysis to determine current behavioral health capacity by Division and identify gaps in staffing

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Conduct internal staffing analysis of behavioral health positions, including survey of program management</p> <p>Make recommendations to address staffing needs and gaps</p>	<p>Annual review of capacity and gaps by division</p> <p>Produce staffing capacity recommendation report</p>	<p>Annual review of capacity and gaps by division</p> <p>Update staffing capacity recommendation report</p> <p>Three Year Analysis of internal behavioral health & counseling staffing growth showing a 10% increase in staffing</p>

Goal 7: Increase the access, availability, and utilization of behavioral health and counseling services for our clients

Objective B: Increase access to behavioral health services through increased partnerships and staff training

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Review current training offerings, funding, and partnerships</p> <p>Identify gaps, and recommend new trainings, resources, and partnerships</p> <p>Developing tracking system</p>	<p>Select, develop, and implement, Trauma Informed Practice training for supervisors and front-line staff</p> <p>Ongoing analysis of funding and partnership gaps</p> <p>Development of plan for cross-program engagement</p> <p>Develop feedback survey to document impact</p>	<p>Ongoing training implementation</p> <p>10% increase in external behavioral health resources</p>

Goal 7: Increase the access, availability, and utilization of behavioral health and counseling services for our clients

Objective C: Develop an internal Behavioral Health and Counseling working group to bring together internal clinical community to meet regularly and address objectives A and B

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Select group members, determine roles and responsibilities, set meeting schedule, and begin meeting regularly	Ongoing regular meetings	Ongoing regular meetings

Goal 7: Increase the access, availability, and utilization of behavioral health and counseling services throughout our service area

Objective D: Develop a center to offer enhanced programming to address behavioral health needs of children and families

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Analysis of needs of children and families and resources currently available in the community</p> <p>Determine gaps in services and what services will be provided</p> <p>Pilot initial services for educators to enhance their work with children with behavioral health needs</p>	<p>Secure funding</p> <p>Determine and hire staffing</p> <p>Expand and enhance services for educators; Provide initial services to children</p> <p>Analyze staff performance</p>	<p>Enhance service offerings and continue to plan for further growth</p>

<p>Resources/Partnerships in Place:</p>	<p>Community Teamwork Human Resources New Community Teamwork Website KFP Media – video creation and editing Strategic Rehousing Initiative Community Teamwork Division (Budgeted) Emergency Funds United Way Support CSBG Funds Axuda microloan program</p> <p>Child Care Circuit (housed in Resource Center) Division of Child and Family Services (DCF) and Early Education and Care (EEC) Lowell Public Schools</p> <p>Community Youth Providers: YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Girls Inc., Lowell Public Schools</p> <p>Lowell Community Health Center Merrimack Valley Trauma Services Anne Sullivan Center VinFen</p>
<p>Resources/Partnerships Needed:</p>	<p>Virtual Co-location partnerships (e.g. DTA, Public Schools, Town Offices) Immigration Organizations (Pathways to Citizenship Funding) Additional Flexible Funds</p> <p>Improved and Expanded connections DCF Youth programming Improved and Expanded Business Partnerships Northeast Independent Living Program</p> <p>Community Teamwork Behavioral Health & Counseling Strategic Planning Committee Greater Lawrence Family Health Center Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health</p>

<p>Domains and National Performance Indicators for review and evaluation:</p>	<p>FNPI 2b. The number of children (0 to 5) who demonstrated skills for school readiness. FNPI 2c. 2. The number of children (1st grade to 8th grade) who demonstrated skills for school readiness. FNPI 2d. 2. The number of children and youth who are achieving at a basic grade level (1st grade to 8th grade).</p> <p>FNPI 3c. The number of individuals who opened a savings account or IDA. FNPI 3z. The number of individuals who: increased their income due to a tax credit. FNPI 3z. The number of individuals who: Acquire a small business.</p>
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	<p>FNPI 4h. The number of individuals (or households) with improved energy efficiency and/or energy burden reduction in their homes.</p> <p>FNPI 4z. The number of individuals (or households) whose energy service was restored after disconnection.</p> <p>FNPI 4z. The number of individuals (or households) whose inoperable home energy equipment was repaired or replaced.</p> <p>FNPI 4z. The number of individuals (or households) whose avoided a utility shut-off.</p> <p>FNPI 4z. The number of individuals who improved physical access in their living space (wheel chair ramps, grab bars, etc.).</p> <p>FNPI 5a. The number of individuals who demonstrated increased nutritional skills (e.g. cooking, shopping, and growing food).</p> <p>FNPI 5b. The number of individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well-being.</p> <p>FNPI 5f. The number of seniors (65+) who maintained an independent living situation.</p> <p>FNPI 5g. The number of individuals with disabilities who maintained an independent living situation.</p>
Community Teamwork Programs that Impact this Goal:	<p>Resource Center</p> <p>Head Start; Early Head Start; Family Child Care; School Age programming</p> <p>Housing Consumer Assistance Center (HCEC)</p> <p>Financial Education Center; VITA</p> <p>WIC, LIHEAP, Weatherization, Home Modification Loan Program</p> <p>Volunteer Center Programming (Spindle City, Mill City Mentoring, Senior Volunteers)</p>

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Community Teamwork, as the Community Action Agency for the Greater Lowell region, has its founding rooted not only in the “*War on Poverty*” but also in the Civil Rights activism of the 1960’s lead by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Critical to our mission is being an agent of “social change,” and as the Agency reviewed its vision and mission for this Strategic Plan, it became clear that “equity” needed to be added, not just as a language change; but as a strategic mission imperative. The Community Teamwork Community Needs Assessment included a section on Racial Equity, and facilitated separate focus groups and surveys to gather the data to inform the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan subcommittee. The Community Teamwork strategic goals focused on diversity and inclusion efforts, internally and externally, as follows:

- Goal 8: Increase representation of People of Color in leadership positions at Community Teamwork;
- Goal 9: Increase purchasing from businesses owned by women and members of the immigrant, newcomer, LGBTQ, BIPOC, and disability communities.
- Goal 10: Provide community education in the area of Racial Equity, with specific intention to amplify BIPOC voices and embrace an intersectional lens.

Listed below are the goals and objectives identified to specifically address these issues.

Goal 8: Increase representation of People of Color in leadership positions at Community Teamwork
Objective A: Expand hiring/recruiting pools and increase application process equity and accessibility to target a diverse community

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Increase diversity (race, gender, ethnicity, and disability status) of applicant pool at all levels with interviewees and hires.</p> <p>Build equity into compensation structure</p> <p>Assess the equity and accessibility of our current processes</p>	<p>Ongoing efforts to increase diversity of applicant pool</p> <p>Implementing solutions to address findings of equity/accessibility audit in Y1</p>	<p>Assess effectiveness of efforts to increase diversity of hiring pool</p> <p>Assess effectiveness of solutions identified in Y2 Benchmark 2</p>

Goal 8: Increase representation of People of Color in leadership positions at Community Teamwork
Objective B: Enhance recruiting and succession planning for staff, including hiring practices

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Review and enhance current plans for recruitment and succession planning</p>	<p>Review implementation and address issues</p>	<p>Analyze effectiveness of activities implemented in Y2</p>

Goal 8: Increase representation of People of Color in leadership positions at Community Teamwork
Objective C: Maximize the racial and ethnic diversity of Community Teamwork’s Board of Directors

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Review Board of Directors demographic composition and identify any Greater Lowell populations not reflected in current BOD to target for recruitment.</p> <p>Develop value statement, utilizing current agency DEI statement, to share when recruiting new members when vacancies occur</p> <p>Develop list of community groups and organizations to target for board recruitment when appropriate vacancies become available</p>	<p>Recruit Board Members for any vacancies utilizing information and value statement identified in Y1</p> <p>Update list of groups and organizations to target for board membership</p>	<p>Analyze effectiveness of activities implemented in Y2</p>

Goal 9: Increase purchasing from businesses owned by women and members of the immigrant, newcomer, LGBTQ, BIPOC, and disability communities
Objective A: Implement programming to help businesses navigate the process to become certified Massachusetts Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women Business Enterprises (WBE), Veteran Business Enterprises (VBE), and Portuguese Business Enterprises (PBE)s, as well as other similar local, state, and national certifications

Annual Benchmarks

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Develop program plan including staffing needs and budget</p> <p>Investigate certification processes for local, state, and national certifications</p> <p>Secure funding</p>	<p>Develop and implement programming</p>	<p>Review program outcomes to evaluate program success in supporting businesses</p>

Goal 9: Increase purchasing from businesses owned by women and members of the immigrant, newcomer, LGBTQ, BIPOC, and disability communities
Objective B: Increase diversity of current list of discretionary vendors by including more businesses owned by members of the immigrant, newcomer, LGBTQ, BIPOC, and disability communities

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Draft SOPs/Value Statement for working with vendors Audit the diversity of current vendor list, including what vendors are discretionary</p> <p>Pending results of audit, develop activities/solutions to increase diversity of discretionary vendors</p>	<p>Implement solutions, including providing resources for vendors to utilize</p>	<p>Evaluate success of solutions</p>

Goal 10: Provide community education in the area of Racial Equity, with specific intention to amplify BIPOC voices and embrace an intersectional lens
Objective A: Partner with agencies doing racial equity work to create an ongoing racial equity symposium series

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Evaluate existing and potential partnerships to amplify existing work and providing support</p> <p>Engaging with existing and potential partners to increase community participation of working toward common goals</p> <p>Plan initial symposium to take place in Year 2</p>	<p>Hold initial symposium</p>	<p>Enhance offerings and increase attendance over Year 2 at next symposium</p>

Resources/Partnerships in Place:	<p>Community Teamwork Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consortium of Lowell (DEICL) Racial Justice Advisory Committee University of Massachusetts Lowell Professors (Silverman and Mitchell) Zoom Meeting capacity Community Teamwork HR Department Clear Company (HR Software) CIRCA EEO Policies in place Universities/ MassHire Career Center system, and Diversity sources for Recruitment MassCAP CAA Executive Directors' Community of Practice (COP) RISE Coalition Existing Staff Orientation on D&I in Relias (Community Teamwork Training Platform) Existing relationships with current businesses and with diverse Community Teamwork vendor pool. Lowell Community Health Center Enterprise Bank CMAA Free Soil Arts Collective</p>
Resources/Partnerships Needed:	<p>Community Teamwork Director of Diversity, Policy, and Culture CAA Human Resource Community of Practice for Support and Feedback Training and Certification Processes to assist businesses: to navigate the process to become certified Massachusetts Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women Business Enterprises (WBE), Veteran Business Enterprises (VBE), and Portuguese Business Enterprises (PBE)s, as well as other similar local, state, and national certifications Additional Funding for Entrepreneurship Center staffing to address training need.</p>

Domains and National Performance Indicators for review and evaluation:	FNPI 3z. The number of individuals who: Acquire a small business.
Community Teamwork Programs that Impact this Goal:	<p>Human Resources Department Agency-wide Goal Board of Directors Goal Entrepreneurship Center @ Community Teamwork</p>

SYSTEMS CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

Community Teamwork considers a major component of its mission is to be a “catalyst of social change.” Advocacy is ingrained in the agency culture and through our historic strategic planning efforts, systems change and advocacy has remained a priority. During the comprehensive strategic planning process,

each of our need areas presented an opportunity for systems change and advocacy work. Therefore, prioritization had to occur to not dilute our efforts and to ensure the agency remained relevant and effective. The priority systems change and advocacy areas are as follows:

- Ensuring working and low-income families are included in plans for universal pre-K and other child care/early education efforts
- Municipal zoning practices that prioritize housing creation
- Policies that encourage home ownership, particularly in low-income and BIPOC communities (e.g. down payment assistance, interest forgiveness, matched savings, etc.)
- Policies that support improvement of the quality of existing efficiency and single bedroom units
- Fair housing practice and enforcement
- Living wages for industries that are traditionally low-wage (e.g. child care, retail, food service)
- Increased supports, accessibility, rights, and safety for immigrants, newcomers, LGBTQ, BIPOC, and disability communities

The goal structure outlined below will impact the identified priority areas, and our Board, Executive Management, Program Managers, and staff leaders will facilitate the Community Teamwork response and participation in forums to impact these changes.

Goal 11: Ensure advocacy efforts are focused on areas aligned with agency Mission and Strategic Plan and appropriately implemented across the agency, focusing both on agency services as well as on equity and opportunity for all members of our community

Annual Benchmarks		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Development of a system to identify legislative priorities, both in topic and in regards to specific pieces of legislation</p> <p>Ensure agency representation on advocacy and advisory groups that address issues related to our services and Strategic Plan and information sharing regarding these efforts</p>	<p>Identify staff at all levels who are interested and engaged in advocacy efforts and provide staff training in engaging in advocacy both in their work and in their own communities</p>	<p>Identify and institutionalize legislative affairs responsibilities across the agency</p>

Resources/Partnerships in Place:	Legislative Lobbyist Participation with trade and advocacy organizations (e.g. MassCAP, RHN, MHSA, MADCA, MA Head Start Association, CHAPA, MACDC, etc.)
Resources/Partnerships Needed:	Expanded Partnerships with trade and advocacy groups as developing. Potential Human Resources support for Executive Management focused on Advocacy and Systems Change.

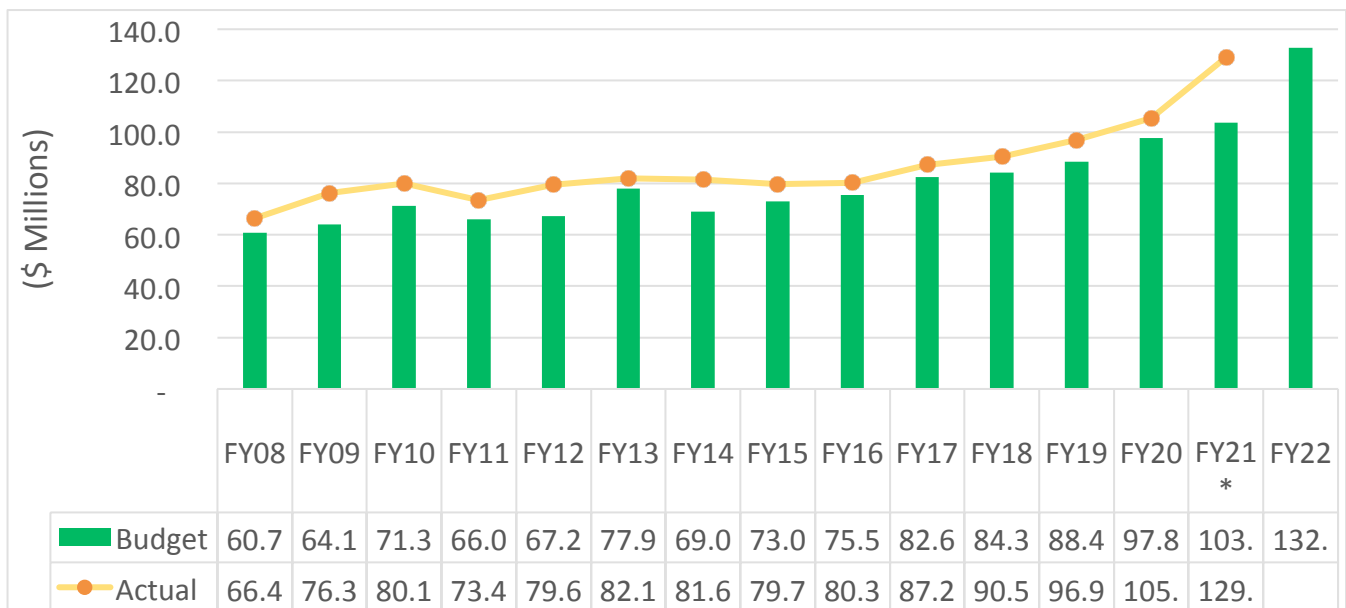
Domains and National Performance Indicators for review and evaluation:	Not Applicable.
Community Teamwork Programs that Impact this Goal:	Not Applicable

Funding Strategies:

Community Teamwork is the second largest Community Action Agency in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and through its three Divisions outlined in the Service Delivery System below, serves 72 cities and towns in the Merrimack Valley and the Northern region of Massachusetts. An anchor institution for the provision of anti-poverty programming, Community Teamwork is in its 56th year of operation, and has grown to a \$132 million-dollar agency (projected for FY22 Budget) and a major employer for the region with more than 530 employees.

As the Agency has grown so significantly, one of the strategies used by Community Teamwork to maintain stability and to ensure Agency strength and solvency is to budget conservatively, based on actual knowledge of funding in place for the next fiscal year. As can be seen in the chart below, Community Teamwork has consistently exceeded initial budgets with additional revenue.

**CHART A: 10 Year Trend
Gross Revenue Actual vs. Budget
(in \$ Millions)**



* Projected Revenue

The chart below highlights the growth of the overall agency by funding categories. For the three years prior to this past fiscal year (2018 – 2020), the agency final revenue figures highlight a 16% growth in revenue. From FY2020 to our final revenue projections for FY2021, our revenue forecast (as of June 2021) indicates a 24% increase in revenue. This increase is primarily the result of COVID related funding. Community Teamwork has been tracking COVID related funding since March of 2020, and has received nearly \$49 million in COVID funding; the largest amounts in the area of housing assistance (RAFT, ERAP, ERMA) totaling over \$38 million dollars, including private support from our regional foundations [Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF) and Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF)] with the private Commonwealth COVID-19 Relief Fund and the United Way of Mass Bay and Merrimack Valley (United Way).

Community Teamwork, Inc.							
Fiscal Year	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	% Change from FY2018 to FY2020	FY2021 Final Revenue Forecast	% Change from FY2020 to FY2021	FY22 Budget Plan
Individuals and Events	\$115,551	\$126,046	\$131,409	14%	\$628,387	378%	\$0
Foundations and Corporations	\$3,611,861	\$4,629,008	\$4,571,211	27%	\$2,673,657	-42%	\$3,326,070
Government	\$84,816,480	\$89,712,334	\$98,492,732	16%	\$125,656,495	28%	\$128,235,318
Other Revenue	\$2,040,836	\$2,441,344	\$1,928,936	-5%*	\$900,177	-53%*	\$1,179,908
Total Revenue	\$90,584,728	\$96,908,732	\$105,124,288	16%	\$129,858,716	24%	\$132,741,296

* These reductions are primarily the result of the closure of all childcare from March through June, 2020, due to COVID restrictions and the loss of parent fees. The parent fees continued to be covered in FY'21, as well as other revenue losses. The fund equivalent was supplied by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and therefore, the Agency did not experience any total revenue loss, just adjustment of source.

Our “[Service Delivery System](#)” in the Strategic Plan (further), outlines the Divisional design of Community Teamwork’s operations. This includes three (3) Divisions, exclusive of the Administrative Infrastructure supporting the programs. As overview, they are Child and Family Services, Housing and Homeless Services, and Energy and Community Resources. A major funding development strategy for Agency growth must include an analysis of historical areas of expansion and contraction. With the COVID funding removed from this analysis, a review of the actual revenue changes of the Divisions budgets over the period of FY’18 to FY’20 indicate the following areas where Agency strategic resource development has proven successful, and has a potential for additional growth:

FY'18 to FY'20 Actual Revenue Growth

Child and Family Services:	Overall Division Growth:	19%
	Early Learning	20%
	Family Child Care	9%
	School Age	21%
Community Resources	Overall Division Growth:	16%
	Community Resources (Resource Center inclusive of ACO partnerships and Community Health Initiatives)	30%
	Housing Consumer Education Ctr.	66%
	Volunteer Center	13%
	Secure Jobs Programming	144%
Housing & Homelessness	Overall Division Growth:	14%
	Housing (Federal and State Voucher, FSS, and SNO Mass programming)	17%
	Youth Services	98%

Following a review and analysis of the financial trends from FY'18 to FY'20, again, a second analysis to inform our funding strategies must occur, from FY'20 to FY'21, without the emergency COVID-19 funding. Understanding that the COVID funding was emergency in nature, and addressed issues such as PPE, Hazard Pay, Food Insecurity, Rental Assistance, etc., and was critical to the continued viability of Community Teamwork in its operations, it also re-focused state and federal funding sources and presented new opportunities for community assistance and support. The funding realities between FY'20 and FY'21 also informed our planning for FY'22 with the following data points:

- Slight revenue reduction (-3%) for the Child and Family Services Division with a 0% change for FY'22; CFS positive revenue growth occurring in Family Child Care programming; (+9% FY'21; +13% projected for FY'22);
- Housing the HCEC, the Energy & Community Resources Division saw an 88% increase from FY'20 to FY'21, with a conservatively planned 6% increase going into FY'22;
- For Energy & Community Resources, while HCEC had significant growth (categorized under COVID), another program for focus is the Entrepreneurship Center- experiencing a 215% increase from FY'18 to FY'20; then a 43% increase from FY'20 to FY'21; and finally, an FY'22 plan that indicates a 39% increase from FY'21;
- Housing and Homelessness Division had a 14% increase over the FY'18 to FY'20 period, then a 10% increase from FY'20 to FY'21, and a planned 2% increase going into FY'22; and
- Youth Services programming and the new Individual Homelessness programs were revenue increase stand outs moving from FY'20 into FY'22, as articulated more fully below.

Understanding the trending by Division and program(s) sets the groundwork for targeted resource development and identification of state and federal source funding increases. This, coupled with the results of the Community Needs Assessment, assists the Community Teamwork Executive Management and Board to focus limited resource development capacity on the areas where there is revenue growth potential and programmatic expansion opportunities.

As illustrated in Chart B above, the overall financial trend chart, the two highest areas of revenue source growth have been in Foundations/Corporations and Government (state and federal) funding sources.

There were reductions in FY'21, but it is expected that the Foundations and Corporations will continue on the upward trajectory. This financial data indicating significant growth in those areas, coupled with programmatic expansion data and new potential funding resources are drivers of the Agency strategies for resource cultivation. First, to continue to increase both government and foundation/corporation's revenue, Community Teamwork has intentionally increased the Agency's capacity for partnership development, resource planning work, grant writing, and donor cultivation. Second, intentional utilization and marketing of the Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) program continues, and has demonstrably increased not just funding, but relationships with foundations in alignment with the Community Teamwork vision and mission.

Agency Capacity Building:

Community Teamwork made intentional changes approximately four years ago to restructure its Planning Department and the Development/Communications Department to address needed capacity in the areas of partnership and donor cultivation and resource development. In the Development Department, backlogs in the use of Community Investment Tax Credits (CITC) existed due to underutilization, described more thoroughly below. A part-time experienced Development Director was hired, with the focus of cultivating donors (in addition to events and communications) to make prominent the CITC as an engagement and resource development tool. The success of this capacity building can be seen not only in the increase of CITC amounts provided to the Agency, but also the engagement of foundations in using the CITC process with Community Teamwork repeatedly. In FY'21, Development has also led the implementation of a new website for the Agency (with more than 28 programs all needing connection through a useable web platform); a new development and grant management platform (Salesforce); and a plan for enhanced outreach and communications support based on Divisions.

Three years ago, the Community Teamwork Planning Department consisted of 1.5 employees. The department focused on grant writing and primarily working with the CSBG requirements, including the CSBG required Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan (CARSP). As the agency recognized its size (\$90+ million in revenue) and its' lack of capacity, a restructuring plan was put in place, including a Director and new hires. In addition to partnership and resource development, the Planning Department was tasked with development and oversight of a number of data bases and learning platforms, including the Relias Training Platform, used for HR trainings and tracking curriculum attainment, and the Case Management System (CMS), built and individualized for the Community Teamwork programming in partnership with SMC Partners. The CMS system has evolved to a point where other funder-required data bases can be "bridged" into the CMS database, and with nightly uploads in place; thus, required funder systems are "data-fed" on an individual basis (Child Plus, WIC, Fuel Assistance, Volunteer Reporter, ETO) nightly communication and data transfers into the overall CMS data tracking system.

With a new Director of Planning and Quality Improvement in place, focused on data collection, management, and quality control of data, additional resources were hired to support the resource and grant development; grant management; and data training and quality control functions. As of this Strategic Planning period, the Planning Team is now at four (4) FTEs, including a Data Coordinator who trains staff, provides reports both internally and externally, and does quality checks on data entered.

The other staff increases are focused on grant/resource development; grant cultivation; and internal systems development (cross-division communication; programmatic/fiscal reporting systems, etc.). The

strategic focus of this team is geared to resource development (grants, foundations, and government sources), aligns with the Agency growth as articulated above and finally, uses the data on programmatic growth to connect funding opportunities to the source that will support not only short-term programs; but also, longer term embedded support. This team supports the programmatic data reports required through the CSBG Community Action Plan (CAP) and Annual Report requirements; builds the systems to ensure accurate and timely data; and facilitates the Executive Management and Board reviews of the performance of the programs.

Community Investment Tax Credits:

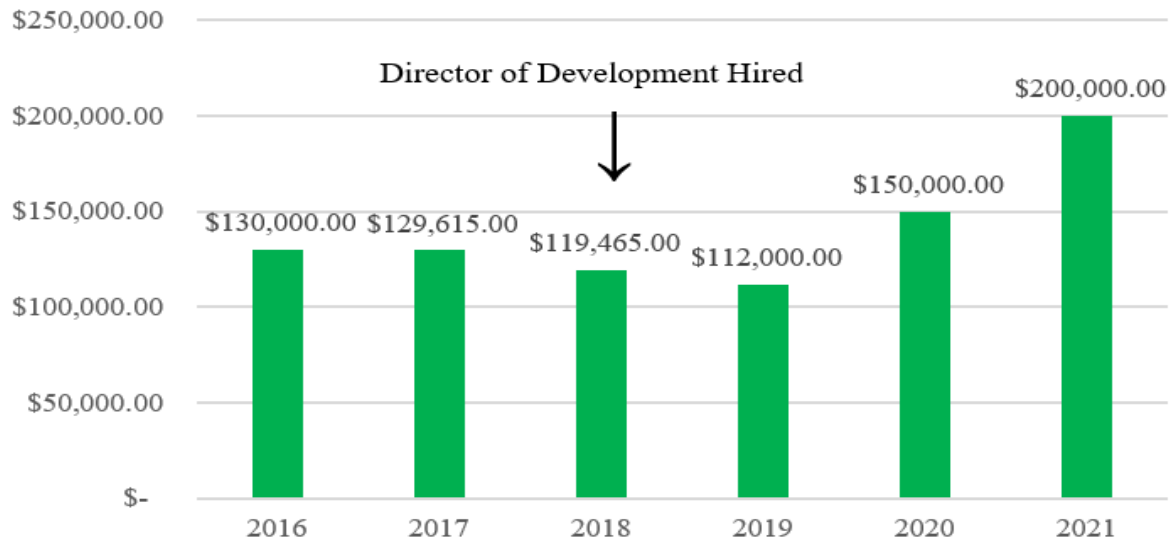
The Community Investment Tax Credit Program (CITC Program) was created by Chapter 238 of the Acts of 2012 and is entering its ninth program year. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is the administering agency for this Program and is responsible for managing the process by which the tax credits are allocated. As a Community Development Corporations (CDC), Community Teamwork is able to apply for CITC credits to facilitate partnership and resource development with nonprofit, public, and private entities desirous of supporting our economic growth plans for our communities. Additionally, the funds raised can address the needs of low- and moderate-income households and the strategic goals as identified in the Community Teamwork Strategic Plan. Since its inception in 2014 through 2020, Community Teamwork has used the CITC program to garner more than \$1.6M in donations.

Although the CITC Allocations prior to the hire of the new Development Director seem high, the issue was that these tax credits were not being “sold”/utilized, and as such, a back log of multiple years occurred. The tax credits were rolled over each year, with DHCD not demanding their return for re-allocation. With the new Director, the strategic resource imperative was to ramp up the education and marketing of the CITC program, and then use all the back-logged credits to move the Agency to a zero balance each year. In that way, Community Teamwork would be maximizing the credits, and could potentially request more in the next year (DHCD can award from \$50,000 to \$250,000 per CDC).

As indicated below, the three years prior to the hiring of a committed Director to focus on the CITC, despite initial increases, the funding award amounts then began to decrease – as a direct result of Community Teamwork not utilizing the credits. The low point occurred with the \$112,000 CITC award for Calendar Year 2019 - \$18,000 less than in 2016.

The efforts to educate partners as to our work and the benefit of the CITC increased each year, with the recent culmination in the 167 Dutton Street Capital Campaign, where over \$900,000 was raised to support the renovation of the historic building and the home to our Youth Opportunity Center.

CITC Award



The partnership with many foundations, including the Smith Family Foundation, the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, the Amelia Peabody Charitable Foundation, the Amelia Peabody Foundation, and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation were enhanced by the offering of CITC. Additionally, individuals giving a minimum of \$1,000 in a donation could also access the tax credit. This year's application (2021) resulted in the highest award we have received, \$200,000 in Tax Credits, and we have reached our goal of zero carry-in and full utilization of the credits by calendar year.

With the experience, education, and support of our Development Director, our annual giving has many repeat donors both Individuals and Foundations, and is a strategic tool Community Teamwork will continue to use to grow our fundraising.

It is important to highlight that our Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds support our strategic resource and partnership development, and as such, support the ongoing performance and expansion efforts of the Agency. The chart below highlights that 36% of our CSBG funding supports the Agency Capacity domain, with an additional 3% funding the work of the Executive Management and Planning staff with Board support activities. As outlined further on, the bulk of our CSBG funding supports our Resource Center, critical to internal linkages and direct client access to resources.

CSBG FY22 Budget
Total Funding \$546,737

Expenses by Domain	%
Linkages (Resource Center Support)	59%
Agency Capacity (1.8 FTE grant writers)	36%
Admin (Board Meetings, printing)	3%
Employment (Financial Literacy staff)	2%
	100%

[Service Delivery System](#)

Community Teamwork’s service are provided through its programs, with primary service sites in Lowell, Salem, and through partners located throughout the Merrimack Valley. This service delivery includes direct programmatic linkages with adjacent Community Action Agencies, as Community Teamwork is one CAA in a network of 23 throughout the Commonwealth. In addition to being a non-profit 501-C3 CAA serving the City of Lowell and the seven surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford, Community Teamwork also serves as a Community Development Corporation and as the Regional Housing Agency for the Merrimack Valley and the rest of Northeastern Massachusetts, cities and towns along the North Shore and Cape Ann.

To facilitate experienced and efficient service delivery, Community Teamwork is organized in a Division structure with like programs falling under each of its three Divisions. They include the following:

Division of Child, Family and Adolescent Services includes quality Early Education and Care Programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start for infants and children under five years of age; School Age Programs that provide safe, enjoyable and well supervised after school activities for children between the ages of six and thirteen; Family Child Care, including child care providers in the Greater Lowell and Wakefield/Everett/Medford area; and remote learning programming. New this past year was the development of non-school sited remote learning sites to provide educational assistance and on-site care for children needing support for remote or hybrid public school models. Additionally, this division provided food and basic supplies delivery during the height of the pandemic to Head Start, Early Learning, and Family Child Care families to address the food insecurity issue.

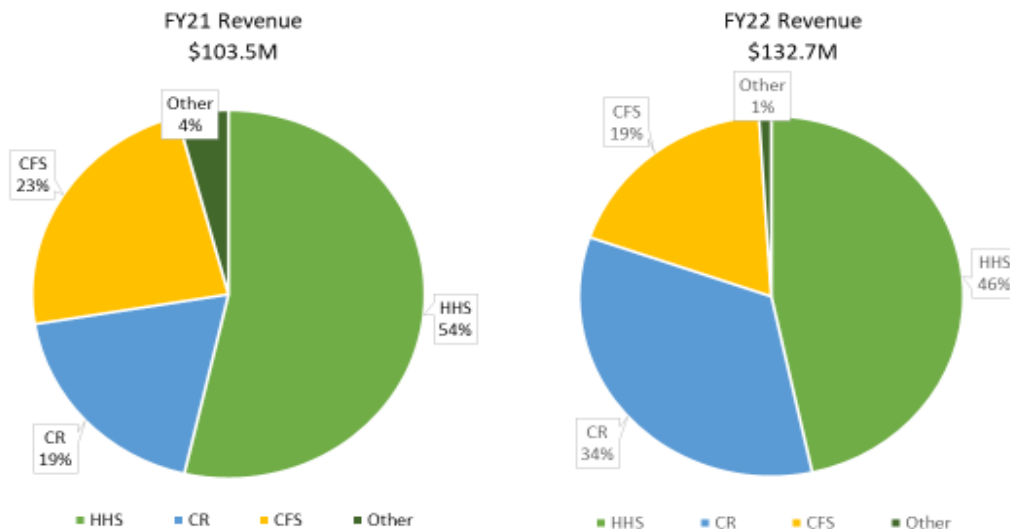
Division of Housing and Homeless Services includes such programs as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, also known as Section 8, which provides housing subsidies to very low-income households, the Massachusetts Voucher program, and includes the Youth Services Department, operating both the YouthBuild Program where out-of-school, out-of-work youth between 16 – 24 years of age, can earn their HSET while learning the construction and culinary trades, as well as the Youth Services drop-in support site, the Mill You, providing case management, re-housing support, and laundry and shower facilities for youth at-risk or experiencing homelessness. The Division also includes direct support for

housing, and operates homeless family shelters, Scattered Sites Family Emergency Shelter (SSFES) offering shelter to homeless families, and the HomeBASE program, offering rental and housing stabilization support to families entering permanent housing.

Division of Energy & Community Resources provides Fuel Assistance and other Energy Conservation Programs; three Senior Volunteer programs; the Spindle City Corps; Mill City Mentors; the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) which provides nutritional education, immunizations and vouchers for pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children ages 0 to five. Other initiatives include Secure Jobs offering job readiness and vocational training in partnership with the MassHire Career Center and the area vocational schools, the Financial Education Center, that includes a host of financial education programming including the Financial Literacy Academy, and the Entrepreneurship Center @CTI which provides entrepreneurs with tools and opportunities to start or expand their small business. Two other critical programs fall within this Division, the Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) provides homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing services through the Residential Services to Families in Transition (RAFT) Program, a limited short-term subsidy program that provides funding to families to either maintain their current housing or move to a new home. Additionally, the HCEC manages the Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) and the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds that have been critical in helping families through the COVID pandemic. Also, under this Division is the management of the Resource Center, the vital hub and front door to all the Community Teamwork programs.

In the chart below, the shift in revenue is indicated from FY'21 to FY'22. The impact of the COVID funding is visible in the overall percentage change of the Community Resources Division, from 19% in FY'21 to 34% in FY'22 of total Agency revenue.

FY22 vs. FY21 Budget Revenue by Division



Strategic Expansion Areas

In addition to the long-standing programming described above, four areas of programmatic growth internally are highlighted below, due to the impact on a number of the strategic goal areas, but also, as evidence of Community Teamwork's focus on strategically aligning our programs, program expansion, resource development, and resource utilization. Four areas of growth: Youth Services, Entrepreneurship Center, the Housing Consumer Education Center, and the creation of an Individual Homelessness Program (for unsheltered adults).

Youth Services Programming: The Youth Services Program, established in 2018, was the first program of its kind dedicated specifically to providing services to homeless and at-risk youth and young adults (YYAs) in the Northern Middlesex County region. Prior to the program's inception, there existed a service gap for programs specifically tailored to youth and young adults. Since 2018, the Youth Services program has expanded rapidly. In a little over a year, the program opened the Mill-You, a drop-in center in which provides amenities such as showers, laundry services, and food, in addition to intake assessment, case management, housing services, and community referrals. The Mill-You offers a safe, welcoming, youth-centric space to provide holistic services designed to help YYAs move from homelessness to housing stability. Housing programs currently offered include Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, a College Engagement Pilot program, and housing supports offered through flexible state funding through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS).

Because no such resources existed for homeless YYAs prior to 2018, the program developed the standard for youth homelessness services in the region, including program structure, delivery of sufficient resources, and on-boarding and exit planning for YYAs, as well as expectations and requirements to provide a safe, healthy, and welcoming environment for participants of all backgrounds and identities. The program was specifically designed in alignment with the model for best practices established through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). At the time of application, Community Teamwork has been designated by the Balance of State COC to develop the region's response to the 2019/2020 YHDP Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The Youth Services programming from its inception, has had a revenue growth of 319%; from the initial contract in 2018 of \$325k to an FY'22 budget of \$1,363,078.00. Initial funding for the Youth Services program was through the Executive Office of Health and Housing Services, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In less than three years, the program has received capital funds from EOHHS, the Smith Family Foundation, and private donors for the build-out of the Mill-You. Additional grant sources have been cultivated for programmatic support to increase staffing capacity for case management and housing search, expand street outreach, provide housing solutions for homelessness prevention, emergency housing, and additional wrap-around services. In late FY'21 three new components have been added to the program, supported by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; a new Street Outreach component, a pregnant and parenting teen program; and EOHHS provided Community Teamwork with capital funding to encourage our program to find additional transitional housing for youth. As of June, 2021, Community Teamwork has closed on a building with seven (7) units that will be used specifically as transitional youth housing in a significant program expansion. This program and its services will continue to be a focus for expansion, with the new Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) set for submission in late July, and strategic planning with local partners for a new emergency shelter site, specifically for youth.

Entrepreneurship Center

The Entrepreneurship Center @ Community Teamwork (E-Center@CTI) is a program of Community Teamwork Inc. focused on supporting at risk and underrepresented micro-enterprises and entrepreneurs. The E-Center provides high-quality technical assistance and, as an SBA Intermediary microlender, access to mission-based capital for the small businesses and entrepreneurs in our service area.

In 1998, as part of a successful collaboration between Community Teamwork, Middlesex Community College, the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and the City of Lowell, the formally named Merrimack Valley Small Business Center, was founded to provide technical assistance for low and very low-income entrepreneurs, to help them create, sustain and grow micro-enterprises. Starting in 2019, the E-Center@CTI had a name and branding change and began a strategic planning process to modernize the program and overhaul the service model in order to better serve the diverse needs of its disadvantaged micro-enterprise clients. As evidenced below, the strategic focus and service modifications have resulted in significant programmatic growth and greater impact on the Small Businesses, Micro-enterprises, and entrepreneurs in our region.

E-Center Revenue:

FY'18	FY'19	FY'20	FY'21 Forecast	FY'22 Budget
\$86,145	\$230,017	\$271,154	\$388,829	\$541,868

The above highlights a **529%** increase in revenue, and includes new and expanded funding support from Mass Growth Capital Corporation, the Small Business Administration, LISC, the City of Lowell, and increased support from private sources such as Santander and DCU. Additionally, the E-Center has partnered with the Family Childcare program to create new training program opportunities for Family Child Care providers, themselves small businesses; new grants for these efforts were received from the GLCF Women Working Wonders Fund and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Urban Agenda grant.

The Entrepreneurship Center @Community Teamwork was significantly tested over the past year, with small businesses desperate for help to access the federal loan supports available due to the COVID Pandemic. The release of federal PPP funds and other grants for Small Businesses provided an opportunity for the E- Center to support many more small businesses, despite its own limited staffing capacity. Our program served 7 times more businesses – from 51 in 2019 to over 380 small businesses from March 2020 to March 2021.

As the Entrepreneurship Center continues to grow, it is a vital component of our Strategic Plan in the Goal area of Diversity and Inclusion. As outlined in Goal 9:

Implement programming to help businesses navigate the process to become certified Massachusetts Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women Business Enterprises (WBE), Veteran Business Enterprises (VBE), and Portuguese Business Enterprises (PBE)s, as well as other similar local, state, and national certifications.

Emergency Rental Assistance

Additional support provided through Federal CARES Act and other Federal funding increased Community Teamwork’s ability to help residents obtain housing, but more critical through the COVID crisis, maintain their housing. From March 2020 to March 2021, 3,767 households were assisted in maintaining their

housing or moving to new housing. The capacity of this program to support both the increase in demand and the increase in funding was predicated on a strong internal Case Management System, data and quality management, and the ability to implement a rapid staff increase and system of training. DHCD also provided additional funding for case management for clients receiving Emergency Rental Assistance. This Special Services Coordinator helps clients who need additional assistance and referrals to both internal and external resources as they are going through the process of obtaining Emergency Rental Assistance. The Special Services Coordinator also follow up with the individuals they are working with 3 and 6 months after their initial receipt of assistance to provide additional assistance if needed and track ongoing outcomes. The Emergency Rental Assistance team went from five (5) staff members to over thirty (30) FTEs.

The financial resources over the past year expanded from all funders: over \$38 million dollars was awarded to this program to assist families, including \$24 million in federal, \$13 million in federal/state, and over \$530,000 in private foundation funding. Funders such as the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, the Essex County Community Foundation, the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund and the United Way all provided additional flexible supports to augment the federal and state housing relief funds.

Individual Homelessness Program

In mid-2018, the City of Lowell, healthcare professionals, and the business community, began to raise the challenges of adult homelessness including: an urban-based emergency shelter with limited services, an increase in emergency services focused on the homeless, and the pressure being placed on the healthcare system, primarily in acute settings and focused on mental health and substance abuse. The City Manager formed a task force of key community leaders and stakeholders, hired a nationally-known consultant with experience in successful homeless intervention policies, and began reviewing current efforts, including our youth, family, and veteran interventions, and comparing these with effective national policies and programming.

Lowell City Manager Eileen Donoghue was responsible for the creation of a Homelessness Task Force to address the growing needs in Lowell, and she continues to support the mission of the Homelessness Task Force as it transitions to new role as a Coordinating Council. Like the Task Force, the Council is made up of a wide array of community partners including Community Teamwork, Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC), South Middlesex Opportunity Council, and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation. Also included are representatives from the City's faith communities, public services (Police), and educational institutions. Working from the recommendations from Barbara Poppe, the former head of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Council works to support the creation of new housing opportunities, and engage in evidence-based practices to reduce homelessness in the Greater Lowell area. The need for additional shelter emergency beds became a clear priority.

In FY'21, a new program was developed due to necessity, but also growing from strong foundational work done through our partnerships, the Resource Center, the Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC), and through the recognition of a significant service gap for our community. In the fall of 2020, as the concerns over the de-population of the shelter continued with the inevitable onset of winter, Community Teamwork began working in partnership with Life Connections Center, a drop-in site offering services which include harm reduction including syringe exchange, Narcan training and distribution, detox placement, recovery and general support groups, street outreach services, resource and referral to community resources, supporting those chronically homeless individuals who are at

severe risk due to COVID, by virtue of these co-morbidities tied to extensive substance abuse and the challenges of being medically compliant when living on the street. Life Connections Center was intent on setting up a new shelter site, and in partnership with Community Teamwork, a pipeline program was developed, with Community Teamwork, bringing its extensive re-housing and stabilization expertise to this population. Community Teamwork's rapid rehousing efforts will regularly co-case manage with the staff of Life Connections to prioritize both the individuals who are ready to move directly into independent living situations (re-housed with RAFT funds, some rental support, and ongoing transitional housing stabilization), and those who need more subsidized care.

The new Individual Homelessness program was initially funded with DHCD Emergency Services Grant COVID funds (ESG CV; ESG CV 2) with additional support from the City of Lowell's ESG funds. When the Winter Protocol set in, Community Teamwork facilitated the partnership with a local hotel owner, and sixty (60) rooms were made available to move individuals off the street. The hotel site was staffed with Life Connections case management support, coupled with Community Teamwork Rapid Re-Housing and Stabilization counselors. Over seventy (70) individuals have been provided safe and secure temporary shelter through this effort. Our partners at DHCD assisted in obtaining FEMA reimbursement for this effort, and the partnership continues to move forward, with the goal of increasing supportive permanent housing for this constituency group. As we enter FY'22, Community Teamwork has expanded the staff support, hired a new Director of Individual Homelessness, and has obtained funding of nearly \$5 million dollars (\$4,927,340) to support these expanded efforts, all within less than one year.

Internal Linkages

Critical to the ability of an agency this size to support individuals and families is the ability to have strong internal linkages across programming. First, it is vital that Executive Management have its pulse on the programs and their performance. The Community Teamwork Executive Management (EM) team consists of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), the Chief Program Officer (CPO), the Director of Marketing and Communications, the Director of Planning and Quality Improvement, and the Division Directors. This team meets weekly to review and communicate on program operations and policies. Of note, during the pandemic, the EM was meeting daily to address all of the issues and needed areas of focus that crossed all divisions and departments. It was a testament to internal linkage and the prioritization of cross-agency communication.

Twice a month, the Executive Management Team brings the Deputy Division Directors, Director of Facilities, Director of Information Technology, and Director of Finance and Accounting to the table, to ensure clear lines of communication and programmatic updates are occurring. As issues arise, new program opportunities are presented, and/or potential new growth and partnerships are available, it is this expanded Management Team that reviews and plans the decisions for the Agency.

The Executive Management Team also attends the monthly Board Meetings. Within the Board Packet of information that is disseminated, Community Teamwork has developed a system of "Dashboards," completed by each program, reviewed by the Deputy Division Directors, and provided to the Board and Executive Management. The Dashboards are monthly performance review and highlights, and are also a tool to keep our internal divisions aware of what is happening in each other's programming.

Finally, Community Teamwork has been making efforts over the past four years to implement a database system to support front-facing staff to document and track client activities and services across

programming. Beginning with a uniform Pre-Assessment form, clients are questioned on a broad variety of needs areas, in order to ensure correct internal referral to programs Community Teamwork offers, and potential external referral to partner agencies and services. Community Teamwork utilizes a comprehensive database system that allows our organization to work with clients in an unduplicated manner. Our Case Management System (CMS) was designed to gather and monitor client data, needs, and outcomes in an integrated manner that allows our clients to participate in numerous programs and we are able to track the outcomes of the services provided.

Community Teamwork programs utilize the CMS system to internally link clients with services in other divisions, and to monitor families and individuals who receive services from multiple programs. Our staff use CMS to monitor performance and outcomes by each client and by program.

Internal Linkage Highlight:

Community Teamwork developed a walk-in center to support individuals in need of assistance but unsure of how to access Community Teamwork resources. Supported with CSBG funding (56% of our standard allocation and a large percentage of our CSBG CARES Act funds for client support), the Resource Center is the initial access point for clients who need additional support to navigate the Agency. As our Strategic Plan outlines, Community Teamwork is moving to facilitate easier access through on-line applications, etc., but there will always be a need for one-on-one support for a large percentage of our clients. The COVID pandemic tested all of our programs, moving to email, Zoom, phone, and basically distant communications with clients; as an Agency, we are embracing technology to ease barriers, however, the Resource Center continues a critical function, emergency or no.

During the past year, the Resource Center was closed to all walk-in traffic, however the Resource Center staff became the hub for direct support to clients. The Center facilitated the process of clients dropping off paperwork for all programs by utilization a drop box installed in the vestibule. Resource Center staff retrieved the paperwork and distributed as appropriate, including scanning and email. The Resource Center utilized other staff members from remote work sites to support the volume of phone calls and emails and to be available as clients presents with emergencies.

The Resource Center staff supported the WIC program to distribute WIC cards to participants who needed to pick them up (new clients). The clients enter the vestibule and sign for the cards left on a table. Additionally, the Resource Center was one hub for clients to arrange for pick-ups of emergency food vouchers, diapers or other emergency supplies critical during the pandemic; with significant job loss in our area, more households were desperately in need of housing assistance and food assistance.

Additional External Linkages

The Strategic Plan presented above highlights the partnerships and linkages in place, and those that in our analysis will need to be cultivated. There are a number of external linkages that should additionally be highlighted, as they support staff and programming and are value-added.

First, Community Teamwork would like to recognize the support and work of MassCAP. The advocacy, education, and community MassCAP conducts assists Community Teamwork in its every day work, as well as in its short- and long-term strategies. Our staff are supported by the Community of Practices

(COPs) in place, including the Executive Directors, Planning, and Development and Communications. These COPs provide a monthly support for questions, issues, and the ability to share best practices and program guidance.

Second, there are additional homelessness support monthly meetings that have assisted Community Teamwork in our new Individual Homelessness program development. Although we have been a long-standing provider of family shelter(s) and homelessness prevention, having these groups of other providers has assisted our design and offered invaluable support. For the Greater Lowell area, the Hunger and Homelessness Commission meets monthly, and our partnership is able to update the community on our activities and needs, and the Commission agency partner members have provided significant guidance and resources. Secondly, the wider region we serve is supported by the Merrimack Valley Consortium, again a monthly meeting of providers, and their information and program discussions have helped inform our design and planning.

Third, with the focus internally on our own Diversity and Inclusion efforts, the creation of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Consortium of Lowell (DEICL or DEI Lowell) in the fall Of 2019 has assisted Community Teamwork to support external, grassroots, community efforts around Racism as a public health crisis. A strong contingent of Community Teamwork staff are active members of DEICL, and communicate to our Executive Management on efforts being made in the City of Lowell.

Fourth, for several years, Community Teamwork has prioritized strengthening its connection to our local health care providers in recognition of the interdependence of health and human services, including housing, nutrition, financial support, and other areas. As the community's collective appreciation of the importance of social determinants of health (SDOH) grew, Community Teamwork has contracts with Mass General Brigham (formerly Partners Healthcare) and Steward Healthcare Accountable Care Organizations, to provide MassHealth funded Flexible Services to qualifying patients. The project has included development of a bi-directional electronic referral system with Mass General Brigham. Community Teamwork also maintains strong partnerships with the Lowell General Hospital and the Lowell Community Health Center, which most recently as included Community Teamwork's Community Health Worker staff in their response to the Centers for Disease Control's Community Health Workers for COVID Response and Resilient Communities Notice of Funding Opportunity. These partnerships and programs, which constitute the agency's Community Health Initiative, inform our understanding of populations most vulnerable to poor health outcomes, including the uninsured.

Finally, it is critical to outline our relationships and support with the other Community Action Agencies in Massachusetts. As noted above, our work with the MassCAP COPs facilitates regular meetings, information sharing, and programmatic design discussions with the CAA's across the State. Highlighted as an example of support, our partner CAA in the Haverhill region, Community Action, Inc. (CAI) noted that with a new Executive Director, the MassCAP "*New Executive Directors*" meetings were so helpful to her, and that the Community Teamwork Executive Director was extremely generous in sharing her time, her knowledge and experience, and policies, etc. which has been a great support to someone new in the ED position.

In addition to the New Executive Director support through MassCAP, Community Teamwork works closely with CAI and GLCAC (Lawrence) on Housing Assistance and funding. As the Regional Housing Administrator (RHA) for the broader region, and the Administrator of the RAFT, ERMA, and ERAP funding, Community Teamwork subcontracts with both GLCAC and CAI in the application, approval, and

distribution of these funds to the Greater Lawrence and Greater Haverhill communities. These partnerships have been critical during the COVID pandemic, as Community Teamwork received an influx of over \$38 million dollars in housing support funding which needed to be efficiently and effectively gotten to the community members in need. Increased communication, stronger planning, and increased resources for staffing to our partners facilitated our ability to best serve the residents in our communities most at risk.

An additional area of partnership and support among Community Teamwork and other CAA's is through the development and implementation of new Case Management Systems (CMS) through SMC Partners. As one of the original CAA's to work with SMC, Community Teamwork has a mature database system in place, with policies, procedures, and other supports embedded. Our Planning Team with oversight of the CMS system has provided other CAAs with mentoring, guidance, policy documents, etc. to support the development of their processes, workflow, and data management systems. Additionally, with a new Data Coordinator in place since early 2020, additional training supports have been offered to our CAA partners, including the development of training videos and screen-shot records, which have been shared. Some CAA's that have utilized this mentoring/training support include CAI, MOC, Pioneer Valley, and Berkshire. This use of a common database has also resulted in regular information sharing meetings with other organizations administering Flexible Services across the Commonwealth, including MOC.

Plan Monitoring and Reporting

The Strategic Plan Monitoring is embedded in our management structure and our Board reporting system. As noted previously, our Executive Management Team meets weekly, and bi-weekly with a fuller management meeting inclusive of Deputy Division Directors. Prior to the pandemic, Community Teamwork also conducted monthly Program Managers' meetings, but these meetings were more about updates, and less about cross-program planning or addressing larger Agency needs. It is the intent of the Chief Program Officer (CPO) to resurrect the Program Manager meetings with a goal of utilizing the Strategic Plan goals to drive the focus of the meetings. The CPO considers the Program Managers Meetings as the source for the Agency's Strategic Plan (SP) working groups; with teams set up by Goal(s) and facilitating, tracking, reviewing and documenting the activities necessary to complete our plan objectives by goal area.

The intent will be to have the Program Manager Strategic Plan work groups report out quarterly to the CPO, who will then review the reports with the Executive Management team. It is expected that Deputy Division Directors and Division Directors will also be participating in SP work groups. The Executive Management is currently designing a review structure for their meetings, and guidance on uniform methods of reporting out on activities and objective attainment.

The SP plan updates will be presented to the Board of Directors twice a year. We are supported by a 24-member Board of Directors who review on a monthly basis our financial well-being, through structured budget and programmatic reviews. In addition, programs submit project dashboards at the end of the month for leadership and Community Teamwork's Board of Directors to review. These dashboards allow the Executive Team and Board members to monitor and assess program achievements or deficiencies each month.

Community Teamwork also reviews the CSBG Initial Community Action Plan (CAP) with the Board, the mid-point update of the CAP, the Annual Plan, and reviews each program's quarterly progress every October, January, April, and July to forecast performance and to make strategic changes to processes to reach annual goals. The Community Teamwork Board of Directors recognizes and embraces their role including ongoing performance management, in addition to their fiduciary responsibility.

Intrinsic to our Strategic Plan is funding. The financial plan in place to grow our programs and agency is rooted in our mission to reduce poverty and to address the causes and conditions of poverty. As opportunities arise to expand existing services and add new services for our specific client populations, Community Teamwork strives to bring additional resources to promote stability, independence, self-sufficiency, and economic growth to the residents of the communities we serve. In reviewing our Strategic Plan work, connection with our financial planning will be incorporated.

Finally, in terms of the responsibility as an anchor Community Action Agency for the Greater Lowell area, our communication plan includes ensuring that our constituents and partners are also kept fully informed as to our progress in meeting our plan goals, on an annual basis. During this extended Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning period, Community Teamwork had broad and layered support, participation, and feedback. From the over 1,400 survey respondents, the 19 key informants representing 17 agencies, to the participants in the 15 focus groups, as well as the oversight by the Board of Directors and active participation by the Executive Management team; individuals in our communities were invested in the collection and analysis of the data, and now, in the implementation of strategic solutions and activities to move our communities forward. Community Teamwork recognizes its responsibility to communicate goals, objectives, and benchmark attainment to this broader external community, and does so on an annual basis through the distribution of our Annual Report. The Community Teamwork Annual Report is reviewed with the Board of Directors and distributed widely through our communications platforms, including hard copies for distribution. The Annual Report has a section specifically on our Strategic Plan Goals, and the attainment activities which have occurred in the prior year.