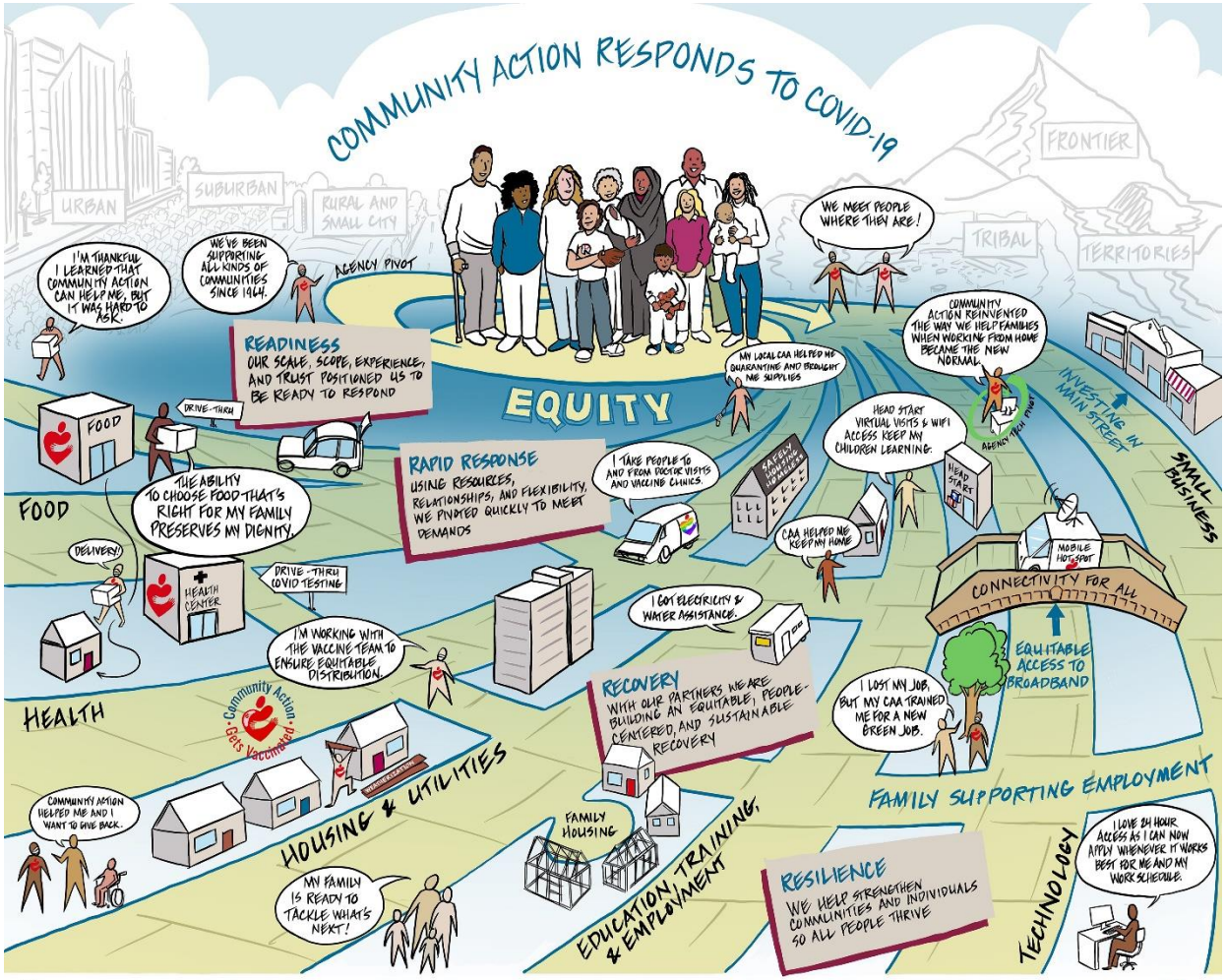
Transitioning from pandemic response to family and community recovery: Examples from the Community Action Network



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As the country moves through recovery and begins to achieve resilience, organizations, governments, and businesses are all addressing their needs that were put to the side, as more pressing issues needed to be addressed. But now is the time to put these issues in the forefront to allow the country to recover and to be as strong and resilient as possible. This is just as true for individuals and families as it is for our communities.

This document provides some examples from the Community Action network illustrating how local CAAs have used their pandemic resources to continue supporting families and communities through crisis into longer-term resilience. It provides sample strategies, possible framing (to consider how this strategy might align with community needs and/or available resources) as well as some additional considerations that may be relevant to the particular strategy

Please note that these examples/strategies are NOT intended to be a complete list of possible strategies, nor are they assumed to be appropriate in each community. Every CAA should continue to draw from its Community Assessment and community stakeholder knowledge to implement the strategies most responsive to the needs of the community. As always, any public resources (local, state, or federal) should always be used in accordance with all applicable legal and regulatory guidance from the appropriate federal, state or local policy.



Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
	Summer programming for youth	
Strengthen the opportunity for children to participate: Support scholarships for youth to attend educational/ recreational camps; support local service providers (through subgrants) to expand or add summer programming	School-age children have been deeply affected by the reduction of in-person learning and recreation during the pandemic - the summer of 2022 is the first opportunity to begin to heal that. Additionally, working parents very much need safe, healthy opportunities for their school-age children during the summer in order to maintain employment	*The window for this activity is closing quickly* - summer program planning is well under way.
	Increase technology capacity	
Strengthen CAA tech capacity: Purchase/update portable technology (laptops/tablets) for staff; enhance web-based service delivery platforms; improve internet bandwidth/ infrastructure, etc.	Having made quick technology pivots during the crisis phase of the pandemic, CAAs need to continue supporting these technology platforms because of the expectations of customers and the improved access to services they have provided.	These investments need to be made soon -- the allowability of costs requires that the useful life of the project occur during the grant period. Significant equipment investments (servers, computers, etc.) cannot be made too late in a program cycle because the actual benefit will mostly occur in the future.
Strengthen family tech capacity: Purchase laptops/tablets for customers to access services or support education for children; purchase hotspots/ broadband/ Wi-Fi service for the same purposes. Providing free training on how to use technology too.	Customer need for remote technology to access services, education, training resources has not gone away with the re-opening of in-person services; families still need support accessing online services that are now "here to stay." People need to know how to upload documents and navigate online applications.	Ideally these resources can be directly connected to education/employment or another CSBG-prioritized area. Providing technology for employment training programs or for students engaged in remote summer learning would be an ideal connection to justify why customers can benefit from these things now (as opposed to a year ago).

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
	Promote Access to Quality Child Care	
Enhance access to child care to support employment: This can occur as a family-level strategy (providing direct assistance to families to secure child care so they can obtain/maintain employment); it can also be implemented at a community level (supporting licensing of new family day care settings, supporting certifications of providers, supporting small businesses to launch child care businesses)	The pandemic has created a child care crisis. Many providers of child care services have been unable to sustain their operations or have chosen to leave the field. Child care "deserts" exist in many communities. Working parents need these resources to obtain/maintain employment.	This also doesn't have to be only for employment--there are benefits to children spending time in a supportive environment during the day, regardless of a parent's employment status. Placing children in high quality child care can set them up for future school success.
Support small and in-home child care providers: Purchase supplies for small child care providers	Provide small / at home child cares who are either owned by people with low incomes or serve children with low incomes with resources and supplies for their business.	Child care resources and providers have shrunk significantly since COVID-19. We need to preserve remaining child care centers and provide them with support to deal with increased demand.
	Transportation	
Keep vehicles operating: Provide gift cards/vouchers for vehicle repair, oil changes, tires, even for buying gasoline	Many families are "one flat tire away" from a crisis that can cost employment and lead to other challenges. With limited resources during the pandemic, many people have delayed repairs to their vehicles.	Ensure your CAAs approach in this regard aligns with federal state and local policies and that your CAA has and follows a well-documented policy regarding eligibility and receipt of any cash assistance. Partner with other organizations where possible to ensure cash assistance is magnified by other supports

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
Support CAA capacity in a changing environment		
Employee benefits/well-being: Provide ongoing support and training to combat COVID-19 fatigue, trauma, and chronic stress; provide training sessions for staff.	Community Action never closed during the Pandemic. CAA staff were and continue to be first responders and have experienced trauma and chronic stress as a result. Benefits and well-being investments will help to support our staff and retain them.	Be mindful of cost allowability / cost allocation (https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/2/200.437 / https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/2/200.431) -- Some benefits would need to be spelled out in employer policies to be eligible Some investments may require ongoing support beyond CARES funding.
Support CAA leadership capacity: Professional development for EDs/CEOs and/or Board Chairs who may be new to Community Action during the pandemic and have not had the opportunity to learn about their role in "typical" circumstances.	CAA leaders have been deeply engaged in rapid response and recovery activities in their communities; onboarding and orientation to Community Action leadership has often had to be done in an ad hoc way; this moment may provide an opportunity for new leaders to focus on long-term CAA resilience.	Any professional development would need to occur during a grant funding period; it is not allowable to "pre-pay" for future professional development outside the grant period.
Prepare to be resilient to future crises: Create a Disaster / Agency Continuity of Operations Plan.	Work with a contractor / consultant to develop a plan for how the agency will operate in case of disaster or disruption to agency services.	The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of having strong disaster plans - they enable our agencies to be resilient and respond quickly when our community needs us most. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, with new variants emerging all the time, we need to ensure we are prepared.
Strategic plan/policy updates: Update Strategic Plan and other policy and procedures, by-laws, etc. to integrate changes and learnings due to the pandemic	Agency capacity to do this work may be an issue. Accessing the expertise of a contractor to get what has been learned during this difficult time may be the most effective way to refresh these documents.	Staff capacity is an issue in many CAAs and it may be necessary to have an outside entity provide this support to capture what has been learned into the documents of the agency.

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
	Promote community health	
Promote ongoing wellness activities: Ex: a campaign to promote mammograms, colonoscopies and provide incentives or cover expenses such as co-pays and transportation.	Many families put off health needs/screenings during the pandemic. Now is the time to get current on these wellness checkups.	Good opportunity to continue to deepen partnerships with public health, health providers and insurers.
Reduce medical debt burden: Reach out to CAA customers to inquire about unpaid medical expenses incurred during the pandemic, including copays for visits and medications.	Co-pays for multiple office visits, hospital stays add up quickly. Transportation costs do as well. Addressing these debts *now* will help the financial future of families by reducing their debt burden coming out of the pandemic.	Ensure your CAAs approach in this regard aligns with federal state and local policies and that your CAA has and follows a well-documented policy regarding eligibility and receipt of any cash assistance.
Improve dental health: Provide financial resources to cover dental services.	Identify customers served by the CAA and offer support to cover these costs, especially for children.	Accessing dental care was seriously limited during the pandemic and many people have put off going until the pandemic began subsiding.
Address burial expenses: Provide resources to cover burial costs for families unable to pay.	Work with County Relief programs or other organizations that know of families who have experienced death and assist with burial costs.	FEMA does provide support for these costs, but it is a complex process and during the time of great grief, providing an easier way to address the need or at least provide staff to assist with the navigation of the FEMA system seems appropriate.

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
Address the mental health crisis: Reimburse mental health professionals to provide services for CAA customers who continue to recover from the pandemic.	Partner with Mental Health professionals to provide a variety of services to customers, trainings, group sessions, creation of materials that would be helpful to people who are living in poverty during this challenging time.	The pandemic has affected the mental health of many individuals across the country, including people experiencing poverty. Depression, anxiety, childhood development, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have increased since COVID-19 has impacted our communities.
Address low vaccination rates: Promote the importance of vaccinations, promote equity in accessing and receiving vaccinations/boosters.	Partner with a health entity and host a vaccine clinic for customers at your agency, especially for young children, distribute social media about vaccines, hold a listening session with customers to hear their thoughts and ideas on how to reach people in their communities.	With the upcoming expansion of vaccines for under five years old, begin now preparing for child focused specialty clinics on site for families to bring children to get vaccinated. Families trust CAAs we are a safe place to come.
Basic needs		
Help with transportation and food: Provide gift cards to gas stations and grocery stores and other providers of basic needs for families. Purchase memberships to CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to allow for healthy, locally-sourced food options. Support access to farmers' markets and providing vouchers for purchases at them.	High inflation is an issue, and it is most prevalent in food and gasoline. If we want people to be able to get to and from work and school, providing some financial assistance will help them be successful. Additionally, some forms of assistance may be receding as the economy re-opens; CAAs may need to "fill gaps" left by those resources going away.	Ensure your CAAs approach in this regard aligns with federal state and local policies and that your CAA has and follows a well-documented policy regarding eligibility and receipt of any cash assistance. Partner with other organizations where possible to ensure cash assistance is magnified by other supports.

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Housing Expenses: Assist families with rent, mortgage, or utility payments -- particularly households unable to meet the ERA, LIHEAP or LIHWAP requirements.	Not all households at the income eligibility level meet the other requirements for ERA, mortgage assistance and/or LIHEAP but were impacted by COVID.	Ensure your CAAs approach in this regard aligns with federal state and local policies and that your CAA has and follows a well-documented policy regarding eligibility and receipt of any cash assistance. Partner with other organizations where possible to ensure cash assistance is magnified by other supports.
Transitioning into housing: Provide support to fill in the gaps for people transitioning into housing.	While there is significant money available for housing, people who are homeless or have experienced displacement due to COVID-19 or recent disasters may not have the basic home items needed to maintain their housing. Partner with your local shelter, CoC, or housing assistance program to provide start-up materials and supplies such as cleaning materials, bed sheets, mattresses, pillows, and other basic home items.	COVID-19 has resulted in people losing their housing, and housing scarcity. Additionally, inflation from the supply chain woes from COVID-19 have made basic household items unaffordable for many. People who are housed can benefit from the additional support as they transition into housing. Ensure coordination to prevent duplication of services.
Partner with local homeless shelters: Provide needed and necessary supplies.	Work with your local shelter and provide needed resources to support -- beds, sheets, personal care items, blankets, food, etc.	COVID-19 has resulted in people losing their housing. Shelters are stretched, and supplies cost more. We need to support our local service providers to serve people in need.

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
Offer greater dignity to your food pantry customers: Convert your food pantry into an online grocery store.	Purchase software to offer online ordering of groceries for your customers, giving the same dignity as buying in a store.	Families using the food pantry can have the same experience as online grocery shopping if you purchase a software program to implement the option. CAAs that have made this change say the customers love it.
Help new parents with expenses: Purchase infant formula, diapers, and other supplies to support new parents.	Identify new parents and provide them with needed supplies and resources for their baby including diapers, formula, car seats, etc.	The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant inflation in prices for basic supplies, especially infant formula. New parents need support to ensure the healthy development of their child during this time. Coordinate and refer families to WIC if applicable for additional support.
Pop-up event to help with basic needs: Host a community pop-up event (or two) before Sept. 29 to provide food and non-SNAP items and even gas cards to those who need them.	A CAA can do this alone or organize with other community organizations to make it as big an opportunity as the community needs. Great publicity and exposure throughout the community.	High inflation is an issue, and it is most prevalent in food and gasoline.
Help build/restore financial resources for families		
Promote financial literacy: If a CAA currently provides financial literacy services now is the perfect time to upgrade the training to help clients better navigate financial challenges in a post-COVID environment. If the CAA does not currently provide these services, it can partner with another entity that does and provide reimbursement for those services.	The financial situation for many families has changed and keeping them up to date on what they can do to stay on top of their household budget is important. Data show that families with low-incomes were the first to be hit financially – and that they benefitted most from pandemic-related financial assistance.	It is important to review community resources to ensure families are connected to available financial supports. Changes in the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit and a few other programs could provide new opportunities for families. CAA staff must be fully aware of all these opportunities and how to connect to them.

Strategy	***Possible framing***	***Considerations***
Promote access to financial resources: Provide training for staff on all the changes in the Child Tax Credit (CTC), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and stimulus payments. Partner with a VITA site to provide free tax services at your site. Distribute information about CTC and EITC to help customers understand how to get their money.	There have been big changes in EITC and CTC that benefit CAA customers. Customers can benefit significantly if all CAA staff can connect them to these resources.	See previous statement above.
Promote Customer Voice in Community Resilience		
Support opportunities for customers to influence community plans: Hold focus groups or community meetings to assess what customers need from the agency or the community. Provide incentives for customers to share their time and treasure with the agency. Hire / provide stipends to agency customers and residents with low incomes to organize and support community events to gather input.	As we are entering a new phase of recovery, the people we serve should guide our agency responses and strategies. And, as opportunities for in-person events become more feasible, CAAs should ensure that all residents have opportunities to engage in public affairs.	CAAs should be attentive to the purpose of these activities and the intended outcomes. These activities should have a clear purpose/role for customer engagement, leading to community systems or agency systems change activities.
Promote "journey-mapping" activities by customers: As CAAs and other service providers prepare for the post-COVID-19 world, support customers in mapping out how services are provided *from the customer perspective* to inform process improvements.	Many initial pivots to services during the pandemic were done out of urgency and necessity. Use this opportunity to learn directly from the customer whether these adaptations worked – and what will work going forward.	This is an excellent opportunity to engage partners and support journey mapping by community residents for multiple community providers. It can lead to improve processes and ultimately broader systems change.