

A Community Action Agency is a private non-profit or public organization, whose mission is to reduce the causes and conditions of poverty in its geographic area of coverage, whose board is broadly representative of three community sectors – low-income people, private organizations and public agencies – and whose status as a Community Action Agency is the result of explicit designation as such by local or state government.

Key Characteristics. In terms of its structure and mode of operation, a Community Action Agency:

- ♦ Serves the entire low-income population in a designated geographic area;
- ♦ Involves low-income people in planning, administering and evaluating its programs;
- ♦ Has a governing board that consists of members of whom at least one-third are persons democratically selected to represent low-income people, one-third are local public officials or their designees, and the remainder are representatives of business, industry, labor, religious, social welfare and other private groups in the community;
- ♦ Has received designation of a Community Action Agency by local government under the provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (which also required recognition by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity) or by the state under the Coats Human Services Act of 1998;
- ♦ Is recognized as an eligible entity as defined in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended, and can therefore receive funding through the state under the Community Services Block Grant; and
- ♦ Belongs to a national network of similar agencies that for the most part received their initial designation by local government, federal recognition, and funding under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 amended.

***Community Action
changes people's
lives, embodies the
spirit of hope,
improves
communities, and
makes America a
better place to live.
We care about the
entire community,
and we are dedicated
to helping people
help themselves
and each other.***

A Community Action Agency carries out its mission through a variety of means that include: (a) community-wide assessments of needs and strengths, (b) comprehensive antipoverty plans and strategies, (c) a broad range of direct services, (d) mobilization of financial and non-financial resources (e) advocacy on behalf of low-income people and (f) partnerships with other community-based organizations to eliminate poverty.

Why Community Action Agencies Are Unique. Most poverty-related organizations focus on a specific area of need like job training, health care, housing and economic development. Community Action Agencies reach out to all low-income people in their communities, address multiple needs through a comprehensive approach, develop partnerships with other community institutions, involve low-income clients in the agency's operations and administer a full range of coordinated programs aimed at having a measurable or potentially measurable impact on poverty.