

**EAST
MISSOURI
ACTION
AGENCY, INC.**

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

2022-2025

**Communities
where
everyone's
potential
to thrive is
unlimited by
community
conditions**



VISION

Communities where everyone's potential to thrive is unlimited by community conditions.

MISSION

EMAA cultivates communities of opportunity and supports people in reaching their highest potential.

VALUES

VALUES are the beliefs that shape organizational culture, support the vision and mission, and guide interactions between customers, EMAA staff, board members, and partners.

At our natural best we are...

Compassionate

We care and go above and beyond for our customers and each other.

*"When working with people, compassion should be #1. People need to know we care. EMAA staff always show customers and the community that they care." **

"I have seen our staff go above and beyond to help our clients! I have seen our staff put their whole heart into finding a solution to help our customers."

"A coworker did the hair and makeup for a homeless customer that was getting married. Going above and beyond the call of duty."

Nonjudgmental

We treat all people with dignity and respect.

"Myself and a lot of my coworkers have walked in the shoes of some of our customers."

"Helping customers no matter their characteristics, beliefs, or culture."

Resourceful

We work together and with our communities to create solutions.

"We figure out all the resources available to help customers, not just the one program they entered the door for."

"If one group can't think of a way to help or find resources, others are willing to help find them."

Dedicated

We don't give up on people, communities, or each other.

"I have seen during the pandemic the dedication EMAA has toward the community. Feeding the communities and providing resources to help people during the pandemic."

"We never give up and we work to find answers."

*All quotations are from EMAA staff.

PHILOSOPHY

Our **PHILOSOPHY** represents practices used to support and encourage people in their journey to achieve social and economic mobility. Embedded in our philosophy are beliefs about human capacity and communities that influence our work.

We Believe Poverty Is Complex

Poverty is more than just a lack of income. We understand poverty today is complex and multidimensional. Thinking about and measuring only monetary poverty is incomplete and stifles our ability to reduce poverty at the community and individual levels. People who are suffering and struggling economically may experience deprivation in other crucial areas of their lives—such as education, housing, health, safety, and social and emotional functioning—even as their level of income deprivation stabilizes or improves. We believe well-being is made up of personal experiences and vital community conditions. Our personal experiences lead to the perspectives that affect how we think, feel, and function, as well as how we evaluate our lives as a whole. Vital conditions are the community-level conditions that we all depend on to reach our potential.

“...Poverty is a place, physically and mentally. Poverty is a cycle. Poverty is a hole that is hard to dig out of. Poverty feels impossible unless the family has a strong support system. It can literally keep the family pulled down.”



Potosi School District deepening their understanding of what it means to live in poverty during an EMAA poverty simulation

PHILOSOPHY

"I have seen EMAA serve people who are at their lowest, as well as those who need a temporary hand. Either way, they meet people where they are."

"We look at where a family is at (which is different for everyone) and start people at their level."

"We understand it takes lots of time and support to make long-term changes."

We Believe in Human Capacity

We believe all people have the capacity to grow and reach their full potential. We believe in a growth mindset that recognizes that people can grow, expand, evolve, and change. Our personality characteristics, talents, and abilities are not fixed resources. Moreover, we believe that with customized supports people are fully capable of achieving their full potential. We believe in coordinating and integrating a rich mix of services to respond to each individual's or family's strengths and needs.

PHILOSOPHY

We Are Community-Minded

Our freedom to reach our full potential and thrive depends on having a consistent set of vital conditions, the properties of places and institutions that we all depend on to reach our potential. We believe the following vital conditions are essential to creating thriving people and communities:

- Basic Needs for Health and Safety
- Meaningful Work and Wealth
- Lifelong Learning
- Humane Housing
- Reliable Transportation
- Thriving Natural World
- Belonging and Civic Muscle

Community conditions can have a positive or negative impact on people's lives. We realize that generational cycles of trauma and exclusion are perpetuated by dysfunctional systems that can prevent people and places from thriving. In addition to providing direct services and opportunities to people who are striving to reach their fullest potential, we are committed to addressing systemic solutions and maximizing the strengths of our community to build a more just and inclusive community for all.

"Without a thriving community the people in the community can't succeed."

"I've lived in poverty most of my life. It's a system and hard to break out of. EMAA understands that."

THEORY OF CHANGE

A **THEORY OF CHANGE** is a statement that presents our hypothesis about the types of interventions that will achieve certain outcomes.

If EMAA builds a poverty reduction ecosystem that addresses certain vital conditions and integrates and coordinates services, then people and places will reach their potential and thrive.



Communities where everyone's potential to thrive is unlimited by community conditions

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES serve as crucial focus areas to aid board and staff decision-making in the volatile and unpredictable years to come.

Our three strategic imperatives do not exist independently but have an interconnected relationship. The more a decision or action connects to multiple imperatives the greater the opportunity for maximum impact. Embedded in our strategic imperatives is the necessity to think about whole people and places rather than programs or funding streams.

IMPERATIVE 1. Thriving Communities

EMAA will strengthen and advance the vital conditions in communities that people depend on to thrive.

Basic Needs for Health and Safety

- EMAA will work with partners and the community to expand access to and availability of mental health, health, and dental care for individuals of all ages and with low incomes across the service area.

Meaningful Work and Wealth

- EMAA will respond to labor demand disruptions and the future of work by advocating for and pursuing partnerships that promote quality jobs (e.g., living wage, basic benefits, career-building opportunities, wealth-building opportunities, and fair and engaging workplaces).
- EMAA will work with area partners to explore the possibility of expanding transportation for individuals and families we serve who are pursuing work goals.
- EMAA will expand the child care system and increase access to quality, affordable early care and education that supports families' abilities to pursue family-supporting employment and their children's healthy development.

IMPERATIVE 1. Thriving Communities

Lifelong Learning

- EMAA will expand transportation access for the individuals and families we serve who are pursuing educational goals.
- EMAA will expand the child care system and increase access to quality, affordable early care and education that supports families' abilities to pursue training and education and their children's healthy development.

Humane Housing

- EMAA will work with partners to negotiate an increase in the stock of affordable, quality housing across the service area.
- EMAA will increase the number of safe, stable, and affordable temporary housing opportunities available to homeless individuals and families.
- EMAA will increase awareness of and advocate for changes to rules, laws, policies, and practices that limit the ability of people with low incomes and criminal records to secure safe, stable, and affordable housing.



House in Fredericktown, Madison County, renovated by EMAA

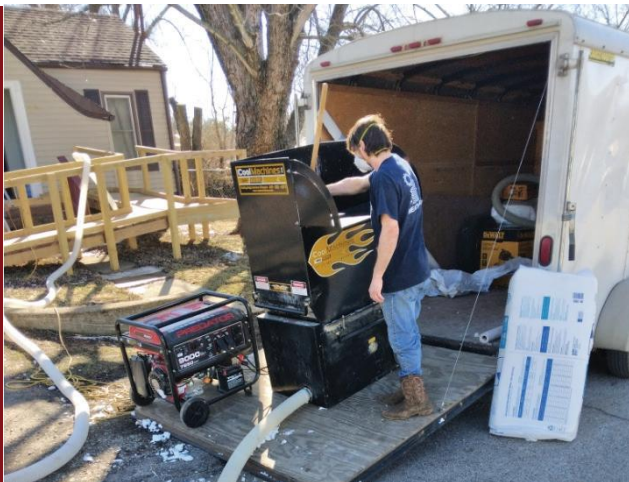
IMPERATIVE 1. Thriving Communities

Reliable Transportation

- EMAA will work with partners to advocate for transportation that is accessible, reliable, safe, and close to work, school, food, child care, health care, and leisure.

Thriving Natural World

- EMAA will collaborate with schools and other partners to promote the creation of healthy and sustainable food production.
- EMAA will increase the energy efficiency of the housing stock across the service area.



EMAA Weatherization staff completing measures to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Ste. Genevieve and St. Francois counties

Belonging and Civic Muscle

- EMAA will promote opportunities for community members to engage across race, class, sexual orientation, and other forms of diversity to build bridges and create a circle of human concern where no one is outside the circle.

IMPERATIVE 2. Thriving People

EMAA will integrate and coordinate a comprehensive mix of services that help individuals and families thrive.

Individuals and families turn to EMAA during times of crisis seeking help meeting basic needs such as food and safe housing. When stability has been achieved individuals and families turn to EMAA to seek supports with work, training, or education that can help them advance. EMAA is committed to delivering an integrated, coordinated, comprehensive mix of services that help individuals and families reach their full potential. This commitment requires EMAA to ensure—or collaborate with partners to ensure—that individuals and families have access to services that meet them wherever they are, whether they are seeking crisis, stabilization, readiness, placement, or advancement services.

Crisis Services

EMAA will provide urgent services and supports to alleviate short-term suffering and meet people's basic needs for health and safety in areas such as food, housing, and energy. These include the following:

- Accessible and efficient navigation and referral services that meet the individualized needs of people living in poverty and experiencing health, mental health, housing, heating, cooling, work, education, food, and other crisis situations.
- Healthy supplemental food assistance to children and adults using delivery methods that are respectful and accessible.
- Compassionate rental, mortgage, energy, and water assistance to families that helps them obtain or maintain safe housing and move toward improved levels of security and stability.
- Emergency shelter, temporary housing, and wraparound supports to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Education and referral for COVID-19 prevention measures such as testing and vaccination locations to protect EMAA staff and customers.

IMPERATIVE 2. Thriving People

Stabilization Services

EMAA will provide services and supports that extend beyond meeting urgent basic needs for health and safety and help people achieve and maintain greater levels of financial security, stability, and social and emotional well-being. These services will include the following:

- Coordinated coaching supports that help individuals tap into their natural capabilities and talents by helping to assess the individual or family's situation and craft a plan to improve and maintain stability and enhance readiness to pursue personalized goals to increase income and/or improve social and emotional well-being.
- Rental assistance to help families obtain safe, secure, affordable housing.
- Quality, affordable early care and education and health and nutrition services to infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from families with low incomes to promote school readiness, health, and physical development as well as parent and family well-being.
- Financial empowerment supports such as individual development accounts and financial training to increase financial security and financial health.
- Energy conservation information and energy saving measures to reduce the impact of high home energy costs on families with low incomes.
- Reproductive health care services to women and men to promote adult health, and healthy babies while also helping families plan pregnancies and births.



Head Start staff and children at a Head Start Center in Ste. Genevieve County

IMPERATIVE 2. Thriving People

Readiness Services

EMAA and its partners will provide services and supports that use the greater levels of adult and family stability as a springboard for individuals and families to achieve their full potential. These services will include the following:

- Readiness and other services and supports to young parents and young children. The latest neuroscience shows that the brains of young parents are undergoing conditions that make them more open to change and growth. Also, it has been well demonstrated that early child education is critical for brain development that takes place from 0-5 years of age. Supports for young parents (age 16-24) have a powerful multiplier effect, impacting the children and the family in both the short and long term with real potential for limiting the period both parents and children spend in poverty.
- Identification of high-demand fields with pathways to quality jobs and creation of training pathways for EMAA customers to pursue to enhance skills and prepare for employment. Training opportunities and supports will be first directed to the parents and caretakers of children in EMAA programs.
- A mix of transportation solutions (e.g., gas subsidy, car repair, car loan, volunteer driving fleet) for adults and young adults engaged in EMAA programs focused on helping people achieve their full potential.

Placement Services

EMAA will provide placement services and supports to individuals and families that have demonstrated readiness for job placement. These services will include the following:

- EMAA will support individuals in securing and maintaining a quality job that provides a family supporting wage that helps the family transition from public benefits and secure greater financial, social, and emotional well-being.

IMPERATIVE 2. Thriving People

Advancement Services

EMAA will provide advancement services and supports that help individuals and families execute their plans for navigating cliff effects with the loss of public benefits and consolidating and celebrating their progress and completing final plans for concluding EMAA services. These services will include the following:

- Utilizing cliff effect calculators and other financial planning tools to assist families in crafting a plan for the reduction and elimination of public benefits.
- Coaching families to complete their final plans and conclude EMAA's services and supports.



Family Self Sufficiency program participant Trinity Fiori at the grand opening of her business, Grind Nutrition

IMPERATIVE 3. Thriving Organization

EMAA has the organizational capacity necessary to help people and places thrive.

All these areas are interconnected and establish the conditions necessary to achieve a thriving organization. When improvement in all these components is achieved, the organization will experience a synergistic or multiplier effect and become “radically better” and on the path to becoming a thriving organization.

Put Customers First

Customer experience must be our first consideration—ahead of staff, the agency, or our funders. Service integration will help us to improve customer experience and should be pursued aggressively. We can learn how we are doing by listening to our customers and engaging them in the design and implementation of services.

EMAA staff at the launch of the EMAA Mobile Outreach Van



IMPERATIVE 3. Thriving Organization

Treat Our Talent as a Precious Resource

Talent is our most precious resource. Our staff has the biggest influence on the experience of our customers. As EMAA emerges from the pandemic we face unprecedented talent challenges. In the coming years we will focus on three questions: What talent do we need? (What roles are important to achieving our purpose and agenda); How can we attract it? and How can we manage talent most effectively to deliver on our purpose and value? (Fostering an inclusive employee experience). EMAA leadership knows recruitment, retention, workload, and compensation are immense future challenges. By focusing on these three questions EMAA can address the drivers of current and future challenges.

Sharpen Purpose and Value

Top-performing organizations have a strongly held sense of purpose, and purpose helps attract people and new funders. EMAA will take steps to make purpose real for everyone. EMAA will work with all staff to clearly articulate what the agency stands for and why it exists. EMAA will use purpose as the glue to connect employees, customers, and partners.

“There are conditions within the community and systems that hold people back from achieving self-sufficiency. EMAA needs to figure out how to integrate and coordinate to ensure families get everything they need to advance.”

Take Steps to Center Equity and Belonging

Essential to all three strategic imperatives is the need to “put on an equity lens” to help us see and understand important truths about how inequities have become embedded in our laws, rules, policies, and systems. EMAA will begin a journey to start learning, talking, thinking, and acting to increase equity and belonging.

IMPERATIVE 3. Thriving Organization

Maximize Structure and Culture

Culture is our “secret sauce.” Culture forms the backbone of organizational health and fuels sustained performance over time. EMAA will be intentional about creating the culture we all want. We will not leave culture to chance. An important aspect of culture includes communication. EMAA will deploy new solutions and methods for communicating internally and outside the organization.

In today’s world organizations are finding creative and innovative ways to engage employees and streamline services. EMAA will accomplish key aspects of the strategic plan by engaging staff and empowering them to work outside current organizational structures. We expect to establish four or five work teams to move the plan’s strategic imperatives forward.

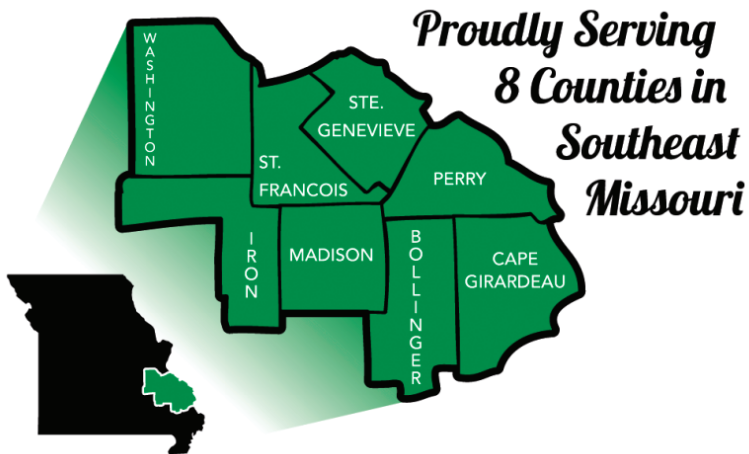
Take an Ecosystem Approach and Accelerate Learning

EMAA will unlock greater capacity and equities by considering staff, board, customers, partners, and the community as a powerful ecosystem to be tapped through deep listening, curiosity, appreciative inquiry, and learning. Building relationships across the ecosystem and moving beyond purely transactional actions will lead to transformational change.

Be Results and Data Driven

EMAA will take steps to utilize a wide range of data in a more real-time environment. EMAA will shift its perspective from considering data costs as a cost center to seeing data as a profit center. We need data for learning and decision making. EMAA will work to gain a greater understanding of our business questions. The goal is to create a continuous learning mindset.

Strategic Plan developed with assistance from Jeannie Chaffin, LLC, chaffin.jeannie@gmail.com



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