



# Utah Community Action

## 5-Year Strategic Plan

August 2024-2029



Utah Community Action™



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# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

It is with immense pride and enthusiasm that we unveil the next phase of our journey at Utah Community Action (UCA). As we reflect on our past accomplishments and look ahead to the future, I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and dedication of our staff, Board of Trustees, volunteers, and community as a whole.

In 2019, we embarked on a journey together with the launch of our previous Strategic Plan. It wasn't just a document to sit on the shelf; it was a living, breathing roadmap that guided our every decision and action. Our team worked tirelessly to implement every aspect of that plan, ensuring that it translated into tangible outcomes for those we serve. I'm thrilled to report that through our collective efforts, we've witnessed remarkable progress and meaningful impact across our programs and initiatives.

The progress we've experienced as an organization has been nothing short of extraordinary. Over the past few years, we've expanded our reach, deepened our impact, and strengthened our partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations. It's a testament to the dedication and commitment of our team, the generosity of our supporters, and the resilience of the communities we serve.

As we look to the horizon, we see new opportunities to explore. We're building upon our successes and charting a bold course forward with our new five-year Strategic Plan. This plan represents our collective vision for the future of UCA—a future where every child, individual, and family in our community has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. It's a roadmap that will guide us as we continue to innovate, collaborate, and advocate for those we are privileged to assist.

I invite you to join us on this exciting journey ahead. Together, we can make a difference and leave this community better than we found it.

Sincerely,

**Jennifer Godfrey**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Mission and Values



## Our Mission:

The mission of Utah Community Action is to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build communities through education and self-reliance programs.

## Our Agency Values



### Appreciation

We recognize and enjoy the positive contributions of others.



### Compassion

We demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of all.



### Integrity

We exemplify the highest standards of honesty and accountability.



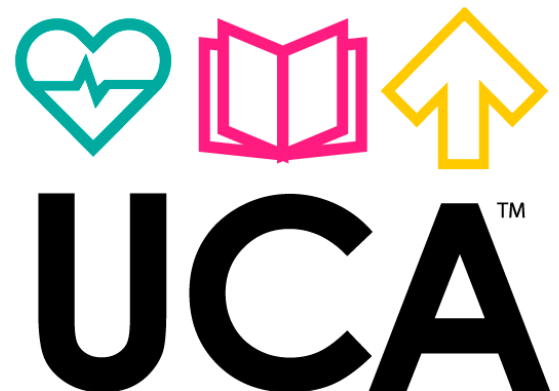
### Respect

We have admiration for each individual's unique strengths and perspectives.



### Trust

We have confidence that the agency and staff will consistently act with the best of intentions.





# Sixty Years of Utah Community Action

For 60 years, Utah Community Action has been at the forefront of identifying and addressing the most pressing needs in our community. We began in 1964 as Salt Lake Community Action Program. Almost 50 years later, in 2015, we updated our name to Utah Community Action (UCA) to more accurately reflect the breadth of our services. In addition to serving Salt Lake County, we also serve Tooele, Morgan, Davis, Weber, and Washington County—with some programs remotely serving the entire state of Utah.

As a Community Action Agency, UCA targets the root causes of poverty in an effort to prevent crises and interrupt intergenerational cycles of poverty. Originally this included community health clinics and advocacy campaigns; for many years we had a food pantry. Over time, we recognized community partners providing these services, so we partnered with them and shifted to meet other gaps in services. These include creating a commercial kitchen where we could provide healthy, fresh meals to Head Start children and seniors and provide job readiness through working culinary courses. As we noticed challenges with housing and evictions, we created a Landlord Tenant Mediation program to support renters and landlords statewide. We also adapted our Head Start program to provide more full-day, year round programs to support the needs of working parents. Additionally, we have increased mental and behavioral health supports in Head Start classrooms. We continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of the community.

Today, we provide six core programs: Head Start, Housing & Case Management, Nutrition, Workforce Development, HEAT Utility Assistance, and Home Weatherization. These programs provide wrap-around support services to meet families where they are and provide holistic case management. As we look ahead to the next five years, our community needs assessment is guiding our strategy. We are building out our Adult Education into a more robust Workforce Development Program to increase employment and wage earning potential. We also intend to address the root cause of housing instability by developing affordable rental housing for seniors and families.

What follows is the product of a long-range strategic planning process. By building a strategic plan that is mindful of strengthening our foundation, enhancing staff and client experience, and increasing agency impact, we are confident UCA will be prepared to meet evolving community needs and continue to positively impact those we serve.



# The Planning Process

UCA engaged Mackey Smith and Herbein + Company, Inc. to assist in the strategic planning process. As an essential step in this process, UCA solicited feedback from staff and various stakeholders to identify opportunities and to inform strategic priorities.

## Methodology

Methodologies utilized include:

- **Focus Groups**
- **Planning Meetings**
- **Surveys**
- **Document analysis**
- **Interviews with Key Stakeholders**

In all, 311 employees responded through the survey, and 152 staff and managers participated in facilitated dialogue sessions. Participants in the process were open in sharing challenges they see, as well as opportunities for improvement that they feel would benefit UCA if implemented.

In addition to digesting feedback from the survey and dialogue sessions, a strategic planning offsite was conducted with the executive team, managers, and key leaders. After the offsite meeting, a strategic planning session was also conducted with the Board of Trustees to ensure an alignment of priorities between the Board, the leadership team, and frontline staff. A strategic planning document was developed and further refined through additional meetings with the Board of Trustees and leadership to reflect this inclusive process. The document that follows was presented to the Board for final approval and adoption in August 2024.

This plan is intended to provide focus to allow each member of the team to see how they can impact UCA's most important priorities. It is the intent of the agency for this to become a living document with periodic revisions as the environment changes. Detailed implementation plans will be developed to align with the priorities articulated in this plan.

# Themes That Have Emerged

Throughout our stakeholder outreach process, certain themes emerged that impacted the content and prioritization of the Strategic Plan. This section outlines key external trends UCA must prepare for, strengths to be leveraged, and opportunities to address.

## Key Trends Impacting Our Strategy

### Cost of Living Increase

One of the most pressing needs facing the community is the dramatic increase in cost of living. This includes housing, utilities, food, gas, child care, and more. The challenge not only impact clients, but the broader community.

### Rising Cost of Child Care

Utah ranks among the states with the most expensive child care in the country. A high birth rate, combined with the need for dual-income households to make ends meet, continues to keep the demand, and prices, up for childcare. This pricing trend is causing childcare costs to become an increasingly significant expense for the majority of Utah households.

### Strengthening Partnerships

As demand for services increases, collaboration with other organizations will become increasingly important. To prepare for the evolving needs of clients, UCA must cultivate strong relationships and communication channels with other service providers, governmental entities, and private sector supporters.

### Community Health Challenges

Unique health challenges uncovered in recent years have only continued. Currently, mental health remains the number one need among white households in Salt Lake County. Among non-white households, food security is the top health concern, highlighting continued disparity in our communities.



## Intergenerational Poverty

Several factors prevent clients from attaining the self-reliance needed for the agency to expand its services to new clients. These include growing income inequality, record inflation, housing costs, stagnating wages, and high rates of intergenerational poverty (poverty that is transmitted from one generation to another, with children born into poverty more likely to become disadvantaged adults themselves.)

## Population Growth and Urbanization

With the state's population anticipated to double by 2050, and the increase in urbanization that will accompany this growth, the number of at-risk families will only increase. Current organizational infrastructure must be prepared to grow in order to effectively anticipate this significant growth in public needs.



# Strengths to Be Leveraged

## Reputation of Quality Service

UCA has served the public for over 60 years and has established a strong presence and reputation in the community at large. Organizations throughout the state recognize UCA as a leader in early childhood education and services to the most vulnerable members of our communities. More important than simply being recognized for the services it provides, UCA is trusted by the families it serves as a source of assistance, and the community associates UCA with a standard of excellence matched by few non-profits.

## Broad Reach of Services

UCA currently operates out of over 40 locations in the Greater Salt Lake Area and is uniquely positioned to accommodate lower socioeconomic communities throughout this region across six key service areas. This positioning gives UCA access to these communities, helping build trust and public awareness in the areas where services are needed most.

## Stability and Scaling

UCA's long standing partnerships, community trust, and government relationships are our strength and foundation. In addition, our solid financial structure has allowed for the continuation of services in the midst of federal government shutdowns. The agency also has conducted effective leadership and succession planning to ensure a quality executive team for years to come. With the sheer number of locations, the organization has created a network effect that is earned through scale. This impacts UCA's ability to maintain a recruiting pipeline, effectively advocate collaboration between public agencies, and impacts a large number of families with its services. UCA's scale also has forced the agency to adopt formalized routines to effectively process families and the documentation required by the government and other stakeholders, including its IT infrastructure of a sophisticated data lake and advanced data tracking capabilities. Additionally, UCA's financing structure has become consistent allowing the organization to use a longer-range planning horizon.

## Purpose-Driven Staff

During meetings with staff, it was clear that employees feel a sincere desire to assist clients and care deeply about the work they do. This level of commitment is unique to UCA compared to other non-profits. While many non-profits aim to serve people in need, UCA staff directly interact with these individuals daily, creating a tangible purpose and meaning. With this purpose-driven mindset, UCA has an opportunity to develop a strong and unified culture where employees feel like they are a part of a bigger team, doing work that makes a meaningful difference for those in need.

# Opportunities to Address

## Investment in Human Capital

Like many organizations in today's job market, UCA is challenged by continued turnover rates that necessitate ongoing recruitment and training, stretching human matters. The cost of maintaining a competitive compensation and benefits structure to attract and retain skilled professionals continues to rise, especially in departments where specialized talent is scarce.

## Facilities Planning

While many improvements have been made over the past five years, facility improvements remain a pressing need. This includes continued security improvements, adequate parking, kitchen enhancements, and improvements to partnership sites.

## Diversify Funding

The current financial state of the Federal Government has led to the ongoing possibility of a government shutdown, or worse, a default. UCA has prepared itself for such scenarios, but the political inconsistencies based on which party is in charge and current gridlock limit the agency's ability to rely on government programs to be timely and orderly in their assistance. Additionally, the current shift in philanthropy provides opportunities for more trust-based philanthropic funding.

## Affordable Housing Development

Given the current housing crisis faced by the community, UCA seeks to expand its role and impact in addressing this essential need. This includes expanding housing services, exploring opportunities to engage in LIHTC projects, and partnering to bring affordable rental housing to the community.

## Expand Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Services

The current pricing of childcare, along with other essential services, limits parents' ability to fully participate in the workforce and impacts the social development of children in the essential formative years before age five.

## Navigating Program-Specific Challenges

Challenges include state politics around homeless service funding, proposed federal funding changes in programs operated by UCA, accountability from parents and clients, cultivating a positive data culture, and support for teachers instructing children with behavioral issues.



# 5 Year Strategic Plan

**5 Year Intention Statement: Continue to enhance the quality of our services while pursuing strategic growth to maximize our impact in the community.**



**Our Mission:** Utah Community Action's mission is to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build communities through education and self-reliance programs.

# Strategic Imperative 1 Strengthen Our Foundation



Utah Community Action has made significant internal improvements over the last 5 years. Evolving to meet community needs, the top priority remains strengthening the organization and continuing to provide quality services to individuals, children, and families. Specifically, UCA will increase the amount of unrestricted funds coming to the agency, creating resilience to market factors and flexibility in responding to agency and community needs. UCA will also expand public-private partnerships so that effective collaboration can address the long-standing challenges in our community. Through these efforts, UCA will strengthen its foundation, and continue to earn the trust of clients and community partners.



## Aligned Strategic Initiatives

- Continue effective service delivery in all programs
- Increase unrestricted funds
- Strengthen and develop public-private partnerships to meet community needs

**Continue to strengthen our internal structure to maintain our reputation as the best service provider in the State.**



## How will we measure success?

- Grant compliance and standards of excellence
- Diversification of funding sources
- Increased partnerships





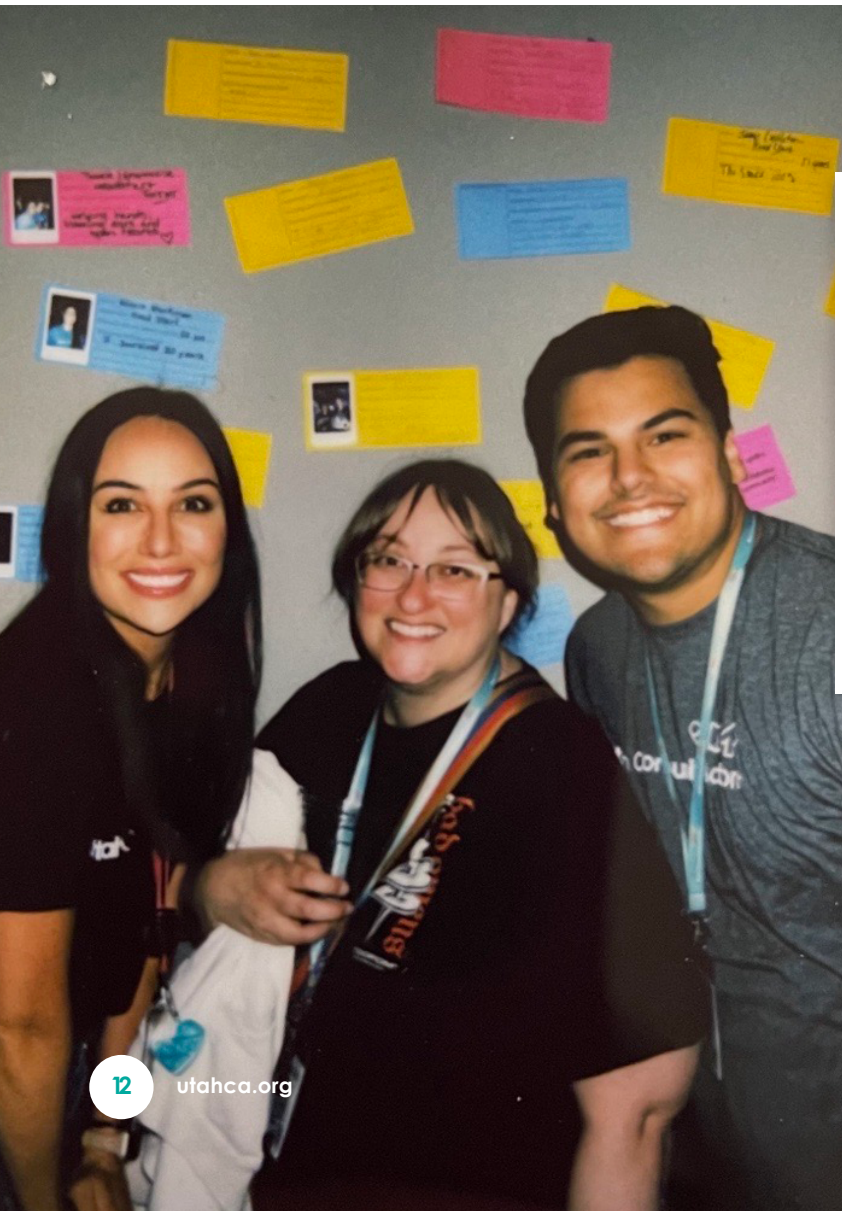
# Strategic Imperative 2

## Enhance Staff & Client Experience

### Aligned Strategic Initiatives

- Continue to refine the coordinated intake system and effectively share information between departments
- Implement holistic case management
- Enhance the safety and security of facilities
- Increase transparency by effective communication of vision and goals with frontline staff and those we serve

Utah Community Action will enhance the experience of staff and clients through several key initiatives. These include refining the coordinated intake system to facilitate seamless information sharing across departments, implementing holistic case management practices to ensure comprehensive client care, and enhancing safety and security measures at facilities to ensure a secure environment. UCA will also increase transparency through effective communication of Agency vision, mission, and goals to staff and clients--fostering a collaborative and informed approach to service delivery.



**Identify new ways to enhance how we support and develop our staff to deliver quality services to children and families.**

### How will we measure success?

- Number of successful client referrals
- Number of individuals and families served
- Investment in facility enhancements
- Increased Net Promoter Scores for staff and clients

# Strategic Imperative 3 Increase Agency Impact



Utah CommunityAction has increased their ability to serve individuals experiencing poverty, yet the demand for services continues to grow. UCA will enhance its ability to positively impact community needs, specifically increasing access to high-quality early childhood services, developing affordable rental housing for seniors and families with children, and supporting workforce development leading to self-reliance. Growth in these areas will directly address community need demonstrating UCA's leadership as an innovative, forward-thinking community action agency.

## Aligned Strategic Initiatives

- Increase access to high-quality, early childhood services
- Expand workforce development services
- Increase capacity to develop affordable rental housing

**Strategically grow  
and meet the most  
pressing needs of the  
community we serve.**

## How will we measure success?

- Increase the number of children receiving high quality early childhood services
- Job placements with higher wages and employee benefits
- Project-specific milestones in the exploration of affordable rental housing development



# Implementation of The Plan



## Recommendations for Utah Community Action

- Create and implement a 5-year plan (2024-29), outlining key milestones, action items, individuals accountable, and timelines for the tasks that will drive success for each strategic initiative
- Communicate the Strategic Plan to stakeholders and distribute a one-page condensed Strategic Plan to each employee
- Utilize the Strategic Plan as the basis for annual planning and goal setting
- Refer to Strategic Plan in Board meetings, leveraging the Strategic Plan as context for important conversations, including the setting of future goals for strategic imperatives and the development of new key initiatives
- Annually establish and review outcome measures associated with strategic imperatives. Make adjustments as necessary to ensure close correlation between outcome measures and plan directives
- Annually provide the Board with an update on progress of key initiatives and measures of success for each strategic imperative



While actively measuring several important metrics, UCA will continue to develop the capabilities to track additional metrics to track future growth and success. With a strong baseline for data gathering already in place, UCA is well positioned to immediately track essential metrics to measure the success of implementing the Strategic Plan. UCA will also continue to create specific quantitative milestones for various imperatives and initiatives.

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