GECAC
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2026–2028
Draft for Board Review & Approval – January 27, 2026 (Standard 4.4)

I. Purpose & Connection to Organizational Standard 4.4

The Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC) completed a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) for Erie County, identifying the most significant causes and conditions of poverty affecting individuals, families, and communities.

This Community Action Plan (CAP):

- Translates CNA findings into clear priorities, goals, and strategies.
- Aligns with the Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle (Assessment → Planning → Implementation → Achievement of Results → Evaluation).
- Is presented to the GECAC Board of Directors on **January 27, 2026** to demonstrate board engagement and oversight and to **meet Community Action Organizational Standard 4.4** (board review/approval of the Community Action Plan informed by the CNA).

II. Summary of CNA Priority Needs (Erie County, 2024–2028)

The GECAC CNA identified the following **priority needs**:

- **Affordable Housing & Utility Relief**
- **Living-Wage Jobs & Job Training Access**
- **Transportation Equity (Urban & Rural)**
- **Healthcare Access, Mental Health & Substance Use Response**
- **Senior Services: Nutrition, Social Isolation, Caregiver Support**
- **Child Poverty Reduction & Youth Engagement**
- **Equity Across Race, Gender, Age & Disability**

These priorities reflect quantitative data (CAP60, local datasets, state and national sources) and qualitative input from residents, partners, and stakeholders across Erie County. Please note, CAP60 is GECAC's internal client tracking system.

III. Planning Process

To move from CNA to action, GECAC utilized the following process:

- **Review of CNA Findings:** Leadership and program teams reviewed data in each priority area, including gaps in services and geographic disparities.
- **ROMA-Based Planning:** Needs were linked to specific, measurable outcomes (individual, family, and community-level).
- **Internal Consultation:** Directors and agency level staff from Workforce Development, Aging, Housing, and Youth Programs provided input on realistic strategies and partnerships.
- **Partner & Community Input:** Feedback from community partners, funders, and residents helped refine strategies, especially around housing, workforce, and senior/aging services.
- **Draft Plan Development:** This 2026–2028 Community Action Plan was drafted to align with funding cycles, staffing capacity, and GECAC's broader strategic direction.

IV. Strategic Priorities, Goals & Key Strategies (2026–2028)

Below are the core priorities, high-level goals GECAC will pursue. Program-specific work plans and performance measures will sit "under" this plan.

Priority 1: Affordable Housing & Utility Relief

Goal 1.1: Reduce housing cost burden and prevent homelessness for low-income households in Erie County.

Key Strategies:

- Expand outreach and enrollment for energy assistance services, especially in high-need ZIP codes.
- Strengthen partnerships with local housing providers, landlords, and legal aid to support eviction prevention and emergency housing navigation.
- Integrate financial coaching through Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), budgeting, and benefits screening into housing/utility relief services.
- Advocate with local and state partners around aging housing stock, and home repair needs identified in the CNA.

Lead Departments/Partners: Housing Services, the local housing authority, Erie County, City of Erie, ECGRA, Erie County Housing Coalition.

Priority 2: Living-Wage Jobs & Job Training Access

Goal 2.1: Increase the number of Erie County residents who obtain and retain **living-wage employment** with career advancement potential.

Key Strategies (Examples)

- Scale and refine Earn + Learn, Work Ready, and Adult Education pathways to connect training directly to in-demand occupations identified by regional labor market data.
- Collaborate with employers (manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, etc.) to create on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and incumbent worker upskilling opportunities.
- Provide wraparound supports (childcare navigation, transportation help, coaching) to reduce barriers to training and employment.
- Use Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS), CAP60, and program databases to track employment outcomes and wage gains over time.

Lead Department: Education Workforce & Self Sufficiency (EWSS) Department. The Regional NWPA Workforce Development Board, Adult Education, Local Employers, NWPA CareerLink, and Erie Community College, Universities.

Priority 3: Transportation Equity (Urban & Rural)

Goal 3.1: Improve access to reliable, affordable transportation so residents can reach work, school, healthcare, and essential services.

Key Strategies:

- Work with Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) and rural transportation providers to identify/advocate for routes and schedules aligned with shift work and training schedules.
- Explore transportation stipends, gas cards, and coordinated ride solutions for participants in workforce, aging, and youth programs (as allowable by funding).
- Advocate for rural transportation solutions that address isolation and access challenges in outlying parts of Erie County.
- Incorporate transportation screening into intake across programs and track transportation as a barrier/outcome in CAP60.

Lead Departments/Partners: Education Workforce & Self Sufficiency (EWSS) Department, Workforce Development, Aging Services, EMTA, rural transit providers, employers.

Priority 4: Healthcare Access, Mental Health & Substance Use Response

Goal 4.1: Improve access to healthcare, mental health supports, and substance use services for low-income individuals and families.

Key Strategies:

- Integrate screening and warm referrals for primary care, behavioral health, and substance use services into GECAC's intake processes utilizing PA Navigate, which is a tool used by community action agencies across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Co-locate or coordinate health and mental health partners at GECAC sites and senior centers where possible. Also work with UPMC to help coordinate services at the neighborhood center.
- Provide health education, prevention workshops, and navigation support targeting high-need neighborhoods and populations identified in the CNA.
- Participate in county/community health planning tables to elevate CNA findings and advocate for equitable resource allocation.

Lead Departments/Partners: Aging Services, Family Services, behavioral health providers, Erie County Department of Health.

Priority 5: Senior Services – Nutrition, Social Isolation, Caregiver Support

Goal 5.1: Support older adults in aging in place safely with improved nutrition, social connection, and caregiver support.

Key Strategies:

- Strengthen **Aging Well (Medicaid eligibility assessment service), and senior center services** to address nutrition, transportation, and social isolation identified in the CNA.
- Expand **evidence-informed activities** at senior centers (exercise, chronic disease self-management, technology classes, social activities).
- Support **family caregivers** through education, respite opportunities (where allowable), and connections to resources.

Lead Departments/Partners: Aging Services (Area Agency on Aging), care giver support, senior centers, and local health systems.

Priority 6: Child Poverty Reduction & Youth Engagement

Goal 6.1: Improve educational, social, and economic outcomes for youth living in poverty.

Key Strategies:

- Strengthen **Upward Bound, after-school, and youth employment** programs as key pipelines out of poverty.
- Expand **tutoring, mentoring, and college/career readiness** activities for middle and high school students.
- Engage youth voice through **advisory councils or youth leadership groups** connected to GECAC programs.
- Coordinate with schools, juvenile justice, and community partners to target supports to youth most at risk (per CNA data).

Lead Departments/Partners: Education Workforce & Self Sufficiency (EWSS) Department, Earn + Learn, Upward Bound, local school districts, community centers, juvenile justice partners, higher education institutions.

Priority 7: Equity Across Race, Gender, Age & Disability

Goal 7.1: Ensure that GECAC's programs, policies, and outcomes advance equity across race, gender, age, disability, and geography.

Key Strategies:

- Use **disaggregated data (race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, ZIP code)** to identify inequities in access, services, and outcomes.
- Strengthen **training and practices** for staff and leadership; integrate equity considerations into program design and decision-making.
- Conduct targeted outreach to **underrepresented neighborhoods and populations** under-served in the CNA data.
- Include equity-focused outcomes and indicators within ROMA and performance management processes.

Lead Departments/Partners: Executive Leadership, HR, all program departments, community coalitions, civil rights and disability advocates.

V. Implementation, Performance Management & ROMA Alignment

To ensure this Community Action Plan is fully implemented and monitored, GECAC will:

1. **Create Program-Level Work Plans**
   - Each department (Aging, Education Workforce & Self Sufficiency Executive leadership) will develop detailed work plans that align with the priorities and goals outlined here.
2. **Define ROMA-Compatible Outcomes & Indicators**
   - For each goal, GECAC will define specific indicators (e.g., households with reduced energy burden, participants obtaining employment, seniors reporting reduced isolation).
   - Outcomes will be tracked via **CAP60, CWDS, and other internal databases**, following the ROMA cycle.
3. **Use Data for Continuous Improvement**
   - Leadership and program directors will review outcomes **at least quarterly**, identify trends, and adjust strategies.
   - CNA and Community Action Partnership (CAP) data will inform grant applications, partnership development, and resource allocation.
4. **Annual Update to the Board (Standard 4.x as applicable)**
   - The Board will receive an **annual progress update** on the implementation of this Community Action Plan, including outcome data, major accomplishments, and areas needing adjustment.

VI. Timeline (High-Level)

- **January 27, 2026:** Board review and approval of the 2026–2028 Community Action Plan.
- **February–April 2026:** Department-level work plans finalized; performance measures confirmed.
- **Mid-Year & Annual (2026–2028):** ROMA-informed outcome reviews; board updates on progress.
- **2028:** Incorporate results and learning from this CAP into the next CNA and subsequent planning cycle.

VII. Board Action – Suggested Motion (Standard 4.4)

Suggested Motion for January 27, 2026 Board Meeting

"I move that the GECAC Board of Directors approve the 2026–2028 Community Action Plan as presented, which was developed based on the most recent Community Needs Assessment and aligned with the ROMA cycle. This approval is intended to meet the requirements of Community Action Organizational Standard 4.4."