



2024-2029 Strategic Plan

Bucks County Opportunity Council

**Five-Year Strategic Plan (2024-2029)
for the Bucks County Opportunity Council
January 10, 2024**

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Letter from the CEO

As we approach the conclusion of our 2018 – 2023 strategic plan, I am filled with gratitude and pride for the incredible journey we have embarked upon together. The dedication and passion of our entire team, from our staff to our volunteers, donors, and partners, have been instrumental in achieving our mission. With this letter, I would like to reflect on our shared accomplishments and express my sincere appreciation.

Our strategic plan was not just a document; it was a roadmap that guided our actions, decisions, and priorities over the past 5 years. It was a blueprint for our vision of creating a better Bucks County and fulfilling our mission of reducing poverty and partnering with the community to promote economic self-sufficiency. We set forth a clear path and objectives, and collectively, we have made significant progress, despite several challenges including a global pandemic.

Here are some of the key highlights from our journey:

Expanded the ES program through the launch of Coaches on Campus: BCOC partnered with Bucks County Community College to bring the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program as well as basic needs support to the college campus. We integrated with student services and became a resource for students struggling to stay enrolled due to financial hardship or lack of support. Today, we are embedded on two BCCC campuses and in our first year, we assisted 52 students.

Opened the HELP Center: BCOC partnered with the United Way of Bucks County, St. Mary Medical Center, and Penn Community Bank to open the first Healthy Eating and Living Partnership (HELP) center in Bristol, PA. The center is the first of its kind in Bucks County designed to serve under-resourced households by providing home goods, basic needs, food, and other essential supports as well as offering resource navigation services. In just four short years, the HELP center has provided resources to thousands of people and has been a hub for those affected by disasters.

Grew & Diversified Funding: The pandemic brought many challenges, but in a positive light, it elevated the awareness of BCOC as we were out in the community every day helping people with essential resources. This brought new donors, funding opportunities, and helped BCOC improve our fundraising game. From year one to year five, BCOC increased private funding by 71%

Reduced homelessness in Bucks County: BCOC worked side by side with multiple partners to address homelessness with innovative and creative solutions. At the start of the 5-year plan we set out to decrease homelessness by 10% in Bucks County. I am proud to report that between 2019 and 2023, we reduced homelessness by 20% despite a pandemic, low vacancy rates, and increased rent costs.

These accomplishments are not just statistics; they represent the lives we've touched, the communities we've helped, and the positive change we've created. They are a testament to the dedication and hard work of each member of TeamBCOC.

While we celebrate our achievements, we must also recognize that our work is far from complete. The challenges we set out to address still exist, and there is much more we can do to make a lasting difference. Therefore, as we close this chapter and look toward the future, we have developed a new strategic plan that will build upon our successes and guide us toward even greater impact.

In this next phase, our focus will remain on the following key priorities:

1. **Refine and enhance BCOC's model for breaking the cycle of generational poverty:** We will continue to grow the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program in Bucks and surrounding communities through our work with educational institutions and community partners.
2. **Focus on upstream strategies to prevent future crises and homelessness:** BCOC will put additional efforts and resources into preventing first time homelessness which can often be the catalyst to poverty.
3. **Improve health equity across Bucks County:** As the lead food agency for the county, BCOC has resources, capacity, and skills to effect change for our residents' health and well-being. We will enhance our partnerships with healthcare entities to address the social determinants of health in marginalized communities.
4. **Revitalize BCOC's Infrastructure for Enhanced Agency Outcomes:** In the upcoming years, we'll upgrade and modernize our infrastructure to create an environment that enhances service delivery for community residents dealing with economic challenges. We'll build on our core values and strengths to make things even better.
5. **Strengthen the Financial Landscape with Intentional, Strategic Commitments:** To boost our ability to support and empower the community, we'll enhance the mix of funding sources that match their needs and goals.

This new strategic plan is not a departure from our core values and mission, but an evolution that aligns with the changing needs of our communities and the world around us.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey. Together, we have achieved great things, and together, we will continue to create positive change in Bucks County.

With heartfelt appreciation and anticipation for our shared future,



Erin A. Lukoss

Chief Executive Officer

Bucks County Opportunity Council

About Bucks County Opportunity Council

The mission of the Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC) is to reduce poverty and partner with our community to promote self-sufficiency. At BCOC we envision a community where all people can achieve economic security and have opportunities to create their future story. BCOC is also committed to racial equity by proactively seeking to eliminate racial inequities and racism to advance economic stability in Bucks County.

BCOC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization who is the authority on breaking the cycle of poverty and advancing economic mobility for under-resourced residents of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. As the designated Community Action agency for the county, we are part of a national network of over 1,000 human service providers established in 1964. Community Action is one of only 15 national human services providers addressing the root causes and conditions of poverty. We are dedicated to ending poverty by connecting people with the resources they need to thrive.

For over 59 years, BCOC has served thousands of families with low-income in Bucks County by helping them to stabilize when in crisis, gain additional education and training, build resources to achieve a livable wage, and work towards economic self-sufficiency. The board and staff of BCOC believe in these core values:

- people living in the economic condition of poverty are problem-solvers and are capable of change,
- self-sufficiency is possible for everyone,
- no significant change can occur without a significant relationship, and
- two things that move people out of poverty are education and training.

BCOC does not offer a “cookie cutter” or “one size fits all” approach, as poverty is complicated, and each person has a story and a path that is unique. Our coaches are skilled in handling diverse and complicated situations and have resources available to help participants achieve success. For many who lack the support of a close network of family and friends, their coach is their sole emotional support.

Strategic Planning Process

We began our strategic planning process in Spring 2023, working with a consultant to design and facilitate a strategic development workshop. Members of our board, senior leadership team, and managers, coordinators, supervisors, and front-line staff participated in the workshop. Several external stakeholders were interviewed for their insights as part of this process. Utilizing a strengths-based approach to strategy development, participants worked together throughout the day to identify a future course that is aligned with the organization’s vision for the future. It was a high-level, directional approach to strategy, and combined with insights from the external stakeholders, helped to inform the key strategic objectives we will pursue throughout the next five years, listed below, and detailed in the pages that follow:

1	Continue to Refine & Enhance the BCOC Model for Breaking Through Generational Poverty in Bucks County and Surrounding Areas
2	Focus on Upstream Strategies to Prevent Future Crises and Homelessness
3	Create a Healthy Community and Improve Health Equity Across Bucks County
4	Revitalize BCOC’s Infrastructure for Enhanced Agency Outcomes
5	Strengthen the Financial Landscape with Intentional, Strategic Commitments

Strategic Objectives

#1: Continue to Refine & Enhance the BCOC Model for Breaking Through Generational Poverty in Bucks County and Surrounding Areas.

Intended Outcome(s): Expand and grow the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program to reduce poverty in Bucks to create opportunities for everyone to flourish and thrive.

Key Initiative(s):

- a. Expand Coaches on Campus to all three BCCC campuses.
- b. Integrate outreach into ES coach performance to capture clients frequently accessing BCOC services.
- c. Duplicate “Opportunity Center” model at all sites for centralized/seamless services.
- d. ES program becomes “evidence-based model.”
- e. Partner with healthcare to address Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) using ES model/platform.
- f. Partner with local banks to fund and grow home ownership opportunities for ES participants and alumni.

#2: Focus on Upstream Strategies to Prevent Future Crises and Homelessness

Intended Outcome: Address housing instability through creative solutions and alternative options to eliminate homelessness in Bucks County.

Key Initiative(s):

- a. Establish a robust eviction prevention and diversion program to prevent first-time homelessness.
- b. Expand court mediation program with local partners to include three district courts.
- c. Collaborate with partner organizations to develop innovative housing options for under-resourced residents of Bucks County.
- d. Duplicate “Opportunity Center” model at all sites for centralized/seamless services and work with our software provider, CTS, to develop tracking method for multiple services in one household.
- e. Develop shallow rent subsidy program with case management to address those with higher potential for eviction.

#3: Create a Healthy Community and Improve Health Equity Across Bucks County

Intended Outcome: Increase the capacity of the food program to eliminate food insecurity in Bucks County on the path to improved health equity.

Key Initiative(s):

- a. Move the HELP Center to a larger location with partner, United Way of Bucks County, to double the available storage and distribution space.
- b. Locate and acquire warehouse in Central Bucks for traditional food bank.
- c. Invest in the Hunger & Nutrition Coalition to accelerate advocacy around food insecurity by providing leadership (i.e. a leader).
- d. Expand the food team to include a dedicated food rescue team.
- e. Formalize the use of the five community health workers (CHW) who have been certified by PA to improve health equity for low-income households.

#4: Revitalize BCOC's Infrastructure for Enhanced Agency Outcomes

Intended Outcome: Revitalize and modernize BCOC's infrastructure, fostering an environment that supports increased excellence in service delivery to community residents facing economic challenges, while building on our core values and strengths.

Key Initiative(s):

- a. Develop HR improvements for staff retention including improved work/life balance benefits, compensation analysis, and increase staffing to reduce workload in some departments.
- b. Conduct a Talent Inventory to better align with needs.
- c. Develop an "app" for improving client access to services.
- d. Complete data analysis/development from all systems more accurate reporting.
- e. Develop adequate IT Support for all staff and systems through development of IT strategic plan with phased approach to IT solutions.
- f. Assess and identify key facility management needs.
- g. Digitize BCOC's practices in fiscal, administration, and client services to streamline processes and save time.

#5: Strengthen the Financial Landscape with Intentional, Strategic Commitments

Intended Outcome: To foster a thriving and diverse range of funding sources that align with our community's needs and aspirations, amplifying our capacity to uplift and empower.

Key Initiative(s):

- a. Develop a training arm to generate unrestricted income for BCOC's mission.
- b. Enhance BCOC's Legacy Giving program.
- c. Execute three multi-year commitments a year for specific programs.
- d. Solicit donations/contributions to the ES Endowment.
- e. Utilize marketing plan to develop "monthly donor circle" campaign with recognition and acknowledgments meaningful to donors.
- f. Develop a marketing plan with an outside consultant to improve BCOC's recognition as a trusted human service provider.