

Visioning – Agency Interview – November 12, 2024  
Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA)

NMCAA is a private, non-profit organization that is connected to CAA offices across the United States. There are 27 agencies in Michigan and this one is the second largest in the state. It serves a nine-county area including Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Wexford, Missaukee and Roscommon, with offices in Petoskey, Traverse City and Cadillac. It employs 350 personnel.

The four questions “For Agency Interview” were asked. The answers are explained below.

1. Its **mission** is to foster economic justice with emphases on economic stability, housing and education. It provides opportunities that promote self-sufficiency, improving the quality of life and building stronger, more connected communities. Its **vision** drives the change that strengthens communities where *all people* have opportunities to achieve their full potential. This includes needs surrounding affordable housing, food insufficiency, education/child care (Head Start, Angel Care), and financial management.
2. Within the Traverse City community NMCAA serves our neighbors and see *collaboration* as a primary strength here. This agency works together with organizations like Food Rescue, Goodwill Inn, TCAPS, farm-to-table agencies, and Northwest Michigan to End Homelessness, and several others.
3. NMCAA ranks affordable housing and childcare as the chief issues lacking within our larger community. Food insecurity and clients’ desire for fresh foods is another important segment that is often lacking for clients. Financial literacy, budgeting, credit scores and similar tasks are important tools that clients need.
4. Gaps in service to those who need them can be provided by volunteers who are knowledgeable and able to help clients with income tax preparation. People are also needed for Meals on Wheels. Promoting the services of CAA in the community would be a visible way of bringing attention to the organization.

We learned a tremendous amount about this agency. The CEO was friendly and knowledgeable. We could have spent a great deal more time going further in depth about the wonderful work NMCAA is undertaking. We have an annual report and a small handout which summarizes their efforts to “bridge the gap between poverty and empowered independence.”

We envision a future XYZ program or congregational event focused on NMCAA. There is also a Saturday event at the Career Tech Center in February where BLC might provide some assistance promoting resources for clients. The feasibility of a BLC team of individuals could be formed as a way to serve as volunteers for various activities. Volunteers are sometimes needed for front desk reception, answering phone calls, greeting walk-in clients.

We are grateful for the opportunity to learn about NMCA. Nancy Ammann and Carolyn Mann