



**Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries**

# **Strategic Plan 2010 - 2013**



# Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM)

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2013

### SUMMARY

**Planning process:** The strategic planning process was carried out over a five-month period from February to June 2010. A Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of members of the Executive Committee (which includes two member executive directors and three funders), ACAM's executive director, three ACAM member executive directors (in addition to the two on the Executive Committee), and one funder (in addition to the three on the Executive Committee) was formed. The planning design incorporated four meetings with the member executive directors, with attendance averaging 9 out of 13 and every member attending at least two planning sessions. The results of these meetings were taken into account by the Strategic Planning Committee members who conducted further analysis of the agency's needs and future direction. Member executive director meetings were facilitated by Ellen Cokinos, LMSW of Ellen Cokinos Consulting. After each meeting, information was compiled and distributed back to the member. The Strategic Plan was approved by both the member Executive Directors and the ACAM Executive Committee.

**Mission:** To provide social purpose ministries with a professional forum to strengthen their capacity to fulfill their mission.

**Vision:** The vision for ACAM is the continual development of a dynamic, high-performing network of social purpose ministries, funders and community partners who, through synergistic alliances, will effect change for those in need. ACAM members envision ACAM to be:

- 1) A measurably successful and replicable model of collaborative action.
- 2) Nationally-recognized for providing models, resources and collaborative solutions to local faith initiatives to help them address basic needs, self-sufficiency and homeless prevention in communities of various sizes.
- 3) A significant, positive and valuable brand.
- 4) A formidable educational/advocacy group.
- 5) A growing network of strong organizations.
- 6) A pace-setter for basic needs, self-sufficiency and homeless prevention ministries.
- 7) Known for providing high-impact training and development opportunities for all members.
- 8) A convening group that can help identify underserved areas and assist local members or other nonprofit collaborations to meet needs there.

ACAM Members envision ACAM membership to mean that they are recognized as:

- 1) The premier and expert providers of basic needs services in Greater Houston.
- 2) Organizations that hold themselves to a higher standard and continue to improve.
- 3) Community partners who mentor fellow ACAM members large and small to benefit the network and the community

**Strategic Goals:**

- 1) Continue to demonstrate that the Capacity Building Grants Program has a significant positive impact on the capacity of members.
- 2) Increase concept development and collaborative initiatives.
- 3) Explore and evaluate the idea of a ministry-wide common data base/case tracking system.
- 4) Increase ACAM reach and strength of networking and training groups.
- 5) Increase the service area of membership by reaching out to underserved parts of Greater Houston, raising the profile of CAMs as service hubs in their communities and raising awareness around the issues affecting the people served by the CAMs.
- 6) Increase ACAM's capacity to serve a growing membership.

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### INTRODUCTION

Started in 2005 as a three-year collaborative project, ACAM has its roots in high-touch philanthropy and capacity building. In 2008, the member nonprofits and funders wanted to see the work of the pilot phase expanded and continued, and so rigorous work sessions ensued that tapped the strength of ministry, funding and community partners giving ACAM a firm start as an organization in 2008. Since that time, ACAM has added member services, staff and new and diverse ministry and funding partners. Today, ACAM is a member services organization that provides funding, training and networking opportunities. Members are faith-based nonprofits that provide basic needs such as food, clothing, rent and utility assistance and serve as the safety net for those in need in the Greater Houston area. Governed by a five-member executive committee comprised of representatives from supporting foundations and member organizations, ACAM is a unique donor-ministry partnership. Through its core programs, ACAM helps its members to become stronger and more sustainable because increased capacity results in the increased ability to serve more people in need. ACAM's core programs include capacity building, networking and training, and advocacy and outreach.

Understanding the importance of ensuring growth in programming, funding, and staff, the ACAM Executive Committee and staff recognized that the organization was well postured to engage in a strategic planning process. Such a planning process was viewed as an essential activity to strategically position ACAM to thrive over the next three years. R. Terry Bell, Executive Committee Chair engaged Dave Steitz of Steitz Partners to help design and facilitate the strategic planning process.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process was carried out over a five-month period from February to June 2010. A Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of members of the Executive Committee (which includes two member executive directors and three funders), ACAM's executive director, three ACAM member executive directors (in addition to the two on the Executive Committee), and one funder (in addition to the three on the Executive Committee) was formed. The planning design incorporated four meetings with the member executive directors, with attendance averaging 9 out of 13 and every member attending at least two planning sessions. The results of these meetings were taken into account by the Strategic Planning Committee members who conducted further analysis of the agency's needs and future direction. Member executive director meetings were facilitated by Ellen Cokinos, LMSW of Ellen Cokinos Consulting. After each meeting, information was compiled and distributed back to the member executive directors for verification and then to the Strategic Planning Committee. The final plan was ratified by the ACAM Executive Committee. The Strategic Plan was approved by both the member Executive Directors and the ACAM Executive Committee.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The statement of the *mission* of ACAM is:

**To provide social purpose ministries with a professional forum to strengthen their capacity to fulfill their mission.**

## **VISION STATEMENT**

An organization cannot be greater than its vision. The vision that will guide ACAM over the next three years:

**The vision for ACAM is the continual development of a dynamic, high-performing network of social purpose ministries, funders and community partners who, through synergistic alliances, will effect change for those in need.**

ACAM members envision ACAM to be:

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### THE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM:

1. **(Goal) Continue to demonstrate that the Capacity Building Grants Program has a significant positive impact on the capacity of members.**

(Objective) Develop and implement an evidence-based assessment tool with input of the members that aligns with the Nine Elements of Organizational Capacity.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Create a committee of EDs and professional support to develop measures consistent with the Nine Elements of Capacity.	Pilot ready for employment by 12/31/10	ACAM ED meeting to select sub-committee on 4/8/10.  ACAM Executive Director will call the first meeting and introducing consulting support for the group.
2.	Reaffirm through written documents and policy change approved by membership that members are not required to apply for this funding as a part of membership, though they will be asked to answer an open-ended question about how the organization has built capacity in the past year.  ACAM Executive director will issue a memorandum regarding policy for capacity building grant requests.	6/13/10	ACAM Executive Director and the ACAM Executive Committee

2. **(Goal) Increase concept development and collaborative initiatives.**

- a. (Objective) Develop collaboratives based on shared areas of concern/need as expressed by members. (See action steps below – same as Objective B.)

- b. (Objective) Promote voluntary participation in diverse collaborative opportunities.

- i. Collaborative initiatives can be presented by the ACAM staff to the Executive Directors or to the staff by the Executive Directors at monthly Executive Director Meetings. In the cases of a short

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timeline, a special meeting may be called to present an initiative. Once defined, collaborative initiatives will be presented to the Executive Committee for review and approval as an action item for possible implementation, timeline and budget.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Provide Executive Directors with regular reports on collaborative initiatives that have been implemented or proposed.	5/13/2010	ACAM Staff
2.	Regularly ask for members to share areas of concern and need with ACAM staff through all ACAM networking groups and other gatherings of members.	On-going	ACAM Staff
3.	Search for partnership and funding opportunities to implement collaborative initiative ideas.	On-going	ACAM Staff and Members (as they identify opportunities)

### 3. (Goal) Explore and evaluate the idea of a ministry-wide common data base/case tracking system.

- a. (Objective) ACAM staff and contract staff to inventory current member databases, methodologies and units of measurement used by ministries along with recommendations for next steps. Share this report with ACAM members.

	Action Step	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	ACAM staff to work with contractor to complete this exploratory process.	6/30/11	ACAM staff, contract staff
2.	As a result of this report, EDs to determine what could be efficiently accomplished through the combining of measurements and ways of analyzing data.	8/31/11	ACAM EDs

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### THE NETWORKING AND TRAINING PROGRAM:

#### 1. (Goal) Increase ACAM reach and strength of networking and training groups

a. (Objective) Increase ACAM reach to member staff by providing additional networking groups or special events.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Create a networking and training for Thrift Store Managers.	Initiated and ongoing	ACAM staff will initiate dialogue and planning. Staff will engage a facilitator for future sessions.
2.	Examine meeting requirements in all areas; Determine which are most useful and meaningful to members and who should serve as facilitators.	3/11/10	ACAM Member Executive Directors
3.	Assistant Director in charge of staff groups will convene current group members without the hired facilitator in order to seek information about group needs.	4/30/10	ACAM Staff
4.	Assistant Director will bring information back to the member ED's, and they will work together with ACAM staff to develop a revised calendar that is substantive in learning opportunities yet respectful of staff time by the ministries dedicated to these networking opportunities.	5/13/10	ACAM Staff
5.	Assistant Director to produce an annual schedule of Networking and Training Events	6/10/10 & annually	ACAM Staff
6.	Re-work the Evaluation Forms for the Training and Networking to capture: quality of presenter (if applicable), value of the content, and appropriateness and usefulness of interaction with peers.		ACAM Staff, ACAM evaluator, and groups facilitators

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7.	Increase member access to funders.	ongoing	ACAM staff and facilitators will invite funder representatives to meetings.
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b. (Objective) Explore the creation of a formal Peer Mentoring Program.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Create a committee of Executive Directors to develop Peer mentoring Program Guidelines.	4/8/10	ACAM Executive Directors
2.	<p>ACAM staff and member executives to develop operating guidelines as well as measures of output and outcome. Guidelines will be drafted and reviewed as a future ED Meeting agenda item.</p> <p>a) Develop measures of Executive director mentoring interactions</p> <p>b) Develop actions for first year ACAM executive Director members</p>	3/31/11	ACAM Executive Directors' Committee on Peer Mentoring and assigned facilitator to staff this group.

**THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM:**

**1. (Goal) Increase the service area of membership by reaching out to underserved parts of Greater Houston, raising the profile of CAMs as service hubs in their communities and raising awareness around the issues affecting the people served by the CAMs.**

a. (Objective) Focus membership development on service areas currently not covered in a concentrated way by existing ACAM members.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Involve members in strategizing and recruiting new ACAM members.	ongoing	ACAM Staff

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2.	Identify and present underserved areas to the Executive Directors.	8/31/10	ACAM Staff
3.	Revise the strategy for new member recruitment.	4/30/11	ACAM Staff and Member Executive Directors

- b. (Objective) Communicate to funders/ public policy representatives a community-wide message to garner support and increase members' strategic position and promote the value of the ACAM brand.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Create new targeted marketing materials to attract more member agencies	9/30/11	ACAM Staff and selected firm
2.	Assume a strategic role in the homeless prevention movement	Ongoing	ACAM Staff
3.	Assume a strategic leadership role in disaster planning	Ongoing	ACAM Staff

- c. (Objective) Conceive how ACAM can help the ministries help clients break out of generational poverty.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Share models used at the ministries and explore other models within the ED group that are successful ways to help clients achieve self-sufficiency. Explore ways to implement these philosophies.	Ongoing	Executive Director group, possibly also program directors group dedicate some meetings to explore.

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACAM'S ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY:

#### 1. (Goal) Increase ACAM's capacity to serve a growing membership:

a. (Objective) Secure the documents and structure necessary to increase ACAM's capacity to serve its membership effectively.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1a.	Obtain 501(c)(3)	12/31/10	ACAM staff, members Executive Directors and ACAM Executive Committee -ACAM Chair to provide draft documents for review 5/15/10
1b.	Create Articles of Incorporation and register with the Secretary of State as a Texas nonprofit.	12/31/10	ACAM staff, members Executive Directors and ACAM Executive Committee -ACAM Chair to provide draft documents for review 5/15/10
1c.	Obtain DUNS No. and other organizational documents	12/31/10	ACAM staff, members Executive Directors and ACAM Executive Committee -ACAM Chair to provide draft documents for review 5/15/10
2.	Committee to plan, guide and coordinate the transition/expansion of ACAM as an organization including but not limited to an assessment of staffing, services, occupancy and related costs.	6/30/10	Executive Committee, ACAM staff and committee of Executive Directors
3.	Assess ACAM's own organizational capacity in a manner similar to members and Nine Elements of Capacity.	12/31/11	Same committee created to develop the assessment tool for the member ministries with assigned consultant support.

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- b. (Objective) Promote ACAM as a model to the national funding and nonprofit communities through ACAM member leadership and participation.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	ACAM to form a sub-committee of EDs to explore and determine concrete steps and timeline.	5/31/11	ACAM Staff and a committee of Executive Directors.

- c. (Objective) Increase and enhance communication between ACAM and its members.

	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Clarify roles for the ACAM representatives to the Executive Committee and communication lines with Executive Committee, ACAM staff and ACAM member ministries.	12/31/10	ACAM Executive Director and ACAM Executive Committee Chair to clarify in documents as the drafts are reviewed by the Executive Directors.
2.	Schedule meetings at ACAM member sites so that members can tour programs and learn about each other.	Ongoing	ACAM Staff

- c. (Objective) Research and seek funding from sources that will fund both intermediary organizations like ACAM and individual ministries, or only intermediary organizations; research non-traditional sources of funding.

	Action Step	Timeline	Responsible Parties
1.	Continue to explore collaborative funding proposals.	Ongoing	ACAM staff and member Executive Directors
2.	Identify potential funding sources not currently accessed and share information with member ministries.	Ongoing	ACAM staff and Executive Committee/Board of Trustees