Semcac Strategic Plan

2022-2027

Mission

Empower and advocate for people to enhance their self-sufficiency by maximizing community resources.

Participants from the first strategic planning session were asked to complete a homework assignment where they were asked about key words that should be included in the mission. Five out of 13 respondents said they want the word "empower" reflected in the mission statement. One respondent each mentioned the following words to include in the mission statement: caring, collaboration, community, compassion, confidence, helpful, people, and resilience.

Vision

Thriving individuals, families, and communities leading a vibrant southeastern Minnesota region.

Core Values

Passion to Serve

We are committed to providing outstanding services supported by caring, compassionate staff, earning the trust of all.

Integrity

We are led by our mission, vision and values, considering them in all our decision making as we continually seek to improve our services.

Respect

We treat everyone fairly and with dignity by listening and acknowledging different viewpoints.

Accountability

We are honest, responsible stewards of all resources entrusted to us.

Strategic Focus Area #1: Internal processes and structures

Strengthening our internal systems to support and expand the services we offer to the community to fulfill our mission and to serve the communities in southeastern Minnesota

Strategic Priorities

A. Alignment and streamlining of internal processes

Goal #1: Increase internal knowledge among Semcac staff of all Semcac programs and services

Goal #2: Increase knowledge about external partners and develop tools to facilitate referrals

Goal #3: Increase internal strategic operations and efficiency. For example:

- Communication overall
- Internal committees/ work groups
- Onboarding new employees & volunteers

Goal #4: Consider ramping up efforts for volunteer tracking, retention, recruitment, organizing, data collection, recognition, etc. agency wide; possibly create position focused on volunteer coordination

Goal #5: Continue to examine and implement internal structural changes in order to respond to organizational needs

Goal #6: Explore a decentralized model for Semcac office work locations, hybrid work models, and use of technology

B. Staff capacity, appreciation, and retention

Goal #1: Improve compensation and appreciation for staff. For example:

- Pay structure, benefits, compensation
- Staff appreciation, recognition, job satisfaction

Goal #2: Increase staff development and advancement opportunities and/or expectations across all of Semcac

Goal #3: Increase staff retention/prepare for turnover and succession planning

	C. Funding and fiscal systems

Goal #1: Increase fund development efforts by developing capacity for grant writing & increase fundraising

Goal #2: Invest in fiscal technology for forecasting, budgeting, resource allocation, distribution

Goal #3: Explore fiscal technology to implement budgeting tools for programmatic use (such as dashboards, live budgeting)

Strategic Focus Area #2: External programming and services

We strive to evolve along with the ever-changing demographics of the communities we serve. We want to provide compassionate, responsive, and high-quality services that will empower those we serve.

Strategic Priorities

	D. Increase community engagement and awareness of Semcac

Goal #1: Meet the needs of an increasingly diverse community; increase Semcac staff, board and volunteers' knowledge and offer training opportunities to increase capacity for cultural competency.

Goal #2: Explore re-branding to increase Semcac's reach and build community awareness of the organization overall (logo, agency name, colors, etc.)

Goal #3: Increase awareness of lesser-known or under-utilized services provided by Semcac

	E. Expand external programming and services

Goal #1: Consider offering more and varying hours of locations and services

Goal #2: Explore expanding existing services and programs to additional counties

Goal #3: Expand relevant, new services to fill community gaps

Potential actions

Strategic planning workgroup members spent some time brainstorming potential actions that may help Semcac make progress on their strategic priorities. This list will be consulted as Semcac moves forward with their action plans over the next five years.

Strategic priorities	Potential actions
A. Alignment and streamlining of internal processes	• Revise and revamp onboarding process organization-wide • Explore software options to optimize internal processes (i.e. HRIS, fiscal and donation software, etc.) • Cross training with other departments (i.e. internal presentations from departments to one another about what they do and how they serve the community) • Increase leadership/management connections to other staff and departments (i.e. informal events or at meetings) • Explore universal intake forms and ways to streamline the intake process from program to program, internally • Create internal communication feedback opportunities (ex: surveys within programs, announcements/chat boxes online – Teams, etc.)
B. Staff capacity, appreciation, and retention	• Explore pay and benefit improvements, including vacation/ sick time/ PTO, PTO donation policies, reduced work hours, paid holidays, health benefits, etc. • Increase resources for staff development • Continue and expand the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) resources/information for staff. • Offer staff development training regarding a variety of DEI efforts (ex: LGBTQIA+, ability, ethnicities, etc.) • Conduct periodic all staff satisfaction surveys • Review staff retention/turnover with HR on a quarterly or biannual basis • Expand staff appreciation and recognition and ensure this is equitable agency-wide

Strategic priorities	Potential actions
C. Fiscal structures and systems	▪ Examine fund disbursement, allocation, and equity across departments for staff appreciation ▪ Create fund raising and development plan ▪ Explore a staff grant writing position ▪ Explore new technology for fiscal structures and systems ▪ Explore 10% de minimis for administrative costs to build up undesignated funds/reserves
D. Increase community engagement and awareness of Semcac	▪ Community presentations, tabling, attending community events (i.e. open house at schools, libraries, etc.) ▪ Hosting community events more often ▪ Create a marketing plan/social media campaign; engage students or interns to help ▪ Explore financial resources for rebranding ▪ Education to larger community about diversity, equity, and inclusion ▪ Participation in equity and diversity events. ▪ Create an all-county resource directory for staff to refer to; engage outreach team to provide information about external partners
E. Expand external programming and services	▪ Increase outreach efforts & participation with local community organizations ▪ Increase staff knowledge/education around funding awarded, to ensure they are aware of what exists internally at Semcac & externally in the service area. ▪ Conduct a field scan of services in the Semcac service area to see what is available (e.g., locations, hours, types of services offered, etc.) ▪ Partner with local immigration service providers and make their resources/contact information available to clients.

Next steps

Upon adoption of the strategic plan by the Semcac board, Semcac staff will work to implement the goals of the plan.

The new strategic plan, which allows the Semcac to be focused on the most important work as defined by Semcac staff, the Semcac board, and the communities they serve, facilitates innovation and the ability to be nimble to meet community needs. Semcac should consider the following next steps to get started with strategic plan implementation:

- **Complete an action planning process for the actions listed above to meet their goals.** Action planning and prioritization worksheets are included in the Appendix to help Semcac staff define, prioritize, and plan concrete action steps for each goal. This includes who is responsible for each step, partners to engage (if applicable), how to measure progress, etc. Semcac staff should also prioritize action planning for low-hanging fruit or the most important priorities first and space which initiatives the organization will focus on in the coming years. Semcac could consider creating a calendar or timeline of when each of the goals will be accomplished over the next five years. This helps avoid staff burnout on the strategic plan and also creates buy-in of the plan so they know that everything does not need to be accomplished immediately.

- **Plan to "divide and conquer" strategic planning work among staff.** Semcac staff came together to collaboratively design the plan, therefore, the work to accomplish your goals happens together as well. Gauge staff interest and energy around specific goals during the action planning process and who should be involved and at what time. Meet staff where they are at regarding their regular work load and allow them time to focus on strategic planning goals.

- **Include strategic planning work in Semcac's day-to-day routine.** Semcac staff should discuss the strategic plan, updates, progress, and changes regularly and often. Staff could mention these items in regular meetings, email updates, and other regular internal messaging. Semcac staff should be recognized for their work on strategic planning efforts by highlighting their accomplishments at these events as well. Semcac should also plan to highlight their strategic planning work to the communities they serve via social media, newsletters, posters at Semcac locations, in their annual report, and other public relations efforts. This will keep the communities that Semcac serves informed of these efforts.

- **Revisit and adjust the strategic plan as needed**. Semcac should examine the strategic plan on a quarterly basis and document changes as needed. Semcac staff should also plan to document accomplishments and set-backs that have happened as part of the ongoing strategic planning efforts to help guide the organization and to measure what is working and what is not.

Appendix

Semcac Prioritization Tool

The following worksheet can be used to help Semcac staff brainstorm, reflect, and prioritize action steps to implement their strategic plan.

Strategic Focus Area:_____

Goals and Outcomes:

- Enter the goals and outcomes you want to focus on for this strategic area

Brainstorm Action Steps:

What actions, program improvements or changes could be made to the program to help maintain or improve some or all of the themes listed above?

1.

2.

3.

Prioritize Action Steps:

High Impact, Low cost	High Impact, High Cost
Low Impact, Low Cost	Low Impact, High Cost

Action Plan				
Item #	**Milestones(s) and Work Tasks**	**Responsible Person (s)**	**End Date**	**Status***

Recommend checking in after 30, 60 and 90 days to update action plan

Action Planning

Purpose: To develop actionable plans for implementing the 2022-2027 Semcac Strategic Plan.

Instructions:

1) Write down the **strategic focus area and goals/outcomes for this action plan**:

Please write the names of your action planning group members in the table below:

1.	9.
2.	10.
3.	11.
4.	12.
5.	13.
6.	14.
7.	15.
8.	16.

For this strategic focus area, please work with your group to complete the action planning grid below. Your action plan will consist of a set of action steps that lead you through implementation of your strategy. Action steps may range significantly. An action step could be as simple as scheduling a meeting with key stakeholders to discuss specific strategies or barriers or something more involved like surveying the population that utilizes a specific Semcac program or service to understand whether their utilization is affected by various factors.

Each action step should include the following information:

1. *What* the action is and the goal it achieves
2. *Who* will carry it out (who will lead and who will support)
3. *What* resources (e.g., money, staff) are needed to carry out the action
4. *What* barriers might impede the action
5. *Communication* (who should know what, how will communication happen moving forward?)
6. *When* it will be complete

Considerations for your action plan: It should be as **complete** as possible (Are all action steps needed to reach the solution included? Do they include the involvement of all necessary stakeholders?) and **clear** (Is it apparent who will do what by when?).

Action step	Who is involved	Resources required	Potential barriers	Communication plan	Target completion date
Example Step 1: Hold a meeting with transportation providers to discuss developing and coordinating service coverage in X counties *Goal*: Expand our understanding of the barriers transportation providers face	**Lead**: *Mark James, Social Services Director of X County* **Supporters**: *Transportation provider staff*	*County staff and transportation staff time*	*Transportation providers view each other as potential competitors and are hesitant to work together to coordinate service*	*Social Services Director of X County will notify group of meeting and send follow-up information after*	*July 2023*

Action step	Who is involved	Resources required	Potential barriers	Communication plan	Target completion date
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				

Action step	Who is involved	Resources required	Potential barriers	Communication plan	Target completion date
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ : Goal:	Lead: Supporters:				
Step # __ :	Lead:				

Action step	Who is involved	Resources required	Potential barriers	Communication plan	Target completion date
Goal:	**Supporters:**				
Step # __ : **Goal:**	**Lead:** **Supporters:**				

Other important thoughts and considerations about this action plan:

Semcac Strategic Planning: Sessions #1 & 2 Summary

Semcac contracted with Wilder Research in June 2022 to assist with the creation of a 5-year strategic plan that will guide the work of the agency in their service area from 2022-2027. Semcac's service area is the southeastern region of Minnesota, including the following counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, and Winona (although services are limited for Olmsted, Goodhue, Rice, Wabasha, and Waseca counties). Wilder Research staff worked with Semcac from 2020-2021 to conduct their Community Needs Assessment.

This agency-wide strategic plan must align with the organizational standards of the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG). The CSBG Organizational standards include that the organization (Semcac) has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by their governing board within the past five years (Standard 6.1) and that the governing board has received updates on the progress of meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months (Standard 6.5)

The goal of the strategic planning process is to center Semcac's mission of empowering and advocating for people to enhance their self-sufficiency by maximizing community resources. During this process, Wilder Research and Semcac will work to focus and coordinate the efforts of Semcac staff and stakeholders to create a strategic plan that will help to achieve the mission, vision, and measureable goals for the next five years.

This memo summarizes the two strategic planning sessions and outlines the areas of focus, opportunities, strategies, and next steps in the process.

Strategic Planning Areas of Focus

In the first session, a participants were asked questions and completed activities around defining Semcac as an organization and where they want to go for the next five years. From these activities, four larger areas of focus ("buckets") were identified by session participants. They also identified potential opportunities and strategies to address the larger areas of focus. Each area of focus and these opportunities and strategies are described below

1: Alignment/streamlining of internal processes and external services

a. **Increase internal knowledge of other Semcac programs; breaking down silos within our organization.** Session participants discussed the need to breakdown silos between programs and the need to increase internal knowledge of other programs. Five survey respondents noted that specifically increasing communication, internal team building, and cross training would be helpful for the organization.

b. **Learn more about external partners to make needed referrals.** During the first session, Semcac employees discussed that they want to help people no matter what, even if they need to refer people to organizations outside of Semcac.

c. **Increase internal strategic operations and efficiency**

- Data collection
- Internal communication systems and work groups
- Continue to build out departments, processes, and technology (i.e., rigorous onboarding processes, new software) (n=7)

2: Community engagement and awareness of Semcac

a. **Meet the needs of an increasingly diverse community.** Session participants discussed the need for increased staff knowledge on new and incoming cultural communities and cultural humility. Session participants also talked about the need to partner with organizations that provide immigration services. One survey respondent and a few session participants highlighted the need for more bilingual staff and interpreters in order to best serve newcomers who do not speak English as a first language to the region.

b. **Consider re-branding to increase Semcac's reach and awareness of services.** Session participants noted that there is a lack of awareness in the community regarding what types of services Semcac offers. Participants also commented that there is a community perception that Semcac only provides services to one type of income level ("low income") and that rebranding could help address these perceptions.

c. **Increase awareness of services provided by Semcac.** The community needs assessment identified that some services that Semcac provides are more well-known in the community (such as energy assistance) while community members were not aware of others (such as housing programs). Session participants emphasized Semcac strives to be a one-stop shop for people who need services and that increasing awareness of all Semcac has to offer should be considered a top priority for the strategic plan.

3: Staff capacity, appreciation, and retention

a. **Better pay and benefits for staff.** Increasing pay and benefits for staff was brought up a few times during the first session by participants. Five survey respondents said this should be a top area of focus for the new strategic plan.

b. **Staff retention, prepared for turnover, and succession planning.** Session participants noted that there is a need to focus on staff retention and preparation for turnover and succession planning. Two survey respondents listed these items as a top area of focus.

c. **More staff appreciation.** Session participants said they would like to see increased staff appreciation. Two survey respondents listed these items as a top area of focus, with one respondent commenting, "Let's make this a dream job!"

4: Expanding external programming

a. **Offer more or varying hours of locations and services.** Session participants noted that in order to best serve people in their communities, Semcac should consider offering varying hours of locations and services. Four survey respondents said this is a top priority that needs to be considered for the strategic plan. Two of these respondents specifically mentioned the food shelf.

b. **Expand certain services and programming to ALL counties served by Semcac.** Session participants discussed that there is a need for expansion around certain services and programming to all counties, particularly those that are rural.

c. **Explore a decentralized model for Semcac office locations.** Session participants discussed the need to explore different options regarding Semcac's main office location, including moving the current office location to somewhere more "centralized" in the service area. Another option that was brought up by participants was exploring a decentralized model where there isn't a "main office," and staff could travel between offices. Three survey respondents said office location changes be a top priority for the next strategic plan. Of note, three other respondents noted they would like to see more work from home options for Semcac employees as well.

d. **Expand relevant services to fill community gaps (e.g., transportation).** The need for transportation in particular was identified by participants at the first strategic planning session, participants in the community needs assessment, and two survey respondents.

Session #2

During the second strategic planning session, Wilder Research facilitators went over each of the four strategic planning areas of focus that were derived from the first session. Wilder staff wrote each of the strategic areas of focus and their supporting strategies on giant sticky notes. We asked participants to walk around to each of the sticky notes to write down any missing opportunities and strategies for each of the overarching areas of focus. During this process, it was determined that a fifth area of focus, Funding and Fiscal Systems, should be added as an overarching strategy.

Participants were then asked to pick an overarching strategy that they were most interested in and move toward the corresponding giant sticky note. They were asked to write down what the benefits and challenges were for each of the suggested strategies on smaller post-it notes and attach them to the sticky notes. A large group discussion followed about each of the strategic areas of focus, as well as benefits and challenges to each.

After the second session, Wilder Research worked with Semcac staff to draft a strategic plan based on all of the data and information we collected at each of the two sessions.

Mission

Participants in session #1 were asked in a homework assignment for one word to describe Semcac they want captured in the mission statement. Thirteen participants responded to the survey. Five out of 13 respondents said they want the word "empower" reflected in the mission statement. One respondent each mentioned the following words to include in the mission statement: caring, collaboration, community, compassion, confidence, helpful, people, and resilience. Figure 1 is a word cloud that reflects these responses.