



FY25-27 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)



Introduction

Building the MICA of the future, together

Neither an organization nor a family can attain higher goals without a strong foundation. This plan goes back to basics - focusing on the building blocks of strong, healthy families and organizations.

Following on learnings from previous integration-focused plans, this plan creates and empowers leaders, both in the agency and in the community, to create needed change. It is designed to elevate the voices of staff and families to dynamically address family, agency, and community needs around poverty issues in our area.

This strategic plan defines three pillars of change initiatives that will occur from FY25 through the end of FY27.

Strategic Priorities

MICA's strategic plan begins October 2024. The vision includes three interconnected areas of focus that encompass family, agency, and community work:



FAMILY LEVEL

Addressing Basic Needs

This pillar is designed to create improvements in the network of basic needs assistance to support a whole family approach.

Prompted by ongoing data and family feedback, this team will respond dynamically to the increased need for food, water, and other basic needs.

Who leads?

Basic Needs Team, with support from the Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team and IDEA (Equity task force).



AGENCY LEVEL

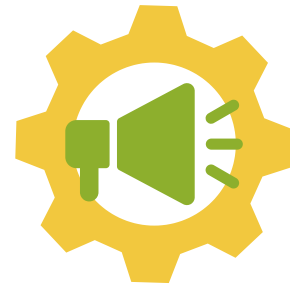
Improving Staff Wellbeing

This pillar focuses on creating improvements to the agency's infrastructure to support staff in fundamental ways.

This team will implement new ways of working and pursue better performance management and compensation strategies.

Who leads?

Executive Leadership, with support and feedback from supervisors, staff, and the Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team.



COMMUNITY LEVEL

Advocating for Change

This pillar raises awareness of MICA's work and lifts up stories of the families we serve.

The Advocacy CAST (Community Action Story Tellers) team will build essential messaging and invite decisionmakers into our work to learn the realities of poverty.

Who leads?

Advocacy CAST team, with support from IDEA (Equity task force).

Refining our Practices

This plan braids three existing foundational tenets of MICA's work into the core pillars and establishes long-term goals for each of these initiatives:



Trauma-Informed Practices

These goals reflect the agency's work toward implementing trauma-informed practices into every aspect of our organization.

The plan articulates steps for our trauma-informed resiliency team that focus on assessment, identifying and mitigating the effects of secondary trauma, and other techniques to support direct service staff.

Who leads?

Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team (TIRT)



Equity, Justice, and Inclusion

These goals reflect the agency's work toward creating an environment both in MICA and in the communities we serve that fosters equity.

The plan reflects the theory of change that the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Action (IDEA) team developed and includes goals like updating outdated policies and training staff in best practices.

Who leads?

IDEA (Equity Task Force)



Whole Family Approach

These goals represent exploration of techniques and tools that can move the agency beyond integration and into a true whole family approach.

The plan reflects the work of bringing together an interdisciplinary team and conducting assessment activities to identify short and long-term goals.

Who leads?

Whole family team, to be convened.

Braiding Initiatives

The committees that are part of this strategic plan are not intended to work in a vacuum. There are clear and deliberate linkages between all six teams, as illustrated below:



Executive Leadership

Guides and provides feedback to all teams. Creates systems and structures to invite feedback from interdisciplinary teams and the agency. Focus is on providing global guidance.

Advocacy CAST

Provides feedback on legislative activities and elevates issues raised by other teams. Connects other teams with relevant community champions or stakeholders. Focus is on creating opportunities to tell our story to stakeholders.

Basic Needs Team

Gathers real-time assessment data which can support the advocacy and whole family teams in their activities. Focus is on service provision.

IDEA (Equity Team)

Helps integrate equity-forward practices across the board. Analyzes and makes recommendations to teams pursuing policy or systems change. Focus is on promoting equitable practices and processes.

Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team

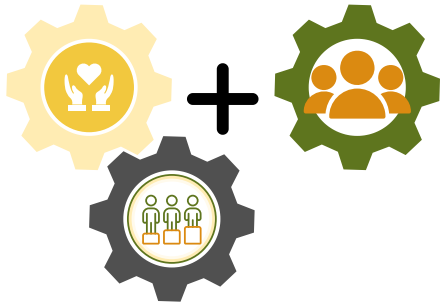
Helps integrate trauma-informed practices into basic needs service provision. Assesses metrics relating to staff wellbeing. Focus is on promoting trauma-informed practices and processes.

Whole Family Practice Team

Gives context and training to other teams pursuing direct service work and makes long-term plans to move the agency forward on whole family approaches. Focus is on practice innovation in service provision.

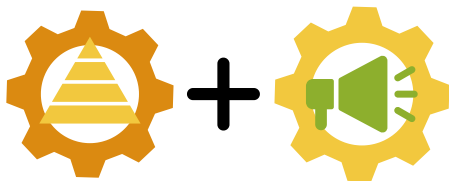
Examples of how this works in practice:

All teams collaborate and work together in dynamic ways that meet the current needs, and no team works in a vacuum. Here are specific examples of what this looks like in practice:



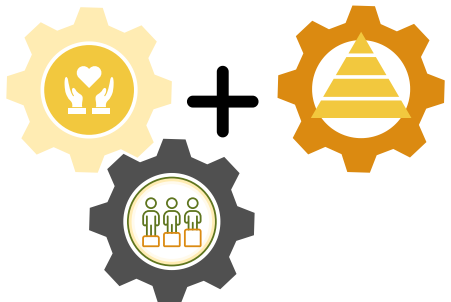
Executive Leadership + IDEA/TIRT

Members of the leadership team are on both the IDEA and TIRT teams. This helps close the feedback loop between those teams and ELT, ensuring that new policy and procedure development has an intensive equity and trauma-informed focus. It also helps both teams accelerate meaningful system-wide change by reducing barriers and assumptions.



Basic Needs Team + Advocacy CAST

The basic needs team has the pulse of the needs of families on a day-to-day basis. A key activity for the basic needs team is conducting a needs assessment with families. This will provide the Advocacy CAST with needed information and stories to relay to stakeholders. Likewise, the Advocacy CAST directly supports the work of the basic needs team by elevating family needs to stakeholders.



IDEA/TIRT + Whole Family Practice Team

The IDEA, TIRT, and whole family practice team focus on different areas of innovation that all have a direct effect on service provision. All three teams will collaborate extensively on resources provided, education, and support to ensure that their initiatives work well together and do not overtax available capacity.



Whole Family Practice Team + Basic Needs Team

The whole family practice team works on practice innovation to meet the needs of families, including basic needs but pushing beyond that into medium-term and long-term resources or interventions as well. The basic needs team has detailed and up-to-date information on family needs that can be very informative for the whole family practice team. The whole family practice team can enter into a dialogue with the basic needs team to get feedback about proposed practice innovations and how they would play out in the field.

Plan Pillar Overview

The FY25-27 plan is structured around three core pillars of work that contain individual team leadership structures, action steps, outcomes, and strategies.

Family Level

Core Outcome: We will see a decrease in families reporting crisis-level food needs after they begin working with MICA.

This family-level outcome directly addresses the top family need from the FY2023 Community Needs Assessment while setting the stage for better, more responsive needs tracking at the family level on an ongoing basis.

Agency Level

Core Outcome: We will see an increase in the percent of staff who feel that the systems and infrastructure at the agency support their work.

This agency-level outcome reflects ongoing work building better agency structures and operational support while directly collecting staff feedback as to their efficacy.

Community Level

Core Outcome: We will see an increase in the number of stakeholders who are meaningfully engaged in our work.

Core Output: We will see an increase in the number of meaningful touch bases with stakeholders, including legislators.

This community-level pillar focuses on building support and recognition for MICA's work. It elevates the stories of families in our communities and sheds light on the realities of poverty for decision-makers and stakeholders, including legislators.



BASIC NEEDS

FAMILY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar is designed to create improvements in the network of basic needs assistance to support a whole family approach.

The Outcome:

We will see a decrease in families reporting crisis-level food needs after they begin working with MICA.

How we are measuring success:

This team will implement a short six question matrix with all families served that rates the level of need from a scale of low to critical across six different basic needs domains:

	Low Need	Moderate Need	High Need	Critical Need
Food				
Water				
Housing				
Child Care				
Employment				
Education				

After initial evaluation, staff will regularly touch base with families and improvements across domains will be tracked in EmpowOR. Individual family data will be used as context for targeted referrals and services, and aggregated data (expressed as weighted averages) will be used to track agency-wide progress toward the outcome over the course of the strategic plan. The focus will be on food assistance, which was the top need identified by families in the needs assessment.

This plan area connects to:

- Whole Family Practice Team
- Previous strategic initiatives (FY18 and 22 plans)
- Data infrastructure work (EmpowOR 2.0)
- Empowering staff-led solutions with guidance, tools, and support
- Trauma-Informed and Equity work with families

Who leads this pillar:

Primary responsibility for the development of strategies leading to the outcome will be taken on by the Basic Needs Team, an interdisciplinary team of direct service staff and their leadership.

Supporting teams:

Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team (TIRT) and IDEA Task Force (equity team): providing a trauma-informed and equity lens to new proposed activities, initiatives, or services.



BASIC NEEDS

FAMILY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar is designed to create improvements in the network of basic needs assistance to support a whole family approach.

Timeline of Activities:

	Goals and Objectives
October-December 2024 (Q1, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Convening of the Basic Needs Team. Training: Training provided for the Basic Needs Team on the proposed strategic model, including basic ROMA training, methodology, and tools Launch of the family needs assessment agency-wide to begin establishing a baseline of data for assessment.
January-March 2025 (Q2, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment phase for the Basic Needs Team. Training: Training provided for the Basic Needs Team around data, data tools, and assessment methodologies. Data: Data from Community Needs Assessment provided to team for analysis and gap-filling.
April-June 2025 (Q3, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment phase for the Basic Needs Team. Data: Team establishes key needs from the needs assessment data and the Community Needs Assessment that are targetable and measurable. Half-year checkpoint: With Trauma-Informed, Equity, and Program Leadership, troubleshoot any issues or concerns with the family needs assessment. Make a plan for follow-up intervals.
July-September 2025 (Q4, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning phase for the Basic Needs Team. Training: Team receives training on how to develop strategies and activities from the needs assessment. Team works to suggest two to three core strategies or activities to implement during the strategic planning phase.
October 2025-December 2025 (Q1, Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning phase for the Basic Needs Team. Training: Team receives training on supports, resources, and sustainability in a new strategy or activity. Team works to provide a plan for supports, resources needed, and potential sustainability for the proposed core activities. Full-year checkpoint: With Trauma-Informed, Equity, and Program Leadership, evaluate any issues or concerns with proposed strategies and monitor successes or challenges with the family needs matrix.
January 2026-June 2026 (Q2/Q3, Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation phase for the Basic Needs Team. Training: Team receives training on how to monitor and produce results from proposed strategies or activities. Team begins to implement and track proposed activities.



STAFF WELLBEING

AGENCY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar focuses on creating improvements to the agency's infrastructure to support staff in fundamental ways.

The Outcome:

We will see an increase in the percent of staff who feel that the systems and infrastructure at the agency support their work.

How we are measuring success:

Through the annual Trauma-Informed Care Survey, there are several metrics of well-being including the following:

- How often do you feel emotionally safe in your work environment?
- Do you feel you are treated fairly at MICA?
- How safe do you feel expressing ideas or concerns about your work to your supervisor?

These three metrics can be combined to assess trends in emotional and mental wellbeing for staff.

To address systems and infrastructure directly, we will ask targeted questions including the following:

- I feel that MICA's core operational systems like UKG and EmpowOR support my work.
- I feel that MICA's core processes and procedures (like those found in the employee manual) support my work.
- I feel that MICA's culture and ways of working support my work with families or other staff.

These metrics will provide targeted feedback about specific areas of focus for this pillar of the strategic plan.

This plan area connects to:

- Prior and current strategic initiatives relating to staff wellbeing (FY22 plan)
- Existing Executive Leadership goals around performance management, systems change, and compensation
- Increased need for documentation, consistency, and trust in core operational systems

Who leads this pillar:

Primary responsibility for the development of strategies leading to the outcome will be taken on by the Executive Leadership team.

Supporting teams:

Trauma-Informed Resiliency Team (TIRT) will provide assessment support and continued work on staff emotional and mental well-being.

Regular dialogue with supervisors and staff will provide additional support and feedback.



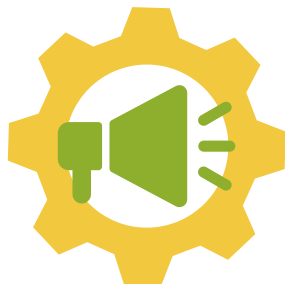
STAFF WELLBEING

AGENCY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar focuses on creating improvements to the agency's infrastructure to support staff in fundamental ways.

Timeline of Activities:

	Goals and Objectives
October-December 2024 (Q1, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment phase for ELT Team to determine progress and next steps on Ways of Working, UKG post-launch, decision-making criteria, policies/procedures, and operational infrastructure.• Training and Toolkits: Seek training, toolkits, or resources for areas of operational infrastructure that will be core goals of this plan pillar.• Data: Review past survey data and establish data collection methodology/baselines for strategic plan period.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and Implementation phase for ELT Team - details TBD.



ADVOCACY

COMMUNITY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar raises awareness of MICA's work and lifts up stories of the families we serve.

The Outcome:

We will see an increase in the number of stakeholders who are meaningfully engaged in our work.

How we are measuring success:

The Advocacy CAST (Community Action Story Tellers) team will set goals to engage legislators, stakeholders and other decision-makers in our work, and these will be tallied to reach an output number. The team will set a goal to determine success.

Through MICA-wide surveying, we will assess advocacy-related questions to gauge staff comfort and adequate resources, assessed with the following questions:

- **When approached by decision-makers like legislators or partners, I feel confident speaking about my work.**
- **I understand the difference between lobbying and educating, and how that affects my work.**
- **I feel like I have adequate resources and training to successfully educate partners and stakeholders about MICA's work.**

After initial evaluation, staff will be re-assessed on an annual basis to determine progress toward the outcome.

This plan area connects to:

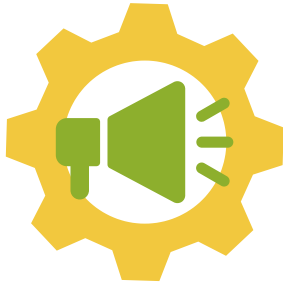
- Increased need for legislative advocacy and an increasingly polarized political environment
- Recent and continuing improvements in data collection practices in prior and current plan periods
- Recent and continuing work on advancing equity in practices and programs (led by the IDEA Task Force)

Who leads this pillar:

Primary responsibility for the development of strategies leading to the outcome will be taken on by the Advocacy CAST Team, an interdisciplinary team of staff from across programs.

Supporting teams:

IDEA Task Force (equity team): providing an equity lens to advocacy work and concurrent messaging resources for staff.



ADVOCACY

COMMUNITY LEVEL CORE PILLAR

This pillar raises awareness of MICA's work and lifts up stories of the families we serve.

Timeline of Activities:

	Goals and Objectives
October-December 2024 (Q1, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy CAST will implement initial strategies leading up to and immediately following the November 2024 national election to engage legislators in our work.
January-March 2025 (Q2, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment phase for the Advocacy CAST Team. Assess changes or continuity in the political environment post-election and how those affect agency needs. Training and Toolkits: Pursue training around the differences between lobbying and education. Advocacy in practice: FaDSS Day on the Hill, legislative invites
April-June 2025 (Q3, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment phase for the Advocacy CAST Team. Assess available resources to use for ongoing messaging and storytelling. Data: Assess how the existing data environment at MICA supports legislative outreach, and what data would be most useful to speak to legislators (including qualitative data, like success or progress stories). Advocacy in practice: All Staff Day, legislative invites
July-September 2025 (Q4, Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning phase for the Advocacy CAST Team. Create plans and goals around the number and type of legislative touch bases that are needed. Advocacy in practice: legislative invites
October 2025-December 2025 (Q1, Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning phase for the Advocacy CAST Team. Create plans and goals around information and training dissemination to the agency leading to the achievement of the outcome. Training and Toolkits: Pursue training resources that exist at the national and state levels that could support the work. Advocacy in practice: Agency annual meeting, legislative invites
January 2026-June 2026 (Q2/Q3, Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation phase for the Advocacy CAST Team. Test and measure strategies designed to meet the outcome and increase legislative engagement with our work.



Trauma-Informed

OPERATIONAL GOALS AND GUIDANCE

These goals reflect the agency's work toward implementing trauma-informed practices into every aspect of our organization. The plan articulates steps for our trauma-informed resiliency team to move this work forward.

	Core Goals and Objectives
GOAL 1	<p>Identify resources and supports to help staff mitigate the effects of secondary trauma in the course of their work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Assessment - are there resources, toolkits, or other community partners who have existing activities that might facilitate your progress toward the goal?
GOAL 2	<p>Continue and refine existing staff wellness initiatives, including strengthening supervision, physical safety, and emotional safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Evaluation - are there points of improvement or refinement that could be made to the existing staff wellness initiatives? Where are the trends in previous survey data that might suggest areas for improvement?
GOAL 3	<p>Using Trauma-Informed principles, evaluate the agency's current intake practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Assessment - what are program and agency practices around intake? How are those evolving as the agency implements more bundling of services and the whole family approach?
ONGOING GUIDANCE	<p>Make a plan for TIRT members or leadership to meet at a regular interval with other agency teams to discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDEA - find areas of intersection with the equity team and plan one shared initiative or project over the course of the strategic plan. A concrete example might include examining cultural differences in how families respond to traumatic experiences. Whole Family - connect with the whole family team to share information about the core principles of trauma-informed care. Basic Needs - connect with the basic needs team to educate about the core principles of trauma-informed care and help them connect that to their work. Advocacy - work with the advocacy team to build opportunities for choice and collaboration for families to share their experiences in a safe manner. Executive Leadership and the Board of Directors - plan to share a substantive annual update on progress toward the core goals at some point during each fiscal year. <p>Plan for TIRT members to engage in ongoing professional development around new theories and practices in Trauma-Informed Care.</p>



IDEA (EQUITY)

OPERATIONAL GOALS AND GUIDANCE

These goals reflect the agency's work toward creating an environment both in MICA and in the communities we serve that fosters equity. The plan reflects the theory of change that the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Action (IDEA) team developed.

	Core Goals and Objectives
GOAL 1	Support and consult with MICA teams (interdisciplinary and program) regarding issues relating to equity and inclusion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Implementation: Reach out to offer to facilitate equity discussions in staff groups/teams.
GOAL 2	Build accountability in equity work for teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Assessment: Define resources and systems to help hold staff and leaders accountable. Work with new and upcoming systems including those developed during the course of the plan in the Staff Wellbeing pillar (led by the Executive Leadership team).
GOAL 3	Increase language accessibility across the board for families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Implementation: Build training for interpreters and staff on how to use the language line and the ethics of interpretation. Write guidance on tone and messaging to maximize accessibility. Pursue language accessibility tools and devices for teams.
ONGOING GUIDANCE	Make a plan for IDEA members to meet at a regular interval with other agency teams to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TIRT - find areas of intersection with the trauma-informed team and plan one shared initiative or project over the course of the strategic plan. A concrete example might include examining cultural differences in how families respond to traumatic experiences. Whole Family and Basic Needs - connect with the whole family and basic needs teams to share information about fostering equity in service provision, with a focus on the impact of systemic/structural racism and inequities. Advocacy - work with the advocacy team to build equitable systems for families to share their experiences. Focus on voice and choice. Executive Leadership and the Board of Directors - plan to share a substantive annual update on progress toward the core goals at some point during each fiscal year. Plan for IDEA members to engage in ongoing professional development around new theories and practices in Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.



Whole Family

OPERATIONAL GOALS AND GUIDANCE

These goals represent exploration of techniques and tools that can move the agency beyond integration and into a true whole family approach. The plan reflects the work of bringing together an interdisciplinary team and conducting assessment activities to identify short and long-term goals.

	Core Goals and Objectives
GOAL 1	<p>Develop a refined overarching Whole Family Approach (WFA) vision including identifying the target population, describing their needs, articulating a vision, and defining goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Assessment - what are the initiatives that MICA has put into place over the last several years that support a whole family approach? Where were those successful, and where does more work need to be done? What is our vision for the family experience at MICA?
GOAL 2	<p>Link current agency activities to a WFA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Assessment - Create an updated journey map. Reflect on the journey families must take to access different MICA services as well as services in the community. Where are services aligned?
GOAL 3	<p>Develop an agency theory of change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested initial activities: Implementation - Develop a theory of change that answers the following questions: What is the desired change? What are the outcomes? What activities will facilitate this change? and Why do you expect to see these changes?
ONGOING GUIDANCE	<p>Make a plan for WFA members to meet at a regular interval with other agency teams to discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDEA - discuss the impact of systemic racism and inequities on families and how that affects service provision. TIRT - discuss how trauma-informed care principles affect families and how those principles can and should be built into WFA activities. Basic Needs - connect with the basic needs team to gain the pulse of family needs and use that to inform your theory of change/activity goals. Advocacy - Work with the advocacy team to help them understand the importance of a whole family approach and what its tenets are, so they can articulate that to others. Executive Leadership and the Board of Directors - plan to share a substantive annual update on progress toward the core goals at some point during each fiscal year. <p>Plan for WFA members to engage in ongoing professional development around new theories and practices in whole family work.</p>

