



ALLIANCE OF  
COMMUNITY  
ASSISTANCE  
MINISTRIES

SM

2014-2018

STRATEGIC PLAN



In 2013, ACAM began its planning process involving all key stakeholders in defining the strategic direction of the organization over the next five years. The process included conducting interviews and SWOT analyses with ACAM staff, member executive directors and board members. Planning meetings took place between May and September, including a two-day planning retreat in June with staff and member executive directors. Through the planning process, ACAM stakeholders developed a plan with six strategic initiatives and eighteen goals that will guide the programs and development of the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc. through 2018.

# ACAM'S VISION AND MISSION

## **Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc. (ACAM) Vision:**

ACAM envisions a community supported by a network of faith-based collaborative ministries that provide opportunities for families and individuals to meet and rise above their basic needs.

### **We do this through:**

- **Collaborating** to create higher impact outcomes and provide access to diverse resources
- **Training and networking** to develop best practices, provide mutual support and increase our knowledge base
- **Setting the standard of ministry service** to ensure excellence within our industry
- **Advancing the position of each member** in our network and the collaborative through advocacy and outreach
- **Promoting our brand and expanding the reach of programs** to increase the impact of our network
- **Developing relationships with funders, members and community partners** in order to ensure ACAM's long- term sustainability

## **ACAM's Mission:**

To advance high-impact collaboration, service excellence and organizational development among community assistance ministries.

# Top Five Critical Success Factors

Needs for Strategy Success Or Barrier to Success	Resolution to Barriers
<p><b>Fund Development</b>– Sufficient capital and financial resources are needed for growth. Ongoing commitment and action from the ACAM board will assist in developing new funding sources. Diversification of funding sources will ensure long-term sustainability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update the current Development Plan outlining detailed strategies for growth.</li> <li>2. Gain additional involvement from ACAM membership in the development of new funding sources.</li> <li>3. Increase staffing and consulting aimed at fundraising goals.</li> <li>4. Increase member ED participation in the development of future collaborative initiatives and ongoing investors in the ACAM network.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Board Development</b> – The ACAM Board of Directors will focus on the expansion and development of the board. The board will diversify to include membership from the Greater Houston corporate community as well as the philanthropic community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Target and recruit board members with resources, time, talent and contacts as well as a commitment to ACAM’s mission.</li> <li>2. Conduct a Board Assessment and develop a list of needed board member skills and potential new board members.</li> <li>3. Current board members will participate in outreach to corporations in the community to identify promising candidates.</li> <li>4. ACAM will continue to conduct the training(s) needed for board development.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Enhance and broaden the reach of ACAM’s brand</b> – Continue to develop a clear and concise message that defines ACAM’s place in the market. The market needs to clearly know what ACAM and its network of ministries do. Promoting the ACAM brand and energizing an expanded board will increase ACAM’s success.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult with an effective branding/PR firm on solidifying and promoting the ACAM brand.</li> <li>2. The ACAM Board, staff and member ministries will unify messaging to more effectively convey the value of ACAM as an intermediary nonprofit and MSO (value includes: uniqueness of concept, cost effectiveness of model, replicability of programs).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Board/Member Engagement in Workgroups</b>- Develop workgroups that have ongoing participation from all key stakeholders and support from ACAM staff and consultants.</p>	<p>Request that board and members actively participate in workgroups that focus on plan goals and objectives throughout the term of the plan implementation.</p>
<p><b>Commitment of the ACAM Network</b> – Engage member ministries in the recruitment of new members and program participants. Continue to monitor member benefits and commitments.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Utilize the Geographic Recruitment and Retention Policy and Procedure to evaluate potential new members.</li> <li>2. Workgroup will review and develop tasks and timelines to meet ACAM’s expansion goals.</li> </ol>

# Top Goals and Initiatives

ACAM has the necessary governance, infrastructure and resources in place for high performance. The eighteen goals in this strategic plan outline the path for ACAM's growth and expansion over the next five years. Marketing and branding, fund development and board expansion have been identified as key components of the plan. ACAM has the commitment from all parties to achieve the goals and initiatives outlined in this plan: the ACAM Board, ACAM staff, and ACAM members and leaders. The goals below were identified by the group as having highest priority.

## Governance/Infrastructure

- 1) **Goal 6.1** Increase fund development efforts
- 2) **Goal 6.4** Employ a common message that drives fund development. (Funders, program, members, etc.)
- 3) **Goal 5.2** Enhance individual board member engagement in promoting ACAM's vision, mission and purpose.
- 4) **Goal 6.2** Expand ACAM membership
- 5) **Goal 5.1** Enhance and broaden the reach of the ACAM brand

## Top Initiatives

- 1) **Goal 1.1** Identify, fund and implement collaborative initiatives for larger systemic impact
- 2) **Goal 4.1** Be a highly effective advocate in crisis situations, enhancing the ability of member organizations to provide their services (i.e., food shortages & hurricanes)

# ACAM'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: Continue to develop collaborative initiatives to create higher impact outcomes and access diverse resources.**

**Goal 1.1 Identify, fund and implement collaborative initiatives for larger systemic impact.**

**Goal 1.2 Standardize reporting for individual and collaborative resource development.**

**Goal 1.3 Quantify the ACAM network's impact as a catalyst to bridge people out of poverty.**

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: Utilize training and networking to develop best practices, provide mutual support and increase participants' knowledge base.**

**Goal 2.1 Ongoing evaluation and development of ACAM's training and networking opportunities.**

**Goal 2.2 Assess ACAM member training needs and the potential creation of different levels of participation for ACAM's Training and Networking Program.**

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3: Set standards for ministry services that ensure excellence.**

**Goal 3.1 Establish a forum to explore faith sharing practices.**

**Goal 3.2 Review and update ACAM's current Standards of Practice.**

**Goal 3.3 Publish ACAM's Standards of Practice to reach the broader community.**

**Goals 3.4 Continuously improve the quality of consistent, accurate data that is managed and collected by the ACAM network.**

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4: Advance the position of each member in our network and the collaborative as a whole through advocacy and outreach.**

**Goal 4.1 Be a highly effective advocate in crisis situations, enhancing the ability of member organizations to provide their services (i.e., food shortages & hurricanes).**

**Objective 4.1.1** Further develop and communicate ACAM’s disaster response model for supporting and funding the network in times of crisis.

**Objective 4.1.2** Pre-position ACAM’s role as a crisis response intermediary in the minds and plans of funders and providers of tangible goods.

**Goal 4.2 Set advocacy priorities for ACAM.**

**Objective 4.2.1** Prioritize advocacy needs and opportunities annually.

**Objective 4.2.2** Create one or two publications per year on “faith in action,” targeting issues or service areas offered by the ACAM network that promote advocacy and collaboration.

**Goal 4.3 Develop community partners that have good strategic fit with ACAM to support advocacy priorities.**

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 5: Continue to promote the ACAM brand in the Greater Houston Area and expand the reach of the brand regionally and nationally.**

**Goal 5.1 Enhance and broaden the reach of the ACAM brand.**

**Goal 5.2 Increase individual board member engagement in promoting ACAM’s vision, mission and purpose.**

**Objective 5.2.1** Expand the board size to 15 and include representatives of targeted key audiences.

**Objective 5.2.2** Formalize brand promotion into board roles, responsibilities, workgroups and operating policies by June 2014.

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 6: Develop funders and members to ensure ACAM's growth and sustainability.**

### **Goal 6.1 Increase fund development efforts.**

**Objective 6.1.1** The board will identify, cultivate and close three grants to ACAM from national funders by the end of 2015.

**Objective 6.1.2** Diversify and expand ACAM's funding base by increasing the number of ACAM funders from 16 to 24 by the end of 2016.

**Objective 6.1.3** Execute two new funding agreements equal to or greater than \$100,000 each (private or government sources).

**Objective 6.1.4** Develop a system that assesses and communicates the fit between ACAM's strategic goals and funder priorities.

**Objective 6.1.5** Review and enhance ACAM's Visibility Plan to secure corporate sponsorship.

### **Goal 6.2 Expand ACAM membership.**

**Objective 6.2.1** Considering Collaborating and Affiliate membership levels, ensure that all members have congruent commitments to ACAM. The Recruitment, Retention and Compliance Workgroup will formalize attendance/participation policies and procedures by the end of 2015.

**Objective 6.2.2** Identify and recruit three new member community assistance ministries that strengthen the ACAM network and fill in geographic coverage gaps.

### **Goal 6.3 Ensure that ACAM has the necessary facilities and capital for growth and sustainability.**

**Objective 6.3.1** Ensure ACAM's smooth transition to a new office location.

**Objective 6.3.2** Acquire funds development for the necessary furniture, fixtures and equipment as needed for the transition plan and space plan.

**Goal 6.4 Employ a common message that drives fund development (funders, programs, members, etc.).**

**Objective 6.4.1** Train the board in a common strong ACAM message.

**Objective 6.4.2** Train member leadership in a common strong ACAM message.

# ACAM'S Milestones

## DEFINITION OF ACRONYMS

CIW = Collaborative Initiatives Workgroup

TNW = Training and Networking Workgroup

AOW = Advocacy & Outreach Workgroup

FDB = Fund Development and Branding Workgroup

RRC = Retention, Recruitment & Compliance Workgroup

DMC = Data Management & Collection Workgroup

**Goal 1.1 Identify, fund and implement collaborative initiatives for larger systemic impact.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Charter Collaborative Initiatives Workgroup (CIW)	1/14	Sharon EDs	5 volunteer EDs Staff
2. Define collaborative initiatives and define concept of basic needs	9/14	CIW	Staff, Board
3. Prioritize Collaborative Initiatives Annually	Every September	CIW	CIW + board development committee
4. Identify the target collaborations	Ongoing	CIW	Staff
5. Develop projects and identify funding	Ongoing	CIW	Staff Consulting resources
6. Launch and implement two collaborative initiatives each year	Ongoing	CIW	Staff Consulting resources
7. Monitor and evaluate	Ongoing	Staff	Consulting resources

**Goal 1.2 Standardized reporting for individual and collaborative resource development.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Enroll new members into existing workgroup	Every Jan.	Staff	DMC
2. Develop common unit measures for services	2 per year	DMC	Staff

**Goal 1.3 Investigate and explore how the ACAM network is a catalyst to help people bridge out of poverty.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Articulate member ministry brand image to communities	Ongoing after 9/17	Staff	CIW Consultants as needed
2. Develop and publish our role	12/17	CAMs	Staff Board EDs Media/Marketing Technical Resources
3. Investigate and share “best practices” for bridging out of poverty	Every December beginning 2017	EDs	Staff Board Technology

**Goal 2.1 Ongoing development and evaluation of ACAM’s training and networking opportunities.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Implement training and networking workgroup (TNW)	4/14	Staff	Volunteer EDs Staff or consultants as needed
2. Assess member priorities for systemic communication – topics, PACE, invitees	4/14	Diana Garbis	TNW Staff
3. Bring assessment results to training and networking attendees	8/14	TNW	Diana Garbis Staff
4. Research other significant and similar events	8/14	Staff	TNW
5. Roll out events	1/15	TNW	Staff

**Goal 2.2 Assess ACAM member participation expectations and the potential creation of different levels of participation for ACAM’s Training and Networking Program.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Evaluate the possibility of varying participation in training.	9/14	TNW	Staff
2. Evaluate the various roles that members make play in training (e.g., some members may be ready to take on a mentoring role with other members).	11/14	TNW	Staff
3. Assess the development of different ACAM membership levels with varying benefits and commitments.	1/15	TNW	Staff
4. Consider proposing altering or increasing levels of membership, which would include different levels of benefits and commitments. The committee would consider variations in training benefits and commitments as part of this process.	3/15	TNW	Staff
5. Submit recommended changes to membership to the Board for approval.	5/15	TNW	EDs, Board, Staff

**Goal Area 3 – Set the standards for ministry services that ensure excellence.**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
3.1 Establish a forum to explore faith sharing practices.	1. Set up the forum	10/14	EDs	Staff
3.2 Review and update ACAM's current Standards of Practice.	1. Update standards where necessary	1/17	RRC	Board/Staff
	2. Develop accountability procedures and clarify expectations for meeting standards	6/17	EDs	Staff
3.3 Publish ACAM's Standards of Practice to reach the broader community.	1. Inform broader community of new standards	8/18	EDs	Board/Staff
	2. Develop publication about meeting revised standards	12/18	Staff	RRC, Consultants
3.4 Continuously improve the quality of consistent, accurate data that is managed and collected by the ACAM network.	1. Research and identify the data elements	Annual Dec	DMC	Staff
	2. Develop reporting tools/forms	Annual Feb	DMC	Staff

**Goal 4.1 Be a highly effective advocate in crisis situations that impacts the ability of member organizations to provide their services (i.e., food shortages & hurricanes).**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
4.1.1 Further develop and communicate ACAM's disaster response model for supporting and funding the network in times of crisis.	1. Form an Advocacy workgroup (board members and EDs).	7/14	Cynthia	AOW Staff
	2. Review current ACAM disaster plan	8/14	Staff	Cynthia, AOW
	3. Make changes to plan as needed and develop strategy for communicating plan.	3/15	Staff	AOW
	4. Communicate plan to local stakeholders On ACAM web site Written materials E-blasts	6/15	Staff	AOW
	5. Maintain Harris County disaster planning connections	Ongoing	Staff	Government Contacts
	6. Utilize members to establish and maintain relationships w/VOADs in other counties	Ongoing	EDs	Staff
4.1.2 Pre-position ACAM's role as a crisis response intermediary in the minds and plans of funders and providers of tangible goods.	1. Identify organizations, stakeholders, sports teams, and businesses to advocate in cooperation with other disaster preparedness organizations.	9/16	Staff	AOW
	2. Check with members for connections to the identified disaster preparedness organizations and supporters.	9/16	Staff	AOW
	3. Market ACAM brand and develop relationships with identified organizations	Ongoing	Staff	AOW

**Goal 4.2 Set advocacy priorities for ACAM.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
4.2.1 Prioritize advocacy needs and opportunities annually.	1. Poll the membership annually to prioritize and present advocacy recommendations to the board (80/20 rule: i.e. 80% of high-impact outcomes will come from focusing on the top 20% of identified advocacy topics/issues).	Every September	Staff	EDs
	2. Participate in external advocacy alliance organizations.	Ongoing	Staff	Board EDs
4.2.2 Create one or two Publications per year on “faith in action” on issues or service areas offered by our members that promote advocacy and collaboration	1. Workgroup reviews survey results above and selects topics for the publication	12/16	AOW	Board, EDs Staff
	2. Research selected topics	3/17	Staff	AOW, Research Consultant
	3. Create and distribute Publications	6/17	AOW	Staff

**Goal 4.3 Develop community partners that have good strategic fit with ACAM to support advocacy priorities.**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
1. Identify potential community partners likely to promote the ACAM brand and advocacy priorities selected for the year.	9/17	AOW	Staff
2. Check the selected community partners with membership to obtain support.	12/17	Staff	EDs
3. Reach out to potential partners and establish relationships.	3/18	Staff	Board, EDs

**Goal 5.1 Enhance and broaden the reach of the ACAM brand.**

Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
1. Create Brand & Fund Development Workgroup	3/14	Staff	Board/EDs
2. Explore concept of ACAM branding on CAM materials	9/16	FDB	Board/Staff PR firm
3. Develop methods for marketing ACAM to various audiences.	9//16	EDs	FDB, Staff
4. Identify key audiences and prioritize – top 3-5 audiences.	3/17	FDB	PR Firm
5. Develop, update and share the case statement.	6/17	FDB	PR Firm Board/Staff
6. Develop and publish relevant ministry action research – particularly related to collaboration.	9/17	FDB	Board/Staff
7. Develop community celebrations for all members at the member’s communities.	12/17	FDB	New Partners

**Goal 5.2 Enhance individual board member engagement in promoting ACAM’s vision, mission and purpose.**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
5.2.1 Expand the board size to 15 including targeted key audiences.	1. Engage CAMs in board recruitment	1/14	Board Chair	Board
	2. Convene board "VIP Nominating Workgroup" (not a workgroup of the board)	3/14	Board Chair	Board
	3. Review the Board Development Plan	Ongoing	Board Chair	Board
5.2.2 Formalize board roles, responsibilities, workgroups and operating policies by June 2014.	1. Form a Board Development Workgroup consisting of a variety of constituencies	1/14	Board Chair	Board
	2. Board Committee roles change (finance/audit, fund development, board development)	3/15	Board Chair	Board

**Goal 6.1 Increase fund development efforts.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
<b>6.1.1</b> The board will identify, cultivate and close three national funders that issue grants to ACAM by the end of 2015.	1. Assess development capacity of staff	8/14	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	2. Develop a process for cultivating national funders	11/14	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	3. Identify potential funders	2/15	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	4. Contact and cultivate funders (ex. Robert Wood Johnson)	5/15	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
<b>6.1.2</b> To diversify our funding, increase the number of funders from 16 to 24 by the end of 2016.	1. Assess development capacity of staff	8/15	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	2. Develop a process for cultivating additional funders	11/15	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	3. Identify potential funders	3/16	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
	4. Prorate expectations every three years (2-3/yr., including national and long-term funders.)	6/16	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
<b>6.1.3</b> Execute two funding agreements equal to or greater than \$100,000 each. (Private or government sources)	1. Research long-term funder priorities.	12/16	Staff	FDB, EDs Board Funders
	2. Cultivate relationships and submit grant applications.	7/17	Staff, Board	Board, Funders
<b>6.1.4</b> Develop a system that assesses and communicates the fit between ACAM's strategic goals and funder priorities.	Develop an ED meeting sponsor list	12/17	FDB	Staff, EDs Board Funders
<b>6.1.5</b> Review and enhance ACAM's Visibility Plan to promote corporate sponsorship.	Develop contact list / cultivate / publicize	Ongoing	FDB	Staff Board Consultant

**Goal 6.2 Expand ACAM Membership.**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
6.2.1 Considering Collaborating and Affiliate membership levels, ensure that all members have the same commitment to ACAM. The Recruitment, Retention and Compliance Workgroup will formalize attendance/participation policies and procedures by the end of 2015.	1. Review current info/drafts – RRC to bring recommendations to EDs 2. Formalize attendance/participation policies and procedures	10/14 10/15	RRC	EDs Staff
6.2.2 Identify and recruit three new member community assistance ministries that strengthen the ACAM network and fill in geographic coverage gaps.	1. Support for membership to EDs – one person / yr.	10/16 10/17 10/18	Board	Staff EDs

**Goal 6.3 Ensure that ACAM has the necessary facilities and capital for growth and sustainability.**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
6.3.1 Ensure a smooth transition to a new office location for ACAM.	1. Identify needs and potential office space	7/15	Staff	Board EDs Time Management
6.3.2 Expand fund development for the necessary furniture, fixtures and equipment as needed for the transition plan and space plan.	1. Find space to store donated furniture until move	12/14	Staff	EDs Grant writer Space

**Goal: 6.4 Employ a common message that drives fund development (funders, programs, members, etc.).**

Objective	Milestone	Date	Owner	Resources Needed
6.4.1 Train the board in a common strong ACAM message.	1. Identify consultants for guidance 2. Conduct training with board	7/14 1/15	Consultant	CIW Role Paper Staff
6.4.2 Train member leadership in a common strong ACAM message.	1. Conduct training with EDs	4/15	Consultant	CIW Role Paper Staff

This plan was developed in partnership with Key Partners Consulting.

# ACAM'S Workgroup Charges

**The Advocacy and Outreach Workgroup (AOW)** ensures alignment of ACAM's advocacy priorities with the needs, priorities, and interests of ACAM's member ministries. The AOW identifies leading priorities and issues for ACAM to pursue and coordinates group advocacy activities as needed. The AOW ensures that ACAM continues to advocate for priorities inherent in its mission, such as the faith-based nonprofit sector and nonprofit capacity building and collaboration.

**The Collaborative Initiatives Workgroup (CIW)** uses the network's strength to address the root causes of poverty and local emergencies. The CIW develops collaborative initiatives to create higher impact outcomes and access diverse resources.

**The Data Management & Collection (DMC) Workgroup** ensures the ability of ACAM to collect consistent and reliable client service data from the member ministries and clearly communicate the collaborative's activity to stakeholders. The DMC works toward the standardization of terminology and unit definitions, weighing the cost-benefit of the level of data collected. The DMC raises awareness regarding data collection and management best practices, methods and technological tools which assist in increasing the transparency, clarity, and accuracy of member data. The DMC reviews and updates data collection and methodology related to the Annual Services Data Report, which assists ministries in the successful completion of the report, thus fulfilling an ACAM membership expectation. The DMC actively assists other ACAM workgroups to provide powerful, accurate, and credible collective data that supports their success in areas such as advocacy, outreach, branding and fund development. The DMC furthers the objectives set forth in strategic planning.

**The Fund Development and Branding Workgroup (FDB)** increases fund development efforts and enhances and broadens the reach of the ACAM brand. The FDB will identify funds and promote collaborative initiatives along with the Collaborative Initiatives Workgroup (CIW). FDB promotes the ACAM brand and the perceived impact of the network. It enhances individual board member engagement in advancing ACAM's vision, mission and purpose. It employs a common message that drives fund development. It trains the board and members in a common message.

**The Retention, Recruitment and Compliance (RRC) Workgroup** serves as an advisory and working group that leads in the review and development of current and potential ACAM members. The RRC reviews and writes retention, recruitment and compliance policies; actively assists in the review of member expectations and membership levels, and reviews new member applicants. The RRC also supports ACAM's CEO when member compliance issues arise. The RRC furthers the objectives set forth in strategic planning.

**The Training & Networking Workgroup (TNW)** ensures that ACAM's Training and Networking events remain relevant to community assistance ministries and promote best practices, peer learning and information exchange. THE TNW is charged with overseeing the ongoing development and evaluation of training opportunities. In addition, the TNW will work with the RRC workgroup to assess member participation and their levels of participation.