

STATE CSBG MANAGEMENT: CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

Key Elements of State CSBG Management:

- Staff Resources**
- Leadership**
- Communication**
- Monitoring and Fiscal Management**
- Use of Information Technology**
- Creating a Culture of Accountability and Performance**

Staff Resources:

- Enough staff to monitor all CAAs at least once per year.
- Large states – One full time staff equivalent per 15-20 CAAs depending on other duties, geography and size and complexity of the CAAs.
- Small States – Fewer staff per CAA but broader range of duties.
- Staff are trained on basic facts regarding poverty in the state, ROMA , CSBG regulations, OMB Management Circulars, basics of non profit management, computer software, state procedures and state CSBG plan.

Leadership Principles:

- Action Oriented – Cost of resolving problems increases over time.
- Tabloid Principle – Ineffective leadership not defined by debate or controversy but by silence. Leader has role of teacher, negotiator and spin doctor.
- Civic Entrepreneurship – Roles of fund raiser and deal broker are key. Important tool is the CSBG “discretionary money”.
- Networks are Essential –Provide information, credibility and access to resources.
- Process is not Product – Measure of leadership is not the elegance of the process but the outcomes.
- Leadership is Multi-Disciplinary—State manager(s) have an informed appreciation of the varied issues involved in Community Action. This may be indicated by their reading the New York Times, Washington Post and the major newspaper in their state or other publications regularly. Also see recommended reading list.

-Leadership Requires Continuity – Leadership has a long learning curve. The more changes introduced into a system the greater the level of complexity and disorder.

-Realistic Expectations – Expect evolution not revolution. The direction that the state’s CAAs are moving in is as important as where they are right now.

Communication:

-Don’t overlook the importance of “informal” communication. Does the state manager have a network with which he/she can have confidential communication on sensitive issues.

Monitoring and Fiscal Management:

-Monitors should be well trained and well informed but they need not be accountants. The ability to investigate such basic issues as the adequacy of bonding, self insurance and the division of fiscal responsibilities will go a long way toward heading off fiscal problems.

-Contracting cycles are adapted to the cash flow needs of the state’s CAA network.

-The state CSBG office has a written procedure for the resolution of monitoring and audit findings and sticks to it.

Information Technology:

-All staff should have computers with internet access.

-The state office has established minimum standards for CAA purchase of computers and software.

-The state office provides incentive grants periodically to CAAs to keep their information technology up to date.

Creating a Culture of Accountability and Performance:

- Staff receive regular training and are kept informed via regular meetings , teleconferences, e-mails or other means.

-There is a systematic training and technical assistance program for the state’s CAAs.

-There is an awards program to recognize CAA achievements.

- Input is solicited from CAAs regarding their needs and responses are developed and implemented.

-State manager meets informally with CAA staff to get their views and to convey state office expectations.

- Audit and monitoring findings are resolved promptly and decisively. Resolutions are progressive and corrective in nature. They proceed from simple warnings and technical assistance to sanctions.