Building A Community Action Theory of Change

Presented by the ROMA Next Generation COE

PMTF Meeting | February 2013
Theory of Change

Using the TOC Model to Enhance ROMA
It is important, as we look to greater standardization of 
ROMA and other performance measurement and 
management systems, that we...

✓ Clearly understand **HOW** the Community Action 
Network (as a whole) is engaged in producing 
change for families and communities.

✓ Have a common understanding of **WHAT** that 
change will be.
Two ROMA “Tools”

There are two tools that have defined ROMA implementation over the past decade:

1. The identification of core activities in the ROMA Cycle, from IM 49.

2. The logic model, which provides a framework for consideration of the key elements of the ROMA Cycle put into place.
The Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle

**Assessment**
Needs and Resources

**Evaluation**
Analyze data, compare with benchmarks

**Planning**
Use assessment data and agency mission statement to identify results, and strategies

**Achievement of Results**
Observe and report progress

**Implementation**
Strategies and services
## ROMA Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Program</th>
<th>Level: __ family __ agency __ community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Service or Activity</td>
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**Mission Statement:**

Note: the “Actual Results” column is missing from this graphic.
What is a Theory of Change (TOC)?

• Describes a process of social change from the ASSUMPTIONS that guide its design to the LONG-TERM GOALS it hopes to achieve.

• Shows the connections between activities and outcomes.

• Helps explain the relationship between the problems you are addressing and the strategies you use to get the work done.
Are we proposing a TOC replace ROMA?

NO
How Does the TOC Relate to ROMA?

- The TOC is like the ROMA logic model in that it is a way of presenting a series of interrelated concepts so that they can be understood as a “big picture.”

- The ROMA logic model has been used primarily at the local level. A TOC can be useful for setting goals, strategic planning, and performance management at the national, state, regional as well as local level.
Adding Focus

The TOC is broader than a Logic Model.

- There’s a consideration of **external factors** and the preconditions related to the achievement of results.

- The TOC adds a focus on the **connections** between elements and assumptions, and **learning** from what has happened as a result of actions taken.

- It prompts review of the actual results identified at the end of a service period. It provides the framework for **data reflection** related to how services were provided and how/what outcome data was collected.
Community Action TOC

• There’s a consideration of external factors and the preconditions related to the achievement of results. This context helps the agency identify what is in their control and what is not.

• It is a product that illustrates the process needed to achieve long-term goals.

THIS IS NOT A GENERAL THEORY OF CHANGE BUT RATHER SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY ACTION
What Questions Does it Answer?

1. Who are you seeking to influence or benefit?
2. What benefits are you seeking to achieve?
3. When will you achieve them?
4. How will you and others make this happen?
5. Where and under what circumstances will this get done?
6. Why do you believe your theory will work?
Pathway of Change & Backwards Mapping

- A **PATHWAY OF CHANGE** is developed by setting the long term goal(s) and then walking back through the steps it takes to get there (**BACKWARDS MAPPING**).

- The pathway becomes a map that illustrates the relationships between actions, the outcomes and the long term goals.

- It shows how outcomes are related to each other over the lifespan of the project.

- Learning through reflection of what happened, testing of the assumptions once action and outcomes are reviewed, and consideration of the relationship between the local, regional, state outcomes and national goals produces **EVIDENCE** regarding “what works.”
Building A TOC

Long Term Goal

Indicators

Outcome Required to Meet Goal

Indicators

Outcome Required to Meet goal

Indicators

Outcome Required to Meet Goal
Building A TOC

Long Term Goal

Activity of program

Add the activities or programs that will lead to the outcomes.
Your TOC is a Target, Not a Dream

- Are these really the only outcomes required to reach the long term goal?
- Are there conditions outside our control that will impact our ability to produce these outcomes?
- How long will it take to reach the long-term goal?
- Do we have the resources we need to implement?
The Process Should...

- Challenge the underlying logic of the connections between activities/programs and outcomes and the long term goals.
- Admit where there are leaps of faith.
- Acknowledge where there are gaps in your knowledge about what outcomes you can expect.
- Capture the complexity of social change.
- Be realistic about what can be accomplished with the resources at hand.
- Take external context into account.
- Provide clear measures of success.
The 2013 Community Action TOC will:

• Articulate our **ASSUMPTIONS**.

• Simplify the identification of **NATIONAL GOALS**.

• Provide a framework for **CONNECTIONS** to be made between strategies provided at local, state and federal levels and the movement toward or achievement of the national goals.

• **INCLUDE THE ROMA CORE ACTIVITIES** and other existing ROMA principles and practices.
ROMA Next Generation protocols will:

- Establish procedures for making clear links between what’s measured (INDICATORS) and the national goals.

- Ask agencies to connect their strategies with RESEARCH.

- Create a process for documentation of DATA ANALYSIS AND ACTION in making programmatic and agency improvements.
Listening Session Results

Beginning to Gather Pieces for a Community Action TOC
Long Term Goal
• What will Change?
• Ambitions, Expectations
• Vision Statement

Assumptions
• Causes
• Preconditions
• External Factors

Performance
• Identify Indicators and Targets (numbers, populations)
  • Implement strategies to produce Change
  • Use measurement tools (evidence) to identify Change and progress towards Change

Reflections
• Learning
• Improving
• Sharing Success
Long Term Goal

Assumptions

Performance

Reflections
TOC: Assumptions

1. Why is your agency important to your community?
2. What has gone into the identification of the issues that your agency addresses -- what are the foundational beliefs?
3. What are some of the causes of the issue(s) you want to address?
4. What makes you believe that your work will lead to change?
5. Do you have findings from best practice literature or social science to support you?
6. What preconditions help or hinder the change you are working toward?
7. Is your work sufficient and conducted at a scale to reach your goals?
1. Describe your agency's vision for revitalized communities and for strengthening families?

2. What is the ultimate change you want to achieve in your community?

3. How does the agency identify this vision throughout the various programs that are offered?

4. Do you think that all community action agencies aim for the same ultimate change?

5. Does one or more of the ROMA national goals capture this ultimate change?

6. Do the goals of your agency align with the ROMA goals?
TOC: Performance

1. How do you define your performance as an agency?
2. Is your performance program focused, includes the whole agency, takes into account broad change in the community, etc.
3. How do you know how many people will be served and, of those, how many will achieve outcomes?
4. Does your performance fit into the NPIs? Which ones? Why?
5. How do you measure progress towards outcomes?
6. What kinds of evidence do you collect and keep?
7. Do you set targets based on a one year period? Do you feel the indicators you have identified will take place in a year?
1. What do you do with the data you collect for reporting? How is it shared internally and externally?

2. Do you use your performance data to explore "what works" and "what could be strengthened" and "what needs to be done differently."

3. What data do you wish you had -- to help you know if programs are working or if they need to be changed?

4. What data do you think would help you to tell the story of your agency's successful impact?
Findings

See Emerging CA-TOC graphic

Does this hold true?
Assumptions

1. Locally driven based on local needs and resources
2. Bundled, comprehensive service delivery to address the interconnected causes and consequences of poverty
3. Community engagement in governance, advocacy, program design and evaluation
4. Nationwide organizational infrastructure and coverage
5. Community planning and coordination of resources
Long-term Goals

1. To create family economic security
2. To create thriving communities
Discussion & Next Steps

1. Should we measure the same things at the national, state and local levels.

2. If family ECONOMIC SECURITY and THRIVING COMMUNITIES are our long-term goals, how do we measure progress?

3. What tools and resources are needed at each level within the network?

4. How do we address the need to measure CSBG success, specifically?
Resources

• [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org) A wide range of tools, samples and background materials

• [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org) *Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning*

• [www.grantcraft.org](http://www.grantcraft.org) *Using a Theory of Change Toolkit*

• [www.roma-nptp.org](http://www.roma-nptp.org) *Introduction to ROMA*
For More Information

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