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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

THEORY OF CHANGE

*Enhancing the CSBG Network's
Performance Management System*

NASCSP Conference | September 2014



ROMA Next Generation

Two key goals of ROMA *Next Generation* Center of Excellence are to:

- ❖ Implement a Theory of Change process throughout the Network
- ❖ Foster a performance culture in the Network



Session Objectives

- Identify how a **Theory of Change (TOC)** will advance Community Action performance measurement/ performance management systems and help to improve state plans
- Identify the differences between a national TOC and a local TOC
- Consider a draft of format for local agencies development of TOC
- Identify how the TOC will create a framework to help make meaning out of data



Need for a Theory of Change

- As a network, we do not have a unified, standardized method of articulating the changes we expect to achieve
- The Six National Goals were designed to provide a framework for our work but ...
 - They are not universally used by agencies to guide the planning, implementation, and analysis phases of ROMA
 - They are not actually measured



National Performance Indicators

- Document the numbers of individuals, families, communities that achieved **INDICATORS** but not the number who achieved the **GOAL**
- Do not ask for connections between the indicators and goals

Why do we think these things indicate success in the Six National Goals?

- Do not connect the services provided with the outcome indicators reported

*Is it one service for one outcome? Many services for one outcome?
Many outcomes from one service?*

- Do not describe the population that is achieving the indicators

Building a TOC

Indicators

Assumptions

Long Term Goal

Indicators
that will be
measured

Indicators
that will be
measured

Indicators
that will be
measured

Intermediate
Outcome
required to meet
goal

Intermediate
Outcome
required to meet
goal

Intermediate
Outcome
required to meet
goal



Assumptions



Assumptions



Service or
Strategy

Service or
Strategy

Service or
Strategy

DRAFT National Community Action Theory of Change

This Theory of Change portrays the National Community Action Network's unique operating structure. It also articulates the assumptions the Network is built on and the long-term goals the Network aims to achieve.

ASSUMPTIONS

Our assumptions articulate the principles and belief system that underlie the work of Community Action.

- Poverty is a complex problem and will not be solved with simple solutions.
- Helping people to overcome poverty and move toward self-sufficiency requires long-term and multi-faceted strategies that integrate agency and community resources.
- Families in crisis are not able to work toward self-sufficiency, so stabilization is a first step on the continuum toward self-sufficiency.
- Community stakeholders, particularly those with a low-income, best know their community's needs.
- Family and community successes are interconnected.

Community Action...

- Is locally driven based on local needs and resources
- Stimulates community engagement in governance, advocacy, program design, and evaluation
- Is driven by community planning and coordination of resources
- Leverages other resources to address complex issues

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Represented by this arrow, systematic data collection and analysis are needed to test these assumptions, continuously improve strategies, and increase Community Action's effectiveness and efficiency.

SYSTEMS CAPACITY

Systems capacity at every level within Community Action enables family and community strategies to become actualized.

Local agencies are well run and have the capacity to implement high quality strategies that produce results. Federal and state offices provide support and oversight.

While these elements of the systems are interrelated, each has a specific role to play in the Network. Together they form nationwide coverage and infrastructure.

Organizational Standards provide a structure for identifying agency capacity in the areas of Maximum Feasible Participation, Vision and Direction, and Accountability and Operations.

Federal and State Accountability Measures address areas of T/TA; data collection, analysis and reporting; monitoring and oversight; and communication.

The entire network uses the Results Oriented Management and Accountability framework and the National Performance Indicators to show the collective impact of Community Action.

Data from these activities are used differently at the different levels of the system.

State/Regional Associations and National Organizations provide training and technical assistance to all levels of the Network.

PROCESSES TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

The system is designed to preserve the focus of Community Action and to promote greater effectiveness among State and local agencies.

Local agencies identify strategies and services that they will provide to produce family, agency, and community outcomes that are directly related to the locally assessed needs.

These local activities acknowledge the need for a continuum of services for families that responds to the target population to be served and the mix of resources that are available both within the agency and in the broader community.

Community Action stabilizes families by meeting their immediate needs.

Community Action works to create pathways to self-sufficiency for America's families with low-income by employing long-term strategies, including bundled, integrated service delivery to address the interconnected causes and effects of poverty.

Community Action joins with partners to create change in community conditions that foster the environment needed to cultivate and maintain self-sufficiency.

Community Action promotes individuals with low-income having a stake in their community.

LONG-TERM GOALS

FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & REVITALIZED COMMUNITIES

The National Performance Indicators are measures of progress toward the long-term goals and enable the national Network to track change over time.





National Theory of Change

What Are Our Assumptions?

Assumptions articulate the principles and belief system that underlie the work of Community Action.

Key assumptions include...



What we believe about **POVERTY**...

- Poverty is a complex problem and will not be solved with simple solutions
- Helping people to overcome poverty and move toward self-sufficiency requires long-term and multi-faceted strategies that integrate agency and community resources
- Families in crisis are not able to work toward self-sufficiency, so stabilization is a first step on the continuum toward self-sufficiency
- Community stakeholders, particularly those with a low-income, best know their community's needs
- Family and community successes are interconnected



More National Assumptions

What we believe about **COMMUNITY ACTION...**

- Is locally driven based on local needs and resources
- Stimulates community engagement in governance, advocacy, program design, and evaluation
- Is engaged in community planning and coordination of resources
- Leverages other resources to address complex issues

What we believe about **DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS...**

- Systematic data collection and analysis are needed to test these assumptions, continuously improve strategies, and increase Community Action's effectiveness and efficiency



What Else We Believe

- **System capacity at every level** within the Community Action network enables family and community strategies to become actualized
- To achieve results, the system is designed to preserve the focus of Community Action and to promote greater effectiveness among State and local agencies
- Local activities acknowledge the need for a **continuum of services**
- Long-term outcomes include **FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & REVITALIZED COMMUNITIES**



The ***Assumptions*** for the National TOC are about **HOW** we believe change will happen.

- ❖ They are stated broadly to reflect the national picture
- ❖ They represent the entire network
- ❖ As states and agencies look at their own community resources and needs, their assumptions may focus on one or all of the national assumptions



Local TOC

*Assumptions articulate the principles and belief system that underlie the **work of specific agencies***

- Based on knowledge of and experience with poverty in the community, resources available, needs of people with low income and communities in which they live
- What is the agency's mission? It's charitable purpose? It's reason for being in business?
- What are the expectations for change?
Individual? Community?



Local Agencies Hold Different Assumptions

- Not every agency has intense case management services
- Not every agency offers emergency or tangible services
- Not every agency does community level work

The selection of these strategies at the local CAA level should be based on the agency's assumptions about the population it serves and the local conditions ***not just on what funding is available***

These assumptions are about ***causes of poverty, what a local agency can do*** to address these causes, and ***what outcomes are expected*** because of what the agency does



- The National TOC provides a backdrop for work that each state does, but it does not replace TOCs for agencies
- Each agency has underlying assumptions that are based on experience and understanding of the local circumstances and conditions
- These assumptions guide the work of the agency now, but in many cases they have not been clearly articulated. (*The TOC will help articulate them.*)
- Agency TOCs, based on local needs, feed into the State Plan



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LOCAL TOC DEVELOPMENT

Local Community Action Theory of Change

Assumptions
*What matters to YOUR
Community Action Agency?*



Strategies
What will the agency do?



Outcomes and Indicators
What will Change?



**FAMILY
ECONOMIC
SECURITY &
THRIVING
COMMUNITIES**

Five empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing assumptions.

Eight empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing strategies.

Large rounded rectangular box for writing outcomes and indicators. Includes prompts: *Describe the change. Include: How will you know? What will you measure? What NPIs will you report on?*

Large rounded rectangular box for writing a connection between outcomes and long-term goals. Includes prompt: *Make a connection between your outcomes and the long term goals to be achieved.*





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Identifying Assumptions

Guiding the Local Discussion



Assumptions About Poverty

The first set of assumptions to consider ...

- **What is poverty?**
- **What are the causes and conditions in the community?**
- **What is the impact of poverty on the community?**

There may be some significant differences in the assumptions that board members and staff make. These need to be on the table as the agency engages in the TOC process because these assumptions impact what the agency thinks is needed to create change.



Assumptions in the Agency Mission

- Look for a reflection of CAA assumptions about poverty in the Mission Statement
 - The reader should have a sense of what is unique about the agency
 - Usually a few succinct sentences that inspire as well as describe



What's in the Agency Mission?

- Key elements:
 - *Population* – who will be served? Who will change?
 - *Outcome* -- what does the CAA expect to achieve by its work?
 - *Service* – what does the agency do?
 - *Relationships* – are there partners? Others involved in the work?



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Mission: Example #1

To eliminate the causes of poverty in partnership with the county human service offices by strengthening low income individuals, families, and communities through self-sufficiency initiatives in XX County



Mission: Example #2

- To plan and manage a social service delivery system for socially and economically disadvantaged children and families
- To foster self sufficiency
- To achieve a safe and healthy community



Assumptions Behind Strategies

Can you identify what is behind these strategies?

(Causes, conditions, outcomes, indicators to measure, evidence to be collected, projected time frame...)

1. Provide credit counseling to low income people who are deeply in debt
2. Provide emergency food distribution
3. Create a community coalition to work with existing and potential employers who do not give jobs to local residents



Connecting Strategies and Assumptions: Example

An agency has just received a modest sum of money (e.g., under \$150,000) to address problems relating to starvation and malnutrition. Which of the following approaches do you believe the agency should adopt?

- a) Conduct a food donation drive and distribute the food to low-income people
- b) Establish a skills development program so individuals with low income can learn how to purchase economical food and use them to produce nutritious meals for the family
- c) Help community residents organize and operate a farmer's market where low-income people (and others) can buy and sell produce
- d) Assist a local group in pushing for changes in, and expansion of, federal and state food programs

What does your choice of strategy tell you about your assumptions about what you believe will work to address poverty?



Agencies Must Decide...

- What **change** will you make or accomplish?
 - *If an agency believes their interaction must occur at the level of stabilizing families before they help them move to self-sufficiency*
 - *If an agency believes their interaction is about maintaining a family or preventing them from being in crisis*
- What services and strategies best address local needs?



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Now think about **YOUR STATEWIDE** strategies

*What would someone looking at your CAAs
strategies think about your **state's assumptions**?*



Where do your CAAs report the majority of their outcomes? Using the NPIs?

(Family, Agency and Community Level Outcomes)

- Can your agencies connect their outcomes with the services that produce them?
- Can they determine the population that achieves the outcomes?



Make the Connections & Improve Impact

- How do your agencies' efforts accomplish the anti-poverty mission identified in CSBG legislation?
- How do the outcomes they expect to achieve move the individuals, families and communities toward the long term National TOC goals?



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THE TOC AND ROMA

The Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle

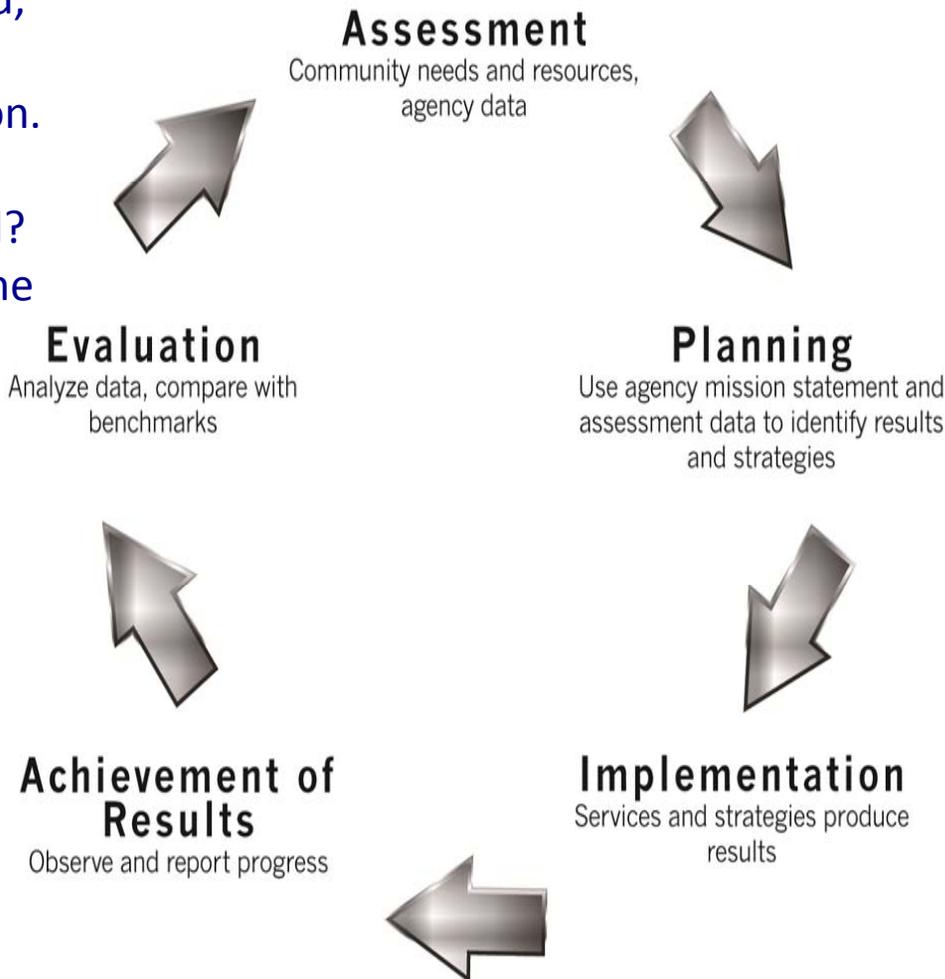
Once services are completed and outcomes observed, the TOC will help guide the evaluation. Did the services do what was expected? Did they validate the assumptions?

The local TOC acts as a bridge between the Assessment data and the Plan

The local TOC helps identify what strategies will be selected and **WHY** they were selected.

The local TOC helps identify the indicators that will be measured.

The local TOC helps identify the outcomes to be achieved





How will a Theory of Change help your CAAs become more effective and efficient?

1. TOC will allow agencies to define the long-term goals and indicators **they want to be held accountable for** in the context of beliefs about how activities will impact on the causes and/or conditions of poverty.
2. Agencies will use their **Community Needs Assessment** to be certain that the agency's assumptions are linked to actual local needs and conditions.



3. The TOC will be a bridge between the identified local needs and the strategic plan
4. Strategies at the **Family, Agency and Community** level will be selected in a purposeful way to address both the local community needs and the long-term National TOC goals
5. Indicators will help identify what will be measured to determine if the strategies are effective in achieving outcomes



6. Identify measurement tools and processes that will be used
7. Analysis of data will test assumptions: What happened?
 - *Was it expected?*
 - *What else needs to be considered?*
 - *Do you strengthen or abandon your efforts?*

For more information about the ROMA Next
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www.roma1.org

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