

**National CSBG Monitoring and Assessment Task Force**

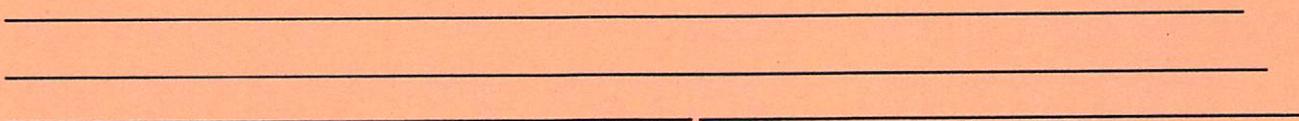
**GUIDE**

**Results-Oriented Management and Accountability**

**R • O • M • A**

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Department of Health and Human Services • Administration for Children and Families • Office of Community Services  
National CSBG Task Force on Monitoring and Assessment



## **Guide on Results-Oriented Planning for Community Services Programs**

### **PART 1: PLANNING FOR RESULTS**

The CSBG Task Force on Monitoring and Assessment believes that monitoring and assessment of community services programs should be focused on the results they achieve for their customers: low-income people. These results should be directly connected to the goals and objectives of the Program. The Program is the entire network of federal and state officials and services providers of all kinds who use CSBG funds to achieve the purposes of the Community Services Block Grant Act. In other words, it is necessary to plan for and measure the results of our work. This guide is designed to help all of us do this well, together.

#### **What is going on here?**

- o Times are changing. Federal and state programs are being asked to do more with less. To compete successfully for declining resources, programs must be able to demonstrate that they can deliver the greatest impact for the least cost.
- o Government is becoming increasingly customer oriented. Americans are interested in the benefits they receive for their investment in tax dollars or eligibility for services. For low-income people, the question is not how much we spend on programs; rather it is how much we help them become more self-sufficient. They want to be part of thriving communities of which they can be proud.
- o To be successful, programs need to focus on the prize: being clear about what they will accomplish and how they will do it. To do this, you need to plan and measure results.
- o No one can do it alone. Partnerships are needed that share commitments and contribute as best they can to benefit their customer. For Community Action, this means we must establish a Community Services Network of caring people and agencies that is dedicated to assisting low-income people become self-sufficient. The network is the program. The program is what we plan for.
- o To be successful, all members of the Network must plan together, share commitments to accomplish the common goals and provide each other with the greatest amount of capacity and flexibility to do their job well. Members break down barriers to success, especially bureaucratic barriers. Collaboration and mutual support are the watchwords.

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#### **What is results-oriented planning?**

- o It is planning that focuses on the impact you want to have on your customers.
- o It is planning that includes concrete goals and objectives and the measures you will use to tell how much progress you are making in achieving them.
- o It pays most attention to what you are trying to achieve for your customers rather than on the processes you use to get there.

#### **Why plan?**

- o Good plans help you deliver better services to customers. Plans that are based on accurate customer needs assessments help target the best services to the greatest need. When resources are limited, services must be even more relevant -- and of the best quality.
- o It will help you run your program better by providing a roadmap to success and a method for checking on your progress.
- o It will provide a firm basis for your priorities and performance measures will give you good information to support the decisions you make about funding and service delivery.
- o It will give you a story to tell to your customers, legislature, potential partners and the public in general.
- o It will give you an effective agenda/frame of reference for talking to your partners and making the right agreements.
- o As your plan evolves over time, it and its predecessors will give you a history: what worked and what didn't work.

Also,

- o The CSBG law requires Community Action Plans that include outcome measures. Outcomes should be based on goals and objectives.
- o Plans provide a useful framework for state legislatures as they carry out their oversight, fact finding and approval functions. Plans tell the program's story clearly and concisely, avoiding conjecture or supposition about what is being accomplished, how it's being done, and can be related to how much it costs.

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- o A new federal law, the Government Performance and Results Act, requires plans and performance measures for all federal programs, including Community Services.
- o The President wants regulatory reform and performance partnerships among federal agencies, states and local programs.

### **Who should plan?**

- o Everyone should plan.
- o The Network plans together.
- o Community Action Agencies should and are required to plan. CAA Boards are central to the CAA planning process. Good planning reflects Board policy, not vice-versa.
- o States must include all the elements of a plan in their applications for grant funding.
- o The Office of Community Services must plan to comply with GPRA and should help all community action partners to plan together to achieve their shared commitments.

### **How often do we need to make plans?**

- o As often as necessary to make them part of the way you do business.
- o Create/update at least once a year, but only to change what needs to be changed and to set your immediate targets for the next twelve months. The important thing is that your plan should reflect your reality. If your situation changes, so should your plan.

### **What is in a plan?**

- o An assessment of the current situation. Such an assessment would describe the customer Needs Assessment Survey, an analysis of resources available and an assessment of the current strengths and weakness of the program and current opportunities and threats to the program.
- o A mission statement (based on the statute) and a vision statement.

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**What is in a plan (continued)**

- o A list of goals and objectives.
- o A discussion of the approach or strategies that will be used to accomplish the goals and objectives.
- o A list of the performance measures that will be used to measure progress toward achieving the goals and objectives.

**What makes a good plan?**

- o It contains a realistic vision that puts customers first.
- o Its Goals mean something, can be measured and represent the shared commitments of all partners in the Network.
- o It reflects Board policy.
- o It reflects community diversity.
- o Its success indicators are concrete and measurable.
- o Its strategies really work and strike the right balance between demonstrating commitments and allowing the doers flexibility to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.
- o It is shared with customers and stakeholders.

**How do you make a good plan?**

- o Get input from customers and stakeholders.
- o Work together and get agreement with partners. Take the time to get people to participate, be open to different points of view, and create an atmosphere where everyone wants to compromise to do better for the customer: low income people.
- o Follow a logical sequence that helps keep plans unified and making sense.
- o Work in groups, maximize participation, stay disciplined by sticking to a clear agenda prepared in advance.

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- o Get or appoint a facilitator.
- o Keep a good record of decisions and discussions.
- o Use the group(s) to get buy-in.
- o Never stop planning; always issue "working plans."
- o Change when a better way is found.

**How do the plans relate to each other?**

- o The National Plan provides the broad framework for community services throughout the country. It paints with a broad brush and is very general. It states a vision and broad goals, i.e. what we want to accomplish. It does not specify how we will do it, except with respect to national initiatives. The plan recognizes that different CAAs and states can accomplish the same result in different ways.
- o The state plan (application) brings partnerships together and shows how each of the national goals will be addressed in the state. It summarizes the individual contributions and expectations of each CAA in the state so that the complete story can be told for the state.
- o The CAA Plans state what part of the state and national plans belong to each CAA. These plans only address goals that the CAA has specific programs to address. They reflect the needs of specific communities and the conditions in those communities. CAA Plans describe specific actions the CAAs and their partners will take to achieve specific results that are negotiated between themselves and the state CSBG directors. These specific agreements form the basis for state distribution of CSBG and other funds.
- o Overall, the way these plans fit together will be a reflection of what partnerships exist and how they work. Feds, states and CAAs will fit together in different ways in different places. But, all partners in the Network everywhere will be working to achieve the same goals: to assist low-income people to achieve increased self-sufficiency in revitalized communities and stable families.

**PART 2: IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS-**

The National Plan for Community Services is a roadmap that CAAs and states should use to understand where they fit in to the overall goals and objectives for community services for low-income people nationally and as a framework for their own negotiations about the manner in which individual CAAs will contribute to accomplishing these goals within the individual states. The National Plan is compliant with the new requirements for development of "outcome measures" under Assurance 13 of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act as amended, and with the results-oriented planning and reporting requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

**Who is responsible for what?**

- o The CAAs prepare their Community Action Plan. They conduct their needs assessment and engage their customers, partners and stakeholders.
- o The States prepare their application for CSBG funds by including all the elements of a state-wide community action plan in the application. In other words, states prepare a state-wide plan that summarizes and aggregates their local plans.
- o States are responsible for making sure that each of the national community action goals are addressed in some aspect of the state-wide plan.

**What are the rules for the states?**

- o States should address all six of the national goals in their applications either directly or through a more consolidated presentation. The rebuttable presumption will be that all six need to be addressed.
- o States should not require each CAA to address all six of the national goals. CAAs should address goals that relate to the individual programs they and the priorities the CAA Board has established for the organization.
- o Requirements should be established which reflect a reasonable balance between the need to look at outcomes of the program and additional burdens being imposed on CAAs.
- o States should provide technical assistance to CAAs that need help developing their plans under the new framework. Team building among CAAs, their partners and the states is an important part of implementing this process. In It is assumed that states and CAAs will need some type of continued assistance in this evolving process.

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**What are the rules for the CAAs?**

- o For each goal that corresponds to the work your agency does, and based on a current needs assessment survey, select measures to report. You may use any or all of the measures contained in the national menu of measures, and report on as many as you wish. But if none apply to your situation, you may create your own measures that measure the progress your agency is making toward the goal or goals you've selected. Note that some of the measures on the menu could apply to more than one goal; use them under whatever goal(s) seems most appropriate to you.
- o Measures that call for a "number of" something to be counted, should be expressed in two parts: (1) the actual count, and (2) the baseline total. For example, if the measure is the "number of households maintaining employment", express it as a factor of the total number of households served by the agency, e.g., 27 out of 86. Do not report percentages without also reporting the counts and baselines so that the data can be aggregated with that of other agencies before percentages are calculated.
- o Data should be collected on the measures selected during the year they are selected. So, if the FY 1997 CAA plan includes self-sufficiency, data about some measure of self-sufficiency (e.g., average income of the core caseload) would be collected during FY 1997.

**What are the rules for the Feds?**

- o The Office of Community Services should use the state plans and reported results obtained through this process as their plans and measures which are submitted to the President through the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress.
- o OCS will emphasize that non-aggregable data from local agencies and/or states is a reflection of the need to be responsive to local needs and priorities even if the result is loss of national statistics that describe conditions nationally. It is appropriate to sacrifice standardization of data for local flexibility.
- o Federal training and technical assistance should be focused on using this planning process to foster team building and partnerships which will improve services to low income people. All state CSBG Directors received basic training on the new process by the end of 1996.

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**What is the time schedule?**

- o All FY 1997 CAA Plans should contain those goals and outcome measures that correspond to their priorities and needs assessments. In FY 1997, all plans will be accepted if they address outcome measures, whether or not the plans are fully compliant in all respects.
- o The National Strategic Plan for Community Services - in its up-to-date form - will be offered as the strategic plan required under the Government Performance and Results Act in October, 1997.
- o CAAs should report real data on actual outcomes in their FY 1997 CAA Plans. States should include actual outcome data in the FY 1997 Applications.