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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

Theory of Change Committee

ROMA Next Generation
Center of Excellence

How You Can Help Us

- Verify that our assumptions are correct
 - The TOC needs to fit into the ROMA cycle you already use
 - The TOC process needs to be woven into strategic planning at the local and state levels
 - We cannot add one more tool without putting it into context
- Ensure practicality
 - Test the ease of implementation

How You Can Help Us (cont)

Think through how you might use this draft and for each section, answer the following questions:

1. Is it clear?
2. Is it practical?
3. Will executive *and* front line staff understand how the TOC fits in the ROMA Cycle?
4. Do you have any suggested changes?

Webinar Agenda

- Walk through the purpose and the core elements of a Local TOC Toolkit
- Document your initial questions and suggestions
- Document your ideas for field testing



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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

Developing a Local Theory of Change

ROMA Next Generation

Center of Excellence

June 2014



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THE PURPOSE OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL AGENCIES

Why add a TOC process to the ROMA Cycle?

- To articulate assumptions that are linked to local needs and conditions as you identified them in your Community Needs Assessment.
 - What do you believe about the causes of poverty and how it affects families? Your community?
 - What are your assumptions about the resources in your community?

Why add a TOC process to the ROMA Cycle?

- To illustrate the bridge between the identified local needs and the strategies your agency uses to meet long term goals
 - What do you believe is the role of your agency in the community?
 - Why do you think the work you do will improve conditions for families? The community?
 - In the context of your beliefs, how will your activities impact the causes and conditions of poverty?

Why add a TOC process to the ROMA Cycle?

- To help you identify the change you believe your agency can help make and select strategies.
 - For what goals and indicators should your agency be held accountable?
 - How will these effect the needs identified?

How will the TOC process make my agency more efficient and effective?



- To help you analyze your outcome data.
- How will you know that your assumptions were correct and the services you selected to implement are working?
 - What did the data collected show you about your assumptions?
 - What may have changed in the years between your Community Needs Assessments?
 - What did you learn about how available resources are supportive of your efforts?
 - What did you learn about your assumptions related to the role of your agency? Strategies?
 - What does this tell you about how to improve and increase your impact?



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HOW DOES A LOCAL TOC FIT INTO THE ROMA CYCLE?

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?

Evaluation

Analyze data, compare with benchmarks



Assessment

Community needs and resources, agency data



Planning

Use agency mission statement and assessment data to identify results and strategies

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.



Implementation

Services and strategies produce results

The local TOC helps identify the outcomes to be achieved



Achievement of Results

Observe and report progress

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



What is a Theory of Change?

- Usually a graphic or short statement that captures what an organization **believes** about the changes (outcomes) it intends to produce.
- Adds a level of focus to the process of planning
- Makes connections between needs, outcomes, strategies and population served.



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WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?

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/T/A; 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.



What is different about the local TOC?



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- The National TOC shows the general assumptions of the network and the range of processes all Community Action Agencies use
- Local agencies determine their own strategies based on their Community Needs Assessments
- The selection of strategies at the local CAA level should be specific, targeted, and based on the agency's knowledge of the community – the populations it serves and the local conditions.

What is different about the local TOC?



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- As examples
 - Not every agency has intense case management services
 - Not every agency offers emergency or tangible services
- While we know the selection of strategies is based on the needs and resources in the community, it is also true that the agency's assumptions play a role in the selection.
- Assumptions 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 guide the selection of strategies whether the assumptions are explicit or implicit.

What is different about the local TOC?



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□ The local agency TOC

- Helps you share why you do the work you do
- Helps you assess the impact of the work you do
- Helps you learn from your experience



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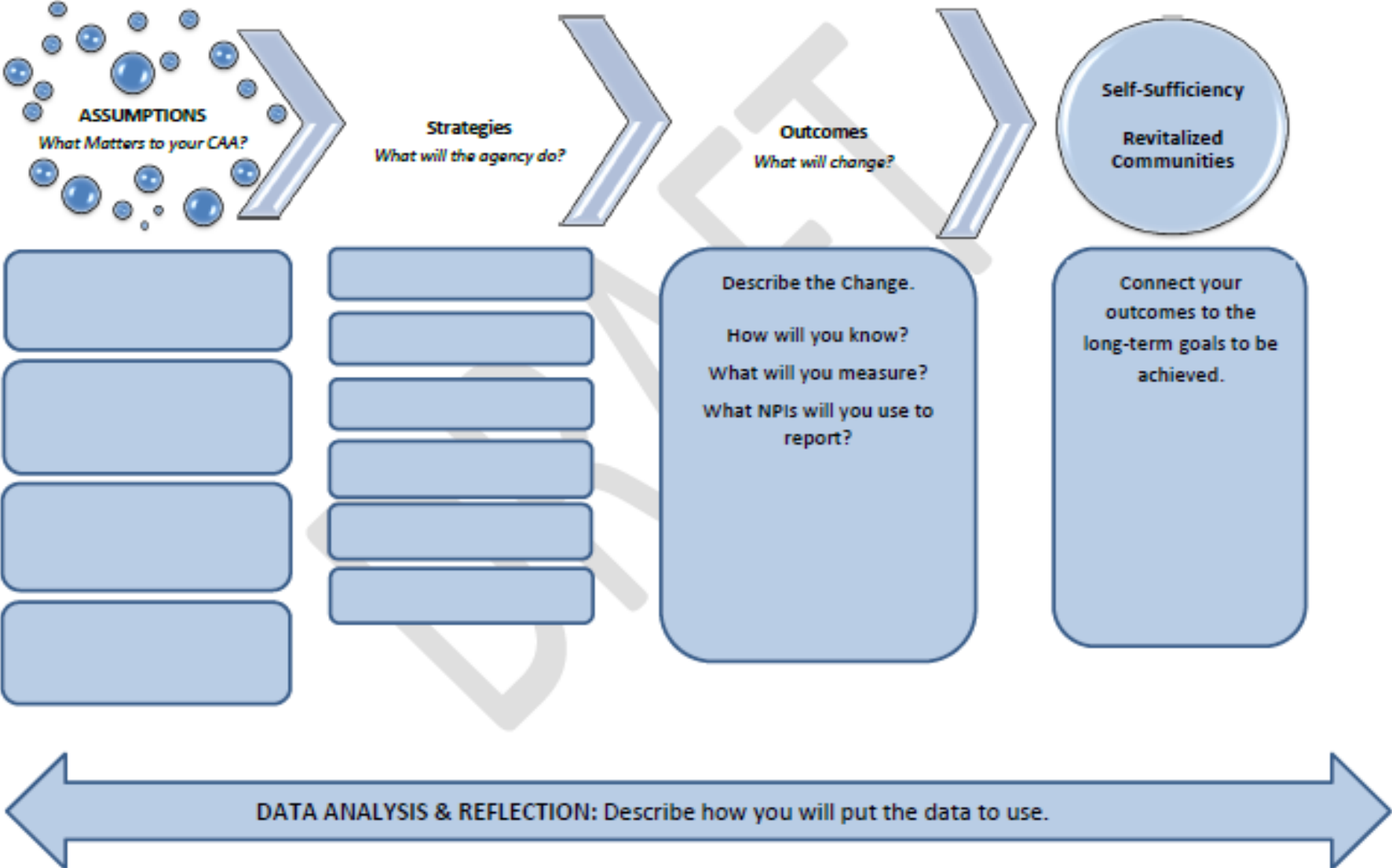
WHAT WILL THE TOOLKIT INCLUDE?

Components of the Toolkit



- Explanation of each stage and how it fits into the ROMA cycle
- Suggestions for who you might want to include at each stage and what materials you should have available
- Examples of what other agencies have done
- Exercises and questions to guide the process

Local Community Action Theory of Change



Sections of the Toolkit



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1. Background Assumptions about Poverty
2. Reviewing Your Mission Statement and your agency's legal exempt purpose (as stated in your by-laws)
3. Reviewing Your Community Needs Assessment
4. Separating Conditions and Causes of Poverty
5. Assumptions about what the agency can do to impact the Conditions and Causes of Poverty
6. Assumptions about the Resources needed to Create Change

Sections of the Toolkit

7. Selecting Your Outcomes – Family, Agency, Community level – and how they connect to the long term National goals
8. Identifying Your Strategies and why you believe they will work to achieve the outcomes
9. Selecting Indicators that will be measured
10. Evaluation - Learning and Improving



Guiding the local discussion

1. BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

2. REVIEWING YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

Background Assumptions about Poverty



- We always make assumptions about what is needed for our work to succeed.
- We make assumptions about the people we serve and the challenges they face, the conditions of the community, and how our work might create change.

Background Assumptions about Poverty



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- As you start the TOC process it is important to clearly articulate your underlying assumptions **about poverty (the causes and conditions in your own community)** before you discuss the role that your organization might play.
- There may be some significant differences in the assumptions that board members and staff make. These need to be on the table as you continue the TOC process because these assumptions impact what you think is needed to create change.

Background Assumptions about Poverty



- Here are two questions to start this discussion.
 1. What do you believe are the causes of poverty?
 2. What do you believe are the impacts of poverty on your community? *(in other words, what conditions do you see that you attribute to the state of “poverty” in the community)*

Who might be at the table for these discussions?

- Board Members
- Senior Management Team
- Representatives of Mid-level and Front Line Staff
- You might also include:
 - Formal and Informal Community Leaders
 - Consumers of Agency Services
 - Programmatic experts
 - Facilitator

Background Assumptions about Your Agency Mission

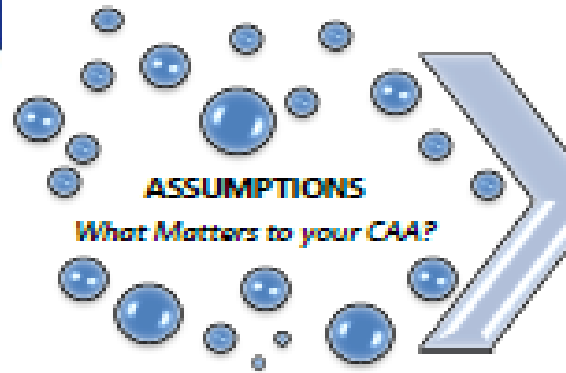


- Now that you have a better understanding of what assumptions are guiding the Board and Staff of your agency, it is time to pull out your Mission Statement and review it.
- You will be looking for evidence of your assumptions about poverty in the Mission Statement.
- *The Mission Statement will also contain what you expect to achieve by your agency's work.*
- *It is also helpful to look at your legal exempt purpose that is in your by laws. This will give deeper understanding of your agency's mission.*

Assumptions for TOC



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What is your mission?

- A Mission Statement contains the essence of who you are, as an agency.
- After reading your Mission Statement someone should know your agency's underlying assumptions and the long term goals (changes) your agency will achieve.
- The reader should have a sense of what is unique about your agency.
- It is usually a few succinct sentences that inspire as well as describe.
- Key elements:
 - Population, service, outcome, relationships

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 work with other agencies, jurisdictions, and the people of YY County to plan and manage social services and to achieve a safe and healthy community.



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3. REVIEWING YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Using Your Community Needs Assessment Data



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- You must find the themes that emerged from your Community Needs Assessment
- One way to do this by organizing the data around completing these sentences.
 - My community includes the following demographics
 - My community has important resources that help families reach self-sufficiency such as.....
 - My community needs the following resources to help families reach self-sufficiency
 - Families in my community need the following support if they are to reach self-sufficiency.....
 - Potential partners for my agency include the following organizations that provide specific services to revitalize our community and assist families as they move toward self-sufficiency....

What needs are most important?

- How does the agency determine this?
- One activity to try to put a value on each need is to ask these kinds of questions:
 - How big is the need?
 - How many people/communities does it impact?
 - How hard would it be to make a change that would reduce the need?

Examples of what you may consider

- What conditions and resources are needed for a family to move from crisis to self-sufficiency?
- Which of these conditions and resources exist in your community already?
 - If you consider employment as part of this pathway then you will make assumptions about skills needed and job availability.
 - You likely will also make assumptions about transportation and child care. There may be available jobs, good transportation, and affordable child care already in your community.
 - *These can be circled or written in a different color to show which are conditions that are needed and which already exist.*



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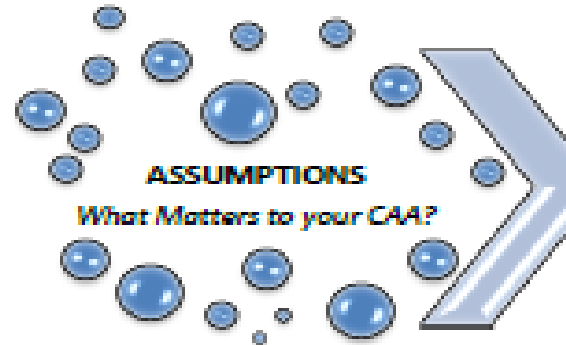
5. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO CREATE CHANGE

Assumptions about How Change Will Happen



- The National TOC has assumptions that articulate the principles and belief systems that underlie the work of Community Action across the country.
- They are stated broadly to reflect the national picture.
- You may find that, as you look at your own community resources and needs, your assumptions focus on one part of the continuum of the national assumptions.

Assumptions for TOC





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6. SELECTING YOUR OUTCOMES – FAMILY, AGENCY, COMMUNITY

Selecting Outcomes Your Agency Will Include in the Strategic Plan



- Where on the national continuum of stability to self-sufficiency does the work of your agency fall?
- At what level does your agency work?
 - The family level? Community level? Both?
- What conditions and resources are needed for your agency to fulfill its mission in relationship to the specific work in the strategic plan?



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7. IDENTIFYING YOUR STRATEGIES

You must decide

- What services and strategies will address your local needs?
- What changes will you accomplish?
 - This can be a difficult question if you believe that your interaction must occur at the level of stabilizing families before you help them move to self sufficiency. It is hard to see “change” when you are maintaining a family or preventing them from being in crisis.



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Exercises to begin the discussion

Looking at Assumptions Behind Strategies



Can you identify what is behind these strategies? (causes, conditions, outcome, indicators to measure, evidence to be collected, projected time frame)

1. Provide credit counseling to low income people who are deeply in debt.
2. Enroll eligible persons in Food Stamps.
3. Create a community coalition to work with existing and potential employers who do not give jobs to local residents.
4. Expand the weatherization program to include basic home repair.

STRATEGY OPTION QUESTIONS



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Your 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 would your agency 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 agency's assumptions about what will work to address poverty?

Where do you report the outcomes from these strategies on the NPIs?

Another example

Approximately 70% of the children in a primary school in your agency's service area are from low-income families. Based on available information, only about half of these children will graduate from high school. Your agency has decided to use a modest sum of money to address this problem.

- Which of the following approaches would you use?
 - a) Provide tutoring and counseling with individual students.
 - b) Create parent training and activity groups to increase parent involvement in school activities.
 - c) Work with community groups to generate community involvement in "stay in school" awareness campaign.
 - d) Help low-income parents and students ask for significant changes in the school system's operation.

One More

You received an anonymous donation to address the problem of low-income people with unpaid heating bills.

- a) Divide the money and give it to families to pay heating bills.
- b) Use the money to purchase weatherization materials and mobilize volunteers to install these materials in homes.
- c) Work with utility companies to create a low income energy fund.
- d) Join with organizations across the state to seek utility rate reforms of benefit to low-income people.

Last One



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Your agency has identified a need related to low-income elderly persons staying out of institutions and in their own homes.

- Consider these strategies:
 - a) Hire homemaker aides for low-income elderly persons.
 - b) Petition the state to increase its homemaker program.
 - c) Have in home training program for elderly persons to assure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to remain in their homes (adjust to their own limited capacity).
 - d) Join with other organizations to have a property tax exemption for low-income elderly persons enacted.

Now think about YOUR strategies



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- What would someone looking at your strategies think about your assumptions?
- Take a few minutes to think about your strategies and the assumptions they may indicate.
- Where do you report the majority of your agency's outcomes on the NPIs?

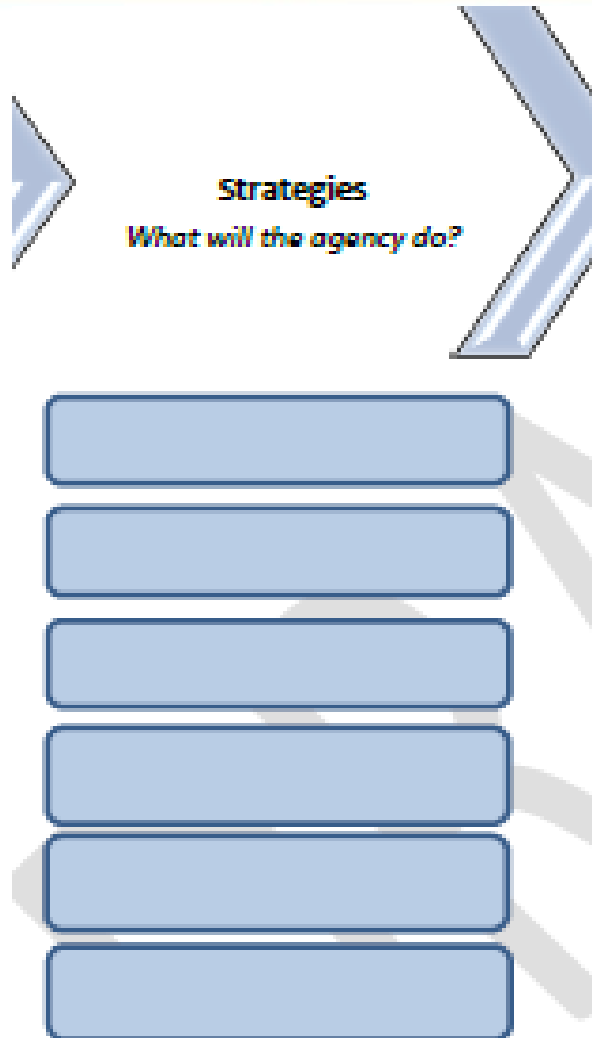
Selecting Strategies

- What are the agency resources?
- What are the community resources?
- Could other resources be developed?

Add your strategies to your TOC



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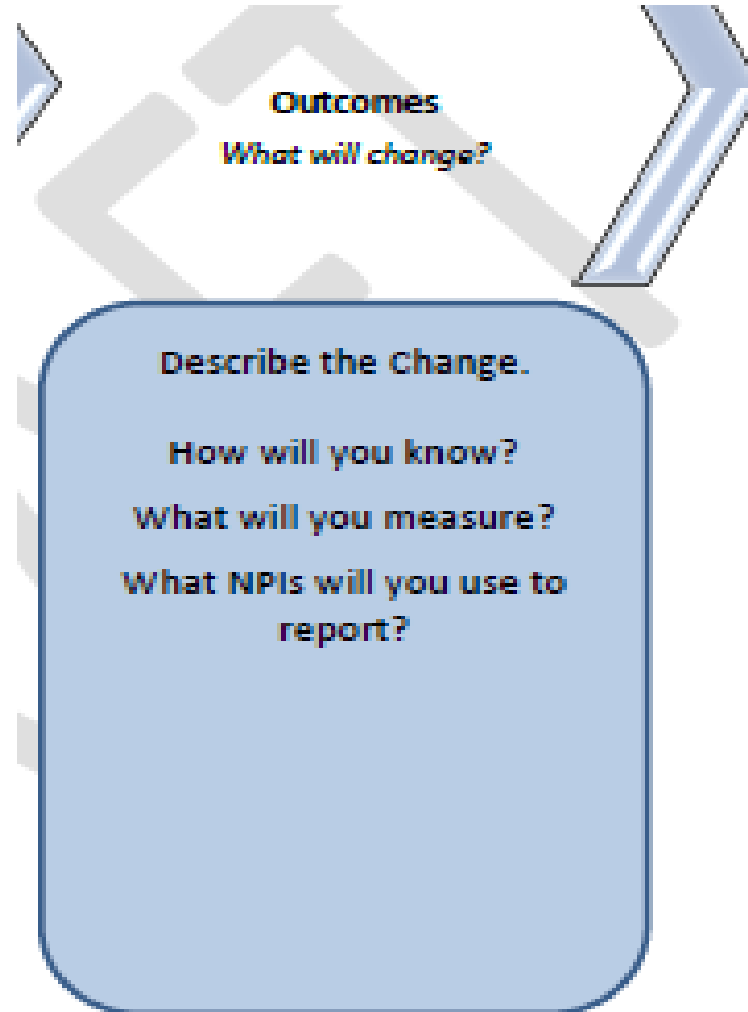
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8. SELECTING INDICATORS AND TARGETS

Identify the Changes *and how you will measure the change*



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Outcomes

What will change?

Describe the Change.

How will you know?

What will you measure?

**What NPIs will you use to
report?**

Make the Connection

- The piece of the TOC that will provide the most support for the “Community Action Story” is the final column: How does the outcome you expect to achieve move the individuals, families and communities toward the long term national goals?
- How do your agency’s effort accomplish the anti-poverty mission identified in CSBG legislation?

Add your assumptions about the connections

Self-sufficiency

**Revitalized
Communities**

**Connect your
outcomes to the
long-term goals to be
achieved.**

Homework for our Next TOC Committee Meeting

Think through how you might use this draft and for each section, answer the following questions:

1. Is it clear?
2. Is it practical?
3. Will executive *and* front line staff understand how the TOC fits in the ROMA Cycle?
4. Do you have any suggested changes?

Questions?

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more resources and information.



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