

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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-incomes having a stake in their community.

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.