

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ACTION

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An End in Sight...

History of Community Action – Part I

An Era of Hope, Opportunity, Change

- **Wednesday, August 28, 1963:** During a 200,000-person **civil rights** rally in at the **Lincoln Memorial** in **Washington, D.C.**, **Martin Luther King, Jr.** gives his famous **I Have A Dream** speech.
- **Tuesday, September 10, 1963:** 20 African-American students enter public schools in the U.S. state of Alabama.

An Era of Hope, Opportunity, Change, cont.

- **Monday, October 14, 1963:** The term "Beatlemania" is coined by the British press.
- **November 06, 1963 : Vietnam War begins** following the November 1st coup and murder of President **Ngo Dinh Diem**, coup leader General **Duong Van Minh** takes over leadership of **South Vietnam**.
- **Friday, November 22, 1963:** In **Dallas, Texas, US** President **John F. Kennedy** is assassinated, Texas Governor **John B. Connally** is seriously wounded, and US Vice-President **Lyndon B. Johnson** is sworn-in as the **36th President of the United States**.

An Era of Hope, Opportunity, Change, cont.

- **Tuesday, May 19, 1964:** Vietnam War: The **United States Air Force** begins **Operation Yankee Team**.
- **Friday, May 22, 1964:** U.S. President **Lyndon B. Johnson** announces the goals of his **Great Society** social reforms to bring an "end to poverty and racial injustice" in America.
- **Friday, June 12, 1964:** **South Africa** sentences **Nelson Mandela** to life in prison.
- **Thursday, July 2, 1964:** U.S. President **Lyndon B. Johnson** signs the **Civil Rights Act** into law.

Enter President Lyndon B. Johnson

- The history of Community Action is intertwined with:
 - The War on Poverty
 - The Great Society
 - The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The War on Poverty

During his 1964 State of the Union address, President Johnson announced...

This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional War on Poverty in America.

The Great Society

For in ***your*** time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. **It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning.**

~ *President Lyndon B. Johnson*

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964

- The vehicle for accomplishing Johnson's Great Society was the EOA of 1964.
- Sargent Shriver drafted the language for the EOA of 1964.
- The legislation passed and was signed into law on August 20, 1964.
- Johnson asked Shriver to assist him in setting up the new Office of Economic Opportunity.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, cont.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964; Public Law 88-452

August 20, 1964

To mobilize the human and financial resources of the Nation to combat poverty in the United States. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.* That this Act may be cited as the "Economic Opportunity Act of 1964".

FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

SEC. 2. ...The United States can achieve its full economic and social potential as a nation only if every individual has the opportunity to contribute to the full extent of his capabilities and to participate in the workings of our society. It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. It is the purpose of this Act to strengthen, supplement, and coordinate efforts in furtherance of that policy.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, cont.

- A cabinet level office was established, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).
- This office was to coordinate all of the federal governments anti-poverty efforts and programs.
- It was also to be a laboratory for program development.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, cont.

Some of the program created under the EOA of 1964 include:

- VISTA
- Job Corps
- Neighborhood Youth Corps
- Head Start
- Adult Basic Education
- Family Planning
- Community Health Centers
- Congregate Meal Preparation
- Economic Development CDCs
- Foster Grandparents
- Legal Services
- RSVP
- Legal Services
- Neighborhood Centers
- Summer Youth Programs
- AND MORE!

The Great Society: Vision to Reality

- Johnson proposed an expansion in the federal government's role in domestic policy. In addition to the Economic Opportunity Act, Congress enacted:
 - ▣ Two major civil-rights acts (1964 and 1965)
 - ▣ Two education acts (1965)
 - ▣ Legislation that created Medicaid, and Medicare

An End in Sight...

History of Community Action – Part II

Community Action Agencies

- OEO accomplished its purpose through:
 - ▣ Development and funding of community organizations
 - ▣ Creation of State Offices of Economic Opportunity (SOEO) to involve Governors in the **War on Poverty**
- The OEO established a direct federal to local relationship with local communities.

Community Action Agencies, cont.

- A delivery vehicle was needed at the local level
- Enter Community Action Agencies...
 - A concept.
 - A public or private organization.
 - A community process.
 - A vehicle to make change.
 - A mission.

The Mission of the CAA

- The EOA defined the purpose of a CAA:

...to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, State, private, and Federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families, and low-income individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivation to secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.

The Mission of the CAA, cont.

- Many adopted the Mission.
- Many community members committed themselves to the Mission and worked for very low wages.
- The CAA employed many of the poor they were organized to serve.
- In addition to services, the CAA was an advocate. It challenged and by-passed the traditional systems.

OEO and Community Action Grow

From 1964-1967:

- OEO hires nearly **3,000** employees
- By 1968 there were over **1,600** CAAs in over **2/3** of the counties nationwide.
- CAAs were organized to serve a single county, multi-counties or a city.
- Most CAAs were private nonprofits but some were organized as public agencies.

OEO and Community Action Grow, cont.

- CAAs expanded programs rapidly and set up centers in low-income communities, reaching out to involve and train the poor.
- CAAs pursued “**maximum feasible participation**” for the poor. This often set up clashes with the establishment.

OEO and Community Action Grow, cont.

- Many big city Mayors and other local politicians complained that the CAAs needed to be controlled.
- Many were challenging the existing power structures and, by offering jobs to neighborhood people, disrupting the hold that patronage exerted on neighborhoods.

Green and Quie Amendments

GREEN

1967: stipulated that local elected officials had **authority to designate the official CAA** for their areas.

Most were certified but a few big cities took control and replaced the existing CAA.

QUIE:

1967: stipulated that **1/3** of board must be composed of elected officials and **1/3** would be private sector representatives. This limited “maximum feasible participation” of the poor on the boards to **1/3** of the membership.

OEO and Community Action Support Begins to Diminish

- Critics increasingly complained that the antipoverty programs of the Great Society were ineffective and wasteful.
- After only 4 years, the Community Action network was experiencing growing pains and commitment from President Johnson waned.

Enter President Richard Nixon

- Nixon attempted to...
 - ▣ Develop a guaranteed minimum income for low income people,
 - ▣ De-fund the Community Action Agencies, and
 - ▣ Dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity.
- Nixon transfers a number of programs from OEO to other federal departments to administer.

Turbulent Times for OEO

1969: Nixon appoints **Donald Rumsfeld** as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Rumsfeld surprises and is basically supportive of OEO and works to improve its efficiency. Rumsfeld hires **Dick Cheney** and Christy Todd Whitman as assistants. Rumsfeld publishes CAA mission guidance.

1973: Nixon appoints Howard Phillips as OEO Director. Phillips sends telegrams to CAAs telling them to complete affairs and close down by June. Phillips was unsuccessful, due to court rulings, and the President does not take Phillips recommendations to veto EOA legislation to heart. Phillips resigns 1974.

Rumsfeld Guidance

- To stimulate a better focusing of all available, local, state, private, and Federal resources upon the goal of enabling *low-income families*, and *low-income individuals* of all ages in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to **become self-sufficient**.

Rumsfeld Guidance, cont.

- The Act thus gives the CAA a primarily catalytic mission: to make the *entire community* more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor by *mobilizing resources* and bringing about greater institutional sensitivity. A CAA's *effectiveness*, therefore, *is measured* not only by the services which it directly provides but, more importantly, *by the improvements and changes it achieves in the community's attitudes and practices toward the poor and in the allocation and focusing of public and private resources for antipoverty purposes.*

Rumsfeld Guidance, cont.

- In developing its **strategy and plans**, *the CAA shall take into account the area of greatest community need, the availability of resources, and its own strengths and limitations. It should establish realistic, attainable objectives, consistent with the basic mission established in this Instruction, and expressed in concrete terms which permit the measurement of results.* Given the size of the poverty problem and its own limited resources, the CAA should concentrate its efforts on one or two major objectives where it can have the greatest impact.

Distracted by War, EOA is Saved

- Nixon develops Public Employment Programs and price controls but becomes distracted by Vietnam and Watergate.
- Nixon does not veto EOA but does not support increases in funding for key programs.
- Nixon resigns and Gerald Ford becomes President.

Enter President Gerald Ford

- The OEO was terminated and replaced by the Community Services Administration.
- This diminished the agency's presence. It was no longer in the Executive Office.
- Overall funding of CAAs was basically flat or below inflation during this period.

Identity Crisis

- Many CAAs do not use the term Community Action in their “title” or corporate name
- CAAs are known in their community by their programs and not their mission
- There is a disconnect and this undermines their resource development efforts

Enter President Jimmy Carter

- Carter appointed Graciela Olivarez as Director of the Community Service Administration.
- The CAA network received bad press and scrutiny due to the flamboyant travel and other practices of some CAA executive directors.
- An effort to improve planning and accountability, GPMS was rolled out.
- CAA involvement with Weatherization and solar greenhouse projects began during this period.

Enter President Ronald Reagan

- Reagan's first budget intended to eliminate CSA and funding for CAAs.
- Reagan personally had dislike for Legal Services and the "Great Society Programs."
- The House of Representatives supported Reagan's proposed budget and zeroed out CSA and Community Action funding.

Omnibus Reconciliation Act Ends CSA

- Enter NCAF and Congressional supporters
- The EOA was repealed
- CSA was eliminated and programs were assigned to various federal departments
- Funds in the resulting Community Services Block Grant were to be administered by the States
- An office was created in HHS to transfer funds to States.

Community Action Agencies Preserved

- 90% of the CSBG funds were to be used at the local level by CAAs
- Eligible CAAs were the same organizations previously eligible under OEO and CSA determinations. They were “Grandfathered.”
- States had the responsibility for monitoring CAAs and could spend up to 5% of the State’s CSBG allocation for administrative purposes. The remaining 5% was designated for State discretionary anti-poverty funded activities. Any portion of the two 5% pools not spent for their purposes would revert to the CAA eligible entities or be returned unspent.

Idealism Continues to Diminish

- Although there were many programs developed under the “Great Society” they were not income transfer programs. They were designed to attack causes of poverty and provide opportunities.
- In the 70s public attitudes and political attitudes moved toward blaming the poor for their problems. The poor were more and more portrayed as lazy and a tax on the broad public.

Shifts in Policy Lead the Way

- In the 80s and into the 90s public welfare policy and politics became more focused on changing values and behaviors.
- President **Bill Clinton's** administration implemented the most significant changes in welfare policy since the Great Society.
- **Newt Gingrich**, then Speaker of the House, supported the largest increase in Community Action funding ever while supervising the cuts in many other federal social programs.

Shifts in Policy Lead the Way, Cont.

- Enter President George Bush
 - ▣ CSBG continuously slated for elimination. It is seen as a duplicative program without results.
- Enter President Barack Obama
 - ▣ Economic Security for All
 - ▣ An era of hope, opportunity, change ...
 - ▣ State of the Union asks for a sizeable decrease in CSBG...



Liking Policy to Data

The Quest for Evidence

Challenging Policy Forces

“The best government programs embrace a culture where performance measurement and evaluation are regularly used and complement one another.”

The Administration is emphasizing that performance measurement information must be present and used to improve. Additionally, **rigorous program evaluation** must be pursued to determine impact against a **comparison** group or the status quo.

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

- The Administration differentiates between performance measurement and program evaluation
- Performance information, like ROMA is important and valued, but it is program evaluation via evidence-based information that is driving policy and funding decisions

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Program Measurement:

Tracks progress toward intended program outcomes, but does not compare outcomes to alternative programs or the status quo

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Program Evaluation:

Rigorous evaluations to determine the impact of programs/practices on outcomes complementing the performance measurement/performance management practices. **Evaluations determine whether programs produce outcomes superior to alternative policy choices, or not putting into place a policy at all.**

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Statements in President Obama's 2012 Budget Proposal

- ❑ ...cutting CSBG in half and **transforming it from a formula-based program to a competitive grant program for CAAs.**
- ❑ CSBG provided funding for the important work of CAAs, but does not **hold these agencies accountable for outcomes.**
- ❑ CAAs receiving funding have remained unchanged since 1964....**guarantees funding for these entities**
- ❑ **States usually pursue termination only when there is a determination that the CAA is grossly financially negligent.**
- ❑ In addition, because of weak reporting in the current statute, the Federal Government **does not now what different CAAs are accomplishing as a result of receiving CSBG funds.**

~ *President Obama's 2012 Budget Plan*

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Statements in President Obama's 2013 Budget Proposal

- Although it supports the important goals of the CSBG program, the Administration proposes to reduce funding in order to meet fiscal targets...
- The Administration proposes to establish a system of **performance standards** and **competition** for CSBG funds, which will promote **innovation** and target funds to **high performing** entities in areas with greatest need.

~ *President Obama's 2013 Budget Plan*

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Federal OCS Principles for CSBG Reform

- ▣ Place-based services to address the causes and impacts of poverty
- ▣ Direct limited resources to agencies that can most effectively serve high need communities
- ▣ Promote evidence-based practices to achieve results

Challenging Policy Forces, cont.

Federal OCS Principles for CSBG Reform, cont.

- ▣ Maximize the percentage of funding devoted to high quality community services rather than toward general administrative expenses
- ▣ Operate with the highest possible level of program integrity

Challenging Political Forces

What's the proper role of government?

- ▣ Six Areas Congress Should Consider Cutting:
 - Empowering state and local governments
 - Consolidating duplicative programs
 - Privatization
 - Targeting programs more precisely
 - Eliminating outdated and ineffective programs
 - Eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse

~ *Recommendations from Heritage Foundation*

Challenging Financial Forces

- ▣ National Debt and Budget Deficit
- ▣ Sequester

Summary

- We should continue to expect Congressional efforts to cut spending on domestic discretionary programs
- The president's 2014 budget may once again place us in a defensive mode in regards to CSBG and other key CSBG Network program appropriations
- Most likely there will be another CR for Labor, HHS, Education spending this year
- OCS to respond to the President's call for standards and improved performance in July

QUESTIONS?

*Credits: John Wilson, Former Executive Director, PA
Community Action Association; Jim Masters, Knowledge
Sharer, Center for Community Futures; The U.S. Census
Bureau; Wikipedia*