Emphasizing What Works

in the Community Action Network

NASCSP

Executive Summary

This issue brief will:

- Review federal policy-level developments focusing on evidence-based and evidence-informed programs

- Summarize work started in 2010 to collect and catalogue evidence-based, evidence-informed, exemplary, and/or promising practices to help enhance CSBG services and improve outcomes for low-income individuals, families, and communities

- Recognize various sources of evidence-based and evidence-informed resources

- Provide some examples of results-focused initiatives at State and local levels

See *Performance Management in the Community Action Network*[1] for related information on advancing the emphasis on outcomes for CAAs, especially through the framework of ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability).

A Clear Message

The Promise of Community Action

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) have been a pathway of opportunity for millions of Americans for nearly fifty years. Created through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, CAAs operate as locally designated anti-poverty organizations across the United States. Today, through federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act funding, CAAs are able to blend together a variety of programs and services in a coordinated fashion designed to help families move toward self-sufficiency and to improve living conditions within the community.

Aptly stated in *The Promise of Community Action*:

> Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.[2]

Success stories abound that showcase the efforts of CAAs. These reflect helping low-income students become the first in their family to attend college, preparing the unemployed to gain a decent job, placing families in affordable rental housing while helping others save and purchase their first home, providing access to health care, offering entrepreneurial training to help create microbusinesses, convening partners to implement community initiatives, and much more.

2012 CSBG Highlights[3] published by the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) reflects that **1,048 CSBG agencies in 99% of U.S. counties provided services to 18.7 million low-income individuals in 7.6 million families during FY 2011**. The report offers data portraying the reach of these services:

Vulnerable populations served by the CSBG Network including:

- **5.1 million** children

- **2.5 million** seniors

- **2.1 million** people with disabilities

- **3.6 million** individuals who lacked health insurance

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1 Barbara Mooney and Ken Ackerman, Performance Management in the Community Action Network, NASCSP Issue Brief, February, 2013

2 Community Action Partnership, www.communityactionpartnership.com

3 National Association for State Community Services Programs, 2012 CSBG Highlights

The CSBG Network **addressed 36.5 million conditions of poverty** that create barriers to economic security. Here are just a few examples of how the conditions were measured:

- **Employment or Work Supports** (5.8 million barriers addressed to help low-income participants obtain initial or continuous employment, acquire a job, obtain an increase in employment income, or achieve "living wage" employment and benefits)

- **Economic Asset Enhancement and Utilization** (1.0 million barriers addressed to help low-income households achieve an increase in financial assets or financial skills as a result of CSBG Network assistance)

- **Child and Family Development** (3.9 million barriers addressed to help infants, children, youth, parents, and other adults participate in developmental or enrichment programs facilitated by the CSBG Network and achieve program goals)

- **Independent Living for Low-Income Vulnerable Populations** (3.3 million barriers addressed to help low-income vulnerable individuals receive services from the CSBG Network and maintain an independent living situation)

- **Community Opportunities and Resources** (3.8 million barriers addressed to improve or increase community opportunities or resources for low-income people as a result of CSBG Network projects or initiatives, or advocacy with other public and private agencies)

While much has been accomplished by CSBG, the economic and political climate over the past several years has ushered in an era of much leaner times for human services and community development work. Community Action is at a crossroads in needing to further demonstrate their effectiveness in order to maintain continued support.

A Date to Remember

In his State of the Union (SOTU) address on January 25, 2011, President Barack Obama proposed to "freeze annual domestic spending for the next five years." He went on to say "this freeze will require painful cuts," including "things I deeply care about, like community action programs."[4] The President followed this statement by proclaiming:

> …I'm willing to eliminate whatever we can honestly afford to do without. But let's make sure that we're not doing it on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens. And let's make sure that what we're cutting is really excess weight. Cutting the deficit by gutting our investments in innovation and education is like lightening an overloaded airplane by removing its engine. It may make you feel like you're flying high at first, but it won't take long before you feel the impact.[5]

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4 Video of The 2011 State of the Union Address (link plays from 36:45)

5 Transcript of The State of the Union Address. The White House Office of the Press Secretary. January 25. 2011

The language used in these remarks startled those involved with CSBG – CAA board members, senior-level staff members, front-line workers, State administrators, volunteers, program participants, and the wide-ranging groups of community stakeholders: ***eliminate what we can honestly afford to do without – not doing it on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens – make sure what we're cutting is really excess weight***. Somehow, these notions seemed to contradict the idea of specifically targeting CAAs for *painful cuts*.

Some details of the president's plan were unveiled less than a week after his SOTU address when White House Chief of Staff William Daley stated on Face the Nation that the president is going to cut Community Action by 50% and re-formulate the program to make it based on performance like with Race to the Top.[6]

OMB Charts the Course

Obama's SOTU may have been a wake-up call to many in Community Action, but this shift in federal policymaking was on the move for several years as seen through material issued by the Office of Management and Budget focusing on evaluation of programs. In June 2009, OMB Director Peter Orszag posted *Building Rigorous Evidence to Drive Policy*[7] that included sentiments such as:

• We haven't been making the right investments to build a new foundation for economic prosperity — and we need smarter investments in education, health care, and social services

• In making new investments, the emphasis has to be on "smarter." Many programs were founded on good intentions and supported by compelling anecdotes, but don't deliver results.

• Rigorous ways to evaluate whether programs are working exist. But too often such evaluations don't happen. This has to change, and I am trying to put much more emphasis on evidence-based policy decisions here at OMB. Wherever possible, we should design new initiatives to build rigorous data about what works and then act on evidence that emerges — expanding the approaches that work best, fine-tuning the ones that get mixed results, and shutting down those that are failing.

• We're flexible about the details of the program; we only insist that most of the money go toward the programs backed by the best available evidence, and the rest to programs that are promising and willing to test their mettle.

• by instilling a culture of learning into federal programs, we can build knowledge so that spending decisions are based not only on good intentions

A year later, OMB Director Orszag issued *Evaluating Programs for Efficacy and Cost-Efficiency* [8] that noted: "Rigorous, independent program evaluations can be key resources in determining whether government programs are achieving their intended outcomes as effectively as possible and at the lowest possible cost." Furthermore, "careful evaluation and decision-making based on demonstrated results are even

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6 White House Chief of Staff William Daley's Exclusive Interview (portion on budget cuts starts at 1:33 and on CSBG at 2:35), Face the Nation, CBS News

7 Building Rigorous Evidence to Drive Policy, Peter Orszag, Office of Management and Budget, June 8, 2009

8 Evaluating Programs for Efficacy and Cost-Efficiency, Peter Orszag, Office of Management and Budget, July 29, 2009

more vital than ever. Ultimately, evaluations can help the Administration and Congress determine how to spend taxpayer dollars effectively and efficiently, by investing taxpayers' resources in what works."

And then, in May 2012, OMB Acting Director Jeffrey Zients issued *Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget*[9] that emphasized "using comparative cost-effectiveness data to allocate resources" and "infusing evidence into grant-making."

Proposed Cuts to CSBG Follow Suit

The budget proposals from the Department of Health and Human Services, the federal agency that administers CSBG, have reflected the President's plan to cut the program nearly in half for the past two years[10].   Here's the justification that was given for these cuts in 2012:

> The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program provides grants to States, territories and Indian tribes for redistribution to pre-designated eligible entities -- primarily Community Action Agencies (CAAs) -- that provide services and activities to reduce poverty. Annual awards for CSBG funds are not open for competition, and many of the CAAs receiving funding have remained unchanged since 1964. The current CSBG program guarantees funding for these entities, unless a State takes formal action to revoke an entity's eligibility -- a difficult and time-consuming process. States usually pursue termination only when there is a determination that the CAA is grossly financially negligent. A series of reports from the Government Accountability Office and the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services have documented failures in program oversight and accountability -- with the likely result that even grossly negligent CAAs continue to receive funding. In addition, because of weak reporting in the current statute, the Federal Government does not know what different CAAs are accomplishing as a result of receiving CSBG funds.
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> The Administration recognizes that many CAAs play an important role in the Nation's communities -- providing much needed and adaptable anti-poverty programs to those in most need of assistance. In order to ensure that CSBG funding is used most effectively, the Administration proposes to cease funding the CSBG program through the existing, non-competitive funding structure. Instead, the Budget provides $350 million to fund the highest performing Community Action Agencies so that scarce taxpayer dollars are targeted to high-performing agencies that are most successful in meeting important community needs.[11]

And similar language was featured with the 2013 budget justification[12], adding that "the budget proposes to establish a system of performance standards and competition for CSBG funds, which will promote

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9 Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget, Jeffrey Zients, Office of Management and Budget, May 18, 2012

10 Fiscal Year 2012 CSBG Budget Proposal, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services featured on Virtual CAP News Feed, February 14, 2011 and Budget for Fiscal Year 2013, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

11 Fiscal Year 2012, Terminations, Reductions, and Savings: Budget of the U.S. Government, Reductions, Community Services Block Grant, Department of Health and Human Services, p. 103

12 Fiscal Year 2013, Cuts, Consolidations, and Savings: Budget of the U.S. Government, Cuts, Community Services Block Grant, Department of Health and Human Services, p. 30

innovation and target funds to the high-performing entities and areas of greatest need" and noting that:

> Annual awards for CSBG funds are not open for competition, and many CAAs receiving funding have remained unchanged since 1964, regardless of their level of performance…In addition, the current reporting systems are not robust enough for States or the Federal Government to determine what different CAAs are accomplishing as a result of receiving CSBG funds.

In the FY 2014 HHS Budget Justification[13], similar language was once again used about targeting funds to "high-performing, innovative agencies." It also focused on the development and use of core federal standards as the basis for open competition:

> Continuing the President's FY 2013 budget request to target CSBG resources to high-performing, innovative agencies, ACF will work with Congress to establish and monitor a set of core federal standards that states will be required to use to assess whether an eligible entity is meeting established standards of service delivery. States will have the flexibility to add to these core standards according to their own interests and needs. When an eligible entity falls short of meeting the standards, the state will be required to implement immediate open competition to serve the affected communities…Current CSBG distribution formulas to states, territories, and tribes will be maintained, but states will be required to allocate funds with increased consideration to the areas of greatest need. ACF will provide flexibility to states to determine funding distributions that respond to the unique conditions of the state.

Improving CSBG Network Outcomes

OCS Focus on Evidence-Based Exemplary Practices

In April 2010, the federal Office of Community Services (OCS) under the Department of Health and Human Services issued a funding announcement[14] "to support a clearinghouse for the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Network and other stakeholders focusing on activities and service delivery mechanisms and policies and procedures making meaningful and measurable progress toward alleviating the causes and conditions of poverty and increasing self-sufficiency among low-income individuals, families, and communities." The announcement indicated that this initiative would involve creation of a State Performance Management Clearinghouse (SPMC), which would "serve as the central gateway to information and resources, including research and evaluation products that **promote evidence-based exemplary practices** [emphasis added] and communication among the CSBG Network."

OCS further described that "the purpose of the SPMC is to build the long-term capacity of the CSBG T/TA program by improving access to quality T/TA information and resources (i.e. evidence-based, evidence-informed, field tested, exemplary, and/or promising practices) to help State CSBG Lead Agencies support CSBG activities and services and improve program outcomes." Topics to be covered by the SPMC included these five major focus areas: 1) Employment-related Services; 2) Asset Development; 3) Administrative,

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13 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Community Services Block Grant, Department of Health and Human Services, p. 170

14 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Funding Announcement HHS-2010-ACF-OCS-ET-0009, Community Services Block Grant Training and Technical Assistance Program: State Performance Management Clearinghouse

Program, and Financial Operations; 4) Community Economic Development; and 5) Risk Mitigation and Assessment.

The following definitions were issued to guide identification of resources for the SMPC:

Evidence-Based Practice – Approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. This could be findings established through scientific research, such as controlled clinical studies, or other comparable and rigorous methods.*

Evidence-Informed Practice – Approaches that use the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation within context. This informed practice allows for innovation and incorporates the lessons learned from the existing research literature.*

Field Tested Practice – A program, activity or strategy that has been shown to work effectively and produce successful outcomes and is supported to some degree by subjective and objective data sources

Exemplary Practice Model – An innovative and consistently applied policy, process, practice, or procedure that takes a comprehensive approach to developing and implementing activities using strategies that are related to the intended service recipients and community. This practice model is culturally competent, data-driven, measurable, and replicable and incorporates a method for documenting programmatic results.*

Promising Practice – A program, activity, or strategy with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness in small-scale interventions or for which there is potential for generating data that will be useful for making decisions about taking the intervention to scale and generalizing the results to diverse populations and settings.

*No single standardized definition exists for what constitutes a "best practice" or "exemplary practice model" regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of social and community services. Different organizations use different criteria for identifying a best practice. However, making a distinction between the different types of practices can be useful. For purposes of this grant, the references can be considered general working definitions.

CSBG Training/Technical Assistance Resource Center

A new website – t*he CSBG Training/Technical Assistance Resource Center*[15] – was created by NASCSP as the recipient of the OCS State Performance Management Clearinghouse grant in a cooperative effort with the Community Action Partnership, which received separate OCS funding to establish a National Risk Mitigation and Quality Improvement Training and Technical Assistance Center (National Training Center).

The website is designed to provide an array of information and assistance designed to support service to low income families and addressing the causes of poverty in local communities. Users can download toolkits, listen to webinars, register for training, engage in online dialogue with colleagues, submit

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15 CSBG Training/Technical Assistance Resource Center (simple new user registration required)

requests for training or technical assistance, read the latest evaluation reports about evidence-based program models, and search a consultant bank for experienced professionals serving the Community Action network.

A *Resource Bank* is included as a component of the site and offers access to material featuring:

• Evidence-Based or Evidence-Informed Programs

• Exemplary or Promising Practices

• Toolkit/Guidebooks

• Webinar Recordings/Multimedia Items

• Samples/Templates

Gathering Material – Finding What Works

Part of NASCSP's efforts with the SPMC has been to populate the *Resource Bank* with material presenting evidence-based, evidence-informed, exemplary, and promising programs and practices. An agreement was created between NASCSP and the Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) to involve Virtual CAP[16] in this facet of the project. Gaining insights from a variety of organizations experienced with evidence-based research was the initial focus:

• [Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy](#)[- 17]

• [EPISCenter](#) at Penn State University[18]

• Forum hosted by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) on *The Promise of Evidence-Based Policy and Practice* featuring Rutledge Hutson (moderator), Director of Child Welfare Policy at CLASP, Gordon Berlin, President of MDRC, and Lisbeth Schorr, Senior fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and lecturer in Social Medicine at Harvard University [19]

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16 [Virtual CAP.org](#) was established by VACAP in 2002 through OCS funding. The website serves as a clearinghouse of information and material that can be used by CAAs and others to help low-income persons and families move toward self-sufficiency and to reduce poverty in communities across the United States.

17 The [Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, which seeks to increase government effectiveness through the use of rigorous evidence about what works.
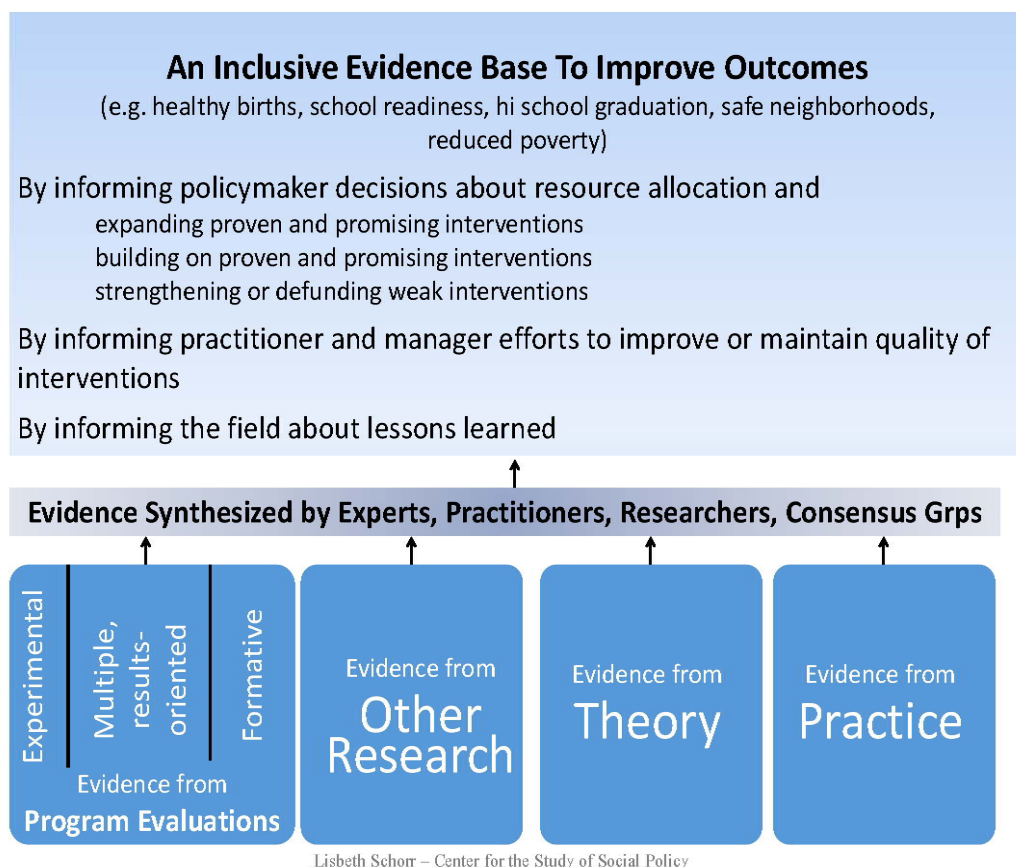
18 The [EPISCenter](#) aims to promote the greater use of prevention and intervention programs that have proven their effectiveness in rigorous scientific evaluations

19 CLASP, [The Promise and Challenge of Evidence-Based Policy and Practice](#) includes video of the event, Forum held on July 6, 2011

The limitations of finding evidence-based studies related to the SPMC's five targeted areas[20] were quickly recognized. For example, the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy has identified interventions under the categories "Top Tier" and "Near Top Tier" to distinguish research-proven social programs from everything else.[21] Only 17 initiatives were listed as of March 2013 and less than half of these would fit within the SPMC targeted areas.

During the CLASP Forum, Lisbeth Schorr from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) offered some tools that are extremely useful in support of creating what she terms "an inclusive evidence base to improve outcomes."[22] This would encompass Evidence from Practice, Evidence from Theory, Evidence from Other Research, and Evidence from Program Evaluations.

An Inclusive Evidence Base To Improve Outcomes
(e.g. healthy births, school readiness, hi school graduation, safe neighborhoods, reduced poverty)

By informing policymaker decisions about resource allocation and
   expanding proven and promising interventions
   building on proven and promising interventions
   strengthening or defunding weak interventions

By informing practitioner and manager efforts to improve or maintain quality of interventions

By informing the field about lessons learned

Evidence Synthesized by Experts, Practitioners, Researchers, Consensus Grps

Experimental | Multiple, results-oriented | Formative
Evidence from **Program Evaluations**

Evidence from **Other Research**

Evidence from **Theory**

Evidence from **Practice**

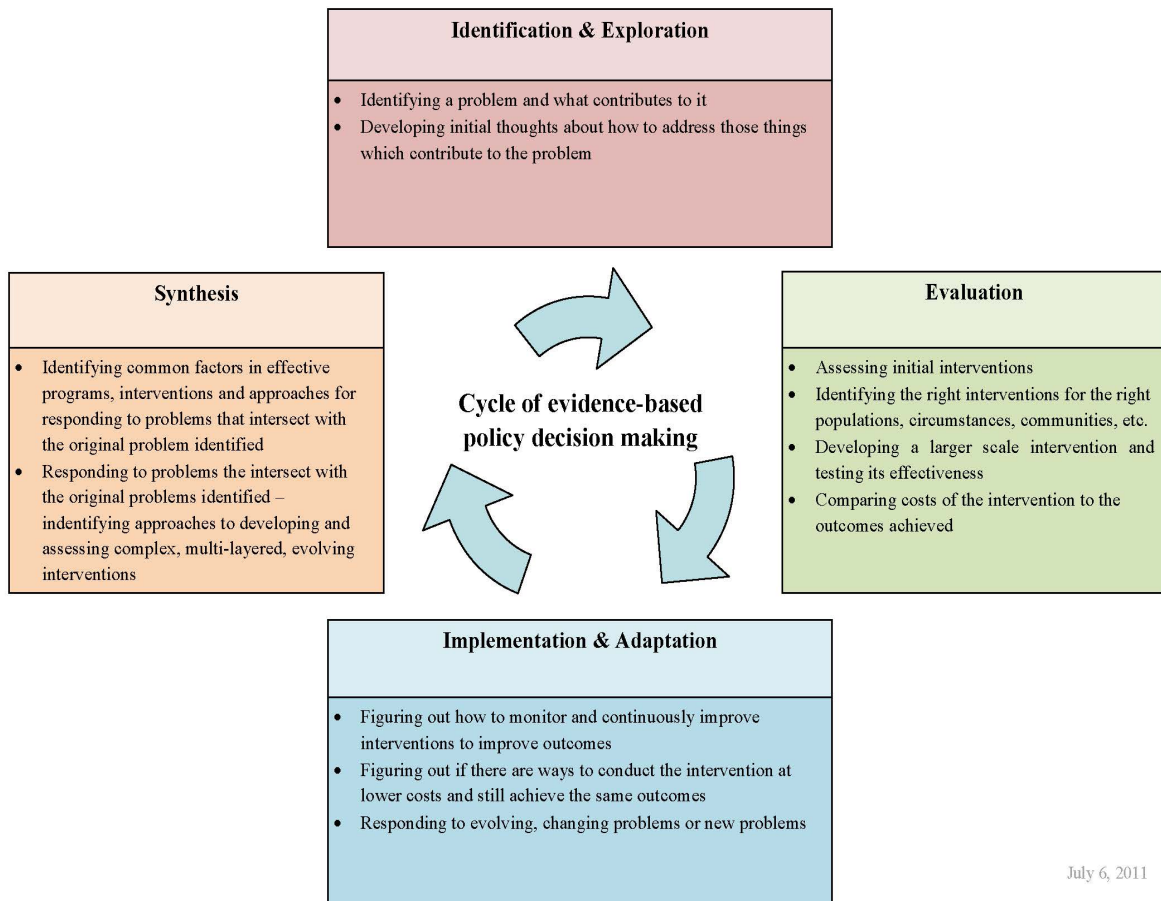Lisbeth Schorr – Center for the Study of Social Policy

Schorr highlighted what she viewed as the cycle of evidence-based policy decision making.[23] This includes four phases: Identification & Exploration, Evaluation, Implementation & Adaptation, and Synthesis.

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20 Five targeted areas of the project: 1) employment-related services, 2) asset development, 3) administrative, program, and financial operations, 4) community economic development, and 5) risk mitigation and assessment.

21 Coalition for Evidence-Based Research, Interventions identified as Top Tier or Near Top Tier, accessed March 21, 2013

22 Lisbeth Schorr, An Inclusive Evidence Base to Improve Outcomes, Center for Study of Social Policy

23 Lisbeth Schorr, Cycle of evidence-based policy decision making, Center for Study of Social Policy

CLASP Presents: The Promise and Challenge of Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

Identification & Exploration

- Identifying a problem and what contributes to it
- Developing initial thoughts about how to address those things which contribute to the problem

Synthesis

- Identifying common factors in effective programs, interventions and approaches for responding to problems that intersect with the original problem identified
- Responding to problems the intersect with the original problems identified – indentifying approaches to developing and assessing complex, multi-layered, evolving interventions

Cycle of evidence-based policy decision making

Evaluation

- Assessing initial interventions
- Identifying the right interventions for the right populations, circumstances, communities, etc.
- Developing a larger scale intervention and testing its effectiveness
- Comparing costs of the intervention to the outcomes achieved

Implementation & Adaptation

- Figuring out how to monitor and continuously improve interventions to improve outcomes
- Figuring out if there are ways to conduct the intervention at lower costs and still achieve the same outcomes
- Responding to evolving, changing problems or new problems

July 6, 2011

Schorr expanded upon the concepts she emphasized during the CLASP Forum by publishing *Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact*[24] in the Fall 2012 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. The article begins by stating:

> No one questions President Barack Obama's insistence that public funds should go to social programs that work and not to those that don't. The controversy is about how we know what works, and the types of evidence that prudent investors should consider credible.\

Maintaining that evidence-based does not have to be limited to experiment-based, Schorr advocates for agreement on four fundamental principles:

- Begin with a results framework

- Match evaluation methods to their purposes

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24 Lisbeth Schorr, Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2012

- Draw on credible evidence from multiple sources

- Identify the core components of successful interventions

The value of embracing an inclusive evidence base is reiterated. Drawing and synthesizing evidence from experimental evaluations, non-experimental evaluations, other research, and practice and experience to:

- Continuously make interventions more effective

- Guide the selection and design of interventions to implement or scale up

- Demonstrate that the work is improving lives and neighborhoods

Rolling Out Resources to Help Improve CSBG Outcomes

An extensive body of information can now be accessed under the *Resource Bank* of the *CSBG T/TA Resource Center* through the joint efforts of NASCSP and the Community Action Partnership. Many helpful guides and toolkits are featured with an emphasis on organizational development published by the Partnership as well as CAPLAW.

As mentioned earlier, part of NASCSP's role with the SPMC has been to pull together T/TA information and resources – evidence-based, evidence-informed, field tested, exemplary, and/or promising practices – to support CSBG activities and services and improve program outcomes. Accordingly, more than 120 items were added to the *Resource Bank* as of January 31, 2013. These included 44 reports on evidence-based or evidence-informed programs or practices, plus 79 examples of exemplary or promising programs or practices.[25] A continuing effort is underway to expand on the range of information to be made available.

Replication of Successful Models

Five steps that can be taken to help ensure successful intervention of evidence-based interventions are described in *How to Successfully Implement Evidence-Based Social Programs: A Brief Overview for Policymakers and Program Providers*[26], a working paper from the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy:

1. Select an appropriate evidence-based intervention

2. Identify resources that can help with successful implementation

3. Identify appropriate intervention sites

4. Identify key features of the intervention that must be closely adhered to and monitored

5. Implement a system to ensure close adherence to these key features

25 Material is featured under these five major focus areas: 1) Employment-related Services; 2) Asset Development; 3) Administrative, Program, and Financial Operations; 4) Community Economic Development; and 5) Risk Mitigation and Assessment.

26 Deborah Gorman-Smith, Ph.D., How to Successfully Implement Evidence-Based Social Programs: A Brief Overview for Policymakers and Program Providers, Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy Working Paper, June 2006

Six core components that drive successful program implementation are outlined in *Implementing Evidence-Based Practices: Six "Drivers" of Success*[27], a Research-to-Results Brief from Child Trends:

1. Staff recruitment and selection

2. Pre-service or in-service training

3. Coaching, mentoring, and supervision

4. Internal management support

5. Systems-level partnerships

6. Staff and program evaluation

Ensuring fidelity with an evidence-based or evidence-informed model is frequently a daunting challenge. Fidelity encompasses "the extent to which an intervention is implemented as intended by its designers. It refers not only to whether or not all the intervention components and activities were actually implemented, but also to whether they were implemented properly."[28] Factors such as issues of scale, insufficient resources or organizational capacity, different community setting with particular social or economic factors, characteristics or qualities of staffing that contributed to the model's success, and so on, all work against replication[29].

Worthy Mining from Others

There will definitely be instances when full replication of proven programs may not be achievable. Nonetheless, there are benefits from learning about approaches that "work" and to determine if certain aspects of the model could be used to strengthen an existing program or fit into a new initiative being considered. As Lisbeth Schorr notes:

> Focusing on spreading the identified components of effective interventions is often more promising than attempting to replicate entire programs, because event proven models are seldom so strong that the program will be successful regardless of the circumstances in which it is replicated. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has concluded that the "integrity of implementation" is a better goal than "fidelity to implementation" because the former can remain true to "essential empirically warranted ideas while being responsive to varied conditions and contexts."[30]

Identifying the core components of successful interventions can lead to great value-added opportunities

27 Allison J. R. Metz, Ph.D., Karen Blasé, Ph.D., and Lillian Bowie, M.A., Implementing Evidence-Based Practices: Six "Drivers" of Success, Child Trends, Research-to-Results Brief, October 2007

28 Deborah Daro, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Brief published by the Children's Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

29 For more discussion see Mihalic, S., & Irwin, K., Blueprints for Violence Prevention: From research to real world settings – Factors influencing the successful replication of model programs. Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 1, 307-329. 2003

30 Lisbeth Schorr, Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2012 and Paul LeMahieu, What We Need in Education Is More Integrity (and Less Fidelity) of Implementation, R&D Ruminations, October 11, 2011

to enhance CSBG programs and practices. This can be accomplished by learning from evaluation reports, studying program models and organizational practices, and seeking materials and tools that can be incorporated within your organization.

Where Else to Look

Here are some other clearinghouses that can be used to access resources from programs meeting various criteria of success. Categories for searching are shown below each clearinghouse.

Social Programs that Work and Top Tier Evidence Initiative – Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

Prenatal/Early Childhood, K-12 Education, Postsecondary Education, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Crime/Violence Prevention, Housing/Homelessness, Employment and Welfare, Substance Abuse Prevention/Treatment, Obesity Prevention/Treatment, and Health Care Financing/Delivery

Programs that Work – Promising Practices Network on children, families and communities

Age of Child, Type of Setting, Type of Service, Type of Outcome Improved, Outcome Areas and Indicators

National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) – SAMHSA (HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Ages, Areas of Interest, Outcome Categories, Geographic Locations, Genders, Races/Ethnicities, Settings, Keywords

Evidence-Based Program Directory – FindYouthInfo.gov

Risk Factors (including poverty) and Protective Factors

What Works Clearinghouse – U.S. Department of Education

Educational Programs, Practices, or Policies

Blueprints for Violence Prevention – Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado at Boulder

Model and Promising Programs, Audience, Program Type, Risk Factor

Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit – Urban Partnerships for Welfare Reform and U.S. Administration for Children and Families

Intake, Case Management, Work Attachment, Work Retention, Transitional Services

Working for Results

The call from the Obama administration for evidence on outcomes is loud and clear. And it's echoed beyond the federal level as anyone involved with human services can testify.

Results First: State-Level Initiatives

An example of the emphasis on "proven" programs is seen through the work of Results First[31], which is helping states assess the "true costs and benefits of policy options" and use of that data to make decisions based on results and return on investment. Results First is also helping states "build a climate for decision-making based on research and evidence. This allows states to eliminate ineffective programs and shift resources to those that generate better outcomes for their citizens."

Managing to Outcomes

Two books are available as free downloads to help organizations create a results framework starting with the core questions of mission effectiveness, fostering an ever-evolving organizational climate that embraces a performance culture, and implementing a managing-to-outcomes approach that will "lead to material, measurable, sustainable benefit for those served:"

- *Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity [32]*

- *Working Hard, Working Well: A Practical Guide to Performance Management [33]*

While the Center for What Works at The Rensselaerville Institute asks the question "Where is your organization on the result trail" and provides a roadmap to becoming a high performing organization[34]. *An Outcomes Framework Browser* and *Impact Measurement Framework* are offered as online tools "to help service providers and funders to identify well-researched program outcomes and key indicators to measure, compare, and improve program impact."[35]

Stepping Into the Futures

There are certainly examples of CAAs involved with various evidence-based programs. These include Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, Across Ages Intergenerational Mentoring Program, Experimental IDA Program, Sector-Focused Employment Training, Community Action Reentry Services, Botvin Life Skills Training, Strengthening Families Program, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

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31 Results First, The Pew Charitable Trusts – currently partnering with twelve states: CT, FL, ID, IL, IA, KS, MA, NM, NY, OR, TC, and VT

32 Mario Morino, Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity, 2011

33 David E.K. Hunter, Working Hard, Working Well: A Practical Guide to Performance Management, 2013

34 The Center for What Works, Journey from Provider to High Performer, The Rensselaerville Institute

35 Ibid, WhatWorks Outcomes Portal (simple registration required)

(¡Cuídate! and Teen Outreach Program™).

Nonetheless, the imperative remains for the CSBG Network to have ample evidence in response to those who claim they don't "know what different CAAs are accomplishing as a result of receiving CSBG funds." This is partially the thrust of current efforts by NASCSP with the *ROMA Next Generation Center of Excellence*, the Community Action Partnership with the *Organizational Standards Center for Excellence* and the Urban Institute with the *Performance Management Task Force*. [36]

Local readiness is a huge part of successfully building this foundation for the CSBG Network. With that in mind, the Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County in California is an example of a CAA with a "performance culture." This agency has established a Learning and Innovation Division "to ensure that all agency programs follow best practices and are evidence based." The Department guides the development of evaluation plans that contain appropriate methodological choices to test and evaluate the most critical indicators of a program's effectiveness and impact. These efforts are designed to build the Agency's knowledge base regarding evidence-based practices related to the Agency's mission and facilitate Agency-wide learning on these practices.

CAP of Sonoma also provides leadership with two countywide efforts – *Upstream Investments* and *Cradle to Career* that embrace interventions that are evidence-based and have measureable impacts.[37] These initiatives are working to eliminate poverty in Sonoma County (*Upstream Investments*) and to build strong families...successful students...world-class workforce...thriving economy...healthy community (*Cradle to Career*). As stated by Oscar Chavez, CAP of Sonoma's executive director:

> To make a difference in the lives of children, youth and young adults in Sonoma County, we must think differently about the systems that impact them. This is about changing the way we prioritize our work – being better partners, setting bolder goals and making decisions that help more children, youth and young adults succeed. [38]

Success is measured by what you accomplish not by what you do. The CSBG Network helps millions of individuals and families in all types of communities each and every year. This is a challenging time for the Community Action Network. Yet, it offers a great opportunity to clearly track and showcase the significant advances that CAAs foster as a multi-faceted, coordinated approach in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty.

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36 Office of Community Services, CSBG FY2013 Update, October 31, 2012 and CSBG Performance Management Task Force Dear Colleague Letter, November 26, 2012

37 Upstream Investments and Cradle to Career

38 Oscar Chavez, quote found in Cradle to Career Resources - Champion (slide 6)

Credits

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NASCSP MISSION

Building capacity in States to respond to poverty issues

The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) is the premier national association charged with advocating and enhancing the leadership role of States in preventing and reducing poverty. NASCSP's vision encompasses the empowerment of low-income families to reach self-sufficiency in its broadest context, through helping States attain full utilization of their resources and implement an extensive array of services to these families, including weatherization, energy assistance, childcare, nutrition, employment, job training, and housing in urban, suburban, and rural communities.