CSBG Community Action Plan and Needs Assessment Tool Kit

Community Services Block Grant Unit
Family Support Division
Missouri Department of Social Services

The Missouri Department of Social Services, Community Services Block Grant Office has provided the following tool kit and templates in an effort to provide guidance, training, reporting uniformity to the agencies that administer the Community Services Block Grant program. The toolkit and templates are a work-in-process. As new ideas and innovative techniques and procedures emerge, the guides and checklists will be modified in an effort to make the needs assessment and community action plan process as efficient and effective as possible

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Introduction

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is a comprehensive process to determine the needs and resources within a community to lift individuals and families out of poverty and encourage self-reliance. A tool that has moved beyond a best practice, the CNA is now a key resource for planning, application, program implementation, and evaluation. CSBG program requirements have changed significantly since community action agencies (CAAs) completed their last CNA. CAAs must now comply with the organizational standards and anticipate implementation of and compliance with ROMA Next Generation. The CNA is the tool that identifies service and resource gaps in the community. CAAs are uniquely funded to be able to fill identified gaps.

The CNA, as a critical exercise for understanding community need and for providing the data for strategic allocation of program dollars, is referred to in **13 of the organizational standards**:

- **Standard 1.1** – The organization demonstrates low-income individuals' participation in its activities.
- **Standard 1.2** – The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.
- **Standard 1.3** – The organization has a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board.
- **Standard 2.2** – The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith- based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions.
- **Standard 3.1** – The organization conducted a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years.
- **Standard 3.2** – As a part of the community assessment, the organization collects and includes current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for their service area(s).
- **Standard 3.3** – The organization collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic services area(s) in the community assessment.
- **Standard 3.4** – The community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of communities assessed.
- **Standard 3.5** – The governing board formally accepts the completed community assessment.
- **Standard 4.2** – The organization's Community Action plan is outcome-based, anti-poverty focused, and ties directly to the community assessment.
- **Standard 4.3** – The organization's Community Action plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the full ROMA cycle or comparable system. In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA-certified trainer (or equivalent) to assist in implementation.
- **Standard 6.4** – Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as a part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.
- **Standard 9.1** – the organization has a system or systems in place to track and report client demographics and services customers receive

In addition, the CNA is a key component of the annual CSBG application process. It is an essential guideline for matching programs to community need as well as for identifying needed partnerships for unfilled gaps. The CNA and the Community Action Work Plan are part of the CSBG Office staff's assessment of each agency during monitoring and the application review. The Community Action Work Plan provides each agency and the CSBG State Office with a clear link between identified needs and agency goals and program achievement. The CNAs and Community Action Work Plans are evaluated as follows:

1. At risk	There is little or no needs assessment data, and the agency has no system for synthesizing available data to guide the direction of comprehensive agency strategic or operational plans.
2. Insufficient but making progress	There are needs assessments for specific programs required by funding sources. The data are only used to meet program requirements
3. Sufficient	Systems exist for utilizing the program needs assessment data on an agency level or for disseminating funding within the agency. There is a regularly conducted, broad based community needs assessment and a system is in place to utilize the data across program lines
4. Sufficient and making strides toward excellence	There is a regularly conducted, broad based community needs assessment and a system is in place to utilize data in developing the agency strategic plan and in formulating goals and objectives
5. Excellent	The agency meets the criteria in 4 and the information from the needs assessment is used in formulating agency goals and objectives in which the board members were involved and they approved. Information is also shared with the community, local policy makers and legislators. The agency needs assessment and strategic plan are utilized in seeking funding through government and private funding sources.

CNAs can and should be more than just a gathering and an analysis of data. They can also be a basis for creating change. A community based needs assessment can help an agency address poverty by providing a snapshot of poverty in the service area. Agencies can begin to create change by setting a framework for programs and plans that work toward ending poverty or at least stabilizing families and individuals and promoting movement to self-sufficiency. It can provide important community information as to who may be working on issues and where gaps in community services exist. It provides an opportunity to make and develop partnerships. Finally a community needs assessment helps the agency in strategic planning process by providing the foundation for strategic operational planning. The work of the needs assessment requires the agency to evaluate if the agency is meeting the needs of the community and determine what programs or projects may have become obsolete and what programs or projects may provide new opportunities for the agency.

As the Community Action Network, it is essential to our role to provide partners, other providers, and state and local governments completed and comprehensive needs assessments and aid in our local and state efforts to reduce poverty.

Process

There are multitudes of ways to conduct a needs assessments **but the collection of all the information is meaningless unless it is framed within the agency's mission and vision.** This tool kit was designed to provide support and guidance to agencies conducting needs assessments and Community Action Plans.

According to the Organizational Standards, Community Action Agencies ("CAAs") must conduct three planning processes:

1. A ***Community Needs Assessment*** ("CNA") every 3 years identifying community needs;
2. A ***Strategic Plan*** ("SP") every 5 years setting agency priorities and outcomes; and
3. A ***Community Action Work Plan*** every year identifying the plan to implement programs that meet the community needs.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") issued Information Memorandum 49, requiring eligible entities to conduct needs assessments and use the results to design programs to meet community needs. In 2015, HHS issued Information Memorandum No. 138 establishing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards requiring CAAs to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and develop a Community Action Plan to address the needs identified in the needs assessment. As noted above, reference to the CNA is found in 13 of the organizational standards.

SIX STEPS TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This guide is divided into six areas:

1. Planning the CNA
2. Data Collection
3. Analysis of Data
4. Prioritization of Data and Issues
5. Creating the Community Action Work Plan
6. Submission of product

END PRODUCT

Each agency needs to create a process and timeline for completing the Community Needs Assessment. To maintain some consistency, the CSBG State Office has developed a tool that all agencies will need to complete. The tool includes templates for:

1. Needs Assessment
2. Data Analysis
3. Prioritization
4. Community Action Work Plan

PART 1

PLANNING

The following steps are provided to guide you through the planning process.

1. **Create a Community Needs Assessment Workgroup**
   - ✓ Organize a committee to develop and oversee an action plan to conduct the needs assessment
   - ✓ Include diverse members such as management, staff, board members, representatives from partner organizations, and volunteers
   - ✓ Define the responsibilities of the committee:

     Sample responsibilities:
     - Determine *what* information to collect
     - Determine *how* to collect the information
     - Determine *who* will participate in surveys, forums, focus groups & interviews
     - Determine *timeline* to conduct assessment
     - Develop *plan* to recruit partners and volunteers to assist in the process
     - Provide *oversight* and feedback throughout the assessment process
     - Monitor process and *ensure completion* of needs assessment

2. **Involve the Board**
   - ✓ Inform the board of need to conduct a community needs assessment
   - ✓ Solicit board volunteers to serve on community needs assessment workgroup
   - ✓ Ensure board members participate in the planning meetings
   - ✓ Ensure the board provides input on the scope of process and information to be collected
   - ✓ Interview board members

3. **Define Assessment Goals – What data is needed?**
   - ✓ Identify the goals of the needs assessment. Clearly define what you expect to know once the assessment is complete in order to determine what data to collect.

     Sample Goals are:
     - Identify the causes and conditions of poverty in the service area
     - Determine the level of poverty in the CAA service area
     - Determine the needs of low-income persons
     - Determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met
     - Identify (organization-based and client-based?) barriers to serving residents
     - Identify community strengths and assets
     - Solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers
     - Determine broad categories of data to gather. Examples are:
       - Population Profile , Employment
       - Education, Income Management

- Housing , Emergency Services
- Nutrition, Linkages and Coordination of Services
- Self-Sufficiency, Health Care

4. Develop a Timeline

- ✓ Develop a timeline and a system to track that deadlines in the timeline are being met
  - Work backwards from submission date to the CSBG State Office (Sept. 30, 2020)
  - When does completed and agency reviewed copy need to be to board for approval?
  - When does completed draft need to be to agency director/others for review?
  - How much time does that leave?
  - What resources are available—staff/board/member/university/community…to assist with project
  - Are others in community gathering similar data?
  - How should this project be broken down---and who will complete what parts?
  - Create a timeline that sees each part to: completion, review, submission to the board, and submission to CSBG State Office.

5. Determine how to collect information

- ✓ Determine what qualitative data you will collect and how to collect data in each county served (e.g. surveys, interviews, forums, and focus groups)
- ✓ Determine what quantitative data you will collect and the sources to use
- ✓ Determine how records related to assessment will be retained

6. Develop a task list with staff and volunteer responsibilities

- ✓ Develop list of tasks to be accomplished by staff and volunteers or partners
- ✓ Assign tasks
- ✓ Develop timeline for task completion

7. Recruit volunteers and partners

- ✓ Identify and contact partner organizations and volunteers
- ✓ Identify partners who may be engaged in similar community research
- ✓ Determine what part of the needs assessment they can assist with
- ✓ Provide timeline to staff and volunteers and partners

Potential Partners and Volunteers

- Members of your agency's board
- University students in graduate programs (e.g. planning, social work and public affairs)
- Nonprofit partners
- City or county staff in community development departments
- Head Start parents
- School teachers and administrators
- Parent Teacher Associations
- VISTA volunteers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Lions Club
- Churches

- Salvation Army and Catholic Charity Organizations

8. **Present Community Needs Assessment Plan to Board**
   - ✓ Develop a report to present to the board outlining the goals of the CNA, major tasks of the project, the methods that will be used to collect data in each county, and the plan to solicit help from partners and volunteers.
   - ✓ Present CNA plan to board for approval
9. **Assign Tasks and Monitor Progress**
   - ✓ Management meets with staff to make assignments
   - ✓ Monitor staff progress in completing tasks by deadline in timeline

PART 2

DATA COLLECTION

It is important to note that when conducting focus groups and or surveys, agencies must include outreach to members of the communities, populations, and counties they serve, and to their current clients, perspective clients, and other service providers or partners who work with the same population that are covered by this assessment. The organizational standards require evidence of collecting input from the five sectors (public, private, educational, community-based, and faith-base). Make sure to keep detailed records of who was surveyed and clearly identify responses from specific sectors.

It is important that each agency understand that each of the areas in the CNA needs to be filled out in entirety. If a certain section or data category can't be filled in, the agency needs to provide an explanation of why it can't be gathered and must not leave it blank.

1 – Statistical Data

The suggested data revolves around the conditions of poverty and related issues of employment, use of income, education, housing, nutrition, transportation, and health.

The Needs Assessment template will provide each agency with the minimum categories to collect data for. You may collect data on more categories than the minimum provided to you.

Suggested Data Resources

2018 Missouri CAN Poverty Report: https://www.communityaction.org/2018-poverty-report/

MIT Living Wage Calculator: http://livingwage.mit.edu/

Engage Network: https://mocan.engagementnetwork.org/

American Community Survey: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/

CARES Vulnerable Populations Footprint:

https://engagementnetwork.org/map-room/?action=tool_map&tool=footprint

US Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/data/

Missouri Census Data Center: https://census.missouri.edu/

Data USA: https://datausa.io/

DESE Missouri School Data: https://dese.mo.gov/school-data

Broadstreet: https://www.broadstreet.io/board/pubboard

Please make sure all data is the most current from the selected source.

– Agency Gathered Data

A- Surveys

Surveys can be used to explain the statistics that are gathered in each section (e.g. unemployment rose from 4% to 7%, survey data should provide a reasonable explanation of why this occurred). An agency should survey clients, partners, community leaders, vendors and other service providers.

The following steps are recommended for preparing and conducting surveys:

Use surveys to capture specific information from a large number of individuals in a short period of time.

1. **Design survey forms**
   - ✓ Identify the questions you want the data to answer and what you want to have learned as a result of conducting the survey.

2. **Identify the people that you will survey**
   - ✓ Determine who you will survey, for example: low income residents in identified census tracts or zip codes with high poverty areas, students in community colleges, staff, volunteers and clients.

3. **Determine the number of people you will survey**
   - ✓ Determine the number of community residents to survey in each county by using a *sample size calculator* that determines a sample size for a given confidence level and margin of error and population. We recommend using a 5% margin of error, and a confidence level of 90%:

     Sample Size Calculator http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html

4. **Determine how you will survey**
   - ✓ Determine how you will survey participants: by phone, a mailed form, in person, or by internet (ie. Survey Monkey http //www.surveymonkey.com)
   - ✓ The return rate may be small; therefore, utilizing the mail as your only means of gathering the survey information is not recommended.

5. **Determine when and where to conduct the survey**
   - ✓ Determine a time period for conducting the survey
   - ✓ Determine the places where the survey will be completed
   - ✓ Have surveys available at all intake locations or partners' sites

   Sample Places to conduct community surveys:
   - Neighborhood Council Meetings
   - Head Start Parent Meetings
   - Parent Teacher Association Meetings
   - Community Meetings
   - Nonprofit Organizations Serving Low-Income Persons
   - Door to Door
   - Persons Attending CAA Forums

6. **Conduct surveys**
   - ✓ Train staff and volunteers who will conduct surveys
   - ✓ Distribute survey forms
   - ✓ Send out invitations for online surveys and reminders to complete it as the deadline approaches

7. **Tally results of surveys**
   - ✓ Tally results
   - ✓ Clean data for entry errors
   - ✓ Refer to Appendix 1 - How To Tally Results of Surveys

8. **Summarize findings**
   - ✓ Summarize findings and identify the top 5 needs

Considerations
- ✓ One should consider having the document translated into the native languages of the agency's clients if the agency serves a large population on non-English speakers.
- ✓ When determining a time limit for surveys, think through when or what may affect the number of clients you might see – what times of the month do clients come in with certain needs (energy assistance, Head Start sign up)
- ✓ If using mail, consider the costs as you should include a self-addressed stamped envelope for replies (as well as with those left directly at clients homes).
- ✓ Think about asking a client the questions versus asking them to fill out a questionnaire for example while they are waiting for services. This will entail training of the staff to ensure the questions are being asked in the same manner as well as providing for an area to ensure confidentiality.
- ✓ Do not assume your clients are without access to the internet and computers. A kiosk type computer in the waiting room as well as maintaining internet e-mail addresses on clients can help to capture information in a quick and concise manner.

- ✓ For surveying your partners, service providers, and community leaders, begin by compiling a listing of those who you want to contact.
- ✓ Analysis of both of these surveys will not only provide information on what clients need from their own viewpoint, but will also provide a picture of how the partners, leaders, and others in the community perceive need - which may not always be the same.

B- Focus Groups

Use focus groups to bring together a broad cross section of low-income individuals and community partners and service providers. Arrange the focus groups for maximum openness and encouragement of participation. Always remember the perceived and real power structures in the community arena including the relations between clients and staff. **Multiple focus groups are common and recommended.**

The following steps are recommended for preparing and conducting focus groups:

1. **Design focus groups forms**
   - ✓ Determine what information you want to gather from the focus group and then develop the questions to gather the information you are seeking (for example—a forum may produce insights to previously unidentified barriers...)
   - ✓ Design the focus group forms by using or modifying *Appendix 3: Guidance For Conducting a Focus Group*
   - ✓ Refer to *Appendix 2: Organize a Community Forum* for information on forums.

2. **Identify the people that will be invited to participate in the focus groups**
   - ✓ Develop a list of 15-20 persons to invite to participate in each focus group in each county and make every effort to have at least 10 of the invitees participate in the focus group
   - ✓ Determine cities and counties in which to hold focus groups
   - ✓ Invite persons by telephone and follow-up with a phone call the day prior to event
   - ✓ Note attendance of representatives from the key sectors as defined in Org Standard 2.2 (public, private, education, community-based groups, and faith-based groups)—and their participation so as to demonstrate compliance with Organizational Standards.

   Sample Persons to invite include:
   - Board members
   - Representatives from partner organizations
   - Neighborhood council leaders
   - Community advocates and leaders
   - Business and civic leaders
   - Educators and school administrators
   - Clients
   - Religious organizations that serve the needs of low-income persons
   - Persons or organizations that the sub-recipient or board identify

3. Determine format/venues for the event

- ✓ Reserve a meeting facility for each of the planned focus groups
- ✓ Hire a professional group facilitator or assign volunteer or staff to role
- ✓ Develop an agenda
- ✓ Identify the process to hold the meeting and to document input
- ✓ Plan to document input at the meeting using a flip chart and to post sheets on walls for attendees to view

4. Conduct focus groups

- ✓ Provide a list of the top five needs which have been identified in the community surveys and delve more in-depth into the underlying causes, needs, and barriers.

5. Summarize information collected

- ✓ Review responses from focus groups
- ✓ Develop summary

6. Sample focus Group Questions

- What would our community look like without poverty?
- What keeps families in poverty?
- What should we as a community do to address poverty?
- How do you define poverty?
- The look of poverty in your county is...
- What does debt look like in our community….(types, amount, etc)
- What can our agency/partners do to support the community to achieve the outcomes to eliminate poverty in your county?
- What are the conditions and causes of poverty in our community?
- Identify programs, strategies and initiatives that have been successful in reducing poverty.
- What steps could be taken to reduce poverty in our community?
- What role(s) could our agency/others interested in reducing poverty and creating an economy that works for all-- play in our community?
- What strategies/services do you recognize as successful for moving community members out of poverty?

C- Personal Interviews

A final way to gather viewpoints of a community is to conduct personal interviews with the clients, partners, staff, and community leaders. Personal interviews allow you to delve deeper into various aspects of the questions; however, the process of personal interviews will take more time.

The following steps are recommended for preparing and conducting Interviews:

1. Design interview forms

- ✓ Determine what information you want to gather from interviewees and then develop the questions to gather the information you are seeking

  Sample information to gather:

  - Thoughts regarding needs in the community

- Community Assets
- Barriers
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Recommendations to address needs and barriers
- Design the interview form

2. **Identify the people that you will interview**

   Sample persons to interview:
   - Elected officials, both city and county
   - Community leaders from civic organizations
   - Heads of non-profit organizations serving low-income persons
   - Clergy from churches with ministries that serve low-income persons
   - Key stakeholders
   - Funders
   - Neighborhood association or council leaders

3. **Determine methods to conduct interviews**
   - ✓ Conducting interview in person (preferred)
   - ✓ Mailing interview form – follow-up to ensure receipt, completion, and return (self-addressed, stamped envelope recommended)
   - ✓ E-mailing interview form - follow-up to ensure receipt, completion, and return

4. **Determine when and where to conduct interview**
   - ✓ Offer as many options as possible for opportunities for interviewee to participate
   - ✓ Pick a place that will make the interviewee feel at ease

5. **Conduct interviews**
   - ✓ Train staff and volunteers who will conduct surveys
   - ✓ While conducting interviews, discuss confidentiality and purpose of the interview

6. **Summarize interviews**
   - ✓ Review responses from interviews and develop summary of input

7. **Sample questions for *partnership* or *stakeholder* focus groups or personal interviews could include the following:**
   - ✓ Do you address this issue or need in the community? (Education, housing, employment, child care, etc.)
   - ✓ How do you address this issue? (advocacy, direct service, referral)
   - ✓ What do you see are the challenges facing this issue in the community?
   - ✓ Who else is working on this issue in your area?
   - ✓ How would you know your programs were successful?

8. **Internal focused questions**: The CNA, if comprehensive and multi-faceted, should provide the background for the whole or significant portion of the agency's strategic plan and provide the framework for discovering other programs and funding. The above questions can be revised for such a group and might look like the following
   - ✓ How do we address this issue or need in the community?
   - ✓ What do you see are the challenges facing these issues in the community?

- ✓ Who do you partner with when you need to help someone who is facing this issue? Who should the agency partner with when addressing these issues?
- ✓ How will we know if we are successful?

D- Forums

The following steps are recommended for preparing and conducting Forums:

1. Design forum forms

- ✓ Determine what information you want to gather from in the forums and then develop the questions to gather the information you are seeking. Design the forum forms by using or modifying *Appendix 2 Organize a Community Forum*
- ✓ Develop an agenda

2. Define forum format and venue for event

- ✓ Hire a professional group facilitator or assign volunteer or staff to role
- ✓ Identify the process to hold the meeting and to document input
- ✓ Plan to document input at the meeting using a flip chart and to post sheets on walls for attendees to view
- ✓ Determine cities and counties in which to hold forums
- ✓ Reserve a meeting facility
- ✓ Consider conducting it in conjunction with other community meetings, such as a PTA meeting or a church group meeting

3. Determine methods to publicize the forum

Sample methods:

- Newspapers, radio, website, e-mails, phone
- Requesting board members to publicize to elected officials and organizations
- Asking partner organizations to publicize by distributing fliers
- Notifying neighborhood council leaders, community advocates and other leaders
- Notifying business and civic leaders
- Notifying clients at centers
- Asking schools if they might distribute the survey to parents
- Sending invitations to religious organizations that serve the needs of low-income persons and to other persons or organizations that the sub-recipient or board identify

4. Conduct forums

- ✓ Explain the purpose of the forum
- ✓ Solicit input on the top five needs of low-income persons in the community
- ✓ Identify barriers that make the need difficult for persons to overcome
- ✓ Solicit recommendations for improvements to agency programs

5. Summarize information collected

- ✓ Review responses from forums and develop summary

E- Related Plans

Many communities and areas have already undertaken a number of plans covering the same geographic area and issues that you cover. These plans provide a wealth of knowledge for the agency and can inform the agency of what other programs are active in the region. The challenge of many regional plans is that other regional agencies often do not have the same boundaries as the lead organization in poverty matters. It is suggested that the CAAs look at other plans that touch on at least one issue area or aspect of the community needs assessment. By examining the plans, an agency can see what is being proposed by other groups, can adjust their plans if needed, or become active partners in helping the other agencies achieve their plans if the goals and objectives are a good match.

3 – Needs Assessment Instruction Guide

The following sections correspond directly with the layout of the CNA template. Use these next pages as a direct guide on how to fill out those corresponding sections. Each source used to gather data **should** be representative of individuals AND families that are at or below the 125% poverty level.

SECTION A – ISSUE AREA CHARACTERISTICS

For each agency, it is very important that as many of the characteristics be gathered as possible, even if they do not relate to the services that you provide or your mission. For this section, the Engage Network and the ACS are quality sources to use.

As you collect these area characteristics, use your previous needs assessment or the previous fiscal year as a base year. Use the base year to help you document major changes in the numbers. There is no determining factor that defines what a major change is; that will be up to you and your agency to determine. The rows with a bold outline require that you show the percentage change from the base year. If there are no changes, write 'No Change' in **Section B**. Please note the base year in the designated cell.

For example: If the poverty rate in your area was 5% in 2016 and stayed level in 2017 but in 2018 it went up to 7%, then this would need to be documented (**Section B** will provide an area for you to document these major changes). In the table there are areas for you to note the percentage change. If the poverty rate changed from 5% to 7%, document it as +2%, meaning the 7% poverty is 2% greater than the base year. If the Poverty Rate was 4%, then you would put -1%.

SECTION B – EXPLANATION OF MAJOR DATA CHANGES

For each documented major change you need to provide a probable and/or provable explanation as to why the change occurred. An example is provided to you in the needs assessment in red font.

Explanations of major changes may be discovered when conducting surveys. It is recommended that you gather the statistical data in **Section A** early in the process. This will allow you to craft survey or focus group questions to explain the data.

SECTION C – SUMMARY OF SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUPS, INTERVIEWS, AND INFORMAL QUESTIONING RESULTS

List here your top results from your clients, potential clients, business and community partners, other service providers, or other valid and reliable sources. The data gathered from these methods need to answer questions regarding Causes of Poverty, Gaps in Services, Barriers to Exiting Poverty, and Individual and Community Needs.

This section is divided into four sub categories:

- Causes of Poverty
- Gaps in Services
- Barriers to Exiting Poverty
- Individual and Community Needs

In each sub area there are **five** columns to fill in for each row:

- Column (1) is the subject area (i.e. cause of poverty, gap, barrier, need);
- Column (2) is the Population from which the data was collected(e.g. qualifying CSBG populations);
- Column (3) is the Data Source (e.g. interview with service provider, focus group with clients, survey of youth, questionnaire to clients going through intake, etc.);
- Column (4) is the County that the data was gathered from;
- Column (5) is where you describe the results and provide a description. See the examples in **red font** in the needs assessment.

SECTION D – LINKAGES

According to the CSBG Act, a qualifying linkage will fill identified gaps in the services and will do so by providing clients or other organizations with information, referrals, case management, or follow-up consultations (Sec. 676(b)(3)). Linkages will be between your organization and governmental programs, other social service programs, or resources that are necessary to assisting the community with needs, gaps in service, or barriers to exiting poverty, and must not duplicate other services available (Sec. 676(b)(5)). In sum, a linkage should be created to fill gaps, needs and barriers in community-wide services as identified in the needs assessment and not just services that your organization offers.

In the needs assessment there are two linkage sections to fill in: (1) Current program / Services Linkages; and (2) Linkages that need to be created.

The definition of a '**Current Program / Service Linkage'** is a linkage that your organization currently has with another service provider or resource that already fills a community need as identified in the most current needs assessment.

Under **'Current Program /Services Linkages',** there are four columns to fill in for each row:

- (1) Linkage (list what organization or resource the current linkage is with)
- (2) Need (provide the need, gap, barrier, or cause of poverty that it addresses. This must correlate with the items identified in **'Section C.'**)
- (3) Population(s) Served (of the qualifying CSBG populations list who the linkage serves)
- (4) What this Accomplishes (describe how the linkage will address a gap, need, or barrier; describe if the linkage is referral, information, or management based, or provides follow-up to services)

The definition of a **'Linkage that Needs to be Created'** is a linkage that the organization will create to fill an issue from the needs assessment. The linkages in this section should have a direct correlation with the needs, gaps, and barriers identified in **Section C**.

Under **'Linkages that Need to be Created'** there are four columns to fill in for each row:

- (1) Purpose (list the need, gap, or barrier that this linkage will address. The linkage should correlate directly with a need, gap, or barrier in **Section C**. See example)
- (2) Linkage (list the organization, service, or resource the linkage will be with)
- (3) Population(s) Served (list the population(s) the linkage will serve)
- (4) What this Accomplishes (describe the gap, need, or barrier the linkage will address; describe if the linkage is referral, information, or management based, or provides follow-up to services)

SECTION E – RESOURCES

In this section you will include the resources (financial, human capital, political, etc.) that the agency can pursue to improve service delivery and reach. Stay within your mission and vision. However, also consider stretching yourself to increase and improve your services. Look to **Sections A and C** to determine what resource you need to meet poverty issues and create or strengthen your linkages or partnerships. Consider local, state -wide, regional, and national resources.

In order to complete this section adequately you will need to conduct a Resource Assessment. This assessment will require you to actively look for resources for which your agency is eligible. Consider corporations, foundations, and State and Federal grant websites.

In this Section you have four columns to fill in:

- (1) Resource (List the resource that you are going after --grant money, foundation money, volunteers, etc.)
- (2) Organization (List the organization that holds the resource --foundation, government organization, etc.)
- (3) Purpose (List the purpose. This should correlate with a need, gap, or barrier in Section C; however, it may correlate with another organizational need.)
- (4) What this Accomplishes (Describe what the resource will help you do.)

If there are resources for which you need help acquiring or applying, please provide those in the community action plan.

4 – Needs Assessment Conditions of Poverty

The following sections provide you with questions and data points to consider when gathering data for all seven conditions of poverty. You are provided with information to help you fill in Sections A through F as found under each condition of poverty in the CNA template.

ISSUE AREA (I) USE OF INCOME

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there an apparent demand for budget information?
- Does the number of check cashing facilities reflect on a need not met by the financial institutions?
- Does the use of pawn shops reflect on the need for monthly cash or the need for cash to meet emergency needs?
- What are sources for emergency funds in the community?
- What educational information may be needed relating to use of income?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

1- Income Area Characteristics (Statistical Data) (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template)

- ✓ Income levels
- ✓ Persons receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- ✓ Children receiving free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Recipients receiving food stamps
- ✓ Total food stamp benefits received
- ✓ Earned Income Tax Credits received and average return
- ✓ Number receiving SSA and/or SSI benefit
- ✓ Average SSA or SSI benefit amount
- ✓ Number paying child support
- ✓ Number receiving child support
- ✓ Average child support amount paid/received
- ✓ Number of payday loan, check cashing businesses
- ✓ Number of banks, credit unions, savings and loan businesses
- ✓ Number of pawn shops
- ✓ Number of recipients receiving WIC

2- Survey Questions

General check off type question

Use of income is a problem in this area because

____Lack of knowledge of budgeting
____Difficulty with money management
____Lack of use of earned income tax credits
____Lack of knowledge about savings

Questions to consider for surveys, focus groups, or interviews.

1. Which of the following is true of your family's income? (Listing)
2. What is your average wage per hour?
3. What is your family size?
4. Does your household have any debt? If so, what type?
5. Which of the following is true regarding your family and child support? (Listing)
6. How does your family manage money?
7. What past due bills does your family have?
8. Does your family have any of the following credit debts? (Listing)
9. Regarding your family's taxes, please check all that apply (Listing)
10. In the past six months has your family done any of the following to meet basic needs?(Listing)
11. Has your TANF, Medicaid, or FSS been sanctioned?
12. How much longer will you be receiving TANF?
13. Are you interested in budgeting and/or financial education/training?

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Local Banks
- ✓ Local Credit Unions
- ✓ Local Savings and Loan
- ✓ Schools/Universities
- ✓ Local or State Financial Institutions

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Consolidated Plans

5- Sources

Living Wage Calculator http://livingwage.mit.edu/

Use this source to answer some of your survey and or data characteristic questions. There are links to each county and one that shows results for Utah as a whole.

ISSUES AREA (II) EDUCATION

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there a high incidence of students not completing high school? If so, are they able to get their GED? If there is a high incidence of drop-out and low GED attainment - why? Is there a correlation between low unemployment and high drop-out rate? Is the drop-out rate related to mothers giving birth?
- Where do students go after graduation? How many graduate from college?
- Is child care available for students to remain in school? Is child care available for adults to return to school or further their education? Do the hours of child care services relate to educational opportunities? (For instance, is care available for evening learning classes)
- Are there eligible children not taking advantages of Head Start or Early Head Start programs?
- Are there transportation issues affecting a family's ability to access education?

What might be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- If a high number of students are remaining in the community, how can they participate in community work?
- Can an empty school building be used for other purposes?

1- **Education Area Characteristics (Statistical Data)** (Some of these are provided for you in the **<u>Characteristics</u>** section of the needs assessment template**)**

- ✓ Public School Enrollment
- ✓ Literacy levels ages 18 and older
- ✓ Licensed child care
- ✓ Education levels (no degree, GED, BS, MS, PhD)
- ✓ Average child care costs
- ✓ Head Start eligible children and families
- ✓ Number of child development and child care programs serving Head Start eligible children
- ✓ Number of Head Start eligible children served by above programs
- ✓ Estimated number of 4 year old or younger children with disabilities
- ✓ Types of disabilities of children 4 years and younger
- ✓ Number of children participating in First Step Program
- ✓ Number of children with disabilities receiving services
- ✓ Number of public school districts
- ✓ Number of private schools
- ✓ Number of pre-school providers
- ✓ Children with limited English proficiency
- ✓ Dropout rates
- ✓ Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools in the area

2- **Survey Questions**

General (check off type) question

Education is a problem in this area because

____No high school diploma
____Lack of GED

____Lack of access to programs for obtaining a GED
____Cost of child care
____Lack of child care
____Lack of computer skills
____Lack of programs for gaining computer skills
____Cost of transportation
____Lack of transportation
____Lack of tuition money
____Lack of vocational skills
____Lack of access to programs teaching vocational skills
____Lack of college education
____Threats of violence in Schools
____Lack of dropout prevention programs

Questions for Surveys, focus groups, or interviews

a) Please answer the following questions regarding education for family members.
    1. Satisfied with education
    2. Would like to improve reading skills
    3. Would like to improve writing skills
    4. Would like to improve English or language skills
    5. Would like to improve math skills
    6. Would like to obtain a GED
    7. Would like training in a specific area
    8. Would like to earn a two or four year degree
    9. Other areas of improvement
b) Please answer the following regarding strengths and barriers to education for family.
    1. Done well in school before
    2. Have support for education, including family
    3. Have specific educational goals
    4. Dependable transportation
    5. Dependable childcare
    6. Other strengths
    7. Lack transportation
    8. Lack of childcare
    9. Previous difficulty with school
    10. Lack high school diploma or GED
    11. Cost of school a problem
    12. Language issues a problem
    13. Discrimination (age, race, gender)
    14. Other barriers
c) Do you need any of the following educational services?
    1. One-on-one support achieving goals
    2. ABE/GED classes
    3. Vocational rehabilitation
    4. Pell grants/Financial aid
    5. Specialized skills training
    6. Community college/university
    7. Literacy/Reading tutoring
    8. English as a second language
d) Please answer the following questions regarding Head Start services (If applicable)
    1. Already enrolled in Head Start

2. On waiting list for Head Start
3. Needs Head Start
4. Not interested in Head Start
5. Enrolled in Early Head Start
6. On waiting list for Early Head Start
7. Needs Early Head Start
8. Not interested in Early Head Start

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Public School Board and school officials (including post-secondary education)
- ✓ Pre-school providers
- ✓ Private school officials
- ✓ Vocational, technical and college placement officials
- ✓ Local Parent and Teachers Programs

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Workforce Investment Board Plans referred to earlier have reference points related to educational needs in the area and should be reviewed.
- ✓ School Districts

ISSUE AREA (III) EMPLOYMENT

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is the unemployment rate low? If so, do businesses have a difficult time finding employees?
- Are there a variety of jobs available requiring different job skills? Do the jobs available predominately require only one or two types of skills?
- How close are the average county wages to the wage needed for a family to be self-sufficient? Are there plans for increasing the wages in the community?
- What appear to be the predominate barriers to employment in the area?
- Is it easy for an individual to get to work? Are the community residences commuting to areas of higher wage jobs?
- Is child care readily available? Is there a need for child care outside the ‘normal working hours’?
- Are resources available to help persons find employment? How far must one travel to access these services?

What might be some of the root causes of the problems identified by this data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are the job skills that are prevalent in the community ones that can be used to attract or start new businesses?
- Can an empty school building be used for other purposes?

1- Employment Area Characteristics (Statistical Data) (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template)

- ✓ Current average annual unemployment and unemployment changes
- ✓ Factory/Plant/Business closures in last 2 years
- ✓ Current average county wages
- ✓ County living wages
- ✓ High school graduation rates
- ✓ Average child care costs
- ✓ Licensed child care facilities
- ✓ Child care waiting lists
- ✓ Median household income
- ✓ Commuter travel patterns
- ✓ Public transportation
- ✓ Top 10 employers in county
- ✓ Veteran status
- ✓ Graduate analysis (where graduates go after high school)
- ✓ High School Graduate performance report

2- Survey Questions

General (check off type) question:

Employment is a problem in this area because:

____People lack skills to obtain a job
____Unable to find jobs in the area
____People lack education to obtain a job
____Lack of good paying jobs with benefits
____Lack of child care during the hours needed
____Lack of computer skills
____Cost of child care
____Few jobs for people without skills
____Current jobs are low paying
____Cost of transportation
____Long commute to jobs
____Employers leaving the area
____Lack of transportation

Questions for survey, focus groups, or interviews

a. Please answer the following regarding the employment status for family members:
    1. Currently working
    2. Full-time employment earning minimum wage or less
    3. Temporary full-time
    4. Temporary part-time
    5. Part-time employment
    6. Retired
    7. Disabled
    8. 14-25 years old and not working
    9. Unemployed less than 3 months
    10. Unemployed more than 3 months
    11. Full time homemaker
    12. Unemployed never worked
    13. Not applicable, young child
b. If you could improve your current employment what areas would you focus on?

1. More hours
2. Better pay
3. Increased benefits
4. Increased responsibilities
5. Reduced required overtime
6. Change career or position
7. Job stability
8. Location of Job
9. Flexible working hours
10. Not applicable

c. Please identify your strengths and barriers for employment
1. Formally trained or certified skills
2. Skills gained from experience
3. Positive work history
4. Education
5. Dependable transportation
6. Dependable childcare
7. Other strengths
8. Lack of reliable transportation
9. Lack of reliable childcare
10. Permanent health/disability problem
11. Temporary disability problem
12. Lack of High School Diploma/GED
13. Pregnancy
14. Emotionally unable to work
15. Lack of Adult Dependent Care
16. Discrimination (age, race, gender)
17. Other Barriers
18. No Barriers

d. Do you need any of the following employment services?
1. Unemployment
2. Support achieving goals
3. Career Search
4. Shelter Workshops
5. Skills Training
6. Business Ownership
7. Job Seeking
8. Vocational Rehabilitation

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Local governments
- ✓ Chambers of Commerce
- ✓ Economic Development Agencies
- ✓ Workforce Investment Boards
- ✓ Regional Planning Commissions

4- Related Plans

- ✓ LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Many regional planning commissions are designated the Local Economic Development Districts through the Economic Development Administration of the US Department of Commerce**.** Their responsibilities include the development of a comprehensive economic development strategies (CEDS) plan approved by the EDA

ISSUE AREA (IV) HOUSING

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there sufficient diverse affordable housing in the community?
- Are financing alternatives available for homeownership?
- What is the connection between 'use of income' credit issues to housing?
- Are utility rates creating a burden for community members?
- What is the relationship between available housing and homelessness in the community?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Can the foreclosed houses be used for other purposes in the neighborhood?
- Are local lenders able to partner with you in providing classes or information on homeownership?
- What are the talents of the homeless population that could be tapped into for the betterment of the community?

1- Housing Area Characteristics (Statistical Data) (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template ;)

- ✓ Rental vacancy rates
- ✓ Owner occupied vacancy rates
- ✓ Average costs of homes
- ✓ Fair Market Rents
- ✓ Foreclosures
- ✓ Percent houses overcrowded
- ✓ Number of homeless
- ✓ Number of homeless children
- ✓ Number of unsafe, unsanitary homes
- ✓ Section 8 wait lists
- ✓ Housing Authorities wait lists
- ✓ Housing affordability (hourly wage a worker must earn to afford housing)
- ✓ Number of families using Emergency Utility Assistance
- ✓ Number of families using Energy Crisis Intervention (ECIP) assistance
- ✓ Average dollar amount of Emergency Utility Assistance payments
- ✓ Average dollar amount of ECIP payments
- ✓ Average age of houses
- ✓ Number of homes weatherized

2- Survey Questions

General (check off type) Question

Housing is a problem in this area because

____Cost of rent/house payment
____Cost of utility/rent deposit
____Housing size doesn't meet family needs
____Lack of temporary emergency housing
____Affordable housing not available
____Need weatherization
____Need repairs (roof, foundation, plumbing, etc.)
____Where housing is available, neighborhood conditions are not acceptable
____Lack of shelters for emergency situations (domestic violence)
____Lack of shelter for emergency situations (natural disaster)

Questions for surveys, focus groups, and interviews

1. Do you have any of the following housing problems? (Listing)
2. Does your home have the appropriate number of bedrooms?
3. Monthly amount your family pays for housing
4. Does your family receive subsidized housing?
5. Would you be interested in owning your own home?
6. Has your home been weatherized?
7. What is your primary heat source?
8. What is the average cost of heat per month?
9. If you are homeless, please check all that apply to you (listing)

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ City building officials, city planning and zoning officials
- ✓ County Assessor
- ✓ Local Community Development Departments
- ✓ Local Office of Rural Development (USDA)
- ✓ Local Realtors

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Local or State CONSOLIDATED PLANs. These plans are also available through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development at :
  https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/about/conplan/localRegional Planning Commission plans

ISSUE AREA (V) NUTRITION

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Are eligible children who receive access to meals during the school year receiving meals during the summer?
- Why would persons be utilizing the food banks on a regular basis?
- Is food accessible? (grocery stores, farmers markets)
- What type of food is accessible?
- Do transportation needs affect access to food?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are vacant lots available for development of community gardens?
- Is there a community kitchen available for training of food preparation and cooking classes?
- Do individuals want to start their own businesses related to food and food products?

1- Nutrition Area Characteristics (Statistical Data) (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template)

- ✓ Number of children receiving free/reduced lunch
- ✓ Average number of recipients receiving food stamps
- ✓ Total food stamp benefits received
- ✓ Number of food pantries
- ✓ Number of households served by food pantries
- ✓ Number of grocery stores in the community
- ✓ Number of farmer's markets
- ✓ Number receiving WIC (Women, Infant, Children) aid
- ✓ Number eligible to receive WIC
- ✓ Number of Senior Nutrition Centers

2- Survey Questions

General (check off type) Question:

Nutrition is a problem in this area because

____Lack of transportation to available grocers
____Not enough income to purchase food
____Food stamps run out before end of month
____Available resources are not used
____Not eligible for food stamps
____Lack of education in nutrition
____Alternative food resources not available (pantries)
____Lack of food

Questions for surveys, focus groups, and interviews

1- Is your food supply adequate?
2- Does your family have any barriers to obtaining and preparing nutritious meals?
3- Do you need WIC?
4- Please mark any of the following that apply to your family's situation (Listing)
5- Do you need food stamps?

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Local food pantry
- ✓ Social Service office
- ✓ Local ministerial alliances
- ✓ Grocers
- ✓ Local farmers groups
- ✓ Area Agencies on Aging/Meals on Wheels programs

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Food banks and Pantries

ISSUE AREA (VI) HEALTH

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?
What does the data tell us about the community?

- Is there a relationship between access to health care and health care costs?
- How long does it take for an individual or family to get access to a doctor or to dental services?
- How far emergency services from the community and what are is the transportation means to access these services?
- Do the businesses in the community offer health insurance?
- Are there any excessive health concerns or conditions (pockets of chronic disease, high numbers of disease or indicators)?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?
What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are there retired medical personnel that could provide guidance on the issue?
- Are there buildings that could be converted to clinics in various areas of the community?
- Is there a possible alternative transportation method to get individuals to appointments?

1- Health Area Characteristics (Statistical Data) (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template)

- ✓ Medicaid and Medicare providers
- ✓ Birth to teens
- ✓ Number of doctors in the area accepting Medicaid
- ✓ Number of dentists in the area accepting Medicaid
- ✓ Number of hospitals
- ✓ Number of Federally Qualified Health Clinics
- ✓ Waiting list for dental and health care at Federally Qualified Health Clinics
- ✓ Number receiving CHIP
- ✓ Number receiving Medicare
- ✓ Number paying Medicare SMI

- ✓ Number paying Medicare Part D
- ✓ Number uninsured
- ✓ Number of Child abuse and neglect reports
- ✓ Cause of death numbers
- ✓ Number of mental health facilities
- ✓ Number of alcohol and drug treatment facilities
- ✓ Number of licensed counselors
- ✓ Number of in home health care workers

2- Survey Questions

General (check off type) Question:

Health care is a problem in this area because

____Doctors will not accept Medicaid
____No clinics or doctor offices in same town
____Waiting list for dental services
____Hospital/emergency room not available in same town
____Lack of transportation
____Lack of insurance
____Existing health conditions
____Lack of income to pay for prescriptions
____Lack of income for medical emergencies
____Lack of resources for alcohol or drug abuse treatment
____Lack of resources for mental health treatment

Questions for surveys, focus groups, and interviews

1- Has medical or prescription co-pays and deductions
2- Good health
3- Temporary health problems
4- Chronic health problems
5- Needs in-home health worker
6- Needs a home chore worker
7- Needs hospice services
8- Needs immunization services
9- Needs medical services
10- Needs dental services
11- Needs vision services
12- Needs drug/alcohol abuse services
13- Needs counseling services
14- Needs mental health services
15- Needs prescription medications
16- Needs family planning
17- Need prenatal care

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Local Physicians, nurses
- ✓ Local Clinics or hospital personnel
- ✓ Local County Health Offices

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Health Improvement Plans– community health plans developed in many of the state counties through the local health departments.

ISSUE AREA (VII) TRANSPORTATION

The following questions relate to the data analysis portion of this tool kit and are restated there. Knowing that you will need to provide explanations to the following questions if they have relevance to your areas will help you create questions for your surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires:

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and the plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there a relationship between employment and transportation (commuting, public transportation access)
- Is there a need for personal vehicles to help in transportation needs?
- Is there a relationship between access to food and transportation?
- How close are major services (education, health care, employment opportunities, and grocers) to the community?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are there abandoned railways, trails, or other areas that can be transformed to other transportation modes (bikeways, walkways)?
- Are there buses no longer in use that can be used for transporting people to jobs, medical centers, or commercial areas?

1- **Transportation Area Characteristics (Statistical Data)** (Some of these are provided for you in the **Characteristics** section of the needs assessment template ;)

- ✓ Commuter trends (Census)
- ✓ Public Transportation trends (local)
- ✓ Percent of citizens living within one mile of a transit stop

2- **Survey Questions**

General (check off type) Question:

Transportation is a problem in this area because:

____Lack of knowledge on how to buy a car
____Cost of buying/down payment for a car
____Lack of credit to buy a car
____Cost of maintaining a car
____Cost of car repairs
____Cost of gasoline
____Lack of help in learning to drive or getting license
____Limited public transportation

Questions for surveys, focus groups, and interviews

1- Dependable transportation
2- Lack of reliable transportation
3- Lack of transportation for health services

3- Potential Partners

- ✓ Regional Planning commissions
- ✓ Local Economic Development Department
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ City/County government

4- Related Plans

- ✓ Regional Planning commissions

PART 3

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The percentage or amount of time, finances, and staff to dedicate to the analysis is up to each agency. The information in this section will provide you with a guide on how to analyze the information.

Who should be involved in the strategic thinking relative to the analysis?

A cross functional team representing different programs and different levels within the agency and board members can lay the foundation as the agency moves from the needs assessment to the Community Action Plan, and the development of programs and activities. In addition, partners and stakeholders in the community can be a part of the analysis of the data and information. While they may not be involved in the decision making regarding the planning of action steps and implementation, they can offer insight to data and information due to their different perspective.

SUGGESTED PARTICIPANTS

- Agency staff (frontline, middle management and upper management)
- Member(s) of the Board of Directors
- Member(s) of other advisory and related internal boards (Housing Agency)
- Community stakeholders (service providers, local government program directors, linkages, partners)

Participants should receive the data prior to any discussion. Discussions with partners are meant to reveal patterns in the data and foster discussion. Some of the questions you may use in this group discussion are found in this section under each poverty issue (below).

SUGGESTED ISSUE AREA QUESTIONS:

The key to this analysis is uncovering the **root causes.** (Identification of the causes and conditions of poverty is required by the organizational standards.) A root cause is the basic reason a problem exists. Understanding the root cause to an issue provides a basis for solving the problem. Appendix 5 provides a sample of using the “But Why” technique to help identify root causes to problems.

The answers that these questions provide will be part of the written analysis* that you submit to The CSBG State office. The written analysis should be no longer then one page per issue area and should be preceded by an executive summary.

See the analysis template for further direction.

In the analysis you MUST provide the most commonly identified Gaps in services, Service Needs, Causes of Poverty, and Barriers to exiting poverty as they relate to the seven issue areas.

The following are the issue areas for which you gathered data. In each category, there are suggested questions for your consideration as you analyze the collected data

ISSUE AREA - USE OF INCOME

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there an apparent demand for budget information?
- Does the number of check cashing facilities reflect on a need not met by the financial institutions?
- Does the use of pawn shops reflect on the need for monthly cash or the need for cash to meet emergency needs?
- What are sources for emergency funds in the community?
- What educational information may be needed relating to use of income?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA – EDUCATION

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there a high incidence of students not completing high school? If so, are they able to get their GED? If there is a high incidence of drop-out and low GED attainment - why? Is there a correlation between low unemployment and high drop-out rate? Is the drop-out rate related to mothers giving birth?
- Where do students go after graduation? How many graduate from college?
- Is child care available for students to remain in school? Is child care available for adults to return to school or further their education? Do the hours of child care services relate to educational opportunities? (For instance, is care available for evening learning classes)
- Are there eligible children not taking advantages of Head Start or Early Head Start programs?
- Are there transportation issues affecting a family's ability to access education?

What might be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- If a high number of students are remaining in the community, how can they participate in community work?
- Can an empty school building be used for other purposes?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA - EMPLOYMENT

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is the unemployment rate low? If so, do businesses have a difficult time finding employees?
- Are there a variety of jobs available requiring different job skills? Do the jobs available predominately require only one or two types of skills?
- How close are the average county wages to the wage needed for a family to be self-sufficient? Are there plans for increasing the wages in the community?
- What appear to be the predominate barriers to employment in the area?
- Is it easy for an individual to get to work? Are the community residences commuting to areas of higher wage jobs?
- Is child care readily available? Is there a need for child care outside the 'normal working hours'?
- Are resources available to help persons find employment? How far must one travel to access these services?

What might be some of the root causes of the problems identified by this data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are the job skills that are prevalent in the community ones that can be used to attract or start new businesses?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA - HOUSING

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there sufficient diverse affordable housing in the community?
- Are financing alternatives available for homeownership?
- What is the connection between 'use of income' credit issues to housing?
- Are utility rates creating a burden for community members?
- What is the relationship between available housing and homelessness in the community?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Can the foreclosed houses be used for other purposes in the neighborhood?
- Are local lenders able to partner with you in providing classes or information on homeownership?
- What are the talents of the homeless population that could be tapped into for the betterment of the community?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA - NUTRITION

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Are eligible children who receive access to meals during the school year receiving meals during the summer?
- Why would persons be utilizing the food banks on a regular basis?
- Is food accessible? (grocery stores, farmers markets)
- What type of food is accessible?
- Do transportation needs affect access to food?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are vacant lots available for development of community gardens?
- Is there a community kitchen available for training of food preparation and cooking classes?
- Do individuals want to start their own businesses related to food and food products?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA - HEALTH

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the data tell us about the community?

- Is there a relationship between access to health care and health care costs?
- How long does it take for an individual or family to get access to a doctor or to dental services?
- How far emergency services from the community and what are is the transportation means to access these services?
- Do the businesses in the community offer health insurance?
- Are there any excessive health concerns or conditions (pockets of chronic disease, high numbers of disease or indicators)?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are there retired medical personnel that could provide guidance on the issue?
- Are there buildings that could be converted to clinics in various areas of the community?
- Is there a possible alternative transportation method to get individuals to appointments?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

ISSUE AREA - TRANSPORTATION

Will addressing this issue eliminate poverty or stabilize a family to help them move out of poverty?

What does the information gathered and the plans reviewed tell us about the community?

- Is there a relationship between employment and transportation (commuting, public transportation access)
- Is there a need for personal vehicles to help in transportation needs?
- Is there a relationship between access to food and transportation?
- How close are major services (education, health care, employment opportunities, and grocers) to the community?

What would be some of the root causes of the problems identified by the data?

What assets does the community have in this issue area?

- Are there abandoned railways, trails, or other areas that can be transformed to other transportation modes (bikeways, walkways)?
- Are there buses no longer in use that can be used for transporting people to jobs, medical centers, or commercial areas?

You do not need to answer all these questions. It is recommended that you consider answering each and develop some of your own. You do not need to restate the questions in the analysis.

Writing the Analysis

The analysis comes before your prioritization and your Community Action Plan because you need to provide your community (service area), partners, and other interested parties with the overall general and specific issues in your area.

Before conducting the analysis, please review the template that has been provided for you. The CSBG State office is asking that each agency write an executive summary of no more than one page. If it is longer, please keep it as close to one page as possible. The body of the document will be your organizations analysis of each of the issue areas per the questions above. Within each of the issue areas, we provide you the minimum that must be addressed. Below are points that you should cover in your analysis/Community Needs Assessment:

Other Considerations:

a) Create CNA Reports and Documents (not required—but useful to agency)

- ✓ The Community Needs Assessment Report
- ✓ A report targeted to the general public which presents CNA data and findings in a briefer and more simplified format
- ✓ A simplified shortened needs assessment report to post on the agency's website
- ✓ A report or document targeted to potential funders or partners
- ✓ A report or document targeted to local elected officials
- ✓ A report or document targeted to State Representatives and Senators representing the service area

b) Present CNA Report to Board for Approval

- ✓ Develop a presentation and document to provide key data, top needs, key findings to board
- ✓ Provide each board member with a copy of report and presentation
- ✓ Presentation should mention each of the reports created in section a) above.

c) Publicize and Distribute CNA Report

- ✓ Plan and conduct a press conference to announce release of CNA Report
- ✓ Submit articles or letters to the editor of local newspapers in service area
- ✓ Set up interviews of board chair or executive director on local TV shows or radio shows to discuss key findings of the CNA Report
- ✓ Provide report to key county and city elected officials or conduct a meeting where they are invited to participate in a presentation of the key findings
- ✓ Provide report to State Representatives and Senators representing the service area

d) Use results from CNA Report in Strategic Planning and Community Action Work Plan

- ✓ Prepare a plan for how the CNA Report data will be utilized during the strategic planning process
- ✓ Use CNA results to develop an outcome based anti-poverty focused Community Action Work Plan

PART 4

ISSUE PRIORITIZATION

The prioritization phase is meant for both your organization and the community. It will demonstrate, based on analysis, what issue(s) should be focused on. This phase is the last step in the Needs Assessment and the first step in developing the Community Action Work Plan.

After prioritizing issues, the agency can move on to determining goals, objectives and action steps for their Strategic Plan and Community Action Work Plan. Finally, prioritization can help your agency focus on areas for new funding, consider new strategies, develop more partnerships, integrate services, and create change.

Prioritization questions

One way to begin the process is to hold a general conversation around the gaps, needs, causes, and barriers in each issue area. It is recommended that you document these conversations and meetings.

The following questions are offered to help guide you through the prioritization process:

1. What has been done in the past at our agency or another to address this issue?
2. Why should we be interested in this issue?
3. What can be done to address this issue?
4. Who (what agency, group, organization) should address this issue? Can the agency address the issue alone? Who should partner with the agency to address the issue? Who in the agency should address the issue?
5. Do we have control over this issue? Do we have control over an aspect of this issue? Control does not mean dominance. In this context it means the agency can actually affect change regarding the issue. For instance – can the agency create the jobs in the community, or can it train the potential employees for jobs that are created by others?
6. Do we have the capabilities (skills, funding, and knowledge) to address this issue? Do we have to spend time and resources learning new skills or programs to help address the issue?
7. What programs do we currently have that can help address this issue?
8. What might we change in our way of doing business that could help address the issue?
9. **If this is an important issue and we do not have the capabilities to address the issue, who can we partner with to help create the change and address the issue?**
10. **If we do not have capacity to address this need, is this an appropriate referral for the local DWD One Stop?**

Prioritization tools

There are various tools that can be used to help in the process of prioritizing issues. Prioritization tools help in reducing the large listing of issues into manageable numbers.

1. NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

One of the first ways to begin narrowing down the multiple lists of issues is to use a nominal group process. The most common way this is done is to put on a large paper all of the issues and give the individuals in the group a certain number of sticky notes/dots/or markers and let them 'vote' with those dots the issues of their highest priority. Individuals may place one dot/marker on each concern or they may place all their dots on one area if they believe it is the one that is of highest priority. Counting up the dots then provides a reduced list of issues to further refine.

2. PAIRED COMPARISON TECHNIQUE

By using a paired comparison technique, the team can decide which issue(s) are priorities. In addition, it may help in determining which issue(s) or program(s) to consider reducing or eliminating. It directly compares one issue to another and allows for the group to decide between two equally important issues.

Process: Set up a matrix identifying all the issue areas you have ranked as most important. You will only compare each set of issues once. Through your group discussions you may have determined sub parts of the broader issue categories that need addressing rather than the whole category. For instance, perhaps the graduation rates in the area are adequate; however there is a need for more pre-school services. The example below is utilizing the major categories; however, you should substitute other more defined issue areas that resulted from your discussions.

	Use of Income	Education	Employment	Housing	Nutrition	Health	Transportation
Use of Income							
Education							
Employment							
Housing							
Nutrition							
Health							
Transportation							

Using information gained through your discussions of the issues, and thinking about whether addressing the issue will either end poverty or stabilize families the individuals in the group will choose one issue as a priority over the other. The group facilitator reads each possible pair and individuals vote on which is the preferred choice to address first.

Example of Comparison Choices

Comparison	Preferred Choice
Employment/Education	Employment
Employment/Housing	Housing
Employment/Nutrition	Employment
Employment/Use of Income	Use of Income
Employment/Transportation	Employment
Employment/Health	Health
Education/Housing	Housing
Education/Nutrition	Education
Education/Use of Income	Use of Income
Education/Transportation	Education
Education/Health	Health
Housing/Nutrition	Nutrition
Housing/Use of Income	Housing
Housing/Transportation	Housing
Housing/Health	Housing
Nutrition/Use of Income	Nutrition
Nutrition/Transportation	Nutrition
Nutrition/Health	Health
Use of Income/Transportation	Use of Income
Use of Income/Health	Health
Transportation/Health	Health

After all the issues are compared one-to-one, they are scored as to how many times an issue was chosen.

Example Scoring:

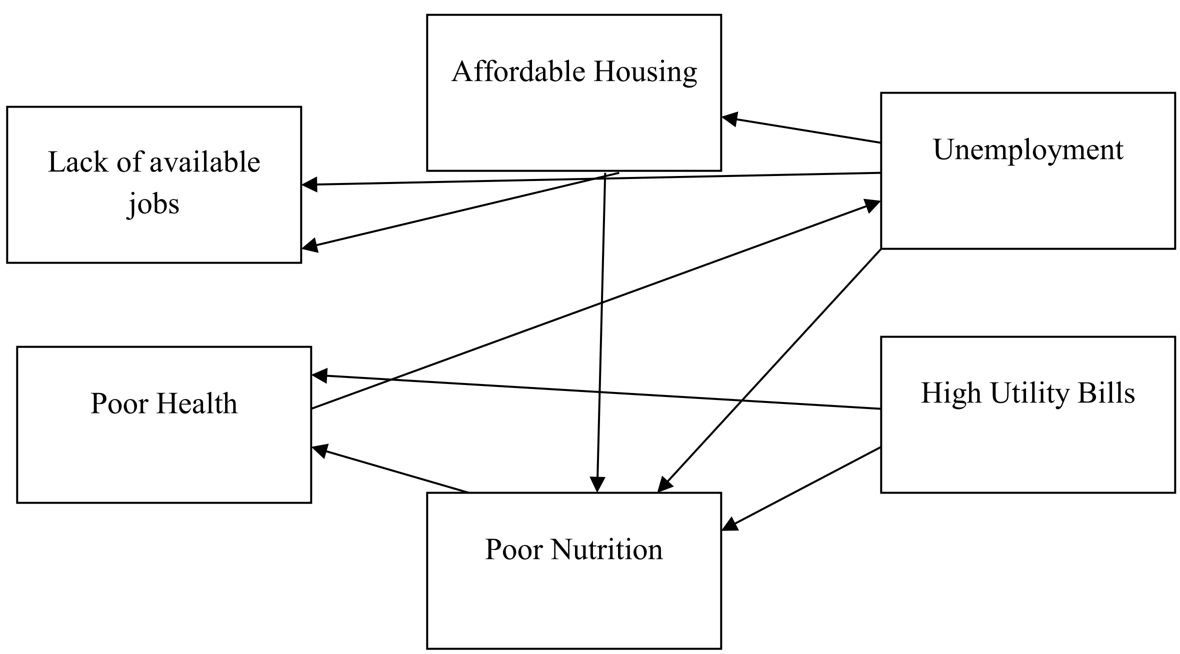
Issue Area	Times Chosen	Total
Use of Income	XXX	3
Education	XX	2
Employment	XXX	3
Housing	XXXXX	5
Nutrition	XXX	3
Health	XXXXX	5
Transportation		0

All ties go through the process again to come up with the prioritized issues. In this case, the new matrix would compare health, housing, employment, nutrition, and use of income. If another tie results, you would then repeat the process until a final prioritization results with no ties.

3. INTERRELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM

A third way to help determine what issue to prioritize is to examine the interrelationships between the core causes of poverty. It helps you to see how addressing one issue may affect another issue.

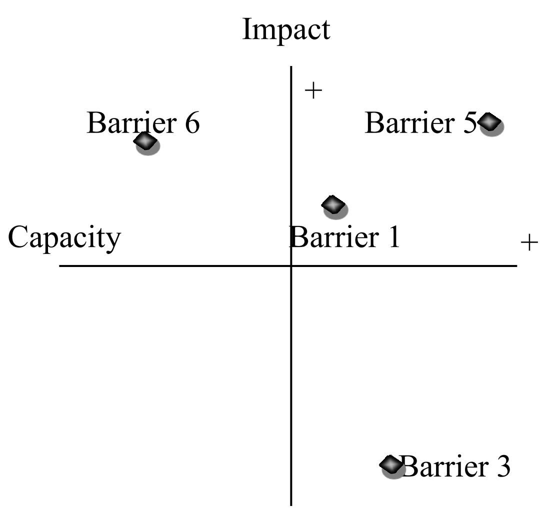
Process: Begin by listing the top 5 or 6 issues in a circle on a piece of paper. Starting with the first issue, ask whether addressing it will affect the next issue, the third issue, etc. If it will affect the issue, draw an arrow to the issue. If addressing the second issue however will affect the first, draw an arrow from #2 to #1.



The issue having the most arrows going outward will have the most effect on the others and would therefore be the one to consider as a top priority. When conducting this exercise you may place up there the barriers, gaps, needs, or causes of poverty that the clients referenced the most. Or you may place up there issue area characteristics that are the most alarming. Doing this exercise will also feed into the linkages and partnerships that you need to create or the resources that are most helpful.

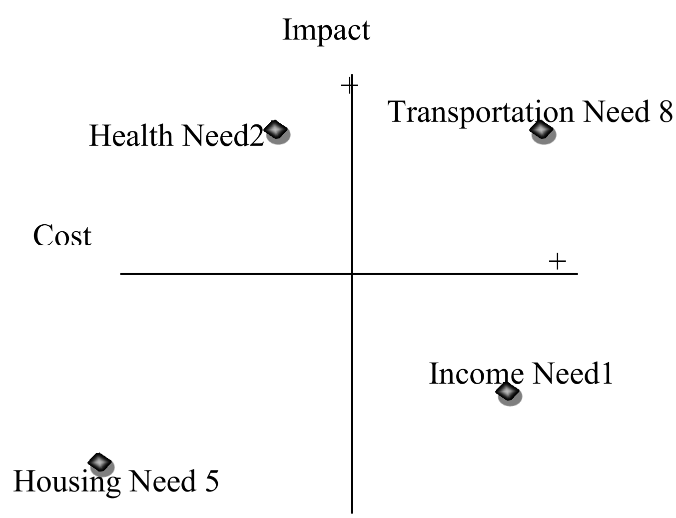
4. MATRIX DECISION

There are several different ways to make decisions using a matrix. Using a similar process to the Nominal Group Process, an agency can come to a conclusion about what issues they are going to pursue based on the abilities of the their organization. With these matrices you can use several different criteria. You can use the barriers, the gaps, the needs, the causes of poverty, the issue areas themselves, linkages, partners, and resources.



In this example, your organization would choose to go for Barrier 6 or Barrier 1. Barrier 5 has high impact but requires a lot of your organizations capacity to address it. Barrier 3 has almost no impact and requires a lot of capacity, therefore choosing it would produce little results. You want to choose an item that your organization has the capacity for and will make an impact on poverty.

In this example your organization would choose Health Need 2, or Transportation Need 8. Between Transportation Need 8 and Income Need 1, The transportation need costs the same as the income need but the impact is higher. Choosing Health Need 2 would be very cost effective and the impact would be amongst the highest. You would need to determine what cost is too high for your organization.



Process: There are two ways to do this exercise

- ✓ In the first example you are looking at the barriers for only one issue area and determining which one you will address.

- ✓ In example two you are looking at the most important needs taken from all the issue areas and determine which of those needs to address.
- ✓ The first example will take longer as you would need to create a different matrix for the gaps, needs, barriers, causes, linkages, and resources for each issue area.
- ✓ In the second example you will need to do some pre-prioritization before you engaged in this exercise to determine which of the needs, gaps, barriers, causes, linkages, and resources from each of the issue areas are worth considering.
- ✓ It is up to you. If you choose the methodology in example two remember to document how you chose the needs, gaps, barriers, etc. from the different issue areas. Maybe you used the areas that got the most attention from the surveys or interviews, or you voted on it, determine the best selection process and document it well.

Steps:

1- Review your organizational mission and vision.
2- Select the issue areas, the needs, gaps, barriers, linkages, resources, and causes of poverty that meet your organization's mission and vision.
3- Create a Matrix that will help you prioritize each equally and clearly.
4- Make sure your participants in this process have a list of these items.
5- Have the participants write each item on a sticky note (e.g. barriers: they could write down all the barriers you are considering, let's say there are 5, they would write the five on individual sticky notes)
6- Once they've created their sticky notes they take turns placing them on the matrix where they think they belong.
7- Once this is complete engage in a conversation to determine if the placements are accurate.
8- Then make a clear note about which item(s) were selected for the Community Action Work Plan.
9- Make a separate list of other items that are important to address; this list should be shared with community partners. (These notes speak to your agency's research and understanding of the community's unmet needs, and your agency's specific response to those needs.)

When choosing a matrix it is very important to choose one that will measure accurately which issue is of the highest priority. In the two examples above we chose Impact and Capacity, the other was Impact and Cost. Other options are:

Impact	Cost (to you directly)
Impact	Time (to address or solve)
Impact	Profitability
Impact	Capacity (organizational)
Impact	Resources available (Grants, etc.)
Impact	Stakeholder Desire
Impact	Partnerships (to assist in running or financing a program)
Impact	Linkages (those that you can create or that you've identified)

Choose any of these or determine your own, as long as it makes sense and truly measures which issue is of the highest priority. Once you've chosen the highest priorities, you will again determine which of the high priority items your organization will address—based on your organization's mission and vision.

How to come up with final priorities?

The final priorities are actually a balance between looking at the various results of the tools, discussing the issues relations to the agency's mission and vision, and looking at existing funding, knowledge and untapped resources. The key to selecting final priorities is the fact they were determined by going through an analytical process and the decision was based on a reasonable set of results. After prioritization, planning process can begin and the community action plan is ready for creation.

PART 5

COMMUNITY ACTION WORK PLAN

The Community Action Plan is the key stone of this whole process. This is the document that should guide your programmatic decisions and your goals. This document will be used by the CSBG State staff in monitoring and as part of the application. You will use your needs assessment, prioritization, and analysis documents to create this Plan.

PART 6

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

At this point the CAP, the CNA, the Data Analysis, and the Prioritization should all be complete. When submitting the report you can choose to submit each report individually or submit it all as one document.

When submitting it as one document, CSBG State staff requests that it be organized in the following order:

1- Data Analysis
2- Community Action Work Plan
3- Issue Prioritization
4- Community Needs Assessment
    a. Supporting documentation (survey, interview, focus groups results; relevant meeting minutes; any correspondence, etc.)
5- Board approval of the CAP and the Needs Assessment as required by Standard 3.5.
    a. Board Minutes, or other written approval (may be a note from board chair noting the date of approval of needs assessment and plan).

Complete submission (including back-up documentation) will facilitate with desk top review of compliance with related organizational standards.

Appendix 1

Tally Survey

Once the surveys have been completed, develop an Excel spreadsheet or use a survey form to record the ratings given by survey respondents to each question.

Once you have recorded how many persons rated each question, then you will mathematically calculate the value to assign to each question. In the example below, each question has five possible responses, and each response has a number/score assigned to it. The number/score, 0 thru 4, is the weight/value that will be given to each response.

An example of how to calculate responses to surveys:

	NEEDS	Don't Know (0)	Not Needed (1)	Rarely Needed (2)	Needed (3)	Very Needed (4)	SUBTOTAL
	Employment						
1	Help finding a job	11 (11x0= 0)	15 (15x1= 15)	10 (10x2= 20)	23 (23x3= 69)	55 (55x4= 220)	0+15+20+69+220 = 324

Survey forms should be sorted by the county the respondent indicated on the Community Needs Survey form. The agency can use county level results in the Community Needs Assessment Report or the results could be shared with board members or other interested parties. The agency should consider summarizing results for each county, in addition to the overall survey results for all the completed surveys.

Appendix 2

Organizing Community Forums

Source: RESULTS Educational Fund's Activist Milestones

http://www.action.org/documents/How_to_Organize_a_Community_Forum.pdf

What is a community forum?

A community forum is an event that anyone can attend, where a panel of experts who have experience in a particular subject share their knowledge and perspectives and where members of the audience can ask questions during a pre-set time. It is a great resource for anyone who wants to learn more about an issue. It is also an excellent way to recruit activists.

Why hold a community forum?
Community forums can be a very effective way to raise awareness in your community and to get people involved in an issue. It can provide an opportunity for activists to join forces to demand action on a set of issues, advocate for change and get local media attention.

What would our community forum look like?

Much of the event depends the time and resources you have available to put into it. It can be as big or small as you want it, but in general, a community forum should last about an hour-- long enough to educate your audience and short enough to keep their attention. For example, the forum could have around three presenters, each speaking for 10–15 minutes. After all the presenters have spoken, there can be a question and answer session, lasting no more than 20 minutes. Finally, it can conclude with a 5–10 minute wrap-up session, motivating attendees and calling them to action.

- What is the most important thing you want to accomplish with this forum? Write this one down, because you will not want to forget it.
- Who can help, and how much time can each person commit? This should be a positive experience. Be realistic about the commitment each person is able to make so that the rest of the planning can go smoothly.
- Who can you collaborate with in the community? You probably do not have all the knowledge and resources to do everything yourself. There are already groups and advocates in your community who care about these issues and would want to be involved in this kind of event.
- What type of budget and resources do you have? You will need to know this before you secure a location, print handouts, plan refreshments, etc.
- Ideally, what would your forum look like? Spend some time dreaming up a forum that makes you happy and proud. What aspects or elements are most important to you?

THINKING ABOUT THE LOGISTICS

As with any event, it is hard to anticipate all logistical matters, but the better planning you do, the more smoothly the event will go. Use the following questions to help you brainstorm resources that are available and put your thoughts together for the event.

- When, where and at what time will the forum occur?
- How long should it last?
- How many people will speak and who should they be?
- Who will moderate?
- Will there be a sponsor for the event?
- How will we publicize the event?
- What will the room set up be?
- Will we need microphones or audio-visual equipment?
- Who can we collaborate with for this event?
- How will we notify the media about the event?
- Should we serve refreshments?

ASSIGNING TASKS

Because there is a lot to do to make a community forum a success, you should ideally start planning the event at least eight to ten weeks in advance. Below is a suggestion of one way to divide the tasks. You may expand, contract, mix and match these fields of responsibility to match the size and personal interests in your team. One person may take on several of these roles, or many people may split them up further. The important thing is that all of these responsibilities are fulfilled and there is one point person overseeing the entire project.

If you are organizing a community forum on your own, then read through this section to see what you should be thinking about.

Team Leader Responsibilities:
- Keep the big picture in mind.
- Keep track of everyone's progress.
- Support each team member with their responsibilities when they need help.
- Manage budget.

Program Coordinator Responsibilities:
- Organize the actual program for the forum.
- Coordinate the agenda.
- Network with local organizations and advocates to find good speakers.
- Moderate the panel during the forum and help move the program along smoothly.

Site Organizer Responsibilities:
- Reserve the site and coordinate all the physical aspects of the event.
- Coordinate the banners, chairs, tables, handouts, sign in table, sound system, refreshments, etc.

Media Coordinator Responsibilities:
- Invite the media.
- Contact local newspapers and television and radio stations. Follow up with them in the days and weeks leading up to the event.
- Write a press release.
- During the forum, be available to greet media professionals and provide them with materials.

- Publicity Coordinator Responsibilities:
- Build public awareness and "fill the room" for the forum.
- Invite people to the forum through public announcements and advertisements and in one-on-one contacts.
- Invite congressional representatives and local policy-makers.

PLANNING THE EVENT

The Importance of Communication

Even if everyone is doing phenomenal work, planning a forum can turn chaotic if progress isn't communicated regularly. In many ways, hosting a community forum is like building a house. If everyone works on their own part of the house, without looking at the blueprint, you may have excellent components, staircases, windows, walls, but they will not fit together to make a house. Likewise, even if your community forum has great speakers, a nice venue and good refreshments, it will not go over well unless it fits into a greater plan.

Make sure that you have a system of communication worked out between teammates and keep your team leader updated on all progress so they can be on the look-out for any confusion or conflicting plans.

Setting a Date
Ideally, the community forum will take place during times when the issue you want to discuss is topical and relevant. This toolkit lays out a planning and preparation timeline of 5 to 6 weeks, but your team may choose to spend more or less time planning. Identify a space of days to aim for, and be prepared to adjust that date as you talk with your partner organizations, speakers, and the site.

Finding a Location
The location for your event will set the tone. Here are some things to think about:

- Will this place naturally draw an audience?
- Will there be any fee to use this space?
- What kind of atmosphere will best suit the forum you are planning? Are you looking for a small room, a large auditorium, a park, or the steps of your Parliament?
- Will the guests and the audience feel comfortable in the space? (For example, some people may not feel comfortable in a church building, others may need it to be handicap accessible, etc.)
- Is this a site that will be attractive to the media? (Is it easy to get to? Does it lend itself to good pictures?)
- Is the site accessible by public transportation? Is parking easily available?

Possible Locations:

- Community College or University
- Library
- Community Center
- Community Organization Meeting Room
- School
- Church, Synagogue, Temple or Mosque
- Town Square or Public Amphitheater
- City or State Government Building

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Partnering with community organizations that are interested in your issue will only enhance the success of your forum. Community partners can lend you help and support in getting materials, media coverage, and community attendance at the forum. Make a list of potential individuals and organizations you could partner with for the forum.

Calling potential partners:

1. Ask to speak with the director or other appropriate staff person.
2. Introduce yourself.
3. Ask if he or she has a moment to talk.
4. Explain that you are planning a community forum.
5. Ask if their organization would be interested in participating or if they can refer you to other interested parties or speakers.
6. Set a plan to follow up — be sure to get all contact information.
7. Thank them.
8. Record contact information and follow up with referrals.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Now it is time to plan the format of your forum. This sample agenda below should help you do this. The tone of the forum should be upbeat but serious and it should end positively, looking forward to future action.

- *Welcome* (5 minutes) Given by one of the organizers, local advocate or celebrity, probably the person who will act as moderator for the rest of the event
- *Introduction* (10 minutes)
- An overview of the issue to be discussed at the forum.
- *Opening Remarks* (10 minutes)

PUBLICITY AND MEDIA

Getting Turnout at Your Event

Your event will have the greatest impact if as many people as possible attend. It is a good idea to have a plan on how you will get people to your event so that you do not spend a significant amount of time putting together an event and only have a small group of people attend. Keep in mind that the best strategy to get people to attend is to personally invite them.

Possible ways to increase turnout at your event:

- Make a list of the friends and family you will personally invite.
- Submit announcements to your local papers for events calendars.
- Hand out flyers at community events.
- Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, religious institutions, in coffee shops, music stores, bus stops, grocery stores, co-ops, laundromats, local schools and universities — anywhere there are people.
- Ask local newspapers and radio, and/or television stations to run public service announcements about the forum.
- Send invitation letters to all community organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals you want in attendance at the forum.
- If you will be having elected officials in attendance or a local celebrity giving the opening remarks, hype it!

Invite Elected Officials and Local Policy Makers

Inviting elected officials and local policy makers to your event is a great opportunity for them to spend time with constituents and hear about their concerns.

- Send a fax or e-mail to their office inviting them to attend your community forum.
- Explain what issue you will be discussing, why it is relevant to them, and why it is an important topic for their constituents.
- Let him or her know that you will honor them for attending and for previous good deeds.
- Note the date, time and location.
- Explain that he or she will offer part of the opening remarks (giving them a chance to express goodwill and concern for the community and the other speakers) and may choose to participate in the question and answer period.
- Inform him or her that you will be inviting the media to attend and ask about their availability to take questions from the media.
- A week after you have sent the fax, make a follow up phone call to their office scheduler.
- Once they have accepted your invitation go over the details of the event.

- Confirm the date, time and location.
- Explain the set-up of the event and who will be present.
- Discuss what you would like them to say at the event and when they will speak.
- Offer to send them talking points.
- A few days before the event, reconfirm their availability to attend.

Putting Together a Press Plan

You can do as many or as few of the following suggestions, based on the amount of time you have to put into getting media attention. Although it is up to you, keep in mind that the more media attention you get, the greater impact your forum will have.

- Try to get advance media coverage. Send a media advisory to key media contacts a week before the meeting.
- Consider inviting area college media classes to videotape your event.
- Make follow-up calls to media people, city desks, daybooks, and assignment editors a day or two before the meeting.
- Prepare a press packet for distribution to press people at the meeting. It should include a press release and background information on your issue and your organization.
- Prepare visuals. Both newspapers and television prefer taking interesting pictures rather than pictures of talking heads. Prepare some visuals, charts, banners, or stunts that you think might be interesting. The visual should not just be "catchy" but should convey your message.
- Talk with press people at the event. One person should be assigned as the spokesperson and to greet the press.
- Call the press people who did not come to tell them what happened, or send a follow-up press release if you do not expect to get much media coverage.
- Thank the press people for covering your event
- If you received inaccurate coverage, call the media contact to clarify your message.
- If the event was a success but media professionals were not present, publicize the results yourselves.

Appendix 3

Conducting Focus Groups

Purpose of Using Focus a Group: The purpose of conducting a focus group is to bring together a small number of individuals, approximately 10-15 persons, to have an in-depth discussion of the needs of the community and of the contributing factors related to the needs.

Steps to Plan a Focus Group:

1. Select a team of staff and/or volunteers to plan the forum and conduct the forum.

2. Identify who will serve as facilitator for the forum. The facilitator can be a manager or board member or volunteer from the community who has experience facilitating forums or focus groups.

3. Identify the issues that will be focused on during the forum and the specific questions that will be asked. .

4. Identify a facility and date and time to conduct the event.

5. Determine who to invite and assign someone to create and send the invitation or make calls to invite persons. Invite persons that are best suited for this type of discussion and who will be able to contribute to an analytical discussion of barriers and needs. Persons to invite may include agency volunteers, neighborhood council representatives, board members, community leaders, leaders of community service organizations/non-profit organizations, elected officials, educators, etc.

6. Invite at least twice as many persons as you anticipate attending. Call invited persons the day before the meeting to remind them.

7. Determine how the discussion at the focus group will be documented or recorded during the event.

8. Assign someone from your staff to provide a written summary report of the input from the focus group and set a timeline for developing and finalizing the summary report.

9. Determine how the input from the focus group will be used in the community assessment process.

Possible Questions to Ask Focus Group:

1st Ask: Why does the identified need exist or what is causing the need?
2nd Once the group identifies the cause of a particular need, then delve deeper into it by asking why does the particular need exist?
3rd Continue discussing each issue and asking follow-up questions until the final root cause(s) has/have been identified. These root causes may point to needs that may or may not be applicable to the community needs assessment.

Example of Discussion to Identify Underlying Needs/Root Causes

Below is an example of how a facilitator can help guide the focus group discussion in order to identify underlying needs. The reason for going through this discussion is for the agency to determine the multiple needs that the agency and community should focus on addressing. It is very helpful to use flip charts with sticky backs that can be hung on a wall during the meeting.

CONDITION OR NEED IDENTIFIED BY GROUP: PERSONS CANNOT FIND A FULL-TIME JOB IN THE COMMUNITY.

Discuss why persons cannot find a full time job in the community by asking "What are some of the reasons persons can't find a full-time job in the community?" Then list the contributing factors. Next, ask if there are any community assets or resources that could address the needs. Finally, ask what solutions do they think can address the needs.

Example of three identified needs which have had the contributing factors identified through a series of progressive questions. The Community Assets/Resources and Solutions have not been provided in this example.

Identified Need	Contributing Factors	Community Assets/ Resources	Solutions
1. Lack of Private Transportation	• inability to drive • high costs of car ownership a) Why is there an inability to drive? • persons do not know how to drive • physical impairment • license revoked b) What is causing the high costs of car ownership? • Lack of income • lack of credit • Unable to afford car insurance		
2. Lack of Public Transportation	a) Area government does not have a public transportation system b) No non-profits that have a transportation program		
3. Lack of Job Skills	• **Persons can't enroll in training programs required for the jobs available.** a) Why can't persons enroll in training programs for available jobs? (1) Persons lack the reading, writing, and math skills. (2) Lack of money to pay for training programs. (3) No training programs in the area. 1 - Why do persons lack the reading and math skills? Lack of high school diplom or GED. 2 - Why do persons have a lack of money to pay for training programs? (a) They don't qualify for student financial aid. (b) Poor credit. (c) Low wages. (4) For the cause related to "no training programs in the area," there is no need for the focus group to delve deeper into this condition.		

Appendix 4

Root Cause Analysis

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a popular and often-used technique that helps people answer the question of why the problem occurred in the first place. It seeks to identify the origin of a problem using a specific set of steps, with associated tools, to find the primary cause of the problem, so that you can:

1. Determine what happened.
2. Determine why it happened.
3. Figure out what to do to reduce the likelihood that it will happen again.

RCA assumes that systems and events are interrelated. An action in one area triggers an action in another, and another, and so on. By tracing back these actions, you can discover where the problem started and how it grew into the symptom you're now facing.

You'll usually find three basic types of causes:

1. Physical causes – Tangible, material items failed in some way (for example, a car's brakes stopped working).
2. Human causes – People did something wrong, or did not do something that was needed. Human causes typically lead to physical causes (for example, no one filled the brake fluid, which led to the brakes failing).
3. Organizational causes – A system, process, or policy that people use to make decisions or do their work is faulty (for example, no one person was responsible for vehicle maintenance, and everyone assumed someone else had filled the brake fluid).

RCA looks at all three types of causes. It involves investigating the patterns of negative effects, finding hidden flaws in the system, and discovering specific actions that contributed to the problem. This often means that RCA reveals more than one root cause.

You can apply RCA to almost any situation. Determining how far to go in your investigation requires good judgment and common sense. Theoretically, you could continue to trace root causes back to the Stone Age, but the effort would serve no useful purpose. Be careful to understand when you've found a significant cause that can, in fact, be changed.

The Root Cause Analysis Process

Step One: Define the Problem

- ✓ What do you see happening?
- ✓ What are the specific symptoms?

Step Two: Collect Data

- ✓ What proof do you have that the problem exists?
- ✓ How long has the problem existed?
- ✓ What is the impact of the problem?

You need to analyze a situation fully before you can move on to look at factors that contributed to the problem. To maximize the effectiveness of your RCA, get together everyone – experts and front line staff – who understands the situation. People who are most familiar with the problem can help lead you to a better understanding of the issues.

Step Three: Identify Possible Causal Factors
- ✓ What sequence of events leads to the problem?
- ✓ What conditions allow the problem to occur?
- ✓ What other problems surround the occurrence of the central problem?

During this stage, identify as many causal factors as possible. Too often, people identify one or two factors and then stop, but that's not sufficient. With RCA, you don't want to simply treat the most obvious causes – you want to dig deeper.

Step Four: Identify the Root Cause(s)
- ✓ Why does the causal factor exist?
- ✓ What is the real reason the problem occurred?

Use the same tools you used to identify the causal factors (in Step Three) to look at the roots of each factor. These tools are designed to encourage you to dig deeper at each level of cause and effect.

Step Five: Recommend and Implement Solutions
- ✓ What can you do to prevent the problem from happening again?
- ✓ How will the solution be implemented?
- ✓ Who will be responsible for it?
- ✓ What are the risks of implementing the solution?

Analyze your cause-and-effect process, and identify the changes needed for various systems. It's also important that you plan ahead to predict the effects of your solution. This way, you can spot potential failures before they happen.

Refer to the "But Why" appendix.

Appendix 5

But Why Technique

What are "root causes?"

Root causes are the basic reasons behind the problem or issue you are seeing in the community. Trying to figure out why the problem has developed is an essential part of the "problem solving process" in order to guarantee the right responses and also to help citizens "own" the problems.

What is the "but why?" technique?

The "But why?" technique is one method used to identify underlying causes of a community issue. These underlying factors are called "root causes."

The "But why?" technique examines a problem by asking questions to find out what caused it. Each time an answer is given, a follow-up "But why?" is asked.

For example, if you say that too many people in poor communities have problems with alcoholism, you should ask yourself "but why?" Once you come up with an answer to that question, probe the answer with another "but why?" question, until you reach the root of the problem, the root cause.

Why should you identify root causes?

Identifying genuine solutions to a problem means knowing what the real causes of the problem are. Taking action without identifying what factors contribute to the problem can result in misdirected efforts, and that wastes time and resources. However, by thoroughly studying the cause of the problem, you can build ownership, that is, by experiencing the problem you will understand it better, and be motivated to deal with it.

The "But why?" technique can be used to discover basic or "root" causes either in individuals or broader social systems:

1. It can be used to find which *individual* factors could provide targets of change for your cause, such as levels of knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and behavior.

> Do people need more knowledge about nutrition?
>
> Do children need to learn refusal skills to avoid smoking?
>
> Do teenagers need to learn how to use contraceptives?

2. It can explore *social* causes. For example, it could help us determine why a certain neighborhood seems to have a higher rate of a specific problem. These social causes divide into three main sub-groups:

> Cultural factors, such as customs, beliefs, and values;
>
> Economic factors, such as money, land, and resources;
>
> Political factors, such as decision-making power.

3. It can uncover multiple solutions for a certain problem and allow the user to see alternatives that he or she might not have seen before. It increases the chances of choosing the right solution, because many aspects of the problem are explored during the "But why?" exercise.

When should you identify root causes?

> Whenever you are faced with addressing a challenging community problem. Of course, the "But why?" technique is not always your best bet and should not be used 100% of the time. It's extremely efficient to find a variety of solutions and is a quick and inexpensive technique that can be done by anyone, at anytime, anywhere. For some issues, however, you should use more sophisticated methods, such as surveys, interviews and data collecting.
>
> When there is support for a "solution" that does not seem to get at the real causes of the problem. For example, if there is hunger in community, let's distribute free turkey at Thanksgiving.
>
> When there is ignorance or denial of why a community problem exists.

How does the "but why" technique work?

Technique Guide

Here's how it works. A group examines a community problem by asking what caused it. Each time someone gives an answer, the "asker" continues to probe, mostly by asking "But why?" or "How could that have been prevented." Example:

Problem:

Too many (too few) people are ________.
Q: But why? A. Because...
Q: But why? A. Because...
Q: Could that have been prevented? A. Yes
Q: How?
Q: But why? A. Because...
Q. But why? A. Because...
Q But why? (and so forth)

1. First, invite people who are both affected by the problem and are in a position to contribute to the solution (see Chapter 18, Section 3: *Identifying Targets and agents of Change: Who Can Benefit and Who Can Help*) to brainstorm possible causes. The more representative the working group is, the more likely it is for the root causes to be uncovered.

2. The working group should then examine a community problem, such as substance abuse or violence, by asking what caused it. Each time someone gives an answer, the group asks, "But why?" Here's an example:

Problem:
A child has an infected foot.
Q: But why? A. She stepped on broken glass while walking.
Q: Could that have been prevented? A. Yes.
Q: How? A. She could have been wearing shoes.
Q: But why doesn't the child have shoes? A. Because the family can't afford shoes.
Q. But why? A. The father or mother has no job.
Q. But why? (and so forth)

In this example, the "But why?" analysis leads to at least two very different conclusions. The criterion for choice between them is to look into the environment of each one. Many solutions may apply to your problem, so it's up to you to find the one that fits it better. The "But why?" analysis by itself doesn't lead automatically to the best solution. It just points out many paths you may take.

Appendix 6

Outcomes and Outputs

While CAAs are held accountable for producing outcomes, they must also demonstrate they have the capacity to achieve their results through effective and efficient management and delivery of services.

We define outcomes or results as benefits to individuals, families, organizations, and communities. The outcomes are the changes that can be observed by following an agency service or intervention, which we call outputs.

Some agencies have problems identifying the difference between outcomes and outputs.

Outputs are the activities of the program which will produce data regarding the scope of the program.

> Outputs are measured by such things as units of service, number of people served, number of households or families served, hours of participation or number of times in attendance at a program

Deciding which elements of the program are outputs and which are outcomes is important for both management and accountability.

On the following page you will find some examples of various elements of programs typically offered by Community Action Agencies. Please consider if these elements are outcomes or outputs.

According to the *Nonprofit Times*: "An output details what your organization does, whereas an outcome defines changes that have taken place because of your organization's work. Maybe people who participated in your organization's programs learned to read, stopped smoking and started running, graduated from high school, or got a job. A solid description of outcomes tells the funder what change occurred, and how much change occurred over what period of time."

In your logic model, **outputs refer to the activities you will conduct and the people you hope to reach**. OUTCOMES are the results or impact of these activities or services, often expressed in terms of an increase in understanding, and improvements in desired behaviors or attitudes of participants. In your logic model, **outcomes refer to the short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals of your program**.