

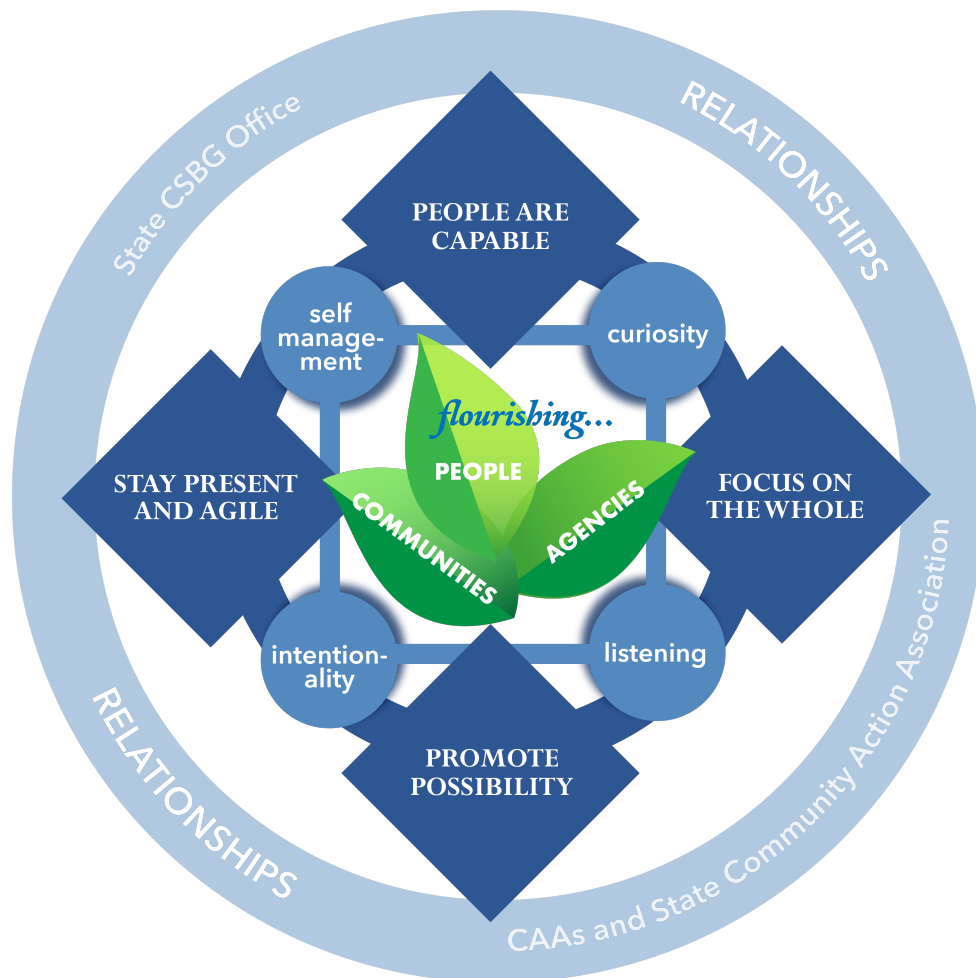


Coaching Relationship-Building Tool

(Version 1.0)

Realizing the benefits of coaching depends foremost on the State Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Administrator nurturing positive, healthy, and productive relationships with CAAs and the State Association. Accomplishing true advancement toward the alleviation of the causes and conditions of poverty and successfully creating a culture of learning and improvement will require CSBG Administrators to cultivate strong and positive relationships, both internally and externally.

CSBG NETWORK COACHING MODEL



In the CSBG Network Coaching Model, **relationships** are the foundation of the entire model. Constructive relationships act as the container within which the coaching core beliefs and skills work, and must be in place for the goals of flourishing people, communities, and agencies to be achieved.

This Relationship-Building Tool offers an approach and series of steps for State CSBG Administrators to use to build the relationships necessary to effectively combat poverty across their states.

Building strong and positive relationships is an art, not a science.

It requires steady attention, intention, and relies heavily on regular and effective communication. While CSBG State Offices have numerous relationships and stakeholders to manage, this tool focuses specifically on steps to strengthen relationships ***with local Community Action Agencies and State Associations*** because they are pivotal to impact and success. ***Refer to the Relationship section in the Coaching Guide for State Administrators for more in-depth information about the ingredients necessary for building a solid foundation of relationships.***

An approach that can be helpful in building and maintaining strong working relationships is to adopt and follow a set of **guiding principles**. Guiding principles state in writing what you value and how you plan to conduct your work. For State CSBG Offices, identifying and adopting guiding principles is a powerful way to describe how you plan to work together with others, both internally and externally.

It is essential for the process to be inclusive of all members of the Community Action Network. You may consider starting with a State Office team, but ongoing, genuine, and true engagement of the Community Action Agencies (CAA) and the State Association will determine if the process is successful.

Note: *This tool offers a series of steps for developing guiding principles that may strengthen relationships with partners. Consider what needs changing or adding to best address your individual state's context.*

1

Engage the State Office team in a discussion and a decision about who its primary customer is. Recruit a team to lead the work. The best team composition may vary depending upon your state's realities, context, and what is feasible. Options might include:

- Working with the entire State Office team
- Designating a team from among State Office staff
- Including State Office staff along with representation from select or all partners from local CAAs and State Association

2

Have the selected team brainstorm and consider guiding principles. Are there existing principles already in place (e.g., for the state agency, for local CAAs or the state association) to review? Consider the Minnesota CSBG State Office's guiding principles, which are part of the NASCSP Monitoring Standards: Mutual respect, open communication, joint problem solving, valuing diversity, and ethical code of conduct. Review other sources as useful. Resources:

- NASCSP Monitoring Standards (includes Monitoring Principles and Practices): https://nascsp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/csbg_mntgstndsfinal_9-2017.pdf
- Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity Guiding Principles: <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/program-overviews/economic-supports-cash-food/office-of-economic-opportunity/>

3

Select a list of 5–15 guiding principles that are relevant to effectively fighting poverty in your state, and briefly define each principle. It may be easier for a person or small team to draft the language for these definitions. Put these together in a document to consider and share with stakeholders.

4

From this list of 5–15 principles, decide on those that are most important to the CSBG State Office and its partners. Finalize a draft of guiding principles for relationships (3 to 7 may be best).

5

Share this final draft with key stakeholders (e.g., local CAAs, State Community Action Association, state agency staff). Solicit and consider input, and then finalize and share back with the statewide network. It is essential that the entire CSBG Network feel ownership and have input on the principles.

6

Begin to incorporate regular use of the adopted guiding principles in the State CSBG Office work, internally as well as externally. It can be productive to distribute and review the guiding principles at the opening meeting of local agency monitoring visits, or when the Office of Community Services comes to monitor you. They can be called upon when addressing particularly challenging issues or in the face of disagreements and conflict. They work well in annual reports and presentations about how the State CSBG Office intends to do its work.

7

Regularly review the guiding principles and evolve them as needed. Once the first version is established, it may make sense to review and update as part of your regular strategic planning work.

IMPORTANT

**Nurturing positive relationships requires ongoing tending.
This work is never done.**