NASCSP
National Association for State Community Services Programs

State Management Work Group | State Plan Promising Practices

Purpose
The promising practices identified, and tools, templates, and resources shared in this document are the result of extensive research conducted over a three-year period by the State Management Work Group (SMWG). SMWG members helped identify the information shared here by analyzing the 2021 **American Customer Satisfaction Survey** (ACSI), conducting extensive research of high-scoring states, collecting and developing tools as well as other training and technical assistance (TTA) to help State Administrators with the implementation of these promising practices. The ultimate goal of this work is to improve service delivery to the CAAs and increase satisfaction with the state office, leading to improved ACSI scores.

What is the purpose of Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)?
The State Plan requires the State to identify its strategy for delivering T/TA to eligible entities. Quality T/TA can improve the overall performance of CSBG, enhance service delivery, and in turn reduce poverty in the community served. CSBG IM 49 establishes Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) as a requirement for the Network and has been identified as a major area of need for T/TA.

Promising Practices:
1. ***Active Certified ROMA Professionals at all levels of the Network (State Lead, State Association)*** – Having the right CSBG staff hold and maintain either a ROMA Trainer or Implementor certification, especially at the State and State Association levels

2. ***Standardize CSBG Terminology*** – A statewide Community Needs Assessment (CNA) manual and Community Action Plan (CAP Plan) template, with logic models, which provides a standardized format and outlines what data should be included

3. ***Implement a Statewide Database*** – The identification, development, and/or implementation of a statewide database in that eligible entities input CSBG data related to client demographics, services, outcomes, funding usage, and/or organizational standards

4. ***Utilize Contractors for Training*** – The use of outside vendors such as the State Association, National Partners, and/or other merchants for Network T/TA needs

5. ***Communicate and Share*** – Intentional, regular communication, and sharing of T/TA-related information that is clear, constant, and consistent

1. ***Active Certified ROMA Professionals at all levels of the Network (State Lead, State Association)*** – Having the right CSBG staff hold and maintain either a ROMA Trainer or Implementor certification, especially at the State and State Association levels

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, Washington

Purpose:
CSBG IM 49 establishes ROMA as a requirement for the Network. Increasing the importance of ROMA and modeling this importance at the State and State Association level bring consistency to the entire CSBG network. This best practice helps to elevate and support eligible entities in the ROMA practices and principles for the CNA, CAP Plans, strategic plans, targeting, and reporting. When the State and/or the State Association has this certification, they are able to support the Network in meeting the ROMA performance measures. Having certified ROMA professionals at the local level helps to ensure the quality of ROMA practices and principles. It is crucial to have the right individuals trained who will have the greatest impact on implementing ROMA within their office.

Method:
A commitment from the CSBG State Lead Office, the State Association, and eligible entities to complete the ROMA Trainer and/or Implementer certification. States who openly support and/or provide discretionary funding for ROMA certifications at eligible entities have found a greater number of certified professionals at the local level. There is a time and financial commitment to becoming ROMA certified. It is approximately a six-month time commitment to become certified, with a yearly recertification process. Currently, there is no state-specific training program and State Administrators will need to use eligible entities' data to complete their certification and yearly recertification.

Challenges:
Staff capacity at all levels (State, State Association, and eligible entities) was found to be the greatest challenge. There is also a financial cost to become certified which may be burdensome to meet. States that provide discretionary funding to eligible entities specifically supporting ROMA certifications are able to reduce this burden.

Benefits:
The benefits of ROMA-certified professionals at the State, State Association, and eligible entities help to improve programs and services. States found there was an improvement

in the quality of data collection and annual reports. States and/or State Associations also have a better understanding of why ROMA is so important and how to deliver quality ROMA trainings for their Network. Both States and State Associations were able to provide clear, constant, and consistent communication regarding the ROMA principles and practices. Overall, this will provide the Network with a better way to tell the Community Action Agency story.

Tools/Templates/Resources:
- See the State Management Work Group Page

2. ***Standardize CSBG Terminology*** – A statewide Community Needs Assessment (CNA) manual and Community Action Plan (CAP Plan) template, with logic models, which provides a standardized format and outlines what data should be included

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah

Purpose:
This best practice in standardizing CSBG terminology with CNA manuals and CAP Plan templates helps to provide clear guidance on the requirements of the CSBG Act and the expectations at the State level. It offers eligible entities insight as to why these items are needed and how this information is used. This clear and concise approach will further support the CSBG Network by providing a tool that can be utilized for T/TA. It also helps to institute historical knowledge for the Network at both the State and local levels.

Method:
The initial startup of preparing and distributing the manuals/templates will depend on the State Administrators' capacity level. States will need to identify all CSBG Act requirements and OCS guidance that impacts CNA and CAP Plans. It is important to review the ROMA practices and principles when developing these manuals/templates. State Administrators should also work with upper management, if needed, to identify the expectations of eligible entities in these areas. States will need to regularly review manuals/templates and make updates as needed.

Challenges:
Staff capacity was found to be the greatest challenge for the development of CNA manuals and CAP Plan templates. Whenever possible, States should utilize tools already created by ACSI top scorers and make individual State updates as needed. Differing language at the federal, state, and local levels may be difficult to navigate. States who created a "crosswalk" identifying language with shared meanings helped both the State and eligible entities. States found that building in consistencies whenever possible and writing out the clarifications helped to eliminate confusion for eligible entities.

Benefits:
This promising practice helps everyone in the Network use the same language, creating consistency and continuity. Developing a CNA manual and CAP Plan template clearly defines the States expectations. It can also increase staff capacity at the local level as eligible

entities are not creating a new format and/or know what data points are needed and where to look. Having a standard format provides State Administrators with a better understanding of poverty at both a State and local level, allowing the State to easily identify any common trends.

Tools/Templates/Resources:

- See the State Management Work Group Page

3. ***Implement a Statewide Database*** – The identification, development, and/or implementation of a statewide database in that eligible entities input CSBG data related to client demographics, services, outcomes, funding usage, and/or organizational standards

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Maine, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, West Virginia

Purpose:
Performance management is a requirement of CSBG. The development and/or implementation of a statewide database for annual reporting and/or organizational standards helps to ensure that States and eligible entities are meeting these requirements in a consistent and timely manner, often reducing duplication.

Method:
States need to determine the value of utilizing a statewide database for organizational standards and/or annual reports. State Administrators need to engage their State Association and eligible entities to gather feedback and determine needs. States can hold workgroups, listening sessions, open office hours, and/or regularly scheduled meetings with the Network to gather input. Many eligible entities get multiple funding sources, States should aim to reduce duplicative data collection and/or entry if possible. States should decide if they wish to develop a database or purchase current software. Developing a database will require more time and dedication. Predeveloped software may also need customization, which could take time. States will need to follow their procurement policy when seeking a vendor.

Challenges:
The development and/or implementation of a statewide database can be time-consuming. States may get resistance when implementing a statewide database. It is crucial that States engage their Network throughout the process to lessen any pushback and reduce duplicative work for eligible entities.

Benefits:
The development and/or implementation of a statewide database helps to ensure that reporting requirements are being met in a consistent manner by all eligible entities. It allows the States access to "real-time" data and helps the State identify trends, allowing the State quickly to recognize any T/TA needs. A statewide database provides a tool that can be utilized to train new staff at both the State and local levels. When using a statewide

database, all reporting updates are consistent for the Network and can capture other funding sources allowing for easier reporting.

Tools/Templates/Resources:
- See the State Management Work Group Page

4. *Utilize Contractors for Training* – The use of outside vendors such as the State Association, National Partners, and/or other merchants for Network T/TA needs

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Arkansas, Maryland, Maine, Ohio, Utah, Oregon

Purpose:
The State Plan requires the State to identify its strategy for delivering training and technical assistance to eligible entities. Depending on staff capacity and expertise, utilizing contractors for T/TA can improve the quantity and quality of T/TA provided to the Network.

Method:
States should gather feedback from eligible entities, review monitoring findings, and organizational standards to figure out T/TA needs. States will need to identify what T/TA can be provided in-house with the allowed staff capacity and expertise. Ideally, States should work with their State Associations to determine the Network T/TA needs and if the State Association can assistance with training topics. If neither the State nor State Association has the capacity and/or knowledge, States will need to identify a potential contractor to deliver the T/TA and follow their procurement policy.

Challenges:
State Administrators may still face some capacity issues in determining T/TA needs, identifying contractors, the procurement process, and/or initial planning meetings with the selected vendor. However, this is still minimal in comparison to providing the T/TA in-house. States should also identify a way to measure the effectiveness of any training provided to the Network.

Benefits:
Utilizing contractors can increase State Administrators' capacity, this is especially true for CSBG State Lead Offices with one staff. Most CSBG T/TA providers have materials that have already been created and may only need to be updated to meet any State specific needs, allowing for quicker delivery of trainings. Contracting with your State Association can help to foster a strong, collaborative relationship. Quality T/TA can improve the overall performance of CSBG, improve service delivery, and in turn reduce poverty in the community served.

Tools/Templates/Resources:

- See the State Management Work Group Page

5. ***Communicate and Share*** – Intentional, regular communication, and sharing of T/TA-related information that is clear, constant, and consistent

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Arkansas, California, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah

Purpose:
Open communication and sharing at the State level help to identify T/TA needs. It also helps to ensure that eligible entities are aware of T/TA opportunities and increase participation.

Method:
States who engage eligible entities in multiple ways such as newsletters, one-on-one meetings, open office hours, and/or anonymous emails see the greatest benefit. These intentional touchpoints allow the State to build strong, collaborative relationships with their eligible entities, in turn allowing the agencies to feel more comfortable asking T/TA-related questions. It is important for States wanting to employ this practice to maintain clear, constant, and consistent communication and sharing with their Network.

Challenges:
Identifying and committing State staff time to consistently maintain Network engagement is a significant challenge. States should determine what will work best for their Network and what State staff can realistically commit to doing. Involving the State Association may also help increase State staff capacity. Geographic areas can be a challenge (rural vs. urban). States may reduce this burden by breaking eligible entities into regions and/or bringing similar agencies together for T/TA and/or to gather input. States found that not all eligible entities fully engage in these touchpoints. This can be counteracted by having one-on-one meetings with agencies and/or developing an anonymous email system.

Benefits:
States found that open communication and sharing with the Network help to build strong, collaborative relationships with their Network. Eligible entities had greater access to State staff to ask T/TA-related questions and were more comfortable doing so. Eligible entities often felt heard and were more likely to participate in discussions that impact the Network beyond just T/TA.

Tools/Templates/Resources:
- See the State Management Work Group Page