

Local Community Action Agency Board Training Manual



It is the Mission of the Nevada County Community Action Agency to engage and empower our community to eliminate poverty, to create equity and prosperity, and to assist people in achieving self-sufficiency through direct services, advocacy, and community partnerships.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board Training Manual

The Nevada County Adult and Families Commission (AFSC/Commission) is a public Community Action Agency embedded in the programming of the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency. The Commission is comprised of 12 voting members who must be residents of the County of Nevada; this Commission is known as the Community Action Agency (CAA) tripartite board of directors. The tripartite structure of a CAA board embodies the grassroots nature which the movement to alleviate poverty was founded, as it requires involvement by all facets of the local community-elected officials, members of the low-income community and private sectors members. The tripartite board structure was introduced in 1964 when Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act to ensure that Community Action Agencies were administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas serviced and members of the groups served. In Nevada County, the tripartite board is the advising or administering board while the Nevada County Board of Supervisors serves as the governing board of the Community Action Agency.

The Board Training Manual was developed to provide CAA tripartite board members with historical information on the development of Community Action Agencies, to provide an understanding of the importance of the tripartite board and the roles and responsibilities of board members. The materials in this Training Manual stemmed from a collection of tools and background information they gathered from state and federal resources, including *CAPLAW*, *WIPFLI*, THE Center for Applied Management Practices, Intro to Board Roles and Responsibility and the Category 5 Board Governance from the National Community Action Partnership, and *BoardSource* (formerly the National Center for Nonprofit-Boards).

Nevada County staff developed this training to provide what we believe is the most appropriate information for Nevada County's Adult and Families Commission, the Community Action Agency advising board.

The War On Poverty Begins

"Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John F. Kennedy, not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right... This administration today, here, and now, declares an unconditional War on Poverty in America... Our joint Federal-local effort must pursue poverty, pursue it wherever it exists. In city slums, in small towns, in sharecropper's shacks, or in migrant worker camps, on Indian reservations, among whites as well as Negroes, among the young as well as the aged, in the boom towns and in the depressed areas."

— Lyndon B. Johnson, January 8, 1964

The Promise of Community Action-the National Mission Statement

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

THE NEVADA COUNTY ADULT AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION

Nevada County Community Action Agency Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Nevada County Community Action Agency to engage and empower our community to eliminate poverty, to create equity and prosperity, and to assist people in achieving self-sufficiency through direct services, advocacy, and community partnerships.

Nevada County Community Action Agency Vision Statement

The Nevada County Community Action Agency envisions communities where all residents have access to quality education, affordable housing, healthcare, transportation, healthy food, and a living wage.

- Through partnerships, people with low-income find resources, support, relations, and opportunities that aid them in overcoming economic and cultural barriers to establishing and maintaining self-sufficient lives.
- Commitment to empowering those seeking assistance to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.
- Organizational excellence and continued improvement working with employees, the community, and partners.

Nevada County Community Action Agency Governance

The Nevada County Adult and Family Services Commission is the advising authority acting as the Community Action Agency. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors has adopted By laws that govern the operations of the CAA. Specific highlights from the Bylaws are listed below, but Commission members should consult the Bylaws for more details on the governance structure, policies, and procedures.

Nevada County CAA Board Member Responsibilities

Specific functions of the Nevada County CAA Board include:

- Make recommendations to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors on policies and procedures which assess, evaluate, and prioritize the needs of low-income residents in Nevada County.
- Develop a Community Action Plan (CAP Plan) to establish priorities for allocating CSBG funding in the County.
- Develop and maintain policies and procedures to evaluate those entities/programs funded with Nevada County CSBG funding
- Participate in a competitive bid process to select vendors/contractors to provide public services with CSBG funding
- Recommend programs to improve or expand the delivery of services to low-income county residents
- Recommend and develop grant applications to support low-income needs
- Coordinate of activities to leverage existing program funds
- Ensure compliance of all programs funded with CSBG funding
- Appoint standing and ad hoc committees to address the needs of the Board
- Adopt a CSBG compliant strategic plan
- Establish and utilize an objective procedure for evaluating funding requests and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, as appropriate

BACKGROUND & UNDERSTANDING: THE COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

What are Community Action Agencies?

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are nonprofit private and public organizations across the United States established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. CAAs exist in almost every community in the United States, and they are as diverse as the communities they serve. Community Action is locally controlled and responds to local needs, which means there is no "typical" CAA. Many factors dictate what an individual agency looks like, including whether it serves an urban or rural area, the condition of the local economy, availability of other community resources, and the demographic profile of low-income residents.

CAAs look different from one another but share a common comprehensive approach to fighting poverty. This approach includes a governing board that reflects the local community, a comprehensive community needs assessment, and close partnerships with other agencies and entities. CAAs may be considered "umbrella" organizations with a common framework but whose components are customized to respond to local needs.

As designated eligible entities with core funding from the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), CAAs are able to compete for, and leverage, diverse resources. CAAs depend on CSBG for partial funding and support, and they use these funds to identify community needs and put together a mix of public and private resources that respond to those identified needs. Local agencies are often known for the specific programs and services they provide, regardless of whether they are funded by CSBG or multiple other sources.

CAAs often administer numerous federal programs that address the specific needs of low-income people. CAAs administer different programs depending on local community needs, and include federal programs like Head Start, weatherization, LIHEAP, HUD housing and homeless programs, USDA food programs and the Older Americans Act. Public agency CAAs often pair social services and/or public health funding with CSBG and other federally funded programs.

History of Community Action Agencies

In 1964, the U.S. poverty rate included 19% of Americans. Rising political forces demanded change. Under a new White House and the Office of Economic Opportunity, the concept of the federally funded, local Community Action Program (CAP), delivered by a local Community Action Agency, in a nationwide Community Action Network became the primary vehicle for a federal War on Poverty.

Lyndon B. Johnson's landmark Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, drafted by Sargent Shriver established Community Action Programs in Title II. In concept, a Community Action Program became a program that would provide services, assistance, and other activities of sufficient size and scope to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty through developing employment opportunities, improving human performance, motivation, and productivity, or improving the conditions under which people live, learn, and work.

A controversial feature of the Act was the requirement for "maximum feasible participation" of the people directly affected (the poor) in the decision-making about how federal funds would be spent on them, in their community. The notion that the poor (largely minorities) should have a say in their affairs created some opposition at first but was in keeping with America's civil rights and reform movements, and the War on Poverty.

In each community, the local Community Action Program (CAP) was provided by a local non-profit Community Action Agency (CAA), overseen by a board made up of three specific sectors of the local community. In 1967, the Green Amendment gave city and county governments the right to decide which entity would be the official CAA for their community, and the Quie Amendment gave two-thirds of the seats on CAA boards to elected local officials and private sector representatives.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES OVER THE YEARS

2012 -- Focus on Performance Management

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) the Office of Community Services (OCS) began a process to improve the support of high-quality services delivery across the CSBG network. As part of a broader effort to increase accountability and achieve results, OCS launched several initiatives: to establish organizational standards for eligible entities, to enhance the CSBG Network's performance and outcomes measurement system for local eligible entities (ROMA), and to create State and Federal-level accountability measures to track and measure organizational performance by State CSBG Lead Agencies and OCS.

2015 -- Several Efforts Finalized

– Organizational Standards

The purpose of the organizational standards is to ensure that all eligible entities have appropriate organizational capacity, not only in the critical financial and administrative areas important to all nonprofit and public human service agencies, but also in areas of unique importance for CSBG-funded eligible entities. (For more information on Organizational Standards, see page 22).

– State and Federal Accountability Measures

State and Federal Accountability Measures are designed to track organizational performance by State CSBG Lead Agencies and OCS. These measures are part of an enhanced framework for accountability and performance management across the CSBG Network.

– Automated State Plans

The new Model State Plan streamlines and automates the prior Model State Plan content while also incorporating information on organizational standards and State accountability measures.

– American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)

Use of the ACSI will allow OCS to collect consistent, uniform information from eligible entities across the country, and will provide the states with actionable insights to improve their customer experience and boost program results. This is in keeping with the enhanced emphasis on using data for analysis and decision-making to continually make program improvements.

2017 – New Annual Report Approved by Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

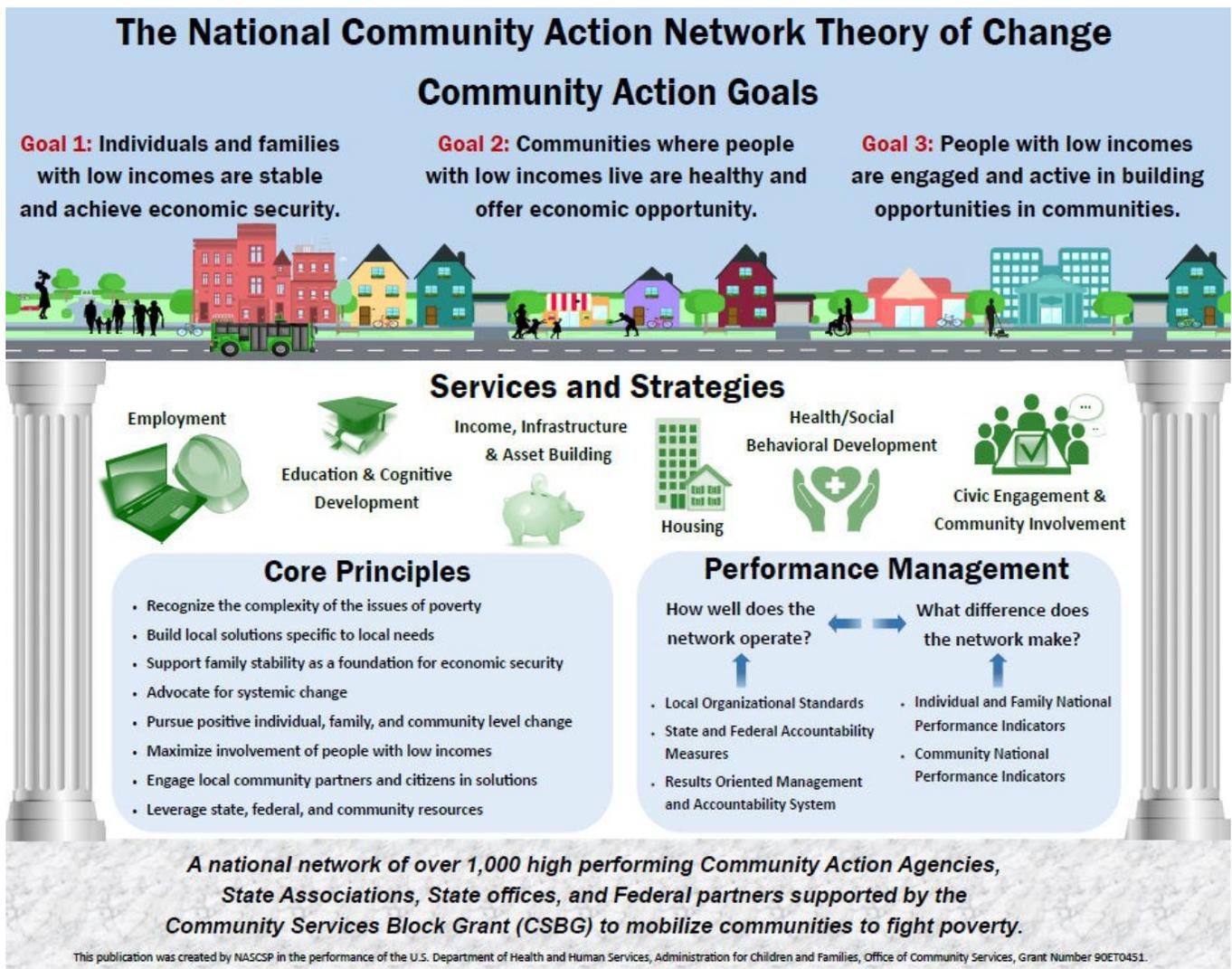
Excerpt from IM 152- 1/19/17

The new CSBG Annual Report marks the largest overhaul of CSBG data collection and reporting since the

first comprehensive CSBG Information Survey (CSBG-IS) was developed in 1983. OCS and the CSBG Network – composed of CSBG eligible entities, State CSBG Lead Agencies, State Community Action Associations, national partners, and others – have participated in a multi-year effort to update the CSBG Annual Report that was designed to complement ROMA Next Generation and support and complete the CSBG Performance Management Framework. The information in the new CSBG Annual Report will be used at local, State, and national levels to improve performance, track results from year to year and assure accountability for critical activities and outcomes at each level of the CSBG network.

The CSBG Annual Report (AR) Approved by OMB includes:

- Connection with the Automated State Plans
- Identification of State Accountability Measures
- Reports on American Customer Satisfaction Index
- Reports on Organizational Standards for Local CAAs
- New National Performance Indicators for Communities, Families, and Individuals
- Identification of Services for Families and Individuals and Strategies for Communities
- Report on Interaction of State and local Eligible Entities regarding performance of full ROMA Cycle
- Inclusion of a National Theory of Change for Community Action



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC CAAs

How are Public CAAs Structured?

Understanding how a public CAA is structured can help you, as a tripartite board member, navigate the board's role in administering CSBG funding, and other leveraged funding streams. Public CAAs are created under and generally governed by local branches of government, and in Nevada County that is the Board of Supervisors. The traditional form of the Nevada County CAA is operated under the Nevada County Health and Humans Services Agency.

What are the Responsibilities of a Public CAAs Tripartite Board?

The federal CSBG Act specifically requires the tripartite board of a public CAA to “participate actively in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation” of CDBG-funded programs. The board's responsibilities are further defined by the governing documents, known as bylaws.

Furthermore, the Office of Community Services (OCS) CSBG Information Memorandum (IM) 82 does not distinguish between the responsibilities of nonprofits CAA and public CAA tripartite boards, requiring both to take responsibility for oversight and governance of CAAs.

The tripartite board also plays an important role in leading a public CAAs compliance with the CSBG Organizational standards. Many of the concepts and directives in IM 82 are reflected in the CSBG Organizational Standards, which require the tripartite board to be involved in the following matters:

- ☞ Reviewing the CAA's mission statement
- ☞ Participating in strategic planning and the community needs assessment
- ☞ Receiving strategic, organizational, and programmatic updates
- ☞ Receiving financial and audit reports; and
- ☞ Participating in the CSBG budget process, as allowed by local government procedures

Should a Public CAA be Referred to as an Advisory Board?

No federal CSBG requirement exists which requires a public CAA board to be referred to as either “advisory” or “administering.” The term “administering” is found in Section 9910(b) of the federal CSBG Act, which states that a public CAA “administers” the CSBG program through a tripartite board and that the low-income representatives on the board must actively participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the CSBG program. OCS references the above language from the federal CSBG Act in IM 82, and also refers to a public CAA board as “advisory.” Some state CSBG laws and/or local ordinances specify how public CAA boards will be referenced.

Generally, a public CAA board is referred to as an administering board because doing so reflects the language in the federal CSBG Act and also emphasizes the active role that a public CAA board, and in particular the low-income representatives on the board, should play in overseeing the CSBG program. In Nevada County the Commission is referred to as “advisory” because that is how our local government refers to all boards that work closely with the county departments. Regardless of

the way the public CAA board is referenced, it is clear that the board, and in particular the low-income representatives, must actively participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the CSBG program.

How does the Public CAAs Tripartite Board Exercise Decision-Making Authority over the CAA?

Tripartite boards of public CAAs can exercise decision-making authority to the extent permitted by the local governing officials. A delegation of such authority is often found in the public CAA's bylaws, or enabling legislation specifying actions the board may take. In situations where a tripartite board's ability to act on behalf of a public CAA is limited, the board should be charged with providing recommendations and advice on matters specific to the CAA's programs. In Nevada County, the public CAA's tripartite board participates in all CAA Organizational Standards required elements and makes a recommendation to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to take action as the governing body upon their recommendation.

The Nevada County tripartite board retains direct oversight over programs and services supported with CSBG funds, as the federal CSBG Act requires such active participation in the program's development, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Regardless of the scope of authority formally granted, the Nevada County CAA board can effect change and exert influence on their agencies and communities without exercising direct decision-making power. These include building relationships with community members and government representatives, as well as consistently participating in local government affairs and advocating on behalf of low-income people.

What Fiduciary Responsibilities does a Public CAA Tripartite Board Have?

The fiduciary duties of care and loyalty owed by board members to a nonprofit CAA usually come from state nonprofit corporation statutes. Since public CAAs are not subject to such laws, whether a public CAA's tripartite board members owe any fiduciary duties to their CAA depends on the laws creating and governing the public CAA. Many local laws hold public entity board members to a similar standard by imposing fiduciary duties in some form. ³ The Roles and Responsibilities of Public CAA Tripartite Boards © 2021 Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. Fiduciary duties may also be required under a public CAA's charter, bylaws, or delegation of authority documentation.

While public CAA board members are not necessarily obligated to act in accordance with nonprofit board fiduciary duties, the duty of care and duty of loyalty are both still useful, informative frameworks for how public CAA board members should conduct themselves in their capacity as board members to help achieve beneficial outcomes for their CAAs.

The duty of care is a standard of diligence; that is, board members should exercise diligence and deliberation. Assessing whether board members have fulfilled their duty of care involves asking questions such as, "Was the decision based on facts that were developed through an orderly process, or did the board just do what felt right at the time of the decision?" The duty of care is

evaluated from a reasonable person standard—a board member should exercise the care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise under similar circumstances. Attending board meetings, reading board materials, and asking hard questions are all activities that suggest a board member is meeting their duty of care.

The duty of loyalty is a standard of faithfulness—a board member gives undivided allegiance to the public CAA and its mission when making decisions affecting the CAA. This means that a board member should not use information obtained as a board member for personal gain (or self-dealing), and instead must act in the best interests of the public CAA. Board members should disclose and avoid conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from any decisions that might result in personal benefit.

Can a Public CAA Board Member Vote by Proxy?

Voting by proxy is a method of voting whereby a board member designates another person to cast a vote on the board member's behalf, usually because the board member is unable to attend the board meeting. Unlike nonprofit CAA board members, public CAA board members are permitted to vote by proxy. Although voting by proxy is permitted, public CAAs are encouraged to limit its use, as board members need to keep informed of the CAA's ongoing issues and exercise reasonable care when making decisions on behalf of the CAA. Even if public CAA tripartite board members are not formally subject to a fiduciary duty of care, it is difficult for a board member to make informed decisions and consider the best interests of the CAA without the information and opportunity for discussion provided by regular attendance at board meetings. Limiting the use of proxies will help board members stay fully engaged in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the CSBG program, as required by the federal CSBG Act.

Tripartite Board Selection

The federal CSBG Act requires that the tripartite board be selected by the "organization." For a public CAA employing a tripartite board structure, the decision-making body of the organization is the local governing body (for example, the county board of supervisors), unless that body has delegated the responsibility of selecting board members to the tripartite board itself. If the governing body retains the authority to choose the board, then the tripartite board can, and should, make recommendations to the governing officials. One way for a public CAA board to be involved in the selection of board members is to establish a board committee charged with overseeing these tasks. This committee is often referred to as the board governance committee and may perform several tasks including maintaining a list of potential board members that it reviews and updates regularly.

Unless an alternative to the tripartite structure has been established by the state, public CAAs with a tripartite board must use a democratic selection process to select low-income sector board members, regardless of the extent to which the decision-making body delegates the responsibility for selecting board members. Public CAAs with the authority to do so should consider voting to seat the democratically elected low-income sector representatives to retain the authority to remove them if such removal is necessary under board policies. In voting to seat the members, the board should respect the democratic selection process by only voting against seating a democratically elected board member if they are disqualified from board service, such

as in the case of a conflict of interest.

WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY ACTION BASICS?

Board, Staff, and Volunteers

Community Action Agencies maintain a different board composition than most organizations with Federal legislation requiring the following board composition:

- ☞ At least one-third of a board's members must represent the low-income community; exactly one-third must be elected officials; up to one-third may be from the private sector.

Local Citizens Govern Local Non-Profit Community Action Agencies

The Economic Opportunity Act required that Community Action Agencies have "maximum feasible participation" in the areas they serve. CAAs embrace this principle in their local agencies.

In 1967, Congress passed the Quie Amendment, which restructured the management of Community Action Agencies. The amendment required that an agency's board of directors select locally elected officials to make up one-third of the board's directors. At least another third of the directors were to be low-income representatives selected by a democratic process, and the balance was to come from the private sector. This tri-partite structure ensures input from all sectors of the community in the planning and administration of the agency and in determining the best local approaches to serving the needs of low-income people and families.

Most Community Action Agencies are private, nonprofit corporations. However, some states have a unique partnership with Reservation Governments. In these cases, Indian Reservation Governments have chosen to be part of the Community Action network and their tribal governments operate local Community Action programming as grantees of the State. Other Community Action Agencies are public entities affiliated with local government, such as in Nevada County.

What Do CAAs Do?

Dramatically rising costs and shortages in housing, energy, quality childcare, and health insurance are leading the assault on Americans' real wages. As a result, many households with low-income need additional support to reach economic self-sufficiency. Community Action Agencies provide households with emergency services to meet their immediate needs, while fostering individual growth and a transition to household stability. Job training, childcare, transportation assistance, and other programs play a critical role in supporting households as they move to greater self-sufficiency.

Working in partnership with people with limited resources, Community Action Agencies provide a range of services to meet the unique needs of American communities. Community Action programs focus on achieving outcomes for families.

Combining the provision of emergency and developmental services with advocacy, Community Action programs also collaborate with private and public entities to assist individuals and families

across the country.

Community Action Funding

Community Action Agencies receive funding from a wide range of private and public sources at the local, state, and federal level. Most local agencies have a large number of funding sources they blend and braid to meet the needs of children and families with low-income. The core funding for all Community Action Agencies is provided by the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The federal block grant was established in 1981.

HOW ARE WE CONNECTED AS A LOCAL NETWORK?

Community Action is run by the Administration for Children and Families, (ACF), a division of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees a broad range of federal programs that address the needs of children and families. To ease the burden of oversight and administration the ACF created 9 regions. California along with Arizona, Hawaii and Nevada and the trust territories of American Samoa, Guan and the Commonwealth of the North Mariana Islands, make up Region IX, our region. In California, the Community Services and Development Department (CSD) administers the CSBG program for state entities.

California Community Action Partnership

California Community Action Partnership (CalCAPA) exists to support Community Action Agencies and CSBG Eligible Entities to strengthen communities and enforce a unified Community Action presence in California. Sixty 96) agencies across California's fifty-eight counties strive to create opportunities to overcome the causes and conditions of poverty and help communities and families of low-income reach self-sustainability. For nearly 60 years Community Action Agencies have administered locally developed programs to meet the unique needs of each community. With over 20,000 combined employees across the state, the nonprofit entities and county agencies have administered over \$1 billion in resources annually with a holistic approach to poverty solutions

HOW ARE WE CONNECTED AS A NATIONAL NETWORK?

The CAA Network Across America

The service areas of CAAs cover 99 percent of the nation's counties. These agencies are connected by a national network that includes a national association and lobbying organization, state associations, regional associations, and a national association of Community Service Block Grant (the core funding for CAAs) administrators. CAAs are a primary source of support for the more than 37 million people who are living in poverty in the United States. The majority of CAA clients are extremely poor with incomes below 75 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

Below is a brief summary of some of the national organizations that assist Community Action Agencies as they deliver services to children and families:



National Community Action Partnership (CAP) ~ Community Action Partnership is a national, 501(c)3 nonprofit membership organization that provides technical assistance, training and other resources to Community Action Agencies, nonprofit and public groups funded by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The resources provided to Community Action Agencies across the country by Community Action Partnership allow Agencies to stay up to date on the latest best practices to fight poverty and empower low-income individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

Website: CommunityActionPartnership.com



National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) ~ NCAF is a leading advocate for Community Action Agencies, working with lawmakers at the federal, state and local levels toward the goal of creating sustainable pathways out of poverty by empowering low-income Americans with the skills they need to achieve permanent self-sufficiency.

Website: NCAF.org



CAPLAW ~ CAPLAW's mission is to provide effective legal education and assistance that enables CAAs to enhance their capacity to operate legally sound organizations and to strengthen CAAs' ability to provide opportunities for low-income individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

Website: CAPLAW.org



National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) NASCSPP's mission is to build capacity in states to respond to poverty issues. NASCSPP is the premier national association charged with advocating and enhancing the leadership role of states in preventing and reducing poverty.

Website: NASCSPP.org

WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS DOES COMMUNITY ACTION OFFER?

Every local Community Action Agency offers unique programs in response to local community needs assessments. Below are a few programs that are provided by many of California's Community Action Agencies.

Strengthening Families

Family Development & Self Sufficiency:

Provides support to families who receive Family Investment Program (FIP) assistance to remove barriers and achieve goals to become independent.



Head Start / Early Head Start:

Enriches children's growth and development and helps prepare them for success in school.



Childcare Resource & Referral:

Helps meet families' need for quality childcare.



Improving Health

Health Services:

Services for families include nutritional food programs for pregnant women and babies; dental check-ups; immunizations; drug and alcohol programs; and medications.



Emergency Programs:

Services include information and/or referrals to obtain immediate help with food, clothing, housing and other urgent needs; as well as providing many of the California Disaster Assistance Programs.



Affordable Energy Assistance

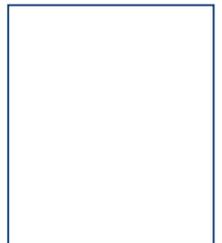
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):

Helps to pay portion of winter heating bills. Applications begin October 1st for elderly and people with a disability and November 1st for all others. Applications are typically accepted until April 30th.



Weatherization Assistance Programs:

Reduces energy costs and makes homes more energy efficient and safe. Households apply automatically when they complete the LIHEAP application.



WHAT IS RESULTS ORIENTED MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY (ROMA)?



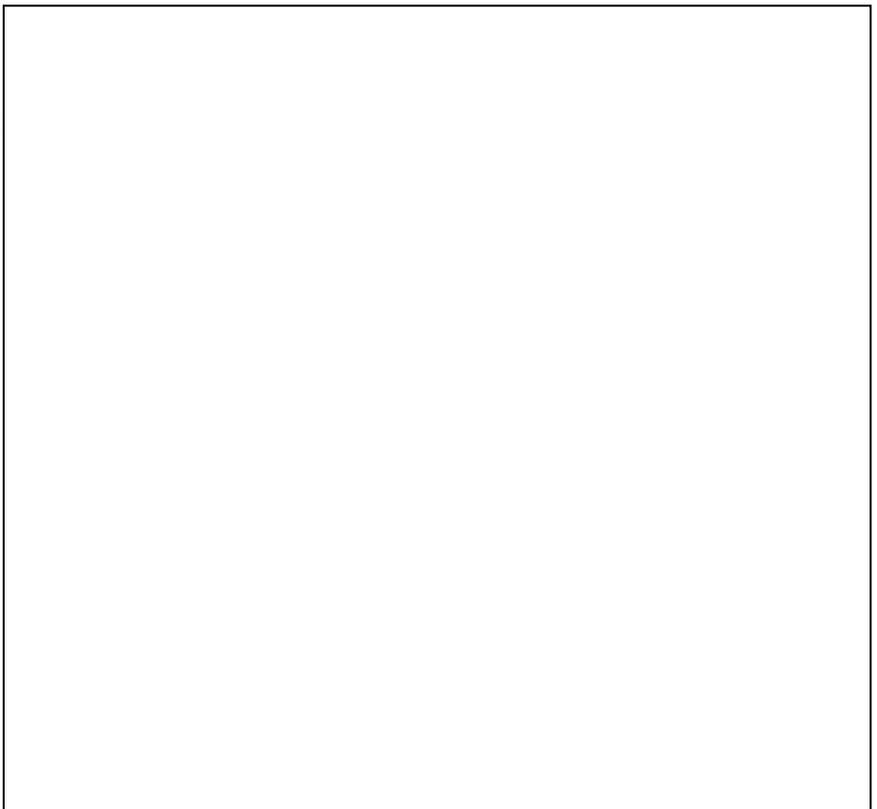
The Monitoring and Assessment Task Force (MATF) a task force of federal, state and local CSBG network officials, created ROMA in 1994. Based upon principles contained in the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, ROMA provides a framework for continuous growth and improvement among local CAAs and a basis for state leadership and assistance. In 1998, ROMA became a requirement for receiving federal CSBG funds, and in 2011 the CSBG network began reporting outcomes in the context of ROMA performance-based management principles. ROMA is the Performance Management Framework for CSBG funding, and it uses the data collected to share the local story with the larger CSBG community about the outcomes the agency is achieving. Agencies may call this data by another name (strategic plans; CSBG data; etc.) regardless of what it's called the data starts within the ROMA cycle (Assessment, Planning, Implementation, Achievement of Results, Evaluation). ROMA is an approach to management that builds accountability into the daily activities of employees and the daily operations of an organization. ROMA is an avenue for organizations to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and plot a course for improvements in agency capacity and performance.

Producing Results

The most successful Community Action Agencies have come to understand that Community Action not only survives, but thrives, when it engages in continuous self-examination. “Star players” ask and answer, again and again: Why are we here? Who are we helping? What are we helping them to become? How will we know and describe success, both theirs and ours?

The results that Community Action Agencies achieve in working with individuals and families are one critical component of ROMA. There are three national Community Action goals with individual/family and community outcomes:

- 🔴 Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security. (Individual/Family)
- 🔴 Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity. (Community)
- 🔴 People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities. (Community)



The management practiced developed and used by the network of CAAs funded through CSBG is used to:

- Implement the six national goals that CAAs address
- Integrate outcomes or results into CAA operations

For each goal that corresponds to the work the Nevada County Adult and Family Services Commission does, we will need to select at least one measure to report on, based on the most recent needs assessment survey.

The six national goals that CAAs address are:

Goal 1 (Family)	Low-income people become more self-sufficient.
Goal 2 (Community)	The conditions in which low-income people live are improved.
Goal 3 (Community)	Low-income people own a stake in the community.
Goal 4 (Agency)	Partnership among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved.
Goal 5 (Agency)	Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.
Goal 6 (Family)	Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

Each CAA collects information about the unique set of goals, outcomes, and indicators it is funded to address in its particular locality and submits cumulative annual report to the Community Services and Development Department (CSD), the state government entity responsible for administering CSBG in the state.

CSD then submits the annual reports to the national Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCS), which in turns submits a report to the Office of Community Services (OCS) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Board members participate in ROMA in several ways”

- ☞ Reviewing and approving mission statements, needs assessment, delivery systems and coordination efforts to assist in the development of the Community Action Plan (CAP Plan).
- ☞ Reviewing and approving strategic and self-sufficiency plans identifying which national goals to address locally.
- ☞ Developing, reviewing, and approving specific planned outcomes for annual work plans and funding application.
- ☞ Conducting internal monitoring visits and reviewing and evaluating quarterly reports from service providers on program accomplishments versus planned outcomes.

GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Exceptional boards add significant value to an agency, making a difference in advancing the mission of the agency. Good governance requires the board to balance its role as an oversight body with its role supporting the organization. The difference between *responsible* and *exceptional* boards lies in thoughtfulness and intentionality, action and engagement, knowledge, and communication. The following twelve principles offer the executive director a description of an empowered board that is a strategic asset to be leveraged. They provide board members with a vision of what is possible and a way to add lasting value to the Community Action Agency they lead.

Constructive Partnership

Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the executive director, recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and executive director are interdependent. They build this partnership through trust, candor, respect, and honest communication.

Mission Driven

Exceptional boards shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision, and ensure the connection between decisions and core values. They treat the creation of an agency mission, vision, and core values not as exercises to be done once, but as statements of crucial importance to be embodied by the board members and agency staff.

Strategic Thinking

Exceptional boards allocate time to engage in strategic thinking to hone the agency's direction. They not only align agendas and goals with strategic priorities, but also use them for assessing the executive director, setting meeting agendas, and shaping board recruitment.

Culture of Inquiry

Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate that leads to sound and shared decision-making. They seek more information, question assumptions, and challenge conclusions so that they may advocate for solutions based on analysis.

Independent-Mindedness

Exceptional boards are independent-minded. They apply rigorous conflict-of-interest procedures, and their board members put the interests of the CAA above all else when making decisions. They do not allow their votes to be unduly influenced by loyalty to the executive director or by seniority, position, or reputation of fellow board members, staff, or donors.

Culture of Transparency

Exceptional boards promote a culture of transparency by ensuring that donors, stakeholders, and interested members of the public have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances, operations, and results. They ensure every board member has equal access to relevant materials when making decisions.

Compliance with Integrity

Exceptional boards promote strong ethical values and disciplined compliance by establishing appropriate mechanisms for active oversight. They use these mechanisms, such as independent audits, to ensure accountability and sufficient controls; to deepen their understanding of the CAA; and to reduce the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Sustaining Resources

Exceptional boards link bold visions and ambitious plans to financial support, expertise, and networks of influence. Linking budgeting to strategic planning, they approve activities that can be realistically financed with existing or attainable resources, while ensuring that the organization has the infrastructure and internal capacity it needs.

Results-Oriented

Exceptional boards are results oriented. They measure the organization's progress towards its mission and evaluate the performance of major programs and services. This measurement happens by reviewing and understanding the data collection system Community Action Agencies all across the nation use, the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA). They gauge efficiency, effectiveness, and impact, while simultaneously assessing the quality-of-service delivery and integrating benchmarks.

Intentional Board Practices

Exceptional boards purposefully structure themselves to fulfill essential governance duties and to support organizational priorities. Making governance intentional, not incidental, exceptional boards invest in structures and practices that can be thoughtfully adapted to changing circumstances.

Continuous Learning

Exceptional boards embrace the qualities of a continuous learning organization, evaluating their own performance and assessing the value they add to the local agency. They embed learning opportunities, especially the issues faced by children and families with low income, into routine governance work and in activities outside of the board meeting. The uniqueness of the tripartite boards promotes peer-to-peer learning amongst board members.

Revitalization

Exceptional boards energize themselves through thoughtful recruitment and inclusiveness. They see the correlation between mission, strategy, and board composition, and they understand the importance of fresh perspectives. They revitalize themselves through diversity of experience and through continuous recruitment.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE?

A CAA that has a board committee structure that runs smoothly actually relieves the workload of the board as a whole, which is one of the main reasons for a committee's existence. Another reason to implement a sound committee structure is that a committee may increase the quality of decisions. A group of fewer, more focused people can be more committed to an issue, thus creating an atmosphere of creativity. Not all CAAs have a committee structure as **each agency develops the committee process that works best for the oversight and governance of the local agency.**

Elements of a Functioning Committee Structure

Every committee, no matter what type, requires the following elements to function effectively:

-  The committee has a purpose, and everyone knows that purpose.
-  Remove committee members who are not right for the committee or do not participate.
-  Only hold meetings with a clear reason.
-  Give advance notice of meetings.
-  Whenever possible, distribute materials in advance.
-  Encourage everyone to participate during the meeting. Discourage members who monopolize the discussion.
-  Start and end meetings on time.
-  Schedule important items first on the agenda.
-  Don't have more than eight people on a committee.
-  Be specific about the committee responsibilities and deadlines.
-  Provide an agenda for each meeting.

Limit unrelated discussions during meetings.

- ☺ Make sure members receive credit for the accomplishments of the committee.

Some traditional committees many Community Action Agencies use include an Executive Committee, Personnel Committee and Nominating Committee. It is considered a good practice for Community Action Agencies to have a Finance/Audit Committee. These committees may be standing committees or ad hoc committees, each agency makes the determination as to what structure works best at the local level. Some agencies have additional committees, some have none; **again, that decision is made based upon what is needed at the local level for each individual agency.**

WHAT ARE THE CSBG ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS?

The Board of Directors plays a unique and important role in the life of a Community Action Agency. While staff members transition, founding directors retire, and programs change, the board offers consistency in purpose, intent, and responsibility. The governing board acts as a body, not as individuals, and its members are bound by the Duties of Care, Loyalty, and Obedience, bearing legal liability for their individual actions as well as those of the corporation.

In Community Action Agencies, the board embodies the core belief and value of maximum feasible participation. Through its tri-partite structure and the involvement of those representing the people our Network serves, elected officials, and private sector individuals, this elegant, yet challenging board structure allows Community Action to be in and of the community, all across the U.S.

The role and responsibilities of nonprofit board members has grown in the past decade and today, board members shoulder significant responsibility for the oversight of finance, executive leadership, human resources, and planning. In addition, the CSBG Act states that boards must fully participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs supported by CSBG. Community Action Agency boards must find ways to fulfill their responsibilities while maintaining their governance role and while not dipping into operational activities.

The CSBG Organizational Standards are a new element of Community Action accountability that boards need to be aware of and consider when carrying out their responsibilities. These 58 Standards address three broad categories: Maximum Feasible Participation, Vision and Direction, and Operations and Accountability and include areas such as leadership, governance, financial management, human resources, strategic planning, customer input, community engagement, community assessment, and data and analysis,

These Standards will likely be incorporated into your Community Action Agency's CSBG contract with your State CSBG Office over the next year. Your staff will work to ensure your CAA meets all 58 Standards and very likely, your CAA already meets the vast majority of them. Part of meeting the Standards may mean adding some work to the plate of the Board of Directors in terms of oversight and approval and may lead to some changes in general process. The Standards were designed, however, to minimize this while ensuring the board is informed over time of critical elements of organizational functioning.

It is important that Board members are aware of the Organizational Standards and that your CAA will be working to meet them. These Standards may cause new items to be brought to the board table for discussion or approval, or for new activities to be conducted. You may find that your CAA is already meeting the 58 Standards, or very close to that number; or you may find that your CAA has some work to do. This document is designed to assist you in explaining how the Standards may impact your regular board work.

There are additional resources and other training videos on the Standards for boards that can help you dig deeper into each area and explain the Standards in more detail. We also encourage boards to read the full Standards document and access these training materials at www.communityactionpartnership.com.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE BOARD PLAY WITH THE CSBG ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS?

The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards were created by our network at the request of the Office of Community Services (OCS), which is the entity that provides the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding to Community Action Agencies.

When it comes to the National Organizational Standards for Community Action Agencies, a Community Action Agency Board should have an understanding of all 58 Standards but should know that of the 58 Standards 29 of those specifically identify the Board's involvement. The Standards are organized as follows:

Maximum Feasible Participation

Category 1: Consumer Input and Involvement

Category 2: Community Engagement

Category 3: Community Assessment

Vision and Direction

Category 4: Organizational Leadership

Category 5: Board Governance

Category 6: Strategic Planning

Operations and Accountability

Category 7: Human Resource Management

Category 8: Financial Operations and Oversight

Category 9: Data and Analysis

The 29 Standards that specifically identify the Board's involvement range from items that need 'reported to', 'received by', 'accepted by', 'conducted by', 'reviewed by', 'approved by', 'signed by' (or any combination of the previously mentioned actions) YOU (the Community Action Agency Board). Several Standards also directly relate to the board, yet do not require one of those actions, all of which are listed below. The Community Action Partnership created a wonderful self-assessment tool/guide that the California Department of Community Services and Development has adapted into a monitoring tool for our agency. The tool provides explanations for each of the 58 Standards and gives suggested documentation that agencies can use to document compliance.

Reported

-  1.3 Customer satisfaction data reported to governing board
-  4.6 An agency-wide risk assessment has been completed within past 2 years and reported to the governing board

Received

-  4.4 Annual update on the success of specific strategies included in the Community Action plan
-  5.4 Copy of bylaws within past 2 years
-  5.8 Training on duties and responsibilities within past 2 years
-  5.9 Programmatic reports at each board meeting
-  6.5 Update on progress meeting goals of strategic plan within past 12 months
-  8.7 Financial reports, including: Agency-wide report on Revenue and Expenditures that compares Budget to Actual, categorized by program; and Balance Sheet/Statement of Financial Position

Accepted

- 3.5 Completed Community Assessment

Received and Accepted

- 8.4 Audit (annually)

Conducted

- 7.4 Governing board conducts a performance appraisal of CEO/Executive Director within each calendar year

Reviewed

- 4.1 Agency Mission Statement within past 5 years
- 8.6 IRS Form 990 annually
- 8.11 Written procurement policy within past 5 years

Approved

- 4.5 Written Succession Plan for CEO/Executive Director
- 6.1 Agency-wide strategic plan within past 5 years
- 7.1 Personnel policies within past 5 years
- 7.7 Whistleblower policy
- 8.9 Agency-wide budget annually
- 8.10 Fiscal Policy changes within past 2 years

Reviewed & Approved

- 7.5 CEO/Executive Director compensation within every calendar year

Signed

- 5.6 Each governing board member has signed a conflict-of-interest policy within past 2 years

Additional Board Governance Standards

- 5.1 Agency's governing board is structured in compliance with the CSBG Act (tripartite)
- 5.2 Board has written procedures that document a democratic selection process for low-income board members
- 5.5 Board meets in accordance with the frequency and quorum requirements and fills board vacancies as set out in its bylaws
- 5.7 Agency has process to provide a structured orientation for board members within 6 months of being seated

Additional Financial Operations and Oversight Standards

- 8.2 All findings from prior year's annual audit assessed by Agency and addressed where board has deemed appropriate
- 8.3 Agency's auditor presents audit to board

Data and Analysis Standards

- 9.3 The agency has presented to the governing board for review or action, at least within the past 12 months, an analysis of the agency's outcomes and any operational or strategic program adjustments and improvements identified as necessary

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY AS A MEMBER OF THIS BOARD?

The agency is established as a Community Action Agency under California law. The Adult and Family Services Commission acts as the board of directors and is established as the authority to operate the agency in accordance with bylaws and board policies.

Agency business will be conducted in accordance with the laws of California, the Commission's bylaws, board policies, and generally accepted nonprofit practices that will accomplish the agency's mission.

Legal Obligations of Board Members

The board is both responsible and liable for the agency. All nonprofit board members and staff, including CAAs, need to be aware of and comply with the three legal fiduciary duties related to their work:

Duty of Care – Board members must meet the duty of care by exercising their responsibilities in good faith and with diligence, attention, care, and skill. This includes both decision-making and oversight responsibilities and is fulfilled by such things as attending board meeting regularly, entering discussions, reading minutes, learning about the organization's programs, maintaining a careful oversight of finances, and questioning unclear or troubling activity.

Duty of Loyalty – Board members meet the duty of loyalty by placing the interests of the organization before their own private interests, including scrutinizing transactions in which the member has a personal financial interest, providing no loans from the nonprofit to board member and avoiding the use of organizational opportunities for personal gain.

Duty of Obedience – Board members must meet the duty of obedience by carrying out the purposes and mission of the organization, complying with federal and state law applicable to nonprofits, doing required filings, and complying with the organizations' governing documents (i.e. bylaws).

Authority of the Board of Directors

Each member of the Board, together with other members of the Board, is legally and morally responsible for all activities of the agency. All members of the board share in joint and collective authority, which exists and can only be exercised when the group is in session.

Board Delegation of Policy and Strategic Direction

The Board's role is to approve agency policies and its strategic direction, while the executive director (or acting authority) is delegated the responsibility to implement the policies and carry out the goals of the organization with the help of agency staff.

Board Member Conflict of Interests

Board members have a duty to subordinate personal interests to the welfare of the agency and those we serve. Conflicting interests can be financial, professional, personal relationships, status, or power. All board members are required to complete a "Conflict of Interests Statement." This policy is reviewed by the board annually and given to each new board member for signature during orientation.

Board members and employees are prohibited from receiving gifts, fees, loans, or favors from suppliers, contractors, consultants, or financial agencies, which obligate or induce the board member or employee to compromise responsibilities to negotiate, inspect or audit, purchase or award contracts, with the best interest of agency in mind.

Ethical Obligations of Board Members

Community Action Boards of Directors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, confidentiality, and honesty in the performance of their duties and are required to comply with all laws, rules, regulations, and contractual agreements. Below is a Code of Ethics that was created by the Community Action Partnership. Any CAA can use this document if they believe it meets the needs of the agency and Board of Directors or choose to create their own.

COMMUNITY ACTION ETHICAL STANDARDS

Remain Focused on Mission

Recognize the primary function of the Community Action movement at all times is to serve the best interests of people with lower incomes which in turn, serves the best interests of the entire community. Seek to empower people and revitalize communities. Engage in activities that move us closer to mission achievement and further our positive outcomes.

Be Outspoken Advocates and Educators

Actively inform the community and decision-makers about issues affecting those with lower incomes. Courageously confront and dismantle myths about social and economic inequality. Participate in promoting policies that support social and economic mobility which reinforce the values of an equitable society.

Inspire Confident and Trust in the Community Action Movement

Lead and serve with professional competence and be up to date on emerging issues in our field. Practice the highest standards of personal integrity, confidentiality, respect, honesty, and fortitude in all that we say and do. Bravely confront any behavior or practice that could erode public trust in the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency or the Adult and Family Services Commission, acting as the Community Action Agency.

Practice Service Above Self

Acknowledge service to the mission, vision and collective values of Community Action is beyond services to oneself. Avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest and ensure undue personal gain is not realized from the performance of professional duties.

Be Leaders, Support Leaders, and Create Leaders

Actively engage people with low incomes in realizing and developing their own leadership skills. Respect and support other leaders by providing facts and advice as a basis for policy decisions and upholding and dutifully implementing policies adopted by the board. Personally practice open mindedness, effective communication, inclusivity, and self-care. Encourage and facilitate the professional and personal development of others.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BOARD MEMBER?

Board Member Rights

Members of the Board are granted certain specific rights. All board members have the right to:

- ☞ Receive notice of board meetings and the agenda.
- ☞ Attend and participate in board meetings.
- ☞ Examine agency's books, records, meeting minutes, financial statements, and contracts; and
- ☞ Place items on the board meeting agenda at the appropriate time.

Ten Basic Responsibilities of An Effective Community Action Board of Directors:

- 1) **Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose.** A statement of mission and purposes should articulate the Community Action Agency's goals, objectives, and identify the primary constituents served. It is the board of directors' responsibility to create the mission statement and review it periodically for accuracy and validity. It is appropriate for the creation of an agency's mission statement to be done with involvement of agency staff as well as the board members. Each individual board member should fully understand and support what is created.
- 2) **Select the Executive Director.** The CAA Board of Directors must reach consensus on the chief executive's job description and undertake a careful search process to find the most qualified individual for the position.
- 3) **Support the Executive Director and Review His/Her Performance.** The board should ensure that the executive director has the moral and professional support he/she needs to further the goals of the Community Action Agency. The board chair, in partnership with the entire board, should decide upon a periodic (annual is considered normal practice) evaluation of the executive director's performance.
- 4) **Ensure Effective Organizational Planning.** As stewards of a Community Action Agency, boards must actively participate with the staff in an overall (strategic) planning process and assist in implementing the plan's goals.
- 5) **Ensure Adequate Resources.** One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to secure adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.
- 6) **Manage Resources Effectively.** The board, in order to remain accountable to its donors, the public, and to safeguard its tax-exempt status, must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring

that proper financial controls are in place.

- 7) **Determine and Oversee the Organization's Programs and Services.** The board's role in this area is to determine which programs are the most consistent with the agency's mission. Discussing the results of a Community Action Agency's needs assessment can assist in developing the long-range (strategic) plan for the agency. There are many ways to develop a strategic plan – the important thing to note is that the board is responsible for its approval. The board of directors then continues to oversee the programs' effectiveness. There are several tools used for collecting data, a few include ROMA, Community Health Improvement Plans, the Head Start Community Needs Assessment, etc.
- 8) **Enhance the Organization's Public Image.** An organization's primary link to the community, including constituents, the public, and the media, is the board of directors. Clearly articulating the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, as well as garnering support from important members of the community and policy makers, are important elements of a comprehensive public relations strategy. Board members are also encouraged to take an active role in advocating for the needs of children and families. This advocacy could include contacting elected officials at the local, state, or national level to serve as a voice for and with those served by the local agency.
- 9) **Personnel.** Only in the direst of circumstances will the board serve as a court of appeal in personnel matters. Solid personnel policies, grievance procedures, and a clearly defined process for hiring and managing employees will reduce the risk of conflict.
- 10) **Assess Its Performance.** By evaluating its performance in fulfilling its responsibilities, the Board of Directors can recognize its achievements and reach consensus on which areas need to be improved.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO EVALUATE OUR BOARD PERFORMANCE?

Once board members are on track, work is still needed to keep things running smoothly. An important part of this process is to learn from past experiences. The Board evaluation process could be done annually to determine how well the board operates.

A board evaluation gives all members a chance to set achievable goals for improvement and discuss board shortcomings. Evaluations not only identify core problems, more importantly, they re-energize a board and point out things it is already doing well. Once the evaluation process is accepted, the results can be built into the work plan for the coming year. Within a short time, the increased effectiveness of the board will become evident.

When evaluating the board's performance, look at areas like policies, roles and responsibilities, and planning. It is important that all board members and the Executive Director take part in the process. This is an effort to improve the entire board team.

The next three pages contain examples of an annual board evaluation and a board member self-appraisal form that can be used or modified as needed.

AS A BOARD OF DIRECTOR, WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE?

Because of the leadership role that has been entrusted to each member of the Board of Directors, each member should understand that he/she is expected to meet high standards of personal conduct if the board is to operate effectively. These standards of best practice should align closely with agency code of ethics:

- ☞ Recognize that the role of the board is that of a policy body, not an administrative body. Agree that role is to ensure the agency is well managed, not to manage the agency.
- ☞ Actively participate in board meetings in the best interests of the agency and the people served. Keep well informed as to issues that may come before the board and be prepared for meetings by reviewing materials in advance of meetings. Strive to become more knowledgeable about the agency and role as a board member.
- ☞ Agree the agency's mission takes priority over any individual's personal agenda. Not use position for personal advantage or that of relatives, friends, associates, or other entities. Understand when conflicts of interest arise, make them known and take appropriate action.
- ☞ Recognize the authority of the full board only when it meets in legal session and that no member may exercise individual authority over the agency or speak for the agency. Bring issues that may affect the agency, or the people served to the attention of the full board, not individual members. Always act collectively, not individually.
- ☞ Respect and support majority decisions of the full board. Once the board takes action, members will not create barriers to implementing board policy.
- ☞ Conduct self in a manner that respects appropriate etiquette and courtesy toward fellow board members and staff. Observe parliamentary procedures (page 26).
- ☞ Be committed to positive and constructive interaction and encourage responsive and attentive listening. Consider all sides of issues before casting a vote and never promise before a meeting how I will vote on any issue.
- ☞ Respect the dignity, values and opinions of fellow board members and focus on issues, not on personalities. Agree that members have a right to disagree but will do so without being disagreeable. Leave personal prejudices out of all board discussions.
- ☞ Not discuss confidential proceedings or information of the board outside of the board meeting.
- ☞ Recognize the importance and value of following the agency's established chain of command. Channel all inquiries, requests, issues and concerns from constituents, the public, media, or staff members to the Executive Director.
- ☞ Not interfere with the duties of the Executive Director or undermine the Director's authority with staff members. Understand board members do not manage or direct staff (other than the Executive Director) and that all communication between board and staff is to be channeled through the Executive Director.
- ☞

Serve as a supporter, defender and advocate of the agency, its programs and the people served and seek out opportunities to do so.

WHAT EXPECTATIONS DOES THE BOARD & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HAVE FOR ONE ANOTHER?

The Board Expects the Executive Director to:

- ☛ Serve as the leader of the agency
- ☛ Provide professional and factual information and advice to the board
- ☛ Recommend appropriate policies for consideration and discussion to the board Implement the policies adopted by the board
- ☛ Keep the Board fully and accurately informed regarding the organization's programs
- ☛ Oversee the development of a budget in connection with the Finance or Budget Committee and keep the Board up to date on budget
- ☛ Identify the needs of the programs and present professional recommendations on all problems and issues considered by the Board
- ☛ Recruit and supervise the best personnel and develop a competent staff. Devote time to developing the work performance of the staff
- ☛ Assist the Board in developing and conducting media/public relations programs

The Executive Director Expects the Board will:

- ☛ Provide support and advice, giving the benefit of its judgment and expertise
- ☛ Consult with the Executive Director on all matters which the Board is considering
- ☛ Delegate responsibility for executive functions and not manage the agency staff
- ☛ Refrain from handling administrative details
- ☛ Share all communication he/she receives from staff members with the Executive Director
- ☛ Provide support to Executive Director in carrying out their professional duties
- ☛ Support the Executive Director in all decisions and actions consistent with policies of the Board, the standards of the organization and all the federal and state regulations
- ☛ Hold the Executive Director accountable for the process used to supervise the staff of the agency
- ☛ Regularly evaluate the performance of the Executive Director

HOW DO I PROVIDE EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT OF THE AGENCY'S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT?

It is frequently said, "Our board does not have to worry about our finances because we have a member who is an accountant (or treasurer, bank official, CPA, etc.)." Even with several members on the board with expertise in finance, the board as a whole is responsible for the financial management of the organization. Each member should know how to read basic financial reports, statements, and projections. Why? It is important to know and understand finances for several reasons:

- ☛ First, without an understanding of the CAA's financial picture, planning becomes a meaningless

exercise.

- ☛ Second, full understanding improves communication with everyone concerned. Board members should understand the organization's finances, in order to fully communicate with funders and the public.
- ☛ Third, the legal responsibility for a CAA's financial success, its ability to pay debts, taxes, and creditors, belongs to the board. The board can delegate tasks concerning financial matters to other people (i.e. Executive Director), but it cannot delegate its legal responsibility. Furthermore, the board has a moral obligation to its members, clients and the public to use funds wisely and to provide the best programs with the available funds.
- ☛ Fourth, the board needs to ensure the success of the organization. No matter how high the values are in the organization nothing can be accomplished if the agency is not financially successful in continuing to provide its services. Thus, the board must monitor and control the organization's finances in order to prevent deterioration of physical equipment or assets, accumulation of unpaid bills, default on tax or loan payments, or ultimately, having the agency shutdown.
- ☛ Finally, the board needs to understand financials to improve its decision-making ability. Understanding the organization's finances is crucial to the board's ability to make good and prudent decisions. A decision, which spends money the organization does not have, could spell disaster. A decision to spend too little could keep the agency from offering valuable services to clients and the public.

DO BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF GET REIMBURSED FOR TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPENSES?

A CAA should establish clear, written policies for paying or reimbursing expenses incurred by anyone traveling on behalf of the agency, including types of expenses that can be paid for or reimbursed and the documentation required. Such policies should require that travel on behalf of the agency be undertaken in a cost-effective manner.

Core Concepts

- ☛ The agency should have a policy that establishes guidelines for expense reimbursement.
- ☛ Keeping accurate records of expenses is essential.
- ☛ Receipts should be required for expense reimbursement.
- ☛ A reimbursement policy should define what expenses are appropriate and what expenses are considered excessive and not appropriate.
- ☛ Most CAAs use a federally approved per diem reimbursement rate for out of state travel. For more information visit: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>.

WHAT ONLINE RESOURCES WOULD BE HELPFUL TO A COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY BOARD?

- 🔗 National Community Action Partnership: <http://www.communityactionpartnership.com>
- 🔗 CAPLAW: <http://caplaw.org>
- 🔗 National Community Action Foundation: <http://ncaf.org>
- 🔗 BoardSource: <http://www.boardsource.org>
- 🔗 Information Memorandums (IM):
 - [IM 82 Tripartite Boards](#)
 - [IM 138 Organizational Standards](#)
 - [IM 152 Annual Report](#)

