

# **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS FOR THE COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK**

## **BACKGROUND AND PROCESS**

The Community Action Network has been conducting place-based anti-poverty work since 1964. In partnership with public and private entities, Community Action provides advocacy and services to meet the twin goals of family self-sufficiency and revitalized communities. It operates in 99 percent of US counties and touches the lives of millions of people every year including children, adults, seniors, veterans, students, people with disabilities, the homeless, and those recovering from natural and other local disasters. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) provides the structure for the designation of each locally governed eligible entity. In most cases, these nonprofits or public entities are identified as Community Action Agencies. Across the Network of entities funded by CSBG, local, state and federal entities share responsibility and accountability in the operations and delivery of CSBG.

In 2001, the Office of Community Services issued IM 49, which outlined how the Network might use Results Oriented Performance Management and Accountability (ROMA) to meet the challenges posed by the Bush Administration's efforts to institute results-based, client-focused accountability. Over the past several years, this direction has been further emphasized by the Obama Administration and members of Congress who have indicated that Federally-funded programs need to more clearly demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in the use of taxpayer dollars.

As part of the accountability process now underway across all Federal agencies, the Community Action Network undertook a year-long effort to reflect on its data collection and measurement systems. All three levels of the Network (Federal, State, and local entities) participated in the process and together have structured a set of performance management tools to demonstrate and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Network as a whole. The Urban Institute (UI) was selected by the Office of Community Services, Health and Human Services (OCS/HHS) to lend its expertise in the field of performance management and guide the development of the performance tools and protocols.

The process for arriving at the recommendations (detailed below) was an extensive joint effort of the Community Action Partnership (the Partnership), the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) and the Urban Institute. It included twenty-five listening sessions (conducted online and in-person) convened by the Partnership, three Task Force meetings comprised of representatives from all three levels of the Network and convened by the Urban Institute, two expert meetings also convened by the Urban Institute, and weekly meetings and telephone calls between OCS and UI.

One of the initial steps in the process was the development of a Theory of Change (TOC) for the Community Action Network. NASCSPP's Center on Excellence, ROMA Next Generation, led

this effort. Following widely accepted conventions and protocols, the TOC addresses six main questions:

1. Who are you seeking to influence or benefit (target population)?
2. What goals do you want to achieve (results)?
3. When will you achieve them (time period)?
4. How will you and others make this happen (activities, strategies, resources, etc.)?
5. Where and under what circumstances will you do your work (context)?
6. Why do you believe your TOC will work (assumptions)?

NASCSP's White Paper on the TOC explains the Network's unique operating structure and articulates the assumptions on which the TOC is built, as well as the long-term goals. Short term goals are then derived from those long-term goals. Appendix A provides a graphic depiction of the TOC; a complete discussion of the development and framework of the model is in the White Paper (June 2013, available from OCS).

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE NETWORK**

Because of the decentralized nature of block grants, each level of the Network plays a unique role and has different sets of responsibilities. The following section succinctly describes the primary roles and responsibilities of each level of the Network.

### **Local Level--CSBG Eligible Entity/Community Action Agency**

The purpose of Community Action Agencies is to address *locally identified* needs of families, agencies, and communities through advocacy, coordinated program services, community planning, and agency capacity building. At the local level, CSBG allows local boards to determine the priorities that are addressed by individual CAAs and their partners. Local CAA boards are uniquely positioned to understand the needs in their communities as they are comprised of 1/3 low-income consumers (or their representatives), 1/3 elected officials (or their appointees), and 1/3 from the private sector of the community.<sup>1</sup>

Partnerships are key to CAA success with CAAs often acting as the *backbone organization* to a coordinated community response to poverty. CAAs report programmatic outcomes in a coordinated manner to the State CSBG Agency and demonstrate accountability through compliance with Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars and monitoring by the State CSBG Agency.

Individual programs and services vary across the US by CAA but consistent key activities include:

- Regular community assessment of needs and resources
- Community and Agency planning
- Program implementation
- Outcome assessment

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<sup>1</sup> Public local entities do not have a tripartite board because the public sector is the agency operating the program.

- Reporting

Critical services provided by the CAA network to low-income families also vary across the network, but include services in eight domains:

- Living Wage Jobs
- Health and Safety
- Affordable Housing
- Transportation
- Early Childhood Education
- Childcare
- Training and Education
- Basic Needs

### **State-level CSBG Agency**

The purpose of the State-level agency is to work with both the Federal government and local eligible entities to implement community action. It receives CSBG funds from the Federal government after submission and acceptance of their State plan and is responsible for complying with the terms of the CSBG Act and associated Federal directives. It also distributes CSBG funds to the State's eligible local entities and oversees and supports their activities.

### **Federal-level Division of State Assistance (DSA)**

The purpose of the Division of State Assistance (DSA) of the Office of Community Services is to provide financial, technical assistance, training, guidance, monitoring, and advocacy services to State, Territorial, and Tribal grantees (as well as discretionary grantees) *so they can* meet the requirements of the CSBG Block Grant and enable CSBG Eligible Entities to meet organizational standards and projected program outcomes. A list of the specific services provided by DSA can be found in Appendix B.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH LEVEL OF THE NETWORK**

Local, State and Federal entities share responsibility in the operations and delivery of CSBG. However, each level works differently and has different performance expectations in support of the mission. To better manage performance, key performance measures and targets are recommended at each level to inform management decisions, track progress against program goals, identify and correct problems, ensure accountability and document accomplishments. The performance measures presented in this document incorporate the collective input from stakeholders at all levels of the CSBG network and were developed in conjunction with the Office of Community Services, The Partnership, NASCSP and the Urban Institute. The following section recommends performance measures for each level of the Network.

## Recommended Local Level Performance Measures

Local level performance measures consist of organizational performance standards and performance indicators.

The organizational performance standards were developed by the Partnership and focus on organizational capacity. They provide a baseline for effective organizational management and leadership capacity and fall into nine categories.

Community Engagement	Strategic Planning	Leadership
Consumer Input	Financial Management	Governance
Community Assessment	Human Resources	Data and Analysis

The organizational standards work to ensure that CSBG funds go to agencies that have the capacity to provide high quality-services to low-income families. To help local entities assess their organizational capacity and target specific performance improvement actions the Partnership has provided organizational assessments tools that can be used by States and local CSBG-eligible entities to set and meet high-quality organizational performance standards. Agencies will be able to assess whether they have “met” or “not met” the established criteria. Details of the organizational standards are available from the Partnership.

The organizational standards incorporate feedback from twenty-five listening sessions attended by CAAs, CEEs, State CSBG offices, State associations, national partners and others. In June and July 2013, the Partnership pilot tested the organizational standards in eleven states. While the Partnership may modify these standards based on feedback from the pilot tests, the basic design and construction of the organizational standards are being recommended by the Partnership for approval by OCS and implementation by local entities in the CSBG Network.

The local level performance indicators are being developed by NASCSP. NASCSP plans to review and strengthen the current performance measures and indicators that are part of the Network’s Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system. The goal is to highlight and promote the use of evidence-informed practices within Community Action.

NASCSP will complete this task with input from the Community Action Network and outside performance management experts. They also will ensure a coordinated strategy for the nationwide implementation of updated performance measures and indicators, giving special attention to how the updated measures and indicators can be used to compare local entity use of CSBG resources effectiveness and efficiency and demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the Network. A White Paper has been circulated by NASCSP for input from the field. It includes discussions of issues and options for revisions to the current National Performance Indicator System. Once revised measures and indicators are developed, NASCSP plans to conduct a pilot test to ensure the feasibility of the revisions. It is anticipated that these measures will be developed before mid-2014.

## **Recommended State and Federal Level Performance Measures**

Draft State and Federal performance measures were developed by the Urban Institute and the Division of State Assistance within OCS and focus on outcome and efficiency measures. The recommended measures can be used by State and Federal agencies to assess the results of their efforts and the efficiency and effectiveness of their processes. The availability of data and agency capacity to collect and analyze the information were key considerations in the development of these measures. Sources of data and information may include program and agency records, State CSBG plans, CSBG program specific reports and required documents, and surveys of grantees. The specific tools and protocols listed below will be developed by the Urban Institute in the next few months and submitted to OCS for review and approval.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Because these recommended performance measures are likely to require changes in State plans or in other data collection procedures and systems, it is expected that the measures will be implemented in phases to minimize disruption. The measures highlighted below in yellow are the recommended priority measures that should be used to begin the performance measurement process. OCS in consultation with the Network will determine appropriate timelines for implementation.

The first year of data collection will be used as a baseline; consequently, no assessments on performance will be made during the first year. Each subsequent year, the goal will be to improve or sustain the level accomplished in the previous year.

Also, performance measures will be gradually implemented using a tiered process. The first implementation tier may request that grantees enter available data for a limited number of performance measures which may include the organizational standards and measures for which data are already being collected. The second implementation tier may request grantees to begin collecting data for new and more complex measures. The third implementation tier may request grantees to implement the broad set of performance measures and begin reporting results.

The effective implementation of this plan will require training and technical assistance, which will be facilitated by OCS for all levels of the Network. This may require additional resources from the Division of State Assistance or “permission” for Local and State agencies to use a portion of their CSBG funds for this purpose.

To the extent resources are available OCS will provide a minimum of six (6) webinars designed to prepare grantees for data collection and equip them to assist CSBG eligible entities to use the new data collection instruments. The technical assistance strategy will be focused to help technical assistance providers (e.g., RPICs, state associations, and state agencies) as well as eligible entities prepare for the reporting requirements.

OCS also will provide written training and reference materials to be made available via the CSBG website. Training materials will be made easily accessible and may include PowerPoint

presentations, frequently asked questions about the new performance measures, as well as best practices for implementing the new system

## State Outcome Measures

These measures answer the questions:

What are the results of our efforts? What difference did we make?

**Note:** after consultation with the states, there will be some efficiency/effectiveness measures that are identified as “priority” measures.

### 1S. Organizational Standards

Description: The organizational standards are the foundation on which effective performance is based. The purpose of the two following measures is to assess how well the local entities are performing and whether state agency resources are being deployed in the most efficient and effective manner to help local entities reach those standards. Failure to improve should signal either a redeployment of resources or a decision about the local entity’s long term ability to perform at the expected level. State agencies will progressively implement organizational standards. By the end of three (3) years, agencies will clearly document changes and the actions taken by local entities to achieve organizational capacity improvements on a semi-annual basis.

- **1Sa.** X% local entities meeting a percentage of the Organizational Standards. The percentage will be determined by the base year and will increase over time. For example, if in the first year 50% of the local entities meet 60% of the standards that will be the base. The next year’s target might be a greater percentage of the local entities meeting the 60% pass rate.
- **1Sb.** The number (or percentage) of local entities that improved or sustained the number of Organizational Standards met compared to the previous year.

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### 2S-4S. State Plan Oversight and Execution

Description: One of the State’s major responsibilities is to monitor local entity performance. When a local entity fails to perform at the level expected, the state prepares a monitoring report. The State then works with the local entity to develop a plan for correcting any problems or deficiencies found. But the State also has a responsibility to see that the planned activities are carried out in a responsible manner. The following measures are efforts to assess the extent to which States are successful in carrying out their monitoring responsibilities and the degree of satisfaction local entities have with their performance.

### 2S. Grant Management/Monitoring/Oversight

- **2Sa.** X% of local entities meeting the agreed upon schedule for rectifying monitoring report findings.
- **2Sb.** X% of local entities completing corrective action plan within agreed upon timeframe.

### 3S. Overall Grantee Satisfaction

- **3Sa.** X% of local entities within the State giving the State office an overall satisfaction score of “x” or above on a satisfactory survey.

### 4S. Plan Achievement

Description: Specific targets are included in key areas of the State plan and targets are aligned with overarching goals and strategy. The targets are quantifiable and consistently utilized by employees to guide their work. State agencies will progressively implement targets. By the end of three (3) years, agencies will clearly document progress toward goals on a quarterly basis.

- **4Sa.** X% of local entities whose actual expenditures post-grant period meet pre-expenditure projections.

## State Effectiveness/Efficiency Measures

These measures answer the question:  
How well did we do it?

### 5S-7S: State Plan Development and Reporting

Description: The State has several responsibilities related to the State plan and the administration of grant funds provided. These measures assess the extent to which states develop an effective plan, distribute funds in a timely manner and collect and report accomplishments as expected.

#### 5S. Distribution of Funds

- **5Sa.** When the State has the authority to distribute CSBG funds (i.e., it has received notification from OCS and, if applicable, authorization from the State's budget and/or legislative offices), the State CSBG agency will contract or obligate the funds to local entities within "x" days and in accordance with the lead State agency's written procedures for fund distribution.

#### 6S. State Plan

- **6Sa.** The State plan includes a State-wide vision with specific goals of community action, and indicates how the local plans link to the vision and goals. (Yes/No)
- **6Sb.** The State plan indicates how the State will coordinate and establish linkages across related social services programs within their State to ensure effective delivery of services to low-income people (assurances) as measured by the number of State programs that are linked.

#### 7S. Data Collection, Evaluation and Reporting

- **7Sa.** State agency submits IS report to NASCSP on time. (Yes/No)
- **7Sb.** State agency submits IS report to NASCSP in prescribed format that allows for aggregation across States according to agreed upon common definitions and measures.
- **7Sc.** State agency includes data collection requirement in contracts with local entities.
- **7Sd.** State's reporting system collects quantitative data for specific key performance measures. State agency reporting process incorporates the review of the quality of the data submitted by the local entity to ensure that reporting is complete and standard measures and definitions have been used consistently. The objective is to move toward a quarterly cycle of data collection and review. Initially data collection and review will be done on a semi-annual basis. (Key measures will be identified for which quarterly data would be collected.) For example:
  - % of local entities that are implementing ROMA or comparable system of assessment, planning and evaluation.
  - % of local entities collecting Organizational Standard data.
  - % of funds expended.
  - Number of clients served against initial projections.
- **7Se.** On a quarterly basis, the State agency provides feedback to local agencies and reports to DSA detailing the progress being made by the local entities, based on goals stated in their contracts and the

performance data collected. For the feedback, State agencies might compare local entity performance to their peers.

## **8S-12S. Grant Management/Monitoring/Oversight and Engagement**

Description: State agencies measure performance and track progress toward goals on a regular, on-going basis; use data to make meaningful comparisons across local entities; and distribute performance data frequently and systematically so that local entities can use information to make adjustments and improvements. Through efforts to coordinate or engage other State agencies, they improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery or reporting of services provided by local entities. Engagement refers to key relationships with relevant entities that have been established, leveraged, and maintained. Stable relationships exist with a variety of entities (e.g., local, State and Federal government agencies; nonprofits and community organizations) that have shown to be mutually beneficial collaborations.

### **8S. Grant Management/Monitoring/Oversight**

- **8Sa.** State agency conducts monitoring activities in accordance with their State plan and as required by OCS.
- **8Sb.** State agency staff held accountable for disseminating corrective action reports and regular monitoring reports to local entities in a timely manner (i.e., within X days or an agreed upon timeframe).
- **8Sc.** State agency monitors local entity's progress toward rectifying monitoring report findings and completing corrective action plan within agreed upon timeframe.

### **9S. Training and Technical Assistance/Guidance**

- **9Sa.** X % of local entities satisfied with State-provided Training
- **9Sb.** X % of local entities satisfied with State-provided Technical Assistance

### **10S. Communication and Relationship Management / Grantee (Local Entity) Satisfaction**

- **10Sa.** X % of local entities satisfied with State agency grant management, monitoring, oversight, communications and relationship management. (Initial survey results will set baseline for initial improvements to State performance.)<sup>2</sup>

### **11S. Discretionary Funds**

- **11Sa.** State agency tracks and submits to OCS a report on how discretionary funds are distributed in the State. Categories might include the % of funds used for capacity building activities (T/TA, IT, staff training, etc.); for corrective actions; for other CSBG purposes; for non-CSBG purposes.
- **11Sb.** X% of discretionary funds used to meet outcome goals outlined in the State plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Local eligible entity satisfaction with State agency to include measures such as:

- ❖ % of local entities surveyed that report receiving funds in a timely fashion according to the terms of their contract;
- ❖ % of local entities surveyed that report getting timely feedback after monitoring visits;
- ❖ % of local entities surveyed that report a perception of mutual respect between the local entity and the State CSBG office;
- ❖ % of local entities surveyed that report engaging in joint problem solving with the State CSBG office.

## **12S. Community Engagement**

- **12Sa.** Demonstrated improved service delivery (e.g. increased enrollment in programs, expansion of services to a different population group, increased funding) realized through partnerships and collaborations with other State (government) agencies and the private sector.

## Federal Outcome Measures

These measures answer the questions:

What are the results of our efforts? What difference did we make?

### 1F. Organizational Standards

Description: The organizational standards are the foundation on which effective performance is based. The purpose of the two following measures is to assess how well the States are performing in assisting local entities to measure those standards and whether State agency resources are being deployed in the most efficient and effective manner to help local entities reach those standards. Failure to improve should signal either a redeployment of resources or a decision about the local entity's long term ability to perform at the expected level. Federal oversight and resource deployment should take account of these measures in terms of its own T/TA and that of its direct grantees who provide T/TA. By the end of three (3) years, States will clearly document changes and the actions taken by local entities to achieve organizational capacity improvements on a semi-annual basis.

- **1Fa.** X% of States with “y%” of Eligible Entities meeting Organizational Standards.
  - **1Fb.** X% of States with Eligible Entities that improved or sustained their level of Organizational Standards compared with the previous year.
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### 2F-4F: Federal Oversight and Execution

Description: One of the Federal agency's major responsibilities is to monitor State performance in executing plans and monitoring performance of local entities. When a local entity fails to perform at the level expected, the State prepares a monitoring report. The State then works with the local entity to develop a plan for correcting any problems or deficiencies found. But the State also has a responsibility to see the planned activities are carried out in a responsible manner. The following measures are efforts to assess the extent to which the Federal agency is able to assist States in successfully carrying out their monitoring responsibilities and the degree of satisfaction States have with Federal performance. The following measures are intended to capture the effectiveness of the Federal agency's performance through plan achievement, local entity improvement and grantee (State) satisfaction.

### 2F. Grant Management/Monitoring/Oversight

- **2Fa.** X% of States in which the number of Eligible Entities were on the Quality Assurance (QA) and the Watch lists.
- **2FB.** List decreased from the previous year.

### 3F. Overall Grantee Satisfaction

- **3Fa.** X% of States giving the Federal office an overall satisfaction score of “y” or above on a satisfaction survey.

### 4F. Plan Achievement

- **4Fa.** X% of States whose actual expenditures post-grant period meet pre-expenditure projections.

## **Federal Effectiveness/Efficiency Measures**

These measures answer the question:  
How well did we do it?

### **5F-9F Federal Planning and Execution**

Description: The Federal agency has several responsibilities related to State plans and the administration of grant funds provided. These measures assess the extent to which OCS completes review of State plans and distributes funds in a timely manner. They also assess the degree to which the Federal agency monitors State performance, reviews data in a timely manner and provides effective T/TA, either directly or through Federally-supported T/TA providers. In addition to measures of timeliness, grantee (State) satisfaction is measured through a survey.

#### **5F. Distribution of Funds**

- **5Fa.** DSA distributes CSBG funds to State CSBG agencies within “x” days of OMB and Department apportionment of funds.

#### **6F. State Plan**

- **6Fa.** State Plans are reviewed and accepted within “x” days of receipt of the complete State Plan.

#### **7F. Data Collection, Evaluation and Reporting**

- **7Fa.** DSA provides timely feedback to the States based on performance data/information received. When data are received semi-annually, DSA should provide responses on the same basis and soon enough for program adjustments. When the reporting system moves to a quarterly report, DSA feedback should be quarterly as well.

#### **8F. Grant Management/Monitoring/Oversight**

- **8Fa.** X% of State Assessment Reports sent within y days of monitoring site visit.
- **8Fb.** When there are deficiencies, X% of corrective actions are taken or a Corrective Action Plan is put into place within y period of time.
- **8Fc.** X% of States have repeat audit findings.

## 9F. Training and Technical Assistance/Guidance

- **9Fa.** Increased levels of grantee satisfaction with DSA-funded Technical Assistance.
  - **9Fb.** Increased levels of grantee satisfaction with DSA-funded Training.
  - **9Fc.** Increased levels of grantee satisfaction with DSA-provided Technical Assistance<sup>3</sup>
  - **9Fd.** Increased levels of grantee satisfaction with DSA-provided Training<sup>4</sup>
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## 10F. Communication and Relationship Management / Grantee (State) Satisfaction

Description: Given that a number of Federal agencies provide services or support to the same or similar populations as those served by the CSBG Network, improved efficiency and effectiveness can come from better coordination of services across Federal agencies. This could involve inter-agency coordination of data collection, better communication, and identification of joint objectives. The measures presented below are designed to assess the extent to which DSA is successful in establishing relationships with other Federal agencies. After establishing a baseline measure the first year, the performance measure would be based on sustaining or improving the initial baseline.

- **10Fa.** X% of States (grantees) satisfied with DSA grant management, monitoring, T/TA, oversight, communications and relationship management.<sup>5</sup>
- **10Fb.** Enhanced partnerships and collaborations as demonstrated by:
  - An increased number of DSA webinars involving other Federal agencies and/or private sector organizations.
  - An increased number of conferences sponsored by other Federal agencies and/or private sector organizations where DSA has an active role (e.g. presentations, workshops).
  - An increased number of joint on-site State assessments undertaken with other OCS programs (LIHEAP, AFI, CDP).

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<sup>3</sup> The following elements regarding TA would be rated:

- ❖ Ease of reaching staff;
- ❖ Ability of staff to direct you to useful resources/information;
- ❖ Timeliness of receiving requested information;
- ❖ Quality of the technical assistance provided;
- ❖ Information provided is current; accurately interpreted;
- ❖ Ability of staff to answer your questions;
- ❖ Clarity and consistency of assistance/guidance provided.

<sup>4</sup> The following elements regarding Training would be rated:

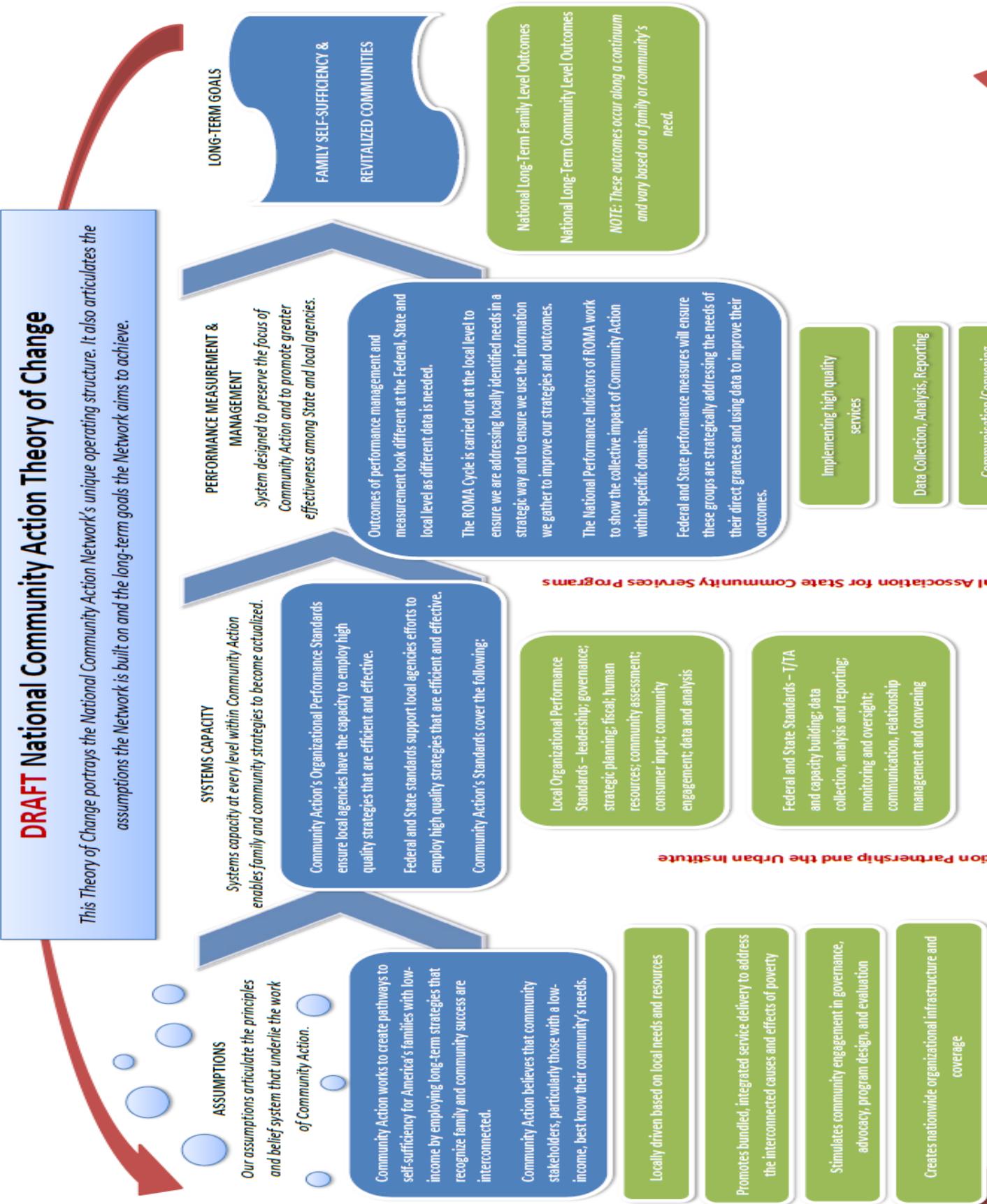
- ❖ Relevancy of training provided;
- ❖ Effectiveness of training provided;
- ❖ Staff providing training is knowledgeable about subject area.

<sup>5</sup> State agency satisfaction with DSA to include measures such as:

- ❖ % of grantees who say that communications (written guidelines, feedback) are clear, relevant and timely.
- ❖ % of State entities surveyed that report the T/TA and coaching provided by OCS was helpful and led to improvements in their organization (also see footnotes 2 and 3)

**APPENDIX A**

**NASCSP Draft National Community Action Theory of Change**



**APPENDIX B**  
**SERVICES PROVIDED BY DSA TO THE STATES**

### Disseminate Grant Award Dollars

- Funding Opportunity Announcements
- Terms and Conditions
- Q & A Responses
- Grant Award Notifications
- Allotments
- Notices of Awards
- Cooperative Agreements
- Information Memoranda

### Review State Plans/Reports

- State Plan Feedback Reports
- Timelines
- Reporting Formats
- Assurances Templates
- Consultations
- Recommendations
- Semi-Annual Feedback Reports
- Quarterly Performance Feedback Reports

### Training and Technical Assistance/Guidance

- Legislative Interpretations
- Risk Assessment Tools
- Promising Practices
- Conferences
- Training Sessions
- Webinars/WebExes
- Consultations
- Q & A Responses
- Evaluations
- Website Updates
- Referrals
- Recommendations
- Dear Colleague Letters

### State Monitoring

- Engagement Letters
- Coordination Letters
- Agendas
- Itineraries
- Entrance/Exit Conferences

- Onsite Assessment Reports
- State Assessment Reports (Findings/Recommendations)
- Financial Analyses
- Financial Technical Assistance
- Feedback Letters
- Feedback Calls
- Q & A Responses

### Policy/Advocacy

- Reports to Congress
- Budget Recommendations
- Speeches
- Conference Presentations
- Website Updates
- Information Memoranda
- Dear Colleague Letters
- Interagency Presentations