



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

## **HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF CSBG**

Community Action originated with President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and the Economic Opportunity Act, which established the Community Action Program (CAP). Through CAP, public agencies and private nonprofits called Community Action Agencies were formed to promote self-sufficiency and respond to immediate social and economic needs within their communities. In 1981, CAP and several other funding streams were consolidated into the Community Services Block Grant (P.L. 97-35).

Although the purpose of the funding remained the same (i.e., to reduce poverty, revitalize communities, and assist low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient), the move to a block grant structure shifted a substantial amount of responsibility from the Federal government to the States. Each State determines the formula used to distribute the block grant to the network of designated eligible entities, taking care that all areas are adequately served. The most recent Federal reauthorization of the CSBG was in 1998 (P.L. 105-285).

### **Structure of the CSBG Network**

The CSBG Network is composed of multiple partners, including Federal administrators; State, Territory, and Tribal grantees; local CSBG-eligible entities and other eligible entities; State Community Action Associations; and national partner associations. Federal responsibility for administration of CSBG falls within the Division of State Assistance (DSA) in the Office of Community Services (OCS) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Most CSBG funding is distributed by ACF as block grants to designated government agencies in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and U.S. Territories. In addition, almost 50 American Indian Tribes receive direct funding from ACF. Within the bounds of Federal statute and regulations, State CSBG agencies are responsible for setting policy, providing guidance to eligible entities, disseminating funds, monitoring, and reporting on activities undertaken by local CSBG-eligible entities and other eligible entities within their jurisdiction. State CSBG agencies vary in where they are located in the structure of State government, in staff size, in whether they also administer other programs for low-income families, and in the control they, as opposed to the governor's office and legislature, hold for CSBG-related policy and implementation decisions.

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are the most common type of eligible entity; other types include local government agencies, Tribal organizations, and farmworker organizations. CSBG block grant funding is distributed to over 1,000 local CSBG-eligible entities and other eligible entities, primarily through the State grantees. Eligible entities differ substantially in size and programmatic specialization because of the unique needs of each community and the availability of resources. Based on local conditions, eligible entities design strategies, deliver services, and seek funding from a wide range of Federal, State, and private (often local) funding streams. States differ in the number and organizational auspice of their CSBG-eligible entities.

Two types of membership associations support the CSBG Network. Most States have a State Community Action Association, which is a membership organization addressing the interests of local CSBG-eligible entities. In addition, four national membership associations support the work of the CSBG Network. Many of

these member associations receive discretionary CSBG funding for specific activities or initiatives that support the CSBG Network.

## ***THE COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK – A PRÉCIS OF THE PLAYERS***

### **The Office of Community Services (HHS/ACF/OCS)**

OCS partners with states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Territories, and Federal and State-recognized Indian tribes and tribal organizations, Community Action Agencies (CAA), migrant and seasonal farmworkers, or other organizations designated by the States, to eliminate causes of poverty, increase self-sufficiency of individuals and families and revitalize communities. In addition to the CSBG, other OCS programs include the Social Services Block Grant, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Assets for Independence Program.

### **CSBG-Eligible Entities (Community Action Agencies)**

Most agencies in the CSBG Network are local CSBG-eligible entities, created through the Economic Opportunity Act, a predecessor of the CSBG. Community representation and accountability are hallmarks of the CSBG network, where agencies are governed by a tri-partite board. This board structure consists of elected public officials, representatives of the low-income community, and appointed leaders from the private sector. Over 1,000 CAAs provide anti-poverty services and advocacy in 99% of American counties. Approximately 80% of these agencies are 501(c)3 non-profits, and 20% are public entities, part of a city or county government. CAAs typically run multiple programs in their mission to address the causes and the effects of poverty.

### **State CSBG Lead Agency**

Housed within state governments, these are the offices with the responsibility to fund, support and monitor local CSBG-eligible entities, passing 90% of the CSBG dollars directly to local CSBG-eligible entities. State CSBG Lead Agencies typically work closely with both the local CSBG-eligible entities and the State Associations, and are responsible for the State CSBG Plan as well as the annual reporting of outcomes.

### **Regional Performance and Innovation Consortia (RPIC) and State Associations**

A key part of the training and technical assistance efforts for the CSBG network, State Associations provide member services, coordination, training and often host conferences. One Association in each region is designated as the lead agency (the RPIC) to coordinate communication and training in their ACF region, including sub-granting funds to the other State Associations.

### **National Associations**

There are currently four national associations, three of whom support and provide training and technical assistance to the State CSBG Lead Agencies, State Associations, RPICS, and CSBG-eligible entities under OCS cooperative agreements.