

CSBG COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The federal requirements mandate that the State require from each eligible contracting entity, as a condition to its receipt of funding under the CSBG Act, a Community Action Plan that includes:

- (A) A Community Needs Assessment, including food needs;
- (B) A description of the service delivery system targeted to low-income individuals and families in the service area;
- (C) A description of how linkages will be developed to fill identified gaps in service through information, referral, case management, and follow-up consultations;
- (D) A description of how funding under this Act will be coordinated with other public and private resources; and
- (E) A description of outcome measures to be used to monitor success in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability, and community revitalization.

The following information is provided to assist you in addressing these requirements.

(A) Community Needs Assessment - this assessment should cover the entire service delivery area and not be limited to only those projects/activities that have been traditionally funded through the CSBG Program. Sources of information will include current and past agencies that have provided CSBG services; other public agencies such as the Department of Family Services, Department of Workforce Services, Public Health Agencies, local Education Agencies, and other private agencies who have a role in the delivery of local human services. In addition, assessment surveys directed to the low-income citizens will provide input concerning the community needs of the low-income citizens as they see it.

The community needs assessment should be undertaken and completed prior to any decisions by the governing board (state contractor) to decide funding priorities. Appropriate community needs assessments should lead to funding decisions that lead to providing appropriate assistance/activities. The assessments should not be viewed simply as another requirement to meet in order to obtain federal funds, but should be viewed as a valuable tool to assist the decision makers to make funding decisions that are most appropriate and which are based on the needs of the low-income people in the community, as evidenced by the assessments. The *WyoROMA* criteria included in this document, should serve as the basis for problem identification, planning, oversight, and evaluation of local projects and should, therefore, be an integral part of the needs assessment.

A description of how the assessment was accomplished, the rationale of how the needs were determined and ranked, and identification of and rationale for those priority needs that were chosen for CSBG funding should be included, at a minimum, in your application.

Additionally, a “composite needs assessment” form that summarizes the various local project assessments will be completed and submitted with the application.

(B) Service Delivery System Description - this description should identify the role of the various agencies (including the local government) that have a direct and/or supportive role in the delivery of CSBG services and activities, as well as the other local public and private agencies that perform work in the human services field. The description should be clear enough for an uninformed reader to obtain a general understanding of the roles and relationships that each agency/program has in the human services delivery system. A listing of all appropriate agencies should be included as part of this description of the service delivery system.

(C) Description of Linkages - this description should clarify how the linkages were developed and how they are utilized with other agencies in the human services field; the description should show how (and to what extent) information, referral, case management, and follow-up consultations are utilized by the CSBG-funded

agencies.

(D) Description of Coordination - this description should explain how coordination of funding is accomplished between agencies (both CSBG-funded and non-CSBG). Since the description of linkages and coordination is so closely linked, the two descriptions could be written together at the same time. A key to remember is that the CSBG funds should be used as a last resort, i.e., if a person's needs can be addressed in a non-CSBG program, that person should not receive services from the CSBG-funded agency, other than through referral to the non-CSBG program.

(E) Description of WyoROMA Elements - For purposes of planning and management of Community projects, consideration must be given to Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Outcomes, Outputs, Performance Targets, and Milestones. These planning elements are consistent with the State Strategic Plan in use by Wyoming State Government and the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system in use by the Office of Community Services.

WyoROMA Elements must show the relationship to the six (6) National Goals allowable under the CSBG Program, as described in the "Planning Process". The six National Goals are:

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

Your *WyoROMA* elements should be directed toward one or more of the 6 National Goals. Some examples of *WyoROMA* Elements are found in the "Planning Process".

PERFORMING A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The assessment of need is normally the first step of any planning process because planning for the future simply cannot be done effectively until the existing conditions of the community are clearly understood.

A community needs assessment can often be the most time-consuming step in the overall planning process but, given its importance, it is well worth the effort. Conversely, conducting a community needs assessment is a relatively inexpensive step in the process.

Input for a community needs assessment should be gathered from many sources, i.e., local officials, service providers, general citizenry, and target group populations. Public meetings, and/or surveys of residents and interviews with knowledgeable citizens can help greatly to ascertain a community's assessment of needs.

Generally, citizens' impressions of needs make up the qualitative assessment of needs; equally as important is the quantitative assessment of needs. The information needed for quantitative assessment is generally available through on-going data collection efforts of private and public human services delivery agencies. However, sometimes additional information and analysis is necessary to pull together the qualitative and quantitative data, i.e., what types of needs exist and how great are they?

PERFORMING A COMMUNITY RESOURCE INVENTORY

Along with the community assessment of needs, it is necessary to determine what community resources are currently available to properly address those identified needs. Normally, resources can be identified as two types: (1) presently provided services; and (2) other available resources that can be utilized to support new programs directed to new or unmet needs.

A resource inventory can provide a good accounting of all services available and can serve the following purposes: (1) it shows how public and private human services are being utilized in the community, and (2) it allows for the identification of possible areas of flexibility for using the resources more effectively.

The resource inventory and community needs assessment can occur at the same time. One of the easier ways to do this is to develop a questionnaire that is designed to obtain responses for both. Furthermore, the two steps of community needs assessment and resource inventory can be interchangeable in their sequence if necessary. Some examples of questions asked in collecting information for a resource inventory could be:

- X What services does the agency provide, and who benefits from them?
- X How much money does the agency spend on these services, and where do the funds come from?
- X How many clients does the agency serve?
- X What is the maximum number of clients the agency could serve?
- X What possibility is there for this agency to coordinate its work with other agencies?
- X What are the stumbling blocks to this agency's working with other agencies/programs (i.e., regulations, politics, etc.)?

When the responses from all service agencies are analyzed, better information can be made available about how community resources are being used. Decision-makers (i.e., local elected officials) should then be able to tell:

- X specifically, whose needs are being met by which agencies;
- X whether agencies are serving as many people as they could;
- X whether several agencies in a categorical program (i.e., employment) may be duplicating efforts; and
- X whether there are areas in need of greater coordination so that services may be more effectively provided with a minimum of duplication.

COMPARING RESOURCES TO IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Basically, comparing the results of a community needs assessment with the results of a resource inventory will help to indicate how service delivery agencies are currently meeting the needs of the community. It cannot be over-emphasized that this is a step that must precede any direction-setting for the future.

In some cases, the comparison may show that resources currently match the needs. In these cases, decision-makers should assure that the adequate resources continue to be available, assuming a significant need remains. Conversely, in areas where services do not adequately meet the needs, consideration should be given to policy changes and new uses of resources to increase the provisions of services.

The comparison of needs and resources should also help local officials answer another question: are the programs meeting their originally designed intent? In other words, while it is basic to know whether or not

there are enough services available to match the needs, it is crucial to be certain that the services provided really assist the clients in the way that they were intended to.

Realistically, it is highly unlikely that all identified needs can be met at the same time, due to limited funds, time constraints and other factors. However, the first three (3) steps of the planning process (i.e., the needs assessment, the resource inventory, and the comparison of the two) should allow a rational charting of the directions a community must take to move toward meeting the most urgent needs of its citizens.

IDENTIFYING UNMET NEEDS & SETTING PRIORITIES AMONG THEM

Because the list of unmet needs may be long, and the community may not be able to adequately respond to all of them initially, it is crucial to set priorities among the identified needs. Basically, this setting of priorities should be the focus of ultimate policy-making efforts.

It is important that the setting of priorities involve all persons or groups concerned, i.e., local officials, service agencies, clients, and others. Equally important is that everyone involved should reach a mutual decision about what kinds of needs should be first addressed. The priorities should also represent the views of people in the community who are experiencing problems, as well as those who have the responsibility for providing services. Community residents' views could be collected by surveys and/or expressed in public meetings called for that expressed purpose.

It is necessary to decide what criteria will be used to set priorities among needs. A suggested way to do this is to ask people involved exactly what kind of services they would like under ideal circumstances, i.e., if there were no financial or time constraints. Priority could then be given to addressing needs which have the following characteristics:

- (1) needs which affect the largest number of people;
- (2) needs which are life-threatening (i.e., malnutrition);
- (3) needs which adversely affect the local economy (i.e., a high unemployment rate); and
- (4) needs which are interrelated to other needs (i.e. emergency food/shelter/medical assistance).

After consideration of what kinds of needs people want to see addressed under ideal conditions, thought will have to be given to what kinds of needs can be realistically met. The choices should be viewed as to the potential short-term and long-range impacts.

The following "Community Needs Assessment Questionnaire" should be completed as part of the application process. The information from that questionnaire will be a valuable aid to the applicant in preparing the *WyoROMA* information required as a part of CSBG Applications and funding requests.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- (1) Please rank 1-7 in order of priority the following community human service needs: (1 being the highest priority; 7 being the lowest priority)

___ **Employment and Training**: includes job training; job counseling; job development; job referral & follow-up; work experience; spot labor; employment generating projects; application & resume assistance; job aptitude testing; and occupation & labor force information.

___ **Education**: includes information, referral & follow-up; counseling & guidance; public information & information regarding issues associated with lack of education & poverty; head start support; day care & parenting information; alternative educational measures; literacy projects; adult basic education; bi-lingual education; and early childhood development.

___ **Housing (non-emergency)**: includes information, referral & follow-up; homeowner counseling; loan assistance; landlord/tenant issues; rental & mortgage assistance; utility assistance; home repair; home rehabilitation & weatherization assistance; and home energy conservation.

___ **Making Better Use of Available Resources**: includes personal, household & financial counseling; energy conservation activities; community resource directories; alternative energy services; consumer education; food cooperatives; family planning services; language translation; removal of barriers to self-sufficiency achievement; dispute mediation; and promotion of low-income people for local associations/groups.

___ **Emergency Assistance**: includes crisis intervention activities; financial assistance; food assistance; clothing assistance; medical assistance; shelter assistance; other immediate urgent needs & issues; and “last resort” services.

___ **Nutrition/Food (non-emergency)**: includes home-delivered meals; congregate meals; food processing; food banks; garden projects; surplus food distribution; and nutritional education.

___ **Linkages With Other Programs**: includes information, referral & follow-up; local needs assessments; community outreach services; resource directories; multi-planning & coordination with other agencies; transportation assistance; improvement of coordination & cooperation with all public and private agencies; and other services/activities that complement or supplement (*not supplant*) those activities of other agencies to fill identified gaps in service levels and to prevent duplication of services.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Your Agency: _____

Agency Address: _____

Contact Person & Telephone Number: _____

(2) How well are these needs being met in your geographical area?

	Good	Fair	Poor	Not at All
Employment:	()	()	()	()
Education:	()	()	()	()
Housing:	()	()	()	()
Making Better Use of Available Resources:	()	()	()	()
Emergency Assistance:	()	()	()	()
Nutrition/Food:	()	()	()	()
Linkages with Other Programs:	()	()	()	()

(3) How well does your community meet the needs of:

Helping low-income people become more self-sufficient?
() () () ()

Improving the conditions in which low-income people live?
() () () ()

Providing low-income people with a stake in their community?
() () () ()

Achieving partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people?
() () () ()

Increasing the capacity of agencies to achieve results?
() () () ()

Strengthening family and other supportive systems to help low-income people achieve their potential?
() () () ()

