Ready, Set, Go—Tools and Tips on Leading a Learning Community

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The Promise of Community Action

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.
Our Objectives for Today’s Presentation

• Why Do We Need Learning Communities?
• What Is A Learning Community
• What Does a Successful Learning Community Look Like?
• Our Learning Community Process
• Lessons Learned
• Plans for the Future
WHY DO WE NEED LEARNING COMMUNITIES?
46.7 million people in America are living in poverty, 15.5 million of whom are children.
We Have A Job to Do

Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.

- Nelson Mandela
Anti-Poverty Work

The “Heart” of Who We Are
Changes to the CSBG Performance Management Framework

• Are we ready?
• How do we get ready?
• How do we help each other get ready?
The National Community Action Network Theory of Change

Community Action Goals

Goal 1: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.

Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.

Goal 3: People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

Services and Strategies

- Employment
- Education & Cognitive Development
- Income, Infrastructure & Asset Building
- Health/Social Behavioral Development
- Housing
- Civic Engagement & Community Involvement

Core Principles

- Recognize the complexity of the issues of poverty
- Build local solutions specific to local needs
- Support family stability as a foundation for economic security
- Advocate for systemic change
- Pursue positive individual, family, and community level change
- Maximize involvement of people with low incomes
- Engage local community partners and citizens in solutions
- Leverage state, federal, and community resources

Performance Management

How well does the network operate?
- Local Organizational Standards
- State and Federal Accountability Measures
- Results Oriented Management and Accountability System

What difference does the network make?
- Individual and Family National Performance Indicators
- Community National Performance Indicators

A national network of over 1,000 high performing Community Action Agencies, State Associations, State offices, and Federal partners supported by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to mobilize communities to fight poverty.

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Successful Capacity Building

• Training
• Technical Assistance
• Ongoing Coaching
How might we work more effectively?
How do we tell the story of our impact?
How might we replicate “what works”?
WHAT IS A LEARNING COMMUNITY?
Learning Communities Defined

“Learning communities provide a space and a structure for people to align around a shared goal. Effective communities are both aspirational and practical. They connect people, organizations, and systems that are eager to learn and work across boundaries, all the while holding members accountable to a common agenda, metrics, and outcomes. These communities enable participants to share results and learn from each other, thereby improving their ability to achieve rapid yet significant progress.”

- Harvard Center on the Developing Child
Learning Community Philosophy

• **Peer-to-Peer Approach to Learning**
  – Peer-Centered—Peer-Engaged
  – Empowering participants to function as “Experts”

• **Outcome-Focused**
  – Participating agencies will improve outcomes and show how programs and activities are linked to those outcomes.
  – Goal/Work plan Development will be central to the Group’s Activities
  – Plan for regular engagement and check-in with the Goal Plans throughout the Project
Why Learning Community Models Make Sense

1) People Learn Differently
Why Learning Community Models Make Sense

Individual Learns

Individual Transforms

Organization Changes
Why Learning Community Models Make Sense

2) Information flows through the organization and all learn and change together
Learning Communities
Support Social Change

Develop leaders for the social change effort
Learning Communities
Build the Network

Improve collaboration and build synergy of purpose
WHAT DOES A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?
Characteristics of an Effective Learning Community Group

1) It gets everyone on the same page
Characteristics of an Effective Learning Community Group

2) It helps participants to determine goals relevant to each organization’s plan.
Characteristics of an Effective Learning Community Group

3) It involves a diverse set of stakeholders
   - Community Action Agencies
   - State CSBG Offices
   - National Partners
   - OCS
   - State Associations
   - Foundations/Funders
Characteristics of an Effective Learning Community Group

4) It facilitates communication and access to information through the use of technological aids.
Characteristics of an Effective Learning Community Group

5) It encourages a shared learning perspective
OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY PROCESS
The Learning Community is comprised of topical peer-to-peer Learning Community Groups (LCGs) which consist of a cadre of agencies that are currently working on a program or service delivery strategy related to a poverty related focus areas.
Phases of the Learning Community

Formation
Knowledge Building
Implementation
Practice Transformation
Learning Communities 2015-2017

OPEN
• Health Intersections
• Poverty Trends
• Decreasing Family Homelessness

CLOSED
• Bundling Services to Improve Outcomes
• Trauma Informed Approaches to Alleviating Poverty
• Financial Empowerment
• Results at the Community Level
• Rural IMPACT
From the very beginning of the process, participants are asked to think about their long-term project goals and objectives.

Application process

1. Provide a brief agency overview, i.e. agency description, target population, number of individuals/households served annually, services provided.

2. A brief statement (one paragraph) about why the organization/agency is interested in becoming a member of the Learning Community.

3. Please describe your agency’s program or efforts which currently align with the selected poverty-related topic.

4. What needs and questions does your organization have that are relevant to the poverty-related topic you have selected?

5. Please list the three topics that most interest you related to your selected topic area.

6. What perspectives, resources or experiences does your organization have that are relevant to a discussion on the poverty-related topic you have selected?

7. What do you think are the one or two aspects of your program or approach related to your selected anti-poverty topic area where your agency does its best or most successful work?

8. What do you think are the one or two areas where your agency most wants to improve or that you want to take on in order to advance your project or approach related to your selected topic area?

9. What does your organization hope to learn, achieve or change as a result of this project?

10. A description of how the agency plans to collect and manage data, including a description of past efforts to track data and manage initiatives based on results.

11. Expectation of short and long-term outcomes and results from LCG participation, with a focus on what changes the agency would like to see at the end of year one and at the end of the project.
LCRC Handbook

- Process overview
- Meeting Dates
- Intro to LCRC team and SMEs

Member Handbook
2016-2017
Learning Community
Why We Needed A Handbook

• Creating the handbook encouraged upfront participation
  – Allowed a greater degree of flexibility on both ends
    • Ex. Goal plan development goal plan clinics
  – Allowed us to focus on the evolving needs of the participants
    • greater understanding of needs for the SMEs
Handbook Resources

Goal Planning Tools

- Goal Plan How-to
- Goal Plan Form
- ROMA Logic Model
Goal Planning Tool

• The Goal Plan tool serves as a “road map” for implementing the program enhancement goals for agencies related to the specific Learning Community Group (LCG) topic areas.

• The Goal Plan template provides simple steps for agencies to clarify their goals, identify available resources, and determine strategies and time frames for engagement and documentation and measurement tools for result reporting.

• The Goal Plan will serve as an important tool throughout any program implementation process as it will help agencies track activities that are the steps towards achieving their programmatic goals.
Handbook Resources

Technology Guides

- Basecamp
- Webex
Learning Community Framework

Formation—3 Month Duration

• Group Orientation
• Develop understanding of the Learning Community model
• Build Rapport with Peers and SMEs
• Program Assessment & Goal Plan Development
• Technical Assistance Clinics (goal planning, community assessment data analysis, NPI basics)
• Baseline Evaluation
Learning Community Framework

Knowledge-Building — 5 Month Duration

• Engage in a topical “deep dive”
  • Content alignment, literature reviews, peer and subject matter expert led best-practice sessions, live and virtual discussions, resource archiving, intensive technical assistance LCG sessions
• Share information/knowledge related to research and practice
• Engage in peer-to-peer learning
• Produce final draft of Goal Plan
• Midpoint Evaluation
Learning Community Framework

Implementation—7 Month Duration

• Focuses on agency-based project implementation
  • emerging topics presentations, customized technical assistance from SMEs and agency peers, skills/strategy development, technical assistance clinics
• Provide and receive peer T/TA
• Track outcomes
• Identify T/TA and resources to support the CSBG network related to the focus area
Learning Community Framework

Practice Transformation- 5 Month Duration

- Share results of the agency projects
- Promote promising practices to the larger CSBG Network
- Strategize ways to build the CSBG Network’s capacity related to the poverty related focus areas
- Final Outcome Evaluation
LCG Member Expectations

• Agency vs. Individual Involvement is the Expectation
• Participation at each meeting is required
• Accountability Expected
• Information dissemination within CAA
• Network dissemination
Learning Community Core Components

- Learning Community Groups (LCGs)
  - Open and Closed
- Subject Matter Experts
- Goal Plans from Participating Agencies
- National Webinar Series (open to all)
- Conference Workshops
- CSBG T/TA Resource Center
- Web-based Information Sharing Space (Base Camp)
Why Open vs. Closed?

• Closed groups provided an opportunity for more intensive learning and the development of customized T/A

• While open groups were intended to provide the entire network with insight on innovative practices and service delivery strategies
LCG Groups Defined

- **Increasing Financial Empowerment for Families** - Designing strategies to help families with low and moderate incomes stabilize their financial lives and rise above poverty.

- **Bundling Services to Improve Outcomes** - Affirming the existence of comprehensive, bundled services in the Network and identifying which bundle of services are most impactful for serving low-income families.
LCG Groups Defined

• **Trauma Informed Approaches for Alleviating Poverty** - Understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma in antipoverty efforts.

• **Results at the Community** - The Results at the Community Level LCG will guide a discussion participants to establish a clear definition of what community level needs, outcomes, and strategies are. Participants will explore how to observe and document change at the community level and how to share the process with key stakeholders.
LCG Groups Defined

• **Health Intersections (Open)** - Collaborating with the health sector to strengthen anti-poverty outcomes for families.

• **Rural IMPACT** - A demonstration project working with 10 U.S. communities to make systems change in rural communities to implement a focused and intentional two generation approach to poverty.
LCG Groups Defined

• **Decreasing Family Homelessness (Open)** - Increasing affordable housing in safe neighborhoods, and expanding shelter supports and other services leading to home ownership.

• **Poverty Trends (Open)** - A survey course on the causes and conditions of poverty today and its impact on Community Action.
Role of Subject Matter Experts

- Paige Teegarden — Bundling Services
- Duane Yoder — Bundling Services
- Mary Virtue — Bundling Services
- Dana Jackson — Results at the Community Level
- Jim Masters — Poverty Trends
- Allen Stansbury — Poverty Trends
- Catherine Marshall — Resources
- Barbara Mooney — Results at the Community Level
- Sharon McDonald — Homelessness
- Elena Cohen — Trauma Informed Approaches
Learning Community Members—2134 And Counting!

All 11 Regions - 45 States plus DC and Puerto Rico - are Represented in the Learning Community
Membership Statistics

• Currently, **2135 Community Action professionals** as participating in the Learning Community

• **Over 90 Community Action agencies** have committed to take part in one of our 4 closed LCGs
Presentation Statistics

- **Over 2,000 people** (including many of you!) attended one **of our 30 National Webinar Series events**

- The LCRC has produced **10 publications** that were specifically crafted with the needs of our LCGs in mind **(and more are on the way soon!)**
Blog Statistics

• Since its launch in August, our blog has been visited by *over 5,000 people*
  – In this time, we have also added over 120 resources to the resource bank
  – 119 people have enrolled to receive live updates on from the blog
Members Just Like You!
Practice Transformation
The National Webinar Series

Focuses on themes related to the specific anti-poverty approaches and is a way to showcase innovative strategies to the broader CSBG network.

Group Focus Areas: Bundling Services

Bundled Services or as some refer to it - Integrated Services - is about more than referring a customer to multiple programs so they can obtain additional services. Bundled services suggests a change in the organization’s mindset and composition that leads to an integrative approach to service delivery on EVERY level of the agency.

Presenters

Tawny Stottlemyre
Belva Dorsey
Angel Walker
Rand Clark
Charley Martin-Berry
Courtney Thomas
Sheree Glencoe
2017 National Webinar Series Schedule

May 24
Learning with the Learning Community: Financial Empowerment

June 21
Decreasing Family Homelessness Session 6

May 25
Learning with the Learning Community: Trauma-Informed Approaches

June 22
Health Intersections Session 3: Health and Substance Abuse

May 31
Health Intersections Session 2: Health and Housing

September 21
Poverty Trends Session 7

Stay Tuned for More Details on the Following Additional Webinar Events:

The Conclusion of our Health Intersections mini-series

The continuation of Our Poverty Trends: Building A Local Theory of Change mini-series

Your Money Your Goals Train-the-Trainer Event

And MORE!
Other LCRC Convention Offerings

• The Health Wealth Connection: How Healthcare Organizations Can Help You Tackle Poverty
• Decreasing Family Homelessness: Lessons Learned
• The Futures Project: Clarity, Impact and Performance Presentation
• Connecting National Economic Trends to the Local Economy: A new Toolkit for Local Economic Analysis
• What's Behind the Bundle?
• Transforming Communities: Advocating for Family Success—A Rural 2 Gen Perspective
• Trauma Informed Case Management
• Getting Results at the Community Level
• Your Money, Your Goals – New Tools for the Front Line
• Lessons learned from the Bundled Services Learning Community Group
• Beyond the “Racial Stalemate”
Tools and Resources
CSBG T/TA Resource Center

- [www.csbgtta.org](http://www.csbgtta.org)
- Many more toolkits, webinars, and print resources
- Consultant Bank
- Training Calendar
- Discussion Forum
- Shared Calendar
Follow Our Blog at:
lcrcweb.com
Technological Tools

Work together the easy way

Basecamp’s unique blend of tools is everything any team needs to stay on the same page about whatever they’re working on. There’s nothing else like it!

Sign up – your first Basecamp is FREE on us!

Your Name
LESSONS LEARNED

Success

what people think it looks like

Success

what it really looks like
Words of Wisdom

Confidentiality and Trust are Key
Words of Wisdom

Archive resource information for new learners
Words of Wisdom

Encourage experimentation and welcome failure as a learning opportunity
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE
Learning Community Resource Center 3.0
2017-2019

• The project purpose is to serve as a Learning Hub for the CSBG Network to support the identification, adaptation, and implementation of innovative and evidence-informed family/individual-level services and community-level strategies to achieve results based on CSBG National Performance Indicators (NPIs).
LCRC Outcomes 3.0

• Enhanced knowledge to use NPIs and associated performance data to improve services and meet goals outlined in the CSBG Annual Report.

• Increased understanding of how to identify goals based on community needs assessments and how to implement appropriate results-oriented services and strategies in order to improve outcomes in selected NPI domains;

• Increased knowledge of the need for planning and coordination in response to challenges that hinder efforts to effectively address local service needs and conditions of low-income individuals, families, and communities;

• Increased understanding of how to set and measure progress on targets for individual, family, and community outcomes resulting from locally determined results-oriented services and strategies to address locally identified community needs;
Proposed LCGs for 3.0

• Bundled Services (outcomes across multiple domains);
• Education Innovations (community level strategies);
• Financial Empowerment (individual and family services);
• Health Intersections (individual and family services);
• Homelessness: A Statewide Approach (community level strategies);
• Leveraging Community Economic Development Initiatives (community level strategies);
• Rural Child Poverty (outcomes across multiple domains);
• Multigenerational Approaches (outcomes across multiple domains);
• Workforce Innovations for the Evolving Economy (individual and family services).
Local and State Level Learning Communities

- Can be done within a local CAA, across teams
- Can be done at the Association level
- Can be done regionally
- Short term, long term, topic, job areas, etc.
- Common readings, project assignments, sharing of findings/learned
- Make it work for you!
2017 Annual Convention

Community Action:
Transforming Communities, Changing Lives

August 28th – September 1st

Join us in Philadelphia for valuable training, legislative information, timely program updates, and unparalleled networking!

Thank you, Wipfli!

Silver Sponsor and Trainer

Check out the Wipfli Pre-Con Session!

Philadelphia Downtown Marriott - Philadelphia, PA

www.communityactionpartnership.com
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