



A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE CANDIDATE DATE FORM (CDF)

This Guide is meant to help you understand the intent and purpose of the CDF. To that end, it provides a broad overview of what is contained in the CDF, so you can understand the “larger picture.” It does not contain all the necessary explanatory details for each section in the CDF itself. When you think you grasp what the CDF is about, then it is time to download the CDF from the Partnership’s website and start.

A. WHAT IS THE CDF?

The Candidate Data Form (CDF) is the first of three assessments used to determine who is to be recognized by the Certification Commission as a Community Action Professional. It is a far reaching and comprehensive method for you as a CCAP candidate to gain recognition by your professional peers of your experiences in:

1. Serving in positions at the level of executive management in your agency or association and in related employment settings. *(The definition of what constitutes an “executive level management” position is found in the CCAP Candidacy Guide on the Partnership website)*
2. Preparing to become a Community Action leader through your formal education and updating your career through management targeted training and professional networking.
3. Performing your work in Community Action in ways that advance the Vision and Values of Community Action in the broader community. And doing this beyond simply fulfilling the duties of your job inside your agency.
4. Advocating for the communities that Community Action Programs serve and telling the story of the challenges and successes of Community Action through publications and media.
5. Serving on boards and committees that keep you involved in the life of your community

B. THAT SOUNDS CUMBERSOME. HOW CAN A SINGLE FORM SERVE TO CATALOGUE THE EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY ACTION LEADERS WHEN THERE IS SUCH A WIDE VARIETY IN BACKGROUNDS AND WORK EXPERIENCE?

It is certainly a challenge to cover all the bases. Much of Community Action’s power is in its ability to respond quickly, strategically and creatively to the ever-evolving needs of the poor as they seek full inclusion in the life of America’s communities. And that means the best leaders in Community Action are both nimble and strategic minded at the same time. But there are many ways Community Action leaders get to their goals of community service and advocacy that are commonly shared as well. The CDF form is the CCAP Commission’s best effort to set up categories that match these experiences. There is a special value in having candidates take some time to think about how their experiences are like those of other leaders in Community Action. It is worth the effort to find that commonality to let your peers see how you do the work, and advance the mission, of Community. It is best to work with a CCAP mentor (or participate in a CCAP Candidates’ Study Group) to review the sections of the CDF. The process of completing the CDF should not be viewed as a hurdle, but as an opportunity reflectively, purposefully and intentionally to take stock of experiences that formed your professional identity and that keep you focused on being a leader in Community Action.

C. WHAT IS THE POINT SYSTEM USED TO EVALUATE THE CDF?

Each entry under each category on your CDF has a point value. That point value is clearly identified for each entry you make on the form. Each category also has a maximum point limit. Once that point limit is reached you cannot earn more points in that category. That is clearly notated on the form.

There is no total upper limit to the number of points you can accumulate beyond the summation of the maximum points for each category. But you must accumulate a minimum of 300 total points on the CDF to meet the target for certification. *(See the CCAP Candidacy Guide for more details about how the CAP program point system works beyond the CDF)*

D. HOW FAR BACK CAN I GO TO ENTER MY EXPERIENCE IN A CATEGORY? DO I HAVE TO BACK UP MY CLAIMED EXPERIENCES?

There is no time limit to how far back you look. So long as it is part of your post high school experience in education and/or so long as it is, or has been, a part of your work or professional development in Community Action, it counts. Your signature on the document affirms that you are truthfully reporting. So there is no requirement to support your claim except where noted otherwise

E. IS THERE SOME GUIDANCE ABOUT PARTICULAR CATEGORIES IN THE CDF?

Yes. Let's look at some each of the four sections of the form and consider what they cover and explore the rationale for their inclusion in the CDF. But first, it is important to understand that these sections are not set up to be restrictive. They are, instead, meant to be inclusive. The evaluators are less inclined to discount and more inclined to include. However, it is not acceptable to enter the same experience in two places on the form and get "double credit." You need to consider what part of the CDF form best matches your experience and then record it in that one place.

CDF SECTION I:

I.1. Number of years as a management or executive staff in a CAA: Each position that you claim is expected to be an "executive level management" position. You need to be able to check at least 3 of the 5 criteria listed below each entry on the form to receive points for each position you enter on the form at I.1. *Also notice that there is no awarding of partial points. If, for example, you were employed in a qualifying position for the past 2 years and 9 months, the position is awarded CDF points only for two years, not two years plus a percentage for the partial third year. That process of gaining whole point values without partial points pertains to the whole CDF*

I.2 Number of years as a full-time management or executive staff member in an organization other than a CAA: Any position either in the public or private sector that you held before your employment at your agency or association that included managerial responsibilities counts. However, it must be a full-time position. And you cannot claim a position that you held at the same time that you were employed in a qualifying position at a CAA or CAA Association.

I.3 Certain qualifying internships count.

CDF SECTION II:

Subsections 1,2 and 3

Subsection 1's points for degrees are self-explanatory.

Subsection 2 was set up by the Commission to give the option for persons who never finished their degree, enabling them to get points for the courses they completed and for persons who took courses to amplify learning before, after, or outside, what they have achieved in their degree program to earn points for that effort as well.

Subsection 3 was set up for persons who took courses that were equal in length and comprehensiveness to college courses but were not applied to college credits. They could be courses that prepare someone to use special skills in the workplace such as a certificate course in human resource management or a training program on conflict resolution or mediation. These are just two examples of the kinds of educational experiences that qualifies under this subsection. The form gives more details about minimum length of time your training program lasted

Subsection 4A – 4D.

Over the years, the Commission occasionally received requests from various organizations for special accreditation of training programs that either are comprehensive in their coverage of the Community Action Body of Knowledge or are specialized in targeting leadership skills for special service to Community Action. When the Commission accredits a specific program, it is placed in this section of the CDF. The section provides points ONLY for those programs that the Commission has pre-determined meets certain criteria. They are listed on the form. If they do not appear on the list, then you cannot include your training experiences here. Or if you have not completed all that is required for one of these accredited programs, you cannot list it here. But if you cannot here, you can still enter the training sessions you attended in subsection 5 or 7 (see below).

Subsections 5, 6 and 7.

These are three closely related subsections that present opportunities for you to inventory specific management focused training experiences you have had. They differ from one another in two ways: 1) about who is presenting the training, 2) about the length of the training. Anything that was part of what you included at 4A-4D (above) cannot be listed here.

Subsections 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

While most learning about management, leadership skills and the work of Community Action could be said to occur in formal training sessions, the Commission recognizes that the professional networking that happens at conferences provides its own kind of learning. Therefore, the Commission added a separate set of subsections just for attending conferences, without listing the training events. And the Commission listed the most frequent and appropriate places where this kind of Community Action specific networking occurs. They include:

- (8) State CA Association conferences,
- (9) Regional CA Association conferences,
- (10) The Partnership's annual convention,
- (11) NCAF's Legislative Conference held annually in March in Washington, DC.
- (12) And it provides the option for other conferences as well (e.g. CAPLAW, NASCSP, Head Start, Weatherization, etc.)

CDF SECTION III:

Community Action leaders engage in a variety of activities reaching beyond their own agency responsibilities that advance the vision and values of Community Action. Community Action leaders sometimes function as presenters and panelists at conferences, sometimes publish articles or send out newsletters, sometimes serve as members of advisory groups or planning committees for community or even state-wide projects, and they sometimes serve on Boards of other non-profits that share the mission of service or advocacy for the low-income community. The CDF provides the candidates a place to inventory such activities in nine subsections.

Subsections 1,2,3 and 4

Community Action leaders are frequently called upon to share their knowledge and expertise about the work of Community Action to broaden others' grasp of a shared mission or to equip them with tools to carry out the mission. These subsections are the places to catalogue your efforts as a trainer or communicator whether that is:

- (1) As a presenter in a training session to share your knowledge with staff or community at a CAA other than your own.
- (2) As a presenter in a training session to share that knowledge with other organizations in the community that are not themselves CAAs
- (3) As a panelist (*rather than solo presenter*) for one of those presentations at another CAA
- (4) Or as a panelist for one of those presentations at a non CAA organization

Subsection 5

Community Action leaders are often called upon to contribute their expertise to planning groups and evaluation panels that help communities meet new challenges or improve the quality of service. Or they work in inter-agency groups to generate new approaches to support or advocate on behalf of people systematically excluded from active participation in the economic life of the community. That might mean being part of a state-wide group to advise policy makers, or being part of a committee planning a multi-agency effort at community renewal, or representing your CAA on a commission that evaluates the work of other agencies, etc. Here you can catalogue any efforts where you have partnered with others outside your CAA to make a difference in your community, state, or even the whole nation.

Subsection 6

Any written or video recorded communication about the work of Community Action meant to inform your community about the challenges of the low-income community or your agency's services to the community counts for points. That is true, as well for any communication composed to advocate for important initiatives through the press, or newsletters, etc.

Subsections 7, 8 and 9

Your years of membership on Boards of various Community Action related organizations that advance the vision and values of Community Action count for points. Whether that was service on your own agency's board before you were employed there (7) or on the Board of your state, regional or national CAA Association (8), or on other Community Action related Boards, such as United Way, or a local social service agency. (9)

CDF SECTION IV

Subsection 1 is your place to inventory any instructional materials you have written or designed to assist the staff, Board or volunteers at your or any other Community Action organization in doing their work in Community Action

Subsection 2 is much like CDF SECTION III subsections 1-4 because it is the place to inventory your trainings. The training activities you have undertaken that are to be listed here differ from those in CDF SECTION III in that they are given to organizations that are not related to Community Action work. It might be a presentation at a meeting with the area's service clubs, or a group of ministers, or a local health fair, etc.

Subsection 3 is like CDF SECTION III, subsections 7, 8 and 9 where you record your membership on a CAA-related organization's Board. But this subsection broadens the scope of Board service outside Community Action. Perhaps you are on the board of a local church or are an individual member, rather than appointed agency representative, on a panel that helps review curricula for your local school board, etc.