Developing an Agency Theory of Change

August 29, 2018
Courtney Kohler, Senior Associate, T/TA National Community Action Partnership

#CAPCON18
Welcome!

Pair Up & Share: Name, Agency, Position

Discuss:

• What do you believe are the causes of poverty?

• What do you believe are the impacts of poverty on your community?

• What do you think people need to get out of poverty? How do you know?
What We Believe about Poverty

Poverty is a complex problem.

It requires long-term and multi-faceted strategies that integrate agency and community resources.

Stabilization is a first step on the continuum toward self-sufficiency.

Community stakeholders, particularly those with a low-income, best know their community’s needs.

Family and community successes are interconnected.
## Assumptions About Poverty

### What is poverty?

| What are the causes and conditions in the community? | What is the impact of poverty on the community? |
Assumptions

• Belief or idea based in logic but formed without evidence, unconfirmed

Example:

I assume there will be food at a party.
Communicated in Mission Statements

Assumptions about the causes and conditions of poverty

Agency’s role in its reduction
Assumptions behind Mission Statements

To improve the quality of life for people in need by empowering them to become more self-sufficient and by providing essential services in collaboration and cooperation with partners.

- People in need must be empowered to become more self-sufficient
- We can empower them
- Becoming empowered to be more self-sufficient will improve their quality of life
- People who are not already self-sufficient are in need of essential services
- We can’t provide these services alone
- We have partner who will collaborate with us to provide these services
What assumptions are communicated in your mission statement?
• Learned from the people around us
• Shared - it does not belong to an individual, but to a group
• Cumulative and dynamic
• Activities and the symbols that give significance
Organizational Culture: Foundation of Success

- Research shows that organizations are pushed forward or held back by management and employees.
- Actions are determined largely by organizational culture.
- Organizational culture is hidden, but can be analyzed.
- Once determined, organizational culture can be changed.
Analysis of your organizational culture will allow you to:

• Connect beliefs and priorities to work behavior and effectiveness
• Identify what you expect to accomplish
• Eliminate barriers that prevent you from changing
• Tap into the unused potential of the people of the organization; impact employee morale, commitment, productivity, physical health and emotional well-being
• Enable strategic plans to succeed at all levels
In order to know what YOU are going to do, you really must understand all that you know about your community and the people with low incomes that live there.

What’s happening? What’s missing? What is beyond your control?
Find the top three to five needs identified in your agency’s community assessment:

• Of the needs above, which are integral to your agency mission?
• Are you already addressing these? (In the column to the right, indicate yes or no)

• Identify if these are family, agency or community level needs.
  – Enter “f,” “a,” or “c” in the column to the right.
Big Thinking

Which needs require community level strategies and/or partnerships?

What can you do to contribute to impacting those needs that are not the immediate mission of your agency?
“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree.
'Which road do I take?' she asked.
'Where do you want to go?' was his response.
'I don't know', Alice answered.
'Then', said the cat, 'it doesn't matter.'"
Identifying outcomes:

- **Identify your agency Overall Outcomes**
- These are the outcomes that are based on the community needs and resources, the agency’s priorities and the agency planning process.
Identifying outcomes:

- Next identify the **Program Outcomes**
- These may be identified by program funding source or by the specific focus of the individual program.
  - Where do you see existing ones we need to include?
- How do these Program Outcomes contribute to the Overall Outcomes of the agency?
Are the changes that the agency wants to achieve for individuals? Families? The conditions in the community? The agency’s own capacity or resources?
How to Determine Outcomes:

- What are the outcomes you currently achieve? What is most successful?
- Are these relevant to what is identified in the new Community Needs Assessment?
- Can you improve outcomes by:
  - Increasing the number of individuals/families currently served?
  - Providing different types of services?
  - Addressing needs that have a bigger effect on the community?
  - Leveraging other community resources?
  - Improving service delivery strategies?
  - Building agency capacity?
  - Making system and/or policy changes?
- Are there new outcomes you want to achieve?
Identify the Connections

• Identify how family level outcomes will improve the community conditions
• Identify how community outcomes will support family outcomes
• Identify how agency involvement in community planning and community projects is "value added"
There are two opposing opinions on the approach to take to achieve progress toward movement out of poverty:

– Local CAAs must provide emergency services to help stabilize families who are in crisis before they can be able to consider what to do to move out of poverty.

– Local CAAs should find other community partners to provide emergency services so they can focus on providing a full range of services that support people as they move out of poverty.
What are we accountable for?

• Moving people out of poverty?
  – How many have moved?

• Improving conditions in low income communities?
  – How many communities have been revitalized?

What will create CHANGE?
One Service - One Outcome
Multiple Services-One Outcome

Service → Outcome

Service → Outcome

Service → Outcome

Service → Outcome
One Service-Multiple Outcomes
Multiple Services-Multiple Outcomes
Consider the individuals and families

• Are they coming to the agency because of an emergency? Because they are facing a crisis of some kind?

• Do you provide immediate tangible assistance?

• What kind of “result” do you see?
  – Does the assistance help the family move out of the crisis state?
  – Is there a change in status?
  – Is the situation temporarily addressed, but the crisis persists?
Identifying what the agency will do

- What we’ve always done
- What we have funding to do
- What is most important to our board
- What is most important to our Executive Director
What do you do to achieve the outcomes?

• Services for individuals and families
  – Direct services
  – Referrals to partners or other agencies

• Strategies for community and agency level work
  – Include other agencies, community members, agency customers, businesses, faith-based groups, government and policy making bodies
Community Strategies

Agency Capacity Strategies

Direct Services to Individuals and Families
Selecting Services and Strategies

• What are you already doing? (look at your plans and reports)
• Is it working? (customer satisfaction data, agency report data)
  • Yes? What adjustments may be needed? Can your success be improved?
  • No? Do you know why it is not working? Do you abandon or strengthen?
• What will you do going forward?
Theory of Change: The Bridge

Mission Accomplished!

Agency’s Actions
(Services & Strategies)

Long Term CHANGE

Intermediate outcomes

Short term outcomes
What is a Theory of Change?

• A Theory of Change (TOC) is a conceptual road map for how an organization expects to achieve its intended impact.

• A Theory of Change demonstrates the “big picture” about how all components work together.

• It includes the core principles, strategies and services, and how you will convert their organizational and financial resources into the desired results.
What does a TOC Communicate?

What is the need that will be addressed?

Who are you seeking to influence or benefit?

What you are seeking to achieve (what will change?)

How you will work towards your outcomes?

What are the assumptions and underlying conditions?
(Hint)

This can be a great entry point to your agency-wide strategic planning process!
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.

This publication was created by NASCSP in the performance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services, Grant Number 90ET0451.
National Community Action Network Goals

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

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

3. People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.
How Can a Local Community Action Agency use the National Theory of Change?

• Communicate the impact of the national network to local leaders and elected officials, funders, and the general public
• Talking internally to staff and Board members
• Help each CAA consider its own TOC that can communicate the impact of the local CAA to stakeholders
Local Community Action TOC

The Ingredients

- Agency Mission & Vision
- High Priority Needs
- Broad Agency Commitments
- Assumptions
  - What do you believe about poverty in your local community?
- Outcomes
  - What change are you seeking based on the needs?
- Services & Strategies to deploy
- Partnerships
  - Who do you have in your local community that help you meet your goals?
The Result
Exercise: Build Your CAA’s Story

Assumptions
What matters to you and to your CAA?

What Services and Strategies does your CAA do in your local community?

What is different in your community because of this?

Data Analysis & Reflection: Describe how you will put the data to use.

10 minutes
DRAFTING, USING, & SHARING AN AGENCY THEORY OF CHANGE
Local Community Action Theory of Change

ASSUMPTIONS
What Matters to your CAA?

Strategies
What will the agency do?

Outcomes
What will change?

Self-Sufficiency
Revitalized Communities

Describe the Change.
How will you know?
What will you measure?
What NPIs will you use to report?

Connect your outcomes to the long-term goals to be achieved.

DATA ANALYSIS & REFLECTION: Describe how you will put the data to use.
Join us on the Pathway to Empowerment.

**Mission**
Guided by our belief that no one should live in poverty, Wayne Metro empowers people and communities to be strong, healthy, and thriving.

**Vision**
Through our work to diminish poverty, we envision communities where all people have hope and opportunities to realize their full potential.

**Strategic Result**
Deliver a collective impact to create social and economic mobility for people and communities through advocacy, resources, and collaborations.

**Strategic Focus**
- **Family Stability**
- **Quality Housing**
- **Economic Opportunities**

**Strategies**
- **Quality Services**
  - Ensure Client Access to Services & Resources
  - Drive Integrated Service Delivery
  - Promote Client Engagement & Satisfaction
- **Capacity Building**
  - Ensure Financial Health & Viability
  - Equip Staff with Skills & Tools
  - Leverage Partnerships & Volunteers
  - Improve Technology Usage
- **Operational Excellence**
  - Ensure Data-driven Decision Making
  - Create Efficiencies in Internal Processes
  - Improve Communication Systems

**Supportive Housing**
- Basic Needs
- Healthy Communities
- Early Childhood Services
- Out-Of-School Programs
- Adult Education
- Community Development
- Financial Capabilities
- Career Readiness
How could your agency use the TOC?

• Help to inform or guide...

• Ensure alignment with...

• Staff training and understanding of...

• Share with...
Why Share Your CAA’s TOC?

- Educate
- Tell the Community Action Story
- Advocacy/Partnerships
Who are Your Stakeholders?

- Board of Directors, Volunteers
- Community Members
- Community Action Customers
- Local Funders, Donors
- Elected Officials/Policy Makers
- News Media
What do you share?

• A TOC can create a well outlined, clear, concise message in a visual way to communicate to various groups of stakeholders.

• Understand Target Audiences
  – What do they value?
  – Time, must be concise message
  – Clearly outlined argument
    • “So what?”
    • “Why does this matter to me?”

• Proof/Data/Metrics

• Stories
What do you share?

*Depends on audience & purpose or goal*

- Staff and Volunteers
- Board Members
- Potential Funders
- Elected officials
- News media
How do you share it?

• Visually | Verbally | Website | Social Media
  – Infographics at Piktochart + Canva
When do you use it?

- Building Partnerships
- Advocacy
- Marketing
- Grant Writing
- Strategic Plan
Where?

- Website
- Social Media
- Community/Advocacy Meetings
www.communityactionpartnership.com

Partnership Webinars
Every Wednesday, the Partnership holds Webinars on different topics. Register today!

Click here

Fighting Poverty
The US Census Bureau estimates that 16% of the population lives in poverty. We work to end poverty

Community Action Network
We have over a thousand agencies in local communities, as well as state associations and

Tools and Resources
Find all of our Training and Technical Assistance webinars, toolkits, useful information and other
Contact Information

Courtney Kohler
Senior Associate, T/TA
Community Action Partnership – National Office

ckohler@communityactionpartnership.com