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**AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK**

# 2022 State CSBG Training and Technical Assistance Plans: Summary Report

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Center of Excellence

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# Introduction

This report provides a summary of the data submitted by State Associations and State CSBG Lead Agencies in their FY 2022 State T/TA Plans. Development of the State T/TA Plans supports coordination between State Associations and State CSBG Lead Agencies and the efficient use of T/TA resources to support local Community Action Agencies. Starting in 2017, all states develop an annual State T/TA Plan that includes:

- T/TA needs of local Community Action Agencies in each State;
- T/TA resources available from key partners that include the State CSBG Lead Agency, State Association, and the Regional Performance and Innovation Consortium (RPIC);
- T/TA outcomes and associated strategies to implement in the upcoming year; and
- T/TA implementation plan/timeline.

This report includes a snapshot of the data that has been collected and analyzed from the FY 2022 State T/TA plans and is meant to support the continued T/TA efforts of the CSBG Network at the state, regional, and national levels. The following outlines the methodology behind the State T/TA Plan process, top T/TA needs, planned T/TA, analysis, and additional comments and context.



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# Methodology

The State T/TA Plan template is updated annually through collaboration among the National Community Action Partnership Center of Excellence (COE), Regional Performance and Innovation Consortia (RPICs), CSBG National Partners (including the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP), Association of Nationally Certified Results Oriented Management and Accountability Trainers (ANCRT), and CAPLAW), and the federal Office of Community Services (OCS). The template is disseminated within the 11 RPIC regions to each State Association and State CSBG Office. State Associations and State CSBG Offices work collaboratively to assess the T/TA needs and draft associated plans in each state. The State T/TA Plans are submitted to the Center of Excellence (COE), who compiles and analyzes the information in collaboration with the CSBG National Partners. Conducting the analysis with the CSBG National Partners ensures a comprehensive perspective for analysis of T/TA needs. The data is reviewed with the COE Steering Committee and OCS prior to finalizing T/TA priorities and disseminating this final report to the Network.

Traditionally, the State T/TA Plan captures the comprehensive T/TA needs of the network. The 2022 State T/TA Plan template was revised to focus on identifying T/TA needs to build network capacity to engage in innovative, high-impact practices, consistent with the COE's Highlighted Initiatives project. In many cases, state networks still conducted a traditional comprehensive T/TA survey to identify broader network training needs and trends and to coordinate resources and plans to address those needs. While this plan was focused on needs related to engaging in innovative, high-impact strategies, the needs identified are also recognized core Community Action Agency practices, including effective leadership, agency capacity, effective use of data, and approaching the work through an equity lens.

The State T/TA Plans were submitted by state networks to the COE in February 2022 and describe State T/TA activities planned through the end of FY 2022 (September 2022). The COE has compiled the data and analyzed the information at the national level to provide a comprehensive picture of the CSBG Network's T/TA needs, investments, and planned activities.

# Summary of Priority Network T/TA Needs

## Data Collection, Analysis, and Use

The Community Action network has shown a steadily increasing interest and growing capacity in effectively collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform agency decision making. Although this has been a top-identified need over the last several years, the needs identified have advanced to focus on the use of data, including how to develop and use agency dashboards and visualizations, using data for continuous quality improvement, and assessing equity and inequities through data.



## Agency Capacity



Engaging in innovative, high-impact work requires capacity. While the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought new financial resources to Community Action Agencies, the pandemic has taken a toll on the Community Action workforce who worked throughout the pandemic to respond to its impacts on communities. Recruiting, retaining, and supporting the wellbeing of the workforce is a top priority. Further, the network has seen significant turnover in leadership and other key positions including Executive Directors, Finance, Human Resources, and on Community Action boards. Training and support is needed to onboard and build the capacity of these new Community Action leaders.

The pandemic has also changed how work is done both within Community Action Agencies and in the broader community, requiring new skillsets, strategies, technologies, financial resources, and partners.

# Summary of Priority Network T/TA Needs

## Equity

Equity work is Community Action work. Equity focus is a foundational principle of the COE, and required in all Highlighted Initiatives. Building capacity of the network to apply an equity lens to all work (both internal agency work and work with and for communities) is a top priority identified through the State T/TA Plans. An agency that can effectively apply the equity-lens to all its work is prepared to engage in the systems-level change work needed to address root causes of poverty.



## Organizational Standards

The CSBG Organizational Standards were designed to ensure that Community Action Agencies have the capacity necessary to serve America's communities. The practices and principles articulated within the Organizational Standards remain necessary for agencies engaging in high-impact, innovative work - that is, an agency cannot engage in transformative practice if it does not have the practices outlined in the Organizational Standards in place. Thus, training and technical assistance on the wide range of topics covered in the Organizational Standards continues to be a top priority for the network.

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# High Priority Needs Related to Engaging in Innovative, High-Impact Work



## Notes and Considerations

- Data Collection & Analysis has been a high-priority need identified in T/TA plans over the last several years.
- Although Needs Assessments and Strategic Planning both were not identified as top needs, these topics are frequently requested for T/TA and referenced regularly as needs in other areas of this survey. Both are essential building blocks to a successful Community Action Agency capable of engaging in transformative work.
- Agency capacity, including needs around staffing and human resources appears frequently throughout the survey.

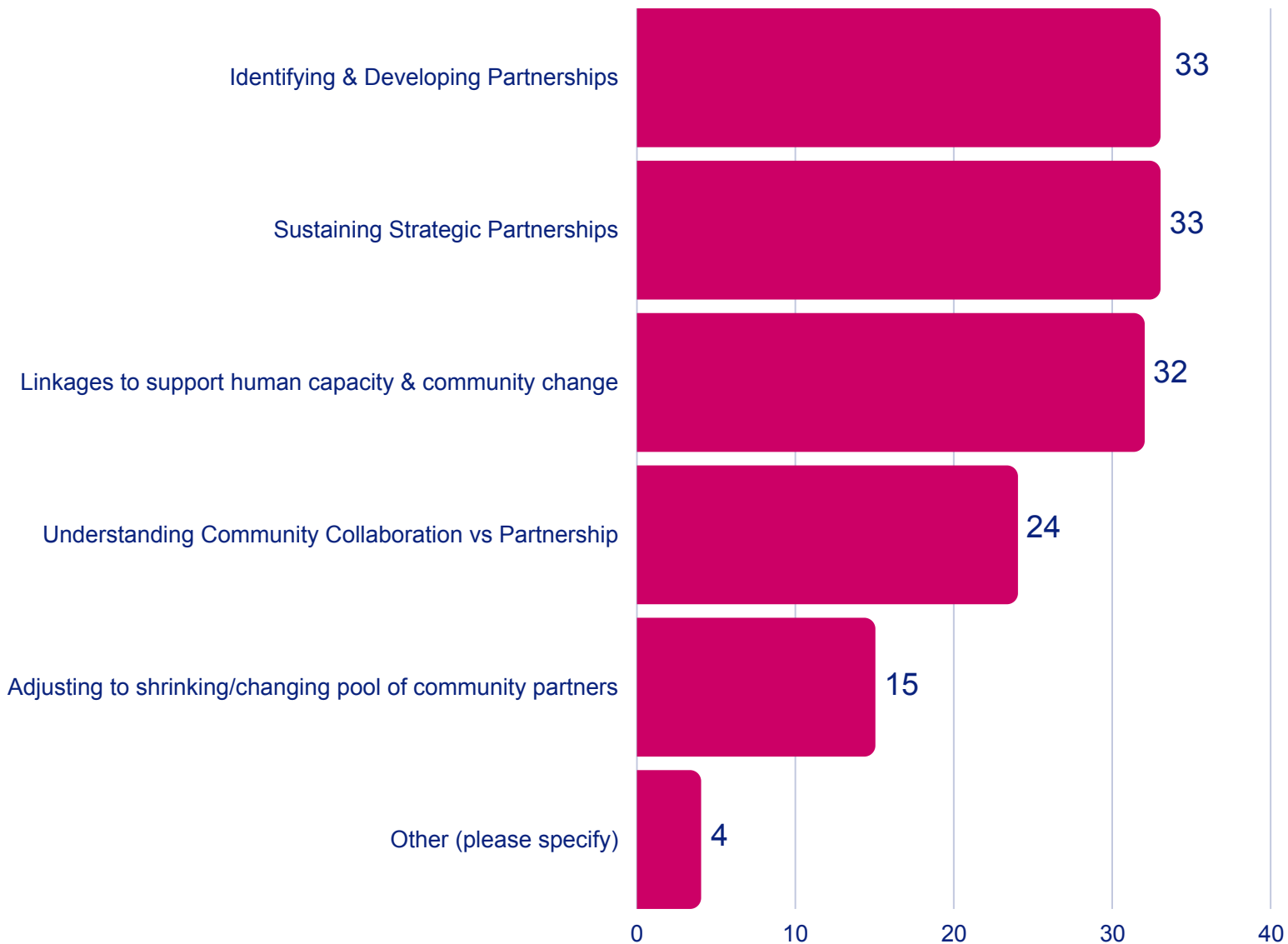
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Data Collection and Analysis Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Developing and tracking outcomes and collecting data needs related to engaging in high-impact practices are more than national performance indicators or intake forms; the work of these practices tends to require the ability to track community-level or systems-level change, and collect data from multiple partners and sources.
- A common theme noted across additional responses is the need for additional supports for agencies to develop dashboards or data visualizations that can be used to inform agency decision making and continuous quality improvement efforts.

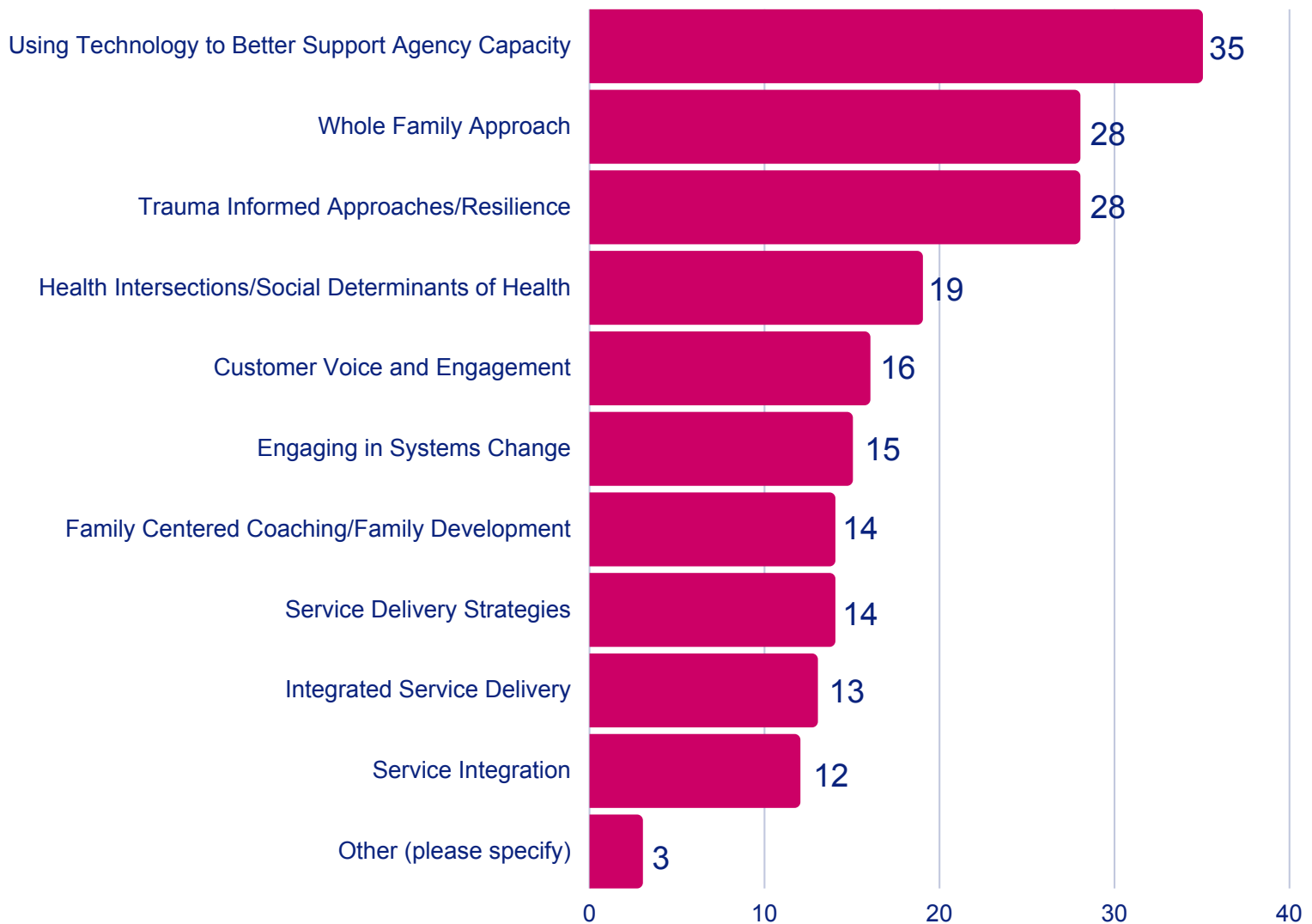
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Community Partnership Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Community Action has a proven track record of developing partnerships in order to serve its mission and the community. However, developing and sustaining partnerships specific to engaging in large-scale community change and human capacity work requires additional planning and capacity, two commonly cited needs throughout this survey.
  - The challenges of creating and sustaining these types of partnerships are exacerbated in rural communities where there are fewer resources.
- Partnership development and engagement are foundational Community Action principles articulated in the Organizational Standards.

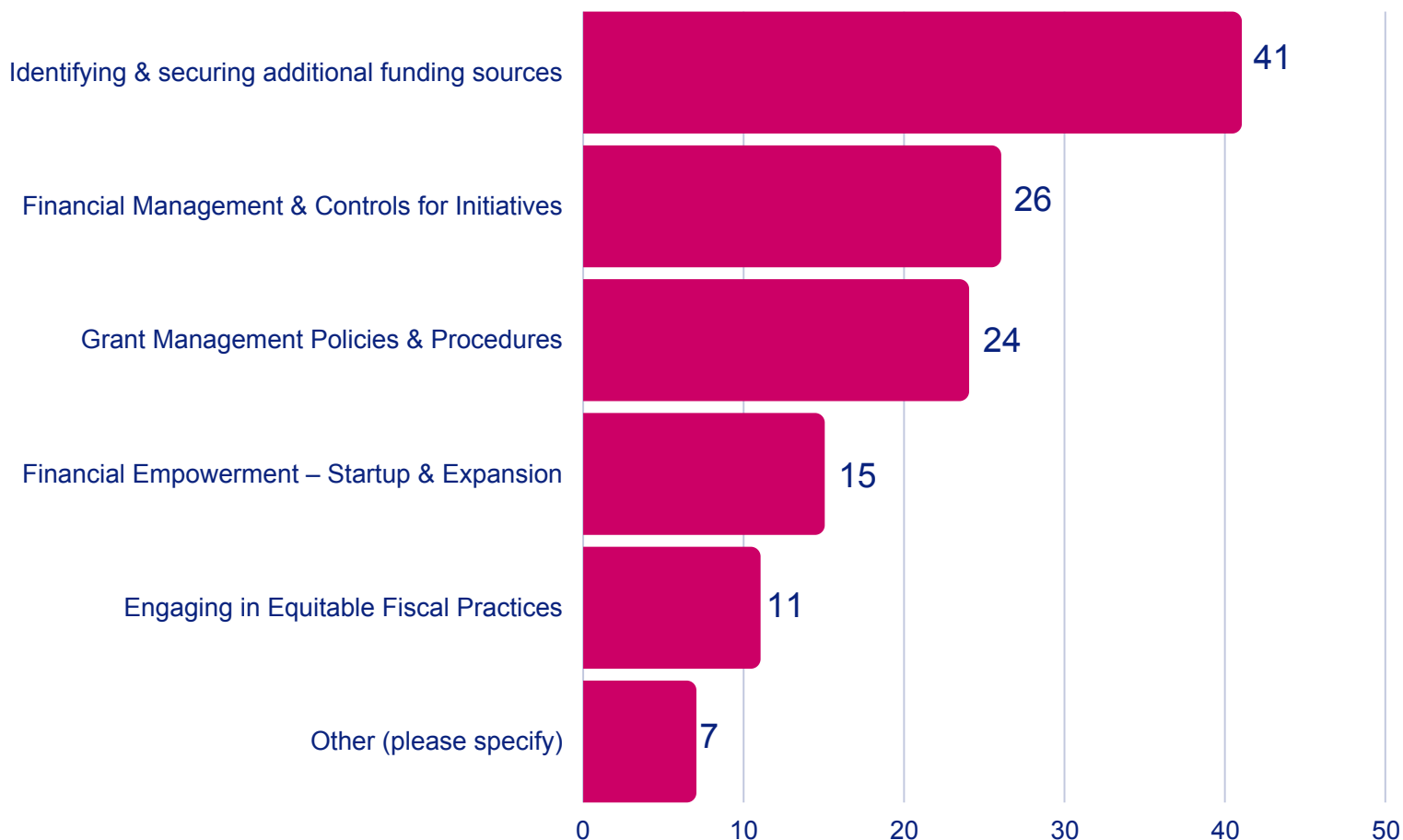
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Services, Approaches, and Practices Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Agency capacity is again identified in a top need - in this case, specific to utilizing technology to better support capacity.
  - Community Action Agencies have implemented a multitude of new technology systems and processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These systems create capacity, but also require additional training and retraining of current staff.
  - Data collection, analysis, and use of data is also related to this identified need.
- Whole Family Approach and Trauma Informed Approaches/Resilience are critical trainings for the network as they seek to engage with families and communities. These are frequently requested training and technical assistance topics.

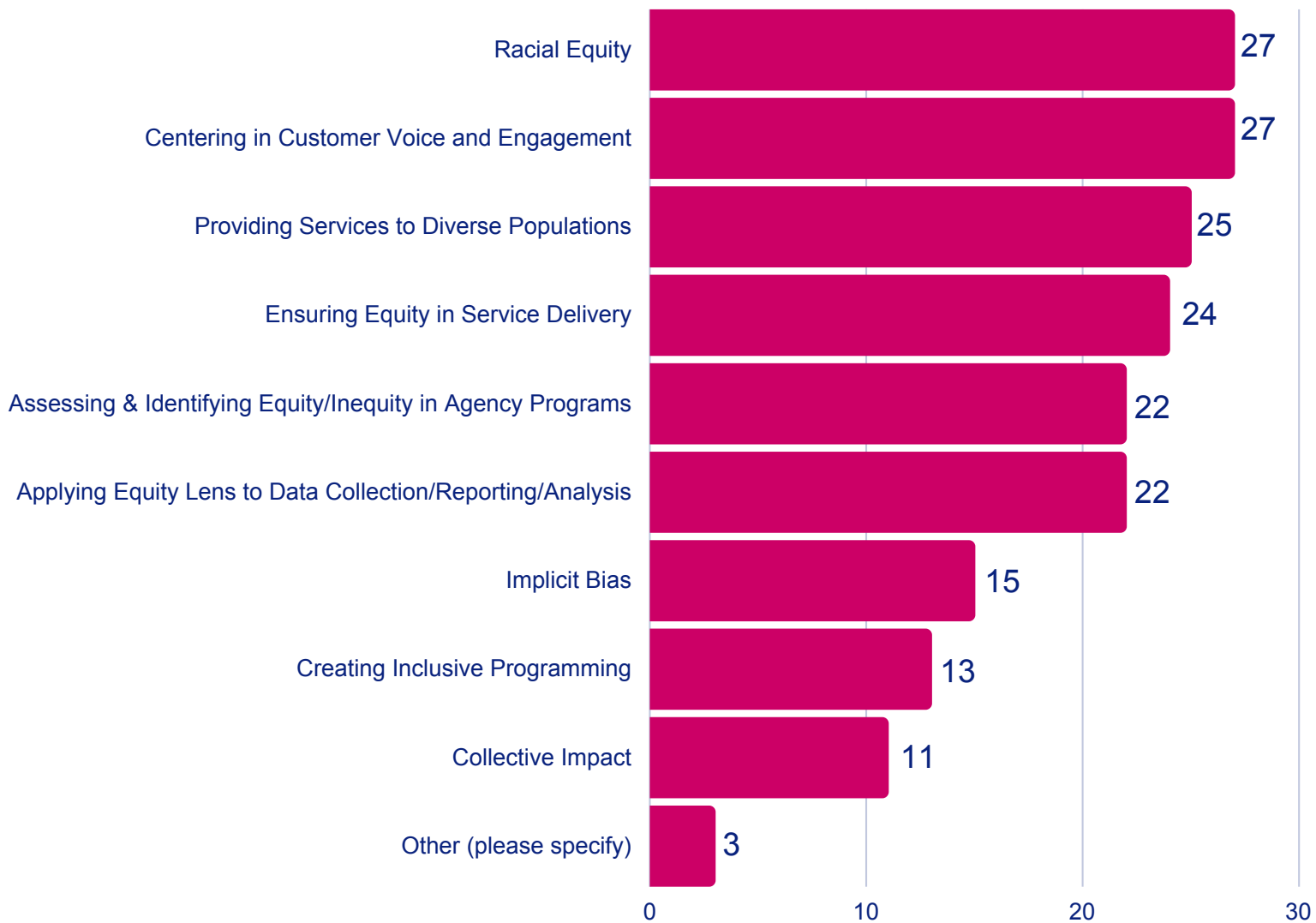
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Funding / Financial Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Identifying and securing additional funding sources is a crucial need of agencies, and falls in line with overall trends of the need for focus on agency capacity. Innovation is not possible without financial resources, and specifically, flexible financial resources.
- Financial management and controls and grant management policies and procedures are closely related top needs; additionally, several of the "other" responses reference topics that would fall into these categories including cost allocation, financial oversight, and financial administration
  - Training for financial staff continues to be a top need identified by the network.
  - Financial training topics were common in state network planned T/TA responses.

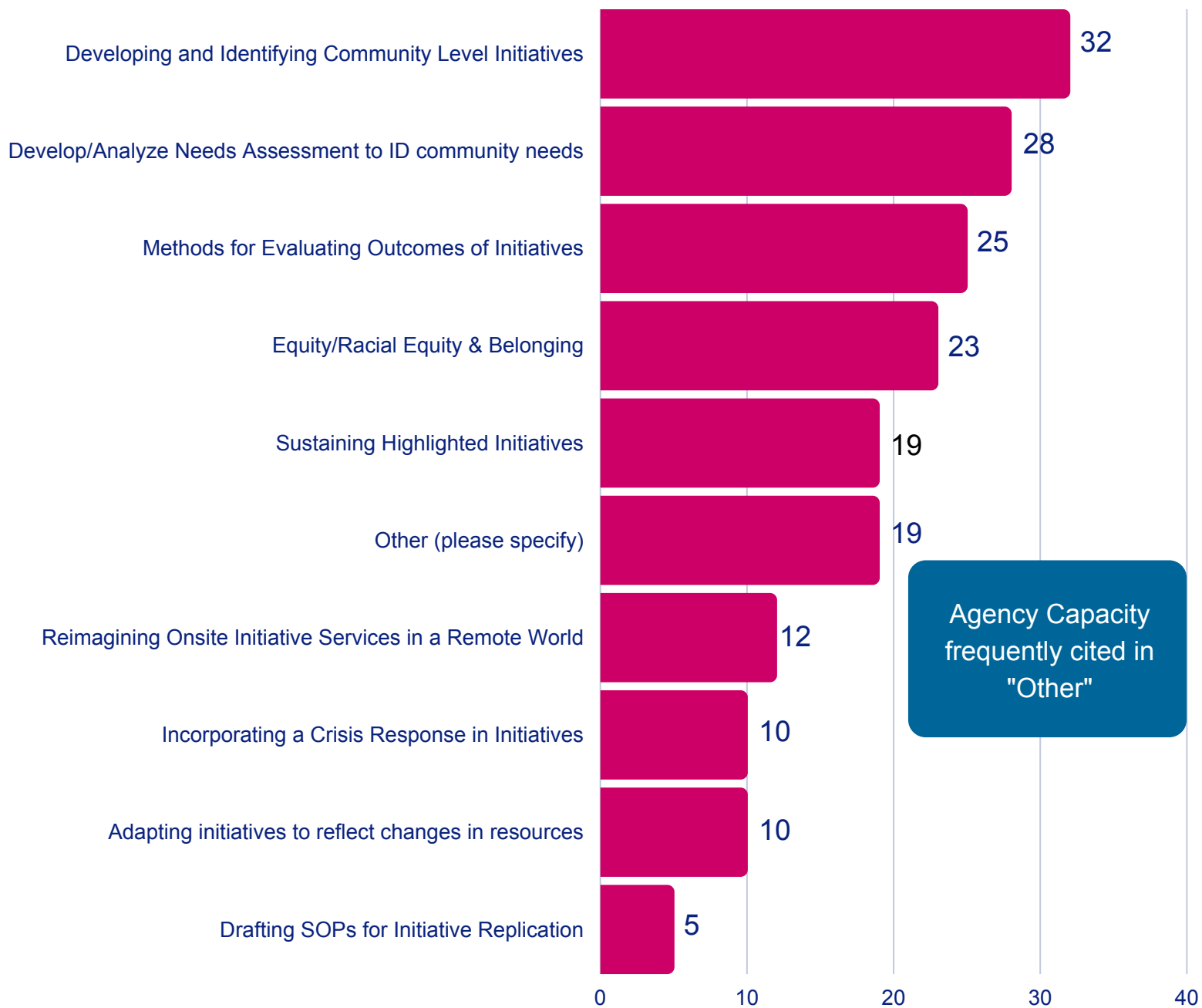
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Racial Equity and Belonging Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Racial equity has been a significant focus of the network in recent years. Using the equity lens, and specifically the racial equity lens, is foundational to an agency being able to engage in work that addresses large-scale community and systems change.
  - Providing services to diverse populations and ensuring equity in service delivery are closely related to this identified need and speak to the network's increasing awareness and implementation of equity practices.
  - Trainings centered on equity including racial equity and cultural humility were frequently cited in the planned strategies to address T/TA needs submitted by states.
- Centering in customer voice & engagement is a foundational Community Action principle articulated in the Organizational Standards.

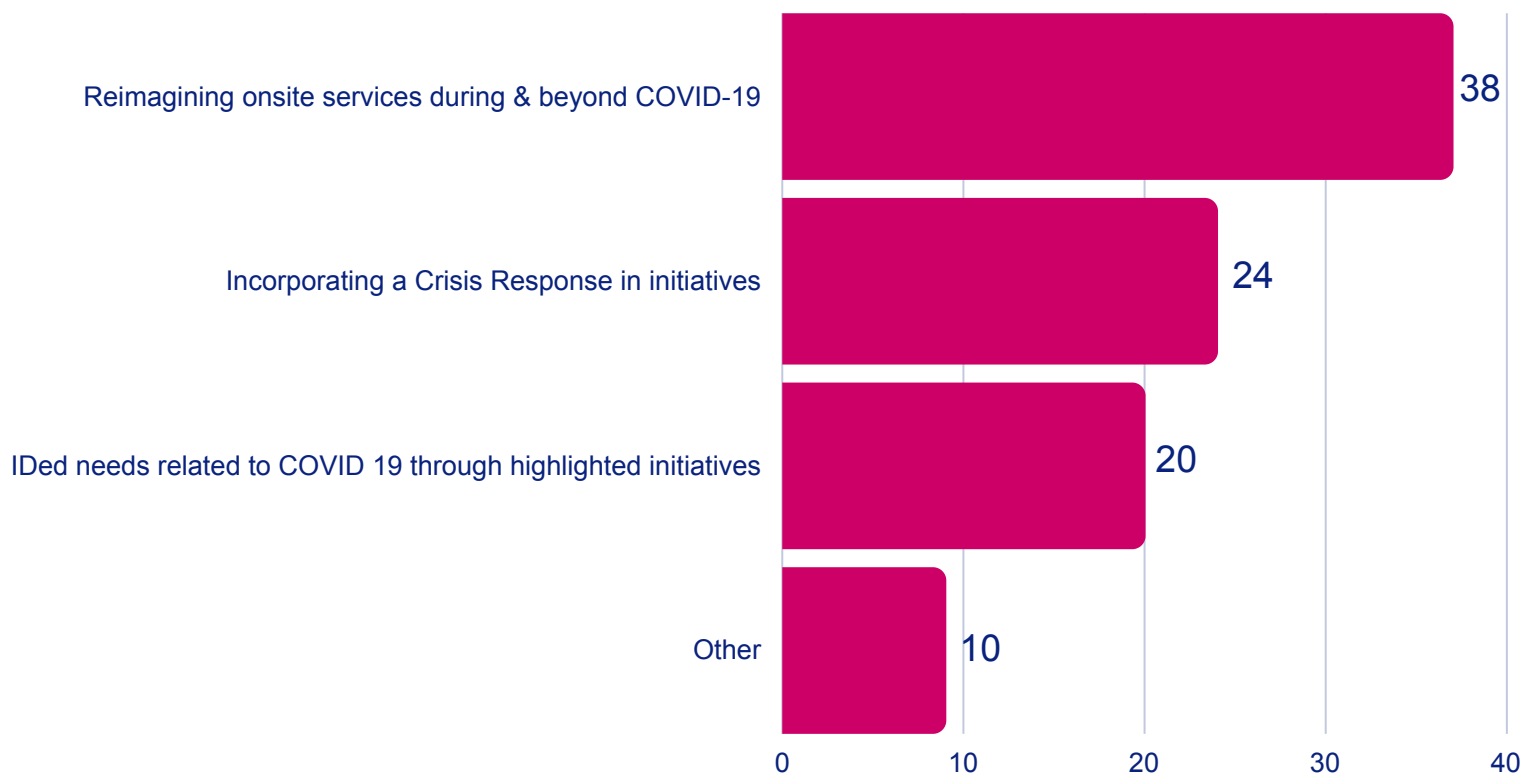
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Planning Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Developing & analyzing the Community Needs Assessment in order to identify community level needs was a top priority, despite low ranking in overall need.
  - Community Needs Assessment training and support is frequently requested by the network. More states are moving towards a statewide needs assessment approach.
- Agency capacity was cited in the majority of "other" responses. Capacity continues to be a challenge for the Network in part due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

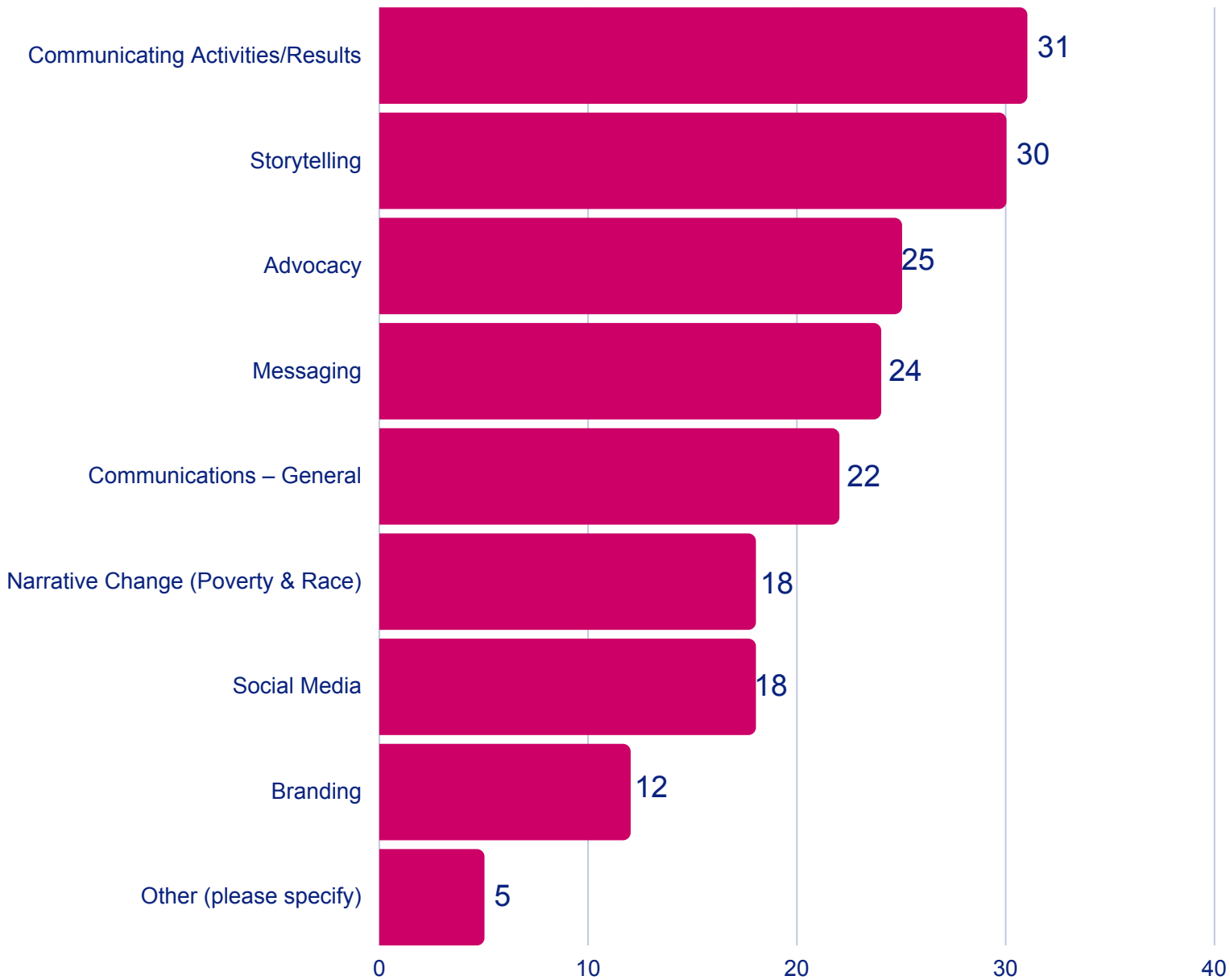
# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Disaster/Crisis Response and Relief Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- State networks frequently identified disaster relief topics (specifically related to natural disasters) in their planned T/TA activities.
- COVID-19 has elevated the importance of disaster preparedness for the network. As a result, agencies are strengthening internal disaster plans and continuity of operations plans.
- Reimagining onsite services requires agency capacity including planning, human resources, technology, and ensuring the wellbeing of employees and the people we serve.
- Several "other" responses cite employee wellbeing and wellness in relation to disaster response, including COVID-19. Employee wellness was also a commonly cited need in the additional comments provided.

# Implementing Innovative, High-Impact Practices Communications Needs



## Notes and Considerations

- Communicating activities/results and storytelling are closely aligned, and speak to the importance of the Community Action network having the needed capacity to effectively tell our story.
  - CAAs have a desire to communicate their activities and impact that go beyond the simple quantitative data collected for reporting and instead communicate the deeper impact of their services in the community.

# Planned Network T/TA Strategies & Topics

Each state also outlined an overview of their planned T/TA for FY2022 related to the T/TA needs of their networks.

These strategies align with the top identified needs, and also provide insight into broader T/TA needs beyond those related to engaging in transformative practice.



## Planned Network T/TA Strategies

To address identified needs, state networks plan to:

- hold conferences, communities of practice, and training sessions to build network capacity;
- facilitate communications (both internally within the network and externally to larger audiences);
- support ongoing assessment of agency needs;
- facilitate networking & peer learning & connection;
- support collaboration between the agencies, state association, and state office.

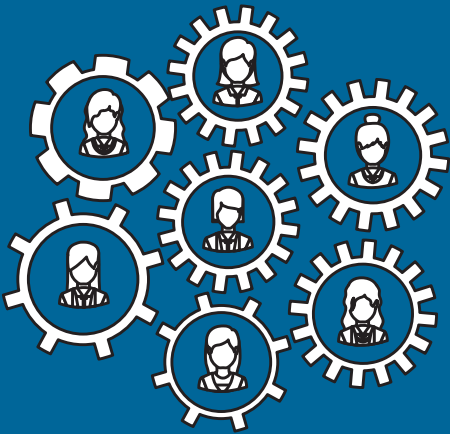
## Planned Network T/TA Topics

To address identified needs, state network planned T/TA includes topics such as:

- Equity (especially DEI topics, cultural humility, & racial justice);
- Board development & governance;
- Capacity building (commonly for leadership, finance, HR; CCAP);
- ROMA (training, alliances, cohorts, and implementation supports);
- Data collection, analysis, and use (especially implementation and support for client databases, data analysis);
- Disaster relief and response;
- Needs assessment (especially related to updating practices around needs assessments due to the pandemic);
- Fiscal (OMB uniform guidance, general fiscal training and support);
- Strategic planning;
- Organizational standards; and
- Sharing of best practices.

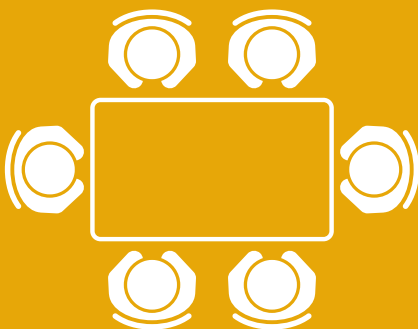
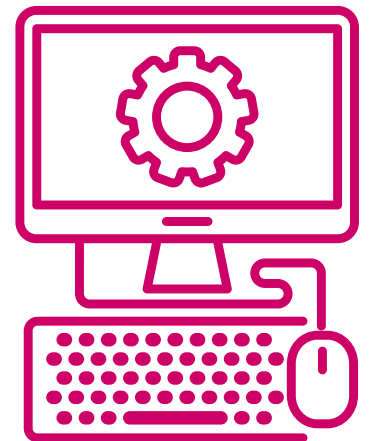
# Additional Comments and Context

Throughout the State T/TA plan and planning process, state networks had an opportunity to provide additional comments and other responses, which provide important context and information for the interpretation and analysis of the data provided. Notable trends and themes from these comments include:



- Agency capacity needs, including those related to staffing, managing turnover, hiring and onboarding of new staff, and supporting the wellbeing of current staff are especially pressing at this time. The COVID-19 Pandemic has been a significant driver of these needs, although the change in broader workforce trends is likely to remain post-pandemic.

- Community Action Agencies worked quickly to implement new technology to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. Community Action systems and processes have changed, as has the delivery of training and technical assistance to the network. There is a growing need for IT capacity, software, databases, and technology to support this shift.



- Community Action Agency boards have also experienced turnover and changes in dynamics and practices due to COVID-19 that necessitate continued training and technical assistance. Support for agency boards includes both training for agency staff as well as direct board training and technical assistance.