

# From Compliance to Capacity: Understanding the CSBG Organizational Standards

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February 24, 2026



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# The Promise Of Community Action

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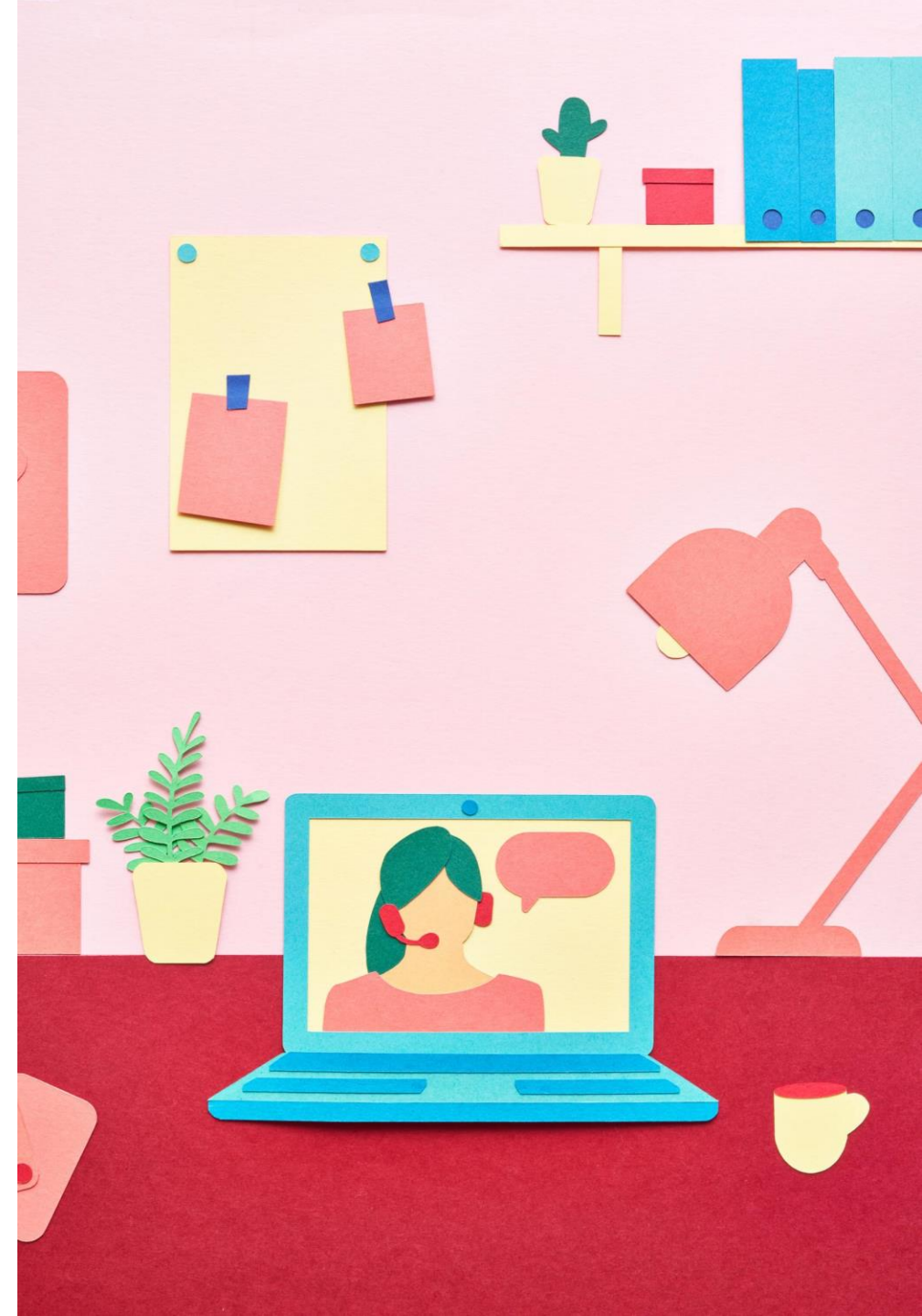


*Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

# Shout It Out...

*(or drop it in the chat)*

**What's one word you  
would use to  
describe the CSBG  
Organizational  
Standards?**



# Agenda

CSBG Organizational Standards Overview

From Compliance to Capacity

Tools and Resources

# 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



Housing

Health/Social  
Behavioral Development



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?

What difference does  
the network make?

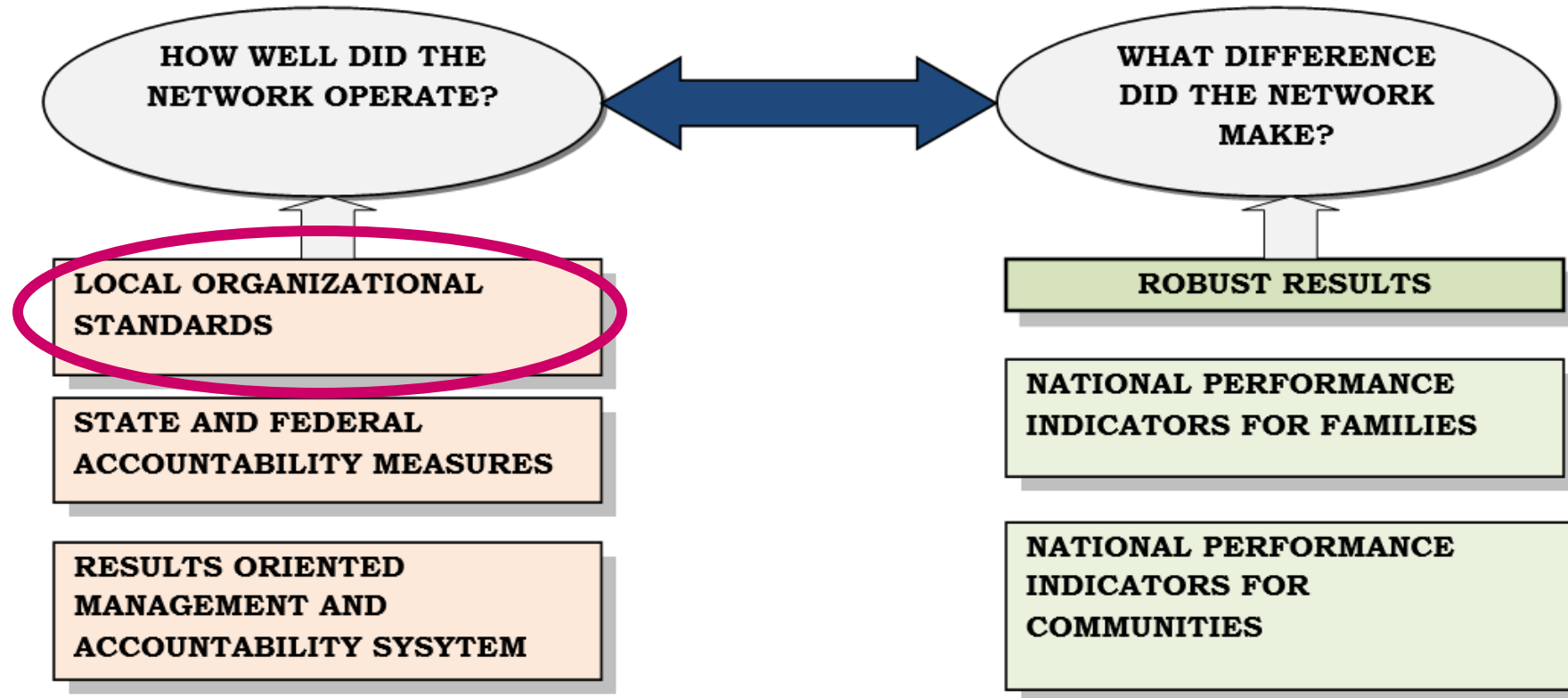
- Local Organizational Standards
- State and Federal Accountability Measures
- Results Oriented Management and Accountability System

- 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.*

# CSBG Performance Management Framework

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



# Key Points of CSBG Organizational Standards

Designed by the Network, for the Network, to ensure CAAs have the needed capacity to fulfill their role.

Direct Links to:

- CSBG Act
- OMB Guidance
- Federal Laws & Regulation
- Good Management Practices
- Values of Community Action

The Organizational Standards were implemented in Federal Fiscal Year 2016

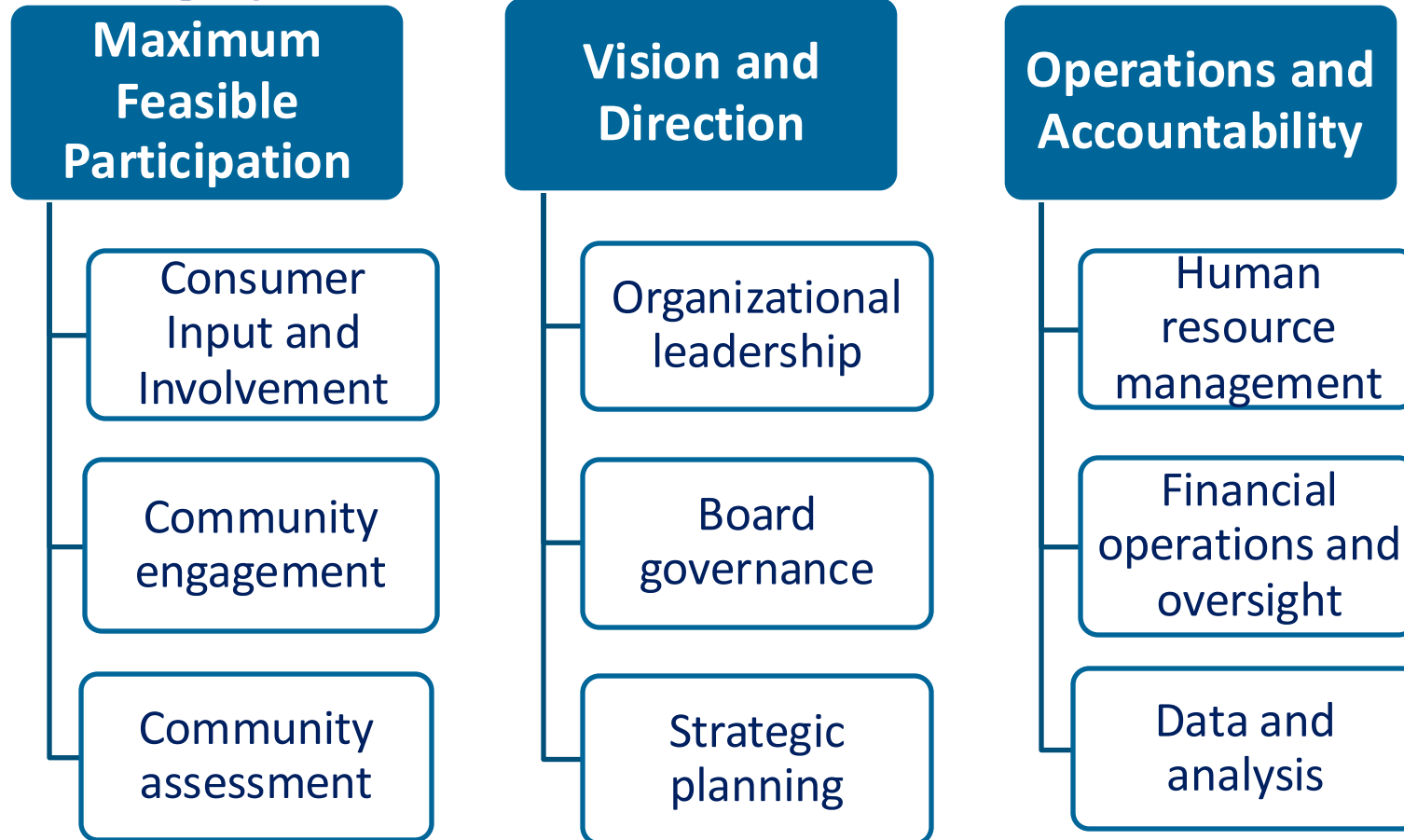
- The CSBG Act was last reauthorized in 1998. Thus, the Organizational Standards do not appear in the CSBG Act.

# CSBG Organizational Standards

Originally established in CSBG IM 138:

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocs/im\\_138\\_csbg\\_organizational\\_standards\\_fy\\_2015.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocs/im_138_csbg_organizational_standards_fy_2015.pdf)

Organized into three thematic groups:



# National Standards; State Administration

- CSBG is a Block Grant – meaning, the Feds provide general guidance, and then leave administration up to the States who they block grant the funding to.
- States (not the feds) are responsible for providing guidance and assessing compliance with the Organizational Standards.
  - Implementation, guidance, and assessment of Organizational Standards will differ from state to state
  - The Organizational Standards are intentionally broad – meant to recognize the need for each state and local CAA to be responsive to local needs
  - Specific/required documentation, processes, etc. are intentionally NOT prescribed in many cases by the Standards themselves; these requirements are set by your state.
- There are lots of ways States assess Organizational Standards
  - Familiarize yourself with the process and timing

# Key Points of CSBG Organizational Standards

States determine if Standards are met or unmet

- (no partial credit!)

There are differences between Standards for Public CAAs and Private CAAs

- There are no additional Standards for public CAAs, and the differences between public CAA standards typically reflect the differences in public CAA administration.

Standards are intentionally broad – meant to recognize the need for each state and local CAA to be responsive to local needs

- Specific/required documentation, processes, etc. are intentionally NOT prescribed in many cases

CSBG Organizational Standards assessments verify the presence of a process or deliverable, not the quality of it

Standards are Not All Equal

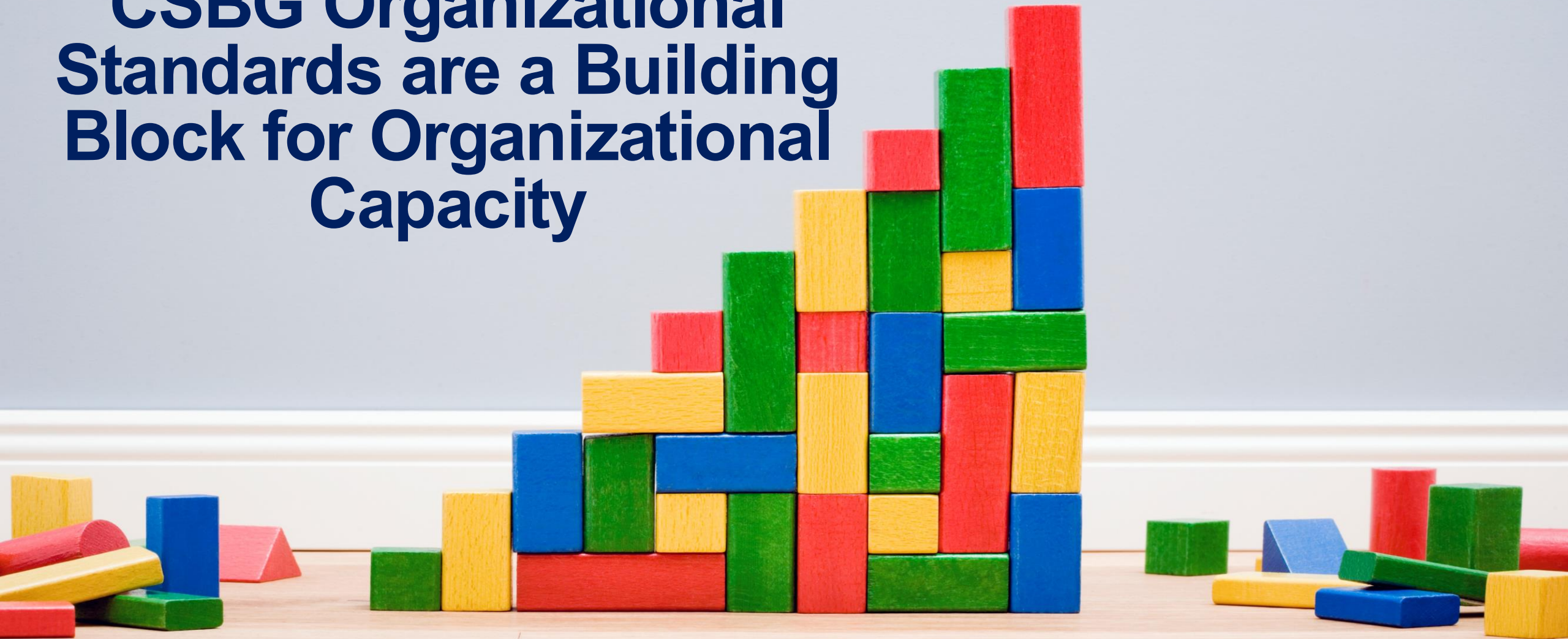
- Standards that are tied to legal requirements have additional consequences if not met

# Organizational Standards are Only a Piece of the (Compliance) Picture



**Is Compliance Enough?**

# CSBG Organizational Standards are a Building Block for Organizational Capacity



# From Compliance to Capacity

Compliance View (Checklist/Accountability)	Capacity View (Capacity/Framework for Growth)
Meeting the minimum requirement	Building systems that sustain performance
Checking a box for OCS/state monitors	Embedding best practices into agency culture
One-time proof of documentation	Ongoing process of strengthening operations
Focus on risk avoidance	Focus on resilience and readiness
Ensures accountability today	Positions agency for future effectiveness and impact

## Example: Standard 4.5

The organization has a written succession plan in place for the CEO/ED, approved by the governing board, which contains procedures for covering an emergency/unplanned, short-term absence of 3 months or less, as well as outlines the process for filling a permanent vacancy.

# How to Build Capacity:

## Self-Assessment

- Don't stop at "Standard Met" – assess the extent to which you are meeting the intent of the Standard.
- **Reflection Question:** *What would it look like if we were doing this to the best of our ability?*
- Use your findings to identify gaps and build plans for improvement

# Let's Try It – What would it look like if we were doing this to the best of our ability?

- **CSBG Organizational Standard 1.3:** The organization has a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board.
- **CSBG Organizational Standard 5.5:** The organization's governing board meets in accordance with the frequency and quorum requirements and fills board vacancies as set out in its bylaws.

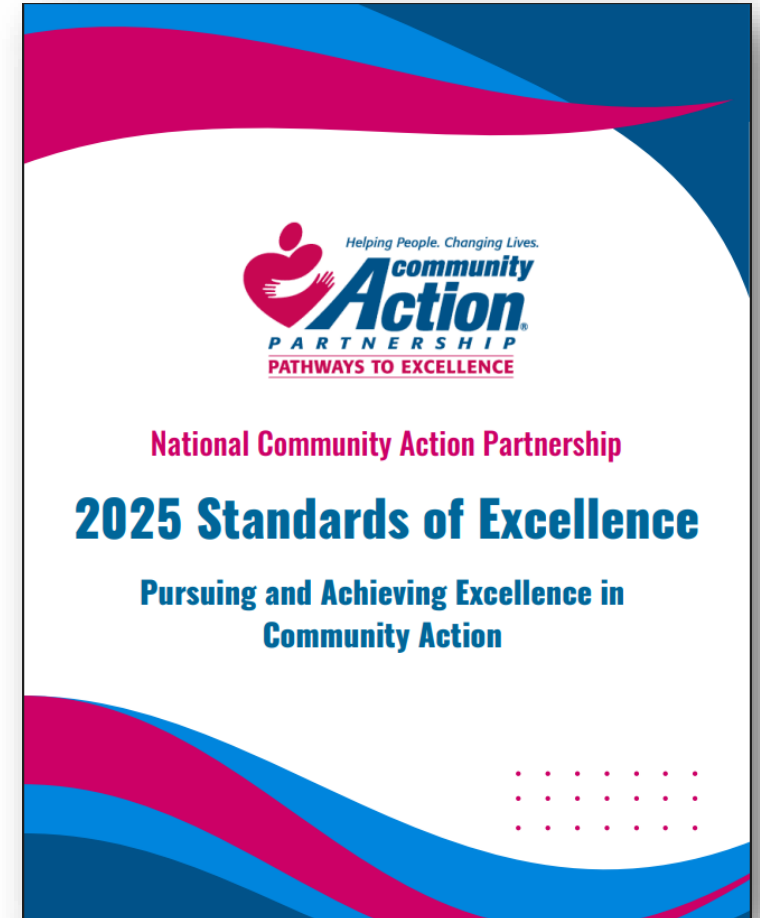
# Not Sure Where to Start? Review Best-in-Class Practices in Community Action Agencies

The 2025 Community Action Standards of Excellence represent 35 of the very best practices of the very best Community Action Agencies.

They represent **optimal, real-world** administrative and operational benchmarks that every agency can strive for.

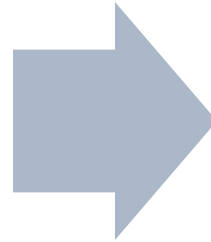
The Standards for Excellence are based on the **Malcolm Baldrige Criteria** for Performance Excellence

*The Baldrige Criteria are tailored to the language and operations of the CAA Network and revised every two years*



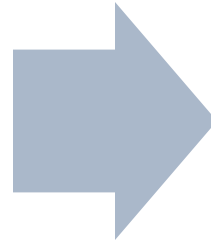
# From Compliance to Excellence

We Have a Tripartite Board!



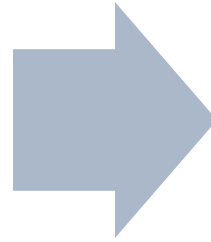
We have a Board that is intentionally recruited with the skills we need to be successful, reflects our community, and centers lived experience

We do a bi-annual risk assessment!



We do an annual risk assessment that informs our improvement plans and is tracked in our agency-wide scorecard

We have partners!



We systematically manage our partnerships through tracking of purpose and effectiveness in meeting our mission

# How to Build Capacity: CQI



TRACK PROGRESS  
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



COMPARE YEAR OVER  
YEAR RESULTS



USE DATA TO IMPROVE  
FOR THE FUTURE

# How to Build Capacity: Fold It In

- Make the requirements in the CSBG Organizational Standards just part of how you do business
  - Especially important for Board Standards!
- Integrate your assessment activities into existing processes
  - Community Assessment
  - Strategic planning
  - Community Action Plan



# How to Build Capacity: Reframe the Standards

- External requirements that are check the box vs tools that keep the agency healthy and effective
- How could you ensure the Standards are seen as more than compliance in your CAA?

# How to Build Capacity: Reframe the Standards

- External requirements that are check the box vs tools that keep the agency healthy and effective.
- How could you ensure the Standards are seen as more than compliance in your CAA?

Leadership  
Communication

Responsibility

Modeling

Celebration

Use!

# SPRING 2026 SKILL BUILDER TRAININGS

## Organizational Standards Skill Builder

*Two-Part Training:*  
March 4th & 5th  
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM ET

### Enhance Organizational Effectiveness

- Expert Guidance
- Examples of Best Practices
- Tools and Resources



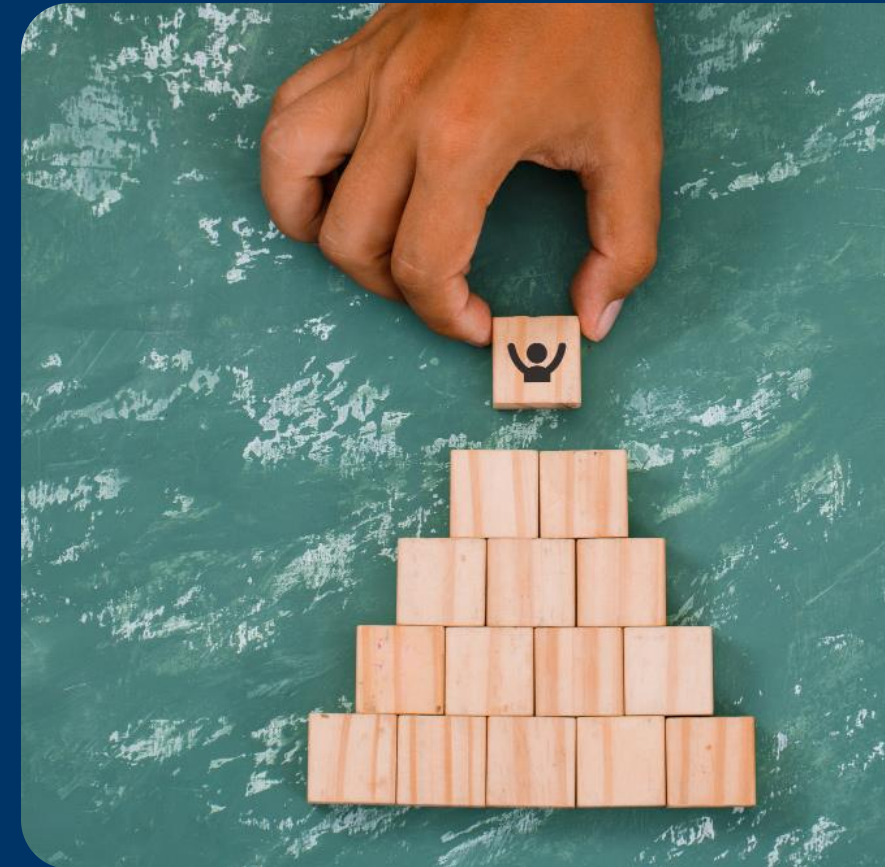
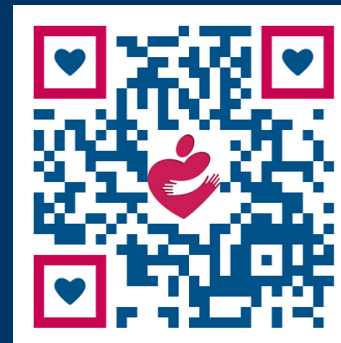
Registration Fee:  
\$399 Members  
\$499 Non-members  
per person  
for each event

## Community Assessment Skill Builder

*Two-Part Training:*  
April 8th & 15th  
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM ET

### From Requirement to Real Insight

- Inform Planning & Decisions
- Make Better Use of Data
- Custom Reports and Maps



Register any staff for both trainings to receive a discount!

# Make 2026 Your Year of Excellence!

*Check out the new opportunities to move beyond compliance!*



- **Enroll anytime in 2026 at the Bronze Tier.**
- **Fall 2026 Silver & Gold Tier cohort info coming soon!**
- **Not Ready to Enroll? Learn about Excellence through the new Pathways to Excellence eCourse**

**Learn More -  
Scan Here:**





# Tools and Resources

# CSBG ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS

## A Brief History...



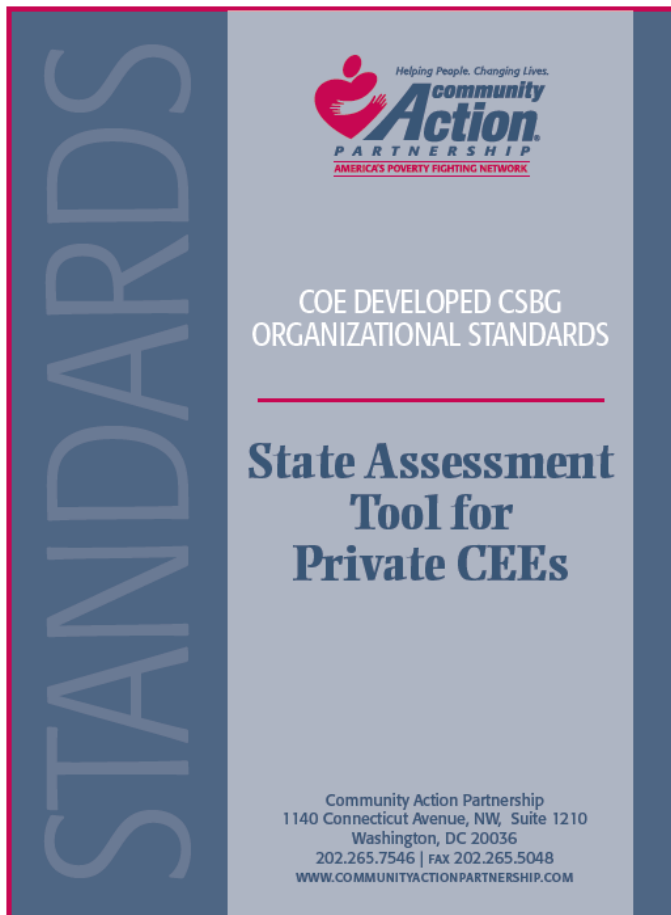
## What are the CSBG Organizational Standards?

The **CSBG Organizational Standards** are a comprehensive set of standards developed with input from the entire CSBG Network through a three-year multi phase process led by the Center of Excellence. The Organizational Standards were announced in January 2015 with the OCS release of **IM 138, State Establishment of Organizational Standards for CSBG Eligible Entities**, directing States to establish organizational standards by fiscal year 2016.

The Organizational Standards are organized in three thematic groups comprising nine categories and totals of 58 standards for private, nonprofit entities and 50 for public entities. The purpose of the organizational standards is to ensure that all agencies have appropriate organizational capacity, in both critical financial and administrative areas, as well as areas of unique importance to the mission of the Community Action network.

<https://communityactionpartnership.com/organizational-standards/>

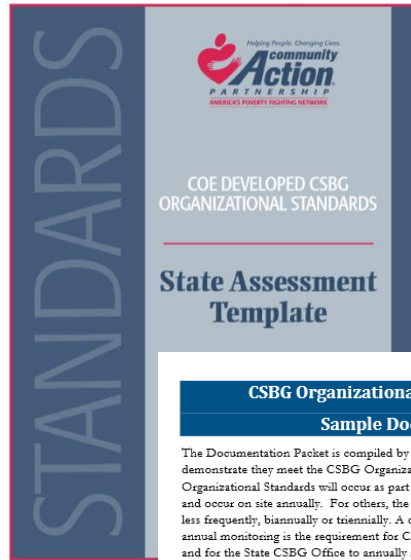
# Tools to Help Assess



- Assessment Tool
- Separate Tools for States and CAAs
- Separate Tool for Private and Public CAA State Assessments
- Includes Final COE-Developed Standards Language
- COE Guidance

# Assessment Template

## States and CAAs Summary Sheet Documentation Packet



### CSBG Organizational Standards-Self Assessment Sample Documentation Packet

The Documentation Packet is compiled by local CAAs as they collect information annually to demonstrate they meet the CSBG Organizational Standards. For many CAAs, the assessment of Organizational Standards will occur as part of regular monitoring by the State CSBG Lead Agency and occur on site annually. For others, the State CSBG lead Agency conducts on site monitoring less frequently, biannually or triennially. A challenge for States and CAAs that do not conduct annual monitoring is the requirement for CAAs to demonstrate they meet the Standards annually and for the State CSBG Office to annually report the number of CAAs meeting Standards.

To meet this challenge, CAAs and State CSBG Lead Agencies will develop a process that meets the needs in that State. Tools and resources are available from the Organizational Standards Center of Excellence (OSCOE) to assist CAAs and States to meet this challenge in ways that are not overly burdensome. This tool focuses on capturing and filing the documentation necessary to demonstrate how a CAA meets each Standard. This tool and others can be found at [www.communityactionpartnership.com](http://www.communityactionpartnership.com).

CAAs will need to demonstrate they meet all Standards annually. Many individual Standards require action on an annual basis, while others do so on a biannual, triennial, or even five year span. There will be materials local CAAs will need to collect that may not change over a five year period (e.g. bylaws, strategic plan). In addition, there will be documents that will need to be collected that may be created monthly (e.g. board minutes). There are certain documents that will be used to demonstrate the CAA meets multiple Standards. This tool is provided to be a guide to help CAAs and State CSBG Lead Agencies think about how to collect, store, and report needed materials over time, limiting duplication of effort. It frames the collection of materials under the title of "Documentation Packet".

A CAA's Documentation Packet may be:

- **Hard copy or electronic (or a blend).** Some CAAs may prefer to have a binder, file folder, banker's box, or other hard copy system for collecting and storing the documents. Others may prefer electronic documents. In some cases, CAAs may use a mix of both options.
- **Stored at the CAA, State CSBG Lead Agency, in the "cloud", or in some other document sharing environment;** Depending on the system established, the Documentation Packet may be stored at the CAA for access during onsite monitoring, at the State Office for desk audits, or in an online file sharing/storage system accessible to both and even perhaps third parties.
- **Formally updated periodically or as part of the annual assessment process.** Some CAAs may choose to update the Documentation Packet monthly as new materials are developed or may choose to select a single time each year they update the packet.
- **Spread across multiple years.** Some documents may be submitted in the initial Documentation Packet and may not need to be updated for two to four years. CAAs and

### SAMPLE Table of Contents (EACH CAA's TABLE OF CONTENTS WILL VARY)

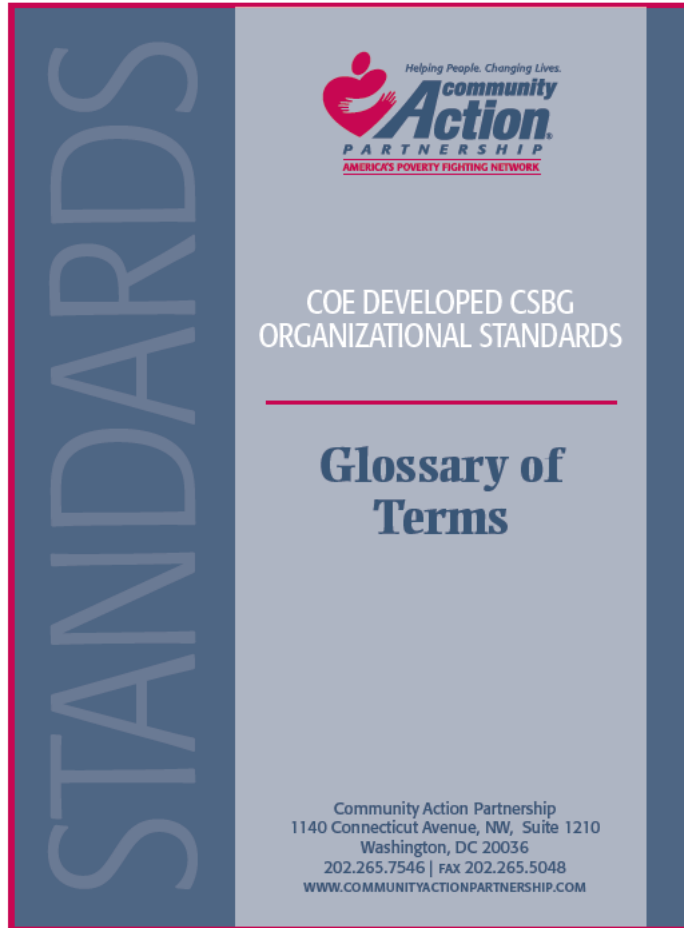
A. Check Off List of items on File with State CSBG Office	#
B. Relevant Portions of Board Approved Strategic Plan	#
C. Additional Strategic Planning Documents	#
a. Committee Meeting Minutes/Notes	#
b. Summaries of Focus Groups/Surveys	#
D. Relevant Portions of Community Needs Assessment	#
a. Additional Community Needs Assessment Documents	#
E. Relevant Board Minutes/Sections	#

Date of Assessment \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1: CSBG Organizational Standards Which Need to Be Documented as Met Annually

Standard Number	Standard	Standard Category	CAA Assessment Met <input type="checkbox"/>	CAA Assessment Not Met <input type="checkbox"/>	Documentation Packet Page Number(s)	State's Assessment Agrees with CAA's Y/N	Notes
1.1	The organization demonstrates low-income individuals' participation in its activities.	Consumer Input and Involvement					
1.3	The organization has a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board.	Consumer Input and Involvement					
2.1	The organization has documented or demonstrated partnerships across the community, for specifically identified purposes; partnerships include other anti-poverty organizations in the area.	Community Engagement					
2.3	The organization communicates its activities and its results to the community.	Community Engagement					
2.4	The organization documents the number of volunteers and hours mobilized in support of its activities.	Community Engagement					
4.2	The organization's Community Action plan is outcome-based, anti-poverty focused, and ties directly to the community assessment.	Leadership					

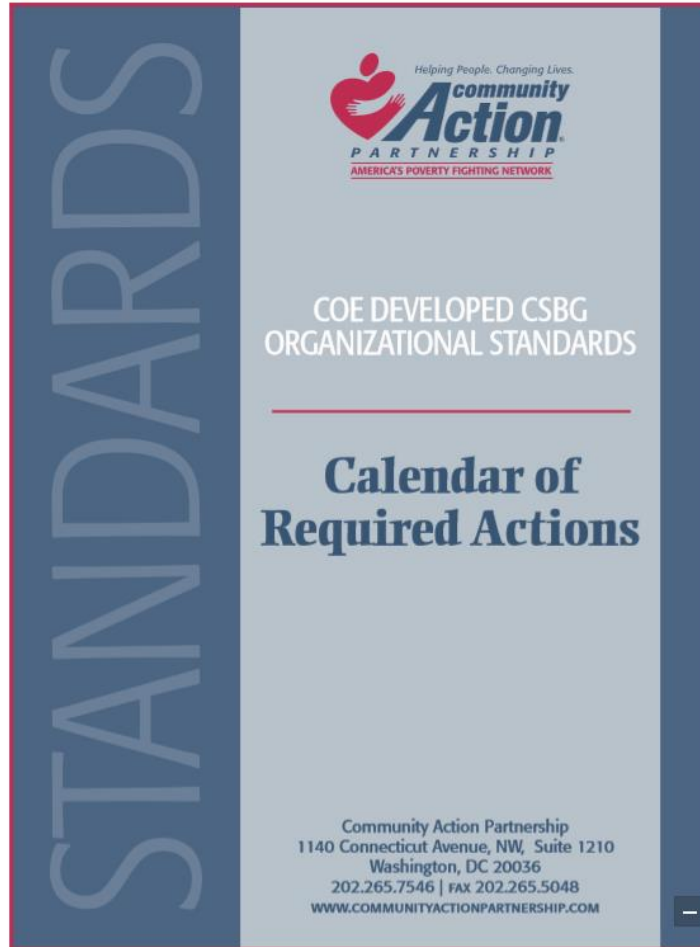
# Tools to Help Assess



## Glossary of Terms

This glossary is provided as guidance by the Organizational Standards Center of Excellence (OSCOE). It is intended to provide some clarity as to the intent of the CSBG Working Group in the development of the Standards. Please note that this is not official guidance and CAAs and State CSBG Offices are encouraged to work together to come to agreement on definitions and to refer to the CSBG Act and Office of Community Services' Information Memoranda when needed.

# Calendar of Required Actions

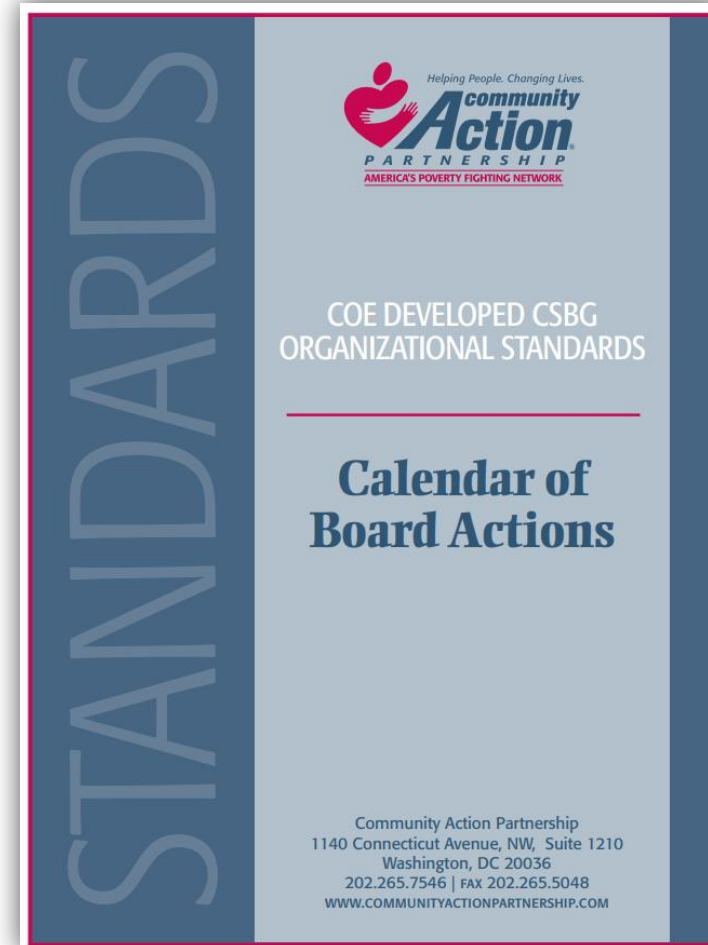


- Annually
- Every 2 Years
- Every 3 Years
- Every 5 Years
- Documentation

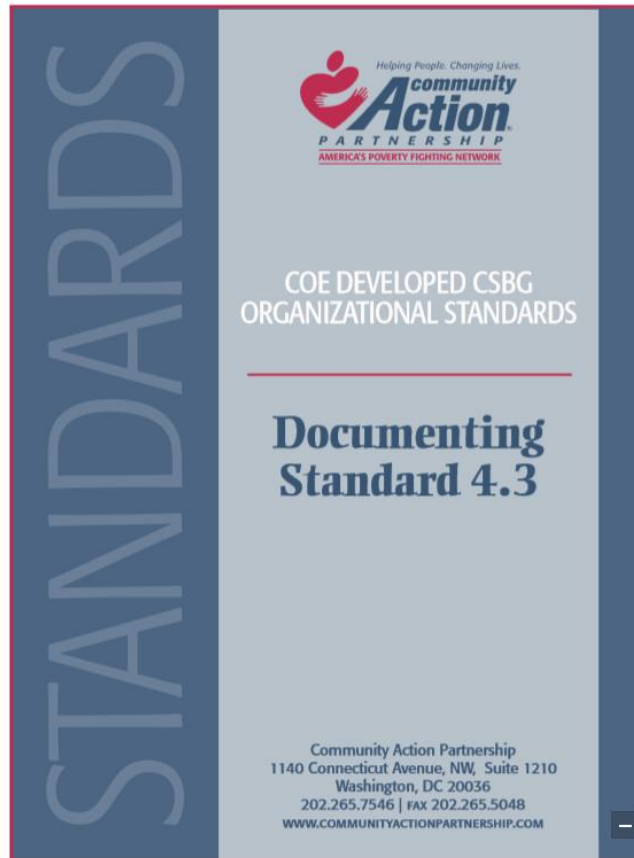
# Calendar of Board Activities

- The Organizational Standards have several requirements for boards that happen on different time cycles– use our Calendar of Activities to help manage requirements

[https://communityactionpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/29\\_Schedule-for-Boards\\_Final-Fillable.pdf](https://communityactionpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/29_Schedule-for-Boards_Final-Fillable.pdf)



# Standard 4.3 Document Use of Certified ROMA Trainer



- Intent: Nationally Certified ROMA Trainer
- Use of “Equivalent” intended for States that have selected a performance management system other than ROMA

# T/A Guides Toolkits and Webinars for Each of the Nine Categories

- Additional Guidance
  - Definition
  - Compliance
  - Document
- Beyond Compliance
- Resources
- Assessment Scales



# We Want to Hear From You!

Please take a couple of minutes to share your feedback and ideas for future webinars and trainings!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2242026OrgStds>





**Q&A**