COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY HISTORY TIMELINE

1964 - The Beginning
Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act establishing and funding Community Action Agencies and Programs.

1974 - What’s In a Name?
The Economic Opportunity Act was terminated and replaced with the Community Service Act of 1974. The change of name may have given an erroneous signal to the local CAAs who did not study the funding legislation. While the name of the legislation was changed, the mission and purpose of the funding remained unchanged.

1970 - The Mission and the Model
The issuance of OEO Instruction 6320-1 established the mission and the model (family, agency and community) of Community Action. Mission: To stimulate a better focusing of all available, local, state, private, and Federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families, and low-income individuals of all ages in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.

1981 - A Change of Relationship
The Community Service Act was replaced by the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG). This changed the regulatory and funding basis of Community Action Agencies as it changed the relationship between local agencies and state offices, who were now installed as intermediaries for funding. However, it did not change the mission and purpose.

1993 – Measurement and Accountability
Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in response to a renewed emphasis on accountability. “The purposes of this Act are to – improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction – help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality.”

1994 - Six National Goals
The CSBG Monitoring and Assessment Task Force supported by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services (OCS), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services produced a National Strategic Plan that identified six national goals for community action.

- Goal 1. Low-income people become more self-sufficient.
- Goal 2. The conditions in which low-income people live are improved.
- Goal 3. Low-income people own a stake in their community.
- Goal 4. Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved.
- Goal 5. Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.
- Goal 6. Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

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1998 - Reauthorization of CSBG Act

The Monitoring and Assessment Task Force, in addition to creating the Six National Goals, advised OCS to support the development of their own management and accountability practices. They recommended a system be known as "Results-Oriented Management and Accountability," or ROMA.

In response to GPRA, and with a recommendation by OCS, Congress enacted a reauthorization of the CSBG act that included amended language to mandate implementation of a comprehensive performance-based management system across the entire Community Services Network. ROMA is specifically mentioned in the legislation as this system. The reauthorization required reporting from all CAAs and CSBG eligible entities beginning October 1, 2001.

2001 - Focus on Client and Community

The Office of Community Services issued Information Memo 49 – Program Challenges, Responsibilities and Strategies – FY 2001-2003. The six national ROMA goals reflect a number of important concepts that transcend CSBG as a stand-alone program. The goals convey the unique strengths that the broader concept of Community Action brings to the Nation’s anti-poverty efforts.

2004 – PART

The Office of Community Services (OCS) participated in a Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART) review administered by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which raised several questions regarding the implementation and reporting of ROMA data across the country.

PART questioned, especially, the way individual states/eligible entities had established performance goals and performance indicators. It was suggested that a national system be adopted to standardize this information for everyone.

2005 - Implementation of National Indicators of Community Action Performance

OCS moved to institute the first mandatory reporting for 2005. Partially in response to the issues regarding a need for a standardized system of reporting CAA results, OCS has established National Indicators of Community Action Performance (NPI), and moved to institute a mandatory report using the NPIs as of March 2005.

One area that is emphasized in the NPIs is the concept of targeting performance goals. CAAs are asked to identify not only the number of units of service they will provide and the number of people to be served, but also to identify the number of results that will be achieved by these participants.

2009 – Renewed Focus on Results-The Obama Administration

As of January 2009, the OMB has issued the Performance Progress Reporting (PPR) Form, which will be used by Federal agencies to collect performance information from recipients of Federal funds awarded under all Federal programs that exceed $100,000 or more per project/grant period.


Originally presented by NASCSP for comment in 2004, the Standard Monitoring Principles are a guide for state offices to use in reviewing their monitoring responsibilities and practices. The Standards are being reviewed by the network to determine the base ways to transition from existing practices to the broader areas indicated. They focus on the concept "beyond compliance to excellence."