

Community Action Plan Template (CAP) Guide

A guide to Illinois' Community Action Plan Template.

Created in partnership by Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Community Action Agency Network

This guide is intended for use with the Community Action Plan Template, as used by Illinois CSBG eligible entities. The content of this guide may be subject to change. We welcome feedback on the guide's content. If you have questions or concerns, please contact IACAA or your Grant Manager. This document provides guidance on conducting a Community Action Plan. The use of the Community Action Plan Template is required by each CAA. However, each CAA has the discretion to use the steps in this guide or to create their own steps. Please note that any text in **BOLD** font, except for titles, is supported by regulation. Any font not bolded should be considered optional guide language and not intended to be interpreted as mandated regulation.

By using this guide, you agree to the terms outlined in this disclaimer. If you do not agree with these terms, please refrain from using the guide. Last Updated: March 2024

The Illinois Community Action Plan (CAP) Template is a required component of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) application process.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, The Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA) developed the template, this instructional guide, and training with financial support and direction provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the Office of Community Assistance, with active input and participation of a working group comprised of staff from Illinois Community Action Agencies.

The prompts in the template meet CSBG application requirements:

1. The Federal CSBG Act (42 USC 106, Section 9901-9926)
2. The Illinois Economic Opportunity Act (20 ILCS 625)
3. CSBG Organizational Standards

The template will help Agencies complete the Community Action Plan that is submitted with your CSBG application and promote standardization of the process and expectations.

The CSBG application process includes:

1. **Community Needs Assessment:** Organizational Standards 3.1 - 3.5, the Federal CSBG Act, and the Illinois Economic Opportunity Act require Agencies to complete a thorough Community Needs Assessment at least every three years. IACAA has prepared a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) Template and Guide to assist CAAs in completing the CNA.
2. **Community Needs Assessment Update:** While Agencies are not required to complete annual updates for years two and three following a full CNA, it is good practice and demonstrates that you are reviewing the changing needs of your customers and communities. IACAA has included sections in the Community Needs Assessment Template for updates to be provided in years two and three.
3. **Community Action Plan (CAP):** The CAP, once completed, will describe how your Agency will use CSBG funding to address needs identified in your CNA, or CNA Update. It also describes how you leverage funding and partner with your community (requirements of the CSBG Act and the Illinois Economic Opportunity Act).
4. **STARS Work Program Detail:** You will develop your work programs in the STARS database only after you have completed the CNA and the CAP. CSBG follows the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle. The CNA and CNA Update are the Assessment phase, and the CAP is the Planning phase. STARS work program detail is the Implementation phase. You must assess and plan before you can implement.
5. **CSBG Budget:** You will plan your budget to achieve the outcomes you identify in your CAP.

If you have questions or need assistance completing the template or any part of the CSBG application process, please contact your grant manager at DCEO, or contact IACAA.

CAP Template Guide Table of Contents

1 Community Action Plan Certification.....6

2 Community Action Plan Summary:7

2.1 7
 2.2 8
 2.3 9
 2.4 10
 2.5 10

3 Service Delivery System12

3.1 12
 3.2 13
 3.3 14
 3.4 14
 3.5 16

4 Linkages and Funding Coordination.....17

4.1 17
 4.2 18
 4.3 19
 4.4 22
 4.5 22

5 Youth Initiatives:24

5.1 24
 5.2 25

6 Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives26

6.1 26

7 Disaster Preparedness.....27

7.1 27
 7.2 27
 7.3 27
 7.4 27

7.5 27

7.6 28

8 Appendices 29

Community Action Plan (CAP) Click to Enter Grant Year

Click to enter the grant year your Community Action Plan is for.

Click the ICON below to add your Agency's logo to the Community Action Plan



Click to enter Agency Name

Click to enter Agency Address

Click or tap here to enter your agency's Mission Statement.


Each box above allows you to click and enter your Agency's specific information.

1	Community Action Plan Certification
2	Community Action Plan Summary:
3	Service Delivery System
4	Linkages and Funding Coordination
5	Youth Initiatives
6	Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives Error! Bookmark not defined.
7	Disaster Preparedness
8	AppendicesError! Bookmark not defined.

- To update your Table of Contents with the proper page numbers, after your CAP is Complete:
 - Click in the Table of Contents above
 - Right Click
 - Choose “Update Field”
 - Choose “Update Entire Table”
 - Click “OK”



COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)

1 Community Action Plan Certification



Agency Name	Click to type Agency Name	Each box allows you to click and enter your Agency's specific information. <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>
Name of CAP Contact	Click to type name of CAP Contact.	
Title	Click to type Title of CAP Contact	
Phone	Click to type Phone Number of CAP Contact	
Email	Click to type Email of CAP Contact .	
*CAP Board Approved MM/DD/YYYY:	Click to type Date the Agency's Board approved the	
CSBG Year (YYYY):	Click to type the Program Year the CAP is submitted	

***Attach board minutes from the meeting where the CAP was approved, note in appendices.**

Board and Agency Certification

Each box allows you to click and enter your Agency's specific information. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">  </div>	This signature can be ink or electronic or Board Minutes can be attached for verification of Board Approval in place of Board Chair Signature. If minutes are attached, list in the appendices in section 8 <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>	
Click or tap here to enter text.		Click or tap to enter a date.
Executive Director (printed name)		Date
Click or tap here to enter text.		Click or tap to enter a date.
Board Chair (printed name)	Board Chair (signature)	Date

Certification of RC

Each box allows you to click and enter your Agency's specific information. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">  </div>	If you do not have an NCRT/NCRI on staff please reach out to IACAA. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>	
Click or tap here to enter text.		Click to enter date
NCRT/NCRI (printed name)	NCRT/NCRI (signature)	Date

2 Community Action Plan Summary:

This section should summarize the entire Community Action Plan and describe how funds are used to support the operations of the Agency beyond the specific programs provided. It should describe the Agency wide process used to develop the plan; specifically explain how the board, client population, and the community were involved in the process.

2.1 Provide a summary of how funds are used to support the overall operations of the Agency. (CSBG Act)

This summary should go beyond the specific programs provided by the Agency.

Explain the client intake process or system, including any eligibility criteria and the steps involved. Later in the document you'll detail the delivery system, for this, focus on providing a summary of the "why" behind your approach and not as much on the actual approach.

- To guide you in creating this summary, here are a few questions to consider answering when creating your narrative:
 - Service Delivery Model:
 - How is your chosen service delivery model flexible and tailored to the unique and diverse needs in your community?
 - Do you offer direct services? Or use subcontractor collaborations? Or is it a mix of both?
 - Funding Allocation:
 - How are funds strategically allocated across various operational facets of the agency, including administrative functions?
 - How are CSBG funds used to address unmet or under-met community needs?
 - Service Delivery System:
 - How is your service delivery system customer-centric and designed to ensure effective client support for maximum community impact?
 - Eligibility Criteria:
 - Describe the initial steps in the service delivery system.
 - How is your eligibility criteria communicated transparently?
 - How does your staff guide applicants through the documentation process?
- Highlight the strengths and advantages of your chosen service delivery model.
 - How does this approach position the agency to effectively address the unique community needs, aligning with the mission's spirit?

Example:

The Abe Lincoln Community Action Partnership (ABE CAP) strategically employs funds to support our overall operations, extending beyond specific programs outlined in the CSBG Act. Our comprehensive service delivery system is client-centric, designed to ensure effective client support and community impact.

Funds are allocated to various operational facets, including administrative functions, outreach initiatives, and maintaining an efficient service infrastructure. This encompasses investment in technology, staff training, and community engagement efforts to enhance overall service delivery.

Our service delivery system begins with a needs assessment to understand individual or family requirements comprehensively. Eligibility criteria are communicated transparently, and our staff guides applicants through the documentation steps. This process is designed for inclusivity, with eligibility determined based on income levels and specific program requirements.

ABE CAP provides a combination of direct services and collaborations with reputable subcontractors. Direct services encompass essential programs, while subcontractors bring specialized expertise to address specific needs such as healthcare, housing, and education.

The chosen service delivery model combines the strengths of direct service provision and subcontracting, allowing for flexibility and a tailored approach to diverse community needs. Direct services provide a foundation for stability, while subcontracting leverages external expertise, enhancing the overall quality and reach of our programs.

ABE CAP uses Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding to address unmet and under-met community needs in partnership with our community. The flexibility of CSBG funding allows ABE CAP to achieve greater impact within the Agency and in the community as it pursues its mission.

Our Agency maximizes funding utilization by employing a client-centric service delivery system that emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, and adaptability. This approach positions us to effectively address the unique needs of our community, aligning with the spirit of the CSBG Act

2.2 Please explain how the Board of Directors was involved in the planning process to create the CAP. (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

- **Detail the specific ways in which the Board of Directors actively participated in the planning process for the Community Action Plan (CAP).**
- **Highlight their contributions to shaping the goals and strategies outlined in the CAP**
- **Describe any meetings, workshops, or collaborative sessions where the board members provided input, shared insights, and played a role in decision-making.**
- **Summarize and attach your board minutes to answer these questions. Note dates when these actions happened. This will help tell the story of how your Board plays an active role in the Community Action Plan process**

Example: ABE CAP is dedicated to transparent and inclusive planning processes, particularly in the creation of the Community Action Plan (CAP). The Board of Directors played a pivotal role in shaping this plan through active and collaborative involvement.

Throughout the planning process, the Board of Directors participated in various meetings, workshops, and collaborative sessions dedicated to CAP development. These sessions were designed to provide a platform for board members to contribute their insights, expertise, and perspectives. Open dialogue and brainstorming sessions were encouraged, fostering an environment where board members actively engaged in discussions about community needs and potential strategies.

Specifically, the Board of Directors provided valuable input on goal setting and prioritization at their February and April meetings, helping define the overarching objectives outlined in the CAP. Their collective expertise and understanding of community dynamics played a crucial role in shaping the strategies and initiatives proposed in the plan.

Decision-making was a collaborative effort, with the Board of Directors offering guidance on resource allocation, programmatic emphasis, and overarching priorities. This ensured that the CAP aligned with the goals of the Illinois Economic Opportunity Act and with our community's unique needs. The Board of Directors approved the plan at its June meeting.

In summary, the Board of Directors of ABE CAP actively participated in the planning process for the CAP, contributing to the formulation of goals and strategies that are both responsive to legislative requirements and reflective of the community's specific challenges and opportunities.

2.3 How was the client population involved in this process? (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

- **Outline the strategies employed to engage the client population in the planning process of the CAP.**
- **Explain any surveys, focus groups, or consultations conducted to gather their perspectives and needs.**
- **Emphasize the efforts made to ensure representation from diverse segments of the client population and how their feedback influenced the development of the plan.**

Example: The client population's involvement in the Community Action Plan (CAP) planning process was a cornerstone of our Agency's commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness. Several strategies were employed to engage the client population in a meaningful and representative manner.

Surveys, focus groups, and consultations were instrumental in gathering the perspectives and needs of the client population during the community needs assessment process. We conducted comprehensive surveys that reached a broad spectrum of clients, ensuring a diverse range of voices were heard. The data collected from these surveys provided valuable insights into the priorities, challenges, and aspirations of our clients.

ABE CAP conducted one focus group in each county in the spring to facilitate in-depth discussions on specific themes and issues and to gather qualitative data to aid in planning and prioritization. The focus group minutes can be found as attachment C. These sessions allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the client population's experiences and expectations. The insights gained from focus groups complemented the survey data, contributing to a more holistic understanding of community needs. Focus group participants included only income-eligible residents, with both ABE CAP customers and non-customers participating.

Efforts were made to ensure diverse representation within the client population, considering factors such as demographics, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Outreach initiatives were designed to reach clients across different neighborhoods and communities, fostering a plan that reflects the varied needs of our service area.

The feedback obtained from the client population played a pivotal role in shaping the development of the CAP. Their input directly influenced the identification of priorities, the formulation of strategies, and the establishment of goals, especially around transportation. This inclusive approach reinforces our Agency's dedication to crafting a plan that genuinely serves the diverse needs of our community.

2.4 How was the community involved in this process? (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

- **Detail the community engagement strategies implemented during the CAP planning process.**
- **This could include town hall meetings, community forums, outreach programs, or partnerships with local organizations.**
- **Highlight instances where the community provided valuable input, and describe any adjustments made to the plan based on community feedback.**

Example: The community played a central role in the planning process of the Community Action Plan (CAP), with our Agency implementing robust community engagement strategies to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness.

Consultations with community leaders and advocates (supporting customers) were a crucial component. These consultations, documented as key informant interviews, ensured that the planning process considered the perspectives of individuals who may face barriers to direct participation. By engaging with community leaders, we sought to represent the interests of various segments within the client population. The key informant interview summary is included as Attachment D.

ABE CAP is a member of the area Human Services Collaborative (HSC). The Agency presented a draft of the CAP at the March meeting of the HSC and received feedback on the contents.

ABE CAP's Board of Directors, complying with the tripartite structure, includes elected officials, private organizations, and individuals with low income. The Board's perspective and involvement in the planning process also demonstrates broad community involvement.

The CAP, therefore, is a result of collaborative efforts, reflecting the collective wisdom and aspirations of the community. The engagement strategies employed underscore our Agency's dedication to community-driven and community-responsive planning.

2.5 How will your Agency leadership team and Board of Directors monitor and document the success of the plan, including comparing targeted outcomes to actual results during the program year? (CSBG ACT)

- **Outline the specific measures and mechanisms put in place to monitor and document the success of the CAP.**
- **Describe the performance metrics, data collection methods, and reporting structures that will be utilized.**
- **Explain how regular assessments and evaluations will be conducted to compare targeted outcomes with actual results throughout the program year.**
- **Highlight the role of the Agency leadership team and Board of Directors in overseeing and ensuring the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation process.**

Example: Measures and Mechanisms:

ALCAA is committed to a robust monitoring and documentation process to ensure the success of the Community Action Plan (CAP). Specific measures and mechanisms include the establishment of key performance metrics

aligned with the CAP's objectives. These metrics encompass quantitative and qualitative indicators relevant to each program and service area outlined in the plan.

Performance Metrics and Data Collection:

Our Agency employs a comprehensive set of performance metrics, ranging from service utilization rates to community impact indicators. Data collection methods involve a combination of client feedback surveys, program-specific assessments, and regular reporting from internal systems. This approach ensures a well-rounded and accurate representation of actual results.

Assessments and Evaluations:

Regular assessments and evaluations are integral to our monitoring process. Throughout the program year, we conduct scheduled reviews to compare targeted outcomes with actual results. This involves analyzing programmatic data, assessing community feedback, and adjusting strategies as needed to address emerging needs or challenges promptly.

Reporting Structures:

ALCAA has established clear reporting structures to facilitate effective monitoring and documentation. Periodic reports will be generated, detailing progress against set goals, challenges encountered, and areas for improvement. These reports will be shared with the Board of Directors and the leadership team, fostering transparency and accountability.

Role of Leadership Team and Board of Directors:

The Agency leadership team and Board of Directors play a vital role in overseeing and ensuring the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation process. The leadership team is responsible for day-to-day implementation and data collection, while the Board of Directors provides strategic oversight, reviewing reports, and making informed decisions based on the documented outcomes.

In summary, ALCAA's approach to monitoring and documenting the success of the CAP is characterized by clear performance metrics, robust data collection methods, regular assessments, and active involvement of the leadership team and Board of Directors. This ensures that our Agency remains agile and responsive, continuously striving for excellence in meeting the goals outlined in the Community Action Plan.

3 Service Delivery System

The CAP should identify the service delivery system in the CAA service area that is targeted toward low-income citizens. It should also identify the accessibility and effectiveness of that system in meeting the needs of low-income clients. This should be done in a collaborative manner that involves the Board of Directors, key stakeholders, management, and the community.

3.1 Describe your Agency's service delivery system. Include a description of your client intake process or system and specify whether services are delivered via direct services or subcontractors, or a combination of both. (CSBG Act)

It's important to note that the specific structure and processes may vary based on the type of Agency, the services offered, and the target population. In, Section 2 you should have summarized these systems, now you should elaborate on how your service delivery system functions at each step in the client's experience while working with your agency.

Some things to consider when constructing your narrative for this section.

- Client Intake Process:
 - Agencies typically begin their service delivery with a client intake process. This process involves gathering relevant information about the client to assess their needs and determine eligibility for services.
 - Information collected during intake may include demographic details, background information, financial status, and the nature of the client's needs.
- Service Delivery Models:
 - Direct Services: Can you provide examples of services directly provided by your CSBG grant?
 - Subcontractors: How are services from other programs and community partners integrated into your agency's offerings?
 - Combination of Both: Many Agencies use a combination of direct services and subcontracting. They may have in-house services for certain needs while outsourcing external partners to meet client needs. This approach allows Agencies to leverage the expertise of external entities and offer a broader range of services.
- Service Delivery Channels:
 - How does your agency currently handle customer access?
 - Are walk-ins and scheduled appointments both accepted?
 - How does your agency use the outreach offices?
 - How are they distributed across your service area?
 - What is the process for determining a referral is needed for an eligible customers?
 - How is the referral documented and shared with the customer?

Example:

ABE CAP accepts both walk-ins and scheduled appointments and has outreach offices in all three counties. Previously, prospective customers had to call or visit an office to set an appointment, but the Agency recently developed and implemented online appointment scheduling.

All customer engagement begins with a conversation to learn about the customer's needs and wants before completing an intake application. This helps ABE CAP direct customers to the service or partner organization best able to meet the customer's needs.

When a family could benefit from an ABE CAP service, the Agency completes a comprehensive intake process that includes income eligibility, demographic data, and a brief needs assessment to establish a baseline of needs and explore additional unmet needs beyond the needs the family initially expressed. Once the customer is determined eligible, the customer and the staff discuss potential services and agree on a service and referral plan that is documented as the last step of the intake process.

Families receive services provided directly by ABE CAP's CSBG grant (such as food assistance, college scholarships, case management), services provided by ABE CAP's other programs (such as LIHEAP, Weatherization, and Head Start/Early Head Start), and services provided by community partners (referrals for a wide range of services). ABE CAP does not currently subgrant any CSBG funding to other organizations.

ABE CAP provides in-person services (appointments and walk-ins), phone applications, and virtual (video) meetings. The Agency hopes to implement online service applications and assessments in the future.

3.2 Identify all underserved rural or metro communities in your geographical service area and steps you will take *(or have taken)* to improve your service provision to these areas.

- **Analyze the findings to understand the specific challenges and needs of rural and metro communities within the Agency's service area.**
 - **To do this you should have done a demographic analysis that breaks down the collected data to understand the demographic composition of different geographical areas in your service area.**
 - **Look for patterns and disparities in access to services, health outcomes, education levels, employment opportunities, and other essential domains.**
- **Outline the steps your Agency is planning to take or has already implemented to enhance service provision to these communities.**
- **Highlight any outreach efforts, partnerships, or specialized programs designed to address the unique needs of these underserved areas.**

Example:

ABE CAP works hard to include all communities and neighborhoods in its service area. The Agency uses social media, print media, community partner relationships, and other methods to reach eligible populations. The Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Directors have highlighted the following areas where greater effort is needed to maximize the effectiveness of its service delivery area:

1. *Agency outcome data shows lower outcome achievement in Boone County than expected. The Leadership Team disaggregated the data and noticed low participation by Hispanic families in Agency services. Nearly one of every four residents of Boone County identifies as Hispanic. The Agency is intentionally hiring staff who speak Spanish, translating materials to Spanish, and is forming and strengthening partnerships in Boone County.*
2. *LIHEAP applications exceed the "Index of Need" in Adams and Boone counties, but fall short in Edwards County. The Agency will increase outreach efforts in Edwards County.*

3.3 How do the services proposed remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency? (CSBG Act)

The services proposed by a CAA are designed to address a range of obstacles and problems that may hinder individuals from achieving self-sufficiency. The specific services can vary based on the nature of the Agency and the needs of its target population

Explain how the services your Agency offers address specific obstacles and challenges faced by individuals in achieving self-sufficiency. Provide concrete examples of how your programs or interventions have effectively removed barriers and empowered clients to overcome challenges on their path to self-sufficiency.

ABE CAP's Local Theory of Change (Attachment F) demonstrates the Agency's plan to help families achieve greater economic and social mobility. The Agency's approach includes:

- 1. Basic Needs: ABE CAP's basic needs services (food assistance, LIHEAP, Weatherization, and transportation) form a stable platform allowing the family to engage in planning and skills development. When basic needs are not met, families are in crisis and cannot pursue social and economic mobility.*
- 2. Education: The Agency's education programming (Head Start/Early Head Start, college scholarships, and case management) provide instructional guidance to help families build the skills and credentials needed to improve self-sufficiency.*
- 3. Empowerment: The Agency's comprehensive case management program places the family at the center of the process, empowering the family to set achievable goals based on the family's strengths. CSBG funding is used to directly remove barriers as they occur in the areas of housing, transportation, child care, or any other domain as long as the family remains engaged and actively participating in the goal identification and attainment process.*

ABE CAP is currently working with a single parent motivated to return to the workforce. This individual is a survivor of domestic violence and has two children. ABE CAP provide energy assistance and a referral to food pantries. The youngest child was enrolled in Head Start and the Agency helped the family apply for after school care for the older child. The Agency partnered with WIOA for job training assistance and helped with job applications. A local factory hired the customer but she could not afford the repairs her car needed to safely get to work and needed help with rent until she received her first paycheck. ABE CAP assisted with both needs and continues to meet with the household. The older child wants to join the orchestra at school. Agency staff found a resource in the community to cover instrument rental.

3.4 Describe the process you used to prioritize the needs identified in your needs assessment to select your proposed work programs. Be sure to identify how the proposed programs addresses priority needs. (CSBG Act)(IL Economic Opportunity Act)

Each Agency's approach is unique to their Agency. However, in general some techniques that can be used to prioritize the needs identified in your needs assessment are as follows:

- Begin with the Family and Community Needs identified in your most recent Community Needs Assessment (or Community Needs Assessment Update).

- Identify your prioritization planning process and who will be included in the process.
 - In addition to leadership staff, Agencies must document the involvement of the Board, income-eligible residents, and partners.
 - Income-eligible resident and partner involvement can be achieved through surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and other methods. Asking income-eligible residents to rank their needs as part of the CNA process can assist with prioritization and demonstrate involvement.

- Evaluate each need based on the following criteria:
 - Is the need an urgent unmet gap in the community if the Agency does not use CSBG funding to address the need?
 - Would a CSBG work program in this area provide either an essential basic service or an initiative that helps families and individuals overcome the causes and conditions of poverty?
 - Does the proposed work program promote equitable access to services by all income-eligible residents, or does it provide targeted outreach to underserved areas?
 - Does the Agency have adequate CSBG funding and staff resources to implement the work program successfully?

Example:

ABE CAP used the following methods to analyze and prioritize data and develop the CAP:

1. *Identification of Key Data Trends Within the Community Needs Assessment: The CSBG Program Director aggregated the data collected for the Community Needs Assessment and included key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty in the Agency's service area as part of the needs assessment process. The CSBG Program Director also disaggregated the data to check for disparities based on geography or demographics within the service area, such as the lower-than-expected participation of Hispanic families in Boone County.*
2. *Income-Eligible Focus Group Discussion and Review of Key Data Trends: After identifying key trends, Agency staff turned towards possible solutions, starting with income-eligible focus groups in each county (Attachment C). The focus groups helped ABE CAP prioritize potential work programs based on feedback from customers.*
3. *Key Informant Interviews: The Agency used key informant interviews of supporting customers (partners, local funders) to further refine prioritization, encompassing a better understanding of community-wide needs and resources.*
4. *Executive Leadership Team Review of Prior Year Data, Resources, and Key Data Trends: The Executive Leadership Team, consisting of the Executive Director, Finance Director, and all Program Directors met twice to review and discuss the prioritization process and results and to consider resources (including budget) for the development of work programs.*
5. *Board Review and Prioritization: The Board of Directors participated in the planning process at multiple meetings, receiving updates and preliminary reports throughout the spring. The Executive Leadership Team presented the draft CSBG application and budget at the June meeting for final discussion and approval (see Attachment A).*

3.5 Complete the chart below to demonstrate how the Agency developed work programs based on your community needs assessment and planning process. Consult with a ROMA professional to complete this chart and assure the need meets the intended outcome. (Organizational Standards)

Need Statement	Work Program Name
<p>Identifying broad domain areas doesn't provide a clear identification of the needs facing low-income populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example: saying "Education" doesn't tell you who or what the actual education need is. <p>When writing your needs statements remember these 3 rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cannot use one word. • You cannot identify the service or strategy that would address a need. • You cannot use the same needs statement for all 3 levels of needs. 	<p>The Work Program Name should align with the Work Program Name listed in the Stars System.</p>
<i>Students cannot afford college</i>	<i>Educational Financial Aid Assistance (1)</i>
<i>Seniors lack food security</i>	<i>Nutrition and Food/Meals</i>
<i>Families need greater social and economic mobility</i>	<i>Case Management</i>

4 Linkages and Funding Coordination

CAAs play an integral role in the delivery and coordination of services. They lead the charge to reduce poverty by providing resources and support the most vulnerable citizens by delivering social services to residents directly and through partnerships with local community-based agencies, provide information and referral, emergency food, client intervention and stabilization, case work, case management, childcare, head start, workforce development, youth programming and senior services. This section addresses the use of outreach offices, information and referral services and how your Agency follows up to ensure comprehensive services to the client population and description of how services are coordinated with other resources (internal and external).

The CAP must include a description of how services are coordinated with other resources (internal and external). This section should specify who the Agency coordinates with, how the coordination is accomplished (both formal and informal), identify any local groups the Agency participates in that enhances coordination, and state how the Agency participates in service delivery displays and presentations at local job and information fairs or similar functions.

Graphics can be inserted in place of narratives below.

4.1 How do you develop linkages to fill identified gaps in your service area through the provision of information, referral, case management, or follow-up? Please provide at least one example of how you developed linkages with another organization or organizations to address an identified gap in the past year. (CSBG Act)

- What community social service groups does your staff join in the communities you serve? How do these groups partner to address the needs of people with low income?
- Describe the referral mechanisms in place to direct individuals or entities to appropriate services.
 - Discuss the criteria for referral and any partnerships established to ensure seamless transitions for those seeking assistance.
- If you provide case management, explain how your case managers work with families to address unmet needs your Agency cannot address.
- Provide an example from the past year where your Agency developed linkages with another organization or organizations to address a particular service gap. Explain:
 - The nature of the identified gap.
 - The organizations involved in the linkage.
 - The collaborative strategies employed to bridge the gap.
 - The outcomes or impact achieved from the linkage.
 - Acknowledge any challenges encountered during the linkage development process

Example:

Abe Lincoln CAA recognizes the critical role of developing linkages to address identified service gaps in our community. In our commitment to comprehensive service delivery, we prioritize information dissemination, referral mechanisms, case management, and robust follow-up procedures.

One of the service gaps identified within our community is the limited accessibility to mental health resources for vulnerable populations, particularly among low-income families and individuals facing housing insecurity. We leverage multiple channels, including community workshops, social media platforms, and local partnerships, to provide accessible information about mental health services, support programs, and resources available within our service area. To enhance referral processes, we established collaborations with local mental health organizations and clinics. Our Agency developed clear criteria for referrals, ensuring individuals receive timely and appropriate assistance from our partner organizations. Our case management approach involves a comprehensive assessment of individuals' mental health needs. We collaborate with licensed counselors and mental health professionals to develop personalized care plans, ensuring tailored support for each client. Robust follow-up procedures include regular check-ins, progress assessments, and feedback sessions with clients and partner organizations. This allows us to address any emerging needs, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and make necessary adjustments.

In the past year, our Agency successfully developed linkages with a local mental health clinic, establishing a dedicated program for low-income individuals. This collaboration resulted in increased access to counseling services, support groups, and educational workshops, directly addressing the identified mental health service gap. Challenges, such as limited transportation for clients, were addressed by coordinating with local transportation services to ensure individuals could access mental health appointments. This highlights our commitment to overcoming obstacles in providing holistic support.

Continuous evaluation and refinement involve regular feedback sessions with clients and partners, allowing us to adapt our strategies based on lessons learned. This ongoing process ensures the effectiveness and relevance of our programs.

Looking ahead, our Agency aims to expand mental health linkages, exploring opportunities for telehealth services and collaborating with additional community partners. We remain dedicated to identifying and addressing evolving service gaps within our community.

ABE CAP also participates in the Human Services Council (HSC) where we collaborate and plan with our community partners to identify and address unmet needs. The HSC partners use the IRIS referral system to standardize and document referrals and follow-up to maximize linkages to benefit customers.

4.2 How do you coordinate the use of CSBG funding with other public and private resources? How do local and other resources work together with CSBG funding to meet needs in your area? (CSBG Act)

Highlight how CSBG funding, specifically, is coordinated with other public and private resources.

- **Outline specific strategies employed to coordinate CSBG funding with other public and private resources.**
 - **Mention partnerships with local government agencies, non-profits, and private organizations to leverage additional resources. Include WIOA even though it is also addressed specifically later in the CAP.**
- **Describe how any local resources, both public and private, are integrated into CSBG-funded initiatives.**
 - **Provide examples of collaborative projects or programs where CSBG funding complements and enhances local efforts.**

- **Emphasize the synergy between CSBG funding and local initiatives in meeting diverse community needs.**

Example:

ABE CAP is an integral part of the community in its service area. Staff engage in partnership with others to meet the needs of local residents. Specific strategies where CSBG funding works with other public and private resources include:

- 1. ABE CAP is a WIOA partner (see below).*
- 2. The Agency participates in the local Human Services Council (HSC), with CSBG funding supporting staff time to attend and collaborate.*
- 3. The Agency addressed a gap in public transit services in two counties (see innovative programs, below). CSBG funds were used to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, prioritize needs (as described in this CAP), and to partner with local mass transit providers and the United Way to address a community need. While CSBG funds were not used directly to provide transportation, they were essential to development of a solution.*
- 4. ABE CAP's two generation case management services rely heavily on partnership with other public and private resources. Case management services rely on the partnership with local employers, health care providers, social service partners, and others as the Agency implements customer-centric care based on the family's strengths and needs.*

4.3 Describe how you collaborate with other social service providers in your area, including religious organizations and charitable groups, to maximize resources, avoid duplication, and coordinate activities? (CSBG Act)

Describe the Agency's overarching strategies for collaboration with social service providers, emphasizing the inclusive approach that spans religious organizations and charitable groups.

- **Address how the Agency actively works to avoid duplication of services through effective communication and collaboration.**
- **Outline the Agency's methods for coordinating activities with other social service providers, including established referral processes, and partner social service agency meetings.**
 - **Mention communication channels, regular meetings, and joint planning efforts to ensure cohesive and complementary services.**
- **Explicitly highlight how the Agency collaborates with religious organizations and charitable groups.**
 - **Provide examples of joint initiatives, shared resources, or partnerships that demonstrate the inclusivity of the collaboration approach.**
- **Discuss how collaboration maximizes resources for the Agency and its partners.**
 - **Emphasize the collective impact achieved through shared expertise, funding, and personnel.**
 - **Briefly mention the positive impact and outcomes resulting from collaboration with a diverse range of social service providers.**

Example:

ABE CAP's community collaboration includes:

- 1. Active Member of the Human Services Council (HSC): ABE CAP actively participates on the HSC, where the community discusses and addresses the needs of residents.*

2. *Participation in the IRIS referral system: The Agency and its partners use the IRIS referral system to make, receive, and track referrals for services. This unified referral system reduces duplication and maximizes efficiency.*
3. *Tripartite Board Involvement: The Agency's tripartite Board of Directors includes community partners and local elected officials, leading to enhanced partnership and understanding in our common work.*
4. *Documented Community Partnerships: ABE CAP documents community partnership through formal Memoranda of Understanding, and by maintaining a graphic representation of community engagement (see below). The Agency reports its partnerships as part of the CSBG annual report.*
5. *Faith-Based Partnerships: ABE CAP regularly refers customers to local faith-based partners when other sources of funding are not sufficient or available to meet a family's needs. The Agency also regularly speaks at religious meetings and events to share information about services, and conducts outreach activities at partner locations, including faith-based partners.*

ABE CAP's Local Theory of Change (Attachment F) recognizes the importance of including a broad array of community partners in fulfillment of its mission. Strong linkages and active collaboration leads to synergistic effectiveness not possible otherwise.



4.4 Describe how the Agency coordinates employment and training activities, including at a minimum, how the Agency coordinates with WIOA."? (CSBG Act)

Please attach your WIOA agreement in the Appendices (Instructions can be found in the *CAP Template Guide*) in addition to describing coordination of other employment and training services provided.

- **Provide a focused explanation of how the Agency specifically coordinates with WIOA.**
- **Briefly discuss the impact of the Agency's other coordination efforts on employment and training outcomes, if applicable.**
- **Highlight key achievements, improvements, or success stories resulting from effective collaboration, including any measurable outcomes, if applicable.**

Example:

ABE CAP partners with WIOA through the development of the WIOA MOU process. ABE CAP's CSBG Program Director participates in workforce development committee meetings, and actively engages in the WIOA planning process. ABE CAP refers eligible households to WIOA for employment services, and receives referrals from WIOA for case management, utilities, early childhood, college scholarships, and other services maximizing employability.

Workforce development staff and ABE CAP staff participate on the Human Services Council (HSC), where employment services are discussed and collaborated.

ABE CAP's comprehensive two-generation case management program focuses on improved family self-sufficiency, which often includes employability goals. The Agency's case management process recognizes the unique nature of each family's needs and dreams. This customer-centric approach often leads to employability gains. For example, three heads of household last year attained a CNA credential and one of those individuals is enrolled at the community college to study nursing. Other heads of household are pursuing welding, while others have obtained employment at a local factory or in service jobs.

4.5 How does your Agency ensure people have access to nutritious food on an emergency basis? (CSBG Act)

- **If your Agency provides food assistance, describe you nutrition programs.**
- **Describe any partnerships or collaborations with local food banks, food pantries, or community organizations.**
- **Highlight how these partnerships ensure income-eligible residents have access to a reliable and timely supply of nutritious food during emergencies.**
- **Discuss the Agency's outreach strategies to communicate the availability of emergency food resources to the community.**

Example:

ABE CAP operates a choice-based food pantry in Boone County, supported by CSBG funding. The pantry is part of the Feeding America initiative and works with the food bank to provide essential food to families in

need. ABE CAP opened this food pantry three years ago when a large pantry closed, leaving a gap in local resources. The pantry is staffed mostly by volunteers, and is open five days per week.

The Agency partners with existing pantries in Adams and Edwards counties and supports the work of the pantries by making referrals, and publicizing the pantries on social media and the Agency website.

ABE CAP monitors food security for its service area through its community needs assessment process, and adapts its services and strategies as needed.

5 Youth Initiatives:

This section should describe how the Agency will address the needs of youth in low-income communities through youth development programs that support the primary role of family, give priority to the prevention of youth problems and crime and promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth.

5.1 Describe how your Agency will promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community-based youth development programs such as the establishment of violence-free zones, youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, entrepreneurship programs, after-school child care. (CSBG Act)

- **Provide an overview of any innovative youth development programs the Agency intends to provide, if applicable, including:**
 - violence-free zones
 - youth mediation
 - mentoring
 - life skills training
 - job creation
 - entrepreneurship
 - after-school childcare.
- **Highlight the Agency's plan to establish and strengthen partnerships with community organizations, schools, businesses, and local government to support the development and expansion of innovative youth programs. At a minimum, how does the Agency collaborate with community partners who address the needs of youth?**

Example:

ABE CAP's services to children and their families include:

1. Comprehensive Head Start and Early Head Start for young children and their families, including wraparound services through the preschool for all initiative.
2. Teen parenting services at the Early Head Start center located in the high school in Adams County.
3. College scholarships for income-qualified residents, including youth.

While ABE CAP does not provide services to directly address the needs of teens (including violence-free zones, youth mediation, job creating, or life skills training), the Agency partners with other providers in our service area to meet the holistic needs of youth. As an active member of the Human Services Council (HSC), ABE CAP attends service planning sessions, collaborates to meet gaps in services, and participates in the IRIS referral database, where it receives referrals from agencies providing direct services to teens and their families.

5.2 Describe how your Agency will use funds to support community and neighborhood-based initiatives, which may include fatherhood and other initiatives, with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting. (CSBG Act)

- **Provide an overview of any innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives the Agency plans to support, including a focus on fatherhood and other relevant programs. If your Agency does not directly provide these services, describe how they are provided in the community, and how your Agency collaborates or partners with others.**
- **Clearly state the goals related to family strengthening and effective parenting that your Agency aims to achieve. Briefly describe how your Agency's services strengthen families and support positive parenting.**
- **Emphasize the Agency's intention to collaborate with local organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders to implement and sustain these initiatives effectively.**

Example:

ABE CAP's two generational case management program, embedded in the Head Start and Early Head Start program, encourages whole-family involvement in the assessment and goal-setting processes. CSBG funding can be used to help families reach specific goals leading to self-sufficiency as long as the goals are based on a comprehensive family needs assessment. All participating families have young children and engage in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to measure the development of parenting skills development.

Additionally, Head Start health data revealed high blood levels of lead in children in Edwards County. ABE CAP worked with local officials in Edwards County to apply for lead abatement funding. The Edwards County Health Department received HUD funding and will begin abatement activities later this year.

6 Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives

The CAP must contain a description of how the Agency uses funds to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives related to the purpose of the Community Services Block Grant. Supporting innovative programs and activities conducted by community action Agencies or other neighborhood-based organizations to eliminate poverty, promote self-sufficiency, and promote community revitalization

6.1 Describe at least one innovative initiative or approach your Agency developed or implemented in the past year, or plans to develop in the coming year. (CSBG Act)

An innovative program can be many different things, from process improvements to providing new services based on community needs.

Consider these things when evaluating your agency's innovative initiatives and approaches:

- Clearly state when the innovative program or approach was developed or implemented in the past year, is currently in progress, or is planned for the coming year?
- Clearly describe the innovative program or approach.
 - Define its goals, objectives, and target audience.
 - State why you implemented the initiative.
 - If the program is planned for the coming year, outline the anticipated steps for development and implementation. 'Discuss any partnerships, resources, or strategies that will be leveraged to ensure the success of the program. Clarify how the program aligns with long-term Agency goals.
- Where available, include supporting evidence such as testimonials, participant feedback, or relevant statistics.
 - This adds credibility to the description and strengthens the case for the program's effectiveness.

Example:

Based on customer satisfaction data, ABE CAP changed its service delivery model in the past year. Customers expressed high levels of satisfaction with ABE CAP, but expressed frustration over busy telephone lines and long wait times to be seen, especially during the LIHEAP season. ABE CAP implemented online appointment scheduling, including the option for either in-person or telephone appointments. Qualitative feedback on this change has been overwhelmingly positive.

Additionally, based on feedback from the Agency's Income-Eligible Focus Groups (Attachment C), ABE CAP met with community partners regarding access to public transportation services. Mass transit providers in two of the three counties served (Adams and Boone) now provide free mass transit rides to households receiving SNAP, TANF, or LIHEAP. This initiative was funded by United Way based in part on ABE CAP's quantitative and qualitative data.

7 Disaster Preparedness

The CAP must contain a description of how the Agency will respond to local disasters. Disaster preparedness is essential to mitigate the devastating impact of natural or man-made disasters by ensuring communities and individuals are equipped with the necessary knowledge, resources, and plans to respond effectively. Without proper preparedness, lives can be lost, infrastructure can be severely damaged, and recovery efforts can be significantly hampered in the aftermath of a disaster. Disasters include things that impact the community at large but also incidents that impact only the Agency, which would limit the Agency's ability to serve the community.

If your agency does not have a full disaster plan use this guide to make the first steps in creating one. At minimum, an Agency's plan should include details for:

- Technology and IT resilience and mobility.
- Physical (building) resilience
- Active violence threat response
- Communication plan
- Staff training in case of disaster

7.1 Does your Agency have a written disaster plan in place that includes strategies on how to remain operational and continue providing services to low-income individuals and families during and following a disaster?

- Yes
 No

7.2 If so, when was the disaster plan last updated?

N/A

7.3 Attach a copy of your plan in the appendices

7.4 Check box below that applies to your Agency.

- Public Agency: Plan can be reviewed at Agency
 Disaster Preparedness Plan Attached.
 Not Applicable

7.5 If your Agency does not have a disaster plan, please Identify types of disasters that have occurred in your area that could impact low-income individuals and families.

Our area has experienced flooding, and tornados/high wind storms over the past year. We also have nuclear power generating plant in our territory, so we participate in evacuation planning with the community.

7.6 If you do not have a written plan, or if your written plan does not include working with your community to address disasters, who do you partner with when a disaster occurs? (i.e. Data Security Breach, Flooding, etc.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IEMA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Red Cross <input type="checkbox"/> V.O.A.D. (<i>Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster</i>) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C.O.A.D. (<i>Community Organizations Active in Disaster</i>) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Offices of Emergency Management <input type="checkbox"/> City Offices of Emergency Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Catholic Charities <input type="checkbox"/> Community Foundations <input type="checkbox"/> Farm Rescue	<input type="checkbox"/> IL Dept. of Public Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health Departments <input type="checkbox"/> FEMA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Religious Charities <input type="checkbox"/> Salvation Army <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> United Way <input type="checkbox"/> ICNA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IT Security Firm <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <i>In the CAP Template Guide you can find additional potential resources and methods of contact.</i>
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If 'Other' was marked above please list the partnerships below.

We partner with the local nuclear plant, and with the Sheriffs in all three counties.

8 Appendices

Please complete the table below by entering the title of the document and its assigned appendix letter.

Document Title	Appendix Item
Board Minutes from CAP Approval Board Meeting	A
WIOA Agreement	B
Income-Eligible Focus Group Minutes	C
Key Informant Interview Summary	D
Example CSBG Dashboard Report	E
ABE CAP Local Theory of Change	F