



## Understanding CSBG Accountability in the Current Political Environment

### CSBG Has a Highly Effective Management and Accountability System

- The Community Action Network is funded by the Community Services Block Grant – and, unlike other block grants, has developed a highly structured management and accountability system. This system is known as ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability).
- ROMA was chosen as a semi-finalist for the prestigious Innovations in American Government Awards from the Institute for Government Innovation at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2002.
- In response to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1994, when the CSBG Act was reauthorized in 1998, outcome measures were required. The outcomes are reported using the National Performance Indicators (NPIs) which provide data on success in the Six National Goals.
- The NPIs provide a standardized reporting system for States and local agencies.
- ROMA provides timely information to States and local agencies they can use to improve performance. Measuring performance at frequent intervals against targets allows for program adjustments and better results.
- ROMA is about more than reporting performance data – it is also a framework for assessment, planning, and analyzing data that helps local agencies to manage and to continually improve performance and outcomes.

### The Administration’s Proposed Cuts and Reform to CSBG are *Not* Based on CSBG’s Documented Good Performance

**PERCEPTION:** *CSBG is an older program that has not changed over the last 40 years.*

**FACT:** CSBG is not a program. CSBG is a federal investment that creates an infrastructure able to respond locally to the national problems that cause poverty. Community needs assessments drive the response and innovation. For one community, this might mean providing job placement and retention services; for another, a community development project. In rural areas, it might mean providing access to health services or developing a rural transportation system. Most recently, in 2009 and 2010, CSBG rose to meet the challenges of the Recovery Act, and was 8th out of 200 Recovery Act programs, in jobs created and saved.

**PERCEPTION:** *There is a lack of oversight in CSBG.*

**FACT:** States monitor and provide critical oversight of local agencies. In fact, in their review of CSBG, Government Accountability Office analysts found that the states they visited “*provided*

*oversight in addition to on-site monitoring through such activities as reviewing reports, coordinating with other federal and state programs, and providing formal training and technical assistance.”<sup>1</sup>* In addition to state monitoring, local agencies are required to obtain audited financial statements. States have indicated that due to the oversight and accountability provided by them, CSBG-funded local agencies are generally stronger and healthier than average nonprofits.

**PERCEPTION:** *There is no competition in CSBG.*

**FACT:** There is competition. Although poor-performing local agencies are few, competition is used to find new agencies – in the last 5 years 17 States took action to terminate and redesignate 30 agencies. Local agencies run competitions regularly to award CSBG and other funds to the best providers. In addition, States often use CSBG discretionary funds to provide competitive grants for innovative or demonstration programs.

**PERCEPTION:** *There is lack of accountability in CSBG.*

**FACT:** There is accountability. CSBG utilizes ROMA, which is an accountability system for 1,065 local agencies. The Obama Administration favors empirical and evidence-based research. However, implementing such practices would require a major federal investment to be made in the technology and manpower needed to conduct longitudinal and site-specific studies. ROMA makes more sense because it represents a wide ranging management tool used to establish, measure, and improve current outcomes.

## **Use ROMA to Refute Perceptions of the Administration**

Now is the most critical time to **use your ROMA data!** Use specific numbers to:

- Tell how you’ve improved the conditions in which low-income people live. (NPI Goal 2)
- Tell about your initiatives to help low-income people own a stake in their community. (NPI Goal 3)
- Tell **how many** individuals and families would be affected in your community. (Section G)
- Tell **who** would be affected in your community – children, seniors, low-income working Americans. (Section G)
- Tell **which** valuable and unique programs would cease to exist without adequate CSBG funding. (NPIs)
- Share **what** kinds of partnerships your agency is involved in, to showcase your agency’s investment in and value to the community. (NPI 4.1)

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*For ROMA data resources, please visit: [www.nascsp.org/CSBG-Publications/598/CSBG-IS-Annual-Reports.aspx](http://www.nascsp.org/CSBG-Publications/598/CSBG-IS-Annual-Reports.aspx)*

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Community Services Block Grant Program: HHS Should Improve Oversight by Focusing Monitoring and Assistance Efforts on Areas of High Risk*, GAO-06-627 (June 2006), page 16.