

National Indicators of Community Action Performance

Community Action was established in the United States by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In announcing the Act, President Lyndon Johnson stated, “The Act does not merely expand on old programs or improve what is already being done. It charts a new course. It strikes at the causes of poverty. . .not just the consequences of poverty.” Congress defined the purpose of the Act as “to eliminate poverty in the midst of plenty in this nation.”

That bold vision demanded a new way of doing work. Community Action Agencies were envisioned as acting not only at the level of the individual or family (“enabling low-income families, and low-income individuals of all ages. . .to become self-sufficient”), but also at the level of community change (“to make the entire community more responsive to the needs of the poor” and achieving changes “in the community’s attitudes and practices towards the poor”) and at the level of working with agencies to increase their capacity to create change. (OEO Instruction 6320-1)

This focus on work at three levels – family, agency, and community – has continued, and since 1994, the Community Services Network has been guided by six broad anti-poverty goals:

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

The National Indicators of Community Action Performance (NPIs) were created in 2005 to enable the Community Services Network to present a more uniform and coherent national picture of their work and accomplishments. Although created somewhat responsively after an Office of Management and Budget review indicating the need for a standardized reporting system, the 12 NPIs do provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the work undertaken by Community Action Agencies at the three levels of family, agency, and community, and are reflective of the Network’s belief that changes must be effected in all three of these areas in order to enable the elimination of poverty.

The National Indicators of Community Action Performance

Goal 1: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient

National Performance Indicator 1.1 – Employment

The number and percentage of low-income participants in community action employment initiatives who get a job or become self-employed as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. Unemployed and obtained a job.*
- B. Employed and obtained an increase in employment income.*
- C. Achieved “living wage” employment and benefits.*

National Performance Indicator 1.2 – Employment Supports

The number of low-income participants for whom barriers to initial or continuous employment are reduced or eliminated through assistance from community action as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. Obtained pre-employment skills/competencies required for employment and received training program certificate or diploma.*
- B. Completed ABE/GED and received certificate or diploma.*
- C. Completed post-secondary education program and obtained certificate or diploma.*
- D. Enrolled children in “before” or “after” school programs, in order to acquire or maintain employment.*
- E. Obtained care for child or other dependant in order to acquire or maintain employment.*
- F. Obtained access to reliable transportation and/or driver’s license in order to acquire or maintain employment.*
- G. Obtained health care services for themselves or a family member in support of employment stability.*
- H. Obtained safe and stable housing in support of employment stability.*
- I. Obtained food assistance in support of employment stability.*

National Performance Indicator 1.3 – Economic Asset Enhancement and Utilization

The number and percentage of low-income households that achieve an increase in financial assets and/or financial skills as a result of community action assistance, and the aggregated amount of those assets and resources for all participants achieving the outcome, as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. Enhancement –*

1. *Number and percent of participants in tax preparation programs who identify any type of Federal or State tax credit and the aggregated dollar amount of credits.*
2. *Number and percentage obtained court-ordered child support payments and the expected annual aggregated dollar amount of payments.*
3. *Number and percentage enrolled in telephone lifeline and/or energy discounts with the assistance of the agency and the expected aggregated dollar amount of savings.*

B. Utilization –

1. *Number and percent demonstrating ability to complete and maintain a budget for over 90 days.*
2. *Number and percent opening an Individual Development Account (IDA) or other savings account and increased savings, and the aggregated amount of savings.*
3. *Of participants in a community action asset development program (IDA and others):*
 - a. *Number and percent capitalizing a small business due to accumulated savings.*
 - b. *Number and percent pursuing post-secondary education due to savings.*
 - c. *Number and percent purchasing a home due to accumulated savings.*

Goal 2: The Conditions in Which Low-Income People Live are improved

National Performance Indicator 2.1 Community Improvement and Revitalization

Increase in, or preservation of opportunities and community resources or services for low-income people in the community as a result of community action projects/ initiatives or advocacy with other public and private agencies, as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. *Accessible “living wage” jobs created or retained in the community.*
- B. *Safe and affordable housing units created in the community.*
- C. *Safe and affordable housing units in the community preserved or improved through construction, weatherization or rehabilitation achieved by community action activity or advocacy.*
- D. *Accessible and affordable health care services/facilities for low-income people created or maintained.*
- E. *Accessible safe and affordable childcare or child development placement opportunities for low-income families created or maintained.*
- F. *Accessible “before” school and “after” school program placement opportunities for low-income families created or maintained.*
- G. *Accessible new, preserved, or expanded transportation resources available to low-income people, including public or private transportation.*
- H. *Accessible preserved or increased educational and training placement opportunities for low-income people in the community, including vocational, literacy, and life skill training, ABE/GED, and post-secondary education.*

National Performance Indicator 2.2 -- Community Quality of Life and Assets

The quality of life and assets in low-income neighborhoods are improved by community action initiative or advocacy, as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. Increases in community assets as a result of a change in law, regulation or policy, which results in improvements in quality of life and assets.*
- B. Increase in the availability or preservation of community facilities.*
- C. Increase in the availability or preservation of community services to improve public health and safety.*
- D. Increase in the availability or preservation of commercial services within low income neighborhoods.*
- E. Increase or preservation of neighborhood quality of life resources.*

Goal 3: Low-Income People Own a Stake in Their Community

National Performance Indicator 3.1 – Civic Involvement

The number of volunteer hours donated to community action.

National Performance Indicator 3.2 – Community Empowerment through Maximum Feasible Participation

The number of low-income people mobilized as a direct result of community action initiative to engage in activities that support and promote their own well-being and that of their community as measured by one or more of the following:

- A. Number of low-income people participating in formal community organizations, government, boards or councils that provide input to decision-making and policy setting through community action efforts.*
- B. Number of low-income people acquiring businesses in their community as a result of community action assistance.*
- C. Number of low-income people purchasing their own homes in their community as a result of community action assistance.*
- D. Number of low-income people engaged in non-governance community activities or groups created or supported by community action.*

Goal 4: Partnerships Among Supporters and Providers of Service to Low-Income People are Achieved

National Performance Indicator 4.1 – Expanding Opportunities through Community-Wide Partnerships

The number of organizations, both public and private, community action actively works with to expand resources and opportunities in order to achieve family and community outcomes.

- Number of organizations community action agencies work with to promote family and community outcomes.

Goal 5: Agencies Increase Their Capacity to Achieve Results

National Performance Indicator 5.1 – Broadening the Resource Base

The number of dollars mobilized by community action, including amounts and percentages from:

- A. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)*
- B. Non-CSBG Federal Programs*
- C. State Programs*
- D. Local Public Funding*
- E. Private Sources (including foundations and individual contributors, goods and services donated)*
- F. Value of volunteer time*

Goal 6: Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential by Strengthening Family and Other Supportive Systems

National Performance Indicator 6.1 – Independent Living

The number of vulnerable individuals receiving services from community action that maintain an independent living situation as a result of those services:

- A. Senior Citizens.*
- B. Individuals with Disabilities.*

National Performance Indicator 6.2 – Emergency Assistance

The number of low-income individuals or families served by community action that sought emergency assistance and the percentage of those households for which assistance was provided, including such services as:

- A. Food (specify unit of measurement – individuals, families, and packages/bags)*
- B. Emergency vendor payments, including fuel/energy bills*
- C. Temporary Shelter*
- D. Emergency Medical Care*

- E. Protection from Violence*
- F. Legal Assistance*
- G. Transportation*
- H. Disaster Relief*

National Performance Indicator 6.3 – Child and Family Development

The number and percentage of all infants, children, youth, parents, and other adults participating in developmental or enrichment programs that achieve program goals, as measured by one or more of the following:

A. Infant and Children –

- 1. Infants and children obtain age appropriate immunizations, medical and dental care.*
- 2. Infant and child health and physical development are improved as a result of adequate nutrition.*
- 3. Children participate in pre-school activities to develop school readiness skills.*
- 4. Children who participate in pre-school activities are developmentally ready to enter Kindergarten or 1st Grade.*

B. Youth –

- 1. Youth improve physical health and development.*
- 2. Youth improve social/emotional development.*
- 3. Youth avoid risk-taking behavior for a defined period of time.*
- 4. Youth have reduced involvement with criminal justice system.*
- 5. Youth increase academic, athletic or social skills for school success by participating in before or after school programs.*

C. Parents and Other Adults –

- 1. Parents and other adults learn and exhibit improved parenting skills.*
- 2. Parents and other adults learn and exhibit improved family functioning skills.*

