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Community Services Block Grant State Plan and Application for Federal Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Briefing Paper

I. Overview

The California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has drafted the California Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) State Plan and Application for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2016 and 2017.

CSBG is funded under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Community Services (OCS). This block grant provides federal funds to states which are then passed to community action agencies (CAA) that offer a variety of programs to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities and empower low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient.¹ In 2016 and 2017, California's network of CSBG eligible entities will continue administering effective and innovative programs that assist low-income individuals and families face today's challenges.

The State Plan contains the following elements:

- Evidence that the public and legislative hearing requirements were met
- Budget distributions
- Information on linkages and coordination on the delivery of CSBG services
- Procedures on monitoring, corrective action, and fiscal controls
- Organizational standards and accountability measures for OCS, States and CSBG eligible entities
- Programmatic, administrative and financial assurances and certification that CSD agrees to as California's designee.

These elements were designed to increase accountability across all three levels of the CSBG network (Federal, State and local) and to allow for better program decisions based on data.

¹ 42 U.S.C. §9901(1)

II. Purpose of the Hearing

Federal law requires that for a state to qualify for CSBG funds, the State must prepare and submit to the Secretary of HHS a State Plan and Application covering a period of at least one and not more than two fiscal years.² The lead state agency must (1) hold at least one hearing in the state "with sufficient time and statewide distribution of notice ... to provide to the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed use and distribution of funds to be provided through the grant ... for the period covered by the State Plan,"³ and (2) hold at least one legislative hearing every three years in conjunction with the development of the State Plan.⁴ This hearing meets both federal requirements.

State law provides that the "appropriate policy committee of the Assembly or the Senate, or both, shall conduct one or more public hearings on the proposed use and distribution of funds provided under the California [CSBG] Program" and requires that prior to the hearing CSD forward to the committees a list of activities it has identified as statewide priorities.⁵ After the hearing, CSD shall adjust the State Plan as a result of public comments received.⁶ The committee(s) conducting this hearing shall determine whether the concerns of low income Californians have been addressed in the State Plan, and the committee chair(s) shall certify that the plan conforms to state law.⁷ The committee chair(s) holding the legislative hearing shall submit a letter certifying this requirement to CSD, which is included in the final State Plan and Application submitted to HHS by September 1, 2015.

III. CSBG Performance Management Framework

Since the previous biennial State Plan submitted on September 1, 2013, there have been significant changes to the administration of the block grant. ACF, through OCS, funded the development of the Performance Management Framework for States and CAAs. OCS invested in the future of the CSBG and funded national projects to support the development of new national organizational standards and performance management protocols for CSBG. CSD staff participated and represented California in each of the national projects.

These efforts resulted in the development of the components of the CSBG Performance Management Framework which consists of the national Organizational Standards, the State and Federal Accountability Measures and Results Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) Next Generation. Together these three efforts comprise a network-wide accountability and management system for CSBG.

OCS is requiring States, no later than FY 2016, to establish and report on their organizational standards for CSBG eligible entities as part of an enhanced system for accountability and performance management across the CSBG Network. The purpose of the organizational standards is to ensure that all CSBG eligible entities have appropriate organizational capacity, not only in the critical financial and administrative areas important to all nonprofit and public human service agencies, but also in areas

² 42 U.S.C. §9908(b)

³ 42 U.S.C. §9908(a)(2)

⁴ 42 U.S.C. §9908(a)(3)

⁵ Government Code §12741(b)

⁶ Government Code §12741(c)

⁷ Government Code §12741(d)

of unique importance for CSBG-funded eligible entities. There are 58 standards for private, nonprofit eligible entities and 50 for public entities.

The new State and Federal accountability measures for CSBG are currently in draft. These proposed measures are intended to ensure that both State and Federal administrators of CSBG are accountable to high standards of performance management. It is the expectation of OCS that the State and Federal accountability measures will be implemented alongside the new organizational standards for CAAs.

CSD staff, along with a select group of leaders within the CSBG network, is participating on the CSBG ROMA National Performance Indicators Workgroup to develop the ROMA Next Generation materials that will support the CSBG Network for the next 5-10 years. The workgroup's efforts are projected to be completed in November 2015.

IV. Modernization and Revisions to the CSBG Model State Plan and Application

The new CSBG Model State Plan and Application, used by States for the first time this year, integrates and aligns requirements from the CSBG Act with elements of the overall CSBG Performance Management and Accountability Framework, which includes 1) organizational standards for CSBG eligible entities, 2) accountability measures for States and OCS, and 3) CSBG data analysis of outcome measures (National Performance Indicators). Ultimately, this framework will enable the CSBG Network at the local, State and Federal levels, to continuously improve their programs and generate stronger results for low-income families and communities.

OCS has revised and automated the CSBG Model State Plan and Application to make it easier for States to submit the State Plan and to allow for it to be used as a planning and accountability tool. The new format has little comparison to the previous format. Instead of including narrative about expenditures and programs, the new format only permits limited narrative descriptions as explanation for specific responses. As a result, this State Plan does not reference previous State Plans, contain narrative descriptions of programs or projects completed by CSBG partner agencies, nor have data charts showing past expenditures.

Unlike previous years in which the State Plan was submitted via email to OCS, the State Plan and Application process requires States to submit their State Plan through an online system. This automation allows data to pre-populate elements throughout the application and to generate reports. This newer, revised State Plan and Application will help implement efforts made on increasing and monitoring performance management.

V. Distribution of Funding

In FFY 2015, California received \$59,802,390 in CSBG funds. For FFY 2016 and 2017, funding levels are expected to remain constant. CSD will pass through at least 90 percent of California's CSBG award to CSBG-eligible entities that meet both federal and state requirements. Five (5) percent will be used for State administrative costs, and five (5) percent will be retained in Discretionary funds.

Pursuant to the annual Budget Act, distribution of CSBG funds is as follows:

Categories	Percent
Community Action Agencies	76.1
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Agencies	10.0
Native American Indian Agencies	3.9
Discretionary	5.0
State Administration	5.0
Total	100.0

CSD will use five (5) percent of its annual CSBG funding for discretionary purposes to support Limited Purpose Agencies (LPAs), training and technical assistance (T&TA), targeted initiatives and innovative projects, and disaster assistance.

LPAs are private nonprofit organizations which received direct funding under the federal Economic Opportunity Act in 1981 and, under the CSBG Act, have operated continuously. The Plan states that these community-based nonprofit organizations operate without tripartite boards, which are otherwise a condition of CSBG funding.⁸ The services that LPAs provide focus on training, technical assistance and special support programs.⁹

Two LPAs will be supported with discretionary funds:

The **Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)** improves the quality of life for rural communities and disadvantaged people in California through partnerships, technical assistance and access to resources. RCAC strives to help community-based organizations and rural governments increase their own capacity to implement solutions to their problems. RCAC provides a wide range of housing and community development services to achieve this mission. These services increase the availability of safe and affordable housing, improve drinking water, wastewater and solid-waste systems, build the capacity of local officials and community-based organizations, and develop the knowledge base of the rural public through education, outreach, and training. In addition, RCAC is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), providing loans for projects in rural communities, including affordable housing development, environmental infrastructure, community facilities and business.

Community Design Center (CDC) provides organizations and residents of low-income communities with resources and consultation services on housing programs, construction processes, loans, permits, building regulations and codes. CDC assists community groups and residents with projects to repair, remodel and rehabilitate buildings for affordable housing and community activities.

Annually, CSD sets aside a portion of the CSBG discretionary funds to support T&TA for California's CSBG eligible entities. T&TA is used to support CSBG eligible entities with meeting administrative and programmatic requirements, and to enhance operations of the agency.

⁸ 42 U.S.C. §9910(a)

⁹ Government Code §12775

CSD may set aside a portion of discretionary funds in FFY 2016 and 2017 to support targeted initiatives, innovative projects, and priorities identified by CSD. The targeted initiatives and innovative projects benefit low-income individuals, families and communities. Selected projects must demonstrate a high potential for success, a strong need for assistance, and achievable outcomes. CSD has supported the following efforts with discretionary funds:

The Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been identified as one of the top programs to assist low- to moderate-income workers increase their income. CSD has supported a variety of efforts to boost awareness about the EITC program and has worked with CAAs to increase the number of eligible Californians who file for and received the EITC. These efforts look to reduce poverty in California by increasing the number of EITCs claimed.

In 2014 and 2015, CSD provided \$800,000 in CSBG funding to 16 CAAs to either expand or develop new Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs which provided no cost tax preparation services to eligible low-income individuals, and assisted filers with claiming the EITC. CSD funded radio public service announcements in English and Spanish to increase awareness and utilization of the credit. Additionally, CSD commissioned an update to the “Left on the Table” Report, titled “The Cost of Unclaimed Earned Income Tax Credits to California’s Economy”. The report has been instrumental in identifying 1) target populations who typically do not claim the credit, 2) counties with low participation rates, and 3) benefits and losses to California’s economy when the credit is not claimed. CSD also produced an informational brochure to educate eligible individuals and families on EITC. The pamphlet also provides information on the eligibility requirements, how to claim the credit, and the required documentation.

CSD is currently leading a State Interagency Team (SIT) Reducing Poverty Workgroup to address gaps in services and outreach for both the federal and state EITC programs, while mitigating duplication of outreach strategies. Representation on the workgroup is comprised of state and federal agency partners and local private non-profit organizations.

Drought Assistance

With California facing one of the most severe droughts on record, Governor Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in January and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. The State has lead efforts to make sure Californians are able to cope with an unprecedented drought. CSD has joined these efforts with programs geared to assist low-income drought-impacted households.

The **Drought Assistance Program (DAP)** provides employment training and job placement services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) whose employment in agriculture have been directly impacted by the state’s drought. CSD awarded four MSFW agencies \$100,000 each under the CSBG to offer services in 24 counties identified as having an unemployment rate higher than the 2013 statewide average, a share of agricultural workers that is higher than the state as a whole and “exceptional and severe” drought conditions according to the U.S. Drought Monitor Classification System.

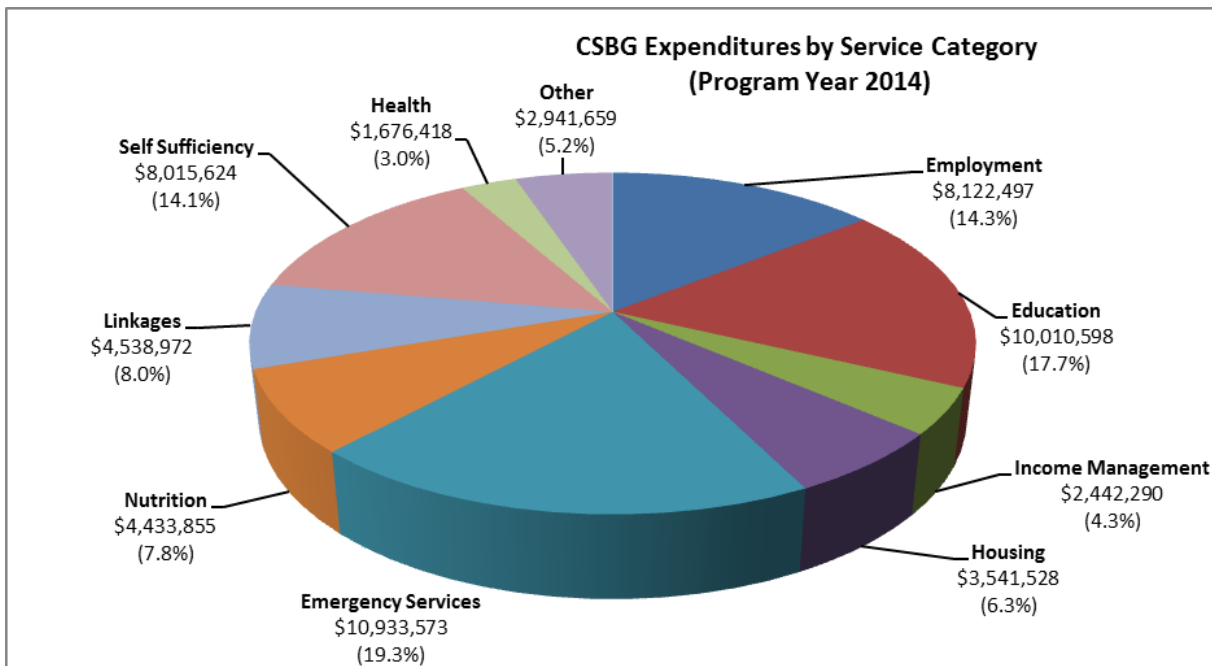
The **Drought Water Assistance Program (DWAP)** pilot program assisted drought impacted, low-income households with their residential water utility bill to prevent disruption in vital water

services and to promote water conservation. Each of the 10 counties experiencing the worst drought impacts was awarded \$60,000, which was provided to the CSBG agency. A total of 2,793 households received services under this pilot. The average water utility bill assistance payment was \$183.

VI. Program Activities

State law sets forth eligible activities for which CSBG funds may be used. These are "designed to have a measurable and potentially major impact on causes of poverty in the community or those areas of a community where poverty is a particularly acute problem."¹⁰ The activities include those which will secure and retain meaningful employment, attain an adequate education, make better use of available income, obtain and maintain adequate housing, obtain emergency assistance, remove obstacles blocking the achievement of self-sufficiency, achieve greater participation in the affairs of the community, address the needs of youth in low-income communities, and make more effective use of other programs related to the purposes of the program.

Local and statewide community action programs use CSBG funds to provide or contribute to a variety of services and functions for low-income households, with emphasis on education, emergency services, employment, self-sufficiency, and health. CSBG funds also provide agencies with the ability to implement "innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives"¹¹ developed through the community action planning process.



Note: While the FFY starts on October 1 and ends the following September 30, CSD allocates funds on a calendar year basis. This difference is noted in the State Plan. Program Year statistics represent the calendar year in which services were provided.

¹⁰ Government Code §12745(a)

¹¹ 42 U.S.C. §9908(b)(3)(D)

Examples include:

Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County

Truancy Prevention Program

Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County (CAP Sonoma) worked with local partners including Youth Connections Santa Rosa , John Muir Charter School, Santa Rosa City School District and Padres Unidos (also a program of CAP Sonoma) to create the Truancy Prevention Program (TPP). The TPP was created to improve high school graduation rates and employment transition after graduation. With CSBG funding, the program was able to support a full-time Truancy Prevention Specialist (Specialist) position. The Specialist works with both the students and parents to improve student attendance and punctuality, prevent truancy, provide support to students who drop-out, and assist with the transition to post-secondary education institutions or vocational training opportunities.

During school year 2013-2014, TPP assisted in accomplishing the following: 21 at-risk youth obtained high school diplomas; 20 middle-school-aged youth developed their education and community engagement plans; students developed Individual Development Plans; and outreach to local colleges and training opportunities. TPP also facilitated workshops on the importance of education while developing youth leadership skills. The program provided workshops to 102 parents addressing the importance and understanding of drop-out prevention and the negative impacts of truancy.

City of Oakland, Department of Human Services

Kitchen of Champions Culinary Training Program

St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County's Kitchen of Champions Culinary Training Program (KCCTP) is an intensive 12-week job training program for low-income individuals facing barriers to employment. KCCTP uses a combination of classroom and hands-on instruction to provide a comprehensive introduction to commercial food service, and offers California food handler certification to participants enrolled in the program. The program provides participants with job search and placement support as well as case management services. Post-training follow up is also available to participants graduating from the program.

KCCTP training classes are comprised of 25 participants each, all of whom have faced challenges in obtaining employment. Many have been incarcerated, are on probation/parole, or have been unemployed long term. The program provides training from professional chefs and food-service workers, personal development and training to become a food service professional, and wrap-around support services. KCCTP provides food preparation experience while also providing free hot meals to low-income residents. In 2014, 71 trainees prepared 800 daily hot meals for the Saint Vincent de Paul's Dining Room and provided catering to other nonprofit organizations or events. Graduates of the program have been successful in obtaining employment at local businesses in the area including Google, Brown Sugar Kitchen, local restaurants, and the Berkeley and Oakland school districts.

Center for Employment Training

Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Drought Assistance Program

In June 2014, the Center for Employment Training (CET) received \$100,000 of CSBG funding under the Drought Assistance Program to provide training and employment services for 40 farm workers whose employment was terminated due to the California drought. This funding was in addition to ongoing employment training funding CET receives from the U. S. Department of Labor. Through the Department of Labor funding, CET typically enrolls over 600 farm workers annually in vocational skill training programs in centers located in Southern, Central and Northern California. Upon receipt of the CSBG grant, CET was able to immediately begin recruitment and enrollment of farm workers in the CET service areas most impacted by the drought, including Watsonville, Soledad, Salinas and San Jose.

Training is provided over a six to eight month period with additional time allotted for placement services after graduation. CET was able to leverage CSBG funding with the Department of Labor National Farmworker Jobs Program MSFW grant and a percentage of the student's Pell Grant to provide employment and emergency housing and utility assistance to MSFWs residing in some of California's most drought impacted areas.

Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency

Family Learning & Support Service Program

In 2014, Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency's (ATCAA) Family Learning & Support Service program, leveraging CSBG funds, provided assistance to a homeless and unemployed young couple that was expecting a new baby. ATCAA assisted the family in services to find permanent housing, enrolled them in the Medi-Cal Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, and began a home visiting program while the family attended classes at the ATCAA Blue Bell Learning Center.

After having the baby, the female participant obtained employment while going to school and attending parenting classes and the baby was enrolled in ATCAA Early Head Start.. The program provided the couple with the means to be successful at their jobs, receive promotions, and elevate to management positions. Thanks to the assistance received from ATCAA, this participant obtained her GED, found permanent housing and bought a vehicle. Today the family is self-sufficient and thriving.

Monterey County Community Action Partnership

2014 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program Expansion

Monterey County Community Action Partnership collaborated with the United Way of Monterey County to expand the existing Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. The VITA Program in Monterey County is a program of the *EarnIt!KeepIt!\$aveIt!* Monterey County Collaborative and has diverse and extensive prior experience working with underserved low income populations and hard to reach areas including limited English proficient and rural communities. United Way Monterey County leveraged CSBG funds to expand the current VITA program and created a seasonal, part-time position. This position allowed the program to further develop volunteer relationships and training, particularly in the more rural regions of the county.

Furthermore, the position has created increased capacity at the VITA sites, especially those serving remote and impoverished areas of the county.

In 2014, a total of 2,384 returns were prepared by 118 volunteers. This is a substantial increase over the 1,751 returns prepared by 110 volunteers in 2013.

Community Services & Employment Training, Inc.

Drought Emergency Services Navigation Project

In 2014, Tulare County became ground zero for the drought emergency in California. Residents throughout the county were desperate for assistance on many levels. Some rural communities, such as East Porterville, no longer had access to water for drinking and bathing, and entire communities where the primary industry was agriculture had no work, resulting in the closure of small businesses. Without water, many farms were left to lie fallow, further contributing to the unemployment problem in Tulare County.

Community Services & Employment Training (CSET) responded to the need by creating a CSBG-funded Community Resource Navigator position that reached out to rural and geographically isolated communities throughout the county to meet one-on-one with residents, identify their needs, and connect them to the available resources, including drought rental subsidies, emergency food and shelter, utility payment assistance, foreclosure prevention, well drilling services, and emergency access to water.

By December 31, 2014, CSET assisted 237 families with water bill payments and provided 1,364 low-income individuals with water conservation information, available drought-related services and information on how to access them.

VII. Additional Statistics for Program Year 2014:

