LOCAL

THEORY OF CHANGE

WORKSHEETS

- Using Your Agency Mission Statement

- Assumptions about Poverty in Your Community

- Identified Needs

- What will change? For Whom? How?

  - Identifying Outcomes
  - Identifying Customers
  - Identifying Services and Strategies

National Community Action Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (TOC) is the articulation of underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide selection of service delivery strategies that are critical for producing change and improvement. It is a framework which addresses the systems and activities that support the outcomes to be accomplished.

> *Theory-based frameworks support implementation efforts as well as strategic planning and evaluation processes by helping stakeholders reach consensus about the populations they plan to serve, strategies they implement, and the results they expect to achieve.*

> Theory of Change, International Network on
> Strategic Philanthropy, May 2005

Defining the work of the Community Action Network in such a theory-based framework can help to identify the links that connect the purpose of the network, the understanding of the network's national system, and the actual strategies implemented by local Community Action Agencies (CAA). Creating this clear link requires articulation of ideas about the best approaches for selection of programs and reasons to expect certain solutions.

The establishment of Six National Goals[1] in the early 1990s was the first attempt to define the entire Community Action network. We have found it to be difficult to talk about a single "Theory of Change" that will encompass the work of over 1000 different local Community Action Agencies -- especially since the mandate for the network's unifying funding source is to "meet local needs." This mandate means that each local CAA identifies the specific needs that face individuals and families with low income and the communities in which they live. It also means that each CAA must identify the resources that are available, through funding support, partnerships, etc. – and this mix of resources varies dramatically from community to community across the country. Once the needs and resources are identified, the Board of Directors and agency management staff consider what will happen in the community – and this different in each community. This understanding of the nature of our network has led us to support the development of Local Theories of Change[2] while continuing to recognize the value of a national TOC.

In the process of gathering input from representatives of the network, we have identified several overarching assumptions that unify the entire network. Consider the assumptions that are represented on the following graphic, which, taken together will achieve the agreed upon national **long term goals.** We present this graphic as a foundation for all Community Action TOC work.

(graphic being renovated)

Local Community Action Theory of Change

While we have relied on the Six National Goals as a foundation for making decisions and strategy choices at the local eligible entity (or Community Action Agency) level, we have also promoted the use of Logic Models for program planning and evaluation.

Logic model's, as we use them in the Introduction to ROMA, are about program management and accountability. They are limited – either to specific needs that may include multiple services, outcomes and indicators, or to specific services that may have multiple outcomes and indicators. But they generally do not address the "big picture" of an agency, or the multiple needs of a community or target population well-being.

We are now asking local agencies to step back and look at the idea of both family and community well being in a way that identifies the agency's assumptions and beliefs. The process of creating a local agency Theory of Change (TOC) is a process of thinking about how the agency is supposed to work and what is supposed to change. The TOC thinking process essentially answers the question "How is this agency supposed to affect the movement of low income people to self sufficiency?" and also "How can it affect the well being of the community?"

It also provides a framework for follow up at the end of a year, for agencies to consider "what has worked" and "what could we do better?" It is a tool that can help validate the initial assumptions (about choice of strategies and services) and decide what resources are needed for the next program cycle.

The following pages include worksheets to help an agency work through the process of identifying assumptions (both generally about poverty and the causes and conditions that effect the local community, and about the agency's role as an anti-poverty agent), and then thinking about the connections between identified needs, population served, outcomes that are realistic and possible for the population and the community, and finally about how the services provided will do what they are supposed to do.

We hope that in this process, services and strategies related to family, agency and community needs are identified. A focus on community level work has to be a part of the local TOC as we move into ROMA Next Generation.

Theory of change for_____

Agency Mission Statement:

Does your mission statement identify the following?
(Circle in the mission statement above or write in here)

The population you will serve:

The outcomes you expect to achieve:

The strategies and services your agency will provide to achieve the outcomes:

The relationships your agency has to help achieve the outcomes:

Assumptions about poverty in our community:

What does your agency assume about poverty in your community?

(e.g. identify causes and conditions of poverty, how the conditions impact the people with low-income and the community at large)

Identified Needs

Identifying the individual, family, community and agency needs

A. Please state the top three to five needs identified in your community assessment and analysis process:

B. Identify if these are family, agency or community level needs. Enter "f," "a," or "c" in the column to the right.

C. Of the needs above, which are integral to your agency mission?
    Are you already addressing these? (In the column to the right, indicate yes or no)

D. Of those needs that are integral to the agency mission, identify those that require community level strategies and/or partnerships to address.

E. Of those that are outside the immediate focus of your agency mission, are there things you can do to contribute to community wide or other effort to address them?

Identifying outcomes:

Identify your agency <u>Overall Outcomes</u> (These are the outcomes that are based on the community needs and resources, the agency's priorities and the agency planning process. They may be achieved by multiple agency strategies, which you will be asked to identify below.)

A-1	
A-2	
A-3	
A -4	
A -5	

Next identify the <u>Program Outcomes</u> (These may be identified by program funding source or by the specific focus of the individual program. You will be asked to state how these Program Outcomes contribute to the Overall Outcomes of the agency. Note: you may have "divisions" or "departments" or other ways that you organize your programs – if so you may have outcomes associated with a set of programs that are so grouped.)

B-1	
B-2	
B-3	
B-4	
B-5	
B-6	
B-7	
B-8	
B-9	
B-10	

(add additional pages and numbers if necessary

Identifying customers:

There are two kinds of customers that most agencies serve: the Service Population (those who are served, but for which no outcomes are expected) and the Target Population (for which the organization holds itself accountable for the achievement of specified outcomes).

Who are your customers?   Do you document outcomes or count outputs?

| Identify the population you currently serve?	OC/OP	1/M*

note: the last column will be completed after the next section on identification of service

Identifying services and strategies:

The relationship between services and outcomes can be simple (as in the case of one service to one outcome), or may be complex (as multiple services leading to multiple outcomes). Consider these circumstances.
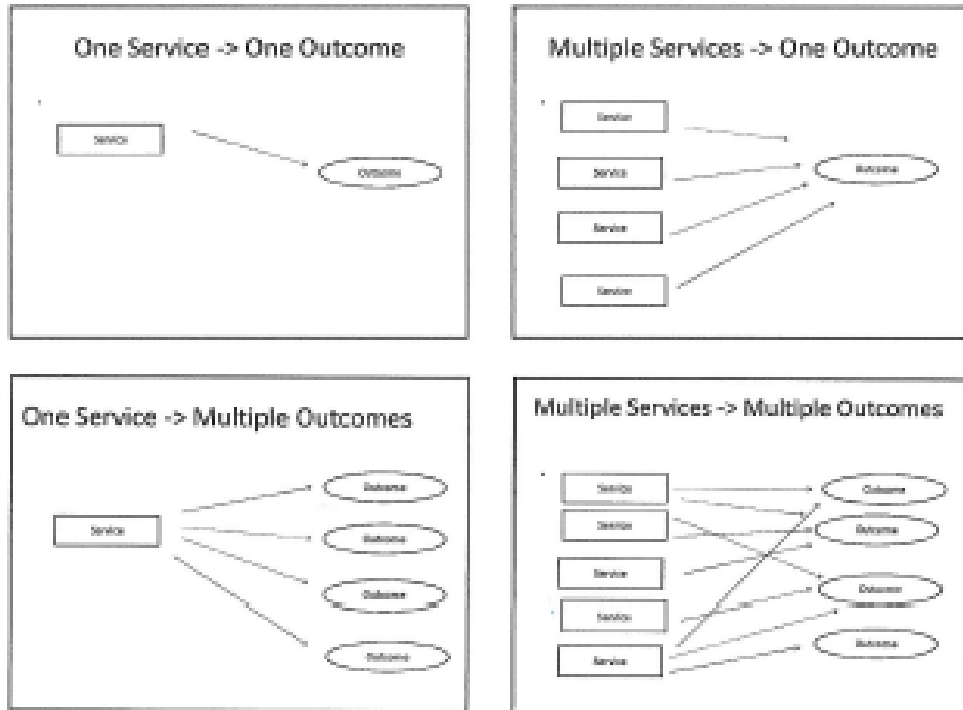
We must also recognize one other circumstance, where the service is provided without follow up to track outcome.   These are circumstances where the individuals receiving services may not be identified with demographic data, may not be considered to be a "client" of the agency, or where single or short term services produce a "service count" but where there is no expectation of a change in status.
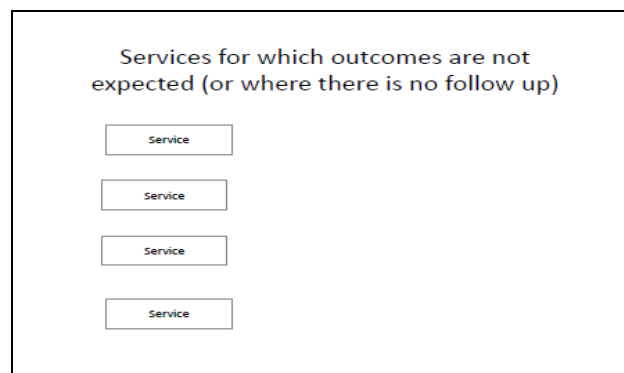
List the services you provide or strategies in which your agency participates. Connect the service to one or more of the outcomes you identified.

Service or Strategy	Outcome

Of the customers you identified in the previous activity, indicate if they receive single or multiple services in the last column.

Mission Statement

Agency Name

OVERALL AGENCY OUTCOMES

WHAT ARE THE LONG TERM OUTCOMES?

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT
POVERTY IN OUR COMMUNITY

Community Needs

1

2

3

PROGRAM
OUTCOME

(identify
population)

PROGRAM
OUTCOME

(population)

WHICH OUTCOMES ARE PROJECTED
FOR THE COMING PERIOD?

PROGRAM
OUTCOME

(population)

PROGRAM
OUTCOME

(population)

PROGRAM
OUTCOME

(population)

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

Service

service

service

service

service

service

service

service

service

service

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service

service