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BACKGROUND
To comply with the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Act, Public Law 105-285, 42 U.S.C. 9908 (a)(11), CSBG eligible entities must complete a Community Needs Assessment. The next needs assessment for CSBG entities in Texas is due to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) on October 31, 2010 and every five years thereafter.

CSBG funds may be utilized to support activities that remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency per 42 U.S.C. 9908 (b)(1)(A)-(C). The needs assessment is a process used to determine unmet needs of low-income individuals, families and communities. Conducting the assessment is of great importance, as it informs both CSBG eligible entities and TDHCA as to how to best direct CSBG funds towards meeting the needs of low-income persons in their services areas in accordance with the assurances in the CSBG Act.

The needs assessment shall be comprised of information provided in this guide. Attachment A-1 through A-5 provides sample survey forms which may be utilized. CSBG eligible entities may alter these forms or create their own assessment tools. For questions regarding the preparation of the assessment, CSBG eligible entities must contact their assigned CSBG Program Officer.

GUIDANCE ON CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Step 1: Designate a Coordinator
Designate one staff person to be the CSBG Community Needs Assessment Coordinator who will oversee activities associated with the completion of the assessment. The Coordinator’s responsibilities may include overseeing the development of a methodology, the administration of surveys, the conduct of hearings or focus groups, the analysis of the results and the completion of the Community Needs Assessment Report.

Step 2: Determine Assessment Methodology
Determine the methodologies which will be used to gather information on the critical community needs in each county of the CSBG service area. Maintain documents which describe each methodology utilized. Also identify the population or neighborhoods to be surveyed and how they will be surveyed. Identify when, where, and how public hearings will be held and describe how the focus groups will be conducted and how participants will be sought.

Lastly, identify the research to be conducted to determine the needs in each county in the service area, and identify the sources for data to be utilized. Data should be gathered on: unemployment rates; education levels, literacy rates; teen pregnancy; crime rates; number of persons in poverty; health data; affordable housing data; and other key issues impacting low-income persons in the CSBG service area.
Step 3: Develop a Plan of Action
Develop a Plan of Action for each county in the CSBG service area which describes how the Community Needs Assessment will be conducted. Provide the following information:

- The method to be used (survey, public hearings, focus groups, research, etc.) to determine the needs in your service area.
- Describe how outreach will be conducted to notify communities of the Community Needs Assessment. (i.e., newspaper articles, radio bulletins, fliers, postings at public buildings, postings at neighborhood centers, etc.)

Step 4: Develop a Timetable
Develop a timetable for conducting the CSBG Community Needs Assessment(s) for each county in your service area.

Keep in mind that even though the due date is not until October 31, 2010, TDHCA is strongly recommending CSBG eligible entities to submit the needs assessment by October 1, 2010. Completing it early will enable CSBG eligible entities to use the assessment results when preparing the Community Action Plan (CAP) and proposed activities and services for the next funding cycle before the submission of the next CAP plan. The CAP plan is also due on October 31, 2010.

Step 5: Develop Assessment Tools
Develop the documents and instruments to be used to conduct the Community Needs Assessment. Refer to Attachments A-1 through A-5 and modify as desired.

- For public hearings, develop the public hearing schedule, includes dates, times and locations and the press releases or other documents to be used to publicize hearings. Also develop all material to be used during the public hearings.
- For surveys, develop the survey instrument. Refer to Attachments A-1 through A-5 for some sample forms. Local universities or community colleges may have students that may be able to offer assistance in developing survey instruments and in conducting surveys or focus groups.
- For focus groups, it is recommended that the group be limited to no more than 15 to 25 persons.

Step 6: Conduct Research
Conduct research on the needs in your service area, by county. Data can be gathered from newspaper articles, journals, magazines, interviews with knowledgeable sources, web sites, etc. Document key findings from the research in a narrative form.

For each county in the CSBG service area provide, at a minimum, the following information and statistics:
1) Availability versus demand for affordable low-income housing: contact local housing authorities, visit the HUD Research webpage.

2) County unemployment rate: contact the local and/or regional Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and review statistics available on the websites of the TWC, the U.S. Census Bureau, or the Texas State Data Center.

3) Community literacy rate: contact local school board(s) and/or local school districts and review statistics available on the Texas Education Agency web site.

4) High school drop-out rate: contact local school board(s) and/or local school districts and review statistics available on the Texas Education Agency web site.

5) Crime rate: contact administrative office(s) of County Sheriff Department or the Uniform Crime Reporting Division of the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS).

6) Percentage of persons living in poverty: visit the U.S. Census Bureau or the Texas State Data Center web sites.

7) Provide any other relevant information about your service area.

Web sites which can be utilized to conduct research include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs: [http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us](http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us)
- The Census Bureau: [http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- The Texas State Data Center: [http://www.txsdc.utsa.edu](http://www.txsdc.utsa.edu)
- The Texas Education Agency: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us)
- The State of Texas: [http://www.texas.gov](http://www.texas.gov)
- HUD User: [http://www.huduser.org](http://www.huduser.org)

**Step 7: Summarize & Analyze Results**

Summarize and analyze the results of surveys, hearings, focus groups, interviews, etc. In summarizing and developing the Community Needs Assessment Report, provide a summary on the results for each type of methodology utilized in each county.

If **surveys** were used, at a minimum, include the following:

- Number of surveys distributed;
- Number of surveys returned;
- Methods for distribution of surveys;
- Names of counties surveyed;
- Names of persons or organizations that assisted in conducting the survey;
- Blank copy of the survey instruments (do not submit completed surveys).
- A summary of the survey analysis per county.
If **public hearings** were held, at a minimum, include the following:

- A Transcript of the hearings.
- Location of each public hearing;
- Time and date for each public hearing;
- Names of persons(s) in your organization that conducted each public hearing;
- Method used to publicize the public hearings;
- Attendance roster with the name of persons attending each public hearing;
- Number of persons giving testimony at each public hearing; and
- A summary of comments submitted.

If **focus groups** were held, at a minimum, include the following:

- Location of each focus group;
- Time and date for each focus group;
- Names of persons(s) in your organization that conducted each focus group;
- Method used to publicize the focus group;
- Sign-in sheet with the name of persons participating in each focus group;
- Minutes of the focus groups; and
- A summary of the input received.

For **research conducted**, identify the following: data sources, names of web sites, names of articles or any other source of information utilized in the data analysis. Include a narrative describing the results of the research.

**Step 8: Complete the Community Needs Assessment Report**

In addition to including information outlined in Step 7, the final Community Needs Assessment Report should include the following information, **by county**, based on the research and survey results:

1) Identification and description of the critical community needs.
2) Identification of contributing factors which may be causing or impacting the needs.
3) Information on the services available in the county in the areas of: employment, education, housing, health, substance abuse prevention, transportation, budgeting, literacy, etc. which address the identified community needs.
4) Description of existing gaps in services, i.e. unmet needs versus services available.
5) Explanation on how the needs identified in the Community Needs Assessment will change the CSBG Services and Activities planned for 2011 – 2015, including specific services or activities that will be implemented and whether any activities will be discontinued. Include the reasoning behind any changes that may be anticipated due to the results found in the needs assessment.
The report should include a table of contents and page numbering, the name and the title of the CSBG Community Needs Assessment Coordinator, the name(s), title(s), telephone number(s) and extension(s) of the primary staff person(s) involved in preparing the CSBG Community Needs Assessment.
ATTACHMENTS
2010 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SURVEY OF COUNTY JUDGES

CSBG SUBRECIPIENT: _______________________________________________________
County: __________________________
Completed By: _________________
Title: ___________________________ Date: ____________

1. List the top 5 most critical needs among the impoverished in your county.

1) _____________________________________________________

2) _____________________________________________________

3) _____________________________________________________

4) _____________________________________________________

5) _____________________________________________________

2. Of those needs listed above, which needs are not being fully addressed by the community?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

3. Please provide recommendations regarding the types of services that would help meet the
   needs identified:

____________________________________________________________________
2010 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SURVEY OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

CSBG SUBRECIPIENT: _____________________________________________________________
City: ______________________ County: _____________________________________________
Completed By: _______________ Date: _______________
Title: ______________________

1) Based on local opinions and the requests for services/assistance in your governmental units(s)
in the last 12 months, what are the most pressing needs of low-income individuals in your
community? List the top 5.

1) ____________________________________________________________

2) ____________________________________________________________

3) ____________________________________________________________

4) ____________________________________________________________

5) ____________________________________________________________

2. Please provide recommendations regarding the types of services that would help meet the
needs identified (attach paper if needed):

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

3. Identify any changes in the economic conditions in your community during the last 12
months. (attach paper if needed)

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
2010 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SURVEY OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

CSBG SUBRECIPIENT: ____________________________________________

1. Based on your organization’s experience in serving low-income persons in your community over the last 12-months, what are the most critical unmet needs among low-income individuals and families? List the top 5 unmet needs.

1) ____________________________________________________________

2) ____________________________________________________________

3) ____________________________________________________________

4) ____________________________________________________________

5) ____________________________________________________________

2. Please provide recommendations regarding the types of services that would help meet the needs identified: (attach paper if needed)

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
Attachment A-4: Survey of Community Members

2010 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY
SURVEY OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

CSBG SUBRECIPIENT: ____________________________________________________________
Person Being Interviewed: ____________________________ (name is optional)
Staff or Volunteer Conducting Interview: __________________________________________
City: ____________________________ County: ____________________________
Date: ______________

1. What would you list as the top 5 needs for you and your family:
   1) ____________________________________________________________
   2) ____________________________________________________________
   3) ____________________________________________________________
   4) ____________________________________________________________
   5) ____________________________________________________________

2. What would you list as the top 5 needs of the low-income community:
   1) ____________________________________________________________
   2) ____________________________________________________________
   3) ____________________________________________________________
   4) ____________________________________________________________
   5) ____________________________________________________________

3. Do you have any suggestions for the types of services that would help meet the needs:
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
2010 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY
SURVEY OF BOARD MEMBERS

CSBG SUBRECIPIENT: ____________________________________________
Person Being Interviewed: ________________________________
Staff or Volunteer Conducting Interview: __________________________
City: ____________________________ County: __________________________
Date: ____________________________

1. What would you list as the top 5 needs of the low-income community:

1) ____________________________________________

2) ____________________________________________

3) ____________________________________________

4) ____________________________________________

5) ____________________________________________

2. Do you have any suggestions for the types of services that would help meet the needs:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Attachment B: Suggested Survey Topics, Topics & Questions

- At hearings and during surveys, inform persons of the purpose of your meeting/survey and inform them of your organization and the services provided. Inform them that their input is of great importance and will assist your organization identify the needs and gaps in services and prioritize the services to be provided.

- In hearings and surveys, ask for community strengths and weaknesses.

- Ask questions which will enable you to determine the adequacy of current services within specific communities.

- At focus groups or hearings, consider providing a list of possible barriers to services and allow respondents to rank in order of urgency and to add to the list.

- Ask questions relating to obstacles blocking the achievement of self-sufficiency, securing and retaining meaningful employment, educational opportunities, use of available income, housing, emergency assistance to meet immediate and urgent needs, and opportunities to participate in community affairs.

- Ask questions regarding the employability of low-income individuals and what resources are needed to enable them to become more self-sufficient.

- Use questions or offer opportunity for multiple choice responses.

- The following are suggested areas of needs which relate to the CSBG National Performance Indicators. Utilize these to assess the efforts of your organization and other service providers in meeting the needs of low-income individuals in the community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Supports</th>
<th>Emergency Services</th>
<th>Child and Family Development</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment initiatives</td>
<td>Emergency food assistance</td>
<td>Extent of vulnerability of low-income, seniors and disabled persons</td>
<td>Health care services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living wage employment benefits</td>
<td>Emergency vendor payments (fuel/energy)</td>
<td>Availability of enrichment programs for youth</td>
<td>Availability of public or reliable transportation, and car repair programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of ABE/GED programs</td>
<td>Temporary shelter</td>
<td>Family counseling</td>
<td>Home ownership or home repair programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary educational opportunities</td>
<td>Emergency medical care</td>
<td>Chemical dependency</td>
<td>Asset building services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of “before” and “after” school child care programs</td>
<td>Protection from domestic violence</td>
<td>Parenting skills</td>
<td>Prescription assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition assistance</td>
<td>Rent Assistance</td>
<td>School readiness</td>
<td>Legal services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>