

Assessing Collaboration Effort in Illinois Community Action Programs

Junfeng Wang
Beverly Bunch

Department of Public Administration
Center for State Policy and Leadership

University of Illinois at Springfield

Research Question

- To study the social service collaboration effort in IL community action agencies:
 - Why they collaborate
 - Whom they collaborate with
 - How they collaborate
 - How they can better collaborate

Methodology

- Part of a larger community action leadership study which covers six states: IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, and WI
- Data sources: online survey, interviews, database, and archives
- Data collection: End of March—End of June
- Planned interview sample size (51): 37 CA executive directors, 6 state association directors, 6 state officials, 1 national association director, and 1 federal official.
- This presentation is based on some of the interviews that have been transcribed.

Community Action

- Established in 1960s as part of the Great Society program – “war on poverty”
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the core federal funding.
- Over 1,000 community action agencies (CAA) nationwide provide various services to low-income individuals and families
- There are six goals for CSBG programs, in which goal #4 states, **“partnerships with supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved.”**

Tripartite Board: Maximum Feasible Participation

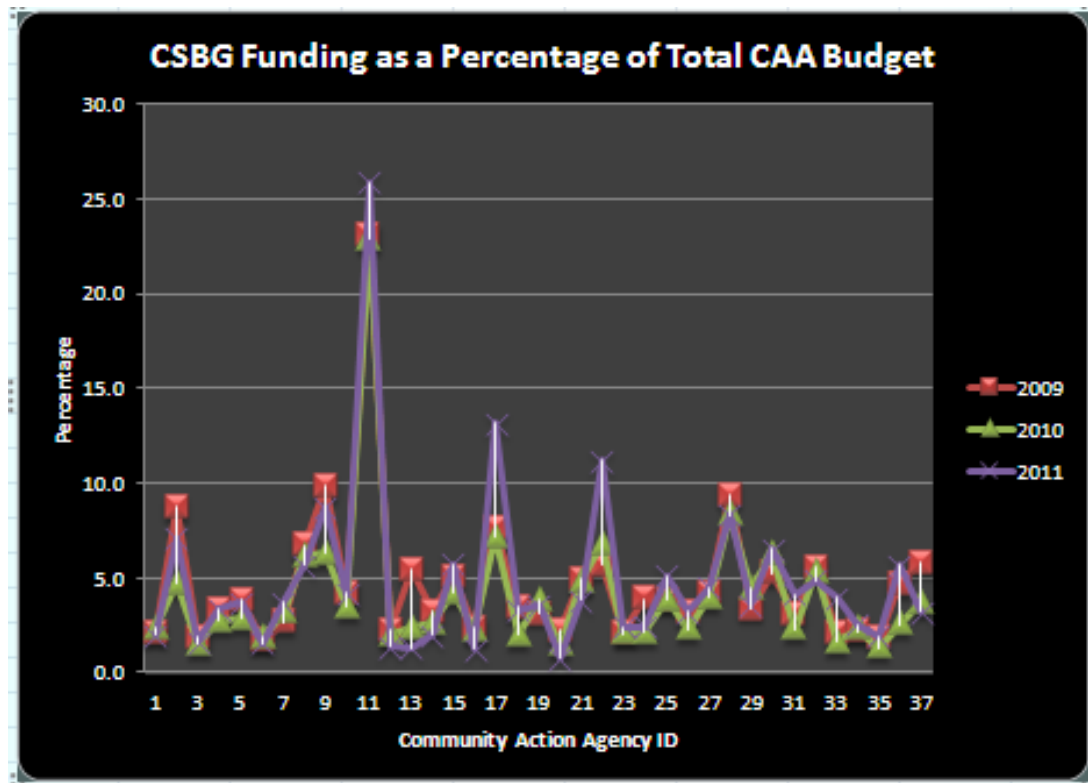
- Each CAA board consists of:
 - 1/3 elected public officials,
“Individuals who were not necessarily sympathetic to our cause but had a better understanding and a better appreciation of what community action was supposed to do.”
 - 1/3 private sector leaders,
For example, attorney, people from financial institutes, businesses etc.
 - 1/3 low-income community members or representative of these members.

For example, a retired school principal, a local foundation person, somebody from a youth organization at a church, somebody from Salvation Army etc.

IL Community Action Agency Budget

Year	Min	Max	Median
2009	886,586	315,733,714	9,815,067
2010	835,691	330,701,082	11,623,293
2011	692,061	384,2046,99	10,467,312

CSBG program
 Weatherization program
 LIHEAP program
 Head Start program



Community-wide Partnerships

- Nonprofit
- Faith Based
- Local Government
- State Government
- Federal Government
- For-Profit Business or Corporation
- Consortiums/Collaboration
- Housing Consortiums/Collaboration
- School Districts
- Institutions of postsecondary education/training
- Financial/Banking Institutions
- Health Service Institutions
- State wide associations or collaborations

Number of partnerships

Year	Min	Max	Median
2009	11	554	123
2010	21	631	149
2011	31	630	129

Assessment by SAFAR

- Gajda (2004) presented a strategic alliance formative assessment rubric (SAFAR), which defines five levels of integration:
 - Networking
 - Cooperating
 - Partnering
 - Merging
 - Unifying

Networking

- Purpose: create a web of communication
- This commonly happens in all IL community action agencies
 - Being a part of the state community action association, IACAA
 - Agency executive directors sit on different community boards, attend inter-organization meetings...

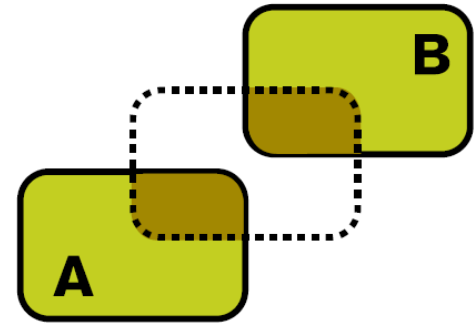
Cooperating

- Purpose: work together to ensure tasks are done.
- Common activities
 - Example: Referrals to and from other organizations
- Less Common activities
 - Example: Salvation Army provides services through CAA

Partnering

- Purpose: share resources to address common issues
- Fairly common among IL CAAs
 - Economic Development
 - example: A factory from manufacture to distributor
 - Health Care
 - Example: Dental checkups for Head Start kids
 - Self-sufficiency
 - Example: Protect clients from predatory lending organizations

Merging



- Purpose: merge resources to create or support something new
- Not often in IL community action agencies
 - Example: A joint mobile medical unit between a local community action agency and a local nonprofit.
 - To address the prevention and treatment of lung disease.
 - The mobile medical unit routinely visits nine locations throughout the county

Unifying

- Purpose: unification or acquisition to form a single structure
- Very rare if there is any in IL community action agencies
- CAAs are territorial agencies



Toward more and Better Collaboration

- CAA executive directors take strong leadership roles in communities
 - Example: A housing issue in the community with section 8 vouchers running out...
- Branding
 - “Everybody recognizes Red Cross, it’s much easier. Red Cross, that’s who we’re going to raise the money for. They’re not going to say we’re going to raise money for Community Action, but we’re the ones working with these families in the long term and we don’t have the brand recognition to actually get recognition.”

Thank you for your questions and
comments