

New York State (NYS)
 Department of State (DOS)
 Division of Community Services (DCS)
 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

**Advisory Council Meeting
 Meeting Minutes**

Meeting date: **February 11, 2021** Meeting began at 11:04am. This meeting was conducted via WebEx Video Conference. Attendance for CSBG Advisory Council members was taken by verbal rollcall.

<p><i>Members Present:</i></p>	<p>Mike Bobbitt Assistant Commissioner, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development</p> <p>Maurice Reid President, KenJam Consultants, LLC</p> <p>Laura Rossman Chief Executive Officer, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc.</p> <p>Andrea Ogunwumi Executive Director, EOP for Chemung & Schuyler Counties</p>	<p>Denis Wilson Executive Director, Fulmont Community Action Agency, Inc.</p> <p>Tina Zerbian Chief Executive Officer, Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc.</p> <p>Dan Maskin Chief Executive Officer, Opportunities for Otsego, Inc.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Lewis (Representative) Pathstone</p> <p>Charles Quinn Chief Executive Officer, Regional Economic Community Action Program, Inc.</p> <p>Miguel Santos Customer Advocate, National Grid (Joined meeting after 12pm)</p>
<p><i>Guest Present:</i></p>	<p>Jacqueline Orr Chief Executive Officer, NYSCAA</p> <p>Pat Standish Coordinator Community Action Angels, NY Wyoming County Community Action</p>		

<p><i>NYDOS Staff Present:</i></p>	<p>Manuel A. Rosa Director, Division of Community Services</p> <p>Vilda Mayuga Deputy Secretary of State for Economic Opportunity</p> <p>Rob Vanderbles Senior Attorney, Office of General Counsel</p> <p>Nancy Pfohl Community Services Program Analyst 3</p> <p>Aimee Kollar Community Services Program Analyst 2</p> <p>Sayla Eisner-Mix Community Services Program Analyst 1</p> <p>LuAnn Hart Director, Division of Fiscal Management</p> <p>Cindi Denick Supervising Accountant, Division of Fiscal Management</p>	<p>Kristopher Niehoff DCS Office Assistant 1</p> <p>Ayanna Hamby DCS Office Assistant 1</p> <p>Amy Gonsalves Community Services Program Analyst 1</p> <p>Niki Battistoni Community Services Program Analyst 4</p> <p>Jessica Garneau Community Services Program Analyst 1</p> <p>Jacob Fox Community Services Program Analyst 1</p> <p>Katrina Abel Senior Accountant, Division of Fiscal Management</p> <p>Mindy Van Alstyne Associate Accountant, Division of Fiscal Management</p> <p>Matthew Ciotti Community Services Program Analyst 1</p>	<p>Jessica Lowell Community Services Program Analyst 2</p> <p>Katy Hanson Community Services Program Analyst 1</p> <p>Theresa Walsh Community Services Program Analyst 2</p>
<p><i>Executive Directors Present:</i></p>	<p>Adrian Fassett President/Chief Executive Officer, Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc.</p> <p>Alex Castro Executive Director, Pathstone Corporation</p> <p>Donovan Beckford Executive Director, Westchester Community Opportunity Program, Inc.</p> <p>Felicia Dumas Executive Director, St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc.</p>	<p>Jerome Underwood President and CEO, Action for a Better Community, Inc.</p> <p>Maureen Abbott Executive Director, Tioga Opportunities, Inc.</p> <p>Renee Hungerford Executive Director, Community Action of Orleans and Genesee, Inc.</p> <p>Rosemary Shader Executive Director, Wyoming County Community Action, Inc.</p>	<p>Laura Rossman Board President, NYSCAA</p> <p>Suzanne Sheers Chief Executive Officer, Niagara Community Action Program, Inc.</p>

Attendance: A total of 10 of 20 CSBG Advisory Council members in attendance, a quorum was not established.

Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chair, confirmed with Robert Vanderbles, DOS Senior Attorney, since a quorum is not present, the CSBG Advisory Council is unable to vote or take any action on items brought before the council. Denis Wilson noted that items needing a vote or approval would be discussed at the next CSBG Advisory Council meeting.

Welcome – Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson

Denis Wilson welcomed everyone to the CSBG Advisory Council meeting. Denis Wilson announced a quorum was not established for the meeting, and items needing a vote would be postponed until the next CSBG Advisory Council meeting on May 20, 2021. Acceptance of minutes from August 18, 2020 CSBG Advisory Council meeting, will be tabled until a quorum is established.

Manuel A. Rosa, DCS Division Director

Manuel Rosa welcomed all in attendance and acknowledged the new Executive Directors in the CSBG Network. Manuel Rosa thanked the network for their hard work this past year and showed appreciation of the remarkable work the CSBG Network has accomplished.

Manuel Rosa announced the Department of State (DOS) is starting the review process to draft the 2022-2023 CSBG State Plan, which includes the Program and Fiscal Monitoring Guide. DOS is seeking input from the CSBG Advisory Council and CSBG Network for areas of improvement and recommendations. DOS is working, with New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA), to establish a workgroup to review and assess the current 2020-2021 CSBG State Plan and Monitoring Guide. Manuel Rosa encourage Executive Directors, or their staff, to participate and express the needs of the network, their recommendations will be taken into consideration when drafting the 2022-2023 CSBG State Plan.

Manuel Rosa acknowledged that DOS has raised the issue of the 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) with Office of Community Services (OCS), Health and Human Services (HHS), on behalf of the New York State CSBG Network. Many Executive Directors, and other staff, have expressed their continued support to keep the 200% FPL permanent, which is slated to end on September 30, 2021. If the 200% FPL is not made permanent by September 30, 2021, this could cause problems going into the 2022 contract year, as the FPL will revert to 125%.

Manuel Rosa continues to seek guidance and clarification, from OCS, on how the CARES Supplemental Act will affect the 2022-2023 CSBG State Plan. Manuel Rosa also spoke about spending the CARES funds by September 30, 2022.

Manuel Rosa noted there will be a public hearing for the 2022-2023 CSBG State Plan, in June. The 30-day comment period is extremely important to this process and looks forward to working with the network, and acknowledges DOS is looking to improve performance and responsiveness.

Aimee Kollar, Community Service Program Analyst

Aimee Kollar shared there are no new updates for the Annual Report since the Executive Director quarterly call in January 2021. The DOS Administrative Review Unit (ARU) is expecting

to receive the FFY2020 Smart Forms, from National Association for State Community Service Programs (NASCS), within the next few weeks. DOS has a due date of April 30, 2021, to submit the forms to NASCS. DOS ARU has offered to work directly with Community Action Agencies to make any necessary correction on the forms, making the process less burdensome. No significant changes are expected to the Modules on the Annual Report, Community Action Agencies can start drafting information by using the forms from last year as a template.

LuAnn Hart, Director of Financial Administration

LuAnn Hart provided a status update of the current CSBG Funding. LuAnn Hart stated DOS has received one Notice of Grant Award (NGA) for Quarter 1 of the 2021 contracting period, which covers October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. Every eligible entity that has a contract for Quarter 1 and has submitted a voucher for payment should have received funds. DOS currently does not have funds to pay past the first 25% advancement. DOS Fiscal staff are reviewing financial reports and preparing for when the next NGA is received, pending release of the NGA, payments will be processed to eligible entities timely.

LuAnn Hart addressed communication recently released by the state, regarding the withholding of state funds on contract payments, due to NYS financial hardship last year, there may be a 20% withholding from some state programs. The executive budget proposed a reduction of withholding to 5% but this will not affect CSBG as CSBG is federally funded.

- Questions or comments received:
 - Maurice Reid asked, “what is the impact of the delay in funding on services of local communities?”
 - LuAnn Hart indicated DOS cannot pay advances at this time for the Quarter 2, as New York has not received the federal NGA for the second 25% payment allocated in the contract.
 - Maurice Reid asked, “does that mean that they are suspending services? What does that mean?”
 - LuAnn Hart explained, the second 25% payment is not due until a financial report is submitted from a community action agency, indicating 20% of CSBG funds have been expended by an agency. She indicated that it is her understanding that this is not currently impacting the network.

Vilda Mayuga, Deputy Secretary of State for Economic Opportunity

Vilda Mayuga welcomed and thanked everyone for joining the call. Vilda Mayuga acknowledged and recognized familiar names on the call, who have joined the Secretary of State, as a part of the Vaccine Equity Taskforce for COVID-19. Vilda Mayuga appreciates the involvement from the network, as some exciting activities are pushed to the local communities. Vilda Mayuga wanted to join the meeting to hear directly from network in discussing and addressing any concerns. Vilda Mayuga acknowledged hearing the questions regarding federal funding and finds it helpful to hear specifics from partners on how it impacts the services with timelines and numbers. DOS is not the federal government. DOS can raise questions and concerns internally

with the elected state government representatives, who have interactions with the federal government representatives. DOS will continue to raise the issues and concerns on behalf of the network. Vilda Mayuga expressed appreciation and thanked the network for all the hard work, even with the financial challenges, and continue to serve the communities with the most vulnerable populations. Vilda Mayuga is open to exploring new approaches, and encouraged continuous feedback from the network, as DOS relies heavily on input from very large diverse communities around the state. Vilda Mayuga stated each region of New York needs representation for a multitargeted approach.

Jackie Orr, Executive Director of New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)

Jackie Orr reviewed highlights of NYSCAA's 2020 CSBG Advisory Council Report, sent as an attachment with the CSBG Advisory Council meeting agenda.

- eLearning courses have been created to support staff development, especially during 2020, due to the pandemic/COVID. NYSCAA eLearners' users grew from 202 to 1,126 by the end of December 2020, largely due to staff being able to participate in remote learning. Currently, a total of 8 courses are available on the eLearning platform for the network. NYSCAA was able to provide webinars and trainings to the network
- Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Interface Master Trainer Training Program the was held in August 2020, this training was supported by the DOS. The program trained 25 staff from 18 community action agencies remotely, learning to be Master Trainers and experts in resilience and neuroscience of the ACE's study. A 3-day training was provided by Dr. Robert Anda, who is one of the original co-principal investigators of the Kaiser Permanente Study, along with two other national trainers. To date, the Master Trainers facilitated 39 trainings across the state, from August 2020 to January 2021, with a total of 520 participants. The Master Trainers are partnering with other community organizations involved in Trauma Informed Coalitions. A learning community has been created to support the trainers, regular meetings allow the group to share best practices and challenges.
- ROMA Alliance continues to meet; the group consists of ROMA Professionals (ROMA Trainers and ROMA Implementers). Regular meetings are co-facilitated by Jackie Orr, from NYSCAA, and Jessica Lowell, from DOS. A CSBG Workplan Training was held for the network, which was a direct result per the request of the ROMA Alliance.
- NYSCAA's Annual Conference was a success. The conference was held virtually, for the first time, and had more people in attendance than in the past. There are future thoughts of a Hybrid model, some sessions in person and some offered virtually.

Jackie Orr stated NYSCAA has many things planned for 2021. NYSCAA is partnering with DOS to start reviewing the CSBG State Plan and creating a workgroup. The workgroup will consist of 10 Executive Directors, from the CSBG Network, and will be meeting to provide comments and recommendations on behalf of the network to be incorporated into the upcoming State Plan.

NYSCAA and Theresa Walsh, (DOS), has formed a workgroup, with members of the CSBG Network, to review the tool, and recommend possible changes. This instrument is used in the

states triannual review process. The Triannual Accountability and Compliance with Standards (TRACS) tool is used every three years by DOS to assess and monitor the agencies in the CSBG Network.

NYSCAA's additional activities for 2021 includes continuing the ROMA Alliance, ACE's Master Trainers work, and Emerging Leaders Institute. NYSCAA has opened applications for the Emerging Leaders Institute, a group of 38 will be joining an introductory webinar next month (March).

- Questions or comments received:
 - Maurice Reid asked, "how are you measuring the impact of training activities on the delivery of services?"
 - Jackie Orr stated evaluations are sent out at the end of trainings, whether in person or webinar, depending the training topic. Most often the evaluations are asking about the increase in participant skill or knowledge, not necessarily service delivery. For example, asking what was learned from the training and what will change based on what was learned at the participants agency.
 - Maurice Reid asked, "is there going to be any training on diversity?"
 - Jackie Orr responded, NYSCAA is in the process of finalizing a CARES Contract with the DOS and has moved forward with forming a Social Justice Committee. The committee consist of 21 individuals, ranging from Executive Directors to frontline workers from community action agencies, that are looking at race, equity, and social justice issues. The CARES workplan includes a series of webinars that will be shared with the network.

Pat Standish, Coordinator, Wyoming County Community Action Inc, Community Action Angels

Pat Standish thanked everyone for the opportunity to review the Annual Report for the Community Action Angels. Pat Standish thanked NYSCAA for assisting with the Annual Meeting of the Minds, over 300 participants attended over the 3-day event. Pat Standish thanked, Vilda Mayuga and Manuel Rosa, from DOS, for their presentations during the Meeting of the Minds, there was an overwhelming amount of positive feedback and appreciation was shared from the participants.

Pat Standish also noted that she participated in the NYSCAA Regional Meetings, sharing information on upcoming workshops and trainings, and the Commission for Children, child's needs assessment. Pat Standish discussed a child's needs assessment that was developed last year. The assessment can be found at the end of the Annual Report for the Community Action Angels.

Pat Standish stated that there were some special projects that the agency was involved in, due to COVID. The Community Action Angels partnered with Office for New Americans (ONA) to establish information where individuals could go to find food pantries. There was 100% cooperation from Community Action Agencies across New York State, in helping to put together

a list of food pantries with contact information, including locations and times, for ONA to place on their website.

Pat Standish stated the pandemic provided opportunities for new partnerships. The Community Action Angels formed a partnership with the agricultural community, specifically the dairy industry. Following Governor Cuomo's guidance and example of assisting farmers, using their products due to the financial difficulties, the Community Action Angels connected with a group of dairy farmers to create a project called "Say Cheese". The group has delivered about 3,500 pounds of cheese to four different agencies in four different counties and continues to connect the group with other agencies and counties across NYS. Pat Standish also indicated a partnership with ONA, highlighting the importance of receiving vaccinations in the refugee community, and how to engage bilingual volunteers.

Pat Standish reported she has been able to help engage volunteers and community development at several different agencies in the network. In partnership with NYSCAA, a board engagement training available on the eLearning platform, this is helpful for agencies to hear how to engage and retain the low-income sector board members and support them in being successful. Pat Standish continues to work with the four board members.

The Ramirez June Project is creating a storybook/journal to help non-English speaking parents identify developmental delays in children. The Commission for Children are going to be implementing an Officer Reading Program where police officers go to schools and read to the children, in an effort to redevelop trust between law enforcement and youth, in light of the recent social justice events. Another initiative is to address fatherhood in a different way, to prevent child abuse. For further information and materials, and to contact Pat Standish directly, go to CommunityActionAngelsNY.org.

CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson, Denis Wilson, asked if there was any old business to address.

- Charles Quinn, CSBG Advisory Council board member and Executive Director for Regional Economic Community Action Program, Inc., indicated there are several outstanding items within the network: (1) Budget Modifications and the allowability of up to 10% without prior approval for DOS, like other state contracts, (2) the scrutiny grantees receive, for example questions regarding how many employees are attending conferences and why an agency is hiring for particular positions (like a Master Social Worker), (3) guidance on income eligibility regarding short-term services. Charles Quinn referenced the allowance in the State Plan; however, expressed agencies are discouraged from using the guidance. Charles Quinn expressed the concerns and issues are from individual agencies, but there continues to be no resolutions or guidance from DOS.
- Manuel Rosa thanked Charles Quinn for expressing his concerns, and acknowledged some of the issues, such as the 10%, predate his tenure. Manuel Rosa has tried to address internally and will turn to LuAnn Hart (Director of Financial Administration) for further perspective and explanation regarding the allowance of 10% budget modifications, at least

for the CSBG contracts. Manuel Rosa referenced the release of the sample Self Attestation Form recommended for use by the agencies to determine income eligibility, especially during the pandemic, and has not been alerted to any further concerns related to through DOS monitoring, and is happy to follow up

- Vilda Mayuga asked Manuel Rosa if there is a sense of how many issues, and expressed curiosity of how many agencies are or are not impacted by the issue brought up?
- LuAnn Hart responded that the flexibility and allowability of the 10% and requiring budget modification is dependent on the language in the Master Grant Contract, and the Office of the State Comptrollers holds DOS to the budget. The fiscal department received training from the Office of the State Comptroller that led to the determination that CSBG agencies must have approval for the expenditure that are made, the art of budgeting makes it difficult to always anticipate needs. For example, an agency travels less than originally anticipated, but has an increase beneficiary costs than anticipated, historically the contract has allowed variances or budget modifications after the fact. However, if agencies know there is a significant change, that should have prior approval, agencies should be working with their DOS Analyst to have those conversations so budget changes can be approved. This will help ensure that an agency is not expending money DOS could not approve. CSBG funding source has very strict rules with regards to certain allowable costs, if agencies do not have prior approval for activities, there is a change the agency is expending funds could be disallowed. There have agencies that have spent funds on unallowable activities and have had to pay back the federal government for these disallowances.
- Charles Quinn acknowledged he is not speaking of allowable activities. Charles Quinn asked regarding the example provided, when agencies have not spent travel funds but may experience an increase in beneficiary costs, why do the agencies need approval to shift the funds of \$15, if the funds are less than 10%?
- LuAnn Hart responded, DOS does not have legal authority to pay agencies outside of the approved budget and the executed contract. If an agency spent extra funds in the beneficiary line, and exceed the funds, DOS must give approval in writing to do so, this is done through the variance or budget modification. It protects the agencies from an audit later and protects DOS, who is responsible for monitoring the funds. Having this in writing will prevent a disallowance later. LuAnn Hart indicated this happens in all contracts not just CSBG.
- Maureen Abbott, Executive Director of Tioga Opportunities, Inc. thanked DOS for the guidance. However, the consensus among Executive Directors, is often the network comes to the table with questions and/or requests for clarifications, and responses are not given in a timely manner. While the 10% is an issue, but there are host of items that have been brought forward from January of last year (2020) in a meeting with the Director. Even if there is no answer, the acknowledgement of being heard, would help ease the frustration.
- Manuel Rosa stated that he appreciates Maureen Abbott's statement and sends his apologies to the network for any delays in responses. Manuel Rosa stated DOS has joined NYSCAA, when invited to join the Executive Director calls. Manuel Rosa stated that some issues may need additional guidance or clarifications from OCS or other entities outside of the DOS, and the intent is not to be disrespectful. DOS will make a commitment to have

more timely answers, however, cannot promise the answers will be what the network wants to hear.

- Adrian Fassett, Executive Director from Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc. indicated the problem is having no answers, every call or interaction with DOS, the response is that answers will be given, but there is no follow up.
- Manuel Rosa acknowledged Adrian Fassett previously raised the issue of 10%, and other discussions, however there may not be an immediate answer. DOS may need to seek further clarity before responding, answers to the network may not always be satisfactory.
- Adrian Fasset stated he is not bothered by hearing an answer he doesn't agree with, his frustration occurs when there are no answers to the expressed concerns.
- Vilda Mayuga responded by indicating she would meet with Manuel Rosa, to discuss the issues, how to address the concerns, and provide guidance or answers in a timely manner. Vilda Mayuga stated she wants to better understand the details and acknowledged the hard work of the network and wants the network to leave the meeting today feeling heard. Vilda Mayuga encouraged the network to continue to share the issues.
- Jerome Underwood, Executive Director of Action for a Better Community, Inc., going back to the contract issues with minuscule line items changes, not an increase, but a shift from a line item to line item, is there and understanding of the hoops that agencies have to go through to get an approval? Does DOS have an appreciation of how cumbersome and unproductive the process is for the agencies? If so, understanding DOS must abide by rules, is DOS willing to be an advocate to change the rules? The bureaucracy is challenging and can be unproductive, the frustration is shared among colleagues throughout the network.
- Vilda Mayuga responded "yes". As pointed out by LuAnn Hart, things at the state impact the federal budget, and how we can only speak for DOS. As with other state issues, DOS advocates to ensure conversations continue, and communicate passion and commitment of the CSBG Network.
- Manuel Rosa will follow up with Denis Wilson and Jackie Orr to identify issues brought forth by the network.
- Adrian Fassett asked, "what is the plan for discretionary CARES, and shouldn't the funds be released as soon as possible?"
- Manuel Rosa indicated DOS is working on several projects for the discretionary dollars, including re-entry and job programs. Manuel Rosa stated that it is important to get the funds from discretionary CARES out as soon as possible. Manuel Rosa stated that there are job programs that they have trying to get the money out for and the NYSCAA contract. DOS is still trying to figure out the best use of dollars.
- Jackie Orr pointed out in the CARES Supplement State Plan, where the re-entry initiative and the workforce development, are there Request for Proposals (RFPs) available? What point are you on?
- Manuel Rosa responded yes. An RFP is currently being drafted for the re-entry Initiative, DOS is looking at the counties that have been most impacted by the early released population, due to COVID, and how to best support those individuals and address the statewide need. Manuel Rosa stated more information will be available soon.
- Michael Martin, CSBG Advisory Council board member and Executive Director of Native American Community Services of Erie and Niagara Counties, Inc. had three points (1)

thanked Ms. Jackie Orr for the NYSCAA Report, highlighting ACE Interface Master Training, he has been an advocate for Trauma Informed Care work, and looks forward to hearing the results, (2) referenced the previous meeting minutes from August 18, 2020, has an edit to page three, bullet three, Mr. Michael Martin wanted it noted he is not advocating to remove funding from Native Nations, just to underserved communities, but advocating and recommending the under-utilized funds be reallocated to the Native populations in urban areas, not taken away but how to better serve the Native population, (3) as not being a member of the CSBG network, but a member of the CSBG Advisory Council, hears the frustration and want to see DOS provide a formal report to the CSBG Advisory Council, in the next meeting, of how the concerns are addressed. There is always conversation around quality improvement at the community/provider level, seems there needs to be at the state level and the state representatives need to highlight the challenges to work better together, this impacts the lives of the communities we serve. As a council member, want this addressed, and realizes there may be other issues, the council could help.

- Manuel Rosa stated that there was a conversation had with Miguel Santos where issues were raised concerning Native Americans and will reach out to set up a meeting to discuss further.

Closing Remarks – Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson

Mr. Wilson wanted to discuss drafting a letter of support for the 200% FPL, however there is not a quorum to vote.

Chairperson reminded the council of the next meeting on May 20, 2021 at 11:00am.

Hearing no further questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned by the Board Chairperson at approximately 12:30pm.