

ROMA

# Bundled Services Delivery Case Study

ROMA Center

Community Action Agencies and Associations in three states participated in a survey and follow-up interviews about bundled services delivery for low-income participants.



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## Striving Toward Self-Sufficiency

### Executive Summary

Families with low income striving toward self-sufficiency often face many obstacles. Each family has unique assets on which to build and a unique set of challenges that must be addressed. It can be daunting for families who need services from different agencies to go from one place to another to find assistance and services for specific problem elements. The family may recognize that the problems they face are intertwined and must be addressed together – or they may not see the connections among the elements. For instance, lack of reliable child care or working transportation can make it impossible to keep a job. There may not be job openings that match skills and companies may hesitate to hire someone without experience. Past health problems may have left the family with debt and facing foreclosure.

Community Action Agencies have recognized the complexity and the need for many services – and have heard from their customers about their challenges and frustrations. They responded by bundling together many of the services families need.

Community assessments tell us that complex problems like poverty are rarely, if ever, solved with simple solutions. The environmental, emotional, physical, and social characteristics of those who live on low income are (typically) shaped by generational and societal messages, expectations, and conditions that preserve the status quo and suppress opportunities for individual development and achievement. Helping people to overcome entrenched poverty and move toward self-sufficiency requires a long-term and multi-faceted case management strategy that integrates agency and community resources.

### *Community Action Opportunities*

Bundled service delivery affords the family opportunity to meet the targets they have set by providing support and access to a comprehensive range of services. These service delivery models have different names and different features in each community, but there are some common elements.

- Through the initial needs assessment/application process, families work with a case manager (note: this staff person may have many different names, including job coach, family support worker, family development specialist, etc.) to set goals and target dates. This initial process sets the families on a unique track that includes multiple services and ongoing interaction with the CAA staff.
- Once identified for this level of service, the family and staff determine together what services are needed and what are available. Often these services come from other agencies, so the Community Action Agency provides a referral.
- Progress is tracked regularly and the case manager keeps in touch at least monthly offering encouragement and a sense of shared responsibility.

## ROMA Center Bundled Services Delivery Case Study

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- The timeframe for these services is extended beyond a single year of programming. In some agencies, families may have as much as 5 years to complete their goals.
- Having a respectful, supportive guide through the continuum of services makes the outcomes more achievable.
- Technology has made it easier to track these services and document their impact, but the driver for these programs has been the recognition of what is needed for permanent, positive outcomes for low-income families.

Through the surveys completed by 16 agencies in three states, we have gained a better understanding of why agencies chose to offer bundled services delivery, how they identify and deliver the services that are needed, how they measure success, and how they, and their partners and customers, learn from their results. With this small sample we cannot represent the whole Community Action Network. Instead we have gathered lessons and we offer recommendations for further, deeper study.

### Case Study Design

Our aim in this case study is to better understand how and why agencies and states are using bundled services for their clients. The responses reflect the experience of the agencies or states in this survey, which may or may not represent the work of the whole network. However, it is the specifics of the work in these states and communities that will help us build a better understanding of how agencies engaged in this work identify their services, the impact that bundled services can have, and how that impact might be measured. These insights will help us as we move forward.

We received responses to a series of questions from 16 agencies, 2 state associations, and 3 state offices (See Appendix). This is a *very small sample* in a large network and these agencies volunteered to provide information.

We are unable to say whether the national picture is similar or very different from the experience of these agencies. Rather, we offer their work as an example of what is happening within the network. From their experience, we gather lessons, particularly as these relate to ROMA Next Generation, and offer recommendations. The next step we propose is to identify what information has already been gathered through evaluations and pilots to assess the mix of services needed by customers of CAAs and the timeframe required for families to reach their own goals toward self-sufficiency. Analysis of this information will help to compare the value of bundled service delivery to other approaches.

This report is presented following the management and accountability cycle of ROMA. This allows us to present the process from community needs assessment through definition of mission and the programs needed to reach it; to implementation of these strategies; and then data collection and analysis. We will then look at lessons learned and make recommendations for deeper evaluation.

Community Needs Assessment

Through regular Community Needs Assessments, Community Action Agencies keep a close eye on conditions in their communities. They see the changes in populations, in needs, and in resources. A Community Needs Assessment helps agency leadership understand the scope of both emerging and

We offer a set of services that are tailored and coordinated to meet the complex needs in multiple life domains, either sequentially or concurrently, of a specific individual or family at a specific point in time based on the individual's/family's goals. As a unit of local government, our agency is the intermediary for a number of federal, state, and local funding streams so this is a good strategic choice for us.

*Snohomish County*

ongoing needs for families with low incomes. The Assessment identifies economic resources, social resources, and partnership opportunities within the community for shared service delivery. With this deep understanding of community needs and community resources and assets, the agency can determine the role it will play in helping families reach self-sufficiency.

Many Community Action Agencies include their service delivery partners in the data gathering and for some agencies these partners also disseminate the Community Needs Report. These partners are identified as organizations that can take referrals for specific programs and services.

Mission and Program Design

Almost all the agencies in our case study determined that bundled services were necessary. One third have been providing bundled services since the agency was formed. Another 20% have had bundled services for twenty years or more. Note: The terminology used does not always include acknowledgement of the "bundling" of services but we have identified several programs that have bundling at its core. Such programs are wrap-around services, Family Self-Sufficiency, LifeWorks, or Intake and Referral Case Management. Eighty percent of our survey respondents describe bundled services as a significant part of their budget, numbers served, and impact.

The mix of services that are part of the bundled services package changes over time and varies from family to family.

This reflects changing needs in the family, changes in the community, changes in agency capacity, and changes in available funds.

Programs related to employment, housing, and education are always part of the mix in the programs we studied. Housing, food, child care, transportation, money management, health and mental health, and substance abuse are also frequently included. Some include foreclosure prevention counseling, tuition aid, legal aid, and crisis intervention. Another observation is that providing a wide range of services is seen as important to meet the many obstacles to self-sufficiency, with the understanding that not all clients need all the services.

Addressing the needs of the families we serve is our mission so bundling services and making referrals are essential to effective delivery of meeting our mission.

*Cumberland CAP*

All but one of the agencies in our case study made referrals to other service providers. This is seen as an important way to expand service options as well as a cost effective way to offer them. The partners are part of the referral process, but are not included in the design of services. In some communities, clients will have options about where they might receive a service. For smaller and more rural communities, there are fewer options and the agency may see needs that they and their partners cannot meet.

The advantages of bundled services delivery that our respondents mentioned include:

- Multiple services address multiple barriers
  - Provided through the Community Action Agency and its service partners to address the multiple barriers a low income family may have to overcome to reach self-sufficiency
  - One stop source of services means that a family only has to “tell their story” one time, limiting the time and emotion expended when having to repeat their challenges to numerous service providers
  - One stop source of services minimizes travel costs and challenges
  - A single initial application process that gathers the data needed to apply for multiple programs can be shared
- Families have a greater stake in their own success if they select their bundle of services
  - Families identify goals and target dates with their coach and discuss any barriers that stand in the way of goal achievement
- Recognition of the time it takes to reach self-sufficiency
  - In some agencies, families can remain in the program for up to five years if they are continuing to work on and achieve their target goals
- Hands-on process
  - Often a case manager or life coach builds a multi-year relationship offering accountability and encouragement to the family

### Cost and Cost Efficiency

Cost and cost efficiency are included in the reasons cited for the choice of whether bundled services are an option. Respondents to our survey had very different answers on whether it is more expensive to provide bundled services than the cost of providing separate individual services. Agencies track their costs by program and they know how many clients are served. This would yield an average cost per client that could be captured. North Carolina has this data, as each agency reports an average cost per client each program year on their yearend report.

ESCSWA responded that, “Case management can be an expensive option. We hire case managers who have at least a bachelor’s degree in a human service field and some experience so they do make a little more than a front line worker without degree or experience. Case managers normally have small “caseloads” and do not work with more than 20 families. We do, however, cross train staff so that they

have the ability to provide even the emergency assistance programs. This makes this option a little more cost effective and it provides better service to our families.”

On the other hand, Four County Community Services said that, “The cost of providing bundled services is less expensive than providing separate individual services. One application, one file, and one case manager is all that is required for a specially designed set of services that helps the customer attain their overall goal.”

Snohomish County said that, “It is more costly at the outset until fully institutionalized at which point it gains the advantage of efficient delivery.”

The costs of bundled service delivery are covered in different ways: some by CSBG, unrestricted income, income from social enterprise, and other funding sources. We found that it is in only a few cases that funding sources cover the cost of a case manager. Rather the cost of a specific service is covered by its own funding source(s) and results are reported for that unique service.

#### Entry into the Program

Half of the agencies in our survey said that all families are offered the option of bundled services. However, bundled services programs with active case management may have a waiting list. The aim seems to be to offer this option to any family that is willing to make a commitment to work on goals. Respondents to the survey generally felt that the majority of their clients would benefit from access to bundled services.

ESCSWA offered an illustration of the process. Families who are interested in making a commitment to work toward employment and educational goals can enter the program. This service is free and voluntary to families. As families come in for emergency services and their needs are assessed they are offered services. Not all families want anything more than the emergency service for which they applied.

#### Engagement of Client in Goal Setting

In describing their bundled services delivery program almost all agencies said that the families were involved in setting their own goals and target dates. The services they receive are voluntary, but restrictions from a funding source may make a given service unavailable to a family due to income or lack of funding to offer the service to all who want it.

Each customer is unique and brings their own strengths and challenges to the table. By bundling services we are able to really get to the heart of some barriers and see how certain obstacles are interconnected. We don't use a cookie-cutter mold and it is the customer determining what they want to strengthen and improve.

*Community Action Opportunities*

### *Role of Front Line Staff*

The title of the person who works with families varies by agency. One title that several use is Case Manager and we selected this one just to make the flow of this section easier to follow. We are not recommending one title over another.

The Case Manager working with a family is seen as vital to the success of many bundled services programs. The relationship starts when the family comes in for services and walks through the assessment with their Case Manager. The Case Manager helps the family set goals and explains the options that are available. This approach helps families to see how one decision or action may have an impact on another. They talk about the importance of reliable child care and transportation if the family is going to commit to getting to work every day.

Throughout the program, the Case Manager is a sounding board and helps with solving problems. Case Managers meet regularly with the families to monitor progress toward goals and problem solve. She can make referrals to programs outside the scope of the agencies' bundled services options because she knows the community. She stays in touch by phone, text, and face to face visits. This can be as often as weekly and is always at least monthly. The case manager is responsible for reaching out to a family who hasn't met a monthly contact. When opportunities for training and events arise that might interest the family, the Case Manager tells the families they are working with about them.

Families enjoy the flexibility of these bundled services but know they are accountable. They can choose what is most important to them and this can lead to increased buy-in and commitment to goal achievement, as well as increased self-confidence.

### *Training of Staff*

Our survey respondents mentioned the importance of national and state trainings within the Network as an opportunity for staff to interact with and learn from their peers. In addition to the national Community Action training, survey respondents mentioned other trainings their staff had received. The types and range of training mentioned below gives a sense of the knowledge and skills that effective staff need. These include, in no particular order:

- ROMA Training
- Strengths-Based Family Worker Training
- Challenging Behavior Institute

While less-expensive methods can be effective for certain types of information dispersal, our program has determined that having face-to-face access to presenters has a significant positive correlation to information/knowledge acquisition and retention. Further, it is positively related to the transfer of learning once the participant returns home as our program requires those who attended the national training to engage in training of his/her peers locally. This learn-teach-learn cycle positively impacts the degree to which the new knowledge is incorporated into the program's practices.

OACAC

- Johnson & Johnson Head Start Management Fellows Program
- National Homeless Conferences
- ToP training (Technology of Participation)
- Community Change Academy
- Empowering Skills for Family Workers
- Earned Income Tax Credit Training
- Child Tax Credit Training
- North Carolina Family Development Credential
- Training by their peers in all the programs and services offered by their agency
- Family Development Model
- 5 Dynamics
- CASTLE Training
- National Alliance to End Homelessness
- Building Changes
- Investing in Families University – a The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative in Snohomish County

Many respondents mentioned their desire for continued and expanded training opportunities, but they see these opportunities shrinking because of budget cuts.

### Tracking Progress

Agencies in our survey are using ROMA National Performance Indicators to track progress and many have self-sufficiency scales that provide families with a means of tracking their progress toward their goals. Data is collected quarterly by most agencies. Families are working toward self-sufficiency for up to five years. Almost all agencies track referrals to be sure the service was delivered, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the service in relation to meeting the customer's need. The impact of that service, though is not directly tracked. None of the agencies track families after they leave the program, although several mentioned the importance of tracking long term impacts.

Family income is always an important, but not the only, measure of self-sufficiency. During a pilot project recently completed in Missouri, the pilot agencies identified the following individual and community outcome indicators from the existing ROMA framework as most helpful in showing long term impact.

Front line CSBG staff have utilized information, their experiences managing their caseloads, as well as information obtained through reports in order to develop new policies, services, and strategies. For example, front line staff found it necessary to change their service delivery strategy and better coordinate the delivery of financial and non-financial services. This modification was identified and promoted by program and front line staff along with members of the community.

*ECHSA*

*From Show Me Outcomes Report Phase One October 2012 - May 2013*

### *A. Individual:*

- 1. Unemployed and obtained a job*
- 2. Employed and maintained a job for at least 90 days*
- 3. Employed and obtained an increase in employment income and/or benefits*
- 4. Achieve living wage employment and/or benefits*
- 5. Completed ABE/GED and received certificate or diploma*

### *B. Community:*

- 1. Increases in community assets as a result of a change in law, regulation, or policy, which results in improvements in quality of life assets*
- 2. Number of low-income people acquiring businesses in their community as a result of Community Action assistance*
- 3. Number of low-income people purchasing their own homes in their community as a result of Community Action assistance*

Almost all agencies make referrals, but not all agencies track the results of the referrals. Missouri estimates that less than 25% can track the delivery and impact of these services. This is something that agencies would like to know, but don't have the time, money, or shared systems to track.

As examples of family self-sufficiency scales and data bases, all agencies in Missouri use the Family Self Sufficiency Scales. North Carolina agencies use Accountable Results for Community Action (AR4CA). AR4CA is a customized database used for case management for CSBG programs and it is also used by NC's weatherization programs.

In addition to the quantifiable data, many programs work with families to set qualitative goals. These might include improved quality of life, less stress, and more confidence.

Cumberland CAP in NC says that staff and clients learn through monitoring visits, meetings at all levels, feedback from the community and partners, performance evaluations, trainings, and customer satisfaction surveys.

Addressing another challenge that CSBG programs may face when trying to track their participants, CAASTLC reported that their substance abuse program uses a short intake and assessment tool for populations that have no stable home and are very transient.

### Challenges in Tracking and Reporting Progress

Agency staff from Executive Directors to Front Line Staff want to measure progress and improve their performance. They have many examples of program improvements that come from tracking progress and they want to do more. Sufficient funding, multiple program information systems, and effective

ways of formatting data all stand in the way. They also have seen that people can move in and out of poverty. Without tracking families for years following the program, how do they know whether their efforts really “stuck”?

ROMA NPIs track outcomes in various areas but do not currently capture the results of bundled services vs. individual service delivery. Self-sufficiency scales and North Carolina’s AR4CA do provide reports that help bring the ROMA data into a format that meshes with bundled services delivery. These are reports that happen at the local agency level and are not required or necessarily reported to the state or federal level. NC does require quarterly and yearend reporting. Information captured in AR4CA is also used in NC’s CSBG state plan biannually.

We can end up taking the human out of human services because we are too caught up in making our funding sources happy.

*Patsy Dowling, Executive Director  
Mountain Projects, NC*

The members of the pilot project identified that there are 13 program information systems used by Missouri CAAs to track and measure program performance. The problem is not a shortage of performance management systems but a problem of having too many. Most of the program systems identified below do not communicate with one another, making it difficult to utilize these systems to evaluate agency level impact on poverty.

1. Community Services: Management Information System
2. LIHEAP: State System
3. Head Start: Child Plus
4. Head Start: PROMIS
5. Weatherization: MoWAP
6. Weatherization: NEAT (National Energy Audit Tool)
7. Housing and Urban Development: PIC
8. Housing and Urban Development: Lindsey
9. Housing and Urban Development: Public Housing Info System
10. Housing and Urban Development: HAPPY (internal: section 8 & disability housing)
11. Housing and Urban Development: YARDY MWA - Toolbox
12. Finance Software: MIP (talks to ABRA)
13. Human Resources Software: ABRA

SHOW-ME OUTCOMES PILOT PROJECT: PHASE 1

One agency in Washington raised an important point. They said that, “progress can’t be measured and we’ve been fooling ourselves in trying to do so. Trying to do so is an antiquated way of thinking. People move in and out of poverty, therefore we will always have a set of people in need of our services. That number is determined by the population of our respective counties. “Progress” is simply measured by maximizing the dollars we get out the door while wasting as little as possible on administrative (indirect) costs.”

### Celebrating Success with Families

Case Managers celebrate successes with their customers in many ways, because small victories can go unnoticed when there are so many issues to address. Agencies use the action plans to show progress and remind them that this is their plan. For some families, seeing all the check marks in the Action Plan is very affirming. Others want verbal recognition. Others like charts and graphs. Most important, customers feel their progress because their lives are getting easier and more stable. A family recognizes the move from crisis to stability and knows when they are living with less pressure and stress. CAO says that, “Clients want to give back in some way, and become active in our Customer Advisory Committee or volunteer at other local agencies. They want to tell their story so we provide an opportunity to do so in our Customer Newsletter and they refer friends and family to the program so they can get the kind of help we provide. Families clearly recognize when they are making better choices and showing progress on their goals.”

### Measuring and Improving Performance

Johnston Lee Harnett Community Action gave a great picture of how data is used at every level in the organization.

Results are discussed at board meetings.

The Executive Director says that she analyzes all reports to make sure the agency is meeting goals and objectives in order to make necessary changes. “I am able to look at trends from the past in order to direct future programs.”

The CSBG Director says that she looks at data to see if the goals are being met. “If we are not meeting goals we discuss how and what needs to be changed. We also look at historical data for us and down trends.”

The Front Line Staff person says that she looks at client successes and failures to determine change which needs to be made to the programs.

### Lessons Learned

1. Bundled services delivery is a program strategy that responds to what Community Action Agencies know about the causes and conditions of poverty in their communities.
2. There is nothing new about Community Action Agencies offering bundled services. Many have been doing this for decades, long before technology made it easier to track.
3. Families set goals and are held accountable for them. This reinforces accountability and gives people the desire to keep working on what is often a long journey.

4. The staff person who works with the families in bundled services programs needs the skills to encourage and provide support, the insight to help families make good choices, and the knowledge of the community to be able to make referrals and link customers to the opportunities that are available.
5. Training for these staff people is seen as valuable. They learn at national Community Action meetings, at trainings about specific programs and services, and from trainings that address the specific challenges of running a bundled services program.
6. Community Action Agencies use the ROMA National Performance indicators to track progress. They also report on a given program to other funders through other data systems. Missouri and North Carolina both use scales to frame the results and capture NPI and demographic data in this way. ROMA as it stands is not designed to measure the impact of bundled services vs. individual service delivery.
7. Community Action Agencies use the data they have to improve their programs, add service options, and find better ways to work with their customers.
8. Families appreciate having their success recognized, but the most important change is often less pressure in their lives.

What have we learned that should inform ROMA Next Generation?

Agencies in our survey are using ROMA National Performance Indicators to track progress. The list of indicators that agencies use is quite short, at least from the ones who reported this information. Missouri's survey narrows the list to 8. Four of the individual ones are related to employment and one about education. If we think about aggregation of data, these are the ones we suggest we start with based on the Missouri experience. *As we move toward asking for more information in this kind of reporting we suggest using the tested Missouri indicators.*

Many have self-sufficiency scales that provide families with a means of tracking their progress toward their goals. Self-sufficiency scales include a fairly common set of domains, but they are unique to agencies or states. This information is incredibly important at the family and agency level. Aggregated it may create problems because the path out of poverty is not straightforward and the various domains may not be equally important. So progress on five domains may not be as significant as getting a job would be for a family. It is good to know both at the agency level, but it may be sufficient to know about the jobs and educational achievement at the national level. *Thus, we do not recommend aggregation of self-sufficiency scales at the national level.*

Agencies are able to capture data quarterly for the families in their bundled services programs and they use this data in the delivery of services to the family. Whether aggregating the short list of NPIS quarterly serves a purpose is a different question. Any added report comes with a cost. It is questionable that the aggregation at the state or national level is useful and it would take new technology and added staff at every level.

A significant gap in the ROMA NPI information is how many people are in the bundled services programs, what are their characteristics, and how long are they in the program. From our survey, it seems that agencies know this, but the number is not reported at the state or national level. *We recommend that agencies be asked, as part of the NPIs, to report the number of people in bundled services and what services they received.* This would be helpful to the state and national level as it would help to tell the story of this work in the Network.

### Recommendations for Further Evaluation

We gathered many ideas for further evaluation through the surveys. Each of these would lend itself to a pilot project. Some require collaboration across federal programs and between community partners. Most require that agencies collect additional data about the costs of delivering bundled services and the impact of these services over many years. If a pilot study were designed to capture this information, it would address several suggestions from the survey respondents at one time. We include this as item 1. The costs of an ambitious pilot may exceed funds, so we have kept the suggestions separate in the subsequent items. These pilots could be prioritized in several ways – least costly, most valuable information on program design, etc.

1. Aim of pilot is to gather information that includes data on the volume/percentage of services delivered and clients served through bundled services; the difference in impact between bundled services and individual services (in comparable situations and equivalent services provided), and the difference in delivery costs of bundled services compared to individual services (including services provided by community partners) and the difference in time or other costs to recipients.
2. Pilot to explore the costs of delivering bundled services vs. delivering individual services. Are the cost advantages of one application and one file sufficient to cover the costs of a Case Manager and/or more hands-on delivery of services?
3. Pilot to track the number of families offered this service vs. the number who enter the program. It would be very interesting to know how many families who are offered this option accept it and enter the program.
4. Pilot to track how many stay in the program for one, two or three years, five years and meet their goals. What is the amount of time that families need to meet their goals? Does a longer timeframe increase total completion rates? (NC would be a good place to begin because AR4CA can run a report that tells us how long someone stays in the program, how many services/referrals they received, how many contacts they had with their case manager, etc.)
5. Long term study to see whether success is maintained over time or is not. This intensive long term follow through would determine if families are taking the information they learned in life skills classes and case management and applying it to achieve progress towards their goals. How

does long term follow through relate to programs and services provided and timeframe of delivery of services?

6. A pilot that would permit Community Action Agencies to share information systems across federal programs and submit a single report to all funders. This would be a significant undertaking as each program has its own required tracking systems in place. This would require many funding sources to agree to pull a system together for the pilot agencies to access.
7. Pilots that would have referrals tracked for impact. This might be combined with the information systems pilot above.
8. Develop simple and effective formats for presenting the results of bundled services delivery using data captured through the ROMA NPIs as they are revised in the ROMA Next Gen project.
9. As these pilots start reporting results, they should be reviewed to capture best and promising practices. Community Action Agencies are eager to have these shared, but the practices should be based on evidence.

*Appendix: List of Survey Respondents*

*Missouri*

Family Support Division, Missouri Department of Social Services, Jefferson City, MO

Economic Security Corporation of the Southwest Area (ESC), Joplin, MO

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC), Aurora, MO

*North Carolina*

Office of Economic Opportunity , N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Raleigh, NC

North Carolina Community Action Association, Raleigh, NC

Community Action Opportunities, Asheville, NC

Cumberland Community Action Program, Inc., Fayetteville, NC

Eastern Carolina Human Services Agencies, Inc. (ECHSA), Jacksonville, NC

Four County Community Services, Laurinburg, NC

Johnston Lee Harnett Community Action, Inc., Smithfield, NC

Mountain Projects, Inc., Sylva, NC

*Washington*

Community Services and Housing Division, Washington State Department of Commerce, Olympia, WA

Snohomish County Human Services (SNOCO), Everett, WA

We received seven responses from local agencies under the umbrella of Washington State Community Action in Seattle, WA.