

Community Scales:

A LADDER TO THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

A PROPOSAL TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE FOR MEASURING CHANGE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

A First Glance to Answer

- What is a Scale? What is a Community?
- What is the Framework?
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The Community Scaling Tool

- Definitions of Dimensions: Public Policy, Equity, Civic Capital, Service and Support Systems, Economic Opportunity
- Relationships of Family, Community, and Agency Scales
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Introduction

For over 30 years, Community Action Agencies have been at work helping improve the conditions in which low-income people live and helping low-income people gain a greater stake in their communities. Nationwide, the strategies these more than 1,000 agencies use are varied, reflecting the diversity of each locality's resources and pressures. This document presents a framework in which local programs can relate the commonalities of their struggles and results at the community level. The framework can also be used to stimulate collaborations between Community Action Agencies and their local partners.

The National Community Services Block Grant Monitoring and Assessment Task Force has established two national goals for explaining the results of the work the Community Action Network does at the community level: 1) **The conditions in which low-income people live are improved**, and 2) **Low-income people own a stake in their community**. The Task Force Subcommittee on Scales and Ladders recommends the framework of the Community Scaling Tool as one way to *quantify the results* of individual agency efforts to affect changes in public policy, equity, civic capital, service and support systems, and economic opportunity. These two goals, these five dimensions, and the narrative descriptions of these categories were carefully crafted to accentuate the values the Community Action Network has held as the focus of its work for the last three decades.

The Community Scaling Tool is designed to allow local agencies to show the incremental progress that is made towards the achievement of long-term, complex goals. Parallel tools (see introductory table on page 4) can be used to measure the incremental changes families and agencies make in their efforts to achieve stability and become self-sufficient. Family and agency level scaling tools are not featured in this document. This paper is designed to help agencies identify when their work produces results at the *community level*, and then provide a framework for assessing, planning, measuring, and reassessing.

The framework described in this paper was developed through a collaborative effort of the members of the National Community Services Block Grant Monitoring and Assessment Task Force Committee on Scales and Ladders. The opinions expressed in this document are those of its authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Monitoring and Assessment Task Force or Office of Community Service, Department of Health and Human Services.

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Introductory Table* Contrasting Family, Community, and Agency Scales

Interventions, Strategies, and Activities produce change in:			
Unit of measure	One client or family at a time	A community condition or system	An agency or program
Scale Level	Family Level Scale measures change in levels of	Community Level Scale measures change in levels of	Agency Level Scale measures change in levels of <i>capacity</i>
Dimensions of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income • education • family functioning • transportation • employment • housing • basic needs • community involvement • substance abuse • child care • health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public policy • equity • civic capital • service & support systems • economic opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governance • collaboration & partnerships • compliance • cultural sensitivity • workforce environment • planning, measurement, and evaluation • communications • information management
Duration of change	endures beyond the agency's investment	endures beyond the agency's investment	stops when agency's investment stops
Aggregation level	agency or program	agency or state	state or agency
Scale Thresholds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving • Safe • Stable • Vulnerable • In Crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving • Safe • Stable • Vulnerable • In Crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving • Safe • Stable • Vulnerable • In Crisis
National Goals	<p style="text-align: center;">1 & 6</p> <p>1. Low-income people become more self-sufficient. 6. Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2 & 3</p> <p>2. The conditions in which low-income people are improved. 3. Low-income people own a stake in their community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4 & 5</p> <p>4. Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved. 5. Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.</p>

*Note to Introductory Table: This table contrasts the differences in scales which measure outcome for families, the community and individual agencies. The working paper which follows discusses ONLY community scales, community level outcomes, and strategies to effect community level change. For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between community and family scales, see the explanatory section on page 17.

A FIRST GLANCE

What is a Scale?

What is a Scale? *A scale is simply a continuum which describes different states or conditions of status.* It has a beginning point and an ending point, with increments in between to help us measure change. One example of a scaling tool we use daily is a thermometer. Inside a room, the thermometer is built into a thermostat to regulate temperature and therefore provide us with comfort. The scale begins at 50 degrees, ends at 90 degrees, with each increment of 1 degree marked in between. Although we could communicate with each other solely using the numerical indicators of degrees, we generally use words we have learned to associate with certain temperatures. Inside a house, 50 degrees is “cold,” and 90 degrees is “hot.” The number we associate with “comfortable” is generally around 70 degrees.

We can take the concept of scales and apply it within human services systems to help agencies get credit for what they are actually accomplishing. Scaling tools offer several unique advantages to the Community Action network.

First, scales can be used to measure concepts that are not easily quantified. Agencies are using scales to gauge progress toward economic self-sufficiency, degree of agency development, amount of community investment, and other concepts that are otherwise difficult to measure. Scales allow agencies to assign values to easily identified, discrete conditions, and to combine these values into a single measure of a complex idea like self-sufficiency. The experience of a number of agencies across the country demonstrates that scales are an efficient means of gathering data on program outcomes.

Second, scales allow agencies to measure intermediate steps. By comparing scale results taken at two different times, one can determine how much short-term progress has been made toward a long-term goal (such as self-sufficiency). Agencies using scales can demonstrate multiple interim successes even when the ultimate goal may not have been achieved. Agencies can build the celebration of interim success into their operations, thereby providing periodic motivation to all the stakeholders: the clients, the staff, and the funding sources.

Third, by using a common framework, scales can be aggregated. Aggregation is important because it allows agencies to present data on a number of clients, states to present uniform data on a number of agencies, and the Office of Community Services to present consistent nationwide information. In the tool proposed in Table 1 on page 7, the following words create a consistent continuum which could be used for aggregating each dimension: Thriving, Safe, Stable, Vulnerable, and In Crisis.

What is a Community?

What is a Community? This tool is designed to help agencies place in context the work they perform which achieves results at the community level. The table on page 7 represents the MACRO context of the discussion: in the broadest terms, what are the goals for community impact resulting from strategies and activities sponsored by the agency? A community, in this context, is not necessarily restricted by established legal or geographic boundaries. ***The term “community” can be used to describe any grouping of individuals who share common distinguishing characteristics (including residency).***

We often speak, for example, of the “low-income” community, or the “religious” community, or the “professional” community. The individual members of these “communities” may or may not reside in a specific neighborhood, county, school district, or voting ward, but an agency may be enacting strategies that will have measurable affect on them. The proposed tool allows agencies the flexibility to define the target “community” in ways that are most appropriate for the situation.

What is the framework?

What is the framework? *The Community Scaling Tool consists of five scales arranged in a matrix format (see Table 1).* The scales share a common set of five words which establish a range of thresholds: Thriving, Safe, Stable, Vulnerable, and In Crisis. For the purposes of this document, the five scales within the matrix will be referred to as “dimensions” of the overall community. These dimensions are designed to be broadly inclusive of both *community conditions* and *community systems*:

- Public Policy refers to both the formal written policies of the community as well as the unstated norms adhered to by the general population. Zoning ordinances are an example of a formal, written public policy. Zoning ordinances may or may not be ignored by the public and simultaneously enforced or unenforced by local officials.
- Equity covers both economic and social distributions of power, opportunity, access, and freedoms. Sexism, racism, and classism are all equity issues.
- Civic Capital captures any activity which a person participates in outside of their immediate family unit including volunteer, social and recreational, religious, and citizenship activities. Civic Capital can also refer to a group of people extending their participation in the community beyond their usual sphere, such as corporate service projects.
- Service and Support Systems include all social and human services, public safety, health, education, child care, housing, justice, infrastructure, and government services. Gaps in the “safety net,” the extent of collaboration between agencies, and the comprehensiveness of services are examples of community conditions and systems interactions within this dimension.
- Economic Opportunity captures the business climate, the labor market, the diversity of the economic base, entrepreneurship, capital stakeholding, and capital resources. Examples of activities within this dimension include strategies to attract or retain jobs, increase job retention and promotion, match labor skill levels with available jobs, and improve new business success rates.

Each of the five community dimensions in Table 1 contains a set of summary descriptive word(s) which describes a continuum of conditions. The summary descriptive word(s) at the threshold levels of “Safe” and “Thriving” capture the vision and values the members of the Community Action Network have brought to their work for over thirty years. The descriptors in the threshold level of “Stable” often refer to conditions many communities consider “normal;” however, “normal” in the lives of many low-income people, and their communities, is a situation which begs for change. General narrative descriptions for each dimension are found in Tables 5-9.

To reiterate a major point, the dimensions of community are broadly stated. There is a functional reason for this large scope: agencies must be able to interpret their local conditions and strategies as appropriate. Each agency approaches its community problems and opportunities with strategies tailored for that community. The “cause” of a particular community condition can vary widely between communities, and the approach to “remedy” that cause will vary based on local resources and motivations. Agencies need the flexibility to explain the problems of their communities and correlate appropriate solutions.

For example, three different agencies operate a first-time home buyers’ program in three different counties. One agency runs the program because local pressure from the Community Reinvestment Act created a pool of funding. The agency considers this an Equity issue because capital was not available in the target neighborhoods in proportion to the dollars the residents of the neighborhoods were investing in the local bank. A second agency runs the program because it could offer credit counseling, case management, and other services packaged together which creates a pool of applicants more likely to be financed. This agency considers their project as an expansion of the Service and Support System. A third agency offers the service in conjunction with a coalition of commercial concerns which are trying to stabilize neighborhoods (by increasing home ownership) in order to attract and maintain business/manufacturing jobs. This agency runs the program as part of an overall approach to increasing Economic Opportunity.

TABLE 1
COMMUNITY SCALING TOOL

THRESHOLDS*		DIMENSIONS				
		PUBLIC POLICY	EQUITY	CIVIC CAPITAL	SERVICE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
5.	Thriving	Innovative	Achieves Equity and Values Differences	Investing	Comprehensive and Integrated	Vibrant
4.	Safe	Supportive	Affirming	Contributory	Preventive	Emerging
3.	Stable	Selective or Reactive	Toleration and Awareness	Participating	Comprehensive but Reactive	Stagnant
2.	Vulnerable	None or Unenforced	Complacent and Uninformed	Awareness and Education	Responsive but not Comprehensive	Contracting
1.	In Crisis	Hostile	Conflict and Fear	Isolation	Non-Responsive	Collapsed

*Note to Table 1: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

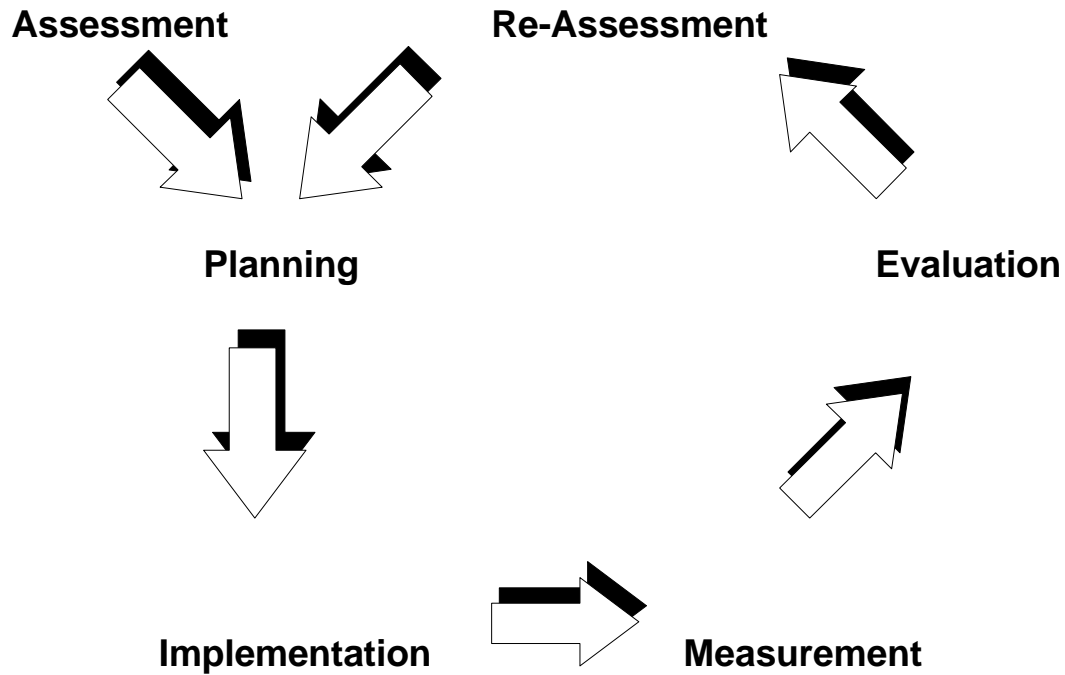
Why Use This Tool?

The proposed Community Scaling Tool can be used to facilitate a number of processes within the daily operations and annual cycles of an agency. Because the five dimensions of the tool are designed to be broadly inclusive of the major components of “community,” the tool is helpful in examining both *conditions* in the community and *systems* of interaction. Therefore, ***an agency can use the same tool as the framework to assess community problems, plan interventions to effect change, measure incremental progress towards change, and re-assess agency strategies*** (see Figure 1). Once staff become familiar with the tool, they will see the additional benefit of using the same, common framework to assess, plan, measure, and re-assess a wide variety of programs and approaches, such as the change in the attitudes of a local advisory board, the effectiveness of collaboration between social service providers, the availability of work experiences for teenagers, the correlation between child care and adult employment, the extent of gaps in the service delivery system, the change in conditions associated with poverty, and the range of volunteer opportunities available to youth, adults, and the elderly.

The tool can be used internally, with an agency’s strategic planning process, to identify goals and timelines for the action steps the agency will take to achieve a community level outcome. An agency may correlate its goals with the Community

Services Block Grant (CSBG) Monitoring and Assessment Task Force (MATF) National Goals, and the action steps may be reported on within the funding cycle for CSBG. Because many community level outcomes are achieved by continuous work through several annual funding cycles, the tool gives agencies a consistent framework to place their annual activities in the context of the long-term goals.

Figure 1: Using the Community Scaling Tool in Assessment, Planning, Measurement, and Re-Assessment



The tool can also be used externally to facilitate better communication, strategic planning, public relations, and cooperation among the local players in a collaborative process. By presenting the framework of the scaling tool to guide discussion, the agency can place the work of the collaboration into the greater context of the community—an essential element of effective advocacy. The local collaboration may opt to adapt the definitions of incremental change to reflect their specific conditions, and the agency can still respond to requests for information that can be aggregated by using the dimensions outlined in the template.

And finally, the scaling tool creates an environment in which an agency can explain the lack of change at the community or family levels instead of trying to justify all activities as having measurable community impact. The scaling tool can explain lack of change because of the shortage of resources, mitigating factors, or other variables which apply to family and community level change. Environment factors that present barriers to change for individuals, such as the lack of affordable day care or an inadequate number of jobs which pay a living wage, can be explained in context using this tool.

A Cautionary Note: This tool was designed specifically to be broadly inclusive of community conditions and systems in part, to provide an agency with a comfort zone in which they can raise questions about troublesome community problems. The authors were acutely aware that any tool designed to show progress towards community solutions could potentially be used to assign blame or failure to agencies unable to show success.

Therefore, agencies are encouraged to:

- understand the distinctions between family level, agency level and community level outcomes. Only use this tool for assessing, planning, measuring and reassessing community level change.

- establish realistic indicators for change which represent the total range of possible community-wide solutions. Do not select indicators solely on the basis of whiter those indicators make your agency look successful when compared to other community partners.

See Table 2 for a complete listing of the advantages of using the Community Scaling Tool.

Table 2

Dispelling the Myths About the Community Scaling Tool

What the Tool Can Do	What the Tool Cannot Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help agency stakeholders see their organization and its activities in the context of their community • differentiate between achievement of short-term, intermediate and long-term goals (incremental change) • show a direct relationship to community collaborative strategies developed to achieve those goals • explain in a simple, flexible practical way a local agency’s needs, strategies, and programs to multiple funding sources • enhance communication between partners in a collaborative effort • provide a context to help explain unanticipated outcomes • provide a mechanism for agencies to compare themselves to their peers • create a safe environment for agencies to raise questions about troublesome community problems • provide “strengths-based” language to discuss community problems with collaborative partners • evaluate the collective impact of multiple strategies over several grant periods • provide a context for “modeling behaviors” of agencies which serve as community catalysts • show a direct relationship of an agency’s day-to-day activities in advocacy with community level systems changes • help agencies focus their efforts on particular community concerns • allow aggregation of systems changes which result from diverse implementation approaches • help understand and explain the social, political, and economic conditions which produce barriers to change for families and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exclude the role of community partners so a single agency gets all the credit for systems changes • hold a single agency responsible for community level outcomes over which the agency has no control • alleviate the need to report demographic and outcome information for families and individuals • replace formal impact evaluations required by certain funding sources • demonstrate the community impact of a single funding source

How do I use this tool?

The Community Scaling Tool can be used by an agency to assess community conditions and systems, plan for change, measure whether change has or has not occurred, determine the amount of change, and re-assess the agency's continued interventions. ***The agency must ask itself, "What, specifically, is going to change?" as a result of the planned interventions and strategies.*** If the answer is a condition of Public Policy, Equity, Civic Capital, Economic Opportunity, or a Service and Support Systems change, the agency should identify specific indicators it will seek to measure whether or not change has occurred. (For other possible answers to this question, see page , Relationship of Family, Community, and Agency Scales.) See Table 3 for six quick steps for using the Community Scaling Tool.

An agency will use the specific indicators to create a subscale applicable to its work. An agency may use only one column (dimension) of this matrix to describe its work on a specific community problem, or it may find that its activities bridge several dimensions. An agency would create a subscale for each dimension for which it wishes to show results.

Table 3
Six Quick Steps for Using the Community Scale

Step 1: Assess	Using the Community Scale as the framework for assessment, are there problems or opportunities in which your agency can provide needed and appropriate intervention? If yes, continue.
Step 2: Analyze	Is the problem or opportunity one that can be changed by effecting change in <u>community systems or conditions</u> ? Does your agency, alone or in collaboration with others, have the ability to achieve change at the community level? If you answered yes to <u>both</u> of these questions, continue. (If no, consider Family level measurement tools if you are effecting change one client/family at a time, or Agency level measurement tools if you need to increase agency capacity in order to effect change.)
Step 3: Strategize	Identify the specific condition or system that will be changed and decide in which of the five dimensions of the Community Scale the change can be measured: Public Policy, Equity, Civic Capital, Service and Support Systems and Economic Opportunity.
Step 4: Focus	Decide what aspect(s) (indicators) of the specific condition or system you will track in order to measure change. Create a targeted subscale using the indicators selected. Be clear that increments of movement can be seen between the different steps of the scale. Correlate the objectives in the agency's strategic plan to the amount of change that will constitute "success."
Step 5: Measure	Since you are measuring change, you need to have at least two measurements: one <u>before</u> the intervention (or at the beginning of the reporting period) and one <u>after</u> the intervention is completed (or at the end of the reporting period.) Change is determined by comparing the difference between these two measurements.
Step 6: Re-Assess	Using the Community Scale as the framework for re-assessment, take the data from your measurements and revisit the problems or opportunities your agency originally identified. Was your initial assessment accurate? Are there additional community systems or conditions which impact your agency's ability to achieve results at the community level? Are changes in your agency's intervention strategy necessary?

As an example of how to use the six quick steps, a community action agency identified a lack of affordable housing as one of the major barriers affecting the ability of clients in its self-sufficiency program to achieve success. Although the problem was identified through assessments of *individual* clients, the agency decided to undertake a *community* level strategy for solving the problem. Table 4 outlines the use of the six quick steps for this agency's first year of interventions. The six quick steps can be repeated for subsequent years of multi-year projects such as this one. A more in-depth narrative of this project can be found on page of this document. Tables 10 and 11 on pages 19 and 20 contain the detailed subscales referred to in Step 4 of Table 4.

Table 4
The Six Quick Steps for a Housing Project (Year 1)

Step 1 Assess:	There is an insufficient supply of affordable housing for low-income people. Housing-related problems are the second most frequent barrier to success for participants in our self-sufficiency program. There is little cooperation between developers and residents. Our agency can intervene.
Step 2 Analyze:	Our community's local comprehensive plan shows areas zoned for low-income housing. We have the ability to acquire land in these areas. We can collaborate with potential low-income residents as a model for private housing developers. We can increase the number of units of housing available for low-income people.
Step 3 Strategize:	Our community's supply of affordable housing for low-income people represents is a component of service and support systems on the community scaling tool. Within this category, the insufficient supply and the lack of coordination between developers, residents and the human service community place our community in a vulnerable status because the housing systems are responsive to pressure to change, but without that pressure, services are not comprehensive .
Step 4 Focus:	We created a subscale for Housing within the Service and Support Systems category of the Community Scaling Tool. The indicators we will use to measure change are: A) housing development efforts as related to resident and community needs; B) housing planning activities as related to other human service and infrastructure issues; and C) housing availability for low-income people.
Step 5 Measure:	We applied our subscale and took measurements at the beginning of the project. At the end of the first year, we utilized the subscale again for measurement purposes and found that there had been no change on the three indicators we selected.
Step 6 Re-Assess	We used the Community Scaling Tool again to re-assess our community's housing situation and we believe our original assessment of the service and support systems dimension was correct. However, we now believe two other problems exist which must be tackled before our original housing plans will be successful. After we acquired land at the targeted site for building, we began the process for gaining necessary zoning permits. We discovered that although our community's Public Policy appeared Supportive because adequate sites were included in the formal comprehensive plan, a condition of Hostility actually existed. As we identified a strategy to overcome this issue, we found that additional Equity issues (of families in the neighborhood adjacent to the building site) were involved.

DEFINITIONS OF DIMENSIONS

The following pages contain narrative descriptions of each of the five dimensions of the Community Scaling Tool. Brief examples are discussed.

Public Policy refers to both the formal written policies of the community as well as the unstated norms adhered to by the general population. Zoning ordinances are an example of a formal, written public policy. Zoning ordinances may or may not be ignored by the public and simultaneously enforced or unenforced by local officials.

TABLE 5
PUBLIC POLICY DIMENSION

THRESHOLD		PUBLIC POLICY SCALE
5.	THRIVING	Public policy affecting the community is innovative in its values, premises, and strategies regarding the condition and needs of low-income persons. Affirmatively seeks new ways to promote the economic development and well-being of low-income residents and their full inclusion in the life of the community.
4.	SAFE	Public policy is supportive with respect to the needs and aspirations of low-income residents. Generally is proactive and systematic in identifying and eliminating barriers to improvement in economic and social status.
3.	STABLE	Public policy is reactive in its approaches to responding to the needs of low-income persons. When issues are forcefully brought to the attention of policy-makers, it is usually possible to achieve a selective case-by-case policy outcome that is favorable with respect to issues and problems of low-income residents.
2.	VULNERABLE	There is no public policy intended to support the needs and aspirations of low-income persons, or any such policy that does exist is unenforced . There is little or no awareness or concern or acceptance of public responsibility for supporting improvement of the economic and social conditions of the poor.
1.	IN CRISIS	Public policy is hostile with respect to conditions and needs of low-income persons. Policies are intended to make it difficult for low-income persons to live in the community or to play a meaningful and contributing role in the life of the community.

*Note to Table 5: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

Equity covers both economic and social distributions of power, opportunity, access, and freedoms. Sexism, racism, and classism are all equity issues.

TABLE 6
EQUITY DIMENSION

THRESHOLD		EQUITY SCALE
5.	THRIVING	The community understands the strengths inherent in diversity, celebrates differences and, therefore, is committed to the development and maintenance of a healthy socioeconomic and demographic mix. The appreciation of diversity has led to establishment of equal treatment and opportunity as the prevailing norms in both economic and social transactions in the community. All cultures and ethnic groups are working together for the common good.
4.	SAFE	Knowledge and understanding of culture and customs of various groups represented in the community's population are common throughout the community. That knowledge has bred an understanding that differing customs and values can coexist and a sensitivity to and appropriate accommodation of those varied customs and values. Affirmation of the rights and the values of others, despite differences, is the norm.
3.	STABLE	Members of the community are generally aware of differences among the populations present in the community. An atmosphere of tolerance prevails with little or no inter-group conflict. There is a growing awareness of the importance of understanding and community among diverse populations.
2.	VULNERABLE	Diverse populations are generally isolated from one another and are uninformed regarding the customs, values, history and contributions of the other populations residing in the community. There is a general sense of complacency regarding lack of interaction and communication among various groups. Lack of understanding and consequent insensitivity are commonplace.
1.	IN CRISIS	Fear and conflict characterize interactions among diverse populations. Various populations are consistently working at cross-purpose. Open hostility is common.

*Note to Table 6: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

Civic Capital captures any activity which a person participates in outside of their immediate family unit including volunteer, social and recreational, religious, and citizenship activities. Civic Capital can also refer to a group of people extending their participation in the community beyond their usual sphere, such as corporate service projects.

TABLE 7
CIVIC CAPITAL DIMENSION

THRESHOLD		CIVIC CAPITAL SCALE
5.	THRIVING	Civic involvement (social and political) is high throughout the community’s socio-economic spectrum. Participation commonly has such depth, intensity, and vision that it constitutes investment in the social and political well-being of the community. Low-income people are fully integrated and actively participate on boards, commissions, and committees addressing all aspects of community life. Civic life is vibrant; social harmony prevails. Even low-income and minority residents have a strong sense of belonging and of community. Voter registration and turnout are high.
4.	SAFE	Low-income people, their neighborhoods, and issues are part of the community dialogue. Low-income people play significant roles within the larger community. Opportunities for social interaction are such that they support development of a sense of community, of mutuality of interest. Those active in many social and policy-making activities have a strong sense of contributing to the social and civic health of the community. There is vibrant civic life within low-income neighborhoods (social, political, recreational, arts, etc.). Level of involvement is high. Voter registration and turnout are comparable to community as a whole.
3.	STABLE	Low-income persons are participating in civic affairs. There is an identifiable leadership within the low-income community and several advocacy organizations. Attainment of goals is difficult but achievements are possible when the low-income community is organized around a particular issue. Low-income participation in policy-making roles concerned with issues particularly relating to the low-income community is proportional to overall population. There is active and accessible civic life in low-income communities. Voter registration and turnout is comparatively low, but low-income vote is sought by community-wide candidates.
2.	VULNERABLE	While low-income people and their neighborhoods are not an integral part of the larger community, there is an awareness within the low-income community and the larger community of the importance of working toward community-wide unity. Low-income persons fill policy-making roles, but there is little evidence that public policy decisions reflect the interests of low-income residents. There is a visible civic life within low-income neighborhoods—social, political, recreational, religious—but participation is low compared with more affluent neighborhoods. Voter registration and turnout are very low.
1.	IN CRISIS	Isolation is the norm. They are isolated physically and socially from the larger community and to a large degree from one another. There is no identifiable leadership. Low-income involvement in policy-making roles and activities is very low or non-existent and without impact. There is little opportunity for positive involvement in civic life. Voter registration and turnout are very low and there is little or no commitment to increasing participation since voting and other approaches to affecting public policy are generally considered futile.

*Note to Table 7: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

Service and Support Systems include all social and human services, public safety, health, education, child care, housing, justice, infrastructure, and government services. Gaps in the “safety net,” the extent of collaboration between agencies, and the comprehensiveness of services are examples of community conditions and systems interactions within this dimension.

TABLE 8
SERVICE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS DIMENSION

THRESHOLD		SERVICE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS SCALE
5.	THRIVING	Community services of all kinds are both comprehensive and integrated into a virtually seamless system. Collaboration and synergy are the norms. Social services are based on a wellness model and are strongly consumer driven. A strong community-wide set of strategic planning processes assures that public and community services are responsive and will grow and develop in accord with community needs. Community is committed to providing resources sufficient to assure quality and comprehensiveness of and full access to community, public, and educational services.
4.	SAFE	Service and support programs have a strong preventive orientation. Most essential community and social services are available to those who need them. Service providers are committed to collaboration and are in the process of developing an integrated approach to provision of community services. Planning involves all segments of the community. Commitment of resources is adequate to assure continued availability of services that meet needs for both basic and early intervention services, as well as for strong public and education services.
3.	STABLE	Public and social services available in the community are generally comprehensive, but are primarily reactive in their responses to community needs. Planning tends to be very limited in strategic outlook and occur principally within programmatic boundaries. Focus is on evident current needs. Clients/customers are seldom brought into the planning process. Providers of public and social services are communicating and considering the value of collaboration. Resources are adequate for most immediate basic needs.
2.	VULNERABLE	Some key public and social services exist and are responsive to needs to which they are focused but the range of community services and resources is limited and not comprehensive . There is no effort to plan collaboratively and comprehensively for a broad range of community needs. Fragmentation of services and community resources is common. Resources are strained and directed principally to maintenance of effort. Competition is the most common form of relationship among providers of services.
1.	IN CRISIS	Public and social services are non-responsive to community needs. “Turf” boundaries are very strong and planning is minimal or non-existent. Even emergency services are inadequate in comparison with the intensity of need. Resources are barely adequate to maintain even the most minimal configuration of community services. Most public and social services are ineffective.

*Note to Table 8: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

Economic Opportunity captures the business climate, the labor market, the diversity of the economic base, entrepreneurship, capital stakeholding, and capital resources. Examples of activities within this dimension include strategies to attract or retain jobs, increase job retention and promotion, match labor skill levels with available jobs, and improve new business success rates.

TABLE 9
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY DIMENSION

THRESHOLD		ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY SCALE
5.	THRIVING	The economic health of the entire community is vibrant . There is a broadly diversified economic base, high rate of employment, and all sectors of the community benefit equally from the community's strong economy. Income levels and costs of living in the community are well-balanced. Education and training resources are available, accessible, and effective in preparing community members to participate in and contribute to the economic life and strength of the community. There is a widely shared vision of a strong and vibrant economy. Community investment is high. Entrepreneurship and capital "stakeholding" are possible and a reality across the entire income spectrum.
4.	SAFE	The economy of the community is emerging . It is growing and there are plans for appropriate development of business and industry. The economy shows strength in key areas. Unemployment is not significantly greater than state and/or national levels. Programs and plans are in place to bring low-income residents into the mainstream of the local economy, including entrepreneurship and opportunities to hold capital interests in the local economy. There is a developing consensus regarding the economic development of the community as a whole.
3.	STABLE	While there are strengths in the local economy and growth is taking place, there is a mismatch or incongruity between the current state and/or direction of the economy and the abilities and aspirations of those living in the community. The economy is stagnant . Opportunities for economic "stakeholder" participation of low-income persons are very limited, though still a possibility. Unemployment is higher than the state average. Planning, however, is focusing on developing a local economy that is more inclusive and likely to accommodate the economic needs and capacities of all residents. Shared goals for economic growth and inclusion are being discussed.
2.	VULNERABLE	The economy of the community is contracting . Capital is fleeing the community. Unemployment is significantly higher than state and/or national levels and is concentrated in minority populations. There is little local planning directed to stabilizing and improving the economy. There is an awareness of income and opportunity disparities in the community, but little dialogue or commitment to improvement in such conditions. Neither the economic environment nor employment and training opportunities offer real prospects for improvement in economic circumstances of low income individuals and families.
1.	IN CRISIS	The economy of the community has collapsed . The flight of capital from the community is virtually complete, and business and industry are leaving. Unemployment is high and rising; poverty is on the increase. Efforts to plan effectively for economic growth are failing; lack of hope has led to lack of effort. There is a general lack of opportunity throughout the community, but minority populations are far more intensely affected by bad economic conditions prevailing in the community. Conflict and blame characterize relationships among various groups and factions.

*Note to Table 9: the Numbers in the far left-hand column are designed to be interchangeable with the words in that column. The numbers are offered as an alternative to the words because the authors are aware that certain community situations are so volatile that the words may create unintended barriers to communication.

Relationship of Family, Community, and Agency Scales.

RAgencies participate in activities which produce outcomes at the family, agency and community levels. Some activities produce outcomes at all three levels concurrently; other activities produce results targeted at a specific outcome level. The key to differentiating the outcome levels is answering the following question: **What, specifically, is going to change?**

- Family level scales measure changes one family at a time. The dimensions for change may include status of employment, education for adults and children, family functioning, income and health.
- Agency level scales measure changes in a single agency or a program within an agency. The dimensions for change may include client satisfaction, cultural sensitivity and competency, funds development and fiscal or administrative health.
- Community level scales measure change in community systems or conditions. The dimensions for change include public policy, equity, civic capital, service of support systems and economic opportunity.

There is a linkage between the Family and Community level scales; ultimately, we wish to show how community level changes translate down to impact on individuals and households. However, the community scale is more subjective than reliance on statistical data alone would allow. The community scale is more than merely the aggregation of outcome data for individual families.

Think about the economic principle that demonstrates that an action taken by an individual may benefit that individual, but collectively, if everyone took that same action, there would be no benefit individually and maybe even a detriment. For example: A football stadium is completely sold out and all the seats are full. If one person stands up, he or she may indeed have a better view of the game. If, however, everyone stands up, some people may have a better view, some people would have the same view, but most people would have a worse view. A different example: A union goes out on strike. One individual may refuse to strike, continue to work throughout the strike, and earn wages as well as eventually receive the benefits negotiated by the strikers. However, if everyone in the union broke the picket lines, the strike would be ineffective, no benefits would accrue, and the future negotiating power of a threatened strike would be lost.

The Agency Scale measures organizational functioning capacity, and effectiveness of services delivered and activities undertaken. The Agency Scale may use data collected with a Family Scale to determine the effectiveness of the case management services, but the Family Scale itself does **not** have a category to measure the role of the agency's caseworker or intervention specialist. The quality or capacity of the agency's caseworker in working with the family is an Agency Level issue. Counseling, referral, advocacy, eligibility determination, certification and education are Agency Level activities targeted at families.

Similarly, the Agency Scale may use data collected with a Community Scale to determine the effectiveness of its advocacy activities, but again, the Community Scale itself does **not** have a category to measure the role of the community organizers. The quality or capacity of the agency's staff working with the community is an Agency Level issue. Leveraging, brokering, advocacy, mobilization and collaboration are Agency level activities targeted at communities.

CURRENT EXAMPLES

The Community Scaling Tool allows the effects of an agency's various activities related to a single project to be shown. It provides a framework within which to illustrate the multiple outcomes which can arise from the strategies used to achieve a single goal.

For example, as a result of its ongoing community needs and assets analyses related to social and economic self-sufficiency, a community action agency concluded that there was a need for additional affordable housing for families in transition between public assistance and self-sufficiency. The agency decided to attempt to expand the affordable housing stock by constructing 52 townhouses for participants in its self-sufficiency programs. Within the Service and Support Systems category of the Community Scaling Tool, the agency defined the current systems as "Responsive but not Comprehensive" ("Vulnerable" on the Community Scale.) (See Table and the accompanying notes.)

The agency identified a site in close proximity to major employment and post secondary education opportunities. The agency reviewed the community's comprehensive plan, which guides the zoning process, and found that the site was designated for multi-family housing. The current zoning was, however, for commercial use. The agency conferred with the local government's planning staff and confirmed that the site was designated to be rezoned for multi-family housing.

The agency obtained site control through an option with the owner, secured commitments for the financing to develop the project and applied for the needed zoning change. The agency's request for a zoning change received the unanimous approval of the community's planning commission, but the planning commission's rezoning decision was appealed to the local government's legislative body by the residents of an affluent, predominantly white, historic neighborhood adjacent to the proposed site. The legislative body reversed the rezoning by an 8 to 2 vote.

The agency appealed the zoning reversal in the courts. The legal premise of the appeal is that the local government's decision to reverse the rezoning was in violation of its own comprehensive plan that, under State law, should guide the zoning process. The case is still pending in the courts and because of the appeals process, may not be resolved for several more years.

Now in the third year of the project, the agency still has not built any units. It still has a goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing for families in transition between public assistance and self-sufficiency, moving the housing dimension from "Vulnerable" to "Stable."

The agency also has new goals for moving public policy related to affordable housing from "Vulnerable" to "Stable." (See Table 11.) It would also be possible for the agency to establish additional goals related to the Equity category. Goals and strategies could be established to move the equity and diversity of the neighborhood where the site is located from "In Crisis" to "Stable."

Table 10
Services and Support Systems Scale with Housing Subscale

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Community Scale Thresholds	Services and Support Systems Scale Descriptors	Services and Support Systems Scale	Housing Subscale
Thriving 5	Comprehensive and Interrelated	Community services of all kinds are both comprehensive and integrated into a virtually seamless system. Collaboration and synergy are the norms. Social services are based on a “wellness” model and are participant driven. A strong community-wide set of strategic planning processes assures that public and community services are responsive and will grow and develop in accord with community needs. Community is committed to providing resources sufficient to assure quality and comprehensiveness of, and full access to, community, public and educational services.	<i>Affordable housing development is integrated with other systems including education, social services and transportation. Most housing initiatives involve multiple players. Development of affordable housing is targeted to clearly identified community needs. It is needs driven, not driven by available categorical public funding opportunities. Housing planning process is comprehensive and reflects both vertical and horizontal integration.</i>
Safe 4	Preventive	Service and support programs have a strong preventive orientation. Most essential community and social services are available to those who need them. Service providers are committed to collaboration and are in the process of developing an integrated approach to provision of community services. Planning involves all segments of the community. Commitment of resources is adequate to assure continued availability of services that meet needs for both basic and early intervention services, as well as for strong public and education services.	<i>The community has a long range plan for affordable housing and strategies to meet its goals and objectives. Most low-income households needing housing have multiple choices in terms of price, size and location. Housing developers are pursuing collaborative projects, such as mixed income developments. Planning for affordable housing includes intended beneficiaries throughout the process. There is a wide range of financing available for affordable housing development, including private and local, state and federal funding.</i>
Stable 3	Comprehensive but Reactive	Public and social services available in the community are generally comprehensive, but are primarily reactive in their responses to community needs. Planning tends to be very limited in strategic outlook and occurs principally within programmatic boundaries. Focus is on evident current needs. Clients (customers) are seldom brought into the planning process. Providers of public and social services are communicating and considering the value of collaboration. Resources are adequate for the most immediate basic needs.	<i>While there is significant growth in the development of affordable housing in the community, it is not proactive in nature but generally in response to existing problems. Low and moderate income households are rarely consulted in the development of housing plans. Developers of affordable housing meet regularly to share information and are discussing processes to collaborate on development activities. While often not well matched to household needs, most low-income families are able to locate housing.</i>
Vulnerable 2	Responsive but not Comprehensive	Some key public and social services exist and are responsive to needs to which they are focused but the range of community services and resources is limited but not comprehensive. There is no effort to plan collaboratively and comprehensively for a broad range of community needs. Fragmentation of services and community resources is common. Resources are strained and directed principally to maintenance of effort. Competition is the most common characteristic of relationship between service providers.	<i>The community continues to experience growth in the development of affordable housing but local data indicate that the lowest vacancy rate is in housing for low to moderate income households. Participants in agency’s self-sufficiency programs experience considerable difficulty in obtaining adequate housing. Housing related problems are the second most frequent barrier to participant success. While the local government has a housing development plan, it is primarily used to satisfy federal requirements and does not guide most housing development activity or policies and initiatives by local organizations or local government. There is little coordination between local housing developers or between housing development and other human services activities.</i>
In Crisis 1	Non-Responsive	Public and social services are non-responsive to community needs. “Turf” boundaries are very strong and planning is minimal or non-existent. Even emergency services are inadequate in comparison with the intensity of need. Resources are barely adequate to maintain even the most minimal configuration of community services. Most public and social services are ineffective.	<i>Available affordable housing stock is significantly below identified needs. Homelessness and overcrowding are common. There is significant competition between for-profit, non-profit and governmental housing developers.</i>

Notes to Table 10:

Columns (1) and (2) contain the thresholds and descriptors that were first presented Table 1. Column (3) repeats the scale for the Services and Support Systems Dimension first presented in narrative form in Table 8. Column (4) is how the local CAA applied the indicators and descriptors of the Services and Support Systems Dimension to its specific goal and strategy of increasing the affordable housing stock. The descriptors in the block for “Vulnerable” on the Community Scale (or “Responsive but not Comprehensive” on the Services and Support Systems Dimension) are in bold type to indicate where the CAA placed its community at the time it initially reported the project.

Table 11
Public Policy Scale with Housing Policy Subscale

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Community Scale Thresholds	Public Policy Scale Descriptors	Public Policy Scale	Housing Policy Subscale
Thriving 5	Innovative	Public policy affecting the community is innovative in its values, premises and strategies regarding the condition and needs of low income persons. Affirmatively seeks new ways to promote the economic development and well-being of low income residents and their full inclusion in the life of the community.	<i>Low-income needs are fully integrated into community housing planning and development systems. Land use planning and zoning policies require that developers provide set asides for affordable housing and/or employment generating activities as a condition for the approval of new development.</i>
Safe 4	Supportive	Public policy is supportive with respect to the needs and aspirations of low income residents. Generally is proactive and systematic in identifying and eliminating barriers to improvement in economic and social status.	<i>There is a comprehensive plan to develop affordable housing consistent with identified needs. The local government actively seeks private, federal and state resources for housing development. The land use planning and zoning process is proactive in ensuring that sufficient sites are designated for future development.</i>
Stable 3	Reactive or Selective	Public policy is reactive in its approaches to responding to the needs of low income persons. When issues are forcefully brought to the attention of policy makers, it is usually possible to achieve a case-by-case policy outcome that is favorable with respect to issues and problems of low income residents.	<i>While the local government has a plan to develop low-income housing, its goals are not pursued proactively. When low-income advocates and supportive groups press for housing initiatives, however, the local government tends to respond positively. The land use planning and zoning process is even-handed and treats all petitioners consistently without respect to socio-economic status.</i>
Vulnerable 2	None or Unenforced	There is no public policy intended to support the needs and aspirations of low income persons, or any such policy that does exist is unenforced. There is little or no awareness or concern or acceptance of public responsibility for supporting improvement of the economic and social conditions of the poor.	<i>There is no comprehensive community policy to develop affordable housing. The only planning that occurs is to satisfy federal requirements to obtain grant funds. Land use planning and zoning decisions are generally based on the relative power and influence of the petitioners.</i>
In Crisis 1	Hostile	Public policy is hostile with respect to conditions and needs of low income persons. Policies are intended to make it difficult for low income persons to live in the community or to play a meaningful and contributing role in the life of the community.	<i>Public policy actively discourages the development of affordable housing through lot size and other restrictions that put most housing beyond the reach of low income families. The community has no plan for the development of affordable housing and does not seek or accept federal or state funds for housing initiatives.</i>

Notes to Table 11:

Columns (1) and (2) contains the thresholds and descriptors that were first presented in Table 1. Column (3) repeats the scale for the Public Policy Dimension first presented in narrative form in Table 5. Column (4) is how the local CAA applied the indicators and descriptors of the Public Policy Dimension as the potential outcomes of its goal and strategy were broadened to include producing a change in public policy regarding affordable housing. The descriptors in the block for "Vulnerable" on the Community Scale (or "None or Unenforced" on the Public Policy Dimension) are in bold type to indicate where the CAA placed its community when it reported on the project following the reversal of its zoning request.

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