



Department of Community &  
Economic Development

## CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Title:** Administrative Boards

**Directive #:** C2016-03

**Effective:** July 1, 2016

To: Community Services Block Grant Subgrantees

From: Lynette Praster, Director – Center for Community Services

### **1.0 Purpose:**

The purpose of the directive is to provide additional guidance to Community Services Block Grant eligible entities that are units of local governments or limited purpose agencies concerning the composition and function of CSBG Administrative Boards.

### **2.0 Revision History:**

This CSBG Directive replaces C2014-03 and is effective July 1, 2016.

### **3.0 Policy:**

In those communities where the local political jurisdiction (city, county, etc.) has designated itself as the community action agency, the governing officials are required to establish an Administering Board. The Administering Board is constituted in the same manner as a Governing Board. Unlike the Governing Board, the Administering Board is not the source of all authority in the CAA, nor is it the legal embodiment of the CAA. The board's actual authority depends on the powers delegated to it by the governing officials of the political jurisdiction. It may function as Governing Board or, if the governing officials choose to withhold most substantive decisions making authority, it will be, in reality, a consulting body or an advisory board. It must, however, at minimum, involve representatives of the client population and the private sector in the determination of program policies and the procedure rather than the mere provision of advice.

#### **Selection of Administrative Boards**

Administrative Boards may be appointed by the chief elected official(s) of the local government involved or selected by a democratic process which is characterized by free and equal participation in the decision making process. In either case, the board membership must be composed of one-third local elected government official's currently holding office or their representatives, except that if the number of local elected officials reasonably available to serve is less than one-third of the board membership, then local appointed officials may be counted to fulfill this requirement. At least one-third of the administrative board membership must be representatives of low-income persons. Representatives of the low-income should

be persons directly affected or served by the CSBG program, “chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures”, and must currently reside within the agency’s service area.

The remainder of the administrative board shall be composed of representatives of business, industry, labor, religious, welfare, education or other major interests in the community/ies served. The members of the administrative board, to the extent feasible, should also be geographically representative of the area served by the Community Action Agency/Limited Purpose Agency.

### **Responsibilities of the Administrative Boards**

The State Community Services Act (P.L. 315 No. 46, as amended 2014) contains several provisions that are germane to the responsibilities of a CSBG Administrative Board. These provisions include the following:

- Section 5 (a), Powers of the Agency – requires that each Community Action Agency shall “be a continuing and effective mechanism for securing broad community involvement in the programs assisted under this Act”.
- Section 5 (b), (4), Functions of the Agency – states that Community Action Agencies shall, among other functions, establish “effective procedures by which the poor and area residents concerned will be enabled to influence the character of programs affecting their interest ...”.
- Section 5 (b), (5), Functions of the Agency – specifies that a Community Action Agency’s functions include “joining with and encouraging business, labor and other private groups and organizations to undertake, together with public officials and agencies, activities in support of the community action program which will result in the additional use of private resources and capabilities ...”.

Implementing these provisions requires the following, at a minimum:

- Regular administrative board meetings held not less than quarterly.
- Prompt filling of board vacancies when they occur. As a general practice, board vacancies should not persist longer than 90 days.
- Providing timely and continuous board training to include but not limited to ROMA and other CSBG related subjects, as necessary all new Board members must receive ROMA Training for Board Members within six (6) months of being seated. The entire Board must undergo ROMA refresher training conducted by a certified ROMA Trainer every twenty four (24) months at a minimum.
- Administrative board’s review and approval of the annual CSBG Application.
- Administrative board’s participation in the periodic evaluation of program outcomes.
- Administrative board’s review and comment on major changes in program priorities, direction or policies.

Terms of individual board membership are determined by the agency, but should represent the current needs of the agency.

Many CAAs find term limits helpful to keep boards revitalized and current. Community Action Agencies may impose such limits through their own bylaws if they wish.

### ***Representatives of Low-Income Individuals and Families***

The statute requires that representatives of low-income individuals and families be “chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures”, and must currently reside within the agency’s service area. The implicit intent of this requirement is to insure that those who *currently* live in areas served by the agency are represented so that they have a strong voice in agency governance and direction and are able to convey to those they represent the presence and significance of community action in their lives. And, because some programs within Community Action Agencies, especially Head Start, also require governance involving families being served, overall agency coordination and communications across programs are further enhanced when a few (one or two) members of Head Start Policy Councils serve on agency tripartite boards. The Head Start regulations require that the Policy Council and the Board cannot have *identical membership*, so this must be observed.

Every effort should be made by eligible entities to assure that board members representing low-income individuals and families:

- Have been selected on the basis of some form of democratic procedure either directly through election, public forum, or, if not possible, through a similar democratic process such as election to a position of responsibility in another significant service or community organization such as a school PTA, a faith-based organization leadership group; or an advisory board/governing council to another low-income service provider;
- Are truly representative of *current* residents of the geographic area to be served, including racial and ethnic composition, as determined by periodic selection or reselection by the community. Being *current* should be based on the recent or annual demographics changes as documented in the needs/community assessment. This does not preclude extended service of low-income community representatives on boards, but does suggest that continued board participation of longer term members be revalidated from and kept current through some form of democratic process and the assessment of community changes.

### ***Elected Public Officials or their Representatives***

The overarching purposes for having elected officials serve on tripartite boards are to encourage awareness of poverty needs within the community and action by local governments, and to foster close coordination and partnership between public agencies and the eligible entities. The statute requires that elected public officials must be “holding office on the date of selection” to a tripartite board. The statute allows public officials (elected, or if necessary, appointed) to name someone to represent them on the board. While the statute does not set term limits for this category of board membership, the spirit of the law

suggests that local government officials participate in agency oversight and governance only as long as the elected officials serving on boards in this capacity remain in elected office.

Similarly, individuals designated by elected or appointed officials to represent them on boards serve only while their principals are in office or are re-designated by those in office. Agencies are responsible for making sure that this category of board membership remains current through such procedures as prompt notification of newly elected or currently elected public officials of the opportunity for board service or representation, and timely replacement of board members (or their representatives) who no longer hold public office.

Agencies that wish to extend the board service of either formerly elected officials or their representatives may choose to appoint them as representatives of “major groups and interests in the community should such vacancies exist.”

### ***Representatives of Major Groups and Interests in the Community***

While the statute does not set term limits for these board members, their role is to reflect and involve key interests and resources within the community to guide agency actions and outcomes. For this category, agencies should strive to assure that:

- Groups and interests with *current* influence or resources deemed *critical* to the success of the agency are represented.
- Members are empowered by their organization to participate in board activities and play a role in agency outcomes.

None of the above guidance implies that administrative boards may assume responsibilities or powers associated with a board of directors. For example, administrative boards may not set salaries or hire/fire the executive director. However, the role of administrative communities in designing programs, providing input into decisions about program content and marshalling community support for programs should be substantive. Administrative boards can and should be a force for effectiveness in the Community Action Agency’s operation.

#### **4.0 Effective Date:**

This directive shall take effect July 1, 2016 and replaces Directive #C2014-03. It shall remain in effect, in its entirety, until such time as it is amended, replaced, superseded, or nullified. Only a directive from the Center for Community Services or equivalent office may countermand any statement herein contained.

cc: Center for Community Services Staff