NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

Promising State Practices for a More Engaged Network

State Management Work Group: Purpose

The State Management Work Group serves as a consultative body to NASCSP and OCS in ***conducting research that informs the development of a variety of promising practices, tools, resources, and training and technical assistance offerings for state administrators.***

Verbatim Comments: Engaging the Network

- *A true sense of teamwork. There should not be an adversarial relationship between the CSBG Lead Agency and the local agencies. I cannot understand how it not impressed upon some CSBG Lead Agency Staff that local agencies not thriving is a reflection of the State, not just the local agency. T&TA cannot be "Well, that is up to you and your Board"...especially when we are requesting best practices or what is acceptable, well beyond national standards. Provide me with complete information about how to be the effective Community Action Agency that we should all want. Not just enough to say, essentially, 'Nope, that ain't it'.*

- *It often does not feel like two-way communication. Also feels like instead of listening to what we need and what is happening on the ground, we are being looped into things that are decided at a state level without a true understanding of what our clients really need.*

- *Communication from the State agency is often "at" the CAPs not with us. We are not brought into discussions about needs, either for the organization or the community, until well after the State has decided what programs they are going to submit for funding. Many times, this communication is only with large, urban CAPs and then programs are rolled out that don't meet the needs of smaller suburban or rural communities and no regard is given to their needs. So, I think rather than receiving information from the State agency, it would be nice if they solicited information from a broader number of CAPs.*

- *Communications via the monthly WebEx and telephone calls is usually one-way. State to agencies.*

- *I would like additional information and the opportunity to engage with state agencies that serve our clients. We could be more effective if there was state-level coordination for information sharing and for the identification of opportunities and challenges. Joint problem-solving could provide improved efficiency, access, and overall effectiveness for the households we serve.*

Verbatim Comments: Engaging the Network

- *More frequent, one-on-one communication between the State CSBG Lead Agency and each CAA within the state. This builds trust and fosters creative problem solving rather than the fear instilled in some CAA's that are always waiting for the shoe to drop telling them what they did wrong or failed to do as well as another CAA was able to execute a similar project.*

- *It appears that the state agency that administers CSBG funds thinks that CAAs are their employees, instead of equal partners, and generally treat them as such.*

- *It often does not feel like two-way communication. Also feels like instead of listening to what we need and what is happening on the ground, we are being looped into things that are decided at a state level without a true understanding of what our clients really need.*

- *More "how can we help you" and/or "how can we partner with you directly, or link you to other partners?"*

- *Information that will help us understand what is going on at the State level in regard to expectations, funding, etc.*

- *Comparisons and overall analysis of all agencies statewide and how our agency fits.*

- *If plans are in process, communication with the CAA's would be appreciated. Planning is very important and needed.*

- *Best practices across the state and nationally.*

- *It makes sense to bring us together to discuss best practices, share survey and monitoring tools, and compare strategies with State guidance.*

Verbatim Comments: Engaging the Network

- *Our lead does a good job of getting the word out and working closely with the state association to ensure the clear dissemination of information.*

- *Our state association is currently hosting weekly calls with Executive Directors across the state and state staff are on that call each week as well. This was started during COVID. After COVID, I don't think we need the calls to be weekly, but it would be nice if the State would continue this practice of having a monthly call with EDs to keep communication lines open.*

- *Our state director is really transparent and keeps our agencies up to date on all matters. I cannot think of any information, at this time, we would like to receive that we currently are not receiving or could receive upon request.*

- *The CSBG Program Manager communicates well, communicates frequently, and asks for feedback.*

- *The relationship is very communicative. I feel like the communications are honest, occur formally and informally, and are helpful. I don't believe we are missing information.*

- *The State CSBG Lead Agency is very good at providing the entities with information that is imperative to providing outcomes and services to our communities as well as our customers.*

CFI Group

State Management Work Group: Membership

Member	State	Region
Jaimi Clifford	Maine	I
Manny Rosa	New York	II
Abby Hanks	Virginia	III
Nancy Rowland/Kris Wilson	Kentucky	IV
Anna Sainsbury	Wisconsin	V
Karen Keith	Texas	VI
Johna Trapani	Missouri	VII
Alex Diaz	Colorado	VIII
Leslie Taylor	California	IX
Leeann Marx	Oregon	X
Beverly Buchanan	Arkansas	NASCSP Board President

SMWG: How It Worked

Used ACSI Data to Guide our Work

Extensive Outreach to the Network/Tribes
- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- One-on-One Interviews

Identified Specific States with Promising Practices

Frequent Communication About Our Work

Was a Value-Add for SMWG members
- Built relationships
- Learned from peers
- Got Ideas for immediate implementation

State Management Work Group: Deliverables

✓ Needs Assessment (2021)) – completed

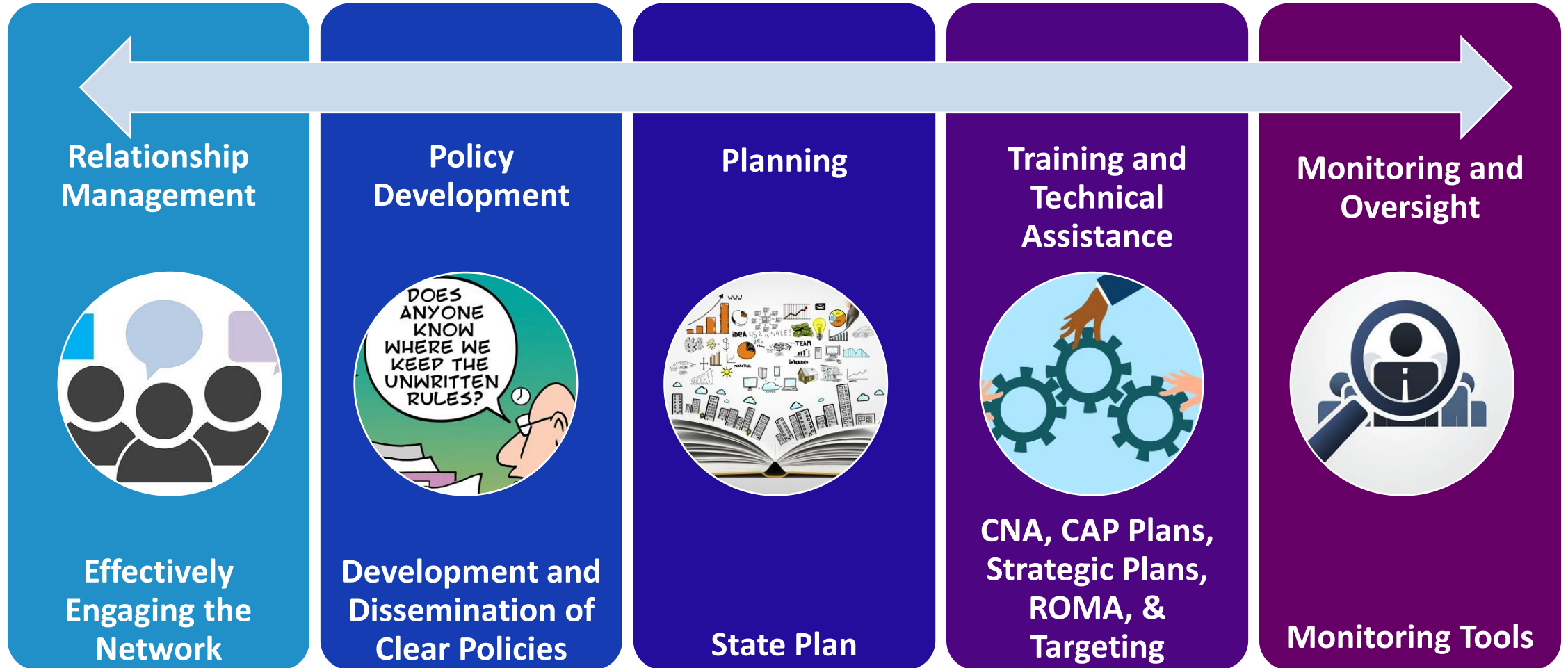⚛ Compendium of Promising Peer Practices (2022) – completed

⤢ Gap Assessment (2023)) – completed

⚒ New/updated tools, training and technical assistance (2023)—complete by 9/30/23

SMWG Prioritized Practices

Relationship Management	Policy Development	Planning	Training and Technical Assistance	Monitoring and Oversight
Effectively Engaging the Network	Development and Dissemination of Clear Policies	State Plan	CNA, CAP Plans, Strategic Plans, ROMA, & Targeting	Monitoring Tools

Sample Compendium

Promising Practices Compendium will include the following:

- The promising practice
- Who employs the practice
- The purpose
- The method
- The challenges
- The benefits
- Tools/Templates/Resources

1. ***Start Early:*** **Timeline Mapping** – Develop a timeline, customized by the state, which outlines all the steps including completion dates needed to develop the State Plan

States Who Have Employed This Practice:
Maryland, Nebraska, North Dakota, Virginia, Utah

Purpose:
ACSI top-scoring states indicated they all started the state plan application process early in the fiscal year, engaged in conversations about the purpose of the state plan, and hold planned listening sessions for feedback. Developing an individualized timeline of these important tasks can help State Administrators execute the planning process in such a way that will reduce workload burden, offer better network engagement, and in turn increase ACSI scores.

Method:
Establishing and maintaining a strong, collaborative relationship with the State Association and the network are key in state planning. How State Administrators involve local agencies vary but the common thread is meeting with their network early and frequently with in-person or one-on-one meetings to increase understanding of the state plan with open feedback opportunities.

States must develop an outline specific to their needs, which includes state regulations related to CSBG, public hearings, and/or nonprofits, for example:

Definition:

"Engaging the Network"

Any connection, communication, or collaboration opportunity that we may have at the State office to work with the Network to achieve CSBG goals.

Goal:

"Engaging the Network"

Building strong relationships equates to better support and overall improvement of the network; ultimately, individuals, families and communities of low-income will benefit from such intentional teamwork and collaboration.

State Management Work Group

Year 2: Research Phase

Engaging the Network Subgroup

- Used the ACSI 2021 Survey data and verbatim comments to focus efforts and identify promising peer practices

- An additional survey was conducted to obtain baseline information

- 5 states were interviewed

2021 Aggregate Score and Impact Table

	National Score Min	National Score Max	2021 Scores	Sample Size	National Impact
Sample Size			744	744	
Development of CSBG State Plan	32	100	61	694	0.3
Extent of involvement	26	100	57	673	--
Caliber of opportunities	26	100	65	683	--
Reflects your input	32	100	60	637	--
Distribution of Funds	23	100	74	737	0.6
Ensured no interruption	25	100	76	728	--
Quality of process	20	100	73	737	--
Use of Discretionary Funds	23	100	69	689	0.3
Transparency of distribution	19	100	69	685	--
Responsiveness to needs	23	100	71	663	--
Training & Technical Assistance	17	95	74	732	0.5
Effectiveness of training	11	93	72	722	--
Effectiveness of assistance	22	96	73	714	--
Responsiveness of staff	22	98	78	697	--
Amount of training & assistance	14	97	72	719	--
Monitoring & Corrective Action	38	100	73	718	0.6
Consistency of monitoring	39	100	71	649	--
Adherence to plan	33	100	76	676	--
Usefulness of visits	33	94	70	690	--
Clarity of feedback	33	100	75	696	--
Timeliness of feedback	39	100	72	697	--
Clarity of process	39	100	73	590	--

CFI Group

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2021 Aggregate Score and Impact Table

	National Score Min	National Score Max	2021 Scores	Sample Size	National Impact
Sample Size			744	744	
Linkages	27	100	66	675	0.6
Awareness of efforts	25	100	67	659	--
Sufficiency of linkages	25	100	66	629	--
Effectiveness of partnerships	27	100	66	645	--
Communication	43	100	77	740	2.3
Sufficiency of information	42	100	77	738	--
Usefulness of feedback	44	100	74	731	--
Frequency of communication	39	100	79	740	--
Clarity of communication	39	100	75	739	--
Responsiveness of staff to requests	50	100	80	737	--
Consistency of responses	42	100	76	733	--
Customer Satisfaction Index	30	95	73	744	N/A
Overall satisfaction	32	100	76	744	--
Satisfaction compared to expectations	30	100	73	744	--
Satisfaction compared to ideal	27	94	70	744	--
Confidence in Lead Agency	30	100	77	731	4.8
Confidence in fulfilling mission	30	100	77	731	--
Trust in the CSBG State Lead Agency	30	100	77	737	4.9
Trusted to meet needs	30	100	77	737	--

CFI Group

Engaging the Network

Promising Practices

1. Maintain a Strong, Collaborative Relationship with the State Association

2. Minimum Administration, Maximum Engagement

3. Establish an Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) or similar group

4. Leverage Technology to better engage the network

5. Dedicate Staff to Engaging the Network Efforts

Engaging the Network

Tools Developed

- Write-up of the history, role, and purpose of Maine's Economic Opportunity Council.

- Write-up about what is needed to implement a detailed process of Q&A tracking using technology.

- NASCSP promotion through panel discussions at various conferences and webinars of the need for strong relationships between states and state associations.

- Tied the work of the ACSI Linkages PPWG to the SMWG Compendium of Promising Practices and the Data Map.

Goal

State Plan Development

Development of more robust State Plans that accurately reflect, support, and communicate the goals of the entire network and its various stakeholders, and that demonstrate clear, concrete and measurable steps will serve as a catalyst to achieving CSBG objectives.

State Management Work Group

Year 2: Research Phase

State Plan Subgroup

- ACSI survey data used to identify promising practices

- Two surveys were conducted to gain insight into the different ways that states approach State Plan development.

- 7 states were interviewed

State Plan

Promising Practices

1. Start Early: Timeline Mapping
2. *Educate the Network*: State Plan Training
3. *Gather Input First*: **Prior** to Drafting the State Plan
4. *Close the Loop*: Follow-up on All Comments
5. Modified Public Hearing
6. Complete a Two-Year State Plan

State Plan

Tools Developed

- Modified NASCSP's State Office Action Plan to include promising practices about developing the State Plan.

- Developed a generic State Plan Training for the CAAs using VA's & CA's power point presentation.

- Developed a generic tracking system for state plan comments using what our high-scoring states do to track and respond to comments.

- Developing a State Plan training series explaining the entire cycle: Start early > Educate > Work involved > How it ties back to the Annual Report > Adding to OLDC.

State Management Work Group

Year 2: Research Phase

Policy Development Subgroup

- One survey was conducted to gain insight into the different ways states approach updating/developing policies
- Four high-scoring states were interviewed
- Two focus groups with six high-scoring states were conducted

Monitoring Subgroup

- One survey was conducted to gain insight into monitoring practices/policies
- Two focus groups with nine high-scoring states were conducted
- Three states with significant improvement were also interviewed

Training/Technical Assistance Subgroup

- One survey was conducted to gain insight into ROMA T/TA practices/tools
- Four high-scoring states were interviewed
- One focus group with thirteen State ROMA professionals was conducted

Policy Development/Dissemination

Promising Practices

1. Regular, recurring review of policies – ahead of OCS review.

2. *Engage the Network* and all relevant Stakeholders (i.e., legal counsel, other state departments, State Associations, eligible entities, etc.) in multiple ways throughout the update process.

3. Minimize administrative burden by eliminating policies not required.

Policy Development/Dissemination

Tools Developed

- Developed a process for the regular, recurring review of policies at the state level and included it in NASCSP's <u>State Office Action Plan</u>.

- Customized (to be more widely applicable), Colorado's NASCSP Conference presentation detailing a state process for regularly updating policies.

- Reviewed and updated the NASCSP <u>Policies and Procedures Manual</u> to ensure it includes all CSBG Act requirements, org standards, OCS guidance, and/or other federal requirements.

Monitoring and Oversight

Promising Practices

1. *Monitor for Impact*: It's all about improving the delivery of services to customers

2. Preparation is Key

3. Consistency is Critical

4. Post-Monitoring Efforts are Integral to the Process

Monitoring and Oversight

Tools Developed

- Modified NASCSP's <u>State Office Action Plan</u> to include the identified promising practices regarding monitoring.

- Put together a packet of easily shared examples of pre-monitoring preparation that the SMWG has gathered and reviewed.

- Put together a packet of easily shared examples, gathered and reviewed by the SMWG, that illustrate how to assure consistency in monitoring.

- Put together a packet of current corrective action tracking tools.

T/TA (ROMA Processes)

Promising Practices

1. Maintain active Certified ROMA Professionals at all levels of the Network (State Lead, State Association)

2. Standardize CSBG Terminology

3. Implement a Statewide Database

4. Utilize Contractors for Training

5. *Communicate and Share*

T/TA (ROMA Processes)

Tools Developed

- Defined terms; developed a glossary.

- Generalized Oregon's Head Start Crosswalk.

- Reviewed and updated ANCRT training re: strategic plans and targeting.

- Identified where data can be found to customize trainings (CNA, targeting, etc.) for the Network.

- Documented the steps needed to establish a statewide database – put together sample RFPs; list of vendors.

- Put together a crosswalk of what contractors offer T/TA specific topics.

Summary: Tools Developed by SMWG

Policy Development /Monitoring Subgroup

- Developed a process for the regular, recurring review of policies at the state level.

- Customized (to be widely applicable), Colorado's NASCSP Conference presentation detailing a state process for regularly updating policies.

- Modified NASCSP's State Office Action Plan to include regular, recurring reviews of policies and procedures. Provide a framework for the reviews.

- Modified NASCSP's State Office Action Plan to include the identified promising practices regarding monitoring.

- Put together a packet of easily shared examples of pre-monitoring preparation that the SMWG has gathered and reviewed.

- Put together a packet of easily shared examples, gathered and reviewed by the SMWG, that illustrate how to assure consistency in monitoring.

- Put together a packet of current corrective action tracking tools.

Summary: Tools Developed by SMWG

State Plan Development/Engaging the Network Subgroup

- Modified NASCSP's State Office Action Plan to include promising practices about developing the State Plan.
- Developed generic State Plan Training using VA's power point presentation.
- Developed a generic tracking system of state plan comments using what MD, OH, UT, VA, WI do to track comments.
- Developing a State Plan training series explaining the entire cycle: Start early > Educate > Work involved > How it ties back to the Annual Report > Adding to OLDC.
- Write-up of the history, role, and purpose of Maine's Economic Opportunity Council.
- Write-up about what is needed to implement a detailed process of Q&A tracking using technology.
- NASCSP promotion of strong relationships between states and state associations through panel discussions at conferences and webinars.
- Tied the work of the ACSI Linkages PPWG to the Compendium of Promising Practices and the Data Map.

Summary: Tools Developed by SMWG

Training and Technical Assistance Subgroup

• Defined terms; developed a glossary.

• Generalized Oregon's Head Start Crosswalk.

• Reviewed and updated ANCRT training re: strategic plans and targeting.

• Identified where data can be found to customize trainings (CNA, targeting, etc.) for the Network.

• Documented the steps needed to establish a statewide database – put together sample RFPs; list of vendors.

• Put together a crosswalk of what contractors offer T/TA specific topics.

Summary

All together these 21 products (tools, resources, and training) ***along with all the information that is contained in the Compendium/Data Map*** will offer a very helpful, easy-to-use Toolbox for the states to utilize.

Once implemented, we expect these to improve the quality, consistency and efficiency of the CSBG state offices.

We expect that use of the promising practices and accompanying tools, resources, and training will result in: **Better service delivery to the CAAs and increased satisfaction w/ the state office, leading to improved ACSI scores for the states.**

SMWG Final Steps

- Complete development of the Data Map, and conduct a review of the Compendium

- Finish refining the tools, resources, and T/TA

- Develop training about the Promising Practices and accompanying tools for the NASCSP Conference and beyond
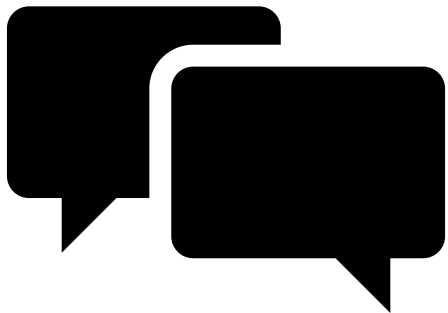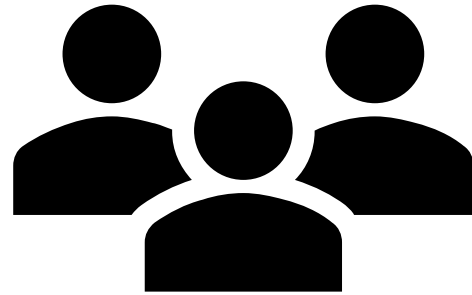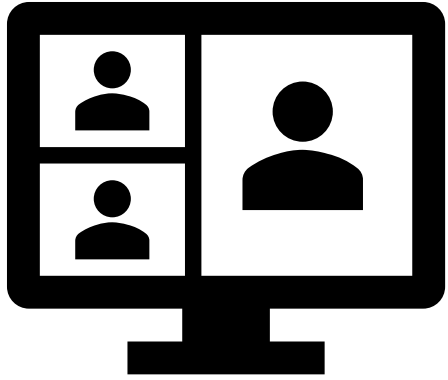
Questions?

THANK YOU!!

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