



# **Moving CARE's Programming Forward**

## **Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice and Underlying Causes of Poverty**

**M. Katherine McCaston  
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**Summary Paper:  
Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social  
Justice & Underlying Causes of Poverty**

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## **Part I: Draft Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice**

### ***Introduction***

CARE's Integrated Program Framework Team (IPFT), in coordination with the Integration Team, was assigned two important tasks in FY04. The first was to develop a document that explains how CARE's programming framework and other important approaches and analytical lenses fit together and make sound programming sense. The second task was to conduct research to help CARE develop a better understanding of underlying causes of poverty. Two discussion documents were developed. The first is entitled, "Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice." The second paper is entitled, "Overview of Underlying Causes of Poverty."<sup>1</sup>

To broaden the input into CARE's conceptual development processes, we developed an extensive two-tier review and consultation process, which involved the Household Livelihood Security (HLS) Advisor as the primary researcher-developer. The first review tier was CARE's Integration Team (staff from RBA, GED, Constituency Building, HLS & DME). The second-tier consisted of one member from each Regional Management Unit and PAD unit (now PR&L). As well, this work was reviewed and critiqued by the 50-plus attendees of the Rights-Based Reference Group meeting in Egypt, 19-21 May 2001, and the 140-plus attendees of CARE's Global Conference 2004. After each consultation process, comments, criticisms, and suggested changes are synthesized and compiled into matrices in order to determine their frequency and make revisions based on this criteria. After comments were categorized, both documents and associated graphics were updated. This paper summarizes the work to date on the *Unifying Framework* as well as the *Hierarchy of Underlying Causes of Poverty*.

### ***Why Develop the Unifying Framework?***

Over the past several years, CARE has integrated important learning into its development approach. The Household Livelihood Security Framework (HLS) provided us with a better understanding of the multi-dimensional dynamics of poverty. Household Livelihood Security also emphasized the importance of working in partnership and becoming a partner of choice in our fight to end poverty. Incorporating Rights-Based Approaches into the Household Livelihood Security work helped to us understand that we need to address not only "needs" but also "rights and responsibilities," thus allowing us to achieve greater impact and lasting change. CARE's work on Rights-Based Approaches, Gender & Diversity, and our incipient work on the Underlying Causes of Poverty (UCP) has shown that, in many cases, people are poor *not only* because they lack assets and skills, but also because they suffer from social exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> These documents are available through IPFT ([mccaston@care.org](mailto:mccaston@care.org) or [rewald@care.org](mailto:rewald@care.org) ).

Several documents have been written to help CARE staff better understand how Household Livelihood Security, Rights-Based Approaches, and our various analytical lenses fit together (e.g. Beckwith, Ghanim). However, questions and uncertainty still exists on whether CARE’s various approaches complement or contradict each other. Some staff expressed concern over the infamous “flavor of the month” approach. Others sometimes broke up into Household Livelihood Security versus Rights-Based Approaches camps. Some staff were quoted as saying, “We’re way beyond Household Livelihood Security.” On the other hand, some are fearful that we are moving to an exclusive Rights-Based focus and into risky and confrontational territory.

In another effort to help CARE move beyond this confusion and frustration, we developed the Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice. This framework is not designed to replace our Household Livelihood Security Framework and other approaches. Instead, the framework was developed to help clarify the connections and linkages, and demonstrate how our HLS Framework, RBA, and other approaches and lenses come together in a complementary and very powerful way.

### ***Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice***

In developing the Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice (see Diagram 1 below), we decided to strip away the titles and jargon associated with our various approaches, lenses, and tools (HLS, RBA, GED, Partnership, Advocacy, etc). Instead, we decided to ***focus on the content or the deeper meaning behind our various approaches and lenses, as well as the associated desired end state***. We identified three key interrelated outcome categories that we feel comprehensively reflect the deeper intent of the combination of our Household Livelihood Security Framework, Rights-Based Approaches, etc. We determined that the combination of our approaches focuses our work toward three important ends: 1) Increasing opportunities for people to meet their basic needs, and ensure that future generations will have these opportunities as well; 2) Promoting people’s efforts to improve social inequity so that people can live a life of dignity without discrimination; and 3) Promoting sound and equitable governance systems -- government, institutional frameworks, private sector, and civil society -- to create a local climate that promotes equity, justice, and livelihood security for all.

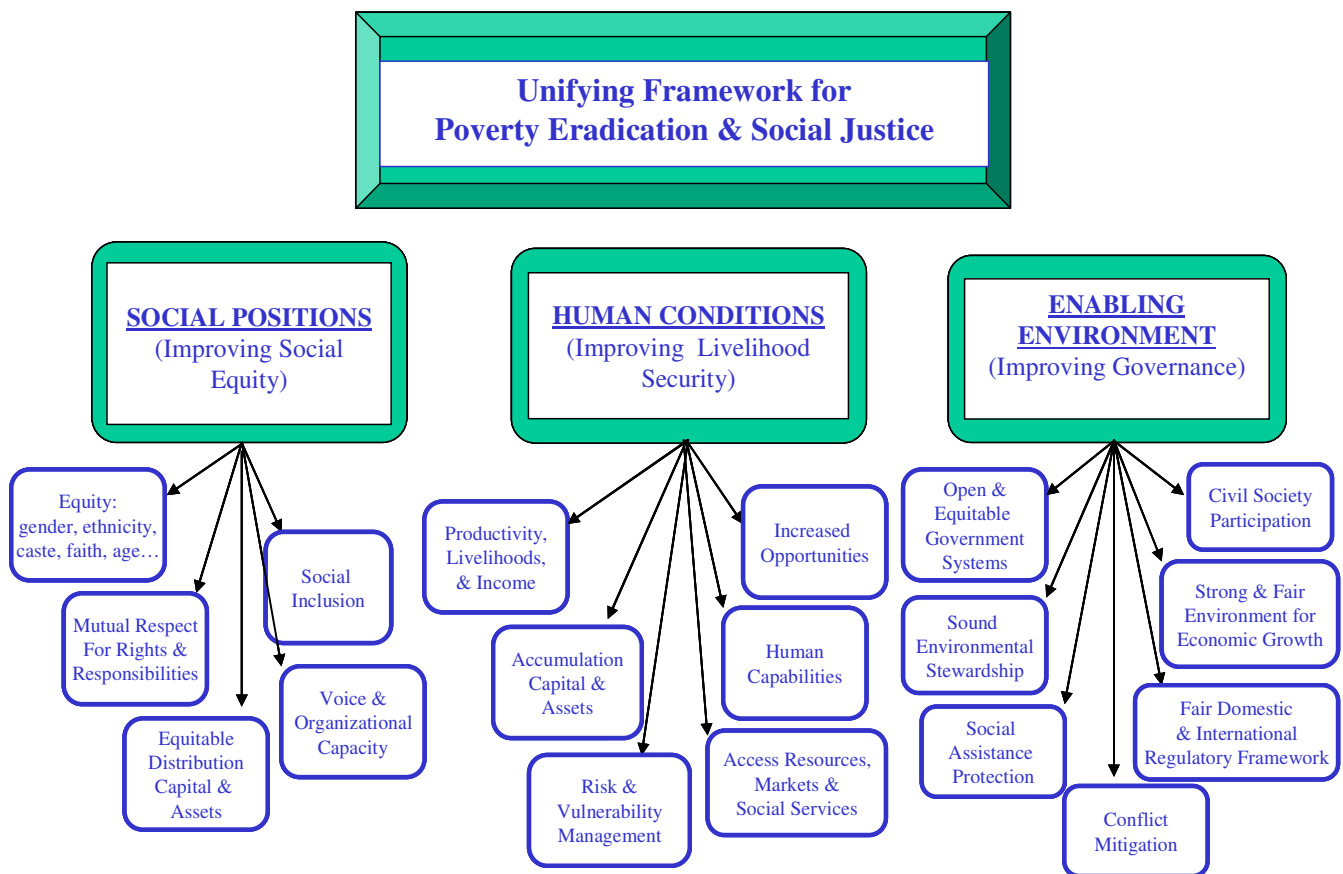
The Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice is developed around three upper-level outcome categories that together ensure that we analyze and address underlying causes from both needs- and rights-based perspectives. The following provides a definition for each outcome category.

1. **Improving Human Conditions**: Supporting efforts to ensure that people’s basic needs are met and that they attain livelihood security with regard to such needs.
2. **Improving Social Positions**: Supporting people’s efforts to take control of their lives and fulfill their rights, responsibilities and aspirations. Supporting efforts to end inequality and discrimination.
3. **Creating a Sound Enabling Environment**: Supporting efforts to create a sound enabling environment – public, private, civic and social institutions – that is responsive to and inclusive of constituents and that fosters just and equitable societies.

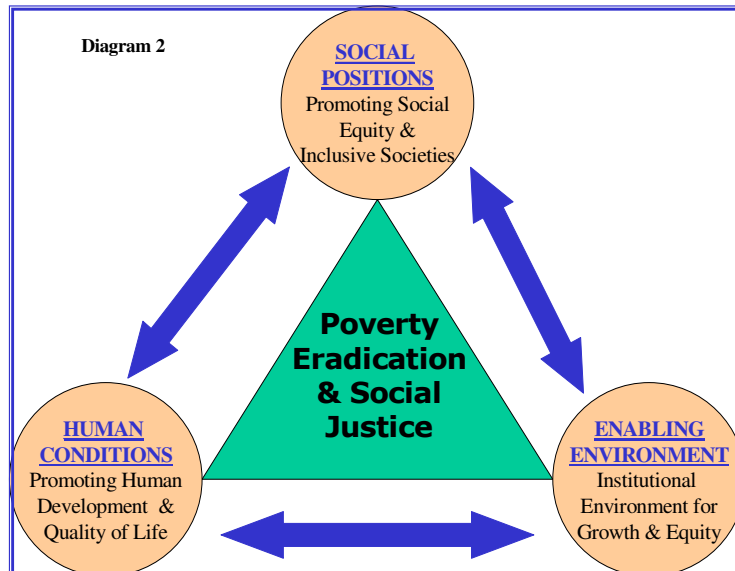
The three upper-level outcome categories bring together the breadth of CARE’s work (e.g., HLS, RBA, gender and diversity, income & asset generation, education, health, environment, partnership, civil society strengthening, advocacy, etc). When viewed in this way, we can see that what might have in the past looked like a mixture of disparate programming approaches have come together in a very comprehensive and important development framework.

The rectangles under each top outcome category represent some of the key intermediate outcomes that are necessary to lead to the upper-level development outcomes. These have been updated based on input from CARE’s Global Conference in Bangkok (Sept 12-16, 2004). We recognize that these do not represent all possible intermediate outcomes, and we will continue to refine these based on our experimentation and learning.

**Diagram 1**



Also importantly, please do not view these 3 categories as tubular. There is considerable interaction between and across these outcome areas. It is the combination of these three outcome categories that is critical to poverty eradication and social justice.



*How has the Unifying Framework Helped CARE Thus Far?*

- ◆ We have found that the Unifying Framework has helped clarify the linkages between CARE’s HLS Framework and other important initiatives for CARE staff.
- ◆ Country Directors and CARE program staff have found that the Unifying Framework’s straightforward categorization is quite useful in helping to explain the depth and breadth of CARE’s development approach to donors, governments, civil society organization, and other partners.
- ◆ The Unifying Framework highlights the importance of continuing to promote our holistic perspective of working on both NEEDS and RIGHTS, whereas some staff and donors felt that CARE was moving away from a needs focus to a more singular focus on Rights.
- ◆ The Unifying Framework focuses our attention on cross-cutting DESIRED END STATES or OUTCOMES rather than on individual initiatives.

While the Unifying Framework and our work on Underlying Causes of Poverty have been two separate endeavors, we have used the Unifying Framework to help situate and guide our work on underlying causes of poverty, which is discussed in greater detail below.

**Part II: Increasing our Understanding of the Underlying Causes of Poverty**

*Review of Literature & Organizational Approaches on UCP*

To increase our understanding of underlying causes of poverty (UCP), we conducted an intensive research process. Literally hundreds of documents were reviewed.<sup>2</sup> In our research, we were ***unable to find a body of literature that specifically focuses on the technical or development-oriented aspects of underlying causes of poverty.*** Much high-

<sup>2</sup> A list of references consulted is available upon request (mccaston@care.org).

level theoretical discussion exists from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Arguments range from Karl Marx and Adam Smith to more recent debates among political economists, political ecologists, anthropologists, etc.

However, we were looking for more straightforward technical discussions that are directly related to CARE's work and could be used for staff training efforts. Specifically, we were looking for efforts that ***systematically define or characterize underlying causes compared to other levels of causation; or any systematic technical discussion on how to distinguish between the different levels of causation;*** and to understand what ***methods and tools were available to help us learn how analysis of underlying causes*** might be different from other types of analysis. Therefore, we found a wealth of brilliant theoretical work; however, we were unable to find more lower-level technical guidance or tools that could explain how focusing on underlying causes of poverty might change our analytical methods or intervention options.

Lacking a development roadmap can be both a drawback and an opportunity. It can be a drawback in the sense that little technical information is available to frame the discussion. It can be an opportunity in that CARE can be more innovative in how we conceptualize underlying causes of poverty and contribute to the debate within the international development community. As you will find below, CARE has seized this opportunity to help create a more detailed understanding of the underlying causes of poverty.

### ***Characterizing Underlying Causes of Poverty***


What do we mean by the underlying causes of poverty? We have determined that Underlying Causes are most often ***the result of a combination of political, social, economic, and environmental factors that are related to the systemic and structural underpinnings of underdevelopment, residing at the societal and often the global level.***

To help staff be able to differentiate between the different levels of causation, we developed a simple three-level causal hierarchy (see Table 1 below):

1. **Immediate Causes** are those factors that are directly related to life and death situations, these can include malnutrition, disease, natural disasters, etc.
2. **Intermediate Causes** are related to improving people's well-being. Intermediate causes generally point to what people lack (needs-based) and focus on: access to basic services, lack of skills, lack of productivity, etc. ***The majority of current development interventions/projects are targeted at this level.***
3. **Underlying Causes** focus our attention to WHY intermediate causes exist. This level requires us to ask why some people have access and some do not; why some groups control the majority of resources, etc. The answers to most of the analytical questions that we ask at the ***Underlying Cause Level are related to the systems or rules – structural underpinnings – that govern a society*** (micro, meso, macro, global). These include the economic, political, and social structures that include and exclude certain groups or classes of people; the policies that allow some groups to control and/or monopolize power; the socio-cultural systems and customs around which discrimination and injustice are often legitimized, etc.

The following hierarchy table demonstrates three levels of causation. The hierarchy is meant to provide some examples of causes at the various levels to help staff be able to distinguish between and think through the levels of causes.

**Table 1: A Causal Hierarchy**

<b>Hierarchy of Causes of Poverty:</b> <b><u>Some Examples for Training Purposes</u></b>		
<b><u>Immediate Causes</u></b> (Saving Lives)	<b>These causes directly relate to life and survival:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disease,</li> <li>• Famine,</li> <li>• Environmental disasters,</li> <li>• Conflict</li> </ul>	 <b>Improving Human Conditions &amp; Social Positions</b>
<b><u>Intermediate Causes</u></b> (Improving Human Conditions)	<b>These causes affect people's well-being and opportunities for development and livelihood security:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low livelihood (agric or income) productivity;</li> <li>• Limited livelihood opportunities;</li> <li>• Lack of skills;</li> <li>• Inadequate access to food;</li> <li>• Inadequate care for women and children;</li> <li>• Lack of basic services, e.g., health, education, water and sanitation, education</li> </ul>	
<b><u>Underlying Causes</u></b> (Improving Social Positions & Human Conditions)	<b>These causes are related to the structural underpinnings of underdevelopment, specifically social systems, and political and economic structures, and environmental issues. They can include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Economic:</u></b> Inequitable resource distribution (distributive justice); unchecked globalization; unfair terms of trade; skewed structural adjustment</li> <li>• <b><u>Political:</u></b> Poor governance and institutional capacity; corruption; violent conflict; domination by regional/global superpowers</li> <li>• <b><u>Social:</u></b> Marginalization, inequality, social exclusion (based on gender, class, ethnicity); harmful social customs and cultural practices; over-population</li> <li>• <b><u>Environmental:</u></b> carrying capacity, resource-based conflict; environmental disasters; propensity for human disease; propensity for crop and livestock disease</li> </ul>	



*These examples are for illustrative purposes only and will NOT be underlying causes in every context.* Context-specific analyses must be undertaken at the CO and program levels to determine the key underlying causes in each location, and to determine the key leverage points for actions and interventions to address the underlying causes identified through the analytical efforts. The lessons from our CO level UCP inquiry will enable us to design context-specific development responses to better address the underlying causes and *not only the symptoms of poverty*. We will continue to refine and update the causal hierarchy through experimentation and learning.

### *How Does our Focus on the Underlying Causes of Poverty Change our Work?*

A shift toward working on the underlying causes of poverty represents an expansion of our work. This shift is not meant at the expense of work at the immediate and intermediate cause level. On the contrary, much of our work will continue to be at these first two levels – emergency relief and development assistance – where CARE has significant experience and comparative advantage. Therefore rather than viewing our focus on UCP as *replacing* what we do, CARE believes that incorporating an underlying cause focus into our work – addressing systemic and structural causes of poverty – will both expand our work and increase the impact of our work at all levels. ***CARE’s work will include a mix of direct service delivery, capacity building, facilitation, and advocacy.*** The “mix” will be determined based on the CO context and CARE’s comparative advantage. *However, as we shift to a UCP focus CARE’s role will increasingly become more focused on facilitation and advocacy.*

You can also categorize the levels of causes by the type of development response that is associated:

- ⇒ **Immediate Causes** - Emergency Relief - Provisioning - Life or Death Factors
- ⇒ **Intermediate Causes** - Development Assistance & Needs Focus -- Protection & Promotion - Improving Human Conditions
- ⇒ **Underlying Causes** - Rights & Needs Focus -- Promotion - Improving Human Conditions and Social Positions

Importantly, by addressing underlying causes of poverty, we are addressing those factors that give rise to immediate and intermediate causes, thereby developing more sustainable solutions.

### *A Point of Depart for Experimentation & Learning*

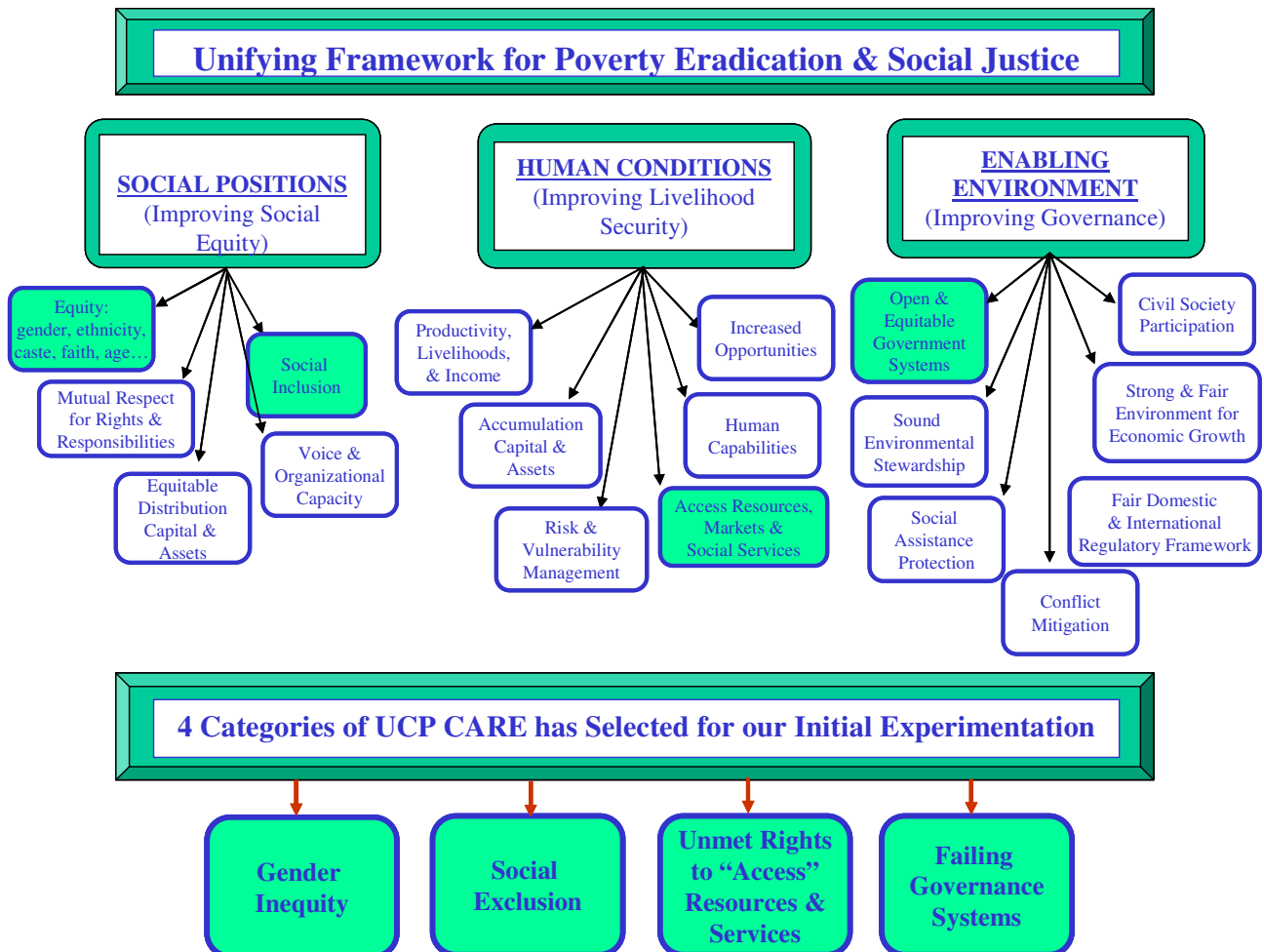
We have chosen four important underlying causal categories (the shaded rectangles in Diagram 4 below) as a point of departure. The selection is based on a review of the evaluations of our own development programming in a variety of contexts, wide internal consultations, and the CARE International Programming Principles. The selection also takes into account the work of other organizations in the international development community, who are attempting to make a similar transition in their approach to development.

**The four Underlying Causes of Poverty areas that we have chosen are:**

- ❖ Gender Inequality
- ❖ Social Exclusion
- ❖ Unmet Rights to “Access” to Resources and Services
- ❖ Poor Governance

While these four areas emerged as the most important categories to begin our work on the underlying causes of poverty, *we must stress that we are at the initial stages of reshaping our programming to address poverty’s underlying causes*. As we learn from our experimentation with these 4 UCP categories, we will document our successes and failures and update these categories as required. It is this type of experimentation that will enable us to expand our analytical and practical understanding of how to address the underlying causes of poverty. We are also dedicated to continuous learning from the broader development community. These initial efforts will lay the foundation for improving our capacity to develop a menu of effective programming options for addressing the deeper – systemic and structural – causes of poverty.

Diagram 3



### *Next Steps*

We feel that our efforts to create a broad consultation processes have contributed significantly to improving both the Unifying Framework and our work on Underlying Causes of Poverty. As we begin experimenting with our UF and UCP work, we will continue to solicit feedback and update our work based on experimentation and learning.

Next steps include:

- ◆ Initiate program-level experimentation and learning.
- ◆ Initiate CO, particularly LRSP, experimentation and learning.
- ◆ Experiment with usefulness of Unifying Framework for evaluation purposes.
- ◆ Put together a toolkit of analytical methods and tools that will help identify UCP.
- ◆ Develop criteria to help staff make key leverage point determinations.
- ◆ Develop a menu of analytical questions for each Unifying Framework intermediate outcome category. This will help guide CARE staff's understanding and use of the Unifying Framework as an analytical tool to guide CO Long-Range Strategic Planning and other programming efforts.
- ◆ More systematically engage CI and incorporate CI insights and observations.