

## Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Community Plan 2022-2023 Community Action Wayne/Medina

Community Action Wayne/Medina (CAW/M) was established as a private, not-for-profit in 1966 as a result of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and became the designated Community Action Agency of Wayne County at the time. In 1979, after four years of service to the Medina region, the agency was designated the Community Action Agency for Medina County also.

Often described as an “anti-poverty” agency, the organization’s recognized values are Self-Determination, Advocacy, Value, Mutual Respect, Creative Responsibility, and Organizational Opportunity. The agency mission is to strengthen the community through collaborations and services by promoting self-sufficiency, household stability and family and childhood education. Goals include economic, social, and physical self-sufficiency as well as dignity and self-esteem for all residents in the two-county area.

Community Action’s current activities are operated under three departments: Child and Family Development; Economic Assistance; and Housing Services. With the current CSBG plan, CAW/M will be adding an additional department: Community Services Department. In addition to the services it administers, Community Action Wayne/Medina provides information and referral to low-income persons in the two county region.

### Community Action Wayne/Medina Needs Assessment

Nationally Community Action Agencies are designated as recipients of Community Services Block Grant money to develop programming and community change to serve the needs of those in each community who are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. By providing this funding through Community Action Agencies in each community the federal government is ensuring that this funding will be used to meet the unique needs of each community. In order to do this CAW/M is mandated to conduct a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years to determine the most significant needs in its community. The CSBG funding then follows to address these needs. In its most recent CNA covering the period of 2020-2023, the following conclusions were reached.

#### Brief Summary of Conclusions of Needs Assessment

Key findings are noted in each section of the CNA with affordable housing, food and mental health services surfacing as most needed services in both counties. Transportation continues to be reported as a major community need in Wayne County as well as support and communication with senior citizens. Additional workforce development supports to complement the current workforce development services that are in place were also cited as needs in Medina County. Mental health and substance abuse (both COVID and nonCOVID related) were cited as issues in both counties. Lower incidence of poverty in Medina County and more robust funding of transportation and senior services allowed for significantly more resources for residents of Medina County. Lack of access to living wage jobs, benefits cliff, issues of generational poverty and the limitations of fixed incomes continue to impact low-income families as does the ongoing harsh impacts of the opioid epidemic. These concerns were similar across both counties. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many impacts of poverty.

Research for this CNA was conducted during the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic and needs

CAW/M concludes the following services are needed by individuals and families of the low-income population based on assessment data and will invest in solutions while working collaboratively with community partners to provide long-term positive impact in solutions:

1. **Basic Survival** –Financial Assistance--Assistance with heating, rent, water and other shelter costs in order to reduce the annual percentage of those costs from annual incomes is the foundation of CAW/M's "anti-poverty" services. Programs also address food insecurity with assistance at the Rittman food pantry including delivery service for elderly and disabled. Financial assistance includes Covid-related assistance. Head Start recently added a new diaper assistance program. Additional service will be added to assist with obtaining birth certificates to help residents access other needed services and a Community Health Worker program to better connect families to services and attain better health outcomes. Senior Outreach services were added in 2020 and will be continued with this grant as well.
2. **Basic Survival**—Housing—On the CAW/M 2020 CNA affordable housing was the number one need in both counties. In order to address this, CAW/M continues to provide housing weatherization and repair programs to allow residents to maintain current housing.
3. **Increase Self-Sufficiency** –Employment and Financial training--Support is given for long-term family stability for individuals unemployed or underemployed by addressing barriers that may inhibit them through service coordination, stabilization, soft skill development and employability training through Getting Ahead classes and coaching. Training includes financial literacy training and credit repair. Additional resources are found for clients through tax clinics in which clients are assisted in filing taxes to receive credits and refunds to which they are entitled. Clients are also encouraged to use the Resource Room in both Wayne and Medina Counties to find and connect with services.
4. **Increase Self-Sufficiency** --Transportation--Transportation continues to be a significant need for those in Wayne and Medina county communities. The lack of public transportation in Wayne county and other affordable options remains a priority concern. CAW/M will continue to invest in offering subsidized transportation, transportation coordination and vehicle repairs. Partnerships are currently in place with Medina Transit, Stark Area Regional Transit, Wayne County, City of Wooster and several private transportation providers.
5. **Empowerment** –Education and Support-- generally related to increased education -- help with school readiness of young children and their parents; help with reducing rates of child neglect (mental health services for parents), improved dental health of children; improved nutrition for children and their families, improved prenatal education levels and appropriate community resource referrals to all CAW/M customers. Services include numerous parenting classes and car seat classes.

While the CNA showed additional needs and services that could benefit the community, the funding only supports CAW/M's funding of a limited number of programs. Services relating to mental health and substance abuse are provided by organizations receiving specific funding for these services. Additional funding sources and partnerships continue to be sought out and evaluated for additional programming.

### Community Action Wayne/Medina CSBG Program Plan for 2020-2021

1. **Basic Survival**—Through its economic assistance programs, CAW/M addresses heating costs and food insecurity. CAW/M provides assistance through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP) programs in both

counties. HEAP is a federally funded program administered by the Ohio Development Services Agency. It helps eligible Ohioans pay their home energy bill. The benefit is applied directly to a customer's utility bill or bulk fuel bill. The amount of the benefit is determined by the number of people in the household, the heating source, and the region of residence. The Winter Crisis Program helps income eligible Ohioans who are threatened with disconnection, have been disconnected or have less than 25 percent supply of bulk fuel in their tank to maintain their utility service through the winter. The Summer Crisis Program provides a one-time benefit to eligible Ohioans with cooling assistance during the summer months. PIPP Plus is an extended payment arrangement that helps Ohioans maintain their natural gas and/or electric service. Regulated gas and electric companies accept payments based on a percentage of the customer's household income. The program provides customers with a consistent payment amount year round and customers who pay on-time and in-full receive a credit for the balance of their current bill as well as credit to reduce their outstanding balance. Additional programs added this year from additional funding include Home Relief rental and utility assistance for those experiencing financial hardships related to COVID and a Low Income Home Water Assistance Program for those who may be threatened with a disconnection of their water service. These programs are all funded through other sources but CAW/M will use CSBG during this grant period to support these programs administratively, as necessary.

To address the issue of food insecurity, CAW/M plans on providing several programs supported by CSBG funding. CAW/M has operated the Rittman Food Pantry for decades to address the needs of the Rittman community as well as the surrounding communities in both Wayne and Medina Counties. This location is an outreach site for all of CAW/M's services and supplies a 3-day food supply for all CSBG eligible clients. CSBG funds are used to purchase food and support the operation of the pantry. The pantry has a new location in Rittman and now offers food delivery to seniors in both counties and Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets to those in need. Although outreach portions of the site are funded by other programs, the food pantry is totally funded through CSBG.

CAW/M also organizes and operates a plant program in the spring of each year. In late spring local greenhouses donate vegetables and flower plants to CAW/M to distribute to low-income families so that they can grow their own fresh vegetables. CSBG helps to fund this program by subsidizing the salary of the staff that help to coordinate donations and the volunteers that run the program.

CAW/M also provides donations of fresh vegetables to customers during the summer months through its collaboration with a local food rescue program. Weekly deliveries of fresh produce are made to CAW/M June through September and allows anyone coming to the agency for services to take whatever they can use. CSBG funding is used for delivery of these free vegetables.

An additional CSBG service is being added for eligible clients to help them to obtain birth certificates. Clients are often required to have a copy of their birth certificate to be eligible for various types of benefits and services within the community but the cost of these documents is often out of our clients' reach. CAW/M will begin assisting with the cost of birth certificates for clients who need them to obtain services but do not have the financial means to purchase them. CAW/M will begin offering this service in 2022.

Another service which will be offered in 2022 is a Community Health Worker program. CAW/M plans to partner with Akron Summit Community Action's Pathways Hub to provide community health worker services to low-income families. CAW/M will be a care coordination agency that

works with the Akron Summit Community Action hub to guide clients to resources that will improve the health and quality of their lives for them and their families.

A senior outreach worker was added in 2020 to assist clients with difficulties that they were facing in obtaining benefits and finding needed resources to meet their needs. Recognizing the increased isolation of seniors during the pandemic and their often limited support system, this program was designed to provide additional supports and information to seniors in Wayne County and to provide a resource to combat the loneliness that many seniors often feel and which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally funded by CARES Act money, CSBG money will be used to continue this program.

**2. Basic Survival**—CAW/M's housing department assists families and individuals in maintaining affordable housing through its involvement in housing coalitions in both counties, through its collaborations with several state of Ohio programs and through its ongoing relationship with utility companies and their energy efficiency programs for low-income clients. The Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) provides eligible Ohioans with assistance to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce energy costs. Ohioans participating in HWAP will receive a home inspection to identify services needed to improve the home's energy efficiency and reduce energy bills and to address some of the health and safety issues that may require individuals to move. This inspection will also be used to identify if clients are eligible for additional services with First Energy, Dominion and Columbia Gas. In addition, CAWM receives a grant through the Housing Assistance Grant Program (HAGP) to assist lower income households in the areas of plumbing, electrical, heating, roofing and handicap accessibility. These programs are all funded through other sources but CAW/M will use CSBG during this grant period to support HWAP administratively, as necessary to support its housing programs.

**3. Increase Self-Sufficiency**—Increasing self-sufficiency is a cornerstone of the work of Community Action Agencies across the nation and is at the forefront of the work that CAW/M does in Wayne and Medina counties. This is done through numerous programs outlined below.

**Getting Ahead**—Getting Ahead is an 8-week workshop that helps individuals in poverty build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families and their communities. It includes "Bring Your A Game to Work" certification as well as financial capability training and one-on-one mentoring. This training for individuals is funded over 50% by CSBG for eligible participants but couples with the community training "Bridges out of Poverty" and Workplace Stability which are funded by other private sources.

The R Rules program provides information similar to Getting Ahead but is directed toward at-risk youth. This program was previously conducted in the Cloverleaf school district and funded by private sources but has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CAWM will continue to work with the school district and will view eligibility information to move towards CSBG funding for this vital program in the future.

**Tax Prep**—Each year for over a decade CAW/M has provided tax preparation assistance to low-income clients. The goal is to ensure that each individual and family receives all of the tax benefits and credits that they are entitled to without incurring fees of high cost tax preparers. This program is conducted in both counties and CSBG funds are used to offset salary costs for staff who assist CSBG eligible clients.

Resource rooms in each county have been set up with computers and phones for clients to use to obtain needed documents and information and print out documents needed for CAW/M services as well as for additional needs.

#### **4. Increasing Self-Sufficiency-Transportation**

CAW/M has played a large role in not only managing the transportation system within both counties but growing it within Wayne County to expand options and access. A state-funded Mobility Coordinator position serves as an advocate for residents and promotes and develops funding sources to add services and has focused on expanding services for elderly and disabled residents. New programs continue to be added with the newest addition to the transportation network being the addition of services through the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority. This is a county-wide system known as Wayne County Transit which started in 2021, expanding on the much smaller Rural Mobility Solutions which launched in December 2019. Although not funded by CSBG, the program runs in coordination with CSBG funded transportation programs in Wayne County. This program allows residents to travel throughout the county with a little preplanning.

Free transportation—Wayne and Medina—Free transportation is offered to CSBG eligible clients monthly in both counties. The service may be taxi service or transit passes. In Wayne County, out of county medical transportation is also available. The program in Wayne County is funded through CDBG dollars, CSBG and local foundations. In Medina County, the services are funded solely by CSBG.

City of Wooster Transportation program—A program which is heavily subsidized by the City of Wooster allows residents to buy low-cost passes for rides within the City of Wooster. Eligible individuals include low-income residents, seniors, disabled, veterans and active military and can ride the Wooster Transit loop bus for free. CAW/M sells all passes and ID's for this program and manages the system and billing. Since 2016 CAW/M has worked to add an additional fixed route in the City of Wooster to connect city residents with employers and job training. In addition, the promotion and management of the program have boosted rides for the Wooster Transit fixed route and passes for taxi rides to 88,000 rides for the City.

Out of County Medical—CAW/M uses CSBG funds along with additional transportation funding to provide medical trips to low-income residents to medical appointments in other counties. CAW/M works with providers to arrange and pay for these rides.

Car repair payments up to \$1000 are offered to clients in Wayne and Medina Counties who do not qualify for car repair funds through their local Job and Family Services. Clients must be the owner of the vehicle and have a valid driver's license and insurance and pay any needed copayments. The program is 100% funded by CSBG funds and can only be used every other year.

#### **5. Empowerment**

Head Start is a Department of Health and Human Services program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children ages 0-5 and their families. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's educational environment. Support services, parenting and a variety of classes and information

are given to families to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving their lives. Although it is an early childhood education program, Head Start addresses the needs of children and families. There is a focus on health of individuals and families and families are often referred to additional services and connected with the needed resources to help the family to resolve all of their needs including mental health and pre and post natal mental health. CSBG funding is not used for Head Start.

A Car Seat Program is run through the Child and Family Development Department and provides free car seats to low-income families throughout Wayne and Medina Counties. Families must attend an educational class on how to install a car seat correctly. The program is designed for families with babies and small children who have outgrown their infant seat. They also provide free inspections and help with installing car seats at local events. This program is funded mainly with CSBG funds but also gets some free car seats from other programs.

### **Community Action Wayne/Medina CSBG Program Plan for 2022-2023—Additional Information**

CAW/M creates and provides many additional opportunities for clients through its involvement in the community and linkages with other organizations. CAW/M staff participate in committees and councils in both counties. The purpose of this is for staff to share what CAW/M is doing and services that are being provided but also to learn about other agencies' programs for referral purposes to our clients and to ensure that services are not being duplicated. It is important for CAW/M to be informed and respond to urgent community needs. This is as important as responding to the needs that are outlined in the Community Needs Assessment.

CAW/M staff routinely provides clients with referrals to other programs and services throughout the community. This is done for clients of all departments. In addition, CAW/M's involvement in the community leads to additional linkages to other organizations and services for clients through building relationships which lead to services such as weekender bags for some of our Head Start children in Medina County through Feeding Medina County, Diapers for our Head Start clients through the Stark County Diaper Bank and transportation passes for clients of Goodwill and Anazao in Wayne County. CAW/M also partners with Community Legal Aid (CLA) providing office space for clients to have a virtual meeting with attorneys at CLA in Akron without having to travel beyond Wayne County. These are just a few examples of how we link clients and services beyond just referrals to other programs and agencies. These linkage are vital to our clients overall well-being.

CAW/M continues to build agency capacity through its community work and internal planning and administrative processes. Building relationships, collaborations and partnerships provides CAW/M with a method to increase capacity to provide service.

Additionally, CAW/M has focused on use of social media to grow services and provide needed information to the public. CAW/M has created a marketing plan and used numerous community resources to get information out to the public including, newspaper, radio, Facebook and a monthly email blast. CSBG Cares money will be used to create capacity building agency videos on 2022.

Internally, CAW/M continues to upgrade communication and technology systems to ensure that a maximum number of clients can be served. Ongoing review and adjustment of the crisis response and communication plans will continue to ensure that safest possible environment for staff and clients.

**CSBG Budget  
for 2022-2023  
= \$ 820,938**

(see breakdown below)

**CSBG Budget for 2022-20223 = \$820,938**

<b>Administration</b>	<b>\$ 15,098</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>\$ 6,069</b>
<b>Tax Preparation</b>	<b>\$ 17,124</b>
<b>Car Repair</b>	<b>\$115,245</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>\$234,681</b>
<b>Food Pantry</b>	<b>\$ 95,533</b>
<b>Car Seats</b>	<b>\$ 70,956</b>
<b>Senior Outreach</b>	<b>\$ 38,455</b>
<b>Plant Program</b>	<b>\$ 8,892</b>
<b>Getting Ahead, Bridges out of Poverty</b>	<b>\$153,913</b>
<b>Birth Certificate</b>	<b>\$ 4,162</b>
<b>Community Health Worker</b>	<b><u>\$ 60,810</u></b>
	<b>\$820,938</b>