

Lakewood Community Services Center

FY26 CDBG Applicant Narrative

1. Mission & History

Lakewood Community Services Center, with its partners, serves the community by providing basic needs assistance and personalized resource and referral services with the goal of empowering each individual to move toward greater self-sufficiency.

LCSC was founded in 1982 by 12 Lakewood churches to provide food assistance to Lakewood residents in need. After operating out of storefronts for 27 years, LCSC relocated to its current 5,200 sq ft location in 2009. In March 2011, the name was changed from Lakewood Christian Service Center to Lakewood Community Services Center to better reflect the client population served. The most significant evolution was the result of the 2012 strategic planning process, at which time the Board and staff determined that clients needed services in addition to emergency food to help them thrive.

In 2013 LCSC formed a partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System to provide mental health case management and counseling at our offices. In 2014 we partnered with Towards Employment, Inc. to establish an on-site employment program. We terminated this agreement in 2017 but did not discontinue the effort to provide job search and placement out of the LCSC offices and formed a relationship with The Centers El Barrio Workforce Program. Unfortunately, the funding community changed its priorities to focus on career pathway services only, which left LCSC with no funding stream for the Hire Local Lakewood initiative. We ended the partnership and the jobs program in February 2019.

LCSC's current strategic focus is to improve the fundamental services (emergency food, case management, housing, and mental health services) we offer to our client population. In December 2024 LCSC relocated its food pantry to a 5,600 sq ft space (twice the square footage of our former location) just off Berea Road in Cleveland. Because home delivery has become our service model, we were able to seek and secure a right-sized space outside Lakewood. We are currently in discussion with the Hunger Network to have the households in Rocky River and Westlake reassigned. This would allow us to add approximately 40 Lakewood households to our home delivery without additional pantry staff and cost. With the looming cut in SNAP benefits it is important to have the ability to add new Lakewood households to our delivery routes.

2. Geographic Service Area

Emergency Food and Case Management: Lakewood, Rocky River, and Westlake

Mental Health Assistance (currently on hold due to threats to Medicaid): Primarily Lakewood but will accept referrals from outside our food service areas. *Note: CDBG funds are used only for services that support Lakewood residents.*

3. Target Population(s)

Emergency food is provided to individuals who meet HUD's Extremely Low, Low and Low-Mod income guidelines. Homelessness Prevention services are available to Lakewood residents at imminent risk of losing their housing and who meet HUD's Extremely Low or Very Low-income guidelines, but who have enough income to become stable after support in the form of cash assistance for rent/utilities. Mental/behavioral health services are available to any client referred for assistance.

CDBG-funded services target low/moderate income Lakewood residents.

4. Programs & Services

LCSC offers the following services: 1. Emergency Food Service via home delivery only; 2. Food delivery to seniors in four senior buildings in Lakewood and one in Rocky River; 3. Homelessness Prevention in the form of cash assistance and/or case management to Lakewood residents at imminent risk of becoming homeless; 4. Case management services which range from short-term engagement (referrals and links to services and mainstream benefits) to long term supports around housing, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, legal issues, wraparound services to families, etc.; 5. Mental health services in partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System.

5. Number & Demographic Profile of Clients Served (FY24)

Food Service Total Unduplicated 4,246 (33,971 Duplicated): Unduplicated female heads of household 1,104; Unduplicated 62+ 1,188; Unduplicated Low/Mod Income 85; Unduplicated Low Income 255; Unduplicated Extremely Low Income 3,906.

Case Management Total Unduplicated: 1,062; Female heads of household 217; 62+ 196; Low/Mod Income 15; Low Income 88; Extremely Low Income 959.

HOME ARP Homelessness Prevention 72 individuals in 55 unduplicated Lakewood households. Reporting to Cuyahoga County varies markedly from the ESG demographic data requirements. Of the 72 individuals served, 62% were white, 38% Black; 2 of Hispanic ethnicity; 4 veterans, and 3 aged 60+. **The total 2024 number served is low because we did not begin the program until March of 2024.*

ESG Homelessness Prevention Total Unduplicated Households (received cash assistance) 20: *Individuals: 46 Adults 32 Children 14, Disabled 3, Victims of Domestic Violence 3, 62+ 4, Extremely Low Income 46*

**It is important to note that the number of households receiving ESG assistance is markedly lower than usual because HOME ARP funds provide the opportunity for greater financial assistance to a broader income demographic – up to 50% of the Area Median Income vs just 30% for ESG.*

6. Qualifications to Implement Proposed Project

LCSC's Executive Director has 20+ years of nonprofit management experience and has taken the organization from a 1,000 sq ft space serving 600 individuals/month to a standalone 5,600 square foot pantry providing home delivery to over 1,500 households each month; spearheaded the name change and strategic planning process; is responsible for overall program management and all fundraising. In 2023 the Executive Director led the City of Lakewood's RFP process, which resulted in securing the property at 12900 Madison Avenue as a permanent home for the organization. This was a highly competitive process, ultimately decided by Lakewood City Council with input from city staff members. LCSC moved its administrative and social services offices into this newly renovated space in May 2025. The Senior Manager Client Services is an LSW and LCDCIII with 26 years' experience in mental health and addiction case management and has been with LCSC since 2009. The Office Manager/Volunteer Coordinator, who had been with LCSC since 2010, resigned to find full time employment and was replaced by a new Administration Manager/Volunteer Coordinator in June 2024. The shift to an all-delivery model opened two new Route Coordinator positions to deliver to residents in Lakewood, Rocky River, and Westlake. The Center's Operations/Pantry Manager joined LCSC as Delivery Route Manager in October 2020 when we made the shift to 100% delivery. In 2022 he took on the additional responsibility as Pantry Manager, replacing the retiring manager who had held that position for 12 years. We are currently interviewing candidates for a second social worker position.

7. Experience Administering Government Contracts & Complying with Federal Regulatory Requirements

LCSC has received pass-through HUD ESG and CDBG funds from the City of Lakewood for over 18 years. The first and most significant of these were the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program funds (\$846,000) as part of President Obama's 2010 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Since that time LCSC has received increased ESG and CDBG funding annually. In 2020 LCSC received both ESG (housing assistance) and CDBG (housing and pantry) CARES Act funds to support Lakewood residents impacted by COVID-19; and in July 2021 we received ARPA funds to support housing stability for clients whose financial hardship was tied to the pandemic and in October received additional pass-through HUD funding from Cuyahoga County, again to support households impacted by COVID-19. Most recently LCSC was named the city's subgrantee for the HOME ARP Tenant-Based Rental Assistance and Supportive Services funding from Cuyahoga County. The City of Lakewood continues to exhibit confidence in LCSC's contract administration and compliance with strict regulatory requirements.

8. FY25 Organizational Budget

i. Total FY25 Operating Budget \$1,278,113

ii. FY25 Budgeted Operating Expenses

Expenditure Category	Amount	% Total Budget
Salaries & Fringe Benefits	\$527,981	41.3%
Operating Costs	\$136,984	10.7%
Indirect Costs	\$119,425	9.3%
Direct Client Cash Assistance	\$465,723	36.5%
Fundraising/PR	\$28,000	2.2%
Total	\$1,278,113	100%

iii. FY24 Budgeted Revenue Sources (Top 4)

#	Source	Amount	% Total Budget
1	HUD pass-through funds from City of Lakewood	\$647,497	58.7%
2	Private Foundations	\$285,000	25.8%
3	Private Donations	\$93,100	8.4%
4	Cuyahoga County Allocation at GCFB	\$78,000	7.1%
	Total	\$1,103,597	100%

9. Does Your Organization Maintain the Following Documents?

- | | | |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|
| i. Personnel Manual/Grievance Procedures | Yes X | No ☐ |
| ii. Affirmative Action Policy | Yes X | No ☐ |

10. Does Your Organization Have the Capacity to Serve Non-English-Speakers? Yes X No ☐

11. Do Your Facilities Comply with ADA Accessibility Requirements? Yes X No ☐

12. Additional Data and/or Information that Strengthens the Organization's Case for CDBG Funding Support

As previously mentioned, home delivery is proving to be a successful and valuable change to our former delivery model, providing this essential service to many of the most vulnerable members of our community. However, it comes with a significant increase in pantry costs. Adding two full-time drivers to bring the pantry staff from one to three and adding the expense of maintaining a second delivery vehicle is significant. United Way of Greater Cleveland funded our senior delivery program for 10 years before changing its funding strategy in 2022, which means we have had to add the staff time and food costs designated for seniors in subsidized housing to the overall pantry budget. Relocating the pantry to a larger safe and sanitary space was necessary and critical to the successful delivery of this essential service to our growing client base. Increasing annual rent from \$24,435 to \$43,579 requires an increase in financial support for the organization. It is also worth noting that LCSC has the second largest food client base of all 79 member partners of the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland.

The lingering impact of COVID-19 coupled with inflation has made case management more critical. Referrals to Social Security Administration, PRC, SNAP, Medicaid, HEAP/PIPP/Summer and Winter Crisis, and to community partners are increasing. These systems are overwhelmed, and appointments are increasingly difficult to obtain. The LCSC social workers often complete client applications online when allowed to speed the process and then continue to follow up until there has been resolution. All social security issues have to be resolved in person following the current Administration requirements.