Organization	Lakewood Community Services Center
Organization Type	Not-For-Profit
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Project/Program Name	Food Pantry
Total FY27 Project Budget	$356,686
FY27 CDBG Funding Request	$104,174

Lakewood Community Services Center

Food Pantry Program

CDBG Eligibility Criteria

Lakewood Community Services Center's Food Pantry Program satisfies the following eligibility criteria and is therefore suitable for CDBG funding consideration.

CDBG National Objective

Low-Moderate Income Limited Clientele (LMC): Activities that benefit either a specific group of persons at least 51% of whom are documented as low-moderate income or a clientele presumed by HUD to be principally low-moderate income (e.g., battered spouses, senior citizens).

CDBG-Eligible Activity Category

Public Services: The provision of public services including labor, supplies, materials, and the pro rata share of the facilities where these services are provided.

HUD-Designated Performance Objective

Create Suitable Living Environments

HUD-Designated Performance Outcomes

- Availability
- Accessibility

I. ABSTRACT

Lakewood Community Services Center has been providing 100% home delivery since September 2020. We currently make well over 1,070 Home Food deliveries every month. All recipients are very low to low-income residents of Lakewood. We deliver to one subsidized housing complex for seniors that is located in Rocky River. At the time we made the decision to switch to home delivery, our plan was to transition to a hybrid service model when it was safe to reopen that would offer home delivery to those who opted to continue and to open the Center for walk-in for those who wanted to return to the traditional model. LCSC conducted phone interviews and provided paper surveys in each home delivery over a period of four months. The resounding results were in favor of continuing home delivery. Despite its challenges, we are committed to continuing home delivery as it provides a much-improved service to the high percentage of senior clients (28%); single female heads of household (26%); those with physical and mental health issues (48%); and those who rely on public transportation (39%). In December 2022, the Center experienced significant water damage to the space we had rented at 14230 Madison Avenue since 2019. Our landlord was reluctant to make repairs in a timely fashion, which resulted in running the operation out of two-thirds of our space for over four months. Eighteen months later, the repairs to the space were not completed. The former Division of Youth Building at 12900 Madison became a purchase option for LCSC and one we pursued. Moving our social work and administrative staff to that space meant acquiring warehouse space for the pantry in a separate location. Identifying pantry space that would accommodate the number of daily deliveries, access to the property for the twice-monthly truck from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, and adequate parking and access for our staff and volunteers proved to be an arduous task. After evaluating space for over a year we finally identified an appropriate location. After months of renovations and modifications to an empty warehouse space, we moved our pantry operation in the first week of December 2024. Our clients, 90%+ at HUD's very low-income level, are experiencing the impact of rising food, transportation, utility, and rent expenses on their already strained household budgets. Changes in qualifications for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits only exacerbate their financial instability. And there is fear of continued cuts to come

Moving to 100% home delivery has resulted in adding two additional staff members to meet the demands of this system. Until mid-2020, LCSC employed one full-time Pantry Manager and relied on 60 volunteers to do intake and to staff the distribution of food in the Center. The current model has made it necessary to add two full-time delivery drivers to manage the delivery routes. In addition, we needed to buy a second van. United Way of Greater Cleveland funded the purchase of the original van in 2010 as part of an Expansion of Food Services grant that allowed us to make deliveries to seniors in subsidized senior housing when the RTA Circulator service was discontinued. That grant also paid for the Pantry Manager's salary when doing senior deliveries and paid for healthy food options for seniors. In their most recent three strategy changes, UWGC has discontinued support for food programs, therefore in addition to needing staff, we now have to secure the original UWGC funding for partial salary support for senior delivery, maintenance costs of both vans, the cost of healthier food options from other sources, and the significantly higher rental cost of the standalone pantry.

Total Project Cost: $356,686 **Total CDBG Request:** $104,174

II. PROJECT NARRATIVE

1. Community Needs Addressed/Service Gaps Filled

LCSC is the only provider of emergency food (groceries) to residents of Lakewood and to seniors in the four subsidized buildings in the community. Seniors, those with mental/physical disabilities, those who rely on public transportation, those who walk, and single parent households are best served by home delivery.

2. Primary Goals & Objectives

The overriding program goal is the provision of emergency food to individuals and families in Lakewood, and to one senior subsidized building in Rocky River, through an all-delivery model. This model was implemented as an outcome of trying to continue to meet the emergency food needs of the community during the pandemic. ***Please note: CDBG funding is used to support Lakewood residents only.*** Because low and extremely low-income individuals and families have been disproportionately impacted by inflation and soaring food costs, we initially made the decision to provide six days of food every 30 days (twice the requirement of our contract with the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland). With original funding from United Way, we were able to purchase fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, sliced bread, and cheese for our senior delivery program. After 14 years, we do not want to discontinue providing these healthier and easier-to-use food options to a vulnerable population, but it comes with additional expense as these items are not available at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. The immediate federal, foundation grants, and the initial outpouring of financial support from individual donors during the pandemic has ended, which is difficult as the longer-term financial effects of soaring food costs continue to stress already low household budgets. Our own food data tracking supports this. The huge increase in clients needing food in 2009 because of the recession did not begin to return to pre-recession numbers until well into 2015 and we anticipate the same pattern will continue. We have established working relationships with vendors at the West Side Market and at Sanson Distributors for fresh produce with a less than 10% markup and free delivery; with Orlando for sliced bread; and with Meister's at the West Side Market for fresh eggs, milk and sliced, shrink-wrapped cheese. Because our Cuyahoga County allocation for food must be spent at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and because other COVID funding has all but disappeared, our goal to continue to offer these user-friendly and healthier options to our families has had to be terminated.

3. Program Design, Uniqueness & Innovation

Everything about our emergency food program is unique!! We managed to close our food distribution for only three days when the stay home directive was issued in March 2020. LCSC was the ONLY pantry to remain open for service five (5) days a week for over six months before other pantries slowly reopened for one or two days a week. We made the successful transition to home delivery over the period July – September 2020 and by December 2020 we were back to our normal delivery numbers, which have continued to increase. The table below shows the number of duplicated individuals receiving food delivery each month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2025	2916	2721	3617	3613	3642	3575	3319	3446	3411	3462	3359	2859	39,940
2024	3084	3341	3280	3260	3235	3432	3475	2842	3439	3305	3324	2076	38093
2023	2568	2583	2628	2769	2742	2882	2902	3026	3096	2992	3013	2770	33971
2022	1710	2240	2452	2557	2031	2490	2360	2522	2457	2654	2571	2463	28507

4. **Target Population(s)**

Lakewood residents who meet HUD's Low-Mod income guidelines are the target population for LCSC's emergency food delivery. HUD defines Low-Mod as 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which for Cuyahoga County equates to $84,000 annual household income for a family of four. As has been the case for the past several years, 90% of the population we serve falls into HUD's Extremely Low-Income category, which equates is defined as being at or below 30% AMI or an annual household income of $33,000 or less for a household of four (4).

5. **Geographic Service Area**

LCSC delivers to households in Lakewood and to seniors in four subsidized buildings in Lakewood and one in Rocky River. ***This CDBG request is for support for Lakewood residents only.***

6. **Services Provided & Delivery Strategy**

CDBG funds provide partial salary support for the individuals directly involved in the provision of emergency food via our home delivery model. Two delivery route drivers make home deliveries and deliveries to seniors in subsidized housing. Our Delivery Route/Pantry Manager supervises the delivery team and manages the routes which includes adding new clients to the schedule, monitoring and responding to clients using the online sign-up process, adjusting the routes, etc. He oversees the Cuyahoga County allocation of funds for the purchase of food from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and for managing the pantry inventory. He is also responsible for weekly trips to local retailers to pick up donated food; for vendor selection for food providers outside the GCFB; for managing the Senior Delivery Program; for maintaining pantry equipment and our vehicles; and for ensuring that LCSC meets the GCFB and Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland stringent food safety requirements.

Our Administration Manager/Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for the quarterly Customer Satisfaction surveys mandated by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland; recruiting, securing, and retaining volunteers who pre-pack and sort products for delivery; for completing monthly reporting to the GCFB and the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland; and for working with staff at the subsidized senior buildings who want to add their residents to food delivery.

The Executive Director has overall program and financial oversight for the program and is responsible for securing all funds to support the program.

7. **Client Outreach Strategies & Efforts**

LCSC reaches its clients in many ways. Program and services information is available on our website and through FB posts. Any new programs and services are made known through the City of Lakewood and more specifically through the City's Human Services Department. Every Lakewood City School receives program and services updates regularly and the schools' Communication Director includes all our information in her bi-weekly communications to families. Lakewood churches include our information in their bulletins and online communications as well. The subsidized senior buildings provide information to their residents monthly. The libraries distribute information on site at both branches, and we also include continually updated information in all our delivered grocery bags. 211 United Way's First Call for Help, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland routinely make referrals. Brochures and updates are available at every church and school, at Neighborhood Family Practice, Recovery Resources, Signature Health, at the Lakewood Family Health Center Navigator's office, and at the COVE Community Center.

8. Partnerships/Collaboration with Community Organizations Serving Low-Moderate Income Persons

The City of Lakewood Department of Human Services partners with LCSC on many of our services and is a primary referral source. We have a strong network of community partners including United Way, referring agencies in Lakewood (Neighborhood Family Practice, Signature Health, and the Lakewood Family Health Center) and throughout the county, churches and schools, and local retailers who have historically made routine donations of food.

With Systems Change grant funding from Healthy Lakewood Foundation, we recently completed an extensive data gathering project, managed by Sangfroid Strategies. We are working with United Way to determine if some of the very significant findings around food use/food preferences/reduction in household food spending can be implemented by the county in future allocation of their food funding. The county funding model has been in place since 2012 without any significant modifications.

9. Project Staffing

Title	Hours/Week Devoted to Program	% CDBG-Funded	Qualifications & Responsibilities
Operations/Route Manager	35	50%	Oversight of federal/county/donor funds; inventory control; oversight of pantry volunteers; equipment and vehicle maintenance; adherence to food safety requirements. Route management; supervision of Route Coordinators; food delivery; sign up/schedule new clients.
Delivery Route Coordinator	35	50%	Pre-pack/pack for delivery; deliver groceries; client data entry into PantryTrak; ongoing communication with clients to minimize missed deliveries; sign up/schedule new clients; reporting back client input; provide exceptional customer service
Delivery Route Coordinator	35	50%	Pre-pack/pack for delivery; deliver groceries; client data entry into PantryTrak; ongoing communication with clients to minimize missed deliveries; sign up/schedule new clients; reporting back client input; provide exceptional customer service
Office Mgr./Volunteer Coordinator	3.5	10%	Review monthly client data entry into GCFB PantryTrak; report to GCFB and Hunger Network; sign up seniors for delivery to subsidized buildings; recruit/retain pantry volunteers
Interim Executive Director	3.5	0%	Program oversight: oversight of county/federal funds and use of foundation/donor funds; supervision of staff; fundraising

10. Implementation Schedule
Non-applicable. Program is ongoing.

11. Projected Beneficiaries (January 1 – December 31, 2027)

	Persons	Households
Total Unduplicated Persons & Households to be Served	7,150	3,250
Unduplicated Low-Moderate Income* Persons & Households to be Served	7,1,50	3,250

*< 80% Area Median Income

***This number represents 90% of the total number served who are Lakewood residents and assumes a conservative 15% increase over the number served in 2025.*

12. Program Evaluation (data collection & analysis, outcome measurement procedures & methodology)

Data Collection Tools: In 2020 LCSC switched from our proprietary client database developed in Access to Pantry Trak, the GCFB's mandated client data software program used by all their partner sites. The switch to Pantry Trak was a direct result of the pandemic when the Center ceased its walk-in service, called off all volunteers and could no longer enter client data at intake. Pantry Trak can be used on a cell phone and does not require a client signature, which makes tracking home deliveries in real time possible. PantryTrak does require the collection of an annual Proxy Form which gives LCSC the authority to sign on each client's behalf rather than collecting a signature at each delivery. Working with the Mid-Ohio Food Bank (the Pantry Trak developers), we have been able to port over all our Access data for past/current clients and have modified the software to allow us to capture all the demographic data that HUD requires but is not required by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank or the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland.

Outcome Measurement Procedures/Methodology: The Greater Cleveland Food Bank scores LCSC by number of meals distributed; number of pounds distributed; price per pound (measuring how well we use the free USDA and Ohio Food Program product to leverage our county funding). The Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland uses our demographic information as well as the number of individuals served to adjust our allocated county dollars based on our performance vs their other partner sites. The Hunger Network mandates quarterly satisfaction surveys, which ask for the most rudimentary information. Unfortunately, they (as fiscal agents only), and their partner agencies are not able address the food consumers' satisfaction with the quality of the food we can buy at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank or allow us to use any of the County funds other than at the GCFB. It is our goal to use the data gathered with support from Healthy Lakewood Foundation to make some changes to this outdated model.

13. Additional data/information that strengthens the organization's case for CDBG funding support.

The increase in cost to LCSC with the move to 100% home delivery is considerable. Although the number of clients served continues to grow, funding for emergency food from the federal government, foundations, and individuals has decreased significantly since the impact of COVID-19 is no longer a philanthropic focus.
Despite its challenges, we are committed to continuing home delivery as it provides a much-improved service to the high percentage of senior clients (28%); single female heads of household (26%); those with physical and mental health issues (48%); and those who rely on public transportation (39%). We also believe that expecting individuals to wait in line for the most basic of shelf-stable items and very limited fresh produce is reminiscent of the Depression-era and not a model that we are inclined to replicate or perpetuate.

In late 2024 LCSC relocated its pantry operation to a 5,580 sq ft space after 15 years in our current rental location that does not meet our needs for safe and sanitary space in which to operate a food program or to provide a safe working space for our volunteers who are predominantly seniors. This larger space is critical due to the sheer number of daily home deliveries, the monthly senior deliveries (five), the need for additional refrigerators and freezers, and space for the pallets of shelf-stable food delivered twice each month by the GCFB. The annual rent and percentage of common area maintenance at the new location will be $43,579 vs the current rent of $17,967. Identifying new sources of support as well as working to increase current levels is more critical to our operation than it ever has been.

III. FY27 PROGRAM BUDGET

i. Expenses

Expense Category	Total Project (A)	CDBG Funds (B)	CDBG As % of Total (B/A)
Personnel			
Salaries	$142,907		
Fringe Benefits	$30,970		
Sub-Total Personnel	**$173,877**	**$80,645**	**46.4%**
Overhead & Operations			
Rent/Lease	$43,579	$13,074	
Insurance - Property	$1,200		
Insurance – Liability	$2,250		
Materials & Supplies	$5,500		
Professional Services - Accountant	$2,340		
Cleaning Service	$2,070		
Pest Control	$1,980		
Utilities/Telephone	$5,850		
Equipment Maintenance	$2,700		
Encrypted Software for on-line sign up	$540		
Route management Software	$1,080		
County Allocation for Food from GCFB	$70,200		
County Allocation for Delivery from GCFB	$7,020		
Healthy Food Purchased from vendor/partners	$34,650	$10,455	
Printing/Copying	$1,850		
Sub-Total Overhead & Operations	**$182,809**	**$23,529**	**12.9%**
Total Project Costs/Program Budget	**$356,686**	**$104,174**	**29.2%**

ii. Funding Sources/Revenue

Source	Requested	Committed	Total
Agency Funds (unless additional foundation/individual support is secured or CDBG funding is less than requested)		$15,000	$15,000
CDBG FY24-FY25 CDBG Carry Forward Funds (est)			0%
Other (Non-CDBG) Federal Funds			
State Funds			
Local Funds			
County Funds – Allocation at GCFB		$77,220	$77,220
Private (Foundations, Individuals, Other) Funds	$80,000 (Stark Fdn; Thatcher Family Fund; Community West Fdn; Murphy Family Fdn)	$80,000 (Healthy Lakewood Fdn; % of all individual/church support)	$160,000
Earned Revenue/Fees			0%
In-Kind/Volunteer Support ($15/Hour**) ***			
FY25 City of Lakewood CDBG Funding Request	**$104,174**		$104,174
Total Funding Sources/Program Budget	**$ 184,174**	**$172,200**	**$356,394**

**Although HUD considers in-kind volunteer support as a funding source, the $15/hr value assigned to volunteer Support does nothing to offset the actual cost of program delivery. For that reason, I have not added it to the table.*

IV. FY27 BUDGET NARRATIVE

1. How will City of Lakewood CDBG funds be utilized to support the proposed program.

Partial salary support for the three full-time delivery staff; partial salary support for the Administration Manager/Volunteer coordinator as outlined under ***9. Project Staffing*** detailed above.

2. How will the proposed program function if the agency does not receive the full amount of requested funding.

We will need to secure additional funding from foundations and individuals and dedicate 100% of the Annual Campaign to supporting the pantry and delivery model.

3. Describe the agency's efforts to develop/leverage other sources of funding to support the proposed program.

Like most non-profits, a significant percentage of the Executive Director's time is spent seeking new funding sources and/or encouraging existing donors to increase their support for this essential service to low- and very low-income individuals and families in our community.