Community Services Partnership Grant Program

July 2021
In 1974, Howard County launched its very first grant program to provide critical services to Howard County residents. Over the nearly 50 years that followed, Howard County has continued this investment through the Community Services Partnership Grant Program (CSP), supporting nonprofit organizations on the frontlines serving our neighbors in need. Simultaneously, the County has experienced significant growth and change in residents’ needs, the nonprofit landscape, and the level of County investment through CSP that called for a fresh approach to this work.

With the goal of reimagining the CSP grant program in the context of today’s Howard County, the Department of Community Resources and Services convened a Design Team comprised of experts, advocates, and community leaders. This team used a data-driven approach to analyze population-level needs, define focus areas for funding, and create a framework for Howard County’s ongoing role in critical human services.

After a year-long process, the team has developed a high impact grant program that aligns with the changing needs in our community, fully leverages partnerships with local nonprofits, and drives meaningful outcomes for our residents. With positive responses from the more than 75 community members who provided input on this new design, we are excited for the next chapter of partnership and impact. Thank you to all involved for your commitment and dedication to this process and to our community. The work you do makes Howard County a better place for all of its residents.

Jacqueline R. Scott, Director, Dept. of Community Resources and Services
Rose J. Burton, Administrator, Office of Community Partnerships

On behalf of the Office of Community Partnerships, we are pleased to present our highly anticipated, redesigned Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program. CSP is a key component of Howard County’s commitment to providing opportunities for residents to grow, thrive and live with dignity. It demonstrates our commitment to partnering with nonprofits, stakeholder organizations and local leaders to promote collaboration and facilitate delivery of vital and effective human services in our county.

A diverse group of community leaders came together to help us design a grant program that is responsive to persistent and emerging needs in our community, rooted in measurable outcomes, and aligned with county-wide priorities. The culmination of our work is a grant program that reflects our values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, as well as our charge to target resources to meet basic needs and foster safety, security and well-being for our residents.

Our newly designed CSP Program provides a great opportunity for us to expand partnerships and leverage resources to build nonprofit capacity and increase outcomes. We are confident that this investment strengthens our ability to address barriers to stability, reduce poverty and promote economic stability. We look forward to working together to foster the best quality of life for all who live in Howard County.
Redesigning the Community Services Partnership Grant Program

Responding to Howard County’s Changing Needs

Since 1974, Howard County Government has been committed to investing in the nonprofit sector to deliver critical human services through the Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program. CSP has grown significantly since its inception, from five grantees and a total award of $128,000 to 46 grantees and a total award of $8.4 million in FY20. After 45 years of administering CSP grants, we redesigned this grant program in the context of today’s Howard County which includes a growing population, shifting demographics, evolving community needs, and an increased number of nonprofits.

With significant input from community leaders and members, including many of our current grantees, we created a nimble, modern grant program. Through this 12-month process, guided by Due East Partners and supported by our design team, we analyzed needs assessments, data and qualitative input from providers and consumers of human services to determine the areas of greatest need. This allowed us to identify the best opportunities to target CSP grants to improve service coordination and collaboration for greater collective impact. (Click here to access the Data Summary developed in early 2020). The redesigned grant program includes the following:

• Well-defined and aligned purpose for our CSP Grant Program
• Guiding principles to inform decision-making
• Shared and measurable results and progress indicators to track our collective progress and impact
• Clear funding areas of focus and three refined and corresponding grant types
• Updated eligibility requirements
Co-Creative Process

Guided by Local Community Leaders

Thank you to our staff and design team for their guidance, insights and leadership and to all of the community members, grantees and key informants who informed the development of the redesigned Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program:

**Staff**
- **Rose J. Burton**, Administrator, Office of Community Partnerships
- **Megan Godfrey Jackson**, Program Manager, Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program
- **Cara Baumgartner**, Administrative Assistant, Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program

**Design Team**
- **Tonya Aikens**, President & CEO, Howard County Library System
- **Dee Athey**, Director of Grants and Community Engagement, Community Foundation of Howard County
- **Kelly Cimino**, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, Howard County Government
- **Michael Demidenko**, Assistant Director for Adult, Family & Children’s Services, Howard County Department of Social Services
- **Joan Driessen,** Executive Director, Association of Community Services
- **Jackie Eng**, Community Advocate and Nonprofit Professional
- **Amma Felix**, Community Advocate and Nonprofit Professional
- **Jennifer Jones**, Deputy Chief of Staff for the County Executive, Howard County Government
- **Tracy Novak**, Director of Population Health, Howard County General Hospital
- **Theo Kramer**, Community Superintendent, Howard County Public School System
- **Maura Rossman**, Health Officer, Howard County Health Department
- **Jacqueline R. Scott,** Director, Department of Community Resources and Services
- **Nikki Highsmith Vernick**, President and CEO, Horizon Foundation
- **Antigone Vickery**, Deputy Health Officer, Howard County Health Department
- **Minah Woo,** Associate Vice President, Continuing Education/Workforce Development, Howard County Community College

* Individuals also serve on the Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency

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**Info Session Attendees**
- 125+ Attendees

**Survey Participants**
- 42 Existing Grantees

**Community Forums**
- 79 Attendees
Community Services Partnership (CSP)

**Purpose Statement:** To partner with nonprofits to equitably meet basic needs and foster safety, security, and well-being for Howard County residents.

**Vision Statement:** Communities that are connected, resilient, and thriving.

Targeting Population-Level Change for All Howard County Residents to Thrive

To fully and effectively execute on our newly articulated purpose, we are rooting the Community Services Partnership Grant (CSP) Program in measurable outcomes. Specifically, we are borrowing from Clear Impact’s Results-Based Accountability (see more on pages 7 and 14) to focus 10-year population-level results and progress indicators to ensure we are truly “moving the needle” for Howard County residents.

Through this shift, we will help ensure that together we are making measurable progress toward meeting the basic needs and promoting the safety, security and wellbeing for individuals and families across the county to thrive. Through the CSP Grant Program we will continue to invest in nonprofits and community organizations that are able to efficiently and effectively deliver vital human services and those that can track and report measurable progress on an annual basis. Grants will be awarded for services and programs that contribute to the collective achievement of the following population-level results over the next decade:

1. All people in Howard County have equitable access to services for basic needs
2. Individuals and families are safe, secure and economically stable

Guiding Principles for Equity and Impact

The following guiding principles establish a new framework for the Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program and are intended to educate our partners of the overarching approach that will inform our decision-making related to this program:

- We thoughtfully and equitably invest county resources to strengthen our public safety net
- We support proven, sustainable, innovative, and community-based solutions
- We collaborate with our nonprofit partners and other funders to address critical human needs and achieve meaningful, measurable impact
- We strive for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in everything we do

We sought to create a bold, transformative guide to align and strengthen our grant making and partnerships as we work together for a better future for all in Howard County.

Megan Godfrey Jackson, CSP Program Manager
Funding Areas of Focus

The role of the Community Services Partnership (CSP) Grant Program, which includes all human services grantmaking as well as Human Service Transportation and Plan to End Homelessness (PEH) Grants, is to make investments in community organizations and nonprofits that effectively deliver programs and support to individuals and families in Howard County who lack access to adequate resources or are facing financial hardship. As a steward of public funding, CSP recognizes the importance of targeting its dollars to areas of greatest need that can best be addressed by local organizations, especially when they are working together for greater and more equitable outcomes.

After months of data analysis, input gathering and discussions with local community leaders, the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) has determined that it will target all of its CSP grant dollars to the following areas of focus:

**Level I: Basic Human Needs**

OCP realizes that a thriving community starts with everyone having the ability to equitably access basic needs for themselves and their families. When basic human needs are unmet, all other goals become secondary.

When children are hungry, they struggle to learn. When families are worried about keeping a roof over their heads, they cannot focus on gaining additional skills or education needed to increase income.

By equitably and collaboratively addressing the basic needs of residents across Howard County who lack access to adequate resources or are facing financial hardship, we can work to eliminate barriers to longer-term well-being, safety and security.

OCP provides targeted CSP grants through its Basic Human Needs funding area of focus to nonprofits serving individuals and families who lack access to adequate resources or are facing financial hardships in the following areas:

- Hunger Relief and Nutrition
- Homeless System Services*
- Health Services including Mental and Behavioral Health
- Reliable and Affordable Access to Resources for Basic Human Needs

* For more information, [click here](#)

**Level II: Safety and Security**

OCP recognizes that achieving the vision of connected, resilient and thriving communities means reaching beyond basic human needs to address safety and security needs of our residents.

When parents are unemployed or underemployed, they struggle to afford a barebones household budget. When someone lives under the threat of violence, it can seriously interfere with everyday life and the ability to function at home, work or school.

To continue building the foundation for all residents to equitably access opportunities, grow and thrive, OCP will invest in the resources individuals need to create a better future for themselves and their families, ultimately leading to a stronger community.

Through its Safety and Security funding area of focus, OCP will provide CSP grants to nonprofits serving individuals and families in the following areas:

- Personal Security and Safety
- Safe and Stable Housing
- Legal Assistance
- Job Skills and Employment
- Healthy Aging
- Family and Community Resiliency
- Reliable and Affordable Access to Resources Related to Safety and Security
Measuring Our Collective Impact Over the Next Decade

The CSP Grant program’s population-level results are intentionally aligned with the efforts of our partners across Howard County. To achieve them in the next 10 years, will take coordinated, community-wide responses that include a diverse swath of multi-sector organizations, agencies and collaboratives.

To help guide the assessment of our collective progress towards these results, we developed a series of progress indicators outlined below. We will work with CSP grantees annually, to align initiatives and programs with these indicators and track program and agency-level effectiveness. Additionally, to contribute to our data-driven analysis of our collective impact, we will conduct accountability check-ins approximately every three years to reassess baselines and trends.

Grants will be awarded to organizations that can track and report on up to three of the Progress Indicators using the following Performance Measures:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

Grantees will be invited to make the case for another progress indicator that points at the results and recommend the performance measures to be tracked depending on the grant type(s) for which they are applying. The CSP will collaborate with its partners to measure progress and revise the indicators as needed.

Clear Impact’s Results-Based Accountability

Population Accountability

**Results** = A condition of well-being for a population or community

**Progress Indicators** = A measure that quantifies the achievement of a result

Performance Accountability

**Performance Measure** = A measure of how well a program, agency or service system is working

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Progress Indicators for Measuring Success Over the Next Decade

**Basic Human Needs**

- Decrease in individuals facing food insecurity
- Increase in people/households with access to nutritious food
- Decrease in people experiencing homelessness
- Decrease in people who are unsheltered
- Increase in access to reliable, affordable transportation
- Increase in equitable access to healthcare, including mental and behavioral health needs
- Increase in households with access to technology and reliable Wi-Fi in the home

**Safety and Security**

- Decrease in people living at or below poverty and ALICE thresholds
- Decrease in unemployed individuals
- Increase of individuals employed per full-time employment
- Decrease in residents who are rent-burdened
- Increase in individuals receiving Humanitarian Relief (forms of legal protection for individuals fleeing harm and seeking freedom and safety in the United States)
- Increase in older adults with access to health care
- Increase in population reporting community connectedness

See sources and shared definitions on pages 12-13.
Building Capacity Together

We recognize that elements of the redesigned CSP Grant Program will require our grantees to obtain new or additional skills, tools and competencies. With support from partners inside and outside of county government, the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) will aim to provide training and support to nonprofits and community partners to build internal capacity. The OCP staff will do its best to respond to requests from its grantees and other community partners to identify opportunities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Measuring Outcomes
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice
- Collaboration*
- Leadership Development

* See page 13 to learn more about the Collaboration Spectrum adopted by OCP per the CSP Grant Program.
Based on grants made available through Howard County's annual budgeting process, CSP grants will be awarded in alignment with the funding areas of focus through the following grant types. An organization may not submit more than two requests for each of CSP's grant types (Core Support, Program Support and Emerging Needs and Opportunity Grants):

Core Support Grants
The purpose of these grants is to support the core operating costs for an organization in equitably and effectively providing critical human services that significantly address the Basic Human Needs and/or advance Safety and Security of individuals and families across Howard County. These grants are intended to support day-to-day operations and long-term organizational sustainability. Multi-year funding may be requested for up to three years for existing grantees with a three-year relationship and is contingent upon annual performance reports and continued availability of funds.

Program Support Grant
The purpose of these grants is to support a specific program within an organization in equitably and effectively providing critical human services that significantly address the Basic Human Needs and/or advance Safety and Security of individuals and families across Howard County. To achieve population-level results and advance measurable progress indicators, CSP provides three types of Program Support Grants:

- **Safety, Security and Wellbeing Grants** — may be used to support a specific program within an organization to address Basic Human Needs and/or Safety and Security
- **Human Service Transportation Grants** — may be used to fund transportation services for adults with disabilities to access employment, health care and social services
- **Plan to End Homelessness (PEH) Grants** — may be used to support priority services under the Howard County Plan to End Homelessness

Emerging Needs and Opportunity Grants
To respond to the needs and opportunities that emerge unexpectedly and impact the delivery of critical human services to individuals and families in Howard County, Emerging Needs and Opportunity Grants will be awarded for specific, time-sensitive projects. Projects may include community needs that arise out of emergencies or crises, as well as new opportunities that have the potential for measurable impact in the areas of Basic Human Needs and/or Safety and Security. The purpose of these one-time grants is to support nonprofit organizations in effectively responding to community needs that require immediate attention and can be used to support the following:

- **Emergency Needs** — To provide financial resources to an organization to maintain service delivery in the event of an emergency, crisis or natural disaster.
- **Capacity-building** — To improve an organization’s effectiveness for increased measurable impact by strengthening management and governance, planning, processes and infrastructure.
- **Collective Impact** — To design, build and manage collaborations between and among relevant sectors and organizations/entities to equitably address complex community challenges which are beyond the scope of any one organization and agency to solve.

An organization may only apply for one area of support (Emergency Needs, Capacity-building and Collective Impact) listed above.
Eligibility Requirements

To reflect CSP’s guiding principles, as well as the laws and public policy that govern grantmaking in the U.S. and Maryland, the following eligibility requirements will apply to all grant programs, with additional and specific requirements for each.

- Be a qualified 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in good standing with the IRS
- Provide direct services to the residents of Howard County, Maryland (if the agency serves a larger geographic area, funding may only be requested for those services offered within Howard County, Maryland)
- Compliant with all federal, state and local laws
- Alignment with at least one of the funding areas of focus (Basic Needs and/or Safety and Security)
- Organization demonstrates equitable partnerships with other nonprofits organizations. Specifically, the organization must fall within the coordinate through integrate levels on the Collaboration Spectrum (see page 13) to improve the delivery of services and/or organizational effectiveness
- Authentic engagement of program beneficiaries in the design and refinement of solutions reflected in service and program delivery

Additional Eligibility Requirements

Core Support Grants

- The organization must be in operation for three years or more with a proven track-record of effective, high-quality service delivery
- Proven ability to effectively track and report on performance measures in alignment with one to three of the progress indicators
- Minimum request of $25,000
- The total request must be less than 20 percent of total current annual expenses
- Demonstrated commitment to collaborating with other sectors (i.e., faith, business, philanthropy, etc.) and a diverse swath of community members to equitably address complex community challenges
- Clearly articulated organizational and programmatic sustainability, including a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
- For those applying for both Core and Program Services Grants, grant funding requests must be clearly differentiated and unduplicated
Program Service Grants

- In operation for a year or more with a demonstrated ability to deliver effective, high-quality services
- Ability to effectively track and report on performance measures in alignment with one to three of the Progress Indicators
- Minimum request of $10,000
- Demonstrated commitment to collaborating with other sectors (i.e., faith, business, philanthropy, etc.) and a diverse swath of community members to equitably address complex community challenges
- Clearly articulated organizational and programmatic sustainability, including a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
- For also applying for both Core and Program Services Grants, grant funding requests must be clearly differentiated and unduplicated

Emerging Needs and Opportunity Grants

- Minimum request of $5,000 and maximum request of $50,000
- Funding may be requested for up to 50 percent of the total project cost
- May only address a new need or opportunity
- May not apply more than once per fiscal year
- Clearly articulated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice

Grant Cycle Timeline

The redesigned grant program will be phased in over FY22 and FY23 grant years. The OCP will provide updates and additional information via its website and information sessions that are open to all members of the public. For questions or more information, please contact Megan Godfrey Jackson, mgodfrey@howardcountymd.gov.
Shared Definitions

**Equitable Access** — Every individual/family in any community in Howard County has the same opportunity as any other individual/family to grow, thrive and live with dignity.

**Food Insecurity** — The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. (ACS Self-Sufficiency Report)

**Homeless** — HUD defines Homelessness in four separate categories:

- **Literally Homeless:** People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided.

- **At Imminent Risk of Homelessness:** People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled-up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing.

- **Homelessness under Other Federal Statutes:** Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This is a new category of homelessness, and it applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment.

- **Fleeing or Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence:** People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

**ALICE** — an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, is a way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford a bare-bones household budget. (United Way)

**Safe and Economically Stable** — A fixed condition of protection from harm or other non-desirable outcomes and secure employment, income and well-being that allows for upward mobility.

**Community Connectedness** — The OCP recognizes that community connectedness is vital to the well-being of every individual. We define community connectedness as the convergence of individuals’ desires to belong to a larger collective; establish a mutually influential relationship with that collective; satisfy their individual needs; be rewarded through their collective affiliation; and construct a shared emotional connection (McMillan, 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Whitlock, 2007). Currently, there are no sources of data in the county to efficiently and effectively track this measure of success. The OCP will work with its partners over time to develop an effective measure, or set of measures, related to community connectedness.
Progress Indicator Sources

1. ACS Self-Sufficiency Indicators
2. Howard County Health Assessment Survey
3. The Path Home Report
4. CHNA
5. UW ALICE Report
6. United States Census Bureau
7. American Community Survey

The Collaboration Spectrum

The OCP recognizes that the only way we can achieve population-level results — adhere to the program’s purpose, meet basic needs and promote the safety, security and well-being for all Howard County residents to thrive — is through collaboration. Collaboration comes in many forms and is defined in a number of ways. For the CSP Grant Program, the OCP is adopting the Tamarack Institute’s Collaboration Spectrum.

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<tr>
<th>Compete</th>
<th>Co-exist</th>
<th>Communicate</th>
<th>Cooperate</th>
<th>Coordinate</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Integrate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Competition for clients, resources, partners, public attention</td>
<td>No systematic connection between agencies</td>
<td>Inter-agency information sharing (e.g., networking)</td>
<td>As needed; often informal; interaction on discrete activities or projects</td>
<td>Organizations systematically adjust and align work with each other for greater outcomes</td>
<td>Longer term interactions based on shared vision &amp; goals; shared decision-makers and resources</td>
<td>Fully integrated programs, planning &amp; funding</td>
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According to the Tamarack Institute, as groups move along the continuum they must pay attention to activities that build trust between the partners. As previously mentioned, to be eligible to apply for one of the CSP Grant Types, an organization must demonstrate equitable partnerships with other nonprofit organizations. Specifically, an organization must have partnerships that fall within the coordinate through integrate levels on the Collaboration Spectrum.
Results-Based Accountability

Developed by Mark Friedman ("Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough"), Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a data-driven process that facilitates collaboration to improve the lives of community members. This framework helps organizations move beyond problems to start taking action to solve problems. RBA can be used at various levels: state, community, agency, or program, and may look different depending on the level at which you are working. The biggest differentiator in the RBA framework is that it has two distinct components: Population Accountability (city, county, state, nation) v.s Performance Accountability (program, agency, service system).

Population Accountability has two parts:

1. A condition of well-being for children, adults, families, or communities, known as a result or outcome. (i.e., families that are safe, stable, connected, self-sufficient).

2. A measure or data point which helps quantify the achievement of that result or outcome, known as an indicator (i.e., percentage of families in Howard County experiencing homelessness).

Performance Accountability is a measure of how well a program, agency or service is working. There are three types of measures:

1. How Much Did We Do? — (e.g., number of people in a program)

2. How Well Did We Do It? — (e.g., percentage of staff trained in best practices)

3. Is Anyone Better Off? — (e.g., number and percentage of families housed)

These three measurements look at the quality and efficiency of services and focuses on people being better off because of those services.

RBA is a simple process that helps challenge assumptions and builds upon collaboration and consensus to improve the lives of community members using data and transparency to ensure accountability for the performance of services.

For more information, click here.