

**Lakewood Community Services Center**  
**Emergency Food Assistance & Service Delivery Model Transformation**  
**CDBG-CV Funding Request**

## **Abstract**

### **Program Description**

As a result of COVID-19, LCSC moved to a drive-thru/walk-up delivery service effective March 23, 2020. While this method enabled us to continue daily emergency food distribution, with the warm summer weather upon us and perhaps even more difficult when temperatures drop, we determined that many of our senior clients, clients with mental/behavioral/physical disabilities, those who rely on public transportation, etc. will have difficulty getting to LCSC as often as they need food. Keeping our double garage doors open in hot weather to serve in the parking lot will have a negative impact on the warehouse ambient temperature, which in turn affects the efficiency of our freezers and walk-in cooler. Keeping the doors open in the cold weather affects the entire building temperature, making it difficult to heat for the social workers and staff who will work from the office providing essential homelessness prevention assistance and case management services.

LCSC plans to move to an all delivery system as early as July and will continue for the foreseeable future in order to: eliminate volunteer/client interaction; keep the building closed to walk-in clients; and most importantly to efficiently serve all client families with particular attention to the health and safety of the clients with special needs.

We intend to hire a part-time driver who will have responsibility for route management/delivery and a part-time pantry coordinator who will assist with the prepacking of groceries determined by the daily route schedule. Clients will be informed of this change by fliers in every grocery bag leading up to the change and by messaging on our phone system, Facebook, and our website. Our partners at Refugee Response will translate fliers and messaging into Arabic, Bhutanese, Burmese and Albanian first with other languages TBD as needed to follow. One of LCSC's volunteers will man the Center's phones and will capture basic client information: name, address, phone number, size of household. This information will inform the delivery day based on address.

Our initial thought is to divide Lakewood into three sections with the west end including the handful of Rocky River clients we are funded to serve by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland (NOTE: CDBG funds will not be used for any services, groceries, time for non-Lakewood residents, which comprise 7-9% of total clients served). Because Lakewood is so dense, particularly in Ward 4 where a large percentage of clients reside, we anticipate delivery to 40 households a day, which equates to 867 households each month, which is reflective of our current need. (This does not include our United Way-funded deliveries to seniors in senior housing as they are handled separately).

We intend to continue adding considerably more healthy food choices to supplement the shelf-stable product we purchase from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank using Cuyahoga County funds. We have been buying and will continue to buy fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy and protein from vendors with whom we have existing relationships. These healthy options are critical for anyone during this time and especially for seniors and those with compromised immune systems.

## **Community Need**

Lakewood Community Services Center is one of very few food distribution centers open during the pandemic and is the only center open daily to meet the needs of the residents of Lakewood who are either existing LCSC clients or individuals and families who require emergency food assistance as a direct result of loss of income due to COVID-19.

## **Beneficiaries**

To qualify for emergency food assistance, individuals must meet the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) income guidelines, which equate to 200% of the federal poverty level. As was the case in FY 2019, and through May 2020, just over 92% of the Lakewood residents receiving emergency food assistance fall into HUD's Extremely Low-Income bracket, which means a household of one person has an annual income between \$0 - \$16,000, which is almost \$10,000 below ODJFS's income guideline for emergency food. We anticipate delivery to 40 households a day (867 duplicated households each month; 10,400 duplicated each year), which is reflective of our current demand. (This does not include our United Way-funded deliveries to seniors in senior housing as they are handled separately).

## **Project Narrative**

### **Community Needs Addressed**

Lakewood Community Services Center is one of very few food distribution centers open during the pandemic and is the *only* center open daily to meet the needs of the residents of Lakewood who are either existing LCSC clients or individuals and families who require emergency food assistance as a direct result of loss of income due to COVID-19. The number of individuals served in March was 1,400; that number reached 2,111 in April and is projected to be over 2,200 in May. We do not anticipate any reduction in the number of individuals served for the foreseeable future as the level of employment and re-employment opportunities will not increase and the additional \$600/week unemployment is slated to expire at the end of July.

### **Primary Goals & Objectives**

LCSC has been able to meet our clients' need for emergency food by switching to a drive-thru/walk-up delivery method effective March 23, 2020. We are fortunate to have the space to continue daily food service while maintaining a zero-contact delivery system. Our goal is to continue providing emergency food to all Lakewood residents in the safest and most effective way possible, while maintaining social distancing. It is also critical for us to be able to meet the special needs of all individuals who need support during these uncertain times.

## **Program Design**

### ***Background***

Intake responsibilities have traditionally been handled inside our facility by our 60 senior volunteers who were all immediately called off for their safety. Since closing the building and implementing the drive-thru/walk-up system, our two licensed social workers have managed the distribution with the help of one volunteer each day who pre-packs groceries at a safe distance from staff or clients. When the eviction moratorium is lifted on July 24, 2020 our social workers will resume their ESG-funded homelessness prevention and essential services responsibilities. Our initial plan was to replace them with two part-time staff members and continue this service method. However, with the warm summer weather and perhaps even more difficult when temperatures drop, we determined that many of our senior clients, clients with mental/behavioral/physical disabilities, those who rely on public transportation, etc. will have difficulty getting to LCSC as often as they need food. Keeping our double garage doors open in hot weather to serve in the parking lot will have a negative impact on the warehouse ambient temperature, which in turn affects the efficiency of our freezers and walk-in cooler. Keeping the doors open in the cold weather affects the entire building temperature, making it difficult to heat for the social workers and staff who will work from the office.

### ***New Program Design***

With all the above considerations in mind, we began to look to food pantries throughout the country to determine what operational changes were either in effect or being put into effect. It quickly emerged that many pantries were moving to a delivery method due to the same challenges impacting LCSC, namely no volunteers, social distancing and meeting the needs of populations with special needs. Closer to home we talked with Refugee Response who began delivering free/reduced cost meals to children in Lakewood, lower west side of Cleveland, Old Brooklyn and Parma. They have and will continue to deliver to 30 households every day for as long as schools are not in session. Due to COVID-19, MetroHealth had to discontinue its on-site mobile pantry, held indoors in the Rehabilitation Institute atrium located at their main campus. To continue providing healthy food options, Metro looked at the highest users over a four-month period and began daily delivery to 60 households in three adjacent zip codes using four drivers who are no longer needed for patient transport. Metro plans to continue delivery.

LCSC plans to move to an all delivery system as early as July and will continue for the foreseeable future in order to: eliminate volunteer/client interaction; keep the building closed to walk-in clients; and most importantly to efficiently serve all client families with particular attention to the health and safety of the clients with special needs.

We intend to hire a part-time driver who will have responsibility for route management/delivery and a part-time pantry coordinator who will assist with the prepacking of groceries determined by the daily route schedule. Clients will be informed of this change by fliers in every grocery bag leading up to the change and by messaging on our phone system, Facebook, and our website. Our partners at Refugee Response will translate fliers and messaging into Arabic, Bhutanese, Burmese and Albanian first with other languages TBD as needed to follow. One of LCSC's volunteers will man the Center's phones and will capture basic client information: name, address, phone number, size of household. This information will inform the delivery day based on address. Our initial thought is to divide Lakewood into three sections with the west end including the handful of Rocky River clients we are funded to serve by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland (NOTE: CDBG funds will not be used for any services, groceries, time for non-Lakewood residents, which comprise 7-9% of total clients served). Because Lakewood is so dense, particularly in Ward 4 where a large percentage of clients reside, we anticipate delivery to 40 households a day, which equates to 867 households each month, which is reflective of our current demand. (This does not include our United Way-funded deliveries to seniors in senior housing as they are handled separately).

One additional consideration for this new model is the addition of considerably more healthy food choices to supplement the shelf-stable product we purchase from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank using Cuyahoga County funds. We have been buying and will continue to buy fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy and protein from vendors with whom we have existing relationships. These healthy options are critical for anyone during this time and especially for seniors and those with compromised immune systems.

### **Target Populations**

To qualify for emergency food assistance, individuals must meet the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) income guidelines, which equate to 200% of the federal poverty level. As was the case in FY 2019, and through May 2020, just over 92% of the Lakewood residents receiving emergency food assistance fall into HUD's Extremely Low-Income bracket, which means a household of one person has an annual income between \$0 - \$16,000, which is almost \$10,000 below ODJFS's income guideline for emergency food. As explained above, our new delivery model is especially important for seniors, those with existing health issues, children, individuals with disabilities and those who rely on public transportation.

### **Geographic Service Area**

LCSC is contracted by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland to provide emergency food to residents of Lakewood, Rocky River and Westlake. For this CDBG application, the service area is limited to ***Lakewood only***.

## **Outreach Strategy & Efforts**

Our food services are well known in the community with referrals coming from the City of Lakewood; the Lakewood city schools; local churches; Neighborhood Family Practice; Lakewood senior apartment buildings, Lakewood Alive, etc. Additional referrals (which have increased exponentially during the pandemic) come through United Way's 211 First Call for Help; the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland. Brochures explaining our food services and all other services offered at LCSC are available at every church, school, library, City Hall, the Division of Youth, the Division on Aging, Neighborhood Family Practice, Recovery Resources, and all subsidized senior buildings and at the pharmacy counters at drug stores throughout the city. We have increased our Facebook presence and are in the process of updating our website to bring move food service to the home page.

## **Community Partnerships & Stakeholders**

The City of Lakewood Department of Human Services partners with LCSC on many of our services and is a primary referral source for the food pantry. We have a strong network of community partners (inside Lakewood and in the broader human services sector) including United Way's 211 First Call for Help, referring agencies and churches; and local food retailers that make weekly donations of food. Refugee Response has joined with LCSC to ensure all information is translated for those with limited English proficiency.

**CDBG-CV Emergency Food Assistance & Service Delivery Model Transformation Budget (July 1,2020 – June 30, 2021)**

Expense Category <i>(Lakewood Residents Only)</i>	CDBG -CV Request	Additional Secured Funding	Total
<b>Personnel</b>			
1 part-time delivery/route manager	0	<i>Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund</i>	34,000
1 part-time pantry coordinator	\$24,200		24,200
<b>Sub-Total Personnel</b>	<b>24,200</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>	<b>58,200</b>
<b>Equipment &amp; Maintenance</b>			
1 commercial double-fronted freezer	3,300		3,300
3 x upright freezers @ \$995 (2 replacements/2 new )	3,980		3,980
Electrical upgrade to pantry	2,425		2,425
Gloves (12 months)	0	<i>Community West Foundation</i>	2,000
Food (fresh produce, dairy, protein not available using County funding at GCFB and to support increased number of clients served)	15,000	Healthy Lakewood Foundation: \$50,000 Community West Foundation: \$10,000 United Way: \$15,000 Vincent J Stark Foundation: <u>\$10,000</u> \$85,000	100,000
N95 masks (12 months)	1,400		1,400
Plastic T-sack bags	2,300		2,300
Brown paper bags (purchased at GCFB)	5,040		5,040
Clear plastic produce/bread bags	1,500		1,500
2020 Ford Transit 250 Van (unnegotiated price)	42,000		42,000
Van insurance and additional driver insured	2,000		2,000
Van expenses (maintenance; registration; gas)	2,000		2,000
<b>Sub-Total Equipment &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>80,945</b>	<b>87,000</b>	<b>67,945</b>
<b>Total Project</b>	<b>105,145</b>	<b>121,000</b>	<b>226,145</b>