

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN

Federal Fiscal Year 2025
October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR**

Submitted by:
Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner
Department of Social Services

The Community Services Block Grant Allocation Plan

FFY 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. Overview of the Community Services Block Grant	1 - 7
A. Purpose	1
B. Major Use of Funds	2
C. Federal Allotment Process.....	2
D. Estimated Federal Funding.....	2
E. Total Available and Estimated Expenditures	3 - 4
F. Proposed Allocation Changes from Last Year	4
G. Contingency Plan.....	4
H. State Allocation Planning Process.....	5
I. Grant Provisions	5 - 7
II. Tables	8 - 12
A. Recommended Allocations.....	9
B. Summary of Program Expenditures	10
C. Summary of Service Objectives and Activities	11
D. Proposed Expenditures by Program Category.....	12

THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN
For Federal Fiscal Year 2025
October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025

I. OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

A. Purpose

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through its administrative agency, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services (OCS). The Department of Social Services (DSS or “the Department”) is designated as the principal state agency for the allocation and administration of the block grant within the State of Connecticut.

The purposes of the Community Services Block Grant are:

1. To provide assistance to states and local communities, working through a network of Community Action Agencies for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient (particularly families who are attempting to transition off a state program carried out under part A of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601, et. Seq.), (“the Act”)) and
2. To accomplish the goals described in paragraph (1) through:
 - a) the strengthening of community capabilities for planning and coordinating a broad range of federal, state, local, and private resources related to the elimination of poverty, so that these resources can be used in a manner responsive to local needs and conditions;
 - b) the coordination of a range of services to meet the needs of low-income families and individuals, so that these services have a measurable impact on the reduction of poverty in the community and in helping families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency;
 - c) the promotion of innovative and effective community-based approaches to addressing the causes and effects of poverty and community breakdown;
 - d) the promotion of participation by the low-income residents and members of the groups served by programs funded through block grants made under this subtitle in planning and coordinating activities and programs designed to respond to the unique problems and needs within their communities; and
 - e) the broadening of the resource base for programs directed at the elimination of poverty to secure a more active role in the provision of services for:
 - (1) Private religious, charitable, and neighborhood-based organizations; and
 - (2) Individual citizens, business, labor, and professional groups, who are able to influence the quantity and quality of opportunities and services for the poor.

B. Major Use of Funds

HHS requires that at least ninety percent (90%) of the funds made available to the state be administered through grants to Community Action Agencies (CAAs) or Community Action Programs (“eligible entities”). Section 675C of the Community Services Block Grant Act requires states to provide funding to eligible entities to be used for purposes consistent with the federal goals identified above in Section A.

There are currently nine CAAs that qualify to receive CSBG funding in Connecticut. Each CAA has a specified geographic catchment area where they provide services. In Connecticut, CSBG funds are primarily used by CAAs to provide planning and coordination, organize services, encourage innovative and effective approaches to addressing the causes of poverty, broaden the resource base for programs and services, and for core administrative expenses. With CSBG as base funding and additional assistance through other state agencies, municipalities, and private donations, CAAs can operate a wide range of programs. The CAAs utilize a holistic approach to address the immediate, short-term, and long-term needs of low- and moderate-income individuals and families to help them achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency. Programs administered by the CAAs include, but are not limited to, Energy Assistance & Weatherization, Housing & Shelter, Employment & Training, Early Childhood Education, Financial Education, Case Management, and Food & Nutrition Services.

As required under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, each CAA also prepares an annual community action plan. Each plan addresses how the goals of the block grant will be furthered by the efforts of the programs administered by the CAA. Key components of the individual CAA’s plans include the following: community needs assessment; description of service delivery system, linkages, coordination of funds and innovative projects; and performance outcomes and measures. CSBG funds are required to be used to serve or improve the well-being of individuals with annual incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level¹ and may not be used to support political activities or to pay for construction unless a specific waiver is obtained by the state from the federal government.

The state is permitted to retain up to five percent (5%) of the block grant for administration and may use the remaining five percent (5%) of the funds allocated for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to, training, technical assistance, and capacity building for eligible entities, and innovative programs that further the purposes of the Act. The Department utilizes the administration allotment to provide direct program monitoring, training, and oversight functions to ensure program compliance.

C. Federal Allotment Process

CSBG funds are allotted based on the national appropriation and the state’s share of funds distributed under Section 221 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 for FFY 1981.

D. Estimated Federal Funding

In FFY 2024, the Community Services Block Grant was funded at a national level of \$754 million, which represents an increase of \$4 million from FFY 2023’s national funding level. Connecticut’s final FFY 2024 block grant allocation was \$9,143,431.

At the time of the development of this plan, federal funding for FFY 2025 has not yet been finalized. For purposes of the development of this plan, the federal funding allocation for Connecticut for FFY 2024 is estimated to be \$9,143,431, which is equal to the state’s final FFY 2024 allocation.

¹ 125% of the federal poverty level = annual income of \$39,000 for a family of four

E. Total Available and Estimated Expenditures

In total, available funding for FFY 2025 is estimated at \$16,690,287 (\$9,143,431 in estimated federal block grant funding and \$7,546,856 in estimated carryforward). Of the total available funding for FFY 2025, this plan proposes to expend \$10,332,569 as detailed below.

Pursuant to 42 USC § 9907, at least 90% of the CSBG funds made available to the state must be used to make grants to eligible entities. Accordingly, the Department proposes that 90% or \$8,229,088 of the estimated FFY 2025 block grant funding be distributed through grants to CAAs in Connecticut.

Of the remaining 10% of the FFY 2025 block grant funds or \$914,344, the state plans to retain 5% (\$457,172) for administration and 5% (\$457,172) for discretionary projects. The funds retained for administration will be used by the Department to support the necessary quality assurance and program staffing to ensure programmatic and fiscal oversight, training, and monitoring activities. The funds retained for discretionary projects will be used by the Department to support state association sustainability efforts, training, technical assistance, technology support, statewide projects and innovative programs related to the purposes of the Act.

The chart below delineates FFY 2025 proposed allocations based on estimated expenditures. Table A on page 9 provides program category detail for FFY 2023 (actual expenditures), FFY 2024 (estimated expenditures), and FFY 2025 (proposed allocations).

PROGRAM CATEGORY	FFY 2025 Proposed Expenditure
Grants to Eligible Entities	\$9,418,225
Discretionary Programs	457,172
Administration	457,172
TOTAL	\$10,332,569
Block Grant	\$9,143,431
Carry Forward from Previous Year	7,546,856
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	\$16,690,287

In line with past practice, this plan proposes to carryforward \$7,546,856 of the total available funding for FFY 2025. Carryforward funding serves as a contingency in case of a decrease of funding in future fiscal years. For example, the state’s final FFY 2022 federal funding level was subject to a 1% reduction. The Department was able to use carryforward funds to ensure that the CAAs were funded at the estimated FFY 2022 level. In addition to contingency funding, carryforward funding will also be used to support the cost of private provider COLAs in FFY 2025 and future years.

The availability of carryforward funding also allows the Department the flexibility to provide additional training and technical assistance in support of the CAA network when needed to comply with federal requirements. As an example, the Department is required to complete the Center of Excellence Organizational Standard review on an annual basis. The purpose of this review is to ensure compliance with all federal requirements. The Department utilizes the results of this review to identify and provide training and technical assistance to the CAA network to support the network’s ability to maintain and/or

improve adherence with federal standards.

F. Proposed Changes from Last Year

This plan continues to use the CAA base allocation methodology that was established in FFY 2024. The transition funding identified in FFY 2024 is not continued into FFY 2025 as those were one-time resources provided to minimize the impact of the FFY 2024 allocation formula update on the three CAAs with reductions by allowing them adequate time to make the necessary budgetary adjustments.

The FFY 2025 allocation plan includes a one-time funding increase in FFY 2025 and continues funding of the FFY 2022, FFY 2023 and FFY 2024 COLAs. Carryforward funds will be used to cover these costs.

Overall, the Department's administrative costs are expected to remain nearly the same with a staffing level of 2.5 employees.

G. Contingency Plan

The development of this allocation plan assumes that the FFY 2025 Community Services Block Grant for Connecticut will be funded at the level of \$9,143,431. In the event that anticipated funding is either increased or decreased, federal law, as noted above, specifies the proportion of funds allocated to CAAs, discretionary programs, and administration. Should a significant decrease in federal funding occur as a result of sequestration, the Department, with input from the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) and the CAAs, will develop a process to determine priorities for applying reductions. If additional funds become available, they may be carried over into FFY 2026 to ensure ongoing programmatic coverage and to mitigate the potential for future reductions.

In accordance with section 4-28b of the Connecticut General Statutes, after recommended allocations have been approved or modified, any proposed transfer to or from any specific allocation of a sum or sums of over fifty thousand dollars or ten per cent of any such specific allocation, whichever is less, shall be submitted by the Governor to the speaker and the president pro tempore and approved, modified or rejected by the committees. Notification of all transfers made shall be sent to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies and to the committee or committees of cognizance, through the Office of Fiscal Analysis.

H. State Allocation Planning Process

Sections 17b-885 through 17b-895 of the Connecticut General Statutes implement the federal requirements governing Community Action Agencies and further stipulate that allocated funds be distributed through an agreement between the Department and Community Action Agencies, or by decision of the Governor and Commissioner of Social Services if an agreement cannot be reached. For FFY 2024, the Department implemented changes to the allocation formula to address issues identified by our federal partners and to incorporate changes in the low-income population that have taken place since 1997 when the formula was last updated. The new allocation formula used a combination of a fixed amount per CAA, the low-income population of a CAA catchment area, and the overall population of the CAA catchment area. The FFY 2025 plan continues the use of the allocation formula established for FFY 2024. The Department will further coordinate with the CAA network to identify a cadence at which to update the formula using the latest population information.

I. Grant Provisions

In order to obtain CSBG funding, Connecticut must submit and obtain federal approval of the state plan that satisfies the requirements of Section 676 of the Reauthorization Act. Under these requirements, the

state must:

- designate a state agency to serve as lead agency;
- hold a public hearing to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed use of funds;
- conduct monitoring in accordance with Section 678B of the Reauthorization Act;
- hold a legislative hearing at least once every three years in conjunction with the development of the state plan;
- use funds received to support activities which assist low-income families and individuals to:
 - achieve self-sufficiency;
 - secure and retain meaningful employment;
 - attain an adequate education;
 - make better use of available income;
 - obtain and maintain adequate housing;
 - obtain emergency assistance; and
 - achieve greater participation in the affairs of the community;

- address the needs of youth in low-income communities;
- ensure that CSBG funds are used to coordinate with and make more effective use of other programs with related purposes;
- describe how it uses its discretionary funds;
- include information provided by eligible entities on how CSBG funds will be used;
- ensure that eligible entities provide emergency food, supplies and related services to combat hunger and malnutrition;
- ensure that the state and eligible entities coordinate with and establish linkages between governmental and other programs to avoid duplication;
- provide for coordination between programs to ensure that energy crisis intervention programs are conducted in each community;
- ensure that the state will cooperate with related federal investigations;
- ensure that funding for eligible entities will not be terminated or reduced below their proportional share without cause;
- provide opportunities for state and eligible entities to form partnerships with other organizations, including religious, charitable and community organizations;
- establish mechanisms for low-income individuals or organizations that feel they are under-represented on the board of a CAA to petition for representation;
- require that each CAA submit a community action plan as a condition of funding;
- require that all eligible entities participate in the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system; and
- require that each eligible entity have a board of directors composed of equal numbers of low-income persons, local elected officials or their designees, and other individuals or organizations serving low-income people in the community.

Additional Federal Requirements:

Through the collaborative efforts of OCS and the CSBG network, including CSBG eligible entities, state CSBG lead agencies, state CAA associations and national partners, a new performance management framework for CSBG was developed and implemented in 2015. This framework includes: organizational standards for CSBG eligible entities; federal and state accountability measures; and Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA).

These elements were designed to increase effectiveness and accountability across the CSBG network (federal, state, and local) and generate more robust results for the people and communities served.

On October 2, 2015, OCS issued Information Memorandum Transmittal No. 144 requiring states, no later than FFY 2016, to collect data and analyze and report on CSBG accountability measures through their online state plan and annual reports.

The thirteen state accountability measures address efficiency and effectiveness characteristics such as timeliness, accuracy, standards, and stakeholder satisfaction in the critical activities and functions listed below:

- Development of State plan, including involving the eligible entities
- Implementation of State plan including:
 - Distribution of funds
 - Use of remainder/discretionary funds
 - Grantee monitoring and corrective action
 - Data collection, analysis, and reporting
 - Organizational standards for eligible entities
 - State linkages and communication

Prior to the release of the accountability measures for states, on January 26, 2015, OCS issued Information Memorandum Transmittal No. 138 referencing the “State Establishment of Organizational Standards for CSBG Eligible Entities under 678B of the CSBG Act, 42 U.S.C. § 9901 et seq.” The categories associated with the organization standards for CAAs are as follows:

1. Maximum feasible participation
 - Consumer input and involvement
 - Community engagement
 - Community assessment
2. Vision and direction
 - Organizational leadership
 - Board governance
 - Strategic planning
3. Operations and accountability
 - Human resource management
 - Financial operations and oversight
 - Data and analysis

The Department and the CAA network continue to work collaboratively to ensure compliance with all federal requirements. It is the Department’s expectation that through this process of consistent communication, Connecticut CAAs will remain informed and aware of compliance requirements for each of the categories associated with the above-mentioned organizational standards. The Department will also utilize this process to assist with the identification of training that is above and beyond the standard training.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability

The Department and the CAA network continue activities related to ROMA Next Generation, which is the next level of ROMA principles, practices and resources implemented in FFY 2018. ROMA Next Generation focuses on integrating information on people served, services and strategies provided, and outcomes achieved by eligible entities on three levels: community, individual and family.

In closing, FFY 2025 continues to hold great promise for the CAA network as it continues to align and maintain its functionality and organizational capacity with federal requirements.

II. Tables

TABLE # and TITLE	PAGE #
Table A Expenditures and Recommended Allocations	9
Table B Summary of Program Expenditures	10
Table C Summary of Service Objectives and Activities	11
Table D Allocations by Program Category	12

Table A

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT EXPENDITURES AND RECOMMENDED ALLOCATIONS

PROGRAM CATEGORY	FFY 2023 Expenditures	FFY 2024 Estimated Expenditures	FFY 2025 Proposed Expenditures ²	Percentage Change from FFY 2024 to FFY 2025
Grants to Eligible Entities ¹	\$6,578,106	\$9,375,299	\$9,418,225	0.5%
Discretionary Programs	447,890	457,172	457,172	0%
Administration	441,286	457,173	457,172	0%
TOTAL	\$7,467,282	\$10,289,644	\$ 10,332,569	0.4%
SOURCE OF FUNDS				
Block Grant	\$9,235,789	\$9,143,431	\$9,143,431	0%
Carry Forward from Previous Year	6,924,562	8,693,069	7,546,856	-13%
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	\$16,160,351	\$17,836,500	\$16,690,287	-6%

Notes:

¹ FFY 2024 estimated expenditures include costs incurred during FFY 2023 and paid during FFY 2024 due to the delay in the submission of required documentation to support the issuance of the payment prior to September 30, 2023.

² Reflects distribution of 90% of the estimated FFY 2024 block grant funding (\$8,229,088), a one-time funding increase in FFY 2025, and continued funding of the FFY 2022, FFY 2023 and FFY 2024 COLAs under the allocation plan.

Table B
COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT
PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

	FFY 2023 Actual Expenditures	FFY 2024 Estimated Expenditures	FFY 2025 Proposed Expenditures	Percentage Change from FFY 2024 to FFY 2025
Number of Positions (FTE)	2	2.6	2.5	
Personal Services	\$178,895	\$218,666	\$216,589	-1%
Fringe Benefits	169,222	170,907	172,983	1%
Other Expenses ¹	93,169	67,600	67,600	0%
Equipment				
Contracts				
Grants to:				
Local Government				
Other State Agencies				
Private Agencies ^{2,3}	7,025,996	9,832,471	9,875,397	0.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$7,467,282	\$10,289,644	\$10,332,569	0.4%
SOURCE OF FUNDS				
Federal Block Grant Funds	\$9,235,789	\$9,143,431	\$9,143,431	0%
Carry Forward from Previous Year	6,924,562	8,693,069	7,546,856	-13%
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	\$16,160,351	\$17,836,500	\$16,690,287	-6%

Notes:

¹ FFY 2024 Other Expenses reflects an adjustment and the reallocation of monies to personal services and fringe benefits.

² FFY 2025 proposed expenditures reflect the base award each CAA will receive plus a one-time funding increase in FFY 2025, as well as funding of the FFY 2022, FFY 2023 and FFY 2024 COLAs.

³ Grants to Private Agencies represents grant amounts plus discretionary funding.

Table C

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT SUMMARY OF SERVICE OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Service Category	Objective	Service/Activity	Number Served FFY 2023*	Performance Measures
Core Funding for Eligible Entities	Provide core administrative support for CAAs to organize services and coordinate funding for programs that serve individuals and families at or below 125% of the federal poverty level.	Provide planning, administrative, and financial management support to Community Action Agencies to coordinate grants and services to low-income residents.	247,034 persons served through nine CAAs	See below

* As reported in Module 4 Section C, Line A of the annual federal CSBG Annual Report for 2023.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AS REPORTED IN THE ANNUAL CT FFY 2023 COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ANNUAL REPORT

Entities track certain categories of performance targeted to reduce or eliminate conditions of poverty as measured by the number of clients who receive specific types of CSBG assistance. Tracked indicators include:

1. Employment indicators and services – outcomes achieved by low-income participants who are either unemployed and seeking earned income or employed and seeking increased earned income and/or employment benefits.
2. Income and Asset Building indicator – participants’ increase in financial assets or improving financial well-being.
3. Education and Cognitive Development indicators – activities that produce developmental and educational outcomes for children, youth, parents/caregivers, and other adult participants.
4. Housing indicator and services – outcomes achieved by participants that access emergency housing, obtain and maintain stable housing, reduce eviction or foreclosure, or improve home’s safety.
5. Health and Social/Behavioral Development indicator – individuals who achieve outcomes such as: improving physical, mental, or behavioral health, increase household member’s interaction skills, demonstrate ability to live independently or decrease household member’s recidivism rate.
6. Civic Engagement and Community Involvement indicators – participants who increase leadership skills, social networks, and knowledge to improve conditions in the community.

Table D
COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT
ALLOCATIONS BY PROGRAM CATEGORY

Major Program Categories	FFY 2023 Expenditures (including carry forward funds)	FFY 2024 Estimated Expenditures (including carry forward funds)	FFY 2025 Proposed Expenditures (including carry forward funds)
Grants to Eligible Entities			
ACCESS Agency, Inc.	\$493,351	\$739,885	\$757,498
Alliance for Community Empowerment (ACE)	964,880	1,321,562	1,325,148 ²
Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc. (CAANH)	1,182,958	1,309,413	1,227,619 ²
Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, Inc. (CAAWC)	558,775	949,809	972,419
Community Renewal Team of Greater Hartford, Inc. (CRT)	972,406	2,169,553	2,181,785 ²
Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA)	186,277	–	–
Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc. (HRANB)	557,201	648,352	663,786
New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI)	1,094,540	1,303,480	1,334,509
TEAM, Inc.	201,907	290,566	297,483
Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA)	365,811	642,679	657,978
Formula Allocations – Total	\$6,578,106	\$9,375,299	\$9,418,225
Discretionary Programs ¹	447,890	457,172	457,172
State Agency Administration	441,286	457,173	457,172
TOTAL CSBG	\$7,467,282	\$10,289,644	\$10,332,569

Notes:

¹ CSBG discretionary resources will be utilized as follows: 80% capacity building activities; 15% other CSBG purposes; and 5% other purposes to support Connecticut’s compliance with the CSBG Act. Examples of services funded through discretionary resources include training and technical assistance for ROMA training; Center of Excellence Organizational Standards performance benchmark initiative, CAA network support; data warehouse annual maintenance, board training; conferences, meetings, annual needs assessments, etc.

² Reflects removal of one-time resources provided in FFY 2024 to assist with the transition to lower payment levels due to the changes in the distribution of low-income residents since 1996.