

Written Comments Presented to the Appropriations and Human Services Committees

*Community Services Block Grant Program
August 7, 2025*

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Department of Social Services*

Chairs Osten, Walker, Gilchrest and Lesser; Ranking Members Berthel, Nuccio, Perillo and Case; and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments in support of Governor Lamont's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 allocation plan for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

My name is Andrea Barton Reeves and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS). In addition to this written testimony, I am pleased to be able to walk through our proposed FFY 2026 allocation plan with you today. I am joined by representatives from the Department who are available to help respond to questions.

The Department is grateful for the continued support and commitment of Governor Lamont, the General Assembly, the Office of Policy and Management, our partners in the community action agencies and stakeholders throughout the state for their support and assistance with the CSBG program.

Overview - Purpose

CSBG is federally administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through its administrative agency, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services. DSS is designated as the principal state agency for the allocation and administration of the block grant within the State of Connecticut. Within DSS, the Division of Program Oversight & Grant Administration, Office of Community Services maintains responsibility for the administration and oversight of CSBG.

CSBG provides funding to states and local communities, working through a network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

The Department is proud to administer CSBG and to advocate for the importance and value of CSBG and the work of the CAAs. Through CSBG funding, the CAAs, together with the Department and

state and local partners, seek to identify, address, and eliminate barriers faced by the state’s most vulnerable households and communities in pursuit of the following community action goals:

- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security;
- Communities where low-income people live are healthy and offer economic opportunities; and
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

Estimated Federal Funding, Total Available Funding and Proposed Allocations

During FFY 2025, CSBG was funded at the national level at \$757 million. At the time of the development of this plan, federal funding for FFY 2026 has not yet been finalized. To ensure the timely development of this allocation plan, we have assumed an FFY 2026 block grant allocation of \$9,235,789, which is equal to the state’s final FFY 2025 allocation. Of the total estimated available funding for FFY 2026, this plan proposes to expend \$10,341,803, which includes carryforward of federal CSBG funding of \$1,106,014.

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 9,418,225 of the estimated FFY 2026 block grant funding be distributed through grants to CAAs in Connecticut.

The remaining 10% of the proposed FFY 2026 block grant funding, a total of \$923,578, is split evenly to support costs of administration and for discretionary projects. The Department plans to retain 5% (\$461,789) for administration and 5% (\$461,789) for discretionary projects. The funds retained for administration will be used by the Department to support necessary quality assurance and program staffing to ensure programmatic and fiscal oversight, training, and monitoring activities. The funds retained for discretionary projects have historically been 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 Community Services Block Grant Act.

PROGRAM CATEGORY	FFY 2026 PROPOSED EXPENDITURES
Grants to Eligible Entities	\$9,418,225
Discretionary Programs	\$461,789
Administration	\$461,789
TOTAL	\$10,341,803

Please note that if the final block grant allocation to Connecticut is greater or less than the estimate used to develop this plan, we are required by HHS to proportionately adjust each of the recommended allocations.

This plan continues to use the CAA base allocation methodology that was established in FFY 2024.

The FFY 2026 allocation plan also continues funding of the FFY 2022, FFY 2023, FFY 2024 and FFY 2025 COLAs. Federal block grant carryforward funds will be used to cover these increased costs.

The proposed allocation of funding is set forth below:

	FFY 2025 Estimated	FFY 2026 Proposed
Grants to Eligible Entities	\$9,713,969	\$9,418,225
ACCESS Agency, Inc.	\$757,498	\$757,498
Alliance for Community Empowerment, Inc. (ACE)	\$1,615,641	\$1,325,148
Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc. (CAANH)	\$1,227,619	\$1,227,619
Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, Inc. (CAAWC)	\$966,479	\$972,419
Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT)	\$2,181,786	\$2,181,785
Human Resource Agency of New Britain, Inc. (HRANB)	\$663,786	\$663,786
New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI)	\$1,334,509	\$1,334,509
TEAM, Inc.	\$278,804	\$297,483
Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA)	\$687,847	\$657,978
Administration	\$419,831	\$461,789
Discretionary Programs	\$461,789	\$461,789
TOTAL	\$10,595,589	\$10,341,803

Note: FFY 2025 estimated expenditures include costs incurred during FFY 2024 and paid during FFY 2025 due to the delay in the submission of required documentation to DSS to support the issuance of the payment prior to September 30, 2024. Aside from the timing of expenditures being reconciled, funding is level for all eligible entities.

Uses of CSBG Funding

CSBG funds are primarily used by CAAs to plan, organize and coordinate the delivery of services within their community; encourage members of the community to support, develop and implement innovative and effective approaches to address the causes of poverty; broaden the resource base for community-centered programs and services; and to support the CAA's core administrative expenses. CSBG is the core funding source for the state's CAA network and such funds are required to be used by the CAAs to serve or improve the well-being of individuals with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$40,187.50 for a family of four).

The CAAs use 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, water assistance and weatherization, housing and shelter, employment and training, early childhood education, financial education, case management, and food and nutrition services.

Through CSBG funding, the CAAs provide services that are designed to help low-income people to become self-sufficient and to improve living conditions for themselves and their community. Working in partnership with other service providers, businesses, faith-based organizations, and advocates, CAAs strive to strengthen families and their environments to help low-income people lead more secure lives.

Administrative funds are used by the Department to employ the staff needed to ensure the Department's ability to perform required programmatic and fiscal oversight, provide training, monitor CSBG activities, and support indirect costs and other one-time expenditures such as system upgrades.

Funds allocated for discretionary projects are used by the Department to support training for the CAAs, technical assistance, compliance monitoring, technology support, statewide projects and special initiatives to strengthen the CAA network, and the development and implementation of innovative services and programs that align with the purposes of the CSBG Act. CSBG discretionary resources have historically been used as follows: 80% capacity building activities; 15% other CSBG purposes; and 5% for CSBG Act compliance purposes. Examples of services funded through discretionary resources include training and technical assistance for Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) training, Center of Excellence Organizational Standards performance benchmark initiative, CAA network support, data warehouse annual maintenance, board training, conferences, meetings, and annual needs assessments.

Federal Requirements

As the state agency administrator of the Community Services Block Grant, DSS is obligated to ensure that federal funds are used and expended in accordance with federal requirements. DSS conducts on-site and remote program and fiscal monitoring of each CAA to verify program accomplishments and to ensure adherence to applicable federal and state statutes, rules, regulations, the CSBG community action plan, and the terms of contracts between DSS and each CAA.

The Department also performs the federally mandated CSBG triennial review, which requires DSS to conduct a full on-site review of each CAA at least once during each three-year period, as well as to assess compliance with the organizational standards put forth by HHS. The Department provides the CAA a report detailing the findings from the review and requires the CAA to develop and submit a technical assistance plan to correct any identified risk or compliance finding.

The Department continues to work closely with the CAAs to strengthen and improve the CAA network. This unique partnership represents a commitment to improve and maximize the efficiencies of Connecticut's human service delivery system to ensure those in need can obtain the services and supports they desire.

We join the Governor and the Office of Policy and Management in recommending approval of the Community Services Block Grant allocation plan for FFY 2026.