

Community Needs Assessment Narrative

CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(3)(C), 676(b)(9)

Organizational Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

1. Describe how your agency collected and included current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for your service area. (Organizational Standard 3.2)

Data was collected through three primary methods: database research, community surveying, and community meetings.

Database Research:

Database research focused on collecting quantitative data from various sources including US Census Bureau data, local data, and internal records collected within the agency. Data collected from these sources provided a platform to supplement the voices of the low-income community and to gather specific data regarding poverty throughout Merced County related to gender, age, race/ethnicity.

Community Meetings:

Community meetings were held as a way to collect qualitative data directly from low-income people and community members. The forum allowed for discussion and opinions on poverty and community needs. Through the forum additional areas of need were identified from a community level perspective that MCCA was not privy too which may have omitted it from the community needs assessment. Community meetings were held with interpreters present to make sure all community member voices were heard.

Community Surveys:

Community surveys were conducted online via Survey Monkey and were made available in print. Surveys allowed MCCA to gather a wide range of input from community members throughout Merced County. Survey answers allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data via individual responses and data collected. The community survey was made available and promoted via Facebook, for program participants, and through community meetings.

2. Describe the geographic location(s) that your agency is funded to serve with CSBG. If applicable, include a description of the various pockets, high-need areas, or neighborhoods of poverty that are being served by your agency.

CSBG funds were used to fund all MCCA services areas, which is the entire county of Merced, located in the central valley of California. Merced County is one of the most diverse county in the

Central Valley. Merced County consist of the following cities and towns: Merced, Snelling, Atwater, Winton, Livinginston, Ballico, Hilmar, Delhi, Planada, Le Grand, El Nido, Dos Palos, Los Banos, Santa Nella, Gustine, Stevenson and Cressey. Merced County continues to have a high poverty rate of 21.9% based on the census data collected in 2021 (Census.gov, Merced County, 2021), which is significantly higher than the state poverty rate of 12.3% and almost doubled the US poverty rate of 11.6% (Census.gov, 2021). A serious problem of poverty in Merced County is due to income inequity, economic and social inequality can create a cycle of poverty, where certain groups are disadvantaged in terms of access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities. The lack of financial stability for large portions of the population, which causes financial hardships and lower standards of living. People who lack access to education may struggle to find employment opportunities that pay a living wage. This can make it difficult to escape poverty. The lack of access to nutritious food, and affordable child care are also contributing factors to the increase of poverty levels in Merced County. Even environmental factors such as natural disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation can have devastating impacts on livelihoods and exacerbate poverty. Poverty levels continue to increase due to the rising prices and shortage of affordable housing units throughout Merced County because 52.24% of community members are renters (Census.gov, Merced County, 2021).

3. Indicate from which sources your agency collected and analyzed quantitative data for the CNA. (Check all that apply.) (Organizational Standard 3.3)

Federal Government/National Data Sets

- Census Bureau
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Department of Health & Human Services
- National Low-Income Housing Coalition
- National Center for Education Statistics
- Academic data resources
- Other online data resources
- Other

Local Data Sets

- Local crime statistics
- High school graduation rate
- School district school readiness
- Local employers
- Local labor market
- Childcare providers
- Public benefits usage
- County Public Health Department
- Other

California State Data Sets

- Employment Development Department
- Department of Education
- Department of Public Health
- Attorney General
- Department of Finance
- State Covid-19 Data
- Other

Surveys

- Clients
- Partners and other service providers
- General public
- Staff
- Board members
- Private sector
- Public sector
- Educational institutions

Agency Data Sets

- Client demographics
- Service data
- CSBG Annual Report
- Client satisfaction data
- Other

4. If you selected "Other" in any of the data sets in Question 3, list the additional sources.

n/a

5. Indicate the approaches your agency took to gather qualitative data for the CNA. (Check all that apply.) (Organizational Standard 3.3)

Surveys

- Clients
- Partners and other service providers
- General public
- Staff
- Board members
- Private sector
- Public sector
- Educational institutions

Interviews

- Local leaders
- Elected officials
- Partner organizations' leadership
- Board members
- New and potential partners
- Clients

Focus Groups

- Local leaders
- Elected officials
- Partner organizations' leadership
- Board members
- New and potential partners
- Clients
- Staff

 Community Forums **Asset Mapping** **Other**

6. If you selected “Other” in Question 5, please list the additional approaches your agency took to gather qualitative data.

n/a

7. Describe your agency’s analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from low-income individuals and families. (Organizational Standards 1.1, 1.2, 3.3)

The quantitative data collected was through various online resources to get a better understanding of data and statistics applicable to our local community. The following resources were used: U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Data, U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics., U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, California Department of Education, and California Department of Public Health. The US Census Bureau shows Merced County’s median income is \$58,861, in comparison to California’s median income of \$84,097. The county’s poverty level is 21.9%; in comparison it is higher than the state poverty level at 12.3% and the national poverty level average of 11.6% (US Census Bureau, 2021).

For qualitative data, we gathered information from the public and community members on what they felt was the community’s needs through surveys and community forums. All data collected were compiled together and incorporated into the needs assessment process. The data collected from our community indicated over 90% of community members indicated they live or work in Merced County. The most needed services expressed by community members are better resources for low income families such as better employment resources and opportunities, affordable housing, affordable childcare and better healthcare services. The data collected in our surveys indicates that many community members are renters, which shows that affordable housing is the most important need in Merced County.

Both the quantitative data and qualitative information collected from the community and public resources were compiled and analyzed to develop our community needs assessment.

8. Summarize the data gathered from each sector of the community listed below and detail how your agency used the information to assess needs and resources in your agency’s service area(s). Your agency must demonstrate that each sector was included in the needs assessment; A response for each sector is required. (CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(3)(C), 676(b)(9), Organizational Standard 2.2)

A. Community-based organizations

In order to access the current needs of the low-income population in Merced County, the Agency conducted an interview with representatives from a community base organization. The interview questions presented to these organizations accessed the necessary resources that low-income individuals and families need in order to obtain self-sufficiency, as well as to access the poverty conditions in the county. The interviews with these perspective organizations have given the Agency valuable information on what they perceive to be the

needs of the community. Based on the Community-based organizations interview, the needs expressed were better resources for employment, better paying jobs, more education resources and affordable housing.

Agency Interviewed: New Direction

B. Faith-based organizations

In order to access the current needs of the low-income population in Merced County, the Agency conducted an interview with representatives from a Faith base organization. The interview questions presented to these organizations accessed the necessary resources that low-income individuals and families need in order to obtain self-sufficiency, as well as to access the poverty conditions in the county. The interviews with these perspective organizations have given the Agency valuable information on what they perceive to be the needs of the community. The needs expressed were better employment opportunities, affordable housing and better access to healthcare services.

Organization Interviewed: Rescue Mission

C. Private sector (local utility companies, charitable organizations, local food banks)

In order to access the current needs of the low-income population in Merced County, the Agency conducted interviews with representatives from a community base organization. The interview questions presented to these organizations accessed the necessary resources that low-income individuals and families need in order to obtain self-sufficiency, as well as to access the poverty conditions in the county. The interviews with these private sectors have given the Agency valuable information on what they perceive to be the needs of the community. The needs expressed were for employment services, assistance with paying utility costs and affordable housing.

Organization Interviewed: Catholic Charities

D. Public sector (social services departments, state agencies)

In order to access the current needs of the low-income population in Merced County, the Agency conducted an interview with representatives from the public sector. The interview questions presented to these organizations accessed the necessary resources that low-income individuals and families need in order to obtain self-sufficiency, as well as to access the poverty conditions in the county. The interviews with these perspective organizations have given the Agency valuable information on what they perceive to be the needs of the community. The needs expressed were better resources and opportunities for job trainings and placements, nutrition, affordable education and housing.

Public Sector Interviewed: City of Los Banos

E. Educational institutions (local school districts, colleges)

In order to access the current needs of the low-income population in Merced County, the Agency conducted interviews with representatives from an Educational institution. The interview questions presented to these organizations accessed the necessary resources that low-income individuals and families need in order to obtain self-sufficiency, as well as to access the poverty conditions in the county. The interviews with these perspective organizations have given the Agency valuable information on what they perceive to be the needs of the community. The needs expressed were resources awareness, such as resources for accessing nutritious foods, better employment trainings, and better paying jobs so individuals would be willing to work.

Institution Interviewed: Merced College

9. “Causes of poverty” are the negative factors that create or foster barriers to self-sufficiency and/or reduce access to resources in communities in which low-income individuals live. After review and analysis of the data, describe the causes of poverty in your agency’s service area(s). (Organizational Standard 3.4)

Poverty is a complex issue and its causes are often interrelated and can vary depending on the specific context. Through different methods used to collect data about our community, the cause of poverty continues to rise.

Lack of affordable housing – Housing cost throughout Merced County still continues to increase significantly over the past couple of years. Poverty rates continue to be well above the state and national average in housing cost. Due to the high cost of rentals and shortage, many families are struggle with the cost of paying for their rent and are living from paycheck to paycheck. In California 78% of low income renter households are burdened by the cost of rent and there is a shortage of 998,510 rental homes that are considered affordable or available to low-income families (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021).

Lack of good paying jobs – Merced County continues to fall well below the state levels for income levels. The average median household income in Merced County is \$53,992 compared to the state average of \$84,907. Although, Merced County shows a 48.9% employment rate, the median household income still is not enough to cover the rent and other necessities needed (Census.gov, Merced County, 2021). Interviews with different sectors of the community have stressed the need for good paying jobs in Merced county and the lack of them impacting the overall quality of life for low-income individuals and families in the county increasing poverty.

Child care – Reliable and affordable childcare helps promote parental employment and family self-sufficiency, but with the lack of affordable child care, many low income families are not able to afford it. They are having to choose between caring for their children and working. Child care is a big burden for everyone in Merced County due to the high cost, especially for the low income families. Especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, many day care facilities have shut down, which makes it really hard to find a location that would have the capacity to take on more children.

Data analysis allowed us to understand more about the causes of poverty in Merced County.

■ Most Needed
 ■ Somewhat ...
 ■ Not Needed
 ■ Don't Know

| | MOST NEEDED | SOMEWHAT NEEDED | NOT NEEDED | DON'T KNOW | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Educational opportunities | 35.68% 76 | 30.05% 64 | 32.39% 69 | 1.88% 4 | 213 | 2.00 |
| Job skills | 40.85% 87 | 30.99% 66 | 24.88% 53 | 3.29% 7 | 213 | 1.91 |
| Knowledge about finances | 38.97% 83 | 37.09% 79 | 21.13% 45 | 2.82% 6 | 213 | 1.88 |
| Access to healthcare | 41.78% 89 | 24.88% 53 | 31.46% 67 | 1.88% 4 | 213 | 1.93 |
| Affordable childcare | 44.13% 94 | 15.49% 33 | 38.97% 83 | 1.41% 3 | 213 | 1.98 |
| Employment for youth | 34.27% 73 | 28.17% 60 | 33.80% 72 | 3.76% 8 | 213 | 2.07 |
| Youth programs | 41.78% 89 | 31.46% 67 | 24.41% 52 | 2.35% 5 | 213 | 1.87 |
| Programs for seniors | 33.33% 71 | 27.23% 58 | 35.21% 75 | 4.23% 9 | 213 | 2.10 |
| Health insurance | 42.72% 91 | 25.35% 54 | 30.05% 64 | 1.88% 4 | 213 | 1.91 |
| Mental health services | 46.48% 99 | 23.00% 49 | 28.64% 61 | 1.88% 4 | 213 | 1.86 |
| Substance abuse services | 23.94% 51 | 27.23% 58 | 46.95% 100 | 1.88% 4 | 213 | 2.27 |
| Assistance with utility bills | 46.01% 98 | 36.15% 77 | 17.37% 37 | 0.47% 1 | 213 | 1.72 |
| Homelessness | 31.46% 67 | 17.84% 38 | 47.42% 101 | 3.29% 7 | 213 | 2.23 |
| Affordable housing | 57.75% 123 | 14.08% 30 | 27.23% 58 | 0.94% 2 | 213 | 1.71 |
| Food Insecurity | 38.03% 81 | 38.50% 82 | 20.66% 44 | 2.82% 6 | 213 | 1.88 |

Data collected also assisted with showing the types of services community members are utilizing in our county.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--|-----------|----|
| Food Stamps | 38.24% | 91 |
| WIC | 24.37% | 58 |
| CalWORKs | 15.13% | 36 |
| Healthy Families/Medicaid/MediCal | 39.92% | 95 |
| Unemployment | 13.45% | 32 |
| Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) | 8.40% | 20 |
| Social Security Income | 21.85% | 52 |
| Subsidized Housing/Rental assistance (HUD/Section 8) | 14.71% | 35 |
| CalFresh | 24.79% | 59 |
| None of the Above | 19.33% | 46 |
| Total Respondents: 238 | | |

Homeless still continue to increase, although it was not a significant increase from previous years (Merced County PIT Count 2023).

Table 3. 2022 - 2023 Comparison of Unsheltered and Sheltered Persons by Jurisdiction

| Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas | Total Number of Unsheltered Persons | | | | Total Number of Sheltered Persons | | | | Total Number | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | 2022 | 2023 | Difference | | 2022 | 2023 | Difference | | 2022 | 2023 | Difference | |
| | # | # | # | %* | # | # | # | %* | # | # | # | %* |
| Atwater | 15 | 27 | +12 | +80 | **18 | 9 | -9 | -50 | 59 | 36 | -23 | -39 |
| Cressey | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Delhi | 0 | 3 | +3 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 3 | +3 | * |
| Dos Palos | 11 | 15 | +4 | +36 | 7 | 2 | -5 | -71 | 11 | 17 | +6 | +55 |
| El Nido | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Gustine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | -7 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0,0 |
| Hilmar | 3 | 0 | -3 | * | 0 | 2 | +2 | +200 | 3 | 2 | -1 | -33 |
| Le Grande | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | -3 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Livingston | 9 | 6 | -3 | -33 | **15 | 0 | -15 | -100 | 35 | 6 | -29 | -83 |
| Los Banos | 51 | 78 | +27 | +53 | **60 | 35 | -25 | -42 | 125 | 113 | -12 | -10 |
| Merced | 224 | 227 | +3 | +1 | **258 | 344 | +86 | +33 | 482 | 571 | +89 | +18 |
| Planada | 6 | 0 | -6 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 0 | -6 | * |
| Santa Nella | 18 | 13 | -5 | -28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 18 | 13 | -5 | -28 |
| Snelling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | -2 | -100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| South Dos Palos | 4 | 6 | +2 | +50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 6 | +2 | * |
| Stevinson | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Winton | 27 | 15 | -12 | -44 | 0 | 2 | +2 | +200 | 27 | 17 | -10 | -37 |
| County-wide*** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | -10 | -100 | 12 | 0 | -12 | -100 |
| Total: | 368 | 390 | +22 | +6 | 380 | 394 | +14 | +3.7 | 855 | 784 | -71 | -8.3 |

10. “Conditions of poverty” are the negative environmental, safety, health and/or economic conditions that may reduce investment or growth in communities where low-income individuals live. After review and analysis of the data, describe the conditions of poverty in your agency’s service area(s). (Organizational Standard 3.4)

MCCAA is committed to providing a path to self-sufficiency for individuals and families who are living in poverty. Merced county statistically continues to outpace the state and national average in poverty rates. Most families in Merced County are working, but with the cost of living on the rise and low paying jobs, the families are still living in poverty.

- Housing is too expensive continues to be a consistent factor among all surveys and interviews.
- Low paying jobs while cost of living rises.
- Lack of education skills include language barriers, computer skills, diploma, vocational skills and training continue to be a community wide issue.
- Cost related to working, such as childcare is a burden to increasing employment and skill development.
- Homelessness continue to be an issue connected to the affordability of housing.

11. Describe your agency’s approach or system for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board. (Organizational Standard 1.3)

MCCAA ensures input from program participants and low-income members from the community via customer satisfaction surveys. Surveys are made available to all program participants at time of services. Results are gathered and analyzed by ROMA staff and results are presented to the board for review at every board meeting. Survey results are attached in the appendix.

Community Needs Assessment Results

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(11)

California Government Code Section 12747(a)

State Plan 14.1a

Table 1: Needs Table

Complete the table below. Insert row(s) if additional space is needed.

| Needs Identified | Level | Agency Mission (Y/N) | Currently Addressing (Y/N) | Agency Priority (Y/N) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Housing Affordability/Cost | Community & Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |
| Utility Assistance | Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |
| Child Care | Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |
| Mental Health Services | Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |
| Health Insurance/healthcare | Community & Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |
| Food/Nutrition | Family/Individual | Y | Y | Y |

Needs Identified: List the needs identified in your most recent CNA.

Level: List the need level, i.e., community or family. Community Level: Does the issue impact the community, not just clients or potential clients of the agency? For example, a community level employment need is: There is a lack of good paying jobs in our community. Family Level: Does the need concern individuals/families who have identified things in their own life that are lacking? An example of a family level employment need would be: Individuals do not have good paying jobs.

Essential to Agency Mission: Indicate if the identified need aligns with your agency's mission.

Currently Addressing: Indicate if your agency is already addressing the identified need.

Agency Priority: Indicate if the identified need will be addressed either directly or indirectly.

Table 2: Priority Ranking Table

List all needs identified as an agency priority in Table 1. Insert row(s) if additional space is needed.

| Agency Priorities | Description of programs, services, activities | Indicator(s) or Service(s) Category | Why is the need a priority? |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Housing Affordability | Provide permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals with disabilities for 12 Individuals over a one year period. Lead service provider on a 90 unit housing complex designated for homeless. | FNPI 4b | Having affordable housing is the key to reducing poverty and increase economic mobility. It helps reduce stress, toxins and infectious diseases which leads to improvement to both physical and mental health. |
| 2. Child Care | Provide affordable child education services through our child development programs located throughout Merced county for working parents. Serving over 400 individuals over a one year period. | FNPI 2a | Child care allows working parents to focus on increasing work productivity or pursuing further education. |
| 3. Food Nutrition | Provide three meals per day at the D-Street Shelter serving over 40,000 meals per year. Food benefits and education through WIC serving over 18,000 individuals per year. | FNPI 5a | Having good nutrition is a critical part of health. It helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases leading to overall health and well-being. |
| 4. Utility Assistance | Alleviate the burden of housing cost through utility assistance through LIHEAP and weatherization up to 9,500 individuals over a one year period. | FNPI4h | Utilities provide home lighting, heating, clean water and proper sanitation, which ensures families a comfortable and livable space. |
| 5. Health Insurance/healthcare | Enhanced Care Management provides support to low-income | FNPI 5b | Case managers help low-income members navigate the healthcare system improving |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------|---|
| | members to navigate the healthcare system and get access to health insurance and healthcare. Partner with Human Services Agency to provide enrollments into Medi-Cal. | | health outcomes. Health insurance allow an individual access to medical care at no cost or at a low cost. Relieves the worry of having to pay for high medical bills. |
| 6. Mental Health Services | Partner with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services to provide mental health services | FNPI 5c | Mental Health services reduces the risk of chronic diseases related to stress, anxiety and substance abuse. Services can help improve the outlook for people who may feel hopeless or lost. |

Agency Priorities: Rank your agency’s planned programs, services and activities to address the needs identified in Table 1 as agency priorities.

Description of programs, services, activities: Briefly describe the program, services or activities that your agency will provide to address the need. Identify the number of clients to be served or the number of units offered, including timeframes for each.

Indicator/Service Category: List the indicator(s) (CNPI, FNPI) or service(s) (SRV) that will be reported in CSBG Annual Report.

Why is this need a priority: Provide a brief explanation about why this need has been identified as a priority. Connect the need with the data. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A))

Part II: Community Action Plan

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(11)

California Government Code Sections 12745(e), 12747(a)

California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 11, Chapter 1, Sections 100651 and 100655

Vision and Mission Statement

1. Provide your agency's Vision Statement.

To eliminate poverty in Merced County through individual and organizational dedication, collaboration, and innovation.

2. Provide your agency's Mission Statement.

To serve, advocate, and collaborate for those in need by developing innovative strategies for self-empowerment.

Tripartite Board of Directors

CSBG Act Sections 676B(a) and (b); 676(b)(10)

California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 11, Chapter 1, Section 100605

1. Describe your agency's procedures under which a low-income individual, community organization, religious organization, or representative of low-income individuals that considers its organization or low-income individuals to be inadequately represented on your agency's board to petition for adequate representation. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(10))

The Merced County Community Action Board (MCCAB) is a tripartite body that comprised of 10 members. They represent the low-income, public and private sectors of the community. Individuals seeking to represent the low-income sector must submit a letter of interest addressed to the Board Chairperson, three personal references, and a petition with 20 signatures from low-income residents from their area. If multiple representatives come forth with a petition the MCCAB will appoint a representative from the qualified applicants or hold an election. Community or Faith Based Organizations requesting representation in the private sector are considered for inclusion on the Board as long as there are no conflicts of interest. Community organizations or low-income representative groups that feel the board is inadequately represented, may petition the board for representation. When vacancies occur MCCAB advertises through public media and other outlets to ensure that those wishing to be on the board have an opportunity to do so.

Service Delivery System

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A)

State Plan 14.3

1. Describe your agency's service delivery system. Include a description of your client intake process or system and specify whether services are delivered via direct services or subcontractors, or a combination of both. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A), State Plan 14.3)

MCCAA's delivery system is client focused driven by information gathered from our community needs assessment. Clients are able to provide feedback and have their voices heard through the community needs assessment, customer satisfaction surveys, and at various group meetings when possible. Services are provided from MCCAA directly to the clients in collaboration with community partners when appropriate. Front desk staff are trained on various agency programs and can refer clients to the appropriate contact person for each program to streamline access to services as much as possible. Client intakes are completed for all programs based off of program requirements and client need. Intake data is collected and input into various software platforms. Reports produced from the different platforms are input into one report for a better understanding of who is being served by MCCAA programs. For needs MCCAA is unable to fulfill referrals are made to partner organizations in the community.

2. List your agency's proposed programs/services/activities that will be funded by CSBG. Include a brief explanation as to why these were chosen and how they relate to the CNA. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A), State Plan)

D- Street Shelter: D-Street Shelter is a 50 bed facility for both male and female adults. We provide three meals per day for clients staying at the shelter as well as case management services. We bundle our services with New Directions coordinating our beds at the shelter while clients, placed into shelter beds work to obtain a source of income and other requirements to sustain permanent housing.

WIC (Women, Infants & Children) Supplemental & Nutrition Food Program: WIC helps pregnant women, new mothers, and children under 5, eat well, stay healthy, and be active. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). MCCAA has WIC sites located throughout Merced and Mariposa counties providing clients with supplemental foods, health care referrals, breastfeeding support, and nutrition education. We are the only provider of this service in our area.

Child Development: The Merced County Community Action Agency has five State-funded preschool sites within Merced County. The program is funded by the California Department of Education (CDE). Offering full and part day, year-round, subsidized preschool programs for qualifying children from 3-5 years of age who are not yet eligible for kindergarten. Serving approximately 400 children annually. We are the only provider of this service in our area.

Weatherization: These services are intended to reduce energy consumption in homes through the replacement of inefficient appliances (when appropriate) and minor repairs, making the home more

energy efficient, lowering monthly utility bills, and providing long-term savings. Repair and replacement of exterior doors and windows, water heaters, stoves, furnaces and coolers, refrigerators, and microwaves. Installation of water restrictor-aerators, energy-sipping CFL's, door weather-stripping, attic and subfloor insulation, carbon monoxide detectors, sealing and patching of small cracks and holes, and other minor repairs which help to conserve energy. The agency also installs no-cost solar systems on qualifying homes in order to provide long-term solutions to energy burdens. We are the only provider of this service in our area.

Utility Assistance: Through LIHEAP, MCCA is able to assist eligible households with payments or purchases of electricity, propane, natural gas, heating oil, or firewood. In addition to the credit on their utility bill, clients will also receive valuable information about energy conservation and practical tips on how to save energy and keep your utility bill at a manageable level. Serving over 4,600 families annually. The two types of assistance available are: 1. Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) – provides a direct payment to an eligible client's utility bill to help offset the cost of heating or cooling their home. 2. Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) – provides assistance to low-income households that are in a crisis situation. Eligibility for ECIP is the same as it is for HEAP except a Shut Off Notice from the Utility Company must have been received by the client prior to application. We attempt to bundle services with different providers such as Health and Services Agency, as well as other non-profits that provide this service as well.

Supportive Housing: An 8-unit apartment complex providing affordable housing for chronically homeless individuals facing mental health issues. These services are bundled with Merced County Behavior Health. While we provide the housing component, Merced County Behavior Health provides mental health services to clients in housing to assist them in maintaining their housing.

HOPWA Program (Housing Opportunities for People with A.I.D.S.): This program is for short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance. Providing emergency homeless prevention funding intended to assist persons with HIV/AIDS who cannot meet their monthly housing expenses. We bundle these services with the department of public health. Public health provides more intensive case management services as well as transportation assistance to help the clients keep their appointments with their physical health provider.

Enhanced Care Management: Enhanced care management (ECM) is a type of care coordination provided by MCCA and new Med-Cal benefit that provides additional support to patients with complex health needs. ECM services provided by MCCA include the following:

- Care coordination: ECM providers work with patients and their healthcare providers to ensure that they are getting the care they need. This may include scheduling appointments, coordinating referrals, and ensuring that patients have access to medications and other resources.
- Health education: ECM providers can provide patients with education about their health conditions and how to manage them. This can help patients make better decisions about their

care and improve their overall health outcomes.

- Behavioral health support: ECM providers can provide support for patients with mental health or substance use disorders. This can help patients get the treatment they need and improve their overall health and well-being.
- Social support: ECM providers can connect patients with social services that can help them meet their basic needs, such as food, housing, and transportation. This can help patients reduce stress and improve their overall health.

All of these programs provide needed services identified in the community needs assessment. Housing, Mental Health services and affordable childcare were identified as priority needs in the community.

Linkages and Funding Coordination

CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(1)(B) and (C); (3)(B), (C) and (D); 676(b)(4), (5), (6), and (9)

California Government Code Sections 12747, 12760

Organizational Standards 2.1, 2.4

State Plan 9.3a, 9.3b, 9.4b, 9.6, 9.7, 14.1b, 14.1c, 14.3d, 14.4

1. Describe how your agency coordinates funding with other providers in your service area. If there is a formalized coalition of social service providers in your service area, list the coalition(s) by name and methods used to coordinate services/funding. (CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(1)(C), 676(b)(3)(C); Organizational Standard 2.1; State Plan 14.1c, 9.6, 9.7)

Our agency coordinates funding in the community through the Merced City and County Continuum of Care. The services and funding are coordinated through that body. The method used to coordinate services is through a governing board that determines how to utilize funding coming into our community and how to coordinate those funds. Through this body all agencies coordinate their funding together to make the greatest impact possible to address homelessness in the community.

Below is a list of participants:

- ACE Overcomers of Merced County
- Atwater Police Department
- Bethel Community Church
- Catholic Charities
- City of Merced
- Central California Alliance for Health
- Golden Valley Health Center
- Healthy House Merced
- Jacobs Well Ministry
- Livingston Community Health Clinic
- Los Banos Police Department
- MC veterans services
- Merced County District Attorney's Office
- Merced County Rescue Mission
- Merced County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services
- Merced County Human Services Agency
- Merced County In Home Supportive Services

- Merced Police Department
- San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV)
- Sierra Saving Grace
- Turning Point- CARE program
- Turning Point Community Programs (New Direction)
- UC Merced
- Valley Crisis

2. Provide information on any memorandums of understanding and/or service agreements your agency has with other entities regarding coordination of services/funding. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(9), Organizational Standard 2.1; State Plan 14.1c, 9.6, 9.7)

MCCAA currently has a service agreement with Merced County to operate a 24/7, 50 bed homeless shelter. Part of the agreement is to coordinate our services with New Directions which is a homeless drop-in engagement center. The agreement is for us to provide shelter for their clients while they assist them with obtaining a source of income and other requirements needed to sustain permanent housing.

MCCAA has an agreement with the Merced City School District to operate a summer lunch program for children to help address food insecurity caused by school lunches not being available due to summer break. In the agreement MCCAA is responsible for preparing and delivery of the meals which on average is around 30 meals per day while offering a variety of educational and enrichment activities for youth.

MCCAA has an agreement with the California Department of Social Services and Catholic Charities. The purpose of this agreement is to provide direct cash payments to immigrant families impacted by the 2022-2023 storms.

MCCAA has a service agreement with the 1213 V Street Project to provide supportive services alongside Behavioral Health Recover Services. The 1213 Project is a 90 unit motel that has been converted to permanent housing for homeless individuals. Responsibilities include linking members to healthcare services, mental health services, employment service providers, and resolve any tenant issues that may result in eviction.

Outside of formal agreements MCCAA has a strong network and collaborates with community partners throughout Merced County. Through this network MCCAA is able to strengthen service delivery and outcomes for low-income individuals and families in need.

3. Describe how your agency ensures delivery of services to low-income individuals while avoiding duplication of services in the service area(s). (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(5), State Plan 9.3a, California Government Code 12760)

MCCAA is able to provide services to low-income individuals while avoiding duplication of services in the following ways.

Data Sharing – MCCAA is currently the HMIS administrator and Coordinated Entry System administrator. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a database that all local homeless service providers utilize. In this system staff can see what programs individuals are working with and the services they are receiving which aids in avoiding duplication of services.

Partnerships and Coordination - MCCAA has strong partnerships in the community. Through these partnerships MCCAA has a good understanding of various programs and services offered throughout Merced County. Having a strong partnership with community partners allows for coordination of services. MCCAA meets weekly with partner agencies in the Merced County Continuum of Care to discuss community resources and coordinate services and resources for individuals and families.

Referral System – MCCAA provides direct referrals to community partners for any needs that are not able to be met by internal services or programs to ensure that individuals are able to get the services that they need.

4. Describe how your agency will leverage other funding sources and increase programmatic and/or organizational capacity. (California Government Code Section 12747)

MCCAA leverages funding by utilizing different funding sources offered at local, state, and federal levels to support the services provided while looking to identify potential funding sources to grow organization capacity.

MCCAA utilizes volunteers to assist with covering food cost at the shelter. Currently our shelter receives no funding for purchasing food yet is open 24/7 providing over 40,000 meals per year. Volunteers from the community purchase the food, prep the meals, and serve the food to the clients. The estimated cost of savings for these meals is around \$200,000 annually.

Recently MCCAA started providing Enhanced Care Management Services. For every client enrolled the agency is reimbursed at a per member per month rate. Through this program the

funding brought in is discretionary and can be utilized to support other needs of the agency and allow for program expansion and capacity building. This funding was leveraged to hire a compliance manager to help monitor contracts, write grants, and engage in social media activity.

5. Describe your agency's contingency plan for potential funding reductions. (California Government Code Section 12747)

In the event of reduced funding, MCCA will continue to offer services, but just on a smaller scale. Merced County Community Action Agency has developed alternatives to ensure the maintenance of service to low-income population of Merced County. We will continue to seek avenues to supplement and expand CSBG funded activities with other sources such as private foundations, government contracts, local fund raising, and agency economic development.

- Where possible, decrease services provided at each site and find other methods to maintain the same level of service. If funding reductions affect the level of service, then reduce the level to a non-crisis or emergency service programs.
- Seek donated space or reduced cost space at sites to further minimize the overhead costs.
- Work with communities to increase volunteer staffing and operations support.
- Selectively eliminate sites in a priority order based on services provided, number of persons served, and ability to provide services elsewhere.
- Seek to pool and coordinate resources and funding with other service providers.
- Continue to seek funding that will augment and/or replace CSBG funding.
- Explore different methods of reducing administrative overhead while maintaining required administrative support services.

We will continue to seek avenues to supplement and expand CSBG funded activities with other sources such as private foundations, government contracts, local fundraising, and agency economic development.

6. Describe how your agency documents the number of volunteers and hours mobilized to support your activities. (Organizational Standard 2.4)

Volunteer information and hours are collected at each site where volunteers are present. Each site submits monthly reports to the CSBG Coordinator who compiles the information into a spreadsheet for tracking and reporting. All of this information is submitted in the CSBG annual report. Volunteer numbers and hours are provided to the governing board for review at every board meeting.

7. Describe how your agency will address the needs of youth in low-income communities through youth development programs and promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(1)(B), State Plan 14.1b)

n/a

8. Describe how your agency will promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community-based youth development programs such as the establishment of violence-free zones, youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, entrepreneurship programs, after after-school childcare. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(1)(B), State Plan 14.1b)

n/a

9. Describe the coordination of employment and training activities as defined in Section 3 of the Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act [29 U.S.C. 3102]. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(5); State Plan 9.4b)

MCCAA partners with different community programs that provide employment services, such as Worknet.

10. Describe how your agency will provide emergency supplies and services, nutritious foods, and related services, as may be necessary, to counteract conditions of starvation and malnutrition among low-income individuals. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(4), State Plan 14.4)

MCCAA operates a 24/7, 60 beds, year round shelter for men and women over the age of 18 who are homeless. Individuals residing at the shelter receives 3 meals per day from a church, service club, or various community members. Without providing these 3 meals per day, individuals would have a difficult time combatting malnutrition and starvation. MCCAA staff will also assist clients with applying for CalFresh or connect clients to other county and non-profit agencies that can help provide nutritious foods and related services to counteract conditions of starvation and malnutrition among low-income individuals and families.

11. Describe how your agency coordinates with other antipoverty programs in your area, including the emergency energy crisis intervention programs under Title XXVI, relating to low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP) that are conducted in the community. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(6))

MCCAA does outreach in Merced County at various community events, providing informational flyers and brochures about services that we provide to the community. We also ensure that our

community partners have program information and flyers about our services. Routinely community partners such as Human Services Agency, Catholic Charities, Love, Inc., the Senior Center, Public Health, Salvation Army, various local churches and other local community based partners make referrals to our programs. When a client comes to MCCA, staff will determine eligibility and assist clients with LIHEAP application.

12. Describe how your agency coordinates services with your local LIHEAP service provider?

MCCA provides LIHEAP services to the community throughout Merced County. Through LIHEAP, MCCA is able to assist eligible households with payments or purchases of electricity, propane, natural gas, heating oil, or firewood. In addition to the credit on their utility bill, clients will also receive valuable information about energy conservation and practical tips on how to save energy and keep their utility bill at a manageable level. Serving over 4,600 families annually. The two types of assistance available are:

1. Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) - provides a direct payment to an eligible client's utility bill to help offset the cost of heating or cooling their home.
2. Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) - provides assistance to low-income households that are in a crisis situation. Eligibility for ECIP is the same as it is for HEAP except a Shut Off Notice from the Utility Company must have been received by the client prior to application. We attempt to bundle services with different providers such as Health and Services Agency, as well as other non-profits that provide this service as well.

13. Describe how your agency will use funds to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives, which may include fatherhood and other initiatives, with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(D), State Plan 14.3d)

MCCA refers new fathers to our WIC Program and the All Dads Matter Program offered by Merced County Human Services Agency. The agency recognizes the importance that good fatherhood has for a child's development and support the All Dads Matter Program by providing classroom space free of charge. Other programs that help strengthens families and encourages parental responsibilities are the WIC and Early Learning Preschool Programs. These programs assist parents and mothers-to-be with learning the appropriate methods to nurture their children as well as to set and achieve personal goals that increase the overall family well-being. Parents and mothers-to-be who are enrolled in the WIC Program receive nutritional, prenatal counseling, and parenting skills that enhance positive family growth. The interactive curriculum that the Early Learning Preschool Program provides to the children prepares them to successfully transition into kindergarten or first grade.

14. Describe how your agency will develop linkages to fill identified gaps in the services, through the provision of information, referrals, case management, and follow-up consultations. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(B), State Plan 9.3b)

To identify the gaps in services, MCCAA collaborates extensively with service organizations that provide services to low-income residents. MCCAA periodically reviews data from the Community Needs Assessment to identify gaps in services and opportunities, to establish partnerships, and close service gaps. The Agency ensures that all of its partners and community-based organizations are aware of each other's services and work together to better serve Merced County residents. MCCAA will continue to establish linkages between community partners to ensure that low-income families and individuals are provided with the services they need to move towards self-sufficiency. When there are unmet needs of the low income resident it will be handled through information and referral, case management, and follow-up consultations.

Monitoring

CSBG Act Section 678D(a)(1)(A) and (B)

1. Describe how your agency's monitoring activities are related to establishing and maintaining the integrity of the CSBG program. Include your process for maintaining high standards of program and fiscal performance.

A variety of traditional methods are currently employed to evaluate and monitor program effectiveness and performance. Merced County Community Action Agency evaluates the success of programs and services through, observation, monitoring, self-assessments, customer satisfactory surveys, interviews, and expenditure reports. Monitoring is a routine part of the agency's operations, accomplished through a multi-layered set of methods implemented by Merced County Community Action Agency programs. Additional staff has been hired to maintain high standards of program and fiscal performance.

The following monitoring activities are carried out to ensure the integrity of the CSBG Program:

- Evaluate program activities and services in relation to identified needs of the low-income population.
- Assess staff progress in providing services and achieving Agency goals and objectives.
- Assess planned service level and expenditures against actual goals, accomplishments, and expenditures on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the goals and objectives in relation to the Agency's mission.
- Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the programs and services based on cost per person/activity.
- Audit of expenditures to determine appropriateness of costs in accordance with contract guidelines.

2. If your agency utilizes subcontractors, please describe your process for monitoring the subcontractors. Include the frequency, type of monitoring, i.e., onsite, desk review, or both, follow-up on corrective action, and issuance of formal monitoring reports.

n/a

Data Analysis, Evaluation, and ROMA Application

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12)

Organizational Standards 4.2, 4.3

1. Describe your agency's method for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and services. Include information about the types of measurement tools, the data sources and collection procedures, and the frequency of data collection and reporting. (Organizational Standard 4.3)

Merced County Community Action Agency Program Directors evaluate the progress of their program(s) on a periodic basis in order to ensure that the annual objectives are met. The Compliance Manager conducts program analysis, review data and statistics for all programs, and presents it to the Directors. The directors, then submit a monthly program report to be reviewed by the Executive Director and the Community Action Board to track progress of meeting annual objectives and program effectiveness. This ensures that programs are performing effectively, responding to change if needed, and addressing the needs of the community.

2. Applying the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation, describe one change your agency made to improve low-income individuals' and families' capacity for self-sufficiency. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12), Organizational Standard 4.2)

MCCAA works hard to ensure that the programs we administer in our community are in close alignment with our mission, "To serve, advocate, and collaborate for those in need by developing innovative strategies for self-empowerment." MCCAA is aware of the necessary changes that the county must undergo in order to improve low-income individuals and families capacity for self-sufficiency. One change MCCAA has made in our agency is opening additional supportive housing units that are affordable for homeless individuals and families.

Merced County was significantly impacted by COVID-19 and the recent flooding's in Merced County, which had cause many families to lose their job and had a loss of income. The loss of income put a lot of low-income families at risk of homelessness. One change that our agency made was providing the option of online courses for our WIC participates, who are not able to attend in-person class. As individuals and families slowly return to work and are not able to attend classes in-person, due to the office hours, our agency continued to provide online classes to help improve low-income individuals and families capacity for self-sufficiency.

3. Applying the full ROMA cycle, describe one change your agency facilitated to help revitalize the low-income communities in your agency's service area(s). (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12), Organizational Standard 4.2)

Merced County was significantly impacted by COVID-19. Job loss and loss of income were prevalent throughout the county. The loss of income and employment put a lot of low-income families at-risk of homelessness. Through assessing the needs of the community we utilized

discretionary funds to implement a rental assistance program. MCCA was granted the Enhance Care Management and Community Support Program to provide case management, connecting Housing and Healthcare services to assist homeless individuals and families.

MCCA also worked with public health and the county to obtain rapid COVID-19 test kits for the homeless in the community. Having access to the rapid test kits, we were able to test a homeless client and bring them into the MCCA' D Street Shelter, instead of having to wait a week for the test results. Having rapid testing in the community also assisted in preventing the spread of COVID in the community by identifying hotspots in different encampments and in the congregate shelters.

Response and Community Awareness

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. Does your agency have Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs in place that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations?

Yes

No

2. If yes, please describe.

MCCAA works hard at ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion programs are in place. Cultural diversity enriches the work environment and makes us stronger as a team. MCCAA hires individuals from different backgrounds and providing opportunities for professional development, trainings and growth opportunities. DEI in our agency to be more inclusive of different ideas, cultures and lifestyles. It allows us to serve, advocate and collaborate for those in need by developing innovative strategies for self-empowerment.

Disaster Preparedness

1. Does your agency have a disaster plan in place that includes strategies on how to remain operational and continue providing services to low-income individuals and families during and following a disaster? The term disaster is used in broad terms including, but not limited to, a natural disaster, pandemic, etc.

Yes

No

2. If yes, when was the disaster plan last updated?

n/a

3. Briefly describe your agency's main strategies to remain operational during and after a disaster.

Although MCCAA does not have a disaster plan, our agency continues to remain open for all services, while taking the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of our staff and the community. To ensure the safety of our staff, we require all staff to follow the required social distancing and other preventative actions to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Our office remains open and offered services over the phone and online for the community needs, such as our WIC program. During the recent flooding's in Merced County, MCCAA coordinated with FEMA in providing assistance with applications for utility assistance, housing assistance, medical support

and home weatherization. MCAA also assisted with collection and distributing non-perishable foods and hygiene supplies to flood victims.