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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Partners, Participants and Friends,

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 Annual Report for Northwest Community Action, Inc. As I enter into my second year as Executive Director, I am thankful to the Board of Directors for their commitment to the mission of Community Action and their willingness to engage, support, and live that mission.

As you review the following pages, be mindful that the programs are effective because of the dedicated staff who provide a multitude of services to assist low-income people in Roseau, Kittson, Marshall and Lake of the Woods Counties. I am thankful for their commitment, resilience, and empathy toward others in challenging times.

Our agency continues to collaborate with a wide variety of community partners to meet the needs of low-income children, families, and individuals. I am thankful for our partnerships with county social service centers, county boards, school districts, childcare providers, public health, energy vendors, contractors, local businesses, faith communities, and neighboring Community Action agencies.

Thank you to the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity for managing the federal Community Service Block Grant and the additional state funded Minnesota Community Action Grant that make us a Community Action Agency. These flexible funds have helped us to fill in the gaps that other sources of funding are not able to fill.

Thank you to the private foundations such as the Otto Bremer Trust and Northwest Minnesota Foundation that have provided grant funding and share our mission. Thank you also to the many private individuals and businesses that help us to meet the needs of the individuals and families that we serve through their generous donations.

At the heart of all we do, we remember the Promise of Community Action: "Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other."

Check out our new website at www.nwcaa.org. Please stop in or reach out to me any time to discuss the services and mission of NWCA at 218-528-3258 Ext. 117 or smillner@nwcaa.org.

Sincerely,

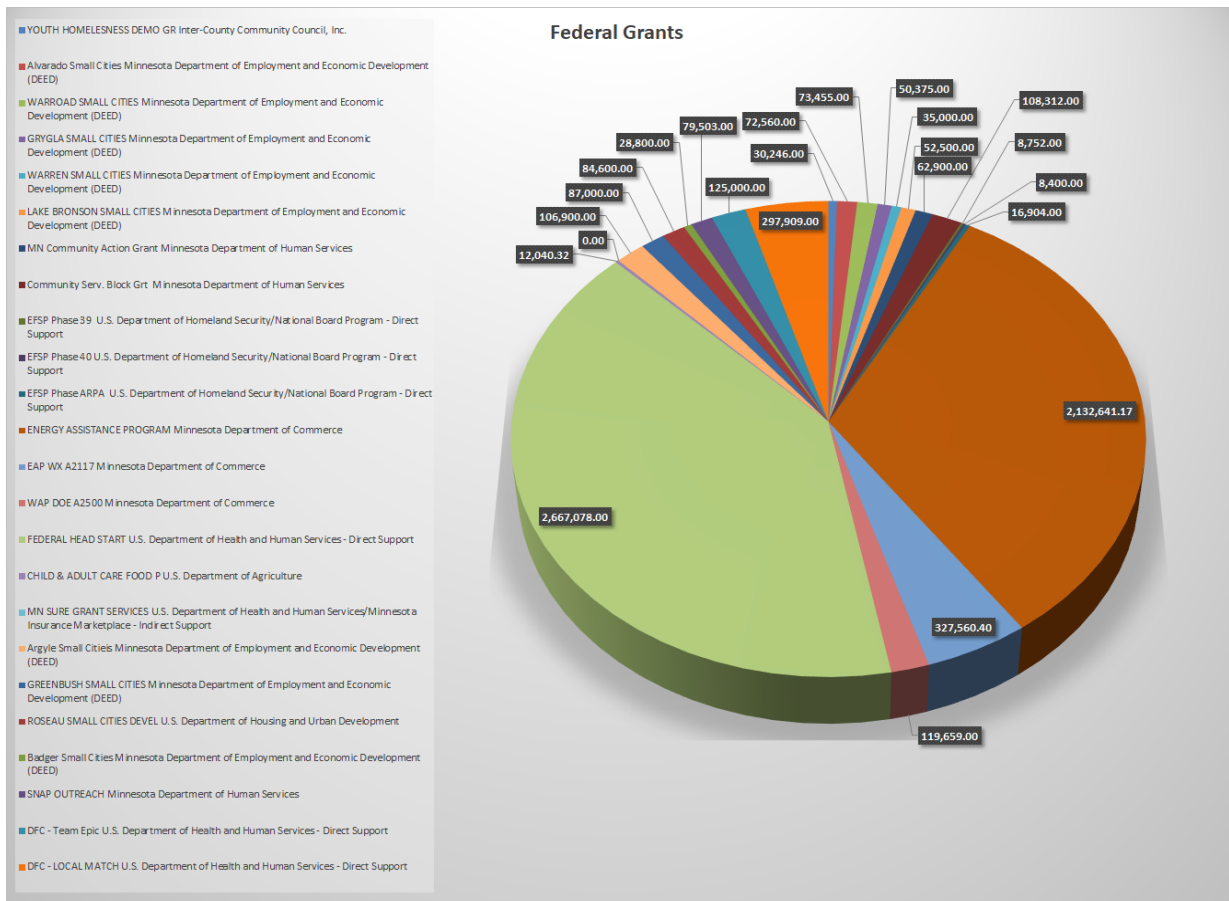
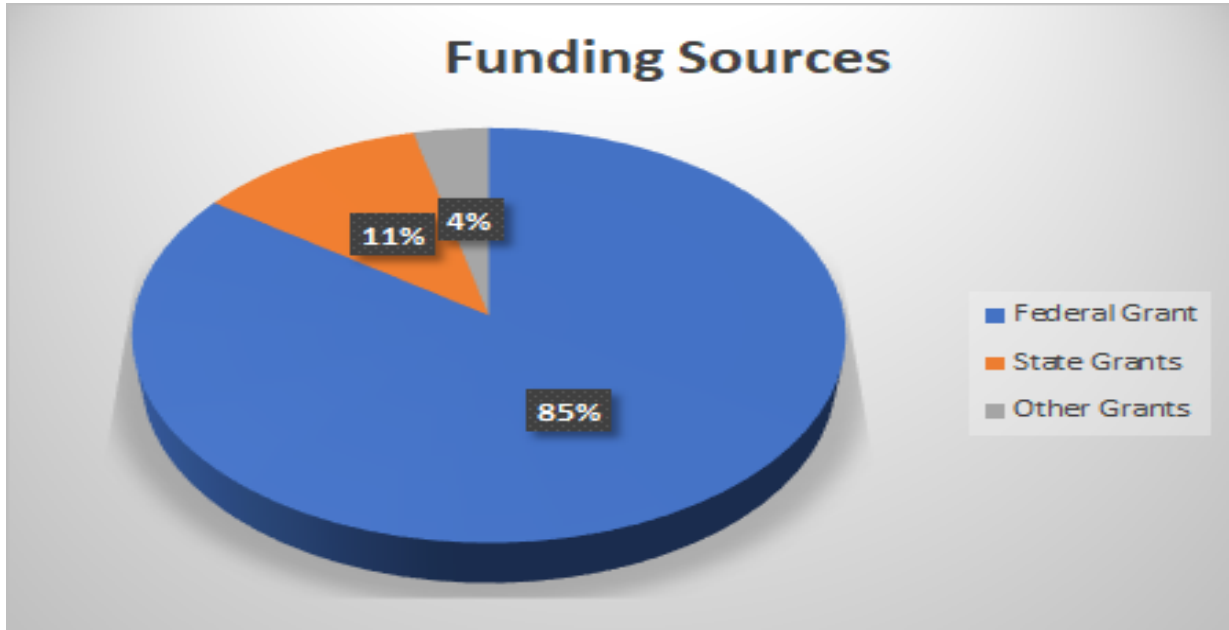


Sharon Millner, Executive Director

FISCAL

Fiscal/ Human Resources Director- Lonnie Vatnsdal

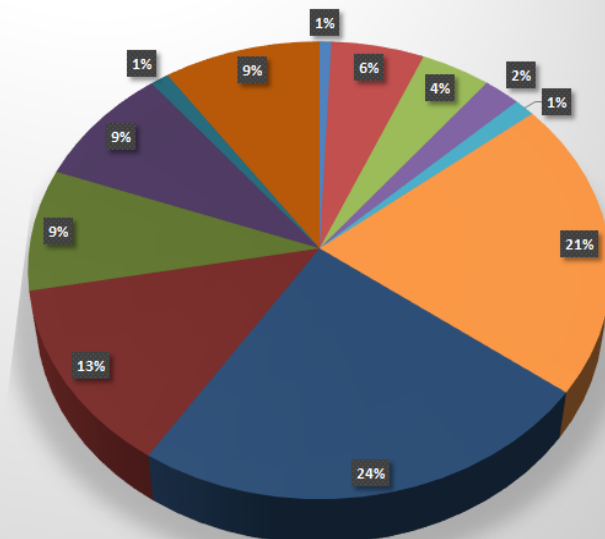
Funding For 2022-2023



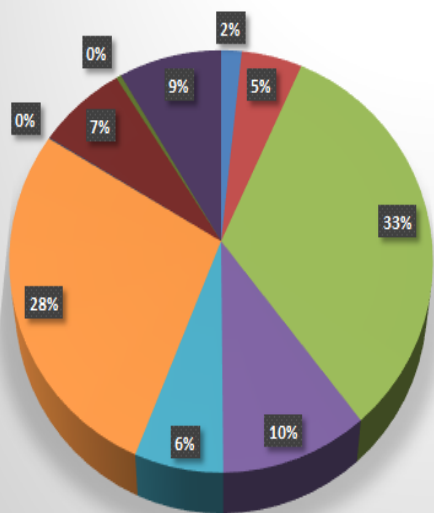
FISCAL

State Grants

- FAIM COACHING DOLLARS Minnesota
- FAMILY HOMELESS PREVENTION Minnesota Housing Finance Agency
- LONG TERM HOMELESS Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.
- OEO - BerganKDV Grant Minnesota Department of Human Services
- PROPANE A2501 Minnesota Department of Commerce
- PATHWAY II EARLY LEARNING Minnesota Department of Education
- MN HEAD START Minnesota Department of Education
- MNSURE OUTREACH & ENROLLMENT Minnesota Insurance Marketplace
- YOUTH INTERVENTION PROGRAM Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- YIP - LOCAL MATCH Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- EMERGENCY DISASTER RELIEF
- TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM Minnesota Department of Human Services



Other Grants



- MN Engrt Shelter & Housing NMF - Jane Lawrenz
- LOW M url Escrow Account Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading
- JAIL TRANSITION COORDINATION Roseau County
- HUB Implementation Projec Northwest Minnesota Foundation
- JUVENILE TRACKER TEEN JOURNEY Roseau County
- BLUE PLUS-VEHICLE REPAIR BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD - MINNESOTA
- REACH OUT FOR WARMTH DONATIONS
- NORTH STAR ELECTRIC NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
- CIP - City of Baudette CITY OF BAUDETTE
- TEAM EPIC Roseau County

FISCAL

NORTHWEST COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. AND SUBSIDIARY
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2022

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
Public support, revenue, and reclassifications:			
Grants and contracts	\$ -	\$ 7,410,232	\$ 7,410,232
Program income	82,111	6,736	88,847
Contributions	43,592	-	43,592
Interest income	9	1,037	1,046
Net assets released from restrictions:			
Satisfaction of grant restrictions	<u>7,410,232</u>	<u>(7,410,232)</u>	<u>-</u>
 Total revenues	 7,535,944	 7,773	 7,543,717
Expenses:			
Personnel	3,337,513	-	3,337,513
Travel	105,400	-	105,400
Supplies	350,533	-	350,533
Direct Assistance	3,363,022	-	3,363,022
Maintenance of equipment	70,171	-	70,171
Depreciation	105,655	-	105,655
Other	<u>209,615</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>209,615</u>
 Total expenses	 7,541,909	 -	 7,541,909
 Change in net assets	 (5,965)	 7,773	 1,808
Net Assets - August 31, 2021	<u>253,326</u>	<u>1,031,505</u>	<u>1,284,831</u>
Net Assets - August 31, 2022	<u>\$ 247,361</u>	<u>\$ 1,039,278</u>	<u>\$ 1,286,639</u>

HEADSTART & EARLY HEADSTART

Program Director—Beth Budziszewski



Northwest Community Action (NWCA) provides comprehensive Head Start services to 240 children and their families in our four-county service area: Lake of the Woods, Roseau, Marshall and Kittson county. A total of 155 families were served, including children with special needs and those needing individualized series. These services were provided in collaboration with their school districts. Head Start services include home visits and centers located in area schools providing nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks. Additional services include medical screenings done with each county's nursing service, oral health screenings, and follow-up work. Head Start may help with payment if the child is not covered by MA, MN Care, or other private insurance.

NWCA Head Start and Early Head Start promote parents as their child's first, and most important teacher. Head Start parents have many opportunities to participate in educational activities in their individual service area. Parents participated in Policy Council both in person and virtually, attended local parent meetings, and worked with a teacher and their child on home visits. Additionally, conferences and home visits are held with each family throughout the year.

Five Year Program Goals

1. Northwest Community Action, Inc. (NWCA) Head Start supports children and families to develop skills to enhance their nutrition, health and well-being.
2. NWCA Head Start will support parents as lifetime learners and educators.
3. Children enrolled in NWCA Head Start will gain skills needed to transition successfully to their next developmentally appropriate stage.

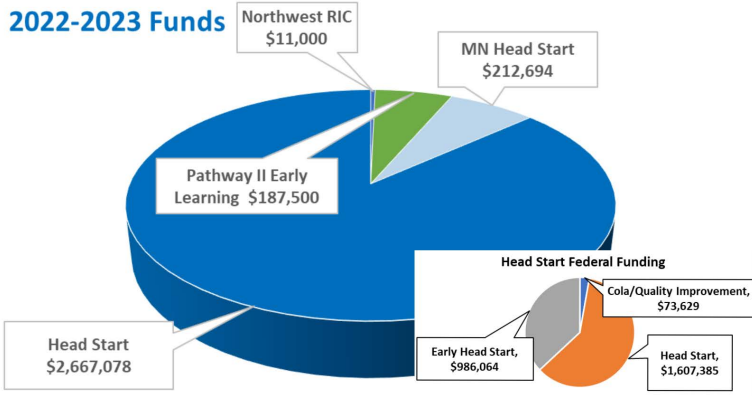
Northwest Community Action, Inc. continues to provide Head Start services to families in Marshall, Roseau, Kittson, and Lake of the Woods counties in the Northwestern corner of Minnesota. Our service area is bounded on the west by North Dakota and on the north by Manitoba and Ontario. This service area covers 6,500 square miles, in which over 32,000 people reside. The communities' range in size from 50 to 2600 people. Our entire service area is designated Medically Under-served, and 2 of our classrooms are located in areas of less than 1,000 individuals, and 50 percent of the families are eligible due to income guidelines.

Policy Council

Parents are encouraged to be involved through parent committee meetings and Policy Council. This year's Policy Council is made up of 9 Head Start and Early Head Start elected parents who lead and make decisions about our program. The Policy Council participates meetings with program management to evaluate, provide insight, encouragement and community engagement. Our Policy Council members are valuable members of our program and our gratitude for their volunteer time and talents are appreciated.

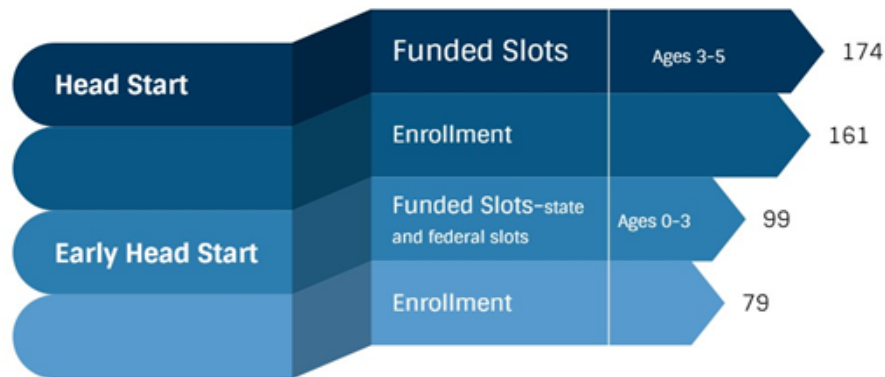
HEADSTART & EARLY HEADSTART

Head Start 2022-2023 Funds

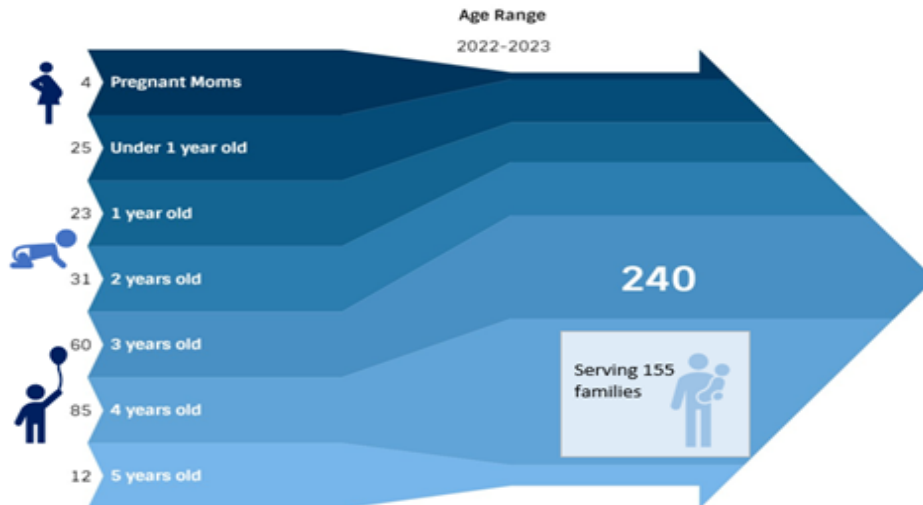


Head Start is funded with federal and state dollars. Our most recent financial audit was completed August 15, 2023. NWCA has implemented the recommendations noted in our audit.

2022-2023 Head Start Enrollment



Head Start



HEADSTART & EARLY HEADSTART



Health

Our health-related services are well-received with staff and community professionals collaborating to complete health and developmental screenings. During the screenings, children are assessed on dental, vision and hearing as well as developmental screening test designed to identify young children who need further testing or who need help with academic skills. Children have received early identification of hearing, dental and vision needs.

School Readiness

NWCA Head Start promotes parents as their child's first, and most important teacher. Head Start parents have many opportunities to participate in educational activities in their individual service area. Parents participated in Policy Council and with knowledge, attendance and participation growing with each meeting. Parents attend local parent meetings, work their teacher and their child on home visits. Additionally, 4 conferences are held with each family throughout the year. In Early Head Start, a weekly (46 total) home visits of 1.5 hours is done with each enrolled child and a parent. The Buddy Group get-together is held twice a month for families in each local area in which activities, education, and information is provided for the children and parents. Parent engagement is emphasized and literacy activities, budgeting education, mental health counseling, and crisis assistance are a few of the parent support services provided.

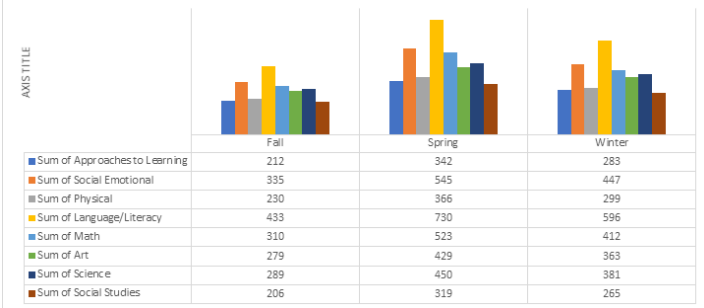


Early Head Start continued to utilize the Child Observation Record Advantage (COR) for outcome and growth tracking. The COR works well in monitoring infant and toddler development, and during the 2022-2023 program year there continued to be growth in all areas of development.

Early Head Start teachers utilize COR Advantage to provide a complete picture of each child's development. COR Advantage allows teachers to observe children's development through play and naturally occurring activities.

HEADSTART & EARLY HEADSTART

**COR SUMMARY OF APPROACHES TO LEARNING
2022-2023**

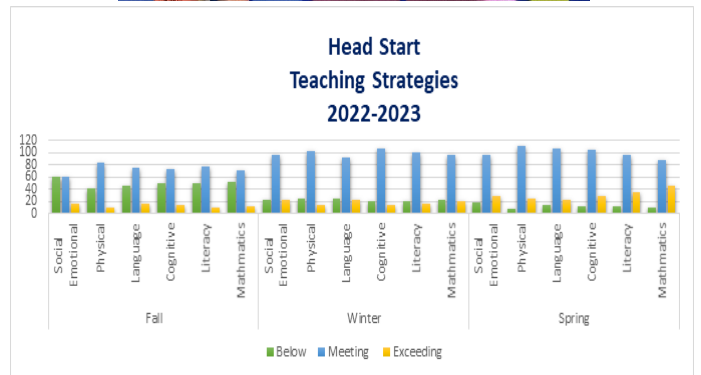


We continued our involvement in a project to aggregate child outcome data statewide using the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). The intent of the program is to document child growth success as well as point to areas for improvement. The results will also help refine our efforts to optimize each child's development and for transitions to kindergarten as well as individual teacher growth. During each school year, communications occur with kindergarten teachers in each school district to review expectations and discuss transition experiences. Developmental growth and/or concerns is shared as appropriate. Memorandums of Agreement that lay out transition activities and mutual school readiness goals are developed with each school district. Overarching goals and the developmental growth of Kindergarten-bound children are included below. There was growth from fall 2022 to spring 2023 in all assessment areas including; Social-Emotional, Gross Motor Fine Motor, Language, Cognitive, Literacy and in Math.



NWCA also participates with MHSA data collection and evaluation for School Readiness Outcomes. Participating with MHSA in this project provides information to showcase our efforts as well as identify areas of need. We are able to analyze our assessment results across the state. For example, if a classroom is showing higher or lower than average scores, we are able to compare across the state and/or do a deeper dive with our tools, classroom needs and documentation and act accordingly.

CLASS Observation and HOVRS provide teachers with constructive feedback; as well as areas to focus on for training. Requests for Conscious Discipline and Mental Health trainings are examples of requests that have resulted from observations.



HEADSTART & EARLY HEADSTART

School Readiness Goals

School readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs.

- It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.
- Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Physical Development and Health

1. Children will acquire and maintain a high level of physical health, including being up to date on physical and dental checkups and immunizations.
2. Children will demonstrate an increased ability to care for their own needs appropriately. They will become more independent and resourceful getting needs met.
3. Children will demonstrate increasing control of large muscles for movement, navigation and balance consistent with their chronological and developmental level.
4. Children will demonstrate increasing fine motor strength, coordination and agility for use in self-care, manipulation of materials and exploring their environment.

Social Emotional Development

1. Children will be able to manage feelings appropriately and self-regulate with regard to their emotions, attention span and behavior.
2. Children will demonstrate positive, appropriate social relationships with family members, peers and other significant adults.

Approaches to Learning

1. Children will demonstrate a positive approach to learning through persistence, attentiveness, engagement and curiosity.
2. Children will show an increasing ability to express themselves through sound, movement, visual media and role play.

Language and Literacy

1. Children will demonstrate increasing skills in comprehension and use of more complex and varying vocabulary.
2. Children will demonstrate increasing proficiency using language to communicate needs, wants and for self-expression.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. Children will use math skills in everyday routines as appropriate for their developmental level with increasing competency in counting, comparing, relating and problem solving.
2. Children will engage in exploring their environment through observation, imitation, manipulation, and curiosity.
3. Children will demonstrate use of skills to solve problems, find multiple solutions and answer questions.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Program Director—Diane Hayes

Northwest Community Action has been a regional leader in developing housing programs which provide housing opportunities for the low- and moderate-income households of our area. The Agency has been actively involved with the delivery of program funding through the MURL Program and the Small Cities Programs.

Table 1 – Projects with Secured Funding		
Community/Jurisdiction	Grant Award Amount	Activities
Cities of Alvarado/Middle River	\$487,340 CLOSED 6/2023	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation. (20 single family homes)
City of Warroad	\$599,955 CLOSED 6/2023	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (9 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation (30+ rentals)
City of Grygla	382,375	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation; 10 single family homes), Rental rehabilitation (1 four-plex); Commercial rehabilitation (3 commercial buildings)
City of Lake Bronson	\$379,500	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (15 single family homes)
City of Warren	\$241,500	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (10 single family homes)
City of Greenbush	\$1,108,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (8 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation 1 four-plex); Commercial rehabilitation (5 commercial buildings); Streetscapes (Pavers, Street Lights, Benches, Planters and Trees)
City of Argyle	\$759,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (15 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation (7 duplexes -14 units); Commercial rehabilitation (4 commercial buildings)
City of Roseau	\$625,600	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (12 single family homes); Commercial rehabilitation (7 commercial buildings)
City of Badger	\$220,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (8 single family homes)
City of Karlstad	\$507,380	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (15 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation (4 single family units)
City of Newfolden	\$880,900	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (15 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation (12 Multifamily units); Commercial rehabilitation (7 commercial buildings)
City of Roosevelt	\$132,250	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (5 single family homes)
City of Strandquist	\$273,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (10 single family homes)
Roseau County	\$563,500	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (20 single family homes)
City of Hallock	\$414,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (8 single family homes); Rental rehabilitation 1 four-plex); Commercial rehabilitation (5 commercial buildings);
City of Stephen	\$368,000	Owner occupied housing rehabilitation (8 single family homes); Commercial rehabilitation (3 commercial buildings);
Total	\$7,942,300	

Northwest Community Action assists jurisdictions in its service area with securing and administering Small Cities Block Grants. These grants have been primarily used by the recipient communities to improve/install public facilities, rehabilitate owner occupied and renter occupied housing, and rehabilitate commercial buildings.

These grants are made available with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are awarded through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) as part of their Small Cities Development Program (SCDP). Awards of up to \$1,400,000 are made for comprehensive projects (generally those involving several activities) and up to \$600,000 for projects involving one activity (such as owner-occupied housing rehabilitation).

During the past decade NWCA has become more actively engaged in working with the Small Cities Program. These projects have made a great impact on the housing, business and rental stock in the communities. During the past year NWCA has administered a number of projects.



NWCA is also assisting in the preparation of applications for a number of communities/jurisdictions which will be submitted for review with awards anticipated in the near future. The following are the jurisdictions NWCA is working with; Kittson County, Marshall County, Lake of the Woods County and the City of Crookston. If awarded Northwest Community Action will administer the projects.

MURL (Minnesota Urban and Rural) Program

The MURL Program is one which Northwest Community Action has administered for over 20 years. Under the program Minnesota Housing provided funding to the agency to acquire and rehabilitate substandard properties and then re-sell the properties on a zero-interest contract for deed with no down payment required. Contract for deed payment amounts are determined by household income levels.

Several years ago, Minnesota Housing ended the active program so agencies were no longer able to purchase houses. NWCA continues to collect payments on houses which were previously sold, but we can only use funds which are paid back to undertake needed repairs on the existing MURL stock. Northwest Community Action currently has 17 homes in our MURL program. We helped one MURL home with new shingles this last year.

Weatherization/Housing

Program Director—Jason Gohman

Weatherization

The goal of our Weatherization Assistance Program is to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings occupied by low-income persons whether they rent or own, reduce their total energy expenditures, improve indoor air quality, and address issues regarding health and safety. Last year we were able to upgrade furnaces and gas water heaters based on conservation. This Air source heat-pumps and central air units have also been added in some situations. Households who are considered the highest priority are the elderly, disabled, families with children under 19 years of age, veterans and those with high energy burdens or high energy use. Last year's focus was to help as many households as possible by doing many more standalones, and only 1 less weatherization job. We also recruited a few more mechanical contractors to help up us ramp up.

Standalone water heaters, furnaces and central air units: Total 68 (Prior year 37)

- Roseau - 20
- Marshall - 19
- Kittson - 11
- L O W - 18

Weatherization Completions: Total 9 (Prior year 10)

- Roseau - 4
- Marshall - 1
- Kittson - 3
- L O W - 1

Conservation Improvement Program (CIP)

Otter Tail Power, Roseau Electric, North Star Electric, City of Roseau and City of Baudette participate in the CIP program. With many households already upgrading to LED light bulbs, our main focus is replacing older major appliances like refrigerators and freezers to Energy Star models. OTP allows qualifying customers for the replacement of dishwashers, clothes washers and clothes dryer. With the increase of appliances being replaced per household we reduce the number of households we serve through this program, but the savings in electrical use are greatly increased for those who do participate. Here is the breakdown of participants by electric provider served so far this year. Otter Tail Power-14, Roseau Electric-20, North Star Electric-19, City of Baudette-2 and City of Roseau-4.

CIPS: A list of appliances delivered by utility provider from 1/1/2023 to 7/31/2023

Otter Tail Power total households served-11

- Refrigerators- 4
- Freezers-4
- Clothes Washers-2
- Clothes Dryers-2
- CIP with no appliance delivered-1

**NorthStar Electric total households served-16
(also includes Kootasca Community Action in Koochiching County)**

- Refrigerators- 8
- Freezers-9
- CIP with no appliance delivered-2

Roseau Electric total households served-11

- Refrigerators-11
- Freezers-6
-

CIP with no appliance delivered-0

City of Roseau total households served-1

- Refrigerators-1

City of Baudette total households served-1

- Freezers-1

9W



ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Program Director—Anne Bertlud

The Energy Assistance Program helps eligible renters and homeowners living in Kittson, East Marshall, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties pay a portion of their home heating, electric bills, and past due water/sewer bills. Homeowners may be eligible for repair or replacement of their nonfunctioning heating systems.

The Energy Assistance Program uses the prior three months of household income and/or last year's federal tax forms for self-employment individuals for making eligibility determinations. The household income must be at or below 60% of the state median income or 110% of federal poverty guidelines, whichever is greater. With additional funds, Commerce increased from 50% of the SMI to 60% for program year 2023. This is the highest threshold allowable by the Federal government.

EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



COUNTY	TOTAL SERVED	AMOUNT PAID
KITTSOON	252	\$161,029.13
LAKE OF THE WOODS	243	\$157,805.25
MARSHALL	183	\$131,829.00
ROSEAU	704	\$478,721.21
TOTAL	1382	\$929,384.59

CRISIS PROGRAM

Crisis benefits are used to prevent shut-off of energy sources, to reinstate service of energy sources, to enable delivery of fuel, and also to assist senior households with current heat or electric bills.

This assistance was provided to 796 households, with 1874 processed crisis events.

COUNTY	TOTAL SERVED	AMOUNT PAID
KITTSOON	15	\$27,898.47
LAKE OF THE WOODS	19	\$49,205.83
MARSHALL	14	\$20,487.30
ROSEAU	56	\$139,406.15
TOTAL	104	\$236,997.75

WATER ASSISTANCE

The Department of Commerce expanded the EAP program to pay water and sewer bills for Minnesotans who apply and qualify for energy assistance.

PRIMARY HEAT ASSISTANCE

The Primary Heat benefit addresses low income household's ability to maintain affordable and continuous energy by providing grants to lower their energy burden. The grant amount is determined by using a matrix of income, household's size, and the previous year heat costs.

A total of 94 households were denied assistance due to lack of sufficient income verification, over-income, or applying after the end of our program year.

COUNTY	TOTAL SERVED	AMOUNT PAID
KITTSOON	163	\$207,515.33
LAKE OF THE WOODS	125	\$139,031.00
MARSHALL	118	\$127,025.50
ROSEAU	390	\$442,640.00
TOTAL	796	\$916,211.83

ENERGY RELATED REPAIR PROGRAM

The Energy Related Repair Program (ERR) is a crisis program that addresses hazardous and life-threatening safety, or no heat problems due to malfunctioning or non-functioning heating systems. Qualified installers make mechanical and safety repairs and installations, and 50% or more of the installation work must be inspected. Occasionally numerous trips were required from contractors.

COUNTY	TOTAL SERVED	AMOUNT PAID
KITTSOON	34	\$19,299.00
LAKE OF THE WOODS	14	\$6,068.00
MARSHALL	15	\$9,226.00
ROSEAU	71	\$15,454.00
TOTAL	134	\$50,047.00

REACH OUT FOR WARMTH

Reach Out for Warmth (ROFW) is an emergency program for households facing a no heat situation. ROFW program is funded solely through local donations. During the 2022—2023 program year donations totaled \$38,115.99, allowing NWCA to help 85 households. A special *"Thank You"* to all who donated to the Reach Out for Warmth Program!

FAMILY SERVICES

Program Director—Randi Jensen

Emergency Disaster Relief- 10 households Served

Dental x-rays
Homeowners Insurance (small cities eligible)
Bathroom pipes repaired
Trailer House Purchase
Rent/Deposit/Utilities-6 households

Jail Transition- 18 inmates

Housing-Rent and/or Deposits
Case Management

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Grant

1 Household with on-going case management/rent

HUB Implementation Grant- 9 Households Served

Vehicle repair-2
Utilities-1
Deposit/Rent-6

Transitional Housing Program-

3 Households with on-going case-management/rent

Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program STANDARD- 16 Households Served

Deposit-8
Rent-12
Utilities-3
Mortgage-1

Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program

FAST TRACK- 45 Households Served

Deposit- 3
Past-due Rent- 28
Past-due Utilities- 25
25 Vehicle Repairs- 1



Long Term Homeless-

Rent/Deposit-2
Work Boots- 1
Bedding- 1
Winter Clothing- 1
Hotel stay - 4

Vehicle Repair (exclude Roseau County)-

14 Households Served

Kittson- 5
Lake of the Woods-8
Marshall- 1 Household

Emergency Food and Shelter Programs

44 Households Served

Hotel- 5 Households
Rent- 25 Households
Utilities- 12 Households
Deposits- 2 Households

Outreach-

Snap Outreach-3,076
Snap Applications- 114
Food Shelf referral- 52
Ruby's Pantry- 49 households
Lake of the Woods-13
Roseau-36

HUB Implementation Grant-

149 Gas/Grocery cards distributed

Emergency Food and Shelter Program

\$100.00 Grocery Card- 6 People Served
\$25.00 Gas Card- 6 people Served

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Homelessness and Prevention and Assistance Program-Fast Track We Have helped 55 households

- Lake of the Woods- 9
- Roseau- 42
- Kittson- 1
- Marshall- 3

Total of \$ 75,495.00

Emergency Food and Shelter Program Phase ARPA-R, 39 & 40

Total Fund Dollars \$29,259.00

We have helped 44 households

- Mortgage/Rent- 27 \$17,351.40
- Utilities/Shut-offs- 12 \$4,250.27
- Shelter- 5 \$5,727.85
- Food- \$ 1,000

Total households receiving/received services= 311

Total people reached through outreach= 3,291

Referrals to outside our available services= 139

- Mental health
- Homeless shelter-Crookston
- Women/children shelter-Thief River Falls
- Legal help
- Violence Intervention Project
- Child-care
- Social Services



Unique Situation: Paid homeowners insurance for two income-eligible seniors for one year to become eligible for the Small Cities grant to obtain a new roof so they could remain in their home.

Other Family Service Grants include:

-Funding from Roseau County to facilitate **Teen Journey**, an education program for Roseau County teens in trouble with the law, truancy, or substance abuse issues.

-**Otto Bremmer Trust grant**, provides funds for Family Service Advocates to provide follow-up, coaching, and on-going case management to participants.

-Minnesota Department of Human Services funds enabled us to develop an **Age-Friendly Communities** Coordinator to research and explore the needs of older adults in Roseau, Marshall, Lake of the Woods, and Kittson Counties.

-**Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM)** is a matched saving program to help low-income individuals save to purchase a home, start or enhance a small business, further their education or purchase a vehicle.

YOUTH INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Program Coordinator—Madeline Waage

The Little Brother Little Sister Program continues to impact our area youth in the Counties of Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods. Area youth need healthy places and activities to engage in positive behavior and grow as individuals.

The mentoring component of the Little Brother/Little Sister Program enables high-risk children to develop relationships, goals and skills necessary to break negative cycles within their lives. Caring adults who volunteer their time as a “Big Brother” or “Big Sister” mentor provide a place of acceptance and positive reinforcement. Through these friendships, mentors are able to provide a consistent, positive influence and offer valuable life lessons during their time together.

Throughout the year fun group activities and free passes to attend events are provided for the Little Brother/Little Sister Program participants. Events for participants were held at 567 Designs, ROAR Rentals, Doc’s Harbor Rentals, the Corn Maze, Blazin’ Saddles Horse Ranch, Archery and more. Group events are a great way for mentors to come and enjoy a free activity with their “Littles.” It also provides an opportunity to connect and meet others involved in the program.

The Little Brother/Little Sister Program is supported through a grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs that ends on December 31, 2023. An application has been submitted for the same grant for the next two years. If approved the new grant cycle will begin on January 1, 2024. Additional financial support has come from the counties of Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods, local businesses, and community members.

The Little Brother/Little Sister Program continues to receive support from the community and it continues to grow as mentors step forward to build friendships and guide our area youth. During uncertain times and heightened emotions, it is most crucial that our youth are surrounded by the presence of a reassuring voice in their lives.



MNSURE-HEALTH SERVICES

Program Manager—Tammy Novacek

Northwest Community Action, Inc. currently has 1 Certified Navigator, who assists clients within our service area with new applications, renewals, changes in their case, and enrollment into Qualified Health Plans. In the past year, Northwest Community Action Navigator assisted more than 1500 clients with health care questions, and successfully enrolled over 300 clients in some kind of a health care plan, which includes Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare or a Qualified Health Plan with an Advance Premium Tax Credit. These numbers are on the rise, because the Federal Health Emergency has ended. With this ending, that means that every Minnesotan that was on Medical Assistance/MinnesotaCare will have to do a complete renewal and send in all the proof of income and update any changes that have happened since 2020.

Open enrollment ran from November 1st, 2022– January 15th, 2023. During open enrollment people with Qualified Health Plans were able to make changes to their current plans or change plans completely. This is also the time that Minnesotans who are without insurance and did not have a qualify life event change, called “special enrollment” could enroll with a January 1st, enrollment date. Clients who qualify for Minnesota Care or Medical Assistance can apply and make changes year-round.

MNsure extended the current grant by one year. This funding allows Northwest Community Action and its partners, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council and Inter County Community Council, to bring free health insurance services to nine counties in Northwestern Minnesota for another year. The service area covers 11,325 square miles, and a total population of 97,537 people. This past year NWCA alone signed 339 people up for healthcare. Of those 138 were Medical Assistance, 31 Minnesota Care and 170 Qualified Health Plans with an Advance Premium Tax Credit.

NWCA also has a Navigator / In-Person Assister Grant, this grant pays \$100.00 per successful applicant who is enrolled or renewed into Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare and \$70.00 for a Qualified Health Plan. With renewals starting in May 2023 – our numbers are on the rise. Northwest has received a total of \$28,800.00 this past year for completing 339 successful applications.

Tammy Novacek has been part of the Navigator Coalition Board, MNsure Stakeholders Board and Department of Human Service Roundtable. Being part of these 3 boards – we meet via web, with much knowledge & work being done to help MNsure Navigators jobs go smoothly. Navigators – not only sign clients up for insurance, we also do certain population applications, update incomes, and also outreach. Right now, NWCA's number 1 outreach is Word of Mouth.

2023 - 2024 open enrollment for Minnesota will be November 1st, 2023 – January 15th, 2024.
The table below shows qualifications - depending on household size and income.

People in household	Medical Assistance for adults over age 18 Monthly/annual income (up to)	Medical Assistance for children Monthly/annual income* (up to)	Medical Assistance for pregnant women Monthly/annual income (up to)	MinnesotaCare Annual income** (up to)	Tax credits for private health plans Annual income** (above)
1	\$1,615 / \$19,391	\$3,341 / \$40,095	does not apply	\$29,160	\$29,160
2	\$2,185 / \$26,227	\$4,519 / \$54,230	\$4,568 / \$54,821	\$39,440	\$39,440
3	\$2,755 / \$33,063	\$5,697 / \$68,365	\$5,759 / \$69,110	\$49,720	\$49,720
4	\$3,325 / \$39,900	\$6,875 / \$82,500	\$6,950 / \$83,400	\$60,000	\$60,000
5	\$3,894 / \$46,736	\$8,052 / \$96,635	\$8,140 / \$97,689	\$70,280	\$70,280
6	\$4,464 / \$53,572	\$9,230 / \$110,770	\$9,331 / \$111,978	\$80,560	\$80,560
7	\$5,034 / \$60,408	\$10,408 / \$124,905	\$10,522 / \$126,267	\$90,840	\$90,840
8	\$5,603 / \$67,244	\$11,586 / \$139,040	\$11,713 / \$140,556	\$101,120	\$101,120
each additional person add	\$569 / \$6,836	\$1,177 / \$14,135	\$1,190 / \$14,289	\$10,280	\$10,280

TEAM EPIC

Program Director—Stephanie Heppner



Team EPIC (Encouraging Positive Impact for Change) is a Drug Free Communities (DFC) Coalition that is made up of adult and youth members of Roseau County. These members share the common goal of increasing community collaboration to reduce youth substance use and abuse and related problems.

During this year Team EPIC had 45 active and 22 inactive adult members and 42 active and 32 inactive youth members and received \$125,000 DFC Funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); with management by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). With all of this year's projects combined, nearly every student in the four Roseau County school districts was reached with Team EPIC messaging or interactions by Team EPIC youth and adult volunteers. The number of interactions with youth was over 1,700 and interactions with adults was over 3,600.

Team EPIC participated in many activities and events this year including:

- **Red Ribbon Week:** Students planned a week of activities in the schools to encourage students to live substance-free. The Team EPIC youth members asked all students in grades 6-12 to write down activities they would rather do than use substances. These ideas were then hung in the hallways of the schools.
- **Prom Week:** Students arranged a fun week of activities and reminders for students to be substance-free during the Prom and Graduation seasons. Many students in 7-12th grade signed a poster stating that "Our Prom has SWAG.....Students Who Achieve Goals. Stay Drug and Alcohol Free." in Roseau County.
- **Youth Summer Retreat:** Youth from Roseau county and around the state participated in a summer retreat at Camp Foley in Pine River. This lake cabin setting had many fun activities to do in between sessions. The goal was to have fun and to learn about youth substance use prevention. Trainers from The Montana Institute taught us about Spirit, Science, Action, and Return.
- **Team EPIC Baja Race Car:** We sponsored a race car at the Roseau County Fair! We had three different work nights throughout the summer to get the car ready. The youth came to work on the mechanics of the car, and to paint it with our Team EPIC logo. After our work was done the youth hung out playing volleyball, corn hole, and ended each night with a bonfire and conversation. Both evenings the youth stayed later than the planned time. What a success!
- **Roseau County Fair Booth:** Youth and adult volunteers helped with the prize wheel. Youth were asked to, "Name an adult you can talk to and why?" Their responses were then hung all around the booth.
- **Community Survey:** This year we conducted a community survey of adults at the Fair and at Northborn Days to help guide the work we do.
 - Vaping was perceived to be the biggest problem among youth.
 - At least 95% of respondents agreed that parents should talk to their kids about the importance of not using substances and that they disapprove of high school students using substances.
 - The top suggestion for prevention was education and awareness for both youth and adults, followed by more activities in the community especially for teens.
 - One respondent shared: "Keep up programs like [Team EPIC]. Be understanding, caring, adults kids feel comfortable talking to."



Testimonials about Team EPIC:

"My goal as the Project Coordinator for Team EPIC is to connect with the youth. I want to give them information to help guide their choices in a positive/healthy way. I truly care about our community and the youth that are our future." ~Nikole Baumgartner, Team EPIC Project Coordinator

"I have been a part of Team EPIC since ninth grade and it has been a great experience. It has shown me that you don't need drugs and alcohol in your life to have fun. I feel that at RHS we show that there are ways to get involved in activities that don't end with you getting in trouble. Team EPIC is always there for people if they need help; and we are focused on showing the community and school staff what it means to be a part of RHS and that's what I love about it." ~Kara Ulvin, Team EPIC Youth Member

"At its core, Team EPIC is a coalition of people who come together for one purpose - to send a positive message to the community's youth. Team EPIC coalition members have a diverse range of talents, and professional and personal experience. The coalition members use their talents and experience to spread important messages about preventing underage alcohol and marijuana abuse. Coalition members attend multiple trainings on relationship building and strategies to build a strong community of concerned people that will get the message out to youth on how they can make healthy life choices. The coalition's messages and methods are evidence based and rely on the latest research to empower adults and youth in order to keep youth safe. Team EPIC is a coalition of caring community members who have a positive impact on the community. That is why I am proud to be a member of Team EPIC."
~Mike Grover, Assistant Roseau County Attorney



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Our Mission Statement

To stimulate a focusing of all available resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families and individuals of all ages to attain skills, knowledge and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.