



# Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

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— " *Strengthening our communities through opportunities and service* " —

## 2017 Annual Report

### A Letter From the Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

2017 provided some interesting challenges and opportunities for SMOC.

One of the big challenges was the comprehensive overhaul of several state and federal data collecting and reporting requirements. We met that challenge head on, and we are confident that we have satisfied the requirements, and that in hindsight, it was an opportunity for us to enhance our operational model. Additionally, the agency worked throughout 2017 on complying with fifty-eight new federal organizational standards. Again, although challenging work, the results have made the agency better equipped in the eyes of state and federal oversight bodies. Ultimately, our mission is what drives the work of SMOC. Helping the disadvantaged members of our communities is, and always has been, why we show up each and every day.

The pages of this Annual Report reflect the efforts of Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council's board of directors, staff and volunteers as we provide opportunity, assistance and hope to those who need it most. We thank you for your continued support of our efforts.

Neal W. Steffl

Executive Director

### Positive Outcomes for Our People and Communities

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC) is a private non-profit, 501(c)3 Community Action Agency. SMOC was incorporated in July 1965 to assist and serve the needs of low-income persons in Southwestern Minnesota, specifically in the counties of Nobles, Rock, Murray, and Pipestone. Although these counties receive most of our attention, SMOC does provide specific program offerings in as few as one, and in as many as fourteen counties.

The mission of SMOC is "Strengthening our communities and people through opportunities and service." To accomplish this mission, SMOC currently employs approximately 110 full and part-time staff, that deliver an array of programs over our service area. Each of these programs has stated goals and outcomes by which we measure our success. The setting of program goals and measurable outcomes is a requirement of most of our funding sources. The operations and policies guiding SMOC's actions are governed by a fifteen member Board of Directors. It is a tri-partite board comprised of one-third elected officials, one-third private sector representatives, and one third low-income or community representatives.

In addition to making a positive difference in the lives of disadvantaged citizens of Southwestern Minnesota, SMOC also contributes to the economic development of the region. Annually, SMOC makes payments of over \$6 million to contractors, vendors, partners, and agency employees. This money circulates throughout the area, thereby benefiting the entire economy of the region.

We are proud to share the following summary of outcomes we have provided in 2017.

## SMOC Expenditures ~ Fiscal Year End 2017

Federal/State Programs:	Funds:	%:	Includes:
Child Care	\$978,885	15.7	Childcare Aware, Family U, MN Early Learning Scholarships
Community Services	\$483,781	7.7	CSBG/MEOG/Family Connect/Homemakers/United Way
Energy Programs	\$935,545	15.0	Energy Assistance Program
Head Start	\$2,147,871	34.5	CACFP (Food Programs)
Health Program	\$433,243	6.9	Family Planning
Homeless & Shelter	\$145,904	2.3	Emergency Services: EFSP/THP/FHPAP/Live Well at Home
Housing Programs	\$64,679	1.0	MHFA/Small Cities
Job Training	\$255,949	4.1	SCSEP
Transit	\$396,618	6.3	Transit
WX Projects	\$252,320	4.0	DOE/EAP WX/MN WX/Oil/Propane
Agency	\$157,985	2.5	SIMPLE IRA/Head Start Building
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$6,252,780</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Community Development

- The **Energy Assistance Program (EAP)** assisted 1,349 households with their energy bills. The average grant was \$528 per household.
- Fuel and electric vendors received a total of \$712,272
- Crisis dollars helped 154 households avert fuel or electric disconnects with a total of \$62,238 in assistance.
- We assisted 29 people with employment training through our efforts in the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** and paid \$184,000 in training wages. Thirty-three local non-profit worksites were assigned workers that helped to enhance their services.
- Worksite supervisors in the six county area of Cottonwood, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock donated their time valued at \$26,493 as in-kind dollars to assist in training the enrollees of SCSEP.
- We provided emergency assistance to 24 families utilizing \$5,007 of Salvation Army funds. Assistance included gasoline, bus tickets, utilities and shelter.
- We provided \$11,200 in **FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program** funds in supplemental financial assistance to area food shelves that were having difficulty meeting needs through local contributions. These funds supplied the equivalent of 5,488 meals to hungry men, women and children.
- We assisted 12 households (25 individuals) with services that prevented them from becoming one of the growing homeless statistics utilizing **Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program** funds.
- We assisted 5 households (17 individuals) with reduced rental expenses which allowed them to live in quality, safe, affordable housing utilizing **Transitional Housing Program** funds.
- We provided \$49,524 to area landlords for rental assistance payments on behalf of persons experiencing homelessness or near homelessness utilizing Family Homeless Prevention Assistance, Transitional Housing, and Salvation Army, United Way, and Live Well at Home funds.
- We have weatherized 17 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray counties and spent \$159,946 on independent contractors who purchased the materials from local businesses to complete the services through the **Weatherization Program**.
- We replaced and repaired furnaces and water heaters through the Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Program for 57 homes, totaling \$62,104.
- The **Homemakers Program** provided services to 100 clients (10,146 hours) in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, Murray, Lincoln Jackson and Cottonwood counties to help elderly and or disabled individuals stay in their home.
- **Live Well at Home** provided emergency housing assistance to 6 older adult households (13 individuals) to help them to stabilize and maintain their housing allowing them to live independently and assisted 22 other households with home modifications totaling \$67,514.

## **Community Development (Continued)**

- **Fulda Small Cities** grant has 7 projects in progress for \$193,811 and 11 projects completed for \$300,329.
- **MHFA** completed 4 projects for \$92,830.

## **Region 8 Child Care Aware (formerly Child Care Resource and Referral)**

- Region 8 Child Care Aware serves the nine counties of: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray,
- Region 8 Child Care Aware serves the nine counties of: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock. We are a part of the West/Central Child Care Aware District.
- Consultation, coaching, and technical assistance is provided to 472 early childhood programs in Region 8 including: 14 Child Care Centers, 348 Family Child Care Providers, and 25 community-based Preschool Programs. Support is also given to 85 School Readiness/Pre-K or School Age Care Programs as needed.
- 14 Child Care Center Directors received advocacy, training, grant, resource, policy, and support information.
- Newly licensed child care providers in Region 8 receive a resource packet including child development, business, and child care safety information.
- Community outreach opportunities were provided in each county by collaborating with partner organizations: businesses, public health, Lower Sioux Community, family services, Help Me Grow Committee, Early Childhood Initiative Coalitions, ECFE, Community Education, ECSE, and Child Care Assistance.

### **Parent Aware Quality Rating System**

- Child Care Aware staff provided coaching, technical assistance, and guidance to preschool, family child care providers and child care centers in Region 8 involved in Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating System.
- 46 child care / preschool programs have completed the full pathway to rating in Region 8.

## **Early Learning Scholarships**

- Early Learning Scholarships in the amount of \$1.2 million were awarded to 478 children attending child care and preschool in Region 8. 37 children aged out 09/01/2017 (became age eligible for Kindergarten.)
- 7/1/2017 our legislature reversed the requirement of a 3 or 4 star rating. All Parent Aware rated child care programs can receive scholarships until 07/01/2020 (unless the end date requirement is removed.)

## **Prairieland Transit System ~ Nobles County Heartland Express**

- Twenty routes are provided in Nobles County each week with two Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- Each of the fourteen communities in Nobles County is served five times each week.
- 3,523 rides were provided to residents of Nobles County with the Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- 23,755 rides were provided at a reduced fare within the City of Worthington by the Worthington Taxi Service.
- 10,020 hours of public transportation services were provided.

## **Family Planning**

Provided exams and health related services to 474 clients in 2017.

Operates with a budget of \$494,282 and employees 5 staff members and 5 clinicians.

Total visits of 1,172 ages 13-55, 234 new clients.

- Provided services to 322 persons from ethnically diverse communities
- Provided interpretive services to 157 Limited English Proficient clients through the use of a bilingual Family Planning staff member and the Interpreter Line
- Provided services to 55 male clients
- Provided education and counseling:
  - √ At 5 Family Planning Clinic sites of Worthington, Marshall, Southwest Minnesota State University, Milan and Redwood Falls
  - √ To 543 students, middle school through college age in Marshall, Worthington, Slayton, and Belview.
  - √ To 206 persons at Community Health Fairs, Special Community Events, and University Events

**Head Start** Funding for the SMOC Head Start Program is provided by the State and Federal Governments. Total funds used for education during this time period was \$1,174,782 plus \$ 339,224 of in-kind and non-federal share. In addition to this we received 39,811 from the Child and Adult Food Program. The total revenue for our program, including the in-kind / nonfederal share is \$1,553,817 for the 2017 calendar year.

**State Funded Early Head Start** SMOC Head Start was funded \$393,869 for Early Head Start through the State Head Start program and we provided Home Visiting services for 25 children and families birth to 3 years of age.

**Pathway I & II Scholarship Funded Programming** \$200,185 to serve 27 Head Start Children and families served in the Center program option

**Federal Funded Head Start** 151 Head Start children and families served in the Home Based and Center Options

We maintained full enrollment of 203 children, 151 Federal slots and 24 Minnesota Department of Education Pathway II Scholarship slots, 3 Minnesota Department of Education Pathway I scholarships, and 25 Early Head Start State Funded slots for the 2016-2017 program year, maintaining an 89.99% program wide average daily attendance, which is up about 6.5% from the 2015-2016 program year. We served 379 children and families during the 2017 calendar year. We had 58 drops during the same time period.

Our enrollment consisted of identification and referrals to our Local Education Agency of 64 children with concerns in development, 30 children being identified and served under an IEP during the 2017 calendar year.

**Parent Involvement Activities** SMOC 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. The following educational presentations and tours were completed during the program year for 2017 calendar year: Bus and Pedestrian Safety, Nutrition Nights, Mental Health presentations on Routines, Brain Development, Sibling Rivalry and general parenting, Winter Survival, Apple Orchard tours, Airport tours, Gym days, First Aid and Choking training, and participation in local Children’s Fairs.

Head Start parents worked on children’s goals to help prepare them for kindergarten, participated in Policy Council, attended site parent meetings, worked with a teacher and their child on home visits and volunteered in classrooms throughout the program year. Parents or former parents donated 25,34 hours to the SMOC Head Start program and their children.

**Kindergarten Readiness** A primary goal for Head Start is to get children ready for kindergarten. This is accomplished within our program through the following activities. Educational opportunities are individualized for children based on parent input, and using the results of developmental, social-emotional, and health screenings. Each child’s teacher creates individual goals for each child, and we have program-wide goals that we strive to reach. (See graph below for 2017-2018 school year outcomes) Our evidence-based curriculum, High Scope, includes an assessment tool that is used to track the progress children are making throughout the year. This is used to assess children’s progress towards kindergarten readiness. Staff members are provided with professional development opportunities that enhance their skills in creating a classroom community and building relationships with children, involving families, and for teaching the content areas. Parents are actively involved in their children’s education, as this allows for greatest success, not only at the preschool level but for a lifetime. Parents are involved in weekly, bi-monthly or 3 times per year home visits that provide parent-child time which allows opportunities for parents to work on educational goals with their children.

