



# Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

1106 3rd Avenue  
P.O. Box 787  
Worthington, MN 56187

[www.smoc.us](http://www.smoc.us)

Telephone: 507-376-4195  
Fax: 507-376-3636  
TTY: 507-372-7279

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

## 2018 Annual Report

### A Letter From the Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

As an employee of a charitable organization, I am often asked, "Is poverty a real issue in rural Minnesota?"

SMOC recently completed a Community Needs Assessment for Murray, Nobles, Pipestone and Rock Counties. The most recent data from the US Census Bureau reveals that Murray County had a poverty rate of 9.17%. Nobles County had a rate of 14.1%. Pipestone County had a rate of 12.73%, and Rock County had a rate of 10.69%. The rate for Minnesota as a whole was 10.84%. So the answer is yes, poverty is a real issue in rural Minnesota.

"It is time for us to make a real commitment to our rural communities by expanding broadband, by supporting our farmers, by building affordable housing and taking on rural poverty. That's how we leave no one behind." - Amy Klobuchar

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

Neal W. Steffl  
Executive Director

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### 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 2018.

## SMOC Expenditures ~ Fiscal Year End 2018

Federal/State Programs:	Funds:	%:	Includes:
Child Care	\$1,165,738	17.0	Childcare Aware, Family U, MN Early Learning Scholarships
Community Services	\$450,583	6.6	CSBG/MEOG/Family Connect/Homemakers/United Way
Energy Programs	\$1,004,488	14.7	Energy Assistance Program
Head Start	\$3,680,523	53.7	CACFP (Food Programs)
Health Program	\$441,367	6.4	Family Planning
Homeless & Shelter	\$121,073	1.8	Emergency Services: EFSP/THP/FHPAP/Live Well at Home
Housing Programs	\$80,379	1.2	MHFA/Small Cities
Job Training	\$277,506	4.0	SCSEP
Transit	\$334,342	4.9	Transit
WX Projects	\$359,472	5.2	DOE/EAP WX/MN WX/Oil/Propane
Agency	\$(1,059,748)	(15.5)	SIMPLE IRA/Head Start Building
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$6,855,723</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Community Development

- The **Energy Assistance Program (EAP)** assisted 1,352 households with their energy bills. The average grant was \$525 per household. Fuel and electric vendors received a total of \$708,127.
- Emergency Repair/Replacement assisted with 65 households with their furnace needs for a total of \$65,960
- Crisis dollars helped 161 households avert fuel or electric disconnects with a total of \$66,882 in assistance.
- We assisted 30 people with employment training through our efforts in the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** and paid \$187,810 in training wages. Twenty-two 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 \$29,528 as in-kind dollars to assist in training the enrollees of SCSEP.
- We have weatherized 17 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray counties and spent \$201,370 on independent contractors who purchased the materials from local businesses to complete the services through the **Weatherization Program (WX)**. In addition, we replaced and repaired furnaces and water heaters for 11 homes, totaling \$42,135 through WX.
- The **Homemakers Program** provided services to 80 clients (8,365 hours) in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, Murray, and Cottonwood counties to help elderly and or disabled individuals stay in their home.
- Fulda Small Cities grant has completed 21 jobs totaling \$386,421.
- MHFA completed 2 projects for \$49,110.

### Family Planning

- In 2018, the Family Planning Program provided medical exams and health related services to 531 clients, of which 424 clients were uninsured. The total number of female users were 459 and the total number of male users were 72.
- The Family Planning Program employs 3 staff members, 5 clinicians, and provides reproductive health services at 5 clinic sites: Worthington, Marshall, Southwest Minnesota State University – Health Services, Milan, and Redwood Falls. The program has memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with various agencies and organizations to be able to be able to provide reproductive health counseling and education.
- Two hundred eleven unduplicated users with limited English proficiency were provided interpretive services through the use of a bilingual Family Planning staff member and a telephone interpretation service.
- The Family Planning Program provided outreach education to 479 students who range in ages middle school to college age. Special events, including Community Health Fairs and University events provided education and outreach to 311 persons.

## **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, 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 490 early childhood programs in Region 8 including: Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Providers, and community-based Preschool Programs. Support is available to 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.
- We completed a comprehensive child care community needs assessment in Worthington. Lack of resources and support for child care and families needing child care was the number one problem raised.

### **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.
- An average of 50 child care / preschool programs are supported each six-months through the full pathway to rating in Region 8.

### **Early Learning Scholarships**

- Early Learning Scholarships in the amount of \$1.23 million were awarded to 522 children attending child care and preschool in Region 8. 135 children aged out 09/01/2018 (became age eligible for Kindergarten.)
- 7/1/2020 MN State Statute will require programs to have a 3 or 4 star rating in order to be eligible for scholarships. Until then, all Parent Aware rated child care programs can receive scholarships (unless the 7/1/2020 date is removed or changed.) This could impact over 100 children in Region 8 (they could lose their Early Learning Scholarship because not enough full-time, full-year Parent Aware rated options are available to families.

### **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.
- The Worthington City Bus Route was piloted with implementation to occur in 2019.
- 4,118 rides were provided to residents of Nobles County with the Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- 22,092 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.
- 73,060 miles were driven by Nobles County Heartland Express buses and Worthington Taxi Service vehicles.
- Cross-county transportation between Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock is being provided.

**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 \$3,275,055.69 plus \$ 635,984.53 of in-kind and non-federal share. In addition to this we received \$49,950.96 from the Child and Adult Food Program. The total revenue for our program, including the in-kind / nonfederal share is \$3,911,040.13 for the 2018 Agency fiscal year.

**State Funded Early Head Start** SMOC Head Start was funded \$373,343.07 for Early Head Start through the State Head Start program and we provided Home Visiting services for 28 children and families birth to 3 years of age.

**Pathway I & II Scholarship Funded Programming** \$190,972.61 to serve 24 Head Start Children and families served in the Center program option

**Federal Funded Head Start** \$1,328,798.46 for 151 Head Start children and families served in the Home Based and Center Options plus \$1,334,726 for facility construction.

We maintained full enrollment of 203 children, 151 Federal slots and 24 Minnesota Department of Education Pathway II Scholarship slots and 28 Early Head Start State Funded slots for the 2018 Agency Fiscal year, **maintaining an 91.88% average daily attendance in our center programs. We served 334 children and families during the 2018 fiscal year.**

We had 28 drops during the same time period.

Our enrollment consisted of identification and referrals to our Local Education Agency of 25 children with concerns in development, 18 children being identified and served under an IEP and 2 children under an IFSP during the 2018 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.

Head Start parents worked on children’s educational 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 /former parents and siblings donated 44,032 hours to the SMOC Head Start program .

**Our Policy Council average attendance was 60.2%.**

**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 2018 Kindergarten Bound Student school outcomes.

Personnel	\$1,274,569.49	Transportation	\$ 64,435.76
Fringe	\$ 363,518.57	Training	\$ 28,399.18
Office Expense	\$ 44,267.92	Facility Construction	\$1,334,726.08
Program Expense	\$ 1 65,138.69	Total w/o non-federal share	\$3,275,055.69

2018 Head Start Funding totals with non-federal share \$3,911,040.13

### 2018 Kindergarten Bound

