

# CSBG ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS



## EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) can typically serve individuals and families up to 125% of the federal poverty line (FPL). The CSBG Provisions within the CARES Act granted states the authority to revise this threshold up to 200% of the FPL for federal fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

## WHY EXPAND ELIGIBILITY?

- The CARES Act allocated an additional \$1 billion to the existing \$740 million CSBG allocation. This increase in resources can support serving the expanded service population.
- The populations up to 200% of the FPL are likely to include those who work in low-wage but critical jobs such as grocery stores and small businesses; along with sectors that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, such as the service and personal care industries.
- Individuals and families in the expanded services category are quite vulnerable, as many did not qualify for traditional safety net services prior to the crisis and are less likely to have cash reserves to sustain themselves during the recovery period.
- Expanding eligibility will allow the network to offer stabilization services to those who could fall below the poverty line, and prevent them from needing more significant on-going public assistance. Some of the individuals and families in this category will not qualify for traditional safety net services at all.

## ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS

The CSBG Act delegates the authority to define eligibility guidelines to states. States have broad authority to develop the criteria for eligibility determination, including defining countable income; setting look-back periods; and developing policies for community eligibility. States are encouraged to limit administrative burden when developing eligibility processes. Some states delegate this authority to local entities.

## PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

The CARES Act included a provision granting an additional \$600 weekly benefit to households on unemployment benefits as a means to replace lost income. States have the authority to define if these benefits are counted in CSBG eligibility determinations. In making these determinations, States may consider how similar programs in their state are treating these benefits and how the state typically treats short-term cash benefits.