

**ECHO INC.**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**

**COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**2018-2019**

## ECHO INC. COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN - 2018-2019

The Community Action Plan is intended to serve multiple purposes. First, the plan itself is a requirement of the Assurances submitted with the State of New Mexico Human Services Department State Plan to the Office of Community Services, Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, DC.

The Community Action Plan is a tool to be utilized by the recipient agencies of Community Services Block Grant funds. This plan will continually be reviewed and assessed as the tool it is intended to be for this organization's management. The emphasis on the federal level is being driven by the National Performance Indicator (NPI) requirements. NPI's were created to present a more uniform and coherent national picture of the work and accomplishments of community action agencies in general and not just as their work relates to the Community Services Block Grant fund activities. The contract reflects this change with the Scope of Work/National Indicators Outcome Plan requirement pertaining to all the work this organization does.

Another major concept that must be well understood by the reader of this document deals specifically with the opportunities, and limitations, presented by receiving Community Services Block funds. The amount of funds received by any specific organization are generally self-limiting due to the actual amount received. A memo dated 12-10-99 sent by the Office of Community Services specifically addresses the fact that recipient organizations are expected to be "umbrella organizations" that utilize the CSBG dollars to supplement and expand existing programs. Specifically the memo says, "The purpose of the CSBG award differs from most other grants because it does not focus on funding a particular service; CSBG does not function solely as a "stand alone" program. Rather, the CSBG funding is expected to support (1) creation of new programs and services, (2) augmentation of existing programs and services; and (3) organizational infrastructure required to coordinate and enhance the multiple programs and resources that address poverty conditions in the community." These funds are to be used by organizations to provide the administrative oversight that they might not otherwise be able to afford due to the limited funding of the other individual programs. This is extremely important to keep in mind as the programs and goals undertaken by this organization are reviewed. ECHO Inc. has historically taken the lead in San Juan County with temporary

emergency assistance programs such as food, rent and utilities. We also have a strong presence regarding affordable childcare. While this organization, and other organizations through various community needs assessments, might identify domestic violence or drug abuse as the highest priority needs in San Juan County, for example, these are not within our purview to address as there are other organizations that already specialize in these areas.

ECHO Inc. has prioritized the focus for this organization through strategic planning and through this Community Needs Assessment. We consider the programs we now administer - ECHO Aztec Pre-School, ECHO Food Bank, Food for Kids Backpack Program, Emergency Assistance Programs, and now the new School Supply and Diaper Kit programs - to be of equal priority for the populations they are assisting. Every year, ECHO Inc., with its Board of Director's, it's CEO and it's Program Directors, assess its programs, their effectiveness in the community and through that assessment, we choose to create new programs as needed and may discontinue programs. It is all based on the needs of the community.

ECHO Inc., as previously stated, is one of the very few sources of funds for rent and mortgage assistance in San Juan County. We provide assistance through EFSP (Emergency Food and Shelter Program) funds. The lack of sufficient funds county-wide for rent and mortgage assistance is not easy to come by.

ECHO Inc. now administers the City of Farmington Utility Assistance Program. The Salvation Army also provides utility assistance through the PNM Good Neighbor Fund. The New Mexico Human Services Department Income Support Office administers the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). As with rent assistance, the need for funds for utility assistance far outweighs the funds available.

ECHO Inc. provides year round pre-school services in Aztec, New Mexico in a facility licensed for 64 students. This school is the only one of it's kind in the county in that fees are based on a sliding-fee scale tied to the federal income guidelines for free and reduced school lunches. Weekly rates are based on a sliding scale according to household size and income. Weekly rates range from \$75.00, \$90.00, and \$100.00. Due to community need, the ECHO Aztec Pre-School has also added an after-school latchkey program - ECHO Afternoon Adventures. In addition, there is before-school childcare program. These programs have lengthy waiting lists, due to both the quality of the programs and the level of need for affordable childcare.

ECHO Inc. administers the only food bank in San Juan County. As New Mexico continues to be one of the worst states in the country for food insecurity and

hunger, the variety of food programs the ECHO Food Bank administers are desperately needed. We provide emergency food boxes to income and need-verified clients up to four times in a twelve-month period. We provide food to other non-profit organizations at extremely reduced "handling fees." These agencies saved \$11,054 on what they would have otherwise paid at retail grocery stores. Currently there are twenty-seven (27) agencies receiving food through the ECHO Food Bank. Additionally, the ECHO Food Bank distributes TEFAP - The Emergency Food Assistance Program. This program has met the need of literally thousands of clients by being available every day in the Food Bank; in addition, we provided 14,939 meals made available through soup kitchens, pantries and shelters locally.

The ECHO Food Bank started a program a number of years ago that is now being replicated throughout the state. A need for "special diet" food boxes for individuals with specific health problems was recognized, and a program thus implemented. This program, we call "Medically Fragile". New Mexico Association of Food Banks and Roadrunner Food Bank have replicated the program and look to expand it significantly across the state.

The ECHO Food Bank has also instituted a "backpack" in twenty-four (24) elementary schools and a "food pantry" in San Juan College that target children and young adults in danger of going home over weekends or holidays to a house with no food. The anxiety this causes individuals is beyond belief. The ECHO Inc. Food Bank provides food in individual servings that children may eat without having to cook or prepare the food. With very little specific funding, this program has expanded from one school to twenty-four (24) throughout the county and 5221 backpacks were distributed last school year. Throughout the year, we have successfully written a number of grants to assist in funding the backpack program in order to sustain the distribution to the schools.

Finally, ECHO Inc. provides food to all of northern New Mexico through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). This USDA program authorizes nutritious food for seniors monthly. Through warehouses located in Farmington and Albuquerque, we served 22,917 individuals in 2017 from Socorro to Gallup to Raton, Taos and Farmington and most places in between.

ECHO Inc. has identified a number of broad areas to address. The Outcome Plan for the current CSBG Contract (FY19) is attached as part of this Community Action Plan with a specific Scope of Work detailed. The Scope of Work not only states the specific problem to be addressed but also states the direct measure and objective as well as the type of unit and the number expected to achieve the

outcome. Please refer to the FY 2019 ECHO Inc. Outcome Plan for this information.

The resources committed to each program administered by ECHO Inc. are as follows:

- 1) The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is the sole source of funding for rent/mortgage emergency assistance. Additionally, we administer the City of Farmington Utility Assistance Program to assist clients of the City of Farmington Utility only;
- 2) USDA funds, as passed through the State of New Mexico Human Services Department, and the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) funds, as passed through the State of New Mexico Human Services Department, are the sole sources of funding for the Supplemental Commodity Food Program (CSFP);
- 3) San Juan United Way, food handling fees for agencies, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) administrative funds, Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), State of New Mexico general account funds, donations, grants and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) are the sources of funding for the ECHO Food Bank.
- 4) San Juan United Way, State of New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department food and children's fees along with parent fees, donations, grants and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) are the sole source of funds for the pre-school and latchkey activities.

ECHO Inc. is a participating agency with the San Juan United Way, San Juan County Partnership, San Juan College and many other critical organizations and institutions in the community. ECHO Inc. is a truly committed collaborative organization in San Juan County. Indeed, we are well known for facilitating many venues where disparate and divergent groups can come to work together. As specifically regards the coordination and linkages around the identified target problems, the following should be noted: 1) active collaboration exists between ECHO Inc., the San Juan United Way, numerous community churches, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, the City of Farmington, with regard to the emergency assistance programs; centers throughout San Juan County with regard to all of the ECHO Food Programs;

3) the ECHO Aztec Pre-School actively collaborates with the Aztec Municipal Schools and the Children, Youth & Families Department to assist students.

A comprehensive list of the various types of linkages and partnerships between ECHO Inc. and other organizations is listed in the attachment titled "Linkages and Partnerships".

The area of food and nutrition education is also an area that is quite difficult to quantify. By anecdotal information we know we are assisting with better nutrition which translates into better overall health. To actually quantify the results, however, would require staff with educational and professional credentials that are totally out of the range of this organization. We have surveyed our clients on a monthly basis to determine if they think that the service we provide, the nutrition newsletters, and live cooking demonstrations are of value as well as to their impression of the quality of food provided.

The pre-school setting lends itself to more quantifiable measures to evaluate the efficacy of the programs. Each child now has a "personal portfolio" that documents their progress throughout the school year. Additionally, we have been in a partnership with the Aztec Municipal Schools for many years. The ECHO Aztec Pre-school Director works closely with all of the teachers in the Aztec elementary schools. We have been told many times that the teachers know the kids who have come from the ECHO Aztec Pre-School by how well prepared they are to enter kindergarten. In addition, we have begun to run parent surveys monthly to determine how our staff are performing and if are services are of benefit to their children.

The staff responsibilities are specific to each program in which they work. Their work is evaluated through audits, management evaluations and surveys of clients. Compliance with all funding source requirements is another tool used to evaluate specific programs.

The Board of Directors and the ECHO Inc. CEO are responsible for the fiscal viability of the organization. The Board reviews financial statements at every meeting for each specific program. The Board commissions the annual single agency audit and reviews the resulting report with the auditor. The Board has access to each program supervisor at their meetings as well as each program director's detailed written monthly reports. This interaction is exceptionally useful to the Board in reviewing program operations and their understanding of the various issues each program has to deal with on an ongoing and/or monthly basis.

The ultimate measure of ECHO Inc.'s value to the community through the programs we provide is based on the community's obvious regard for the work we do and the reputation we have for providing quality services. ECHO Inc. has restored the community faith in this organization, now having been in the community for over 50 years. The staff and Board of Directors of ECHO Inc. are committed to always looking at community need, evaluating existing and potential new programs in light of community requests and providing the best possible services within the limited means we have available.