

Building the future



2021 Annual Report



Reflecting on past success

At Community Action, we empower people living in poverty to reach economic stability. As we close the final year of our current five-year strategic plan, we invite you to join us in reviewing what we've accomplished together. Below are reflections on three of the goals included within this plan.

1. Increase the financial well-being of program participants

Over the past five years, Community Action has created new opportunities for participants to reach their financial goals.

- Since 2017, we have provided over **11,000 financial education and coaching services** to youth and adults.
- In 2017, our financial education programs served 107 individuals. **In 2021, they served 337.** Every year, new and continued partnerships supported our ability to serve more individuals.

2. Address gaps in services in Lancaster and Saunders Counties

We use many strategies to identify and address the causes and conditions of poverty within our service area. Each year, we distribute an input survey to program participants and community members.

- **In 2019, a group of guests, neighbors, and community leaders joined together to establish the Community Action's Gathering Place Advisory Committee.** They helped create a vision for the Gathering Place that meets the neighborhood's needs.
- In 2020, service hours at the Gathering Place permanently expanded to include weekends. **In 2021, the Gathering Place served 30,401 meals.**

3. Create a work environment that attracts and retains a quality workforce

Every day, our staff create new opportunities for neighbors to reach stability. Community Action employees turn our mission into action.

- Five times since 2017, Community Action has been named one of Lincoln's Best Places to Work.
- We've built intentional opportunities for career advancement within our early childhood education programming. **In 2021, expansion of our Head Start program created an additional 30 career opportunities.**
- Beginning in 2022, a Workforce Development Grant received from the City of Lincoln will provide early childhood education employees with more opportunities for career advancement.



- **In 2021, participants made 105 asset purchases** as a result of our matched savings programming.

“This program helped me in all aspects of my life. I feel more confident in my ability to learn new skills and more prepared to achieve my goals.”

– Muyassar, Financial Coaching participant



- **In 2021, 374 children and 1,149 of their family members received Head Start services.** Through increased outreach, families on Head Start's waiting list are connected to Community Action and other local resources to promote stability.

- Our community's need for emergency rent, utility, and deposit assistance remains great. We've increased our ability to provide this service, and our partnerships with others who do this work.

In 2021, 3,828 individuals received Emergency Services assistance from Community Action.



“The Gathering Place helped me so much. But it's more than the food. The people are welcoming. It's an encouraging place to be.”

– Guest of Community Action's Gathering Place

Employees will be able to earn additional credentials while working. They'll also receive wrap-around supports to ensure their success.

“To say ‘simply amazing’ is an understatement. ‘Family’ is more fitting for the way we feel about the care, compassion, and dedication we have received since attending Community Action's Head Start program.”

– Community Action Head Start parent



Serving our whole community

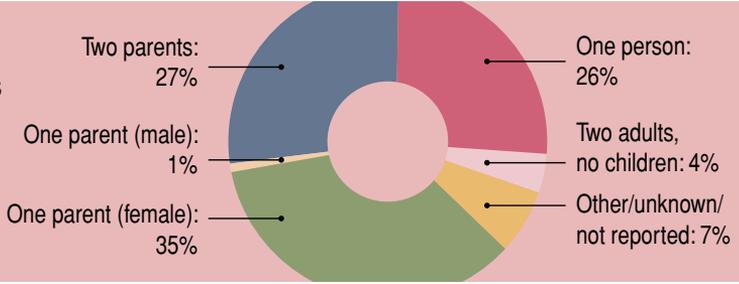
The following data demonstrates characteristics of those served by Community Action in 2021 for whom demographic information was known/collected.

74% of households served had income at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (\$26,200 for a family of four in 2021).

45% of households served were living in extreme poverty (annual income at or below 50% of the federal poverty level, or \$13,100 for a family of four).

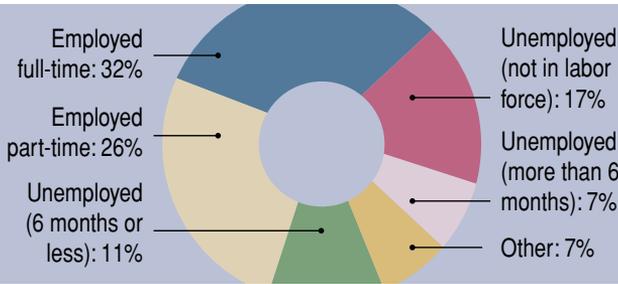
Family Type

64% of households served had children in the home.



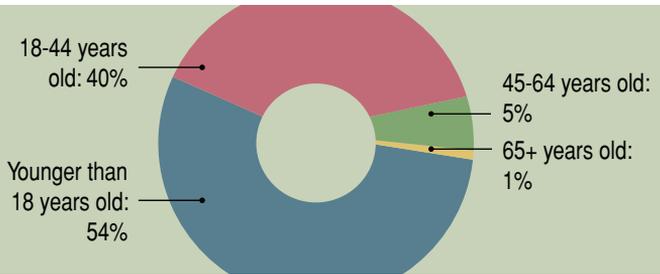
Work Status (Age 18+)

57% of individuals served were employed, either part-time or full-time, during the past year.



Ages of Individuals Served

54% of those served were under age 18.



2021 Revenue

\$16,945,768

Grant Revenue	69.35%
Program Revenue	4.45%
Donations	11.46%
Miscellaneous Income	14.74%

2021 Expenses

\$16,178,602

Hunger Relief	1.67%
Early Childhood Education	57.86%
Community Services	10.84%
Homelessness Prevention	8.25%
Housing Services	4.81%
Financial and Family Well-Being	5.84%
Management and General	10.73%

* Financials are preliminary (unaudited). The strong positive bottom line for FYE 9/30/2021 is the result of the timing of the purchase of the K Street Head Start Center. The purchase was funded in part by a grant from the Office of Head Start. The capitalization of the building created a negative expense entry in one agency program. The depreciation of the building will balance this out over its useful life.

Moving forward together

At Community Action, 2021 was a year of growth and change. Agency leadership transitioned. Some programs grew and others found forever homes. We prepared to draft a new strategic plan. And every day, we continued working alongside our neighbors—alongside you—to address the causes and conditions of poverty in Lancaster and Saunders Counties. **In 2021, Community Action provided 101,461 services to 17,878 people.**



In August 2022, Community Action's Leadership Team presented Vi See with a Community Action at Work Award. Vi is pictured here alongside six Community Action Board presidents, past and current.

A transition of leadership

In August 2021, Community Action's Leadership Team presented CEO Vi See with the 30th Community Action at Work Award. This recognition is awarded to individuals who embody the spirit of Community Action's mission to empower people living in poverty to reach economic stability. Vi served as CEO of Community Action for 13 years. Her vision and leadership brought great success to the agency and increased opportunities for those we serve, including expansion of Community Action's early childhood and adult matched savings programming.

Vi retired in October 2021, and was succeeded by Heather Loughman.

Heather Loughman succeeded Vi See as CEO on October 31, 2021.



Moving forward together (continued)

Building a foundation of financial stability

Through a combination of financial education and a 4:1 savings match, Community Action's Free to Save program gives households the opportunity to build financial stability through purchase of an asset. Participants may use their savings match for one of the following investments:

- Home
- Vehicle
- Post-secondary education
- Small business start-up or expansion

Asset ownership is a key component of financial stability and wealth building, but it's

an especially difficult milestone for many to reach. **In 2021, Community Action received a \$1 million three-year grant to expand our Free to Save program to serve 90 additional participants.**



Financial well-being programming gives participants like Hadi the opportunity to invest in themselves.



Increasing early childhood education opportunities

In spring of 2021, Community Action announced receipt of a \$1.6 million annual grant from the National Office of Head Start. These funds allowed the program to **increase enrollment by 72 for infants, toddlers, and their families.** We also opened a new center at 2615 O Street, and added thirty additional employment opportunities to our team.

Although Community Action has been providing Head Start services since 1966, the program has never had a permanent home in Lincoln.

That changed in September 2021. Community Action purchased a facility at 1843 K Street (former Lincoln School of Commerce) and began transforming the building into an ideal space for children to learn and grow. This new home for Community Action Head Start will support children and families for generations to come.

Examining our current structures

As a Community Action agency, we are charged with eliminating the causes and conditions of poverty. Among the most pervasive of these, we know, are systemic racism and other injustices. In acknowledgement of this and the continued need to become a more antiracist, anti-oppressive organization, we took action.

Throughout 2021, Community Action partnered with k+r strategies, a local change navigation firm, to complete an extensive internal audit relating to our organization's culture around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

On October 26, 2021, the Board of Directors reviewed and accepted the resulting audit report. Included are several opportunities for growth, summarized as:

1. Moving from "diversity" to antiracism and anti-oppression.
2. Creating intentional opportunities for racial equity in leadership.
3. Prioritizing development of shared language tools for staff.

Community Action's board embraces these and other opportunities for growth. These, as well as additional recommendations, will inform and guide the agency's future goals and priorities, such as strategic planning.

Building the future

So much has changed within our agency and community over the past five years. Our community's needs have grown and shifted, and Community Action has adapted to meet them. **This has only been possible because of you.**

As we look toward the future together, know that **you are essential.** Together, we can create a community of **safety, stability, and opportunity for everyone.**



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Ashley Ulmer, Secretary

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Community Action

Leadership

Pam Benner
Jill Bomberger
Jessie Hedrick
Heather Loughman
Michelle Martinez



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Lincoln, NE 68508

www.communityactionnetwork.org

Consider leaving your legacy
through a planned gift to
Community Action.

Our Programs and Services

Early Head Start & Head Start / Foster Grandparent Program / Emergency Services: rent, utility, and deposit assistance / Supportive Housing / Tenant Support Services / Affordable Housing / Displaced Tenant Assistance / Free to Save / Opportunity Passport™ / Financial Coaching / Lancaster County Community Response / ITIN Application Assistance / Weatherization / Community Action's Gathering Place: hot, nutritious evening meals / Healthy Food Access / FEAST Wellness