

Understanding the Value of Centralized Services: **Wayne Metro Community Action Agency**

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This site brief describes the centralized services provided at Wayne Metro Community Action Agency in Detroit, Michigan. The brief is one of three developed as part of the *Understanding the Value of Centralized Services (VOCS) Study*, awarded to MEF Associates and its subcontractor, Mathematica, by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families.

The VOCS study is a broad inquiry to explore the benefits and challenges of providing multiple social services at a single location for families with low income. It examines the range of models used to provide centralized services, the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of providing multiple services for families with low income at one location, and the use of virtual coordination as a complement to centralized services provided in person.

For the purposes of this study, we use the following definition of a “centralized community resource center” (CCRC): *Brick-and-mortar locations where individuals can apply for or receive multiple services and/or benefits that are funded by the federal government.*

The study includes three main components:

- Consultations with interested individuals and groups for active engagement and experts;
- A targeted literature review; and
- Site visits to three CCRCs that use varying approaches for centralizing services.

This brief draws on qualitative data collected from the site visit to Wayne Metro in March 2022. The team conducted semi-structured interviews with program leadership, staff, and partners; focus groups with clients; and observations of partner meetings and physical space, including lobbies and general office layouts.

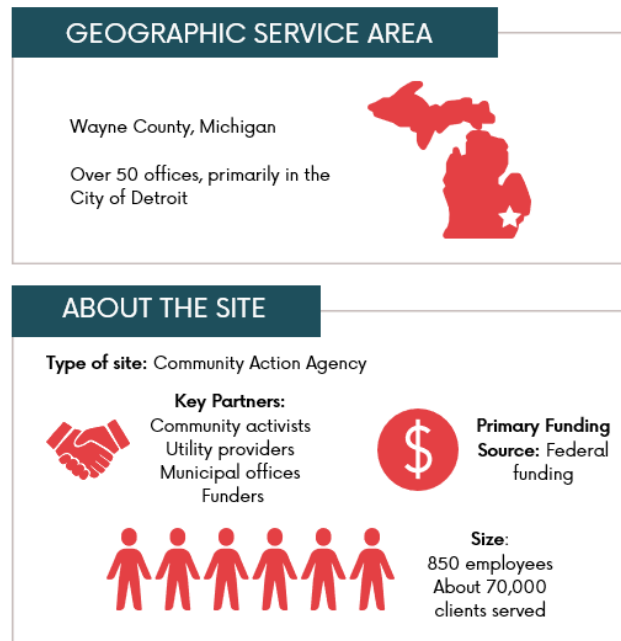
The findings of the study are presented in a final report, which can be accessed on the [VOCS project page](#) on ACF’s website.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1971, Wayne Metro provides more than 70 different programs and services, including financial literacy classes and coaching, homeownership workshops, housing counseling, utility assistance, Head Start, GED preparation, free tax preparation, foreclosure prevention, and homelessness services. Wayne Metro leadership said they aim to “create equitable and inclusive communities, with green and healthy homes where families can succeed and be empowered to be strong, healthy, and thriving.” Staff help clients access services while assisting the development of clients’ skills and economic stability to the point where they no longer need Wayne Metro services.

Since 1971, Wayne Metro has provided services to Wayne County, evolving to meet the community’s needs by developing a call center to quickly connect clients to services and co-locating staff in offices with other services providers to expand client access. In 2016, Wayne Metro shifted from providing individual services to clients to a “whole family” model, a multigenerational approach that focuses on the family as a whole and its success. The whole family model requires Wayne Metro staff to learn about all family members’ goals and to connect them with multiple services to reach those goals. Before this shift, Wayne Metro connected clients with only the specific services in which they were interested.

In addition to 50 offices, Wayne Metro uses two tools to centralize services for clients: a call center with staff trained in all programs (Connect Center) and an online universal application. Clients can call the Connect Center to learn about all available Wayne Metro services. During calls, staff point them to the resources needed.

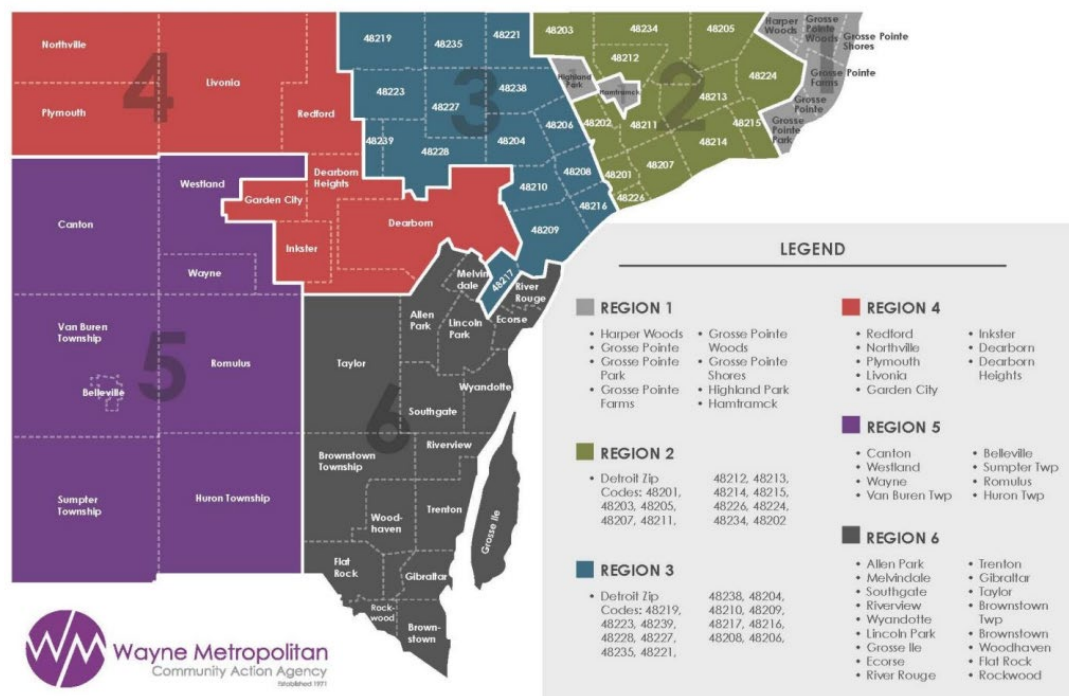


Pictured: Entrance to the Wayne Metro headquarters office

CLIENTS AND COMMUNITY SERVED

Wayne County has a population of 1,774,816 people, with the highest concentration in the City of Detroit.¹ Wayne Metro provides services in six regions of Wayne County, as illustrated in Exhibit 1. It primarily serves the City of Detroit, where 70 percent of clients live. Through its 50 office locations, Wayne Metro estimates that it has served more than 70,000 clients each year since the COVID-19 pandemic began, doubling the number of clients it served before the pandemic.

Exhibit 1. Wayne Metro Regional Map



Source: [Wayne Metro 2020 Strategic Plan](#)

Population served

In general, Wayne Metro serves families that have low income (earning below 200 percent of the federal poverty level). Adult clients in those families range in age from 20 to more than 50 years. Children between ages 3 and 5 years are often enrolled in one of Wayne Metro's Head Start programs. Their caregivers are often young and single. The families who Wayne Metro typically serves experience homelessness, include parents who are unemployed and are on SSDI, or both. Many clients experience intergenerational poverty and have experienced some trauma.

Individuals served by Wayne Metro often face education and transportation barriers to achieving economic stability, among other systemic barriers. Some clients do not have the education needed to obtain jobs or the time to attain a GED certification needed to access certain jobs. Many clients do not have transportation to go to work or to visit Wayne Metro offices. To minimize this barrier,

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/waynecountymichigan,US/PST045221>

Wayne Metro locates its offices in busy areas near freeways and bus lines so clients can access services via public transportation. The online universal application also helps clients access services without requiring them to travel to an office.

Wayne Metro staff and clients shared the strengths of their community. The staff discussed how clients are driven to improve their lives and the lives of individuals around them. Staff said that clients want to use the assistance offered by Wayne Metro to improve their situation and to ensure a better future for their children. Focus group participants also described wanting to help Wayne Metro improve the lives of community members that Wayne Metro has yet to reach, offering to advertise services to their connections in the community. Participants said that even though asking for help can be difficult, they wanted to share their experiences in asking Wayne Metro for help with others in the community to support them in achieving their goals.



Pictured: Wayne Metro hallway identifying areas of impact

Connections to the community

Wayne Metro is committed to delivering culturally responsive, equitable services by reflecting the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of Wayne County. Staff located at individual offices speak the predominant language of the community and often belong to the community that office serves. For example, Arabic speaking staff are likely to be located in offices where there is a dense population of Arabic speaking communities, such as Dearborn, which has one of the largest Arab American populations.

Wayne Metro values its relationship with the community. Leadership said

community partners and interested individuals and groups have been essential to its growth, development, and organizational maturity. Leadership see the organization's role as the intermediary that helps communities access the services they need and connects funders to communities. To build trust with the community, Wayne Metro staff solicited feedback from community partners on ways to improve its relationship with the communities with which it worked and ways Wayne Metro could improve its services. Community members shared that Wayne Metro services could better meet the needs of its community, such as by decreasing the amount of time it took clients to access services. In response to these discussions, Wayne Metro developed the universal application. Now, Wayne Metro staff make engaging with community partners a regular practice to inform programming and continuously solicit feedback from the community about services needed. Wayne Metro draws on community input through the following.

- **Board of directors.** Wayne Metro's board of directors is made up of one-third community members, one-third political leaders, and one-third business leaders. The board of directors guides Wayne Metro's direction. With community members serving, the board is infused with community voice and can hold Wayne Metro accountable for responding to the needs of the communities it serves.

- **Regional advisory boards.** Wayne Metro organizes its service area into six regions. An advisory board made up of community members represents each region. The advisory boards meet monthly with Wayne Metro and share information about current events and needs of the region.
- **Developing buy-in with community partners.** Staff intentionally involve community partners in development of new programs. When presenting the new program to the community, staff invite community partners to demonstrate how partners provided input on new programs.
- **Client surveys.** At the completion of services, Wayne Metro surveys clients for feedback regarding their experience with Wayne Metro.

In addition to drawing on community input, Wayne Metro provides time for staff to learn about the cultures of the communities with whom they work and to assess services community members may need. They participate in culturally responsive trainings to inform how they engage with clients. Wayne Metro staff lead these trainings with external partners and consultants. To better understand the various communities and their needs, staff conduct community needs assessments every three years to determine the services needed and by whom.

In a focus group with the study team, clients reported feeling a sense of relief once connected to Wayne Metro. They explained how they felt some hesitation when reaching out for support because they had asked for help from family and friends before accessing services at Wayne Metro. For the focus group participants, Wayne Metro was a last resort for help. Although sometimes afraid of being rejected or judged for accessing services, clients revealed that these feelings quickly dissipated when staff focused on supporting them and their family in any way possible.

SERVICES AND CENTRALIZATION

Wayne Metro offers multiple programs and services both in-person and virtually, shown in Box 1, and provides a single access point for individuals and families with low income. For example, individuals can complete the universal application online, walk into a Wayne Metro office, or use the website online chat feature for assistance.

A few primary service needs, such as water and energy assistance, lead clients to Wayne Metro. Once connected with Wayne Metro, clients often access rental assistance, early education, afterschool programs, food support, and support for other basic needs.

To deliver services, Wayne Metro organizes staff by function and program. Each program has the following staff positions:

- Frontline staff who help potential clients who call the Connect Center and provide direct services;
- Staff members responsible for processing applications;
- Program coordinators who serve as a resource for frontline staff and support managers; and
- A manager who oversees the program.

Clients first connect with Wayne Metro in various ways. For services related to financial assistance, such as utility assistance, clients connect with Wayne Metro through the Connect Center, where staff help them complete the universal application and submit needed documents. Clients may also work with staff from individual program teams to ensure their applications are complete. In some programs, such as Head Start, clients connect to Wayne Metro staff who assess their goals for the program and provide ongoing case management before connecting them with the Connect Center for additional services.

To teach Wayne Metro staff about the other services available to clients, individual program teams provide training directly. Staff also use internal resources developed by Wayne Metro staff to stay informed about the services available at Wayne Metro. For example, a financial coach developed a spreadsheet that helps staff identify other services for which a client may be eligible based on his or her income.

Service Delivery

Wayne Metro provides services at more than 50 sites, co-locating staff at Wayne Metro buildings as well as municipal buildings, schools, buildings with elected officials, and Head Start centers. Staff direct clients to services using the Connect Center and universal application.

Box 1. Wayne Metro Services

- Rental assistance
- Property tax assistance
- Food supports, including summer food programs and a virtual marketplace for food and household hygiene items
- Energy assistance
- Water assistance
- Emergency plumbing repair
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- After school and summer programs
- Family literacy
- Weatherization Assistance Program
- Housing stability and counseling services
- Tax preparation program
- Financial coaching
- Financial education
- Mortgage supports

Physical Space

Wayne Metro services are housed in one of four location types, illustrated in Exhibit 2: a main hub, smaller Wayne Metro-owned satellite sites, Head Start centers, and staff placed in sites such as schools and offices of elected officials. Clients can access all Wayne Metro services at any location, and each site has staff from an array of programs.

Wayne Metro staff also said that they often refer clients to other Wayne Metro services. For example, as part of developing participants' family plans, Head Start staff might refer families to adult education services offered by Wayne Metro. Staff noted that developing strong relationships with clients helps clients feel comfortable coming back to Wayne Metro if they need additional services. Clients also often refer friends and family members.

Exhibit 2. Wayne Metro Co-location Sites



A hub providing Wayne Metro services in a larger building



Smaller Wayne Metro-owned sites and buildings such as a converted old theater



Head Start centers



Municipal buildings, schools, and buildings with elected officials

Client Flow

Strong relationships with other organizations and clients are essential to recruiting clients for Wayne Metro services. In addition to organizations with which they co-locate (see the upcoming Partnerships subsection for more information), a variety of organizations—including United Way; the Michigan Department of Health and Human Service programs; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; and 211, the state-wide resource for identifying services—refer potential clients to Wayne Metro. In addition, Wayne Metro has developed relationships with local utility providers to add a QR code on bills that would connect potential clients with information about utility assistance available at Wayne Metro. One focus group participant said that they learned about Wayne Metro services through information on their utility bill.



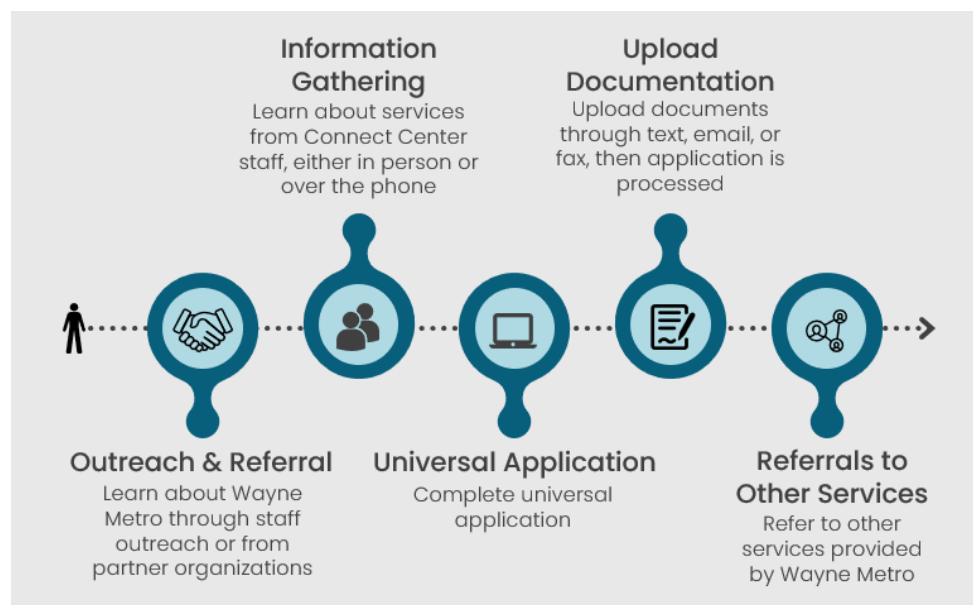
They actually offered help, like OK, well here's some things we can do. It was very helpful. You didn't just feel like you were alone.

- Client



As shown in Exhibit 3, clients can call the Connect Center to learn about available services or to schedule an appointment to speak with staff in person. Connect Center staff are trained to ask probing questions to identify and share information about additional available services in which the client or the client's family members may be interested.

Exhibit 3. Wayne Metro Client Flow



To confirm eligibility while on the call with the Connect Center staff, Wayne Metro uses categorical eligibility.² For example, if a client is determined eligible for Head Start, then the client would be automatically considered eligible for additional services, such as housing or energy assistance. If callers are income ineligible for a particular service, Wayne Metro staff refer them to other providers for comparable services. At the end of the call, Connect Center staff send the client a link to the universal application. Through this application, clients can apply for multiple services for the whole family at one time. If clients need additional help completing the application or have no access to the internet, Connect Center staff will also set up appointments to walk clients through the application and, if needed, complete the application for the client. Connect Center staff can provide this application assistance in person or over the phone. Wayne Metro staff said that because the universal application is available online for clients to complete at their convenience, clients can avoid long waits before accessing services.

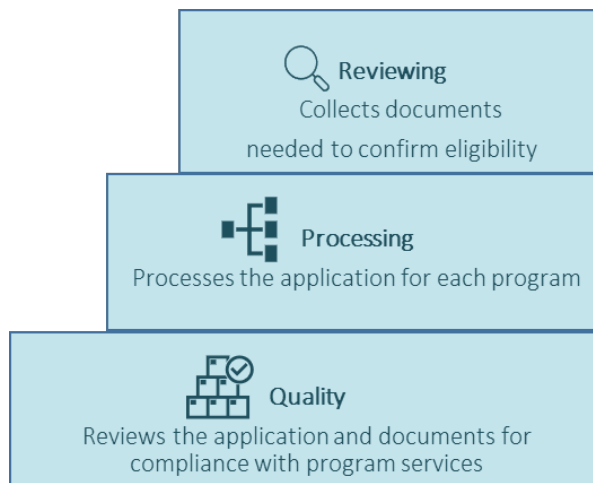
Staffing

Wayne Metro staff are also prepared to help clients in person. Connect Center staff are located in each office so if a client walks into any Wayne Metro office, Connect Center staff will meet with the client and ask the same probing questions. This process is designed to help clients learn about services and complete the application as they would if they called the Connect Center.

² Programs may use categorical eligibility to determine whether clients or participants are eligible for services based on their eligibility for another program with similar eligibility requirements.

Once individuals complete the universal application, the individual program teams process applications for the specific services they offer. Each program team can view the data collected through the universal application to determine eligibility for its individual program. Once the application is complete, several teams ensure the application is processed accurately. Exhibit 4 shows the role three teams play in processing applications. Once the application is processed, the client experience varies by the programs and services the client receives. For example, some clients can receive some services, such as energy assistance, without meeting with staff from the program. For other programs, such as Head Start, clients work with a program case manager who conducts assessments and meets regularly with the family once their child begins attending.

Exhibit 4. Three Teams Process Applications



When clients who have already received services need additional services, Wayne Metro staff said they generally refer clients back to the Connect Center for more information because Connect Center staff are the most up-to-date on the services available. Connect Center staff use a document they call their “holy grail,” which provides information about all the programs, process flows, and documents needed to demonstrate eligibility. Connect Center staff discuss clients’ needs and help identify additional programs or services that would address those needs. Clients then submit a new application. Staff also connect clients with other program teams, if needed.

Wayne Metro was able to build on its existing structure to help clients access services virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, as described in Box 2.

Box 2. Service Adaptations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, clients were unable to access services in person because of stay-at-home orders. To help clients access the services they needed, Wayne Metro increased clients’ virtual access to services. Before the pandemic, Wayne Metro began developing a universal application, whereby clients could apply for multiple services online at one time. The pandemic accelerated the implementation of the universal application, as Wayne Metro prioritized responding to the growing need clients had for online services.

To understand the number of clients who accessed services throughout the pandemic and to inform community partners’ understanding of community needs, Wayne Metro staff aggregated data collected through the universal applications to create dashboards and to share aggregate information with each other or with partners.

Partnerships

As a Community Action Agency, Wayne Metro centralizes services within itself and partners with external organizations primarily for co-location and for sharing information about services. See Box

3 for detail on their written agreements. For example, Connect Center and program staff co-locate at elected officials' offices to quickly connect constituents with services. Wayne Metro also collaborates with churches and neighborhood-based child care centers to provide services while sharing the cost of facilities. To provide afterschool programs, Wayne Metro works with individual schools.

Wayne Metro also partners with community members. A local council member owns all of the buildings on a city block in one community, and Wayne Metro is helping that member acquire a child care license and will co-locate services. At the time of the site visit, co-location of Wayne Metro staff at partner locations was paused as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but Wayne Metro staff said they expected co-location to resume shortly. Partners also helped Wayne Metro share information about services with potential clients. For example, the local water provider added to its bills information about water assistance services available at Wayne Metro so potential clients could access services, if needed.

Box 3. Defining partnerships

Wayne Metro uses written and signed agreements between its organization and the partner that describe the conditions of the partnership, similar to an MOU. For example, the agreement would specify terms for leasing space, dates the agreement covers, and expectations and conditions of the grant if Wayne Metro provides funding to the partner.

Data Sharing

Wayne Metro uses a centralized data system to capture information for multiple programs and to support continuous improvement. This data system takes the information collected through the universal application, identifies the data needed to process the application for individual programs, and shares the relevant data with individual program teams. The universal application includes questions about routine personal details, such as race, ethnicity, gender, working experience, educational experience, date of birth, age, phone number, address, types of disabilities, and types of incomes and whether the applicant is receiving benefits from other programs (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

When Wayne Metro first developed the universal application, it used simple online forms to collect information from clients and online spreadsheets to store the data. As clients' needs for services grew throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, so did Wayne Metro's need to collect and store data. During the pandemic, Wayne Metro staff developed the organization's current data system in an online database system that requires no staff to code.

Staff use the data system to improve the experience for clients through continuous improvement of the universal application, by identifying areas for staff training and informing staffing decisions, such as the number of staff needed to support a new program. Before development of Wayne Metro's data system and the universal application, Wayne Metro primarily used data for reporting to funders.

“

Our priority is always clients and then staff: Improving the clients' experience and then improving the staff's experience so both have what they need.

- Staff member

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Box 4. Using Continuous Learning Principles to Improve the Universal Application

When the universal application first went live in March 2020, one team processed all the applications. After a couple weeks, Wayne Metro staff realized that team did not have capacity to review all the applications. To devise a solution to this challenge, staff reviewed reports about the number of applications submitted, the amount of time required to process applications, and the number of staff members involved. After reviewing these reports, staff decided to split the one processing team into five separate teams, where each focused on one specific service. Staff said that they continuously review these types of reports to update and improve their processes.

Now data staff also use data from the system to work with program staff to identify and apply improvements to service delivery, as described in Box 4. For example, data staff run reports to identify opportunities to train program staff, such as application processing delays and common application processing errors. Staff reported that using analytics helped them become more efficient at processing applications and helped clients access services in a timely manner.

Staff also use the data system to inform staffing decisions. For example, they use auto-generated reports to

estimate the number of staff needed to support a program or to estimate the amount of time they might need to process applications. They use these reports to make decisions about whether to add or decrease staff.

Wayne Metro uses other data systems shown in Box 5, such as Child Plus, the Head Start data system, when required by funders. However, when possible, Wayne Metro seeks exemptions from using funder-required data systems by demonstrating that its own data system can collect the same data that funders require. When Wayne Metro staff share data with funders, they provide aggregate information about the services provided by the funders' contribution, types of additional services clients needed, and the number of additional services clients accessed through Wayne Metro that are funded by other funding sources.

Box 5. Additional Data Systems Wayne Metro Staff Use

Wayne Metro staff use separate data systems for the following programs and functions.

- Head Start
- Supportive housing and homeless services
- Weatherization services
- A variety of smaller systems and internal spreadsheets

These data systems are not integrated with Wayne Metro's main data system, and staff are responsible for entering data into these systems.

Funding

Wayne Metro relies on multiple federal funding sources and has developed a strong infrastructure to track funding across programs to implement its centralized approach. Federal funding makes up more than 80 percent of Wayne Metro's funding, but Wayne Metro has more than 20 funding sources, listed in Box 6. According to Wayne Metro staff, the budget increased from \$60 million in 2020 to \$250 million in 2022.

Using flexible funding, as described in Box 6, helps Wayne Metro address funding limitations when it must meet emergent community needs. Wayne Metro uses Community Services Block Grant funding to meet program needs not covered by other funding streams because it has fewer programmatic restrictions on how funds can be used than other program funding streams. Wayne Metro staff referred to this funding as their "pivot" funding, which allowed them to address community needs. For example, one neighborhood is ineligible for the Water Relief Assistance Program, so Wayne Metro has used pivot funding to provide a similar program to clients in that specific community.

Tracking costs and funding requirements across numerous funding streams can be a challenge. To accurately track the requirements of each funding source, the finance team assigns a grant accountant or grant coordinator to monitor each funding stream. Wayne Metro staff track the time they spend on each program to allocate costs to the appropriate funding stream; then, the finance team proportionally assigns the costs to the funding stream. Wayne Metro staff report that this method allows them to better centralize services because staff can work across programs and funding streams, which improves services for clients.

Box 6. Wayne Metro Funding Sources

Federal

- U.S. Department of Agriculture: Summer Food Service Program
- U.S. Department of Education: Afterschool and summer programs
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Child and Family Services Plan, Community Services Block Grant, Head Start, Low Income Home Emergency Assistance Program, Low Income Household Water Assistance Program
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Emergency Solutions Grant Program, Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Home Funds, Resident opportunity funds
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Federal Emergency Management Agency Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- U.S. Department of Treasury: Coronavirus Relief Fund, COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

Non-federal

- Great Start Readiness Program
- Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP)

Foundation

- United Way
- Balmer Foundation
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Kresge Foundation and more

Box 7. Using Flexible Funding to Develop the Universal Application

In 2018, Wayne Metro began developing the universal application to reach clients who were unable to visit offices during business hours. Wayne Metro staff developed the online application for one service and began testing it, using the Community Services Block Grant and other foundation funding to support the data team and to invest in developing the universal application. Wayne Metro planned to launch the application later in 2020 but sped up its timeline when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. To speed up the timeline, Wayne Metro used the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding to implement the universal application. CARES funding also is flexible, which allowed Wayne Metro to implement the online application so clients could apply for multiple services funded by the CARES Act.

Reflections on Centralization of Services

Wayne Metro centralizes its services internally and co-locates with partner organizations to connect clients with its services.

Benefits of Centralizing Services

Wayne Metro staff described how centralizing services as a Community Action Agency makes eligibility determination quicker and accessing services easier for clients and offers both clients and staff efficiencies.

- **Making access easy.** Wayne Metro's approach to centralization gives clients simultaneous access to multiple supports. Focus group participants appreciated how Wayne Metro could connect them with multiple services at one time. All focus group participants received or were aware of a variety of services through multiple programs offered by Wayne Metro. Staff said that they wanted clients to come to them with their needs and that they trusted other Wayne Metro staff to help clients because they all had the same passion to help clients. All staff reported that they referred clients to multiple services and that clients in their programs often accessed other Wayne Metro programs. According to one of Wayne Metro's funders, connecting clients to multiple services led to strong, trusting relationships with clients whereby clients felt comfortable coming back to Wayne Metro for additional services.
- **Streamlining eligibility determination.** Having the Connect Center where clients can

“ They fulfilled everything that I needed to know and offered more services if I needed them . . . When I did finally get a job, they helped me with gas vouchers so I can get to and from work. They helped me for quite a bit when my car broke down. They fixed the car. Yeah, and I was able to get ahead.

- Client

access information about all the programs available through Wayne Metro helps the organization share information with clients and process the diverse needs of clients and connect them to the various services they need. The universal application also facilitates access for clients and reduces the burden of completing multiple applications. The universal application eliminates the need to submit required documents for each program separately. Changes to federal

requirements on the data and documents needed from clients removed barriers to accessing services for clients, as well. Staff said this change in required documentation helps clients quickly access services provided by Wayne Metro and with the lowest burden possible because they are not required to submit separate documentation for each service they access.

- **Developing infrastructure to quickly implement new services.** Centralizing services and meeting multiple needs is attractive to funders, according to staff. They noted that centralizing services has helped Wayne Metro obtain additional funding because it can use data to show how many additional services clients access. For example, Wayne Metro was able to add property tax assistance services because leaders in the community knew Wayne Metro had the capacity to assess clients' eligibility for the program while connecting clients to additional supportive services.
- **Realizing efficiencies through centralization.** The universal application and the data system have also made Wayne Metro more efficient because they allow staff to process applications faster. Staff estimated that an application that would have taken at least one hour to process before the universal application now takes around 20 minutes. The universal application also helped Wayne Metro access future funding. Using data, Wayne Metro staff can illustrate how their organization can provide families with services that meet a wide range of needs by showing the number of clients who accessed additional services and which services they accessed. Staff reported experiencing several different types of efficiencies through centralization, including the following.
 - **Client efficiencies.** Clients experience shorter wait times to receive services.
 - **Operational efficiencies.** Applications processing is more efficient, resulting in a reduction in teams and staff involved.
 - **Program efficiencies.** Staff catch errors in the applications sooner.
 - **Financial efficiencies.** Fewer staff are needed to process applications.
 - **Data efficiencies.** Clients can easily access additional services without completing the application again or resubmitting documents.

Challenges of Centralizing Services

Wayne Metro staff reported that key challenges include staying on top of the changing number of services provided and adopting a different approach to client engagement.

- **Staying informed about a wide range of services and programs.** Keeping staff and clients up-to-date on the various programs offered by Wayne Metro can be difficult. To address this challenge, staff have developed internal resources to keep themselves informed about new programs. Wayne Metro staff said they often refer clients to the Connect Center because Connect Center staff had the most up-to-date information about available services.
- **Building staff buy-in.** Another challenge involved building buy-in among staff for the whole family model. Leadership reported that they promoted staff members who were



Pictured: Wayne Metro hallway sharing the experiences of former clients

more receptive to this model but may have been in their roles for less time than usual before promotion. They also reported that transitioning their approach to providing services from exclusively program focused to a whole family model could be difficult for long-serving staff.

Lessons Learned and Plans for the Future Regarding Centralized Services

Wayne Metro leadership said the shift to the whole family model has changed how staff approach providing services. The emphasis moved from providing a single service to understanding the family's goals and how Wayne Metro could address all of the family's needs. An essential element of the whole family approach is to ensure that staff buy into the model and have the training to understand all the services available through Wayne Metro. Because program staff at Wayne Metro provide training to other staff members about the various services available and clients can access multiple services through the universal application, Wayne Metro's approach to centralized services facilitated implementing a whole family model. In addition, Wayne Metro staff said they need flexible funding to address the whole family's needs as they arise. Wayne Metro uses its flexible funding sources, such as the Community Services Block Grant funding, to fill gaps in services and extend services to neighborhoods that may be ineligible for particular services.

“An organization needs to be able to acknowledge when they are not doing well, make changes to improve, and be willing to make difficult staffing decisions to support that type of culture shift.”
- Staff member

Wayne Metro staff emphasized the importance of quickly connecting clients with services. The Connect Center is an essential feature of their centralized service delivery model that helps clients access a variety of services, according to staff. Wayne Metro staff also said that helping clients access multiple services helps develop trust with clients and, over time, clients feel comfortable coming back to Wayne Metro for additional services.

Wayne Metro plans to continue improving its processes to support clients' and staff's experiences. Staff plan to apply continuous learning principles to iterate and improve processes and tools and to use data to make informed decisions about the number of staff supporting a team or process.

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