

# WISCAP

*Wisconsin's Poverty Fighting Network*

2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



# POVERTY IN WISCONSIN

For many, Wisconsin can be a very poor place. By almost any social and economic measure, life for low-income households is hard. Over 600,000 people live below the federal poverty line where they constantly confront acute housing shortages, health disparities, and wage and income issues. A walk across the state finds rural livelihoods disrupted by the erosion of the small farm economy; more than 25,000 homeless children and youth living in overcrowded conditions or run-down motels; and scattered workers and shuttered buildings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Like most anywhere, Wisconsinites work hard to overcome limits and maximize opportunities. But whatever resourcefulness, creativity, or drive people in the state might possess, a difficult economic system for poor households often works against their best aspirations.

Despite all this, poverty is not inevitable; rather, it is something that happens, and an alternative is possible. In 2022, WISCAP and its statewide network of community action agencies collectively played a significant role in



addressing both immediate crisis needs while working to effect long-term solutions.

In 2022 through our efforts, more than 31,000 households received emergency rent assistance, \$16.5 million worth of TEFAP commodities were distributed to Wisconsin residents, and 31 new businesses were created.

We also advocated for anti-poverty policy measures at the federal and state level through our support for the Wisconsin Opportunity Act, the federal Homeless Children and Youth Act, increased funding of the Community Services Block Grant program, and deeper investments in childcare, healthcare access, job training, and business development programs. Additionally, over the past year, WISCAP increased its strategic partnerships with the private sector, philanthropic organizations, faith-based groups, trade associations, and organized labor. These are necessary if we are to elevate the ways in which people can navigate everyday life across the Badger state. Poverty is not in our past. The work continues.



Brad Paul, Executive Director

## ABOUT WISCAP

### BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) is a statewide network of sixteen Community Action Agencies (CAA) and two special purpose agencies. Incorporated in 1974, WISCAP traces its origins to the historic “War on Poverty” and historically advocated for community-informed policies and greater resource mobilization for its member agencies and the people they serve.

WISCAP is a member of the Regional Performance and Innovation Consortia (RPIC) Region V. RPIC is a collaboration of state associations that serves as a regional focal point to lead Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Training and Technical Assistance. RPIC Region V is comprised of six states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Each state is represented by that state’s association of Community Action Agencies. The steering committee for this region is called the Mid-America Community Action Association (MACAA) and is comprised of the executive directors and board presidents of each state association.

The national network of community action – which includes over 1,000 community action agencies – reaches 99% of America’s counties. WISCAP is one of 49 state associations and a member of the National Community Action Partnership. The work of community action is also served by additional partners including the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP), the Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers (A-NCRT) and CAPLAW.



**President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964:** This action created the Community Action Network of national, state and locally-focused organizations we have today.

# HOW DO COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES & WISCAP WORK TOGETHER?

## Community Action Agencies

In Wisconsin, our **18 member agencies** exist to help people get out of and stay out of poverty. These agencies provide services and coordinate community resources to their local population.

## WISCAP

As the association of community action in Wisconsin, **WISCAP** advances the work of our member organizations to help people and communities become economically secure. We are the statewide voice for Community Action Agencies and people struggling with poverty.

### EDUCATION/SKILLS ENHANCEMENT



Education, training, and re-training have become all-important for those entering the job market and those already in the workforce.

### JOB & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



The Job and Business Development (JBD) program provides low-income entrepreneurs with a variety of business development services and access to financial capital to start or expand businesses and create jobs.

### ENERGY/UTILITIES



The programs operated by agencies conserve energy and conserve a low-income person's modest income. They can help people weatherize their home and pay high utility bills.

### FOOD SECURITY



Twelve of our agencies and eight of our partners coordinate the distribution of millions of pounds of Federal commodities every year. They work with hundreds of food pantries, meal sites and shelters to help people access stable food sources.

### HOUSING



WISCAP's member agencies produce affordable housing utilizing a number of programs. Many manage rental properties and administer homeownership and rental assistance programs.

### FAMILY SUPPORT



Community Action Agencies can help parents obtain child care, parenting classes, legal services, violence prevention services and more.

### HEALTH



Our agencies help thousands of people obtain health care services every year. This includes helping infants and children receive their age appropriate immunizations, medical and dental care.

### PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY



WISCAP works with our member agencies, community partners and legislators to develop innovative, comprehensive and effective solutions that increase household economic security and relieve conditions of poverty. As an agency and a network we advocate with local, state & federal government on public policy affecting low-income individuals in Wisconsin.

### TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



We promote professional growth and competence of members through training. They identify their needs for training and education and throughout the year we provide opportunities for them to attend those sessions.

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT



WISCAP encourages, promotes, and stimulates the development of resources; which demonstrate progress toward the elimination of poverty.

### POVERTY AWARENESS



Through conferences, publications, press outreach, research, and social media, we strive to increase public awareness of the struggles of low income people and solutions to poverty.

### PROGRAMS



WISCAP managed several programs in 2022, including: Job and Business Development Program, the USDA's Rural Business Development Grant, Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance, and Wisconsin Help for Homeowners. Additionally, we provide statewide administrative support to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) network.

# COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2022

## CAAS HELPED LOW-INCOME ENTREPRENEURS START NEW BUSINESSES AND CREATE WISCONSIN JOBS.

For over 30 years, Wisconsin CAAs have provided business development services to low- and moderate-income entrepreneurs through the Jobs and Business Development Program (JBD). In the past ten years, the JBD program has helped create 373 new small businesses, 697 new full-time jobs and has leveraged \$8.6 million in small business loans and grants.

The program recognizes that individuals are experts in their field, often with years of experience, but need significant business counseling and support to start their own businesses. CAAs provide intensive, one-on-one technical assistance to help these experts to create their own job and build assets by starting their own small businesses.

Despite the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 JBD program created 42 new full-time jobs at 31 newly launched small businesses, preserved 44 jobs at existing businesses, and helped small business owners access \$901,338 in business loan and grant funding in 2022. CAAs provided technical assistance to businesses in a variety of sectors including food service, childcare, personal services, pet care, and retail.

### JBD SUCCESS STORY

Purple Basil (Food Truck) LLC  
Portage County



Purple Basil (Food Truck) LLC is a dream come true for its owners, Carolina Cook and Taylor Okerlund. For as long as she can remember, Carolina Corral has always loved to cook. Carolina and Taylor met while serving in the US Army and fell in love with the cultures and cuisines around the world during their service. After leaving the Army they both pursued an education and were inspired to start their own business so they could bring their passion for unique cuisines to central Wisconsin. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, they successfully tested their idea by renting a food truck in 2021 and in 2022 accessed CAP Services' technical assistance and business financing to buy their own food truck and launch their business in Portage County. Chef Carolina says, "Not only does it bring joy to my life, but it is a passion true to my heart."



*Community Health Worker receives COVID-19 Vaccine.*

## WISCAP'S NETWORK PROVIDED EDUCATION & OUTREACH ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the lives of Wisconsinites, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Division of Public Health partnered with WISCAP and seven of our member agencies to address vaccine hesitancy and barriers by increasing education and outreach for the COVID-19 vaccine. This program focused heavily on marginalized populations which saw an unproportionate higher number of infections and deaths caused by COVID-19. These populations include African American, American Indian, Hmong, Latinx, Rural, LGBTQ+, Elderly, POC, Migrant Farmers, Veterans and any other individuals experiencing poverty. These populations are not only more susceptible to adverse health outcomes due to COVID, but they also had increasingly lower vaccination rates due to various barriers. With this program, we were able to connect with these communities to build trust and both identify and address these barriers to vaccines.

The seven agencies who participated in this program are trusted resources in their community and were able to educate and dispel myths about the vaccine through 11 listening sessions held across the state that attracted over 440 individuals. These listening sessions were also supported by over 181 Local Health Partners. In response to these listening sessions, the Local Health Partners involved, held over 125 pop-up clinics and 3,235 individuals received the vaccine.



# COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2022

## CAAS HELP PEOPLE OBTAIN & MAINTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) 2022 Gap Report found that only 35 units of affordable housing are available for every 100 low-income renters in

Wisconsin. Sixty-nine percent of the 195,642 extremely low-income households in Wisconsin are severely cost burdened, meaning they pay over 50% of their income on rent. The pandemic has only intensified this dynamic.

- In 2022, WISCAP member agencies addressed housing stabilization through the **Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance Program (WEA)**. Through this program, over \$139.5 million in emergency rent was distributed to nearly 32,000 households
- Nearly two-thirds of these were households with incomes under 30% of the area median income.

WISCAP also helped launch the Wisconsin Affordable Housing Action Network a statewide cross-sectoral affordable housing advocacy network to develop solutions, policies, and pilot projects in diverse communities across the state.

## COMMUNITY ACTION PROVIDED WEATHERIZATION AND ENERGY ASSISTANCE.

Weatherization and energy-saving efforts represent a significant service offered by Community Action Agencies. Services provided by CAA weatherization crews include insulation, air sealing, furnace inspection, and other energy conservation measures, at no cost for eligible households. These benefits have tangible financial benefits for low-income renters and homeowners. In 2022, 2,955 homes were weatherized using a combination of federal funds and state Public Benefits resources. In addition, 28,926 households received energy assistance with a total benefit of \$12,046,863. This is an average benefit of \$416.47 per household.

Looking forward, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Infrastructure Reduction Act, respectively, present an opportunity to increase funding and opportunities to expand services and foster innovation. As an anti-poverty network, WISCAP will continue to advocate on behalf of member agencies to ensure additional funds are accessible for low-income clients.

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**\$139.5 million**  
*in rental assistance  
provided*

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Responding to the threat of foreclosure brought on by the pandemic, WISCAP collaborated with the Wisconsin Department of Administration and the Office of the State Treasurer to create the **Wisconsin Help for Homeowners (WHH) program**, a statewide effort to keep COVID-impacted households in their homes. Program services include legal aid to prevent foreclosure, HUD-certified counseling, and up to \$40,000 in financial assistance to cure COVID-related delinquencies for eligible applicants. In 2022, 4196 homeowners in 71 of Wisconsin's 72 counties received \$28,470,882.37 to assist them in staying in their homes.

Meanwhile, Community Action Agencies are managing homeless programs and services, housing stabilization programs, and support, while many are building and managing permanent affordable housing, including weatherization. Some of our evolving projects are on the cutting edge, creating affordable housing for migrant laborers in a rural community, state-of-the-art Net Zero affordable housing, senior housing, supportive housing, and innovative rural housing initiatives. The unique credibility of our agencies helps inform innovative partnerships and will remain part of the solution to the ongoing crisis in affordable housing in our state.

### Take Root® Wisconsin



As a program within WISCAP, Take Root® Wisconsin's network of community organizations, housing counseling agencies, Realtors®, lenders, government leaders, and other groups, work to promote sustainable homeownership.

The program's mission is to:

- Improve homeownership in struggling communities
- Increase first-time homeownership
- Prevent property tax and bank foreclosures
- Improve housing quality, health, and safety

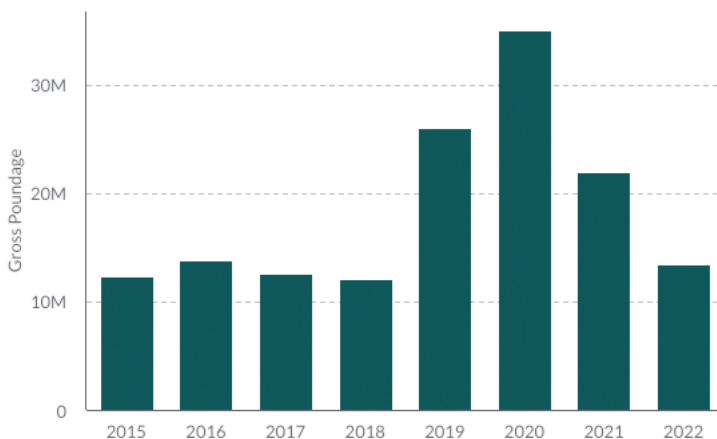
TRW brings together private and public stakeholders to increase homeownership and help people buy, fix, and stay in their homes.

# COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2022

## CAAS & PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS DISTRIBUTED 13.5 MILLION POUNDS OF TEFAP COMMODITIES.

Twelve CAAs and eight non-CAA partners distributed 13.5 million pounds of TEFAP commodities worth \$16.5 million to 338 food pantries, meal sites, and shelters statewide in 2022. TEFAP core resources were supplemented with 'Build Back Better' foods to help mitigate nutritional hardship during the pandemic. In addition to meat, fruit, vegetables, juice, cereals, grains, and pasta, families also received fresh produce, shell eggs, and fresh milk. Network food pantries report distributing 60.5 million pounds of food from all sources combined to an average of 148,000 people each month – a 10% increase over last year. In addition, the 71 meal sites and shelters in the network served a monthly average of 1,607,000 meals, 12% more than the year before. WISCAP has managed logistics and data collection for the TEFAP network since 1998, which has distributed 316 million pounds of federal commodities to food-insecure Wisconsinites.

### TEFAP Poundage by Calendar Year



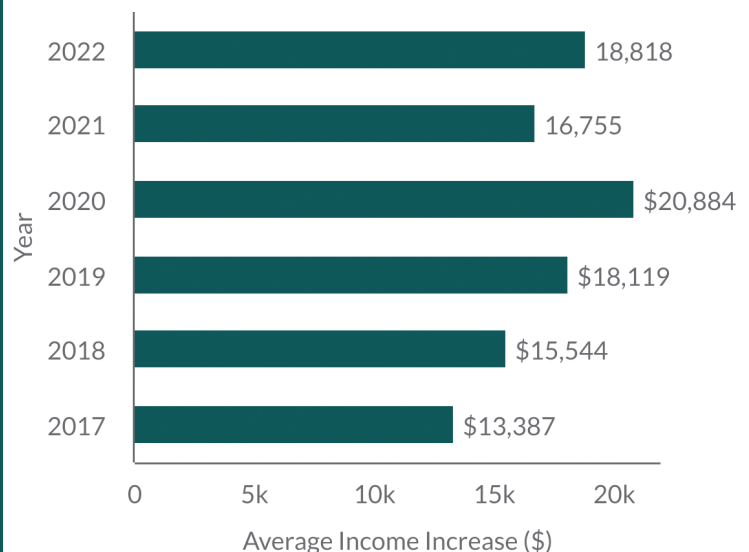
### Pandemic Lessons - Food Security

At the height of COVID, despite the severe economic disruption and high unemployment, demand for emergency food declined because households could access unprecedented supplemental resources – both nutritional & financial (rental assistance, child tax credits, stimulus checks, enhanced SNAP & unemployment benefits, universal free school meals). Starting late in 2021 these supplemental programs began ending just as high inflation rates increased stress on family budgets – and six years of falling demand for emergency food reversed. As remaining COVID resources are withdrawn, a dramatic increase in food pantry demand is accelerating, confirming that food insecurity rates directly reflect national and state investments – and disinvestments - in families.

## COMMUNITY ACTION HELPED SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS EARN AN AVERAGE OF \$18,818 MORE PER YEAR

The Community Action Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) helps low-wage workers obtain better-paying jobs with benefits by assisting them to obtain a degree or certification at a technical or community college. Participants receive assistance paying for tuition, childcare, and transportation to attend classes, as well as individualized career planning, case management, referral, and job search support. Twelve agencies served 148 participants in 2022 with funding from Wisconsin's Department of Children & Families. Of the graduates, 70% reported new jobs earning an average of \$18,818 more annually. Of clients who graduated that found a new job, 77% obtained health benefits.

### Average Annual Income Increase of SEP Graduates



## WISCAP

*Wisconsin's Poverty  
Fighting Network*

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Front Cover: Washington, Wisconsin

# COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS & SERVICES

	1 ADVOCAP	2 CAP Services	3 CWCAC	4 CACSCW	5 CAI	6 Couleecap	7 Indianhead	8 Lakeshore	9 Newcap	10 NOCCAP	11 NWCSA	12 RKCAA	13 SDC	14 SWCAP	15 West CAP	16 WDEOC	FRH	UMOS
<b>Education / Skills Enhancement</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Adult Literacy Skills	x	x								x			x		x			x
Skills Enhancement Program	x	x	x		x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x		
Financial Literacy Education	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Employment Training	x		x		x	x	x		x			x	x	x	x			x
<b>Economic / Business Development</b>	•	•	•			•	•		•				•	•		•		•
Business Development	x	x	x			x	x		x				x	x		x		
Business Revolving Loan Programs	x	x	x			x								x		x		
<b>Energy / Utilities</b>	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Emergency Fuel Assistance Programs			x							x			x		x	x		x
Weatherization Programs	x	x	x		x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
Telecommunications Assistance							x		x		x						x	
<b>Food Security / Environmental</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Emergency Food Assistance	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Community Garden Programs	x	x			x		x				x							
Community Meal Prgms / Holiday Baskets	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x			
Nutrition Education	x		x		x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x				x
<b>Housing</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Transitional / Supportive / Emergency Housing	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x		x
Homeless Programs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		
Rental Property Management / Development	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x			x	x			x
Rental Assistance Programs	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Homeownership Programs	x	x	x			x	x	x	x				x	x		x	x	
Foreclosure Assistance	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Housing Revolving Loan Fund	x	x				x	x		x					x		x	x	
Home Repair Programs	x	x	x			x			x				x	x		x	x	x
<b>Headstart / Child Development</b>	•	•					•							•	•		•	•
<b>Parenting / Family Support</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Childcare Provision/Assistance/Referrals		x			x		x						x	x		x		x
Parenting Classes	x	x			x		x						x	x		x		
Support, Referral and Advocacy	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x
Clothing Assistance			x	x	x	x	x				x			x		x		
Fatherhood Initiative		x			x								x					
Violence Prevention/Victim Services	x	x					x		x				x					x
Legal Services				x			x				x							x
<b>Physical / Mental Health</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Women's Health									x			x		x				
Health Education	x			x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x				x
MA/WIC Programs											x	x		x				
AODA / Mental Health		x						x	x				x	x				
<b>Refugee / Migrant Services</b>		•												•				•
<b>Senior Services</b>	•	•	•		•						•	•	•	•	•	•		•
<b>Tax Preparation Assistance</b>		•									•		•					
<b>Transportation</b>	•	•	•			•			•					•	•	•		•
Car Purchase Programs	x	x	x			x			x					x	x	x		
<b>Youth and Young Adult Services</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•		•	•		•
Education Skills	x		x	x	x		x		x	x			x			x		x
Fresh Start					x											x		
Mentoring Program					x				x				x					x
Juvenile Justice / Violence Prevention					x								x					x
Homeless / Runaway Programs		x	x	x		x			x		x				x			
Employment / Living Skills	x		x	x	x		x		x	x			x					x

# WISCAP NETWORK DIRECTORY

## 1 ADVOCAP, Inc.

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## 2 CAP Services, Inc.

Nicole Harrison, CEO  
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Stevens Point, WI 54481  
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nharrison@capmail.org  
www.capservices.org

## 3 Central Wisconsin Community Action Council

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1000 Hwy 13, P.O. Box 430  
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## 5 Community Action, Inc.

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## 6 Couleecap, Inc.

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## 7 Indianhead Community Action Agency

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## 8 Lakeshore Community Action Program

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## 9 Newcap, Inc.

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## 10 North Central Community Action Program

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## 11 Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency, Inc.

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## 12 Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency

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## 13 Social Development Commission

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Milwaukee, WI 53205  
414-906-2700  
ghinton@cr-sdc.org  
www.cr-sdc.org

## 14 Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program

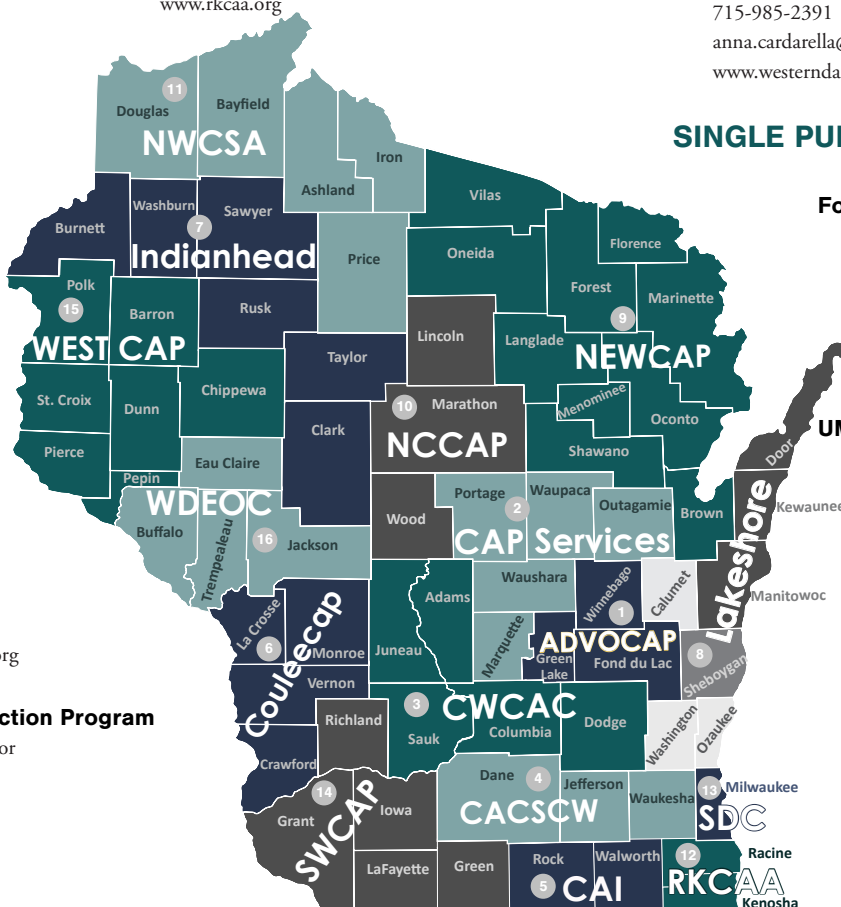
Brett White, Executive Director  
149 N. Iowa St.  
Dodgeville, WI 53533  
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bwhite@swcap.org  
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## 15 West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency

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## 16 Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

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## SINGLE PURPOSE AGENCIES:

### Foundation for Rural Housing

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