

**Testimony submitted by the  
Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA)  
For the Fairfax County Consolidated Community Advisory Committee  
October 14, 2014**

As recipients of Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP) grants since FY2002, ACCA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the priorities for the coming fiscal years. CCFP funding assists ACCA's Emergency Financial Assistance ministry, which provides financial assistance for rent or security deposits, utilities, prescription drugs, dental care, medical or dental needs, and miscellaneous purposes; ACCA's Pantry ministry, which provides emergency food and other essentials to needy people in the community; and ACCA's Furniture ministry, which provides basic furniture, bedding and linens for refugees and other families and individuals moving into empty apartments.

CCFP funding for ACCA ministries grew from \$10,000 in FY2002 to \$ 101,000 in FY2014 to cover increases in inflation, the number of clients needing assistance and the amounts needed for emergency assistance, and the need for furniture storage space. Increased expenditures for the ACCA CCFP-supported ministries have greatly exceeded the increase in CCFP funding, growing from \$115,600 in FY2002 to \$352,900 in FY2013—excluding the value of donated food, hygiene items, furniture, and volunteer services. From FY2013 to FY2014 alone expenditures increased by \$53,000. Most of these expenditures were for financial assistance to keep individuals and families from homelessness.

The great majority of referrals to ACCA for assistance come from Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning. ACCA could not have responded to these legitimate requests for immediate assistance without CCFP funding. Denial of such requests would have increased homelessness, hunger, squalid living conditions, and untreated illness in our communities. County trends data reveal that emergency food requests in FY2014 were at the highest level they have reached since the recession began, an increase from 2,883 calls in FY2007 to 7,684, and requests for emergency housing assistance—although somewhat lower than the peak in 2012—remain at a very high level: 3,723 calls in FY2014 compared to 2,340 in FY2007.

Thus even with increased funding from the CCFP, our member churches, individuals, and grantors, ACCA's resources have been stretched tight. We have often had to ration assistance in order to stay within the monthly ACCA budget for emergency financial assistance. Nor have we been able to return to our former policy of providing two weeks of food in one emergency food delivery. Despite very successful food drives, food volunteers have told me that they have never seen the ACCA cupboards so bare.

Turning to some of the specific issues raised by the Steering Committee in its July 2014 report:

Community Needs Assessments. We strongly support increased community needs assessment. Region 2, where ACCA provides its services, contains two of the biggest pockets of low-income individuals and families in the County. Despite the economic recovery, unemployment remains high. We also get requests for assistance from the working poor,

especially when faced with illness or other emergencies. We think it is especially important to determine how best to help families get out of the cycle of need and gain self-sufficiency.

Improve Collaboration among Providers. ACCA believes collaboration among providers is invaluable. It has always been important to our ability to provide effective service delivery. We participate in the bi-monthly Food Providers Network. We also meet regularly with other furniture providers, such as FCS, CHO, Share, and others. This permits us to learn from each other's experiences and to share resources where one provider may be short and another may have surplus. We also have met with ECHO to discuss how we might coordinate in the event of an emergency and look forward to continuing participation in Mason District's Community Collaboration for Disaster Resiliency Initiative. In addition to collaboration with other providers, ACCA has a vast array of partners with who assist us in obtaining donations and in providing services.

Complexity of Requirements. Adjusting priorities and contracting requirements is essential to meeting changing needs, the evolving nature of community-based providers, and increasing legal requirements. This complexity in proposals and reporting requirements for CCFP funding creates obstacles for small non-profits such as ACCA, whose Human Services Ministries are staffed entirely by volunteers. However, with the excellent technical support provided by the staff of the Department of Management Services ACCA volunteers have developed an Internet technology (IT) tool to electronically transfer and store data for our Emergency Financial Assistance ministry. We have met with County staff and other service providers to share our experience with the IT Tool, with a view towards increasing use of similar technology throughout the County. We also intend to adapt this Tool to the needs of our Pantry and Furniture ministries.

Measuring Outcomes. We support the increasing emphasis on outcomes as a measure of effectiveness. However, ACCA most often is first responder in emergency situations affecting a mobile and transient group of clients, many of whom do not speak English. ACCA has no caseworkers and does not perform any follow-up with clients, so it is almost impossible for us to determine the intermediate or long-term effects of our assistance in the lives of our clients or their progress toward self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, we are confident that our collaboration with the County and other providers enables ACCA to support our clients' first steps toward stability and self-sufficiency. We note that the IT Tool we have developed enables ACCA to communicate more effectively with the County and to more readily provide the data that it seeks regarding the clients whom we serve.

We continue to encourage the County to provide more than professional development and advice about measuring outcomes. It would help ACCA and other non-profits if the County developed models and provided support for longitudinal evaluation--whether through sampling, follow-up surveys or other data analysis. Compelling stories are popular now as a means of communicating about the effectiveness of human services. However, these should be backed up by solid facts—not just about the numbers served but also about how their lives were changed by interventions.

Crisis Intervention. Almost all of the assistance provided by ACCA with CCFP funding

can be categorized as helping families in crisis overcome short-term problems to avoid falling more deeply into despair and dependency on public support. Our collaboration with social workers from the County and Schools as well as other partners such as Shelter House and Bethany House, multiplies the value of the funds, goods, and services provided in the short-term by ACCA volunteers. We also support maintaining a CCFP reserve to be tapped if the loss of federal funding for crisis intervention exacerbates local needs.