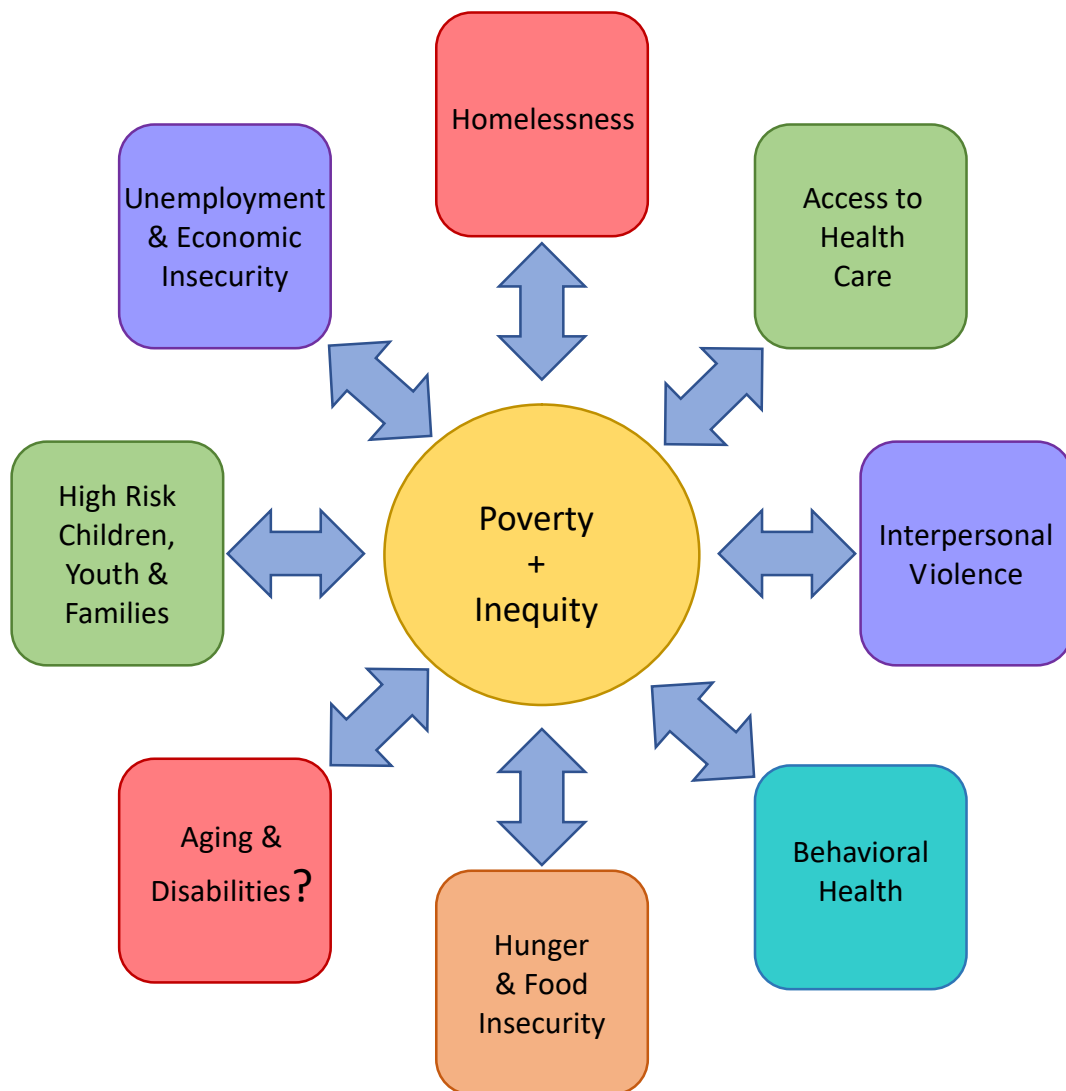


## City of Columbia FY2026 Budget: Social Services Funding

For over 50 years, the City of Columbia has recognized that in addition to physical infrastructure and public safety, it must also make an investment in our community's social infrastructure. To this end, the City has both provided and purchased social services to ensure that adequate levels of these services are available to low-income residents of the City.

The social services provided and purchased by the City address some of our community's most challenging issues, many of which are rooted in poverty and inequity.



This report, from the Human Services commission, is intended to outline these issues and the critical role the City's social services funding plays in addressing their causes and effects.

For detailed information about the City's social services funding, please visit the [City of Columbia Social Services Funding web page](https://www.columbia.gov/health/social-services-funding/) (<https://www.columbia.gov/health/social-services-funding/>).

## A Strategic Investment

Because the City does not have the capacity to provide all of the social services needed to address the causes and effects of poverty and inequity in our community, the Human Services Commission and the Department of Public Health and Human Services are charged by the Columbia City Council to make annual recommendations for the purchase of social services, through professional services agreements with community-based providers, utilizing the City's social services funding.

In order to target limited resources, the City's social services funding is allocated to address two issue areas reflecting the funding priorities identified by the HSC and approved by the City Council:

- **Basic Needs**
- **Opportunity**

<b>Goal</b>	Ensure our basic needs are met and we all have the opportunity to achieve our full potential.
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Requests for proposals and the resulting purchase of service contracts are issued in a staggered, two-year cycle:

Issue Area	Target Range		Target Mean		FY25 Allocations	
	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$
Basic Needs	50 – 75%	\$927,929.50 - \$1,391,894.25	62.50%	\$1,159,912	79.70%	\$1,433,196.00
Opportunity	25 – 50%	\$463,964.75 - \$927,929.50	37.50%	\$695,947	20.30%	\$422,663.00

The social services contracted by the City are identified and prioritized through a data driven process, which also incorporates an ongoing assessment of community needs and resources. While the City's investment in social services is not adequate to fully address the causes and effects of poverty and inequality, it does substantially increase the availability of services in Columbia. Examples of services the City purchases include:

- Employment readiness and support from Job Point
- Homelessness and shelter services from Room at the Inn and Turning Point
- Housing support services from Voluntary Action Center and Love Columbia
- Out of school programs from Columbia Housing Authority, Fun City, and Grade A Plus
- Personal finance education from Love Columbia
- Domestic violence services from True North
- Senior and disability services from Services for Independent Living
- Nutritious supplemental foods from the Food Bank and CCUA

Without funding from the City, many of these services would simply be unavailable to our community's most vulnerable residents.

## A Return on Investment

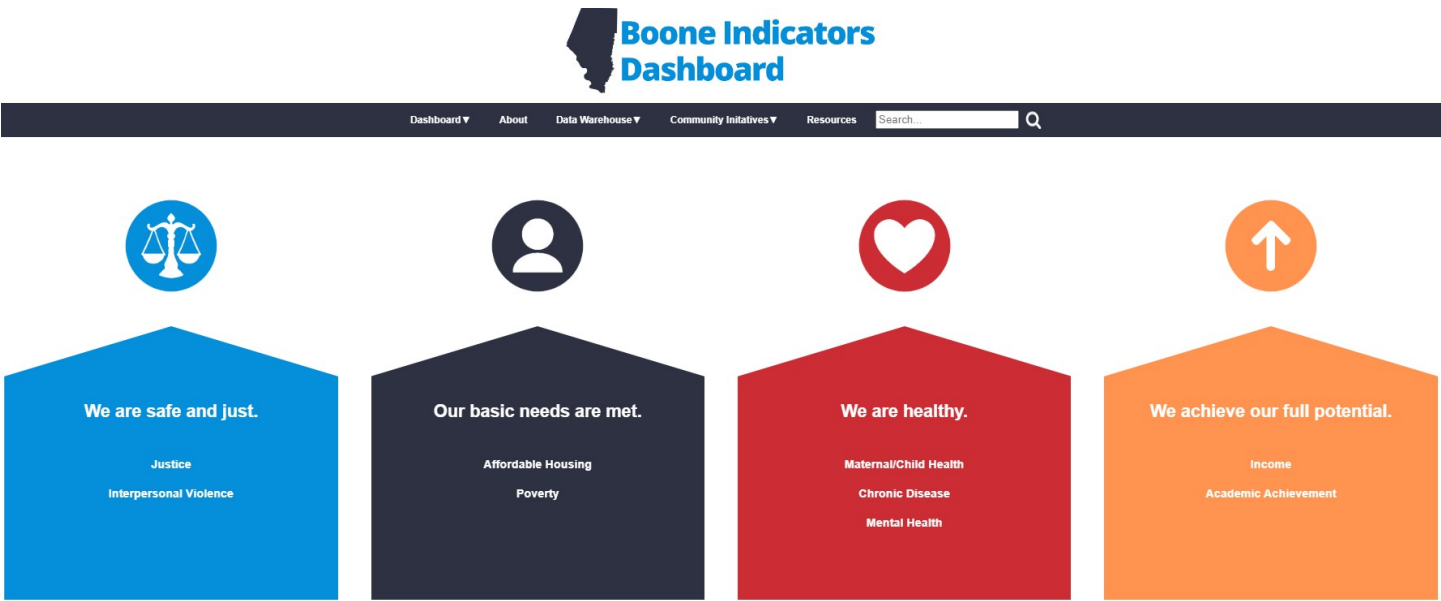
**\$16:1**

The City's investment also allows our contracted partners to leverage additional, external resources which further increase the community's capacity to deliver social services. Based on an analysis of our current social services contracts, we found that for every \$1 the City of Columbia invests in local social services, our contracted providers generate \$16 additional dollars... a \$16/\$1 **return on investment**. In addition, a significant portion of these revenues are obtained from sources outside our community. Our relatively small investment makes Columbia very competitive in obtaining shrinking resources from external funders which are increasingly requiring local matching funds.

# A Collective Investment

The investment in social services also empowers the City to be a leader in convening a multitude of stakeholders to address our community’s complex social issues. Because we are operating in a resource-scarce environment, we have embraced and led a collective impact approach, in the spirit of moving the needle together.

Through our [Boone Impact Group](#), the City of Columbia, Boone County, Heart of Missouri United Way, Veterans United Foundation, Community Foundation of Central Missouri, and Missouri Foundation for Health continue to successfully align plans, policies, practices, and funding in order to further develop our capacity to effect positive change at the community level. We measure our success in doing so through our [Boone Indicators Dashboard](#) ([www.booneindicators.org](http://www.booneindicators.org)), which serves as our community’s scorecard and repository of local economic and health indicators.



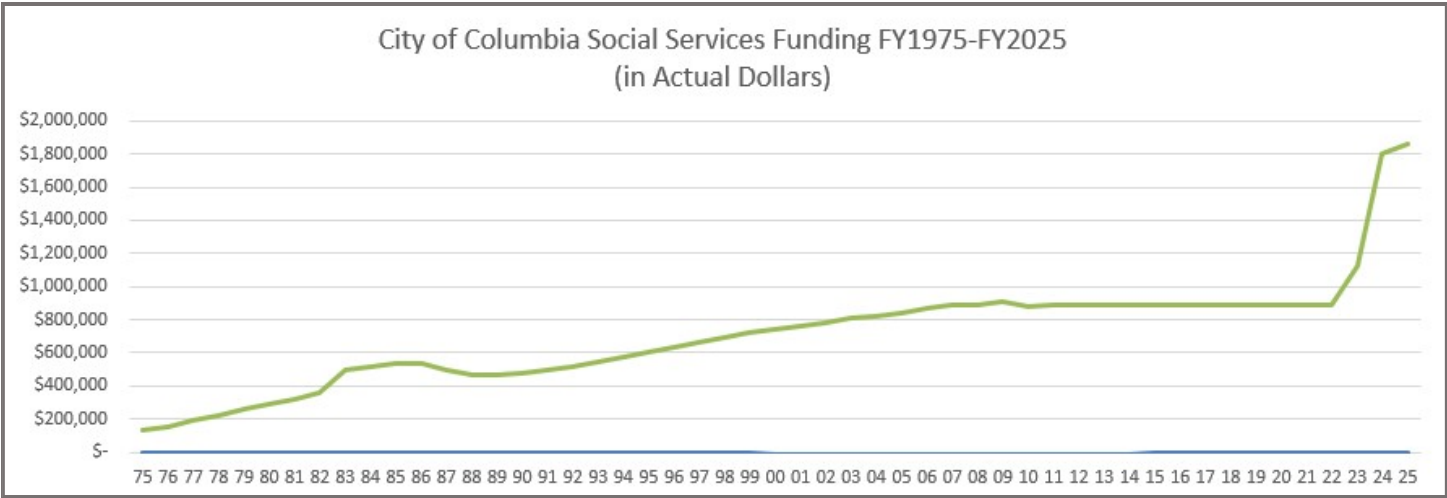
It is critical to note that the large college student population in Columbia does inflate our overall poverty rate. While college students may be living in situational poverty, most are not in households experiencing generational poverty. In order to mitigate the effect of college students on the poverty rate in Columbia, and because they are important stand-alone indicators, we closely monitor the poverty rates for children and families.

Poverty					
Indicator	Region	Category	Baseline	Most Recent	Trend
Child Poverty Rate	City of Columbia	Total	15.5% in 2014-2018	13.4% in 2019-2023	
	Boone County	Total	15.8% in 2014-2018	14.8% in 2019-2023	
	State of Missouri	Total	19.4% in 2014-2018	16.0% in 2019-2023	--
	Equity Statement: In the City of Columbia, Black children have a poverty rate seven times higher than White children. In Boone County, Black children have a poverty rate almost six times higher than White children.				

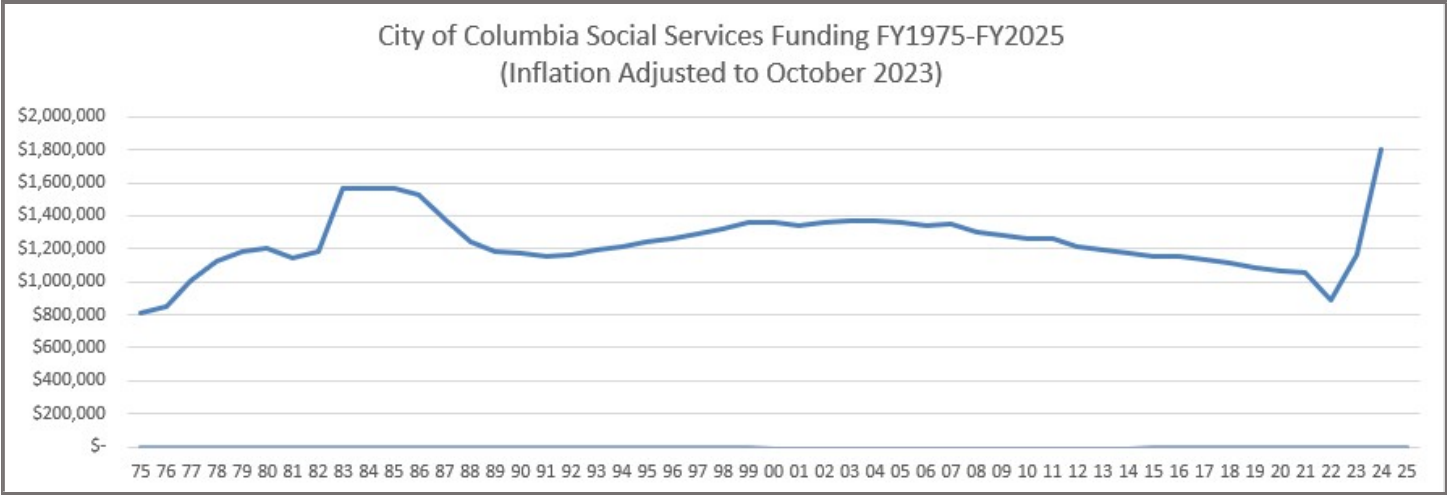
Due to a long history of pervasive intolerance and bigotry, African-Americans in Columbia continue to experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, and morbidity & mortality and disproportionately low rates of educational and economic attainment.

## Funding History

In actual dollars, the City’s investment social services steadily increased from FY1975 through FYFY2009. In FY2010, the investment was reduced and then remained flat until it was increased substantially in FY2023 and again in FY2024.



When adjusted for inflation, the City’s investment in social services peaked in FY1984. Since that time, the inflation adjusted level of funding trended downward until FY2023.



## FY2026 Request for Proposals for Social Services

On July 14, 2025, City staff issued a request for proposals (RFP) for social services to address the issue area of opportunity. The Human Services Commission looks forward to the opportunity to present the FY2026 social services contract recommendations to the City Council on December 15, 2025.

## Conclusion

The issues of intolerance and unfairness compounded by the issue of poverty have conspired to keep too many of our residents from realizing their true potential. This is why the City’s investment in social services, which not only assists people in meeting their basic needs, but also builds the skills and assets people need to move up and out of poverty, is so critical. And now, the need for social services has never been greater. At the same time, the burden of providing and funding social services increasingly falls on local communities. Therefore, the City’s social services funding is needed now more than ever. The members of the Human Services Commission would like to thank the City Manager and City Council for their continued support of the City’s investment in the social infrastructure of our community.