

*1 in 3 children under age 12 in Massachusetts may be at risk of not having the daily essential items – clothing, shoes, school supplies, winter coats – they need. To meet this critical need, 142 state-wide partner agencies rely on C2C for these essentials every day and in every season.*

### Mission

Cradles to Crayons provides children from birth through age 12, living in homeless or low-income situations, with the essential items they need to thrive – at home, at school and at play. We supply these items free of charge by engaging and connecting communities.

### For what purpose do you plan to utilize these funds?

Cradles to Crayons (C2C) plans to use these funds to support our core initiative, *Everyday Essentials*, which operates year-round across the Commonwealth. Last fiscal year, C2C served over 148,000 children living in households at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, through this initiative.<sup>1</sup> C2C works with nearly 1,000 staff members at 142 state-wide organizational partners, including schools, social service agencies, and community health centers, to distribute *KidPacks*, backpacks filled with school supplies and other essentials to children in need.

A *KidPack* is a personalized order for each child, and contains one week's worth of gender- and size-specific, seasonal clothing and other essential items. Other items within a *KidPack* can include: shoes, underwear, socks, diapers, hygiene kits and books, depending on the child's need and C2C's available inventory. New backpacks filled with age-appropriate school supplies are distributed in bulk to service partners during "back to school" time. Specialty Items are also available for partners to distribute to the families in their networks. Specialty Items include baby gear, sports equipment, dress clothes, larger toys, and other items donated to C2C in quantities too limited or too physically large to offer in every *KidPack*.

C2C believes that all of these items are critical to a child's well-being: from boosting self-esteem and school attendance and being ready to learn, to staying safe and warm during the cold winter months, to developing through play and physical activity in every season.

Our process begins with grassroots children's product collections, held in neighborhood and corporate communities. Items collected make their way to our Giving Factory warehouse, where volunteers sort and inspect donations for new or like-new items. Quality donations are then packaged into personalized *KidPacks*. The large majority of items in our Giving Factory are donated by members of the community, with a small amount strategically purchased by C2C in bulk to fill gaps in donated inventory. By leveraging these donations and a volunteer base of more than 31,000 volunteers annually, C2C is able to minimize operational costs and maximize the number of disadvantaged children we are able to serve. Our volunteers are crucial to our mission and we would not be able to serve high volumes of children without their support.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019, at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines was at or below \$51,500 for a family of four.

Operating year-round, *Everyday Essentials* includes targeted initiatives to focus attention on specific areas of need:

- **Ready for School** - fills a child's need for an adequate quantity of seasonal clothing and other essentials to be able to attend school, by providing backpacks with school supplies and clothing packs to children between June 1 and October 1. This past year, the organization provided 87,540 incidences of service across Massachusetts.
- **Gear Up for Winter** - distributes winter coats, hats, gloves, boots, and warm clothing to children from October 1st through March 31st. Last year, C2C supplied 28,335 hats and gloves, 16,244 pairs of boots/shoes, and 28,450 winter coats to bundle up children and protect them from the cold.
- **The Mobile Clothing Pantry** - a successful program that collaborates with 12 school- and community-based food pantries, including the Greater Boston Food Bank, to serve as a one-stop hub for orders and distribution of *KidPacks* for 4,000 children every year. This program enables families who utilize food pantry services to address multiple, basic need insecurities – food and clothing – at the same time. Since inception, this program has served more than 14,000 children.

Given the current coronavirus pandemic, the vulnerable children and families C2C serves are facing increasingly challenging circumstances. Their reliance on our support cannot be overstated at this time. Though our volunteer operations and product collections have stalled, C2C continues to adapt to this ever-changing situation, in order to serve these vulnerable populations, all while maintaining the safety of our staff, partners and community members. For example, we have already provided thousands of diapers to a food pantry partner for families to pick up when collecting food during this crisis. We also anticipate the demand for our services to be greater than ever once we resume full operations. Therefore, funding is critical at this time to ensure that we can continue to serve the community as best we can both now and when social distancing subsides.

### **What are your other sources of funding?**

Cradles to Crayons receives funding from an extensive network of supporters that can be divided into three categories: foundations, corporations and families/individuals.

C2C has developed a loyal base of private foundation and corporate foundation supporters whose giving priorities align with our mission. Last year C2C received grant support from 47 private foundations and 18 corporate foundations.

C2C also engages companies throughout Massachusetts who provide support outside of grants. Last year, C2C partnered with 332 companies through annual partnerships, event sponsorships, corporate volunteer visits, third-party events, and matching gifts. Our Annual Partners consist of companies that support us at the \$50K level or above. Some of our partners include Bank of America, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Staples and TJX Companies. C2C secures a majority of corporate funding through financial support alongside volunteer opportunities. Our volunteer shifts present companies with impactful, hands-on team-building opportunities in which employees roll up their sleeves and sort, organize and quality check the items donated to our organization.

In addition, financial support from families and individuals account for more than 50% of our annual funding. A major source of our familial support is via our Family Leadership Circle. The FLC is comprised

of a group of generous and dedicated families who give \$1,000 or more annually and play a critical role in sustaining our mission to provide local children with the essential items they need to thrive.

## What are your short-term and long-term goals?

Cradles to Crayons is driven by one focused and all-important goal: a future free of childhood poverty. We have short-term and long-term goals that help guide us as we work to make life better for children in need.

### C2C's short-term goals:

- To serve 147,500 children in FY2020 (April 1 – March 31)
- To meet its fundraising goals

### Long-term goals:

- Heighten awareness among the general public, funders, and policy-makers about Clothing Insecurity and the vast numbers of children affected by the lack of adequate clothing, which places them at an unfair disadvantage for adverse long-term educational, economic, and health outcomes.
- C2C is gathering data on the ability of its services to reduce absenteeism, improve academic performance, and increase well-being through our “ Predictable Service for Deeper Impact”, a two-year, research-based pilot focused on proactively providing service. Launched in the fall of 2018, this program, provides 309 participating students within highly, “economically-disadvantaged” elementary schools (Boston, Worcester, Holyoke) with four deliveries of customized *KidPacks* and age-appropriate school supplies throughout the school year.
- Increase efficiencies in our warehouse operations, supply chains, inventory management, and distribution methods to serve partners and families as efficiently and effectively as possible.

## Why are staff members passionate about the work they do?

C2C staff are driven by the fact that each and every day they are working to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Massachusetts. Knowing that our work is going to impact the lives of children adds an extra layer of motivation, and a personal connection that is difficult to duplicate. C2C staff members lead at least one volunteer shift in our Giving Factory each month. Not only does this help serve as a reminder of why we're doing this work, but we also get to witness firsthand, individuals from all walks of life come together for a common cause. On any given day, over 200 community members will walk through our doors and volunteer alongside one another.

Our model allows staff to visualize C2C's mission. We can walk into The Giving Factory and see all the product donations we have received. We can see *KidPacks* as they are being assembled. We can see community members dropping off carloads of donations and service partners picking up carloads of assembled items to distribute to the families in their networks.

Staff are also fueled by “sunshine”. At C2C, “sunshine” refers to drawings, letters and thank you notes that we receive throughout the year, from the children and families that we serve, and our partner organizations. Our “sunshine wall” in our Giving Factory, adorned with thank you messages from families we have impacted, keeps staff motivated and passionate about their work.

*“What more can I say? I appreciate this lovely team of wonderful people, your energy is life to others, your kind and giving ways are God sent. I recently found out about C2C and I was overjoyed with the clothes and supplies my kids received and let me tell you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I don't have to feel like a beggar and ashamed. I know now, I am one of many who needs help.”– Parent*

## What impacts have you made in the local community?

C2C measures success based on improving a child's quality of life through our ability to fulfill the orders placed by social service partners, and the delivery of needed items into the hands of children. Last fiscal year, C2C served 148,592 children across the Commonwealth. Through our *Everyday Essentials* initiative, we provided 58,029 *KidPacks*, including 34,449 pairs of footwear; 60,022 backpacks; and 30,542 essential items (i.e. hygiene kits, diapers).

Approximately one-half of our recipients live in Boston, with most requests concentrated in the high-need neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and South Boston. We also reach children in other high-need cities and towns, including New Bedford, Quincy, Lowell, Fall River, Brockton, Somerville, Lawrence, Lynn, Worcester, and Holyoke.

C2C's primary quantitative success indicator is the number of children served. This goal is set at the beginning of the fiscal year and is based on actual service in the previous fiscal year, as well as market needs, staff capacity, ability to grow and secure product. Through the use of Salesforce, C2C:

- (a) Tracks the number of children served annually to meet our service goal, the type and particulars of every order, and KPIs such as fill rates and turnaround time.
- (b) Collects survey feedback from our partners annually. In our most recent partner survey, a full 100% of respondents described our services as either "critical" or "important" to their ability to serve children: 91% of parents said it relieved the stress of having to buy backpacks, school supplies, and winter clothing; and 88% of partners said they rely on C2C to provide resources they cannot get elsewhere.
- (c) Registers and tracks volunteers by group, individual, and service hours.
- (d) Records the number of community drives and the quantity of donated product.
- (e) Monitors our progress towards meeting our fundraising goals.

In addition, partners also frequently share anecdotal evidence or "Sunshine" about the impact of our services on the children and families we serve.

The lack of proper clothing is one of the top 10 reasons children are absent from school.<sup>2</sup> Children living in low-income situations are four times more likely to be chronically absent than others. By providing adequate and appropriate clothing, C2C helps reduce absenteeism. More than 89% of C2C's partners reported a surge in school attendance during the cold months because of our *KidPack* service.

Poor health is also one of the top 10 reasons kids do not go to school. Seasonally appropriate clothes are essential to face winter temperatures in a region like New England, and have a direct impact on the incidences of poor health, especially for low-income children who are more likely to walk or ride the bus to school. C2C provides children with the warm winter wear and footwear they need to help them stay warm and healthy.

C2C is the premier "go to" agency in Massachusetts that addresses children's Clothing Insecurity and reported to be the only resource of its kind by our partners. Lacking essential daily items often creates a stressful environment for families. By providing children with these essentials, C2C helps to relieve the family's financial stress.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/What-is-Chronic-Absence.pdf>

## What makes your organization stand out as distinct?

C2C is one of few organizations across the United States that address the issue of Clothing Insecurity for children. Defined as the lack of access to affordable, adequate, and appropriate clothing, Clothing Insecurity is a basic need that is not often supported by government programs. Yet it is a basic human right that according to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is critical to uphold a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

In Massachusetts, according to the Boston Planning and Development Agency, 284,000 children under age 12 – 1 in 3 children – live at or below 200% of the federal poverty line, and may face Clothing Insecurity during the year. Alarmingly, almost 90% of the State’s children under 12 do not qualify for the State’s minimal annual clothing allowance (\$350), leaving a huge gap for families experiencing economic hardship. For thousands of families, C2C is their only resource to meet their children’s clothing and essential item needs. Through C2C’s core, year-round initiative, *Everyday Essentials*, we are able to reach those families.

Without adequate and appropriate clothing, children face unfair barriers and participate in life on an unequal playing field. Our services provide the basic need items that help them to overcome those barriers and level the playing field. According to Communities in Schools (2015 report), Clothing Insecurity is listed three times among the top ten reasons children are absent from school. By ensuring children have properly fitting and seasonally appropriate clothing and backpacks full of school supplies, they are better prepared to learn, interact with their peers, and possess greater self-confidence.

Inadequate, poorly-fitting, tattered, and unclean clothing often leads to stigmatizing a child as poor, discriminating against a child as an outsider, or to bullying. One of C2C’s core beliefs is that Quality=Dignity. When a child has properly-fitting, clean clothing, it can boost their self-esteem. All children have the right to have their basic clothing needs met and deserve to feel that they “belong.” When a sense of “fitting in” is high, so is engagement and motivation.

Our model, rooted in community participation, empowers individuals, groups, and communities to donate product, time, and financial resources. Our Giving Factory warehouse in Newton functions as an efficient storage and operations center to process tons of new and like-new donations. Most importantly, it is a popular hub for hands-on volunteerism. It is one of the few places where you can find a group of 100+ professionals volunteering alongside a family with children as young as five years old. Our unique operational model allows C2C to utilize a diversified supply chain, a high-volume, volunteer-led fulfillment center, and a large network of partnerships that amplifies distribution to reach the greatest number of Massachusetts’ children in need.

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<sup>3</sup> The **right to adequate clothing**, or the **right to clothing**, is recognized as a [human right](#) in various [international human rights instruments](#); this, together with the [right to food](#) and the [right to housing](#), are parts of the [right to an adequate standard of living](#) as recognized under [Article 11](#) of the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR). The right to clothing is similarly recognized under [Article 25](#) of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR).