



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Board Approved updated: 6 May 2021



*Helping people.
Changing lives.*



Economic Security Corporation of Southwest Area

2020-2023 Community Needs Assessment

CNA Update: May 2021

Executive Summary

2020-2023 Community Needs Assessment Planning Committee

Staff Members:

- John Joines, CCAP Chief Executive Officer
- Jeff Goldammer, Head Start & Early Head Director
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Facilitator:

- National Community Action Partnership, facilitator. Courtney Kohler, MA, CCAP, NCRT, Senior Associate and T/TA

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Executive Summary

About Economic Security Corporation of Southwest Area

Economic Security Corporation is a charitable non-profit organization and the designated Community Action Agency serving primarily Barton, Jasper, Newton and McDonald Counties. We offer a wide range of services for low wage earners and vulnerable populations, including access to Head Start, Housing, Family Strengthening, Housing Counseling, Intake, Assessment & Resource Referrals, Home Repair, and Weatherization, community coordination, Early Head Start, Early Head Start Childcare Partnership, employment and training for persons experiencing homelessness, energy assistance and housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

The Economic Security Corporation has been a local leader in the nationwide fight against poverty since 1965. We have built a sustainable and coordinated system of opportunities for Economic Security Corporation's families and communities. Economic Security Corporation employs 370 Community Action individuals in the four-county area.

ESC's Mission:

- To provide comprehensive services that instill hope, share opportunities to eliminate the conditions of poverty and help neighbors achieve self-sufficiency.

ESC's Vision:

- A thriving community of neighbors that is free from poverty.

Community Action Promise:

- Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to help people help themselves and each other.

An additional note: The World Health Organization on January 30, 2020 declared a global pandemic. On March 11th, Missouri Governor declared a Statewide Public Health Emergency. On April 6, 2020, the Missouri Governor declared a "Stay at Home" order that lasted until May 6, 2020. This caused our needs assessment timeline to change several of the techniques that we would have used to gather information in-group settings. April 1, 2021, COVID-19 vaccinations were available to everyone over 18 years of age; we have three vaccinations available, Pfizer, Moderna and J & J.

Overview of Strategic Planning Process

As a Community Action Agency, Economic Security Corporation receives, federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds distributed through the Missouri Division of Social Services, Community Services unit. As a CSBG recipient, every three years, the Economic Security Corporation conducts a strategic planning process in order to assess the needs that exist among low wage earners and the most vulnerable people in our service area. Our goal is to create a plan to address those needs over the next three years. This process is reviewed annually to make plan course corrections. This process includes a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment, which assesses the state of ongoing issues while identifying new and changing goals and needs, annually.

Between October 2017 and September 2018, the Economic Security Corporation's Strategic Planning Team coordinated a 12-month timeline that included review of Community Needs Assessment data, including annual updates. Created a new mission and vision statement, created a local theory of change. Reviewed Community Needs Assessment High Priority Needs that led to outcome statements.

Data was collected, reviewed and analyzed along with secondary supportive data from the Community Action Partnership Assessment tool and Economic Security Corporation's Management Information Systems.

The information collected through this process will help the Economic Security Corporation and the invaluable local providers with whom we collaborate to prioritize services and strategically plan for the next three years.

Service Area and Community Profiles

Barton County Community Profile:

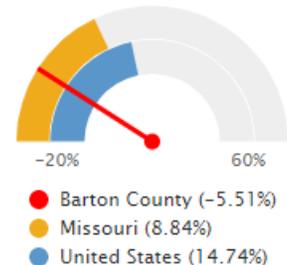
Barton County is a rural, farming community in Missouri. Lamar is the largest city and the center of activity in the county, which includes Barton County Memorial Hospital and the County Seat.

Geographic Boundaries: Barton County's boundaries are Vernon County to the North, Dade County to the East, Pittsburg, Kansas to the West and Jasper County to the

South. The total area is 36.57 square miles. Total population is 11,942 with the city of Lamar being the largest town with a population of 4,306.

Population: Total population has seen a decrease by -4.78% from 2000 Census to 2017 American Community Survey (ACS)

Percent Change in Population



Barton County Households:

- Households decreased by .90% in comparison to Missouri (8.73%) and the Nation at (6.13%)

Barton County Individuals and Families:

- 14% of the families are single female-households mainly residing in the City of Lamar. However, 42% single female-headed households are living in Poverty as compared with Missouri who have 18.3% female-headed households. Nationally, this percentage is over 19% are female-head households.
- 26% of individuals are living in Poverty (125%) compared with 19% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 22% of individuals are living in Poverty (100%) compared with 14% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 44% of individuals are living in Poverty (200%) compared with 33% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 18.3% of the individuals are seniors over 64 years of age compared with 15.2% of Missouri citizens who are seniors. 13.8% of Barton County seniors live in Poverty compared with the rest of Missouri that falls around 8.6%.

Population in Poverty, Percent



Barton County Age and Gender:

- Children (0-4) includes both females and males is 6.7% or 691 children, 74 less children than in 2015 ACS.
- 44% of children (0-4) live in Poverty compared to the 22% of Missouri children (0-4) who live in Poverty.
- It is almost twice as likely for a male child 0-4 to be living in Poverty than his female counterpart.
- 2% more females live in Poverty than their counterparts.
- Adults aged over 64, including both females and males are 18.4% of the population, 1.4% increase in adults aged over 64 than in the 2015 ACS.
- Adults ages (18-64), eligible working age makes up over 56% of the population, representing a 0% increase from the 2015 ACS.

Barton County Race and Ethnicity:

Race and Ethnicity are more likely to reside on the East side of Barton County.

- 25 Hispanic/Latino children age 0-4, of this population 88% are most likely living in Poverty.
- African American population represents 1.71%.
- All other races combined were 6.6%.
- 287 people of color live in Poverty, 35 are children. (0-4).
- 71% of Hispanic/Latino individuals are most likely living in Poverty.

Barton County Nutrition:

- 55% of Barton County students are eligible for free or reduced lunch compared with 50% of other Missouri students.

Barton County Wellness Indicators:

- Deaths of Despair I (rate of death due to suicide, alcohol-related disease and drug overdoses per 100,000 population) is three more deaths per 100,000 than the Missouri rate.
- 11.4% of Barton County citizens are uninsured compared to 9.2% of Missouri citizens.
- Barton County's median housing stock age is 1974, that indicates there are a number of older homes with lead-based paint. These homes should not house children under 6 years of age due to the risks of lead-based paint on young children.
- Barton County has a lower vacancy rate. 2% residential addresses are available for rental housing, compared to Missouri residential vacancy rate of 3.1%

Barton County Broadband Access:

- 80.9% of Barton County has access to high-speed internet compared with 91% of Missouri's population.

Jasper County Community Profile

Jasper County is part of a micropolitan area, the Joplin MSA designation is being changed later in 2021 or 2022; it is unclear how this will change direct Joplin MSA federal funding streams, Southwest Missouri. Joplin is the largest city and the center of activity in the county, which includes two regional hospitals, one regional airport and a secondary County Courthouse. Daytime population is approximately 240,000 people. Therefore, it is the main hub for the four-state area.

Geographic boundaries: Jasper county's boundaries are Barton County to the North, Greene County to the East, Galena, Kansas to the West and Newton County to the South. The total area is 31.54 square miles. City of Joplin is the largest town with a population of just over 50,657. There are smaller towns that border the City of Joplin to

the North and East, including Webb City, Carl Junction, and Duneweg and Duquesne, Missouri.

Total population has seen an increase of 13.22% from the 2000 Census to 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) compared with the State of Missouri's average change in population of 8.58%. We appear to be in a growth mode.

Percent Change in Population



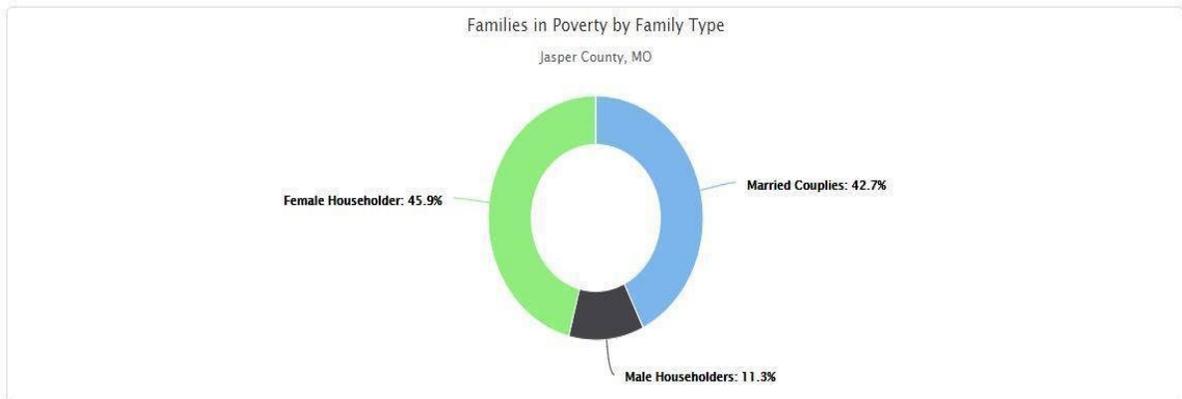
Jasper County Households:

Total households for the area increased by 46,009 households or 11.10%. Households increased in comparison to Missouri 8.73% and the Nation at 6.13%.

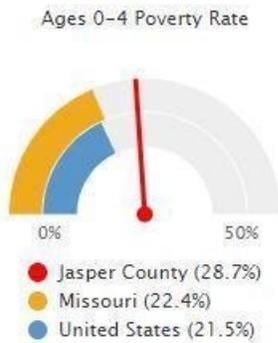
Jasper County Individual and Families:

- Married couples make up 75.4% of the population, and yet 43% of families living in Poverty are married couples.
- 17% of the families are single female-headed households mainly residing in the South-Central part of Jasper County.

However, 46% single female-headed households are living in Poverty, as compared with Missouri who has 18.3% of households are led by female-headed households. Nationally, this percentage is over 19% of households are female-headed households.



- 24% of individuals are living in Poverty (125%) compared with 19% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 17% of individuals are living in Poverty (100%) compared with 14% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 40% of families are living in Poverty (200%) compared with 33% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.



Jasper County Age and Gender:

- Children (0-4) including both females and males is 7% of the total population.
- 29% of children ages 0-4 live in Poverty compared to 22% of Missouri children (0-4) live in Poverty.
- 18.5% of females are living in Poverty compared to 16% of the male population
- 60% of Jasper County's population are adults ages (18-65) and are eligible able-bodied.

Jasper County Race and Ethnicity:

- 1,222 Hispanic/Latino children aged 0-4 live in Jasper County, of this population 54% are most likely living in Poverty.
- 496 children aged 0-4 of color live in poverty.
- African-American population represents 2% of Jasper County's population
- Mixed races represent 3%
- American Indian population represents almost 2% of Jasper County's population
- Over 37% of the Hispanic/Latino population are likely to live in Poverty, compared to the not Hispanic/Latino population who are 15.7% more likely to live in Poverty.

Jasper County Life Expectancy:

- Jasper County citizens will live on average 2 years less than other Missourians, due to high heart and lung disease.

Jasper County Wellness Indicators:

- Adults with Asthma are 5% higher in Jasper County than other Missourians.
- Deaths of Despair I (rate of death due to suicide, alcohol-related disease and drug overdoses per 100,000 population) is two more deaths per 100,000 than the Missouri is and has almost doubled in 10 years.
- 12.6% of Jasper County citizens are uninsured compared to 9.2% of Missouri citizens.
- Jasper County's median housing stock age is 1978, that indicates there are a number of older homes with lead-based paint. These homes cannot house children under 6 years of age due to the risks of lead-based paint on young children.
- Jasper County infants are twice more likely to die from preventable sleeping-related deaths than other Missouri infants are.



- 29% of Joplin area citizens commute to the Springfield area for employment, compared with 20% of Springfield area citizens who commute. This equates to 7K missing employees for Joplin area employers.
- Jasper County has high employment in the Food and Beverage Manufacturing area, it is the highest concentration by 4x compared to other areas of the state.
- One in 4 Missouri counties have a Location Quotient (LQ) of 2.0 or greater, which is twice as concentrated compared to the U.S. average. Most F & B manufacturing Occupations require middle-skills, which makes up 83% of all food batchmakers in the state.

Newton County Community Profile

Newton County is part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and is a rural, farming community in Missouri. Its Northern border is with the City of Joplin, Neosho is the second largest city and the center of activity in the county, which includes County Seat & Freeman Hospital - Neosho.

Geographic Boundaries: Newton County's boundaries are Jasper County to the North, Lawrence and Barry County to the East, Ottawa County, Oklahoma to the West and McDonald County to the South. The total area is 627 square miles. Total population is 58,236 with the City of Neosho being the second largest town with a population of 12,051.

Percent Change in Population



Total population has seen an increase by 10.6% from the 2000 Census to 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) compared with the State of Missouri's average change in population of 8.58%. We appear to be in a growth mode.

Newton County Households:

Total households for the area increased by 2,011 households or 10%. Households increased in comparison to Missouri 8.7% and the Nation at 6.1%.

Newton County Individuals and Families:

- Married couples make up 82% of the population, and yet 56% of families living in Poverty are married couples.

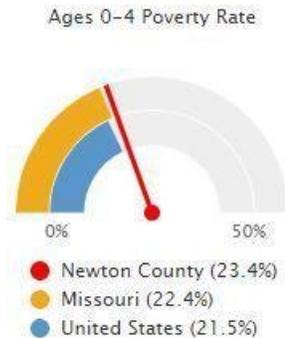
- 12.8% of the families are single female-headed households mainly residing in the Southwest Central part of the County as compared with Missouri who has 18.3% of our households are led by female-headed households. Nationally, this percentage is over 19% of households are female-headed households. However, in Newton County, 35.8% single female-headed households are living in Poverty.

Report Area	Poverty Rate All Types	Percent of Poverty Married Couples	Percent of Poverty Male Householder	Percent of Poverty Female Householder
Newton County, MO	9.8%	56.1%	8.1%	35.8%
Missouri	9.8%	35.8%	11.3%	52.9%
United States	10.1%	36.7%	10.6%	52.7%

- 19.7% of individuals are living in Poverty (125%) compared with 19% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 13.8% of individuals are living in Poverty (100%) compared with 14% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 39.4% of individuals are living in Poverty (200%) compared with 33% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.

Newton County Age and Gender:

- Children (0-4) including both females and males is 6.3% of the total population.
- 23.4% of children ages 0-4 live in Poverty compared to 22% of Missouri children (0-4) live in Poverty.
- It is almost twice as likely for a female child 0-4 to be living in Poverty than her male counterpart.
- 3% more females are more likely to live in Poverty than the male population.
- Adult's age over 64, including both female and male is 16.6% of the total population compared with 15.2% of Missouri citizens who are seniors.
- 58.9% of Newton County's population are adults ages (18-65) and are eligible abled bodied.



Newton County Race and Ethnicity:

- 178 Hispanic/Latino children aged 0-4 live in Newton County, of this population 45.8% are most likely living in Poverty.
- Black or African-American children 0-4 are 50% more likely to be living in Poverty.
- Other Race children 0-4 are 89% more likely to be living in Poverty compared to Missouri's rate of 44%.

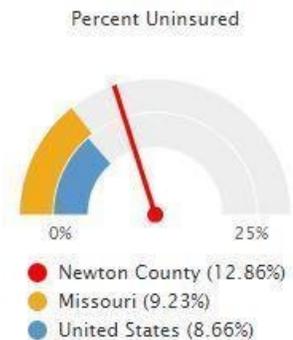
- 129 children 0-4 of color live in poverty.
- 35% of the Hispanic or Latino population are likely to live in Poverty, compared to the not Hispanic or Latino population 12.6% who are likely to live in Poverty.
- 835 people of color live in poverty.

Newton County Nutrition:

- 60% of Newton County students are eligible free or reduced lunch compared with 50% of other Missouri students.

Newton County Wellness Health Indicators:

- Deaths of Despair I (rate of death due to suicide, alcohol-related disease and drug overdoses per 100,000 population) is five less deaths per 100,000 than Missouri, however, the Mortality Rate in the last 10 years has grown by 15 deaths per 100,000.
- Uninsured Population is higher than the State and the Nation.
- Newton County has a lower vacancy rate. 1.2% residential addresses are available for rental housing, compared to Missouri residential vacancy rate of 3.1%
- .99% or 147 homes in Newton County lack access to plumbing compared with .41% of Missouri homes.



McDonald County Community Profile

McDonald County is part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and is a rural, farming community in Southwest Missouri. Its Southern border is with the State of Arkansas, Bentonville, AR is the home office to Wal-Mart. Anderson is the largest town with a population of 1,999. Pineville, MO is the County Seat. Both of these towns show a population trend line going down.

Geographic Boundaries: McDonald County's boundaries are Newton County to the North, Barry County to the East, Delaware and Ottawa County, Oklahoma to the West and Benton County, Arkansas to the South. The total area is 540 square miles. Total population is 23,078.

Total population has seen an increase of 5.29% from the 2000 Census to 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) compared with the State of Missouri's average

Percent Change in Population



change in population of 8.8%. A little over 1,100 new people have been added to McDonald County’s population in the last 18 years.

McDonald County Households:

Total households for the area increased by 24 households or .30%. Households had no significant change in comparison to Missouri 8.7% and the Nation at 6.1%.

McDonald County Individuals and Families:

- Married couples make up 76.8% of the population, and yet 53.7% of families living in Poverty are married couples.
- 15% of the families are single female-headed households mainly residing in the North Central to Southwest section of McDonald County as compared with Missouri who has 18.3% female-headed households. Nationally, this percentage is over 19% of households are female-headed households. However, in McDonald County, 41.4% single female-headed households are living in Poverty.
- 27.5% of individuals are living in Poverty (125%) compared with 18.8% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 19.45% of individuals are living in Poverty (100%) compared with 14% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.
- 50.1% of individuals are living in Poverty (200%) compared with 32.9% of Missouri individuals who live in Poverty.

Population in Poverty, Percent



McDonald County Age and Gender:

- Children (0-4) including both females and males is 6.8% of the total population.
 - 45.1% of children ages 0-4 live in Poverty compared to 22% of Missouri children (0-4) live in Poverty.
 - It is almost 10% more likely for a male child 0-4 to be living in Poverty than his female counterpart.
 - 12.7% of adults age over 64 are living in Poverty compared with 8.6% of Missouri citizens who are seniors.

Ages 0-4 Poverty Rate



McDonald County Race and Ethnicity:

- 47% of the Hispanic/Latino children aged 0-4 are living in Poverty.
- Black or African-American children 0-4 are 40% more likely to be living in Poverty.
- Other Race children 0-4 are 63% more likely to be living in Poverty compared to Missouri’s rate of 44%.

- 210 children aged 0-5 of color live in poverty.
- 27% of the Hispanic or Latino population are likely to live in Poverty, compared to the not Hispanic or Latino population 18.4% who are likely to live in Poverty.

McDonald County Nutrition:

- 73% of McDonald County students are eligible for free or reduced lunch compared with 50% of other Missouri students.

McDonald County Wellness Indicators:

- Over 17% of McDonald County, citizens are uninsured compared with 9% of Missouri Citizens.
- There are less than seven residential addresses available for rental housing, making it difficult for low-income individuals to locate rental units.
- 1.31% or 147 homes in McDonald County lack access to plumbing compared with .41% of Missouri homes.
- McDonald County has high employment in the Food and Beverage Manufacturing area, it is the highest concentration by 4x compared to other areas of the state.
- One in 4 Missouri counties have a Location Quotient (LQ) of 2.0 or greater, which is twice as concentrated compared to the U.S. average. Most F & B manufacturing Occupations require middle-skills, which makes up 83% of all food batchmakers in the state.

McDonald County Broadband Access:

- 81.1% of McDonald County has access to high-speed internet compared with 91% of Missouri's population.

Community Focus

Conducted by Economic Security Corporation's Community Needs Assessment Team from December 2019 thru July 2020. The group session that was scheduled for May 11-12, had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 and the re-opening of Missouri's phase one. We elected to conduct the remaining item: Prioritization by utilizing an electronic nominal group process.

The Community Needs Assessment Key Informant and Focus Group team:

ESC's Staff:

- Gail Callahan, Community Development, McDonald County
- Suzanne Becker, Community Development, Newton County
- Pam Judd, Community Development, Barton County
- Kim Richmond, Head Start/Early Head Start, Newton County

- Linda Kincheloe, Head Start/Early Head Start, Newton County
- Vanessa Garcia, Head Start/Early Head Start, Barton County
- Amy Rivard, Head Start/Early Head Start, McDonald County
- Debbie Spears, Head Start/Early Head Start, McDonald County
- Tammy Walker, Community Development, all 4 counties
- John Joines, CEO, Joplin, Jasper
- Debbie Markman, Resource Development, Joplin, Jasper, all 4 counties
- Jeff Goldammer, Head Start/Early Head Start, all 4 counties
- National Community Action Partnership, facilitator. Courtney Kohler, MA, CCAP, NCRT, Senior Associate, and T/TA

Community Members, Low-Income Individuals and Low-Income Focus Groups:

The following community groups interviewed:

- Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce (Business)
- City of Joplin Manager (City)
- Freeman Health Systems (Regional Hospital)
- St. Paul's United Methodist Church (Faith-Based)
- Ascent Recovery (NGO)
- Alliance of SW MO (NGO)
- United Way of SW MO/SE KS (NGO)
- Workforce Investment (WIB Services)
- Neosho Senior Center (Senior Services)
- The Help Center (Faith-Based)
- Lamar City Utilities (Utilities)
- Pineville Health Department (City)
- Abounding Grace Church (Faith-Based)
- Granby First Church of God (Faith-Based)
- City of Joplin Health Department (City)
- Joplin Area Habitat for Humanity (NGO)
- Ozark Center (NGO)
- Joplin Police Department (Law Enforcement)
- Joplin Schools (Schools)
- Lafayette House (DV)
- City of Joplin Planning (City)
- Restorative Life Shelter (Faith-Based)
- Hope Kitchen (Faith-Based)
- Good Samaritan (Faith-Based)
- Lamar Senior Center (NGO)
- McDonald County Emergency Management (County)
- Noel Public Housing Authority (PHA)
- Granby Methodist Church (Faith-Based)
- City of Lamar (City)

Goals of the Community Needs Assessment Interviews and Focus Groups:

- Community input
- Customer input
- Barriers to services
- ID Needs
- What is working
- Comprehensive
- Focus = 4 county service area
- CNA drives Strategic Plan
- Resources available
- Root causes of Poverty

Methodology

Overview of Methodology

- Key Informant Interviews used qualitative and quantitative data, collected this information November 2019 to January 2020
 - Qualitative: Community Members (listed above) provided opinions, observations and other information that had been provided through one on one interviews.
 - Quantitative: county profile data was provided through the National Community Partnership (CAP) Assessment website, Ozark Health Commission's Needs Assessment, CAP Assessment county profiles, which include census data, demographic, American Community Surveys, HUD, etc.
- For Qualitative data:
 - Focus Group meetings, one per county.
 - Customer Surveys were completed through an on-line survey tool. We utilized a customer survey flyer with a QR code for smartphones. The Customer Survey was located on our website. In addition, we made available a paper version.
 - Head Start and Early Head Start parent survey was completed in March 2020
 - [Customer Satisfaction 2020-21 data was added.](#)
- For Quantitative data:
 - National Community Partnership Assessment Tool (Community Profile data) website as one resource.
- Contributing factors were identified as part of the Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups
- Customer Survey results were presented as part of the Gaps, Barriers and Unmet Needs survey to 100 Community (including low-income) members utilizing a Survey Monkey web-based tool due to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. ESC's Community Needs Assessment Team felt this was a better opportunity to gather data due to the return to business order by the Missouri Governor on May 6,

2020. Seven domains were identified, plus ACE's: children's homelessness, free and reduced school lunch statistics, food insecurity, education, health, housing, nutrition, transportation, use of income and employment

Data Analysis and Prioritization Method

- Data Analysis:
 - Developed 1-2 page Domain Assessment Analysis for a total of seven. Each domain, included domain statistics, consumer survey data, key informant and focus group data and contributing factors. Then we asked the community and customers to identify gaps, barriers and unmet needs utilizing an on-line survey tool due to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic in April and May 2020.
- Prioritization
 - Developed prioritization of unmet needs from the data analysis results
 - Added information to seven domain assessment 1-2 page documents for the community to reference.
 - Created a prioritization on-line survey tool and had the same group that completed the data analysis participate in the prioritization.
 - ESC's Management staff reviewed the 37 prioritized items. Each person was given five dots to vote for the items that they saw as a priority. The top five items that received the most votes were selected as our top five items.

Domain Analysis and Evaluation of Needs:

Education Domain

These statistics relate to educational needs. This is a baseline or starting point about our educational outlook. An important note is that Pre-K and all Missouri schools closed down in mid-March and did not re-open during this school year, due to COVID-19 Global Pandemic outbreak. The sources we utilized include the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, USA Today, Brookings Institute, Missouri Health Matters and Missouri County Health Rankings.

Education Statistics

- Almost 28% of children (0-5) living in Southwest Missouri live in poverty.
- COVID-19 slide leads to summer slide, the largest groups of children this affects are the 20%-30% African American and Latino population.
- COVID-19 affects education access for children who do not have WIFI or did not complete any school lessons.

- SW Missouri Hispanic/Latino children (ages 0-5) are 54% more likely to live in poverty compared to their Caucasian counterparts that are 23% more likely to live in poverty.
- All four counties in SW Missouri are lower than the average of 17.9% Missourians who possess a college degree.
 - McDonald County has the greatest difference of almost 10% less baccalaureate degree citizens.

Consumer Survey Education data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The survey was completed during January 1, 2020 to March 31, 2020. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response code (QR) flyer. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult.

- 38% surveyed stated they are unable to increase their education levels.
- 41% surveyed stated they struggle with childcare issues to attend higher education.
- 55% surveyed stated they struggle with costs associated with higher education.

Key Informant and Focus Group Education data

The key informant and focus group collection process started on November 7, 2019 and ended on January 14, 2020. The ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one each in each of our counties during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects identified education needs.

- 10% surveyed stated low-income individuals do not possess the technical skills to access the living wage positions that are available.
- 16% surveyed stated low-income individuals lack basic reading skills that affects these Individuals' access to living wage jobs.
 - Lacking good reading skills affects reading to their children.

Contributing Education Factors

After the key informant, customers and focus groups interviews were completed; ESC aggregated responses and identified needs. The section below identifies the root

causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19).

Global Pandemic COVID-19

- Global Pandemic (COVID-19) declared by WHO on 1.30.2020, 100% schools closed across SW Missouri beginning mid-March 2020, for the rest of the school year, this includes Pre-K's. We will have approximately a 5 to 6 month summer slide or COVID-19 slide resulting in high school students having a more difficult time upon returning to school.
- SW Missouri schools will be returning to school beginning August 4, 2020 and the first of September. Each school district will be opening up differently, making it difficult for parents planning for work and after-school care. Social distancing, masks and better air recirculation devices are recommended protocols.
- COVID-19 hot spots have been McDonald and Jasper County due to poultry plant exposures.

Broadband Access

- 22% of rural Americans lack broadband access.
- Only 80.9% of Barton County have broadband coverage.

Higher Education Access

- Low literacy skills affect the whole family's engagement in reading together.
- Customers stated they were unable to seek higher education.
 - Due to a lack of childcare access.
 - Due to high costs.
 - Do not have enough time.

Education Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Education Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- There are no community public/private transportation route resources that would enable low-income individuals to travel to higher education locations. (C)
- Low-income individuals lack adequate resources to further higher education. (F)
- Low-income families need their children to be safe to further higher education. (F)
- Low-income individuals have little resources, which has caused poor credit or student loan debt that prohibit continuing education. (F)
- Low-income individuals are unable to access long distance learning. (C)

- Missouri schools lack resources and under-funded; Missouri Governor Parson must balance the budget per Missouri Statutes. Missouri has lost a lot of tax revenue (COVID-19/Internet sales), so Gov. Parsons made some cuts to State and local funding, as of March 2021 some of these cuts have been restored. (C)
- Lack of community resources to assist with parents who do not require their school-aged children to attend public school. (Joplin) {F}
- Public school lack resources to help increase parent involvement with school-aged kids. (Joplin) {C}

Education Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

- Low-income individuals lack adequate resources to further higher education to further higher education. (F)
- Low-income families want their children to be safe. (selected as one of the top five priorities) {C}
- Low-income individuals have little resources, which has caused poor credit or student loan debt that prohibit continuing education. (F)
- Lack of community resources to assist with parent involvement with school-aged children (Joplin) {C}
- Need to increase adult literacy in Barton and McDonald Counties (F)

Additional Identified Education Priority that ESC is Unable to Address

- Low Income individuals are unable to access long distance learning.(C)
- Parents do not require their school-aged children to attend public school. (Joplin) {F}

Employment Domain

These statistics relate employment wellness with SW Missouri communities. This is a baseline or starting point for our employment outlook. An important note here is that unemployment rates have not been published for April as of yet, which is being affected by COVID-19 Global Pandemic outbreak. The sources we utilized include the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, DataUSA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator, FEMA and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Employment Statistics

- Barton County citizens earn 63% less than Missouri's average wage
- Barton County low-income single parent, one-child families have the most difficult time obtaining living wages, they would need to add over \$7/hr. to catch up
- Newton County low-income single parent, one-child families would need to add over \$6.32/hr. to catch up

- McDonald County low-income single parent, one-child families would need to add over \$5.77/hr. to catch up

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency’s needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and QR flyers. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 573 people who were able to respond to the housing needs.

- 25% surveyed stated they are struggling with employment.
- 33% surveyed stated there is a lack of good paying jobs with benefits.
- 33% surveyed stated the cost of childcare is too much.
- 32% surveyed stated there is a lack of transportation opportunities.

Key Informant and Focus Group data

The Key Informant and Focus Group collection process started on November 7, 2019 and ended on January 14, 2020. ESC’s leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning employment needs in our communities. ESC’s Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one each in each of our counties during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects identified employment needs.

- 23% surveyed stated low-income individuals could not live on Missouri’s current minimum wage.
- 19% surveyed stated low-income individuals lack soft skills and “adulting.”
- COVID-19 effect on low-income individuals lost work, economy tanked and re-opening of the economy.
- Jasper County females are twice as likely to hold a service occupational job as compared with their male counterparts.

Contributing Factors

Once the Key Informants, Customers and Focus Groups identified needs, our staff followed up with, “why” they believed this was a need, and was there data to support it. The section below identifies the root causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). Southwest Missouri has been fortunate not to be a hotspot at this time.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

- Global Pandemic (COVID-19), loss/furloughs of thousands of hundreds of jobs in SW Missouri

- Global Pandemic, economy unknown, including small businesses that are unable to come back
- Customer satisfaction survey results FY21-22
 - 15% reported lost employment wages
 - 9% reported lost job, with 71% reporting expectations of returning to work once employer re-opens.
 - 6% are drawing unemployment benefits
- Unemployment rates are continuing to drop across all three counties. Good news is while Missouri's UI rate is 4.2%; three of our counties are below this rate.
 - Barton County pre-COVID-19 - 3.2%: post COVID-19 is 3.2%
 - Jasper County pre-COVID-19 - 3.6%: post COVID-19 is 3.1%
 - McDonald County pre-COVID-19 - 3.8%: post COVID-19 is 3.9%
 - **Newton County pre-COVID-19 - 3.9%: post COVID-19 is 4.9% (data issue: 115 claims versus 37 claims)**

Living Wage Employment

- Living wage jobs are not located where low-income individuals are living, childcare and transportation services are difficult.
- Gender wage inequality, women make about 80.2 cents to their male counterpart's \$1.

Living in Poverty

- Missouri is the 15th poorest State.
- Missouri must encourage higher enrollment of high school graduates into colleges and universities also encouraging growth in more high-tech industries.

Missouri Economy

- Missouri has fallen behind the national average in in-growth of total output, growth of output per worker, growth of labor force, and growth of total factor productivity.
- Services and Hotel Occupations are the largest growing industry in America according to the CBS documentary *"Surviving An Unlivable Wage"* June 2020 and the lowest paid.

Employment Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Employment Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- Low-income families need their children to be safe in the evenings and overnight. (F)
- New Economic Growth with industries and businesses targeted in Barton County who pay a living wage. (C)
- Living wage jobs require traveling more than 25 minutes from low-income neighborhoods. (F)

- Low-income individuals lack resources to access technical skills for living wage jobs. (C)
- Communities lack resources to provide more living wage job opportunities. (inclusive of benefits) {C}
- Low-income individuals lack motivation to find employment (F)
- Low-income individuals lack access to technical skills for manufacturing jobs. (C)
- Employers lack skilled employees that are required to **compete** for the available living wage jobs in SW MO (C)
- Potential **low-income** employees have employment barriers that keep them from being hireable, good work history and/or past legal issues (F)
- Service industries pay a livable job wage. (C)
- Lack of flexibility in the job market as one crisis (having to take care of a family member who is ill) can end employment, making it difficult to get re-hired. (F)
- Employees furloughed or terminated due to COVID-19 Global Pandemic (C)

Employment Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

- Low-income families need their children to be safe in the evenings and overnight. (F)
- Living wage jobs require traveling more than 25 minutes from low-income neighborhoods. (F)
- Potential employees have employment barriers that keep them from being hireable, good work history and/or past legal issues (F)
- **Living wage jobs are not located in low-income neighborhoods. (selected as one of the 5 top priorities) (C)**
- **Low-income individuals lack access to technical skills for living wage jobs. (selected as one of the top 5 priorities) (C)**

Additional Identified Employment Needs that ESC is Unable to Address

- Missouri has fallen behind the national average in in-growth of total output, growth of output per worker, growth of labor force, and growth of total factor productivity. Missouri does not have the trained workforce that technical industries must procure to locate here (C)
- Gender wage inequality. (C)
- All service industries pay a livable job wage. (C)

Health Domain

Social determinants are conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. These statistics relate to the wellness of our communities in which we live. This is a baseline or starting point about our hometown's well-being. The sources we utilized included: Ozarks Health Commission's Needs Assessment, National Community Action Partnership's Assessment Tool, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Missouri State Highway Patrol, Office of State Courts Administrator, Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC), Livestories, State of Childhood Obesity and Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool.

- High prevalence in tobacco use results in some of the biggest health concerns related to lung disease (46%), cardiovascular disease (23%) and mental health; these are higher than Missouri's average statistics for these categories.
 - 13% increase in adults with Asthma in Jasper County.
 - Two in 5, twelfth grade students in the U.S. reported vaping in the past year.
- Across our four county area, 11% to 17% of citizens are uninsured
- Newton County's teen birth rate has doubled in the last four years.
- Jasper County's suicides increased and are twice the number of Missouri's measures (18.5%).
- Jasper County's infant death rate from sleep-related issues are twice the number of other Missouri infant sleep-related deaths.
- Juvenile referrals are double Missouri's rate in both Jasper and Barton Counties.
- Domestic Violence is at least twice as high as the State's average in both Jasper and McDonald Counties.
- Adult obesity has seen a large increase in the last 10 years, over a 7% increase, ranking ninth out of 51 States.
 - One in 4 people in our service area do not get enough physical exercise.
 - Annual costs of obesity in the Joplin community is \$125M

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, *Survey Monkey*. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response code (QR) flyers. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 562 people who were able to respond to the Health needs survey.

- 29% surveyed stated they are experiencing health issues or unable to access medical care.
- 55% surveyed stated they do not have dental insurance.
- 52% surveyed stated they do not have health insurance.
- 17% surveyed stated they do not have transportation to get to medical appointments.
- 46% stated they could afford \$20 per month for healthcare for their family.
- 12% do not qualify for Medicaid, and cannot afford health insurance without some financial assistance.
- 11% either are part-time employees or have lost their jobs.

Key Informant and Focus Group data

Beginning on November 7, 2019 and ending January 14, 2020, ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their

information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four Focus Groups, one per county during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects these groups identified Health needs.

- 16% lack stable and safe housing, including the lack of a living wage job.
- Higher cause of death based on Heart and Lung disease, higher than the Missouri average
- Property crime in Jasper County accounts for 73% of all property crime in the area
- Barton County's Emergency Room visits due to Opioids misuse is as high as St. Louis statistics
- 13% of the Key Informants interviewed stated social determinants (low-income neighborhoods, older housing stock, less wellness amenities, etc.) are keeping low-income individuals in Poverty
- 10% surveyed stated communities lack adequate recreational activities for well-being, outside of school activities
- 10% surveyed stated low-income individuals lack access to basic healthcare (i.e. primary physicians/prevention/wellness checks)

Contributing Factors or Root Causes

Once the Key Informants, Customers and Focus Groups identified needs, our staff followed up with, "why" they believed this was a need, and was there data to support it. The section below identifies the root causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). In June and July, the CDC considered Jasper and McDonald Counties. We are currently experiencing a flat line, but the number of positive COVID-19 cases has not gone down.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic Affect:

- Global Pandemic COVID-19 mental health effects include isolation and loneliness leading to mental health conditions that could be new for a different set of individuals. Resulting in our communities resources becoming strained.
- COVID-19 has created more isolation for low-income families, reducing their social capital.

Lack of Medical Insurance

- The lack of medical insurance and issue of affordability appears to be due to customers not having enough money/income. Resulting in prevention/wellness checks not occurring which leads to an increase in heart/lung chronic disease.
 - Nineteen percent of U.S. households could not afford to pay for medical care up front or when they received care in 2017, according to new U.S. Census Bureau data on the burden of medical debt. (This is a new item that has been added to the 2016 US Census concerning health medical debt)

Community Well-Being

- Women are waiting to have a child, versus children. Without new infants, the theory is America's demographic makeup will tip further toward an older generation. Whose members will grow needier and less productive with age, a shrinking workforce could, over-time, make this imbalance all the more unsustainable.
- The lack in several counties access to enough physicians, results in some low-income individuals having to drive more than 40 miles or more for a wellness/prevention checkup.
- SW Missouri lacks living wage jobs mixed with low-income workers lacking technical skills for living wage jobs that are available.
- Missouri has fallen behind the national average in in-growth of total output, growth of output per worker, growth of labor force, and growth of total factor productivity.
- Social determinants of health, where you live, learn, work, play and worship can affect your health. The interconnectedness of health, education, economic viability, housing, and quality of life influences an individual, family, and community's ability to thrive.
- The lack of access to recreational opportunities for low-income individuals or families can factor into heart, lung and obesity conditions.
 - Adult obesity continues to increase since 1990; it appears this increase is due to a couple of diseases that are on the rise.
 - Diabetes has seen increases of 6% since 1990.
 - 2010 trending data collected about Cardiovascular Disease expects an increase of 4.5 times by the year 2030.

Health Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Health Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- Jobs that do not pay a livable wage. (C)
- Need all jobs to offer paid [affordable insurance](#) (C)
- Low-income individuals lack [knowledge to prevention and wellness healthcare](#) (i.e. primary physicians/prevention/wellness/behavior health checks) {F}
- There is not enough and available [public/private transportation routes](#) that would enable individuals to travel for healthcare appointments. (F)
- Need more [community resources](#) for more free clinics. (C)
- Healthcare websites are difficult to navigate. (F)
- Low-income individuals lack the expertise to make [on-line healthcare appointments](#) or review their own healthcare information. (F)
- Low-income individuals need safe, decent and affordable housing. (F)
- Need to [advocate with Missouri legislature to expand Medicaid through budget process](#) (it has been approved by Missouri voters). (C)
- Global Pandemic COVID-19 is causing new mental health effects including isolation and loneliness in all of our communities (C)

- Need for more access to recreational opportunities for low-income neighborhoods. (C)

Health Domain Top Seven Needs and Prioritization

- Low-income individuals lack knowledge to basic healthcare (i.e. primary physicians/prevention/wellness/behavioral health checks.) This was identified as a priority (F)
- Low-income individuals are uninsured. (F)
- Community lacks resources to ensure all jobs offer paid affordable insurance.(C)
- Community lacks resources for recreational opportunities for low-income neighborhoods. (C)
- Low-income individuals need safe, decent and affordable housing (F)
- Community lacks resources to provide enough preventative healthcare opportunities. (C)
- Medical insurance and prescriptions are not affordable for low-income individuals. (C)

Additional Identified Health Priorities that ESC is Unable to Address

- Low-income individuals lack income to afford basic needs (F)
- Agency lack resources to have staff get certification to process Medicaid or Medicare applications. (A)
- Jobs that do not pay a livable wage. (C)

Housing Domain

Social determinants are conditions in the places where people live, learn, work and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. These statistics relate an important social determinant for housing wellness. This is a baseline or starting point about our housing stability. The sources we utilized include U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, FEMA, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The Homeless Coalition's Point In Time Count (PIT), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Housing Statistics

- Barton County Homeownership rates are in the negative, compared with Missouri's rate of 3.58%
- SW Missouri has a very low rental housing vacancy, almost 1% less than the U.S. rate, making it more difficult to locate rental property.
- SW Missouri low-income communities and citizens affected by natural disasters 6 out of the last 10 years; floods, ice storms and tornadoes, almost yearly, hit

somewhere in our four-county area. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Global Pandemic on January 20, 2020.

- Homelessness among children is on the rise, trending upward for the last 5 years.
 - Jasper County has doubled.
- McDonald County has three times the number of homes without plumbing compared with Missouri's average.

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response Code (QR) flyer. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 563 people who were able to respond to the housing needs.

- 27% surveyed stated they are struggling with rental costs.
- 26% stated housing is too expensive
- 13% stated they were struggling with rental costs due to a loss of a job. (Note: COVID-19 caused Jasper and McDonald Counties to be a hotspot mid-June till first of August, 2020)
- 12% stated the home they were currently living, required repairs.

Key Informant and Focus Group data

Beginning on November 7, 2019 and ending January 14, 2020, ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one per county during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects these groups identified housing needs.

- 23% surveyed stated low-income individuals could not live on Missouri's current minimum wage.
- 42% surveyed stated that low-income individuals are unable to access housing due to debt owed, drug offenses, bad credit or felony record.
- 13% surveyed stated the community's access to coordinated entry was too long.
- 13% surveyed stated social determinants play a critical role, where a low-income individual is living is just as important as a living wage job. The importance of access to affordable, decent and safe housing is paramount to a healthy neighborhood.

Contributing Factors

After the key informant, customers and focus groups interviews were completed; ESC aggregated responses and identified needs. This section below identifies the root

causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). Southwest Missouri has been fortunate; we are not a hotspot at this time.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

- Global Pandemic (COVID-19), loss/furloughs of thousands of jobs in Southwest Missouri resulting in several months of unpaid rent, there is not enough money being printed to resolve this issue.

Rental Property

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) publishes annually Fair Market Rents guidance that drives the market value of rentals. The results are older housing stock, without amenities, such as old, inefficient appliances or kitchen; appliances are not included with the unit. The rental costs are driven up by what the housing market can bear, not what the rental may be really worth based on improvements to the property or lack of.
- Rental vacancy rates are so low in our area, meaning rentals available are few and may not pass a HUD's Housing Quality Standards Inspection, if a low-income individual would want to utilize a Housing Choice Voucher.
- Due to the low vacancy rates, monthly rents are often higher

Homelessness

- MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and HUD use different definitions for homelessness, which results in more families/children tracked as homeless utilizing The Hearth Act's definition of homelessness. Housing providers, that have housing assistance utilizing HUD funds must follow a stricter definition for homelessness; this often results in confusion for communities trying to re-house families who may not meet the "literally homeless" definition.
- The Homeless Coalition's January 2021 Point-in-Time had a rather low sheltered count, 100 people less. There are some reasons, COVID-19 was in its height and COVID-19 vaccinations were only available for Tier 1 eligible citizens. The Homeless Coalition made a decision to cancel the Project Homeless Connect event on the day of the homeless census. Also one of our sheltered providers will not participated in the census count and yet they sheltered 64 people that evening.

Natural Disasters

- Natural disasters are increasing. SW Missouri lies in tornado alley and has areas that lie in flood zones that unfortunately are occurring with much more frequency due to climate change.

Housing Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Housing Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)

- Low-income individuals need employment due to a loss in employment (COVID-19) to be able to continue to pay rental costs (F)
- Communities lack resources for affordable housing units (C)
- Low-income neighborhoods need home or rental repairs (C)
- Communities' market rents are too high. (C)
- Low-income individuals have poor rental history and/legal issues that prevent them from affordable and subsidized housing (F)
- Community lack resources to provide access to affordable, decent and safe housing. (C)
- Affordable rental housing stock is old, outdated and unkempt, often does not meet HUD's Housing Quality Standards. (C)

Housing Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

- Community lacks resources for affordable, decent and safe housing units. (C)
- Community rental market rents are too high. (C)
- Low-income individuals lack good rental histories and/or legal issues that prevent them from affordable and subsidized housing units. (IE., LIHTC) {F}
- Community lacks resources to provide access to affordable, decent and safe neighborhood housing. (selected as one of the five priorities) {C}
- Lack of living wage employment scale to keep up with paying basic living expenses. (C)

Additional Identified Housing Priorities that ESC is Unable to Address

- Community lacks resources to assist with older housing stock that is not being kept up. (C)
- Low-income individuals have poor rental history and/legal issues that prevent them from affordable and subsidized housing (F)

Nutrition Domain

These statistics relate to the nutritional needs in our communities, this is a baseline or starting point. The sources we utilized: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Kids Count, Missouri Department of Social Services, Ozarks Health Commission Needs Assessment, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Livestories, State of Childhood Obesity, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Feeding America and Missouri Hunger Atlas 2019.

Nutrition Statistics

- All four counties have a higher percentage of children on free or reduced school lunch; the range is between 50% to 95% (Note: closure of schools due to COVID-19 Global Pandemic, mid-March till August, 2020)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits have been in a downward trend since the 2007-2009 recession for SW Missouri citizens (Note: Due to COVID-19, State of Missouri is providing maximum benefits to all who are receiving SNAP)
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has higher participation rates compared with Missouri's average rate in these counties: Jasper, McDonald and Newton.
- Obesity for low-income Pre-K is extremely higher than Missouri's average measure. Our four counties are between 5% to 13.6% higher than Missouri's average pre-K obesity measure
- 20%-26% of a McDonald County family's income is paid toward required food.
- 14.2%-15.5% of Barton County individuals are food insecure with hunger.
- Food banks increased the amount of food they distributed by more than 364,000 pounds as compared to the previous year. (Note: COVID-19 data is not included)
- All four county areas have food deserts

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, *Survey Monkey*. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response Code (QR) flyer. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 566 people who were able to respond to the nutrition needs.

- 24% surveyed stated they are struggling to provide food for themselves and/or family
- 69% surveyed stated they do not have enough money to purchase nutritious food
- 15% surveyed stated they did not know "how to" prepare nutritious meals

Key Informant and Focus Group data

The Key Informant and Focus Group collection process started on November 7, 2019 and ended on January 14, 2020. The ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one per county during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects identified nutrition needs.

- 23% surveyed stated low-income individuals could not live on Missouri's current minimum wage

- 29% surveyed stated that there are food deserts in many of the areas resulting in lack of adequate and healthy food choices

Contributing Factors

After the key informant, customers and focus groups interviews were completed; ESC aggregated responses and identified needs. The section below identifies the root causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). Southwest Missouri has been fortunate; we are not a hotspot at this time

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

- Global Pandemic (COVID-19), SNAP could not be used on-line as of 4.30.2020. (5.1.2020, MO Gov. Parsons changed this), if low-income customers have two items: Internet access and a credit card
- Global Pandemic (COVID-19), Free and reduced lunches have not been available to all families since mid-March due to the school's closings
- According to ESC's customer satisfaction surveys FY21-22, 8% reported food insecurity.

Food Deserts

- Lack of access to nutritional food, rural areas have food deserts. (i.e., Golden City), West side of McDonald County and Newton County
- Pay more for access to nutrition food, Joplin, Census Tract 110, new grocery store charges an additional 10% on everyone's bill. No other grocery store within 2-mile walkability radius

Lack of Accessibility

- Customers' surveyed stated bills are paid first, resulting in no money left to purchase nutritional food. In addition, customers do not know "how to" meal plan or cook healthy meals
- Lack of access to nutritional food due to lack of accessibility transportation to grocery stores

Nutrition Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

Nutrition Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- Low-income communities do not have access to healthy foods without traveling over 15 miles. (C)
- Low-income individuals need livable wage to purchase nutritious food for their family (F)
- Low-income individuals lack the knowledge to prepare healthy meals. (F)

- Eligible WIC or SNAP recipients do not apply for these supplemental programs. (F)
- Low-income children are food insecure in the summer time. (C)

Nutrition Domain Top Four Needs and Prioritization

- Low-income individuals lack educational knowledge regarding healthy nutrition, meal planning, making good nutrition choices, and healthy food preparation (F)
- Low-income communities do not have access to healthy foods without traveling over 15 miles. (C)
- Nutritional foods are more expensive. (F)
- Distressed communities lack resources to bring a local grocery store into low-income census tracts and rural areas. (C)

Additional Identified Nutrition Priority that ESC is Unable to Address

- Low-income children are food insecure in the summer time. (C)

Transportation Domain

These statistics relate to the public/private transportation needs in our communities; this is a baseline or starting point. The sources we utilized: U.S. Census Bureau, American Survey, Rural Health Information Hub, *The Joplin Globe*, Ozark Area Commission's Community Health Assessment, Joplin Area Transportation Study Organization (JATSO) 5-year plan and JATSO public hearing.

- Mean travel time is less than the U.S. measure of 26 miles.
- More than 6% of SW Missourians drive alone compared with Missouri and U.S. figures.
- 82% of SW Missourians do not carpool compared with 76% of Americans.
- 27% to 36% have a second vehicle in SW Missouri.
- 12% of all public transit are rides to and from schools.

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, *Survey Monkey*. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response Code (QR) flyer. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 562 people who were able to respond to the transportation needs. 57 surveyed responded to public transportation needs.

- 26% surveyed stated they are experiencing transportation problems.
- 50% surveyed stated they could not afford the cost to maintain a vehicle.
- 40% surveyed stated they have no money for a down payment.
- 32% surveyed stated they do not have a valid driver's license or poor credit to finance a car.

- 39% surveyed stated that public transportation is not accessible during the evening hours.
- 39% surveyed stated that public transportation takes too long to run the route.

Key Informant and Focus Group data

The key informant and focus group collection process started on November 7, 2019 and ended on January 14, 2020. The ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one per county during the months of November through December 2019. This information reflects identified Transportation needs.

- 52% of key informants and focus groups stated transportation must be accessible, public transportation must be on time, affordable, poor lighting conditions make it unsafe to walk to public transportation stops at night.
- 13% surveyed stated that transportation affects low-income individuals and families access to living wage jobs, wellness/prevention medical and access to nutritious food. (social determinants for healthy communities)
- Federal regulations are old and not been updated.

Contributing Factors

After the key informant, customers and focus groups interviews were completed; ESC aggregated responses and identified needs. The section below identifies the root causes. In addition, there are sources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). Southwest Missouri has been fortunate; we are not a hotspot at this time.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

- Global Pandemic (COVID-19), public transportation was shut down, which only affected Joplin Area's Trolley system as of 6 April 2020.
- Joplin Trolley public transportation, currently social distancing is required, which is reducing the maximum occupancy for transit vehicles in the Joplin area.

Rural Public/Private Transportation

- Rural and smaller cities cannot afford public bus systems and citizens are not acclimated to utilizing public transportation due to the inconvenient times, length of ride and cost.
- Rural children face increased travel time due to the long distances needed to travel to school in rural communities, getting home after dark, homework and chores at home can sometimes conflict, due to time constraints.

Federal Regulations

- Some Federal regulations need to be updated to allow for public/private transportation that provides more flexible opportunities in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), (note this is designation is changing during FY22, we unsure how this will affect this areas federal and state funding) and rural areas.

Social Determinants: Access to a Living Wage Job

- Where you live has a direct impact on low-income families wellness. Lack of public or private transportation affects low-income individuals and families' access to living wage jobs, wellness/prevention medical and access to nutritious food.

Public/Private Transportation Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Public/Private Transportation Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- McDonald County lacks resources to provide varied needed public/private transportation routes. (C)
- Low-income individuals lack private/public transportation options (F)
- Low-income individuals lack public/private transportation opportunities who work second and third shifts. (F)
- Cars are too expensive to obtain and maintain for low-income individuals. (F)
- Community lacks resources to expand City of Joplin's trolley hours, routes and reduce the time it takes to get to destinations. (C)
- Rural counties lack resources to provide access to public/private transportation opportunities. (C)

Transportation Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

- McDonald County lacks resources to provide varied needed public/private transportation routes. (C)
- Low-income individuals lack private/public transportation options (F)
- Low-income individuals lack public/private transportation opportunities who work second and third shifts. (F)
- Cars are too expensive to maintain for low-income individuals. (F)
- Community lacks resources to expand City of Joplin's trolley hours, routes and reduces the time it takes to get to destinations. (employers). {C}

Additional Identified Transportation Priority that ESC is Unable to Address

- Rural communities lack resources to provide access to public/private transportation routes. (C)

Use of Income Domain

These statistics relate to financial wellness of our communities in which we live. This is a baseline or starting point about our income stability. The sources we utilized include U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, DataUSA, *USA Today*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Relations, Missouri Unemployment, FEMA, Lindenwood University and *Business Insider*

Income Statistics

- Almost 28% of children (ages: 0-5) living in Southwest Missouri live in Poverty.
- Barton County has almost 21% of their citizens living in Poverty.
- Gender inequality, females are earning 80.2 cents to their male counterparts who earn \$1.
- Per capita income for the four-county area is \$23,723, which is considerably less than Missouri's per capita income of \$28,282 and the U.S. per capita income of \$31,177.
- Jasper County has the highest infant childcare center costs in the four-county area, costing low-income families with infants, annually \$7,117. This is less than the average Missouri infant childcare center rate of \$8,580.
- Five out of the last 9 years, SW Missouri has had a Federal Disaster Declaration and now we have a Global Pandemic.

Consumer Survey data

Low-income customers surveyed utilized a web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. We provided a web link or paper version of the agency's needs assessment questions by conditions of poverty. The method included direct mail outs, walk-ins, website, home visits and Quick Response Codes (QR) flyer. The COVID-19 Global Pandemic made the March collection of data somewhat difficult. We had a target of 1,100 surveys; we were able to reach 559 people who were able to respond to the financial needs.

- 47% of ESC's customers surveyed stated they struggle to meet basic needs. (shelter and food)
- 42% of ESC's customers surveyed identified debt being the reason they struggle.
- 61% just do not have enough money to cover basic needs.
- COVID-19 Global Pandemic effect with the numbers of people who have lost their jobs and have not returned to their jobs. As of July 2020, unemployment rates have increased by 3%.

Key Informant and Focus Group data

Beginning on November 7, 2019 and ending January 14, 2020, ESC leadership team interviewed 31 key stakeholders in our communities. We interviewed across various sectors, including quasi-government, public schools, faith-based, mental health, hospitals, community-based organizations and public officials to capture their information concerning needs in our communities. ESC's Community Development Director conducted four focus groups, one each in each of our counties during the

months of November through December 2019. This information reflects these groups identified financial needs.

- 56% of SW Missouri school-age students participate in Free and Reduced Lunch.
- SW Missourians are earning about \$4,500 less annually than other Missourians based on average.
- COVID-19 Global Pandemic will affect low income families, as many of the first jobs lost were service occupation positions (eating establishments, box stores, hotels and bars)

Contributing Factors

After the key informant, customers and focus groups interviews were completed; ESC aggregated responses and identified needs. The section below identifies the root causes. In addition, there are resources that support these needs with the exception of the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). Two of SW Missouri counties became hotspots in June and July, as of August we are continuing to have an increase in positive COVID-19 tests. Hospitalizations are leveling out due to many younger people are testing positive resulting in less hospitalizations.

Lack of Financial Resources

- Customers identified needs that included no savings, struggling to find full-time employment or have past/current debt.

Missouri Economy

- Missouri's productivity is contributing to some of these areas:
 - Output per worker is lower than the national average, which could have a direct bearing on SW Missourians earning capacity.
- Missouri does not push to produce a college-educated workforce.
- Missouri's industrial make-up is weighted too heavily on non-growth industries.
- Missouri is the 15th poorest State.

Natural Disasters

- Natural Disasters cannot be anticipated, Southwest Missouri has a 9-year trend, resulting in five Federally Declared Disaster years, many low-income individuals and small businesses are under-insured or have no insurance resulting in loss of income ultimately affecting communities.
 - COVID-19 Global Pandemic has resulted in a 3% higher unemployment rate as of July 2020, due to job losses, businesses closing and reduction in hours/cut in wages. There are expectations that some businesses will not return, which will become permanent job losses.

COVID-19

- 29% of ESC's customers indicated (per FY21-22 Customer Satisfaction survey) they were behind on rent/utilities due to COVID-19 related issues.

Use of Income Domain Top Needs and Prioritization

Use of Income Needs Prioritization Results from Respondents

The following needs are with level of need noted {Family (F), Agency (A), or Community (C)}

- Low-income families need their children to be safe. (F)
- Low-income families do not have resources to pay basic needs. (shelter and food) {F}
- Distressed communities lack resources to be prepared for natural disasters. (C)
- Low-income individuals need to improve their earning capacity (F)
- State of Missouri lacks resources to produce more college-educated workforce to compete with growth industries jobs. (C)
- Low-income individuals need to improve income, so past credit problems do not turn into payday loans (F)

Use of Income Domain Top Five Needs and Prioritization

- Low-income families need their children to be safe. (F)
- Low-income families do not have resources to pay basic needs. (F)
- Low-income individuals need to improve earned income, so past credit problems do not turn into payday loans (F)
- Lack of technical skills to improve earning capacity by low-income Southwest Missourians (C)
- Distressed communities lack resources to be prepared for natural disasters. (C)

Additional Identified Use of Income Priority that ESC is Unable to Address

- Lack of an adequate college educated workforce to compete with growth industries. (C)

Adverse Child Trauma (ACEs):

“Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration, and lifelong health and opportunity. Working together, we can help create neighborhoods, communities, and a world in which every child can thrive.” (Source: CDC) Examples of adverse childhood experiences can include: violence, neglect, suicide, substance misuse, mental health problems, parent incarcerated. These can lead to chronic health issues as adults and can negatively affect their education and employment.

In this domain, ESC’s data will demonstrate the areas of concern that wrap around violence and victimization that will affect a child into adulthood. These areas should be addressed as part of any of ESC’s future strategies.

- Increase in number of juvenile court referrals in Barton and McDonald Counties
- Barton County is 4Xs number of average juvenile court referrals for the State.
- ESC 4-County area has a higher domestic violence incident reporting compared with Missouri
- McDonald County is almost 3Xs the number of domestic violence incidents compared to the State of Missouri.
- Jasper County is almost double the number of domestic violence incidents compared to the State of Missouri.
- Jasper and McDonald Counties have a higher violent crime rate
- Jasper County has the highest property crime rate compared to other three counties. This can be an indicator of a higher substance abuse issue. Often people who are substance abusers will steal to obtain money.

Community Strengths:

Barton County Community Strengths

- Less children under 18 living in Poverty by almost 2%
- Reduction in children Living in Poverty under 6 by almost 4%
- Reduction in food insecurity of children
- Reduction in preventable hospitalization for all causes for children under 18
- Reduction in births to teens (ages 15-19)
- Reduction in substantiated child abuse/neglect cases
- Median income family household with children under 18 has increased
- Adult unemployment rates have dropped
- Child homelessness has dropped
- Children entering/re-entering state custody has dropped.
- Uninsured children rate has dropped 2%

Jasper County Community Strengths

- Less children under 18 living in Poverty by almost 3%
- Reduction in food insecurity of children by almost 4%
- Reduction in preventable hospitalization for all causes for children under 18
- Reduction in child asthma ER rates

- Reduction in births to teens (ages 15-19)
- Reduction in substantiated child abuse/neglect cases
- Reduction in housing cost-burdens
- Median income family household with children under 18 has increased
- Children entering/re-entering state custody has dropped.

McDonald County Community Strengths

- Less children under 18 living in Poverty by almost 4%
- Reduction in food insecurity of children by almost 4.5%
- Reduction in Low birthweight infants by almost 1%
- Reduction in substantiated child abuse/neglect cases
- Increase in high school graduation rate by over 1%
- Reduction in children Living in Poverty under 6 by almost 4%
- Median income family household with children under 18 has increased
- Reduction in housing cost-burdens

Newton County Community Strengths

- Reduction in food insecurity of children by over 5%
- Reduction in preventable hospitalization for all causes for children under 18
- Reduction in child asthma ER rates
- Reduction in substantiated child abuse/neglect cases
- Reduction in housing cost-burdens
- Median income family household with children under 18 has increased
- Reduction in teen unintentional deaths/homicides/suicides rate
- Children entering/re-entering state custody has dropped.
- Uninsured children rate has dropped 3%

Final Priorities:

ESC's management team were asked to select the 5 needs from the 37 needs that were provided in seven domain summaries that they believed, based on data, key informant interview data and focus group were the highest priorities.

1. Low-income families need their children to be safe to further higher education. (F)
2. Living wage jobs are not located in low-income neighborhoods. (C)
3. The community lacks resources to provide access to affordable, decent and safe neighborhood housing. (C)
4. Low-income individuals lack resources to access to technical skills for a living wage job. (shelter and food) {C}
5. Low-income individuals lack knowledge to basic healthcare (i.e., primary physicians/prevention/wellness/behavioral health checks) {F}

Identified Existing Linkages and Partnerships:

Non-Profit Organizations

- Alliance of SW MO
- Carthage Crosslines
- Children's Haven
- Connections Case Management
- Crosslines Ministries of Joplin
- First Steps
- God's Resort Joplin
- Heritage Youth Center
- Lafayette House
- Longview Saddle Club
- Project Care
- Soul's Harbor Ministries
- Ozark Center
- BCAWS (Lamar)
- Longview Saddle Club
- Pumpkin Patch Child Development Center
- American Red Cross
- Catholic Charities of SW MO
- One Joplin
- Community Clinic
- Crosslines Ministries of Neosho
- Fuller Center
- Habitat for Humanity Joplin
- Independent Living Center
- Legal Aid of Western Missouri
- Loving Grace
- Salvation Army of Joplin
- United Way of Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas
- Community Clinic
- H.O.U.S.E., Inc.
- Loving Grace Ministries
- The Homeless Coalition

Local City/Quasi-Government

- Carthage Public Housing Authority
- City of Carl Junction
- City of Joplin
- City of Anderson
- City of Carthage
- City of Pineville

- City of Neosho
- Jasper County Health Department
- City of Sarcoxie
- Carthage Water and Electric Company

- Joplin Public Housing Authority
- Noel Public Housing Authority
- Joplin Public Library

Associations and Advocacy Groups

- MO Community Action Network
- Association for Certified ROMA Trainers and Implementers
- National Head Start Association
- National Community Action Partnership
- Community Housing Resource Board (CHRB)
- We Care Coalition (VITA)
- MO Head Start Association
- The Homeless Coalition
- National Community Action Foundation
- Jasper/Newton Counties Continuum of Care

Federal Government

- Administration of Children and Families
- U.S. Department of Energy
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Office of Community Services
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

State Government

- Joplin Regional Center
- MO Depart. of Social Services
- MO Dept. of Mental Health Services
- MO Dept. of Maternal Infant & Child Home Visiting Program
- MO Dept. of Health and Senior Services
- MO First Steps
- MO Dept. of Children's Services
- MO Natural Resources
- MO Dept. of Energy
- Missouri Housing Development Commission
- MO Career Center, Joplin
- MO Natural Resources, Region M

County Government

- McDonald County Commissioners
- Jasper County Commissioners
- Jasper County Health Department
- Newton County Health Department
- Newton County Commissioners
- Barton County Commissioners
- McDonald County Health Department
- Barton County Health Department

Faith-Based Organizations

- Sarcoxie First Baptist Church
- St. Mary's Parish
- Christ Community United Methodist Church
- Southwest City First Baptist Church
- St. Philip's Episcopal Church
- First United Methodist Church
- St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Schools

- Carl Junction Schools
- Joplin Schools
- Lamar Schools
- Neosho Parents As Teachers

Higher Education

- Crowder College

Media

- Fox News 14
- KOAM
- The Lamar Democrat
- McDonald County Gazette (NWA)
- AMI Radio Group
- KSN
- KODE
- The Joplin Globe
- MSSU-TV

For-Profit Business and Corporations

- Liberty Utilities Central
- Lowes
- 1st Choice Heating and Cooling
- Complete Electrical Service, LLC
- Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce
- Webb City Chamber of Commerce
- CLM Sheet Metal
- HRMs Forest Park Apartments
- Ivey's Service Center
- Laclede Utility
- PenMac Staffing Agency
- Southwest Missouri Bank
- Erin Yost Home Childcare
- Barton County Chamber of Commerce
- O'Reilly Build
- Mercy Hospital
- Spire
- Midway Sheet Metal
- DR Mechanical
- Sycamore Homes
- Carthage Chamber of Commerce
- Neosho Chamber of Commerce
- McDonald County Chamber of Commerce
- Footprints and Friends too
- Freeman Regional Hospital
- Kidz Corner Childcare
- Rideout Lumber
- U.S. Bank

References and Sources

Sources utilized to gather community needs assessment data:

- National Community Action Partnership's Assessment Tool
- Missouri Community Action Network Assessment Tool
- U.S. Census Bureau
- American Community Survey
- USA Today
- Brookings Institute
- Missouri Health Matters
- Missouri County Health Rankings
- DataUSA
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator
- FEMA
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Ozarks Health Commission's Needs Assessment
- Missouri State Highway Patrol
- Office of State Courts Administrator
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Livestories
- State of Childhood Obesity
- Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool
- Jasper County Public Housing's 5-Year Plan
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- The Homeless Coalition's Point In Time Count (PIT)
- MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Missouri Department of Social Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service
- Feeding America
- Missouri Hunger Atlas 2019
- Rural Health Information Hub
- *The Joplin Globe*
- Joplin Area Transportation Study Organization (JATSO) 5 year plan
- JATSO public hearing. *USA Today*
- Lindenwood University
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED)
- *Broadband.now*
- National Center for Children in Poverty
- MO Kids Count

- National Initiative for Children’s Health Quality (NICH,
- County Health Rankings
- Public Finance and General Economics,
- Amazon Prime’s “Uncomfortable Truth”
- CBS Documentary “Unlivable Wage”
- *Business Insider*

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For more detailed information:
Data collection, data analysis and prioritization tools are available upon request.