

Section 5: Community Needs Assessment Report

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Introduction

From January 2023 to August 2023, Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority (DCEA) conducted a comprehensive assessment of the needs of lower income residents of its Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) counties and non-CSBG counties served by DCEA’s education programs. The assessment included the overall needs and assets of the communities. **Sources for Data:** Sections 2, 3, 6, and 7 and *List of Sources*.

East Tennessee counties served by the agency’s CSBG programs are Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Monroe, and Sevier.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Counties

Counties Served with Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Funds	
County	Programs
Cocke	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start; Educational Opportunity Centers
Grainger	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start; Educational Opportunity Centers; Upward Bound; Afterschool Programs; Affordable Housing Program
Hamblen	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start/Early Head Start; Educational Opportunity Centers; Afterschool Programs; Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program; Affordable Housing Program
Jefferson	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start; Educational Opportunity Centers; Affordable Housing Program
Monroe	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start; Affordable Housing Program
Sevier	Community Services Program (Neighborhood Service Centers, Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, Senior Nutrition Program); Head Start; Affordable Housing Program

Non-CSBG Counties Served by DCEA’s Education Programs

Blount County, TN (Head Start)
Campbell County, TN (Talent Search)
Claiborne County, TN (Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers)
Hancock County, TN (Sexual Risk Avoidance Education)
Hawkins County, TN (Upward Bound, Educational Opportunity Centers)
Morgan County, TN (Upward Bound)
Scott County, TN (Upward Bound, Talent Search)
Union County, TN (Afterschool, Head Start)
Bell County, KY (Talent Search)
Harlan County, KY (Talent Search)

Counties Throughout Tennessee Served by DCEA’s Affordable Housing Program

DCEA manages 1,599 affordable rental housing units for low-income seniors and families in 24 Tennessee counties. Primary funding sources include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Housing Development Agency (HOME Program and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits), and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati.

1. Anderson
2. Bradley
3. Carter
4. Grainger
5. Greene
6. Hamblen
7. Hawkins
8. Jefferson
9. Knox
10. Loudon
11. McMinn
12. Monroe
13. Morgan
14. Overton
15. Polk
16. Putnam
17. Rhea
18. Roane
19. Scott
20. Sevier

21. Sullivan
22. Unicoi
23. Washington
24. White

Connecting Affordable Housing Tenants to Services

Housing in CSBG Counties: DCEA’s housing program serves low-income residents in five of the six CSBG counties (Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Monroe, and Sevier). DCEA has no housing in Cocke County. Tenants are connected to health and social services by Service Coordinators and DCEA’s programs operating in the counties. CSBG counties with housing are included in DCEA’s Community Needs Assessment.

Housing in DCEA’s Non-CSBG Counties: With the exception of Morgan, Scott, and Hawkins counties (Upward Bound in Morgan/Scott, Talent Search in Scott, and Upward Bound and Educational Opportunity Centers in Hawkins) and five CSBG counties (Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Monroe, and Sevier), Affordable Housing counties are *not* included in the Community Needs Assessment. Apartment Managers and/or Service Coordinators connect families and seniors to services through partnerships with the Community Action Agencies/Human Resource Agencies serving the housing counties. DCEA’s housing management team reviews the agencies’ Community Needs Assessments and Strategic Plans and communicates with key agency staff members in order to plan, implement, and evaluate collaborative/coordinated services that will meet each tenant’s unique needs.

Collaborating Agencies Serving DCEA’s Housing Tenants: **Mid-East Community Action** (Roane, Loudon); **Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency** (McMinn, Polk, Rhea); **Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency** (Overton, Putnam, White); **Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency** (Carter, Greene, Hawkins, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington); **Bradley-Cleveland Community Services Agency** (Bradley); **Anderson County**

Community Action Commission (Anderson); **East Tennessee Human Resource Agency** (Morgan, Scott); **Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Agency** (Knox).

Assessment Process

The Executive Director and planning team members (Outcomes Manager, Director of Planning, Program Directors, and the Chair of the Board of Directors) led the comprehensive needs assessment.

Methodology: (1) Compiling, analyzing, and interpreting recent statistical data including population, income and poverty, workforce characteristics and economic conditions, homelessness, housing costs and conditions, public assistance, education, childcare, nutrition, transportation, health/mental health/substance use, teen pregnancy, adverse childhood experiences, violent crime, single parents, elderly population, and disability; (2) Developing assessment instruments for distribution to clients, community members, partners, and the agency's board and staff members; (3) Distributing, collecting, and organizing data from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observation; (4) Analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data; (5) Producing community needs assessment reports.

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths: Our positive relationship with current and past clients, partners, and community members is demonstrated by the number responding to the needs surveys. In the CSBG counties, 637 clients completed surveys; in the non-CSBG counties, 100 clients completed surveys. In the CSBG counties, 362 community members completed surveys; in the non-CSBG counties, 154 community members completed surveys. In the CSBG counties, 67 key partners (those contributing significantly to the agency's programs and services) completed

surveys; ten in the non-CSBG counties completed surveys. All program directors and key frontline staff participated in focus groups, interviews, surveys, and/or client observation.

Twenty out of 24 board members completed surveys.

Limitations: More stakeholders in the CSBG counties responded than in the non-CSBG counties. Across individual counties (both CSBG and non-CSBG), more stakeholders in Hamblen County responded than in other counties.

Population

CSBG Counties: Total Population and Change 2010-2020

The CSBG population grew by 5.43%, with Sevier reporting the highest growth (9.45%) and Cocke the lowest (0.94%). A significant positive shift in total population can indicate local economic growth, but it can also negatively impact health care provider to population ratios and the availability of essential community resources.

	Total Population, 2010	Total Population, 2020	Population Change, 2010- 2020	Population Change, 2010- 2020, Percent
Report Area	306,678	323,338	16,660	5.43%
Cocke County	35,662	35,999	337	0.94%
Grainger County	22,657	23,527	870	3.84%
Hamblen County	62,544	64,499	1,955	3.13%
Jefferson County	51,407	54,683	3,276	6.37%
Monroe County	44,519	46,250	1,731	3.89%
Sevier County	89,889	98,380	8,491	9.45%
Tennessee	6,346,105	6,910,840	564,735	8.90%
United States	312,471,161	334,735,155	22,263,994	7.13%

CSBG Counties: Race

93.14% of the population in the CSBG counties is White. Grainger County has the highest percentage of White residents (97.09%); Hamblen has the lowest (88.08%).

Percent of Population by Race							
	White	Black	Asian	Native American	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Report Area	93.14%	1.89%	0.71%	0.31%	0.15%	0.93%	2.87%
Cocke County	94.68%	1.89%	0.71%	0.31%	0.35%	0.93%	2.87%
Grainger County	97.09%	0.19%	0.18%	0.5%	0.51%	0%	1.53%
Hamblen County	88.08%	3.0%	0.88%	0.32%	0.42%	2.55%	3.76%
Jefferson County	94.96%	1.80%	0.60%	0.03%	0.05%	0.26%	2.29%
Monroe County	93.09%	2.07%	0.44%	0.19%	0%	0.95%	3.26%
Sevier County	93.99%	.88%	0.82%	0.33%	0.04%	0.78%	3.16%
Tennessee	76.73%	16.67%	1.81%	0.25%	0.06%	1.53%	2.94%
United States	70.42%	12.62%	5.64%	0.82%	0.19%	5.14%	5.17%

CSBG Counties: Hispanic/Latino Population

19,529 Hispanic or Latino persons live in the report area, representing 6.06% of the total population. Hamblen County has the highest number (7,591) and percentage (11.77%) of Hispanic/Latino residents. Cocke County has the lowest percentage (2.57%). Grainger County has the lowest number (796).

Hispanic or Latino Population Number and Percent		
	Number	Percent
Report Area	19,529	6.06%
Cocke County	919	2.57%
Grainger County	796	3.42%
Hamblen County	7,591	11.77%
Jefferson County	1,971	3.65%
Monroe County	2,041	4.4%
Sevier County	6,211	6.34%
Tennessee	377,162	5.57%
United States	59,361,020	18.18%

Non-CSBG Counties: Total Population and Change, 2010-2020

The non-CSBG population grew by .71%, with Blount County reporting the highest rate of growth (9.97%). Union County reported the second highest growth rate (3.63%). All other counties reported significant population loss. Population loss is associated with a lack of employment opportunities and local health and social services resources.

	Total Population, 2010 Census	Total Population, 2020 Census	Population Change, 2010-2020	Population Change, 2010- 2020, Percent
Report Area	380,883	383,593	2,710	0.71%
Bell County, KY	28,690	24,097	-4,593	-16.01%
Harlan County, KY	29,278	26,831	-2,447	-8.36%
Blount County, TN	123,010	135,280	12,270	9.97%
Campbell County, TN	40,716	39,272	-1,444	-3.55%
Claiborne County, TN	32,213	32,043	-170	-0.53%
Hancock County, TN	6,819	6,662	-157	-2.30%
Hawkins County, TN	56,833	56,721	-112	-0.20%
Morgan County, TN	21,987	21,035	-952	-4.33%
Scott County, TN	22,228	21,850	-378	-1.70%
Union County, TN	19,109	19,802	693	3.63%
Kentucky	4,339,370	4,505,836	166,466	3.84%
Tennessee	6,346,105	6,910,840	564,735	8.90%
United States	312,471,161	334,735,155	22,263,994	7.13%

Non-CSBG Counties Population: Percent of Population by Race

The White population is the largest group in the report area (95.03%).

	White	Black	Asian	Native American /Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Races
Report Area	95.03%	2.93%	0.48%	0.18%	0.06%	0.23%	2.08%
Bell County, KY	95.26%	2.50%	0.01%	0.17%	0%	0.24%	1.82%
Harlan County, KY	95.47%	1.96%	0.33%	0%	0%	0.32%	1.93%
Blount County, TN	93.14%	2.65%	0.76%	0.14%	0.08%	0.31%	2.92%
Campbell County, TN	97.06%	0.24%	0.43%	0.17%	0%	0.43%	1.67%
Claiborne County, TN	96.17%	0.86%	0.78%	0.20%	0.11%	0.04%	1.83%
Hancock County, TN	93.36%	0.56%	0.58%	0%	0%	0.14%	0.37%
Hawkins County, TN	96.07%	1.41%	0.45%	0.14%	0.13%	.10%	1.70%
Morgan County, TN	91.99%	6.04%	0.09%	0.59%	0.02%	0.33%	0.95%
Scott County, TN	97.76%	0.58%	0.01%	0.55%	0%	0.07%	1.03%
Union County, TN	97.01%	0.46%	0.15%	0	0.10%	0.02%	2.27%
Kentucky	86.25%	8.10%	1.53%	0.19%	0.07%	1.08%	2.80%
Tennessee	76.73%	16.67%	1.81%	0.25%	0.06%	1.53%	2.94%
U.S.	70.42%	12.62%	5.64%	0.82%	0.19%	5.14%	5.17%

Non-CSBG Counties: Hispanic or Latino Population

8,070 Hispanic/Latino persons live in the non-CSBG area, representing 2.11% of the total population. Blount County has the largest number (4,602) and the highest percentage (3.5%). Scott County has the lowest percentage (0.99%); Hancock County has the smallest number (120).

Non-CSBG Counties: Hispanic or Latino Population Number and Percent		
	Number	Percent
Report Area	8,070	2.11%
Bell County, KY	315	1.19%
Harlan County, KY	267	1.01%
Blount County, TN	4,602	3.5%
Campbell County, TN	584	1.47%
Claiborne County, TN	425	1.34%
Hancock County, TN	120	1.83%
Hawkins County, TN	897	1.58%
Morgan County, TN	297	1.38%
Scott County, TN	218	0.99%
Union County, TN	345	1.75%
Kentucky	167, 949	3.76%
Tennessee	377,162	5.57%
United States	59,361,020	18.18%

Conditions of Poverty

Population in Poverty & Poverty Rate Change

Between 2010 and 2020 poverty decreased in all CSBG and non-CSBG counties.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), the decrease was due to federal stimulus checks, Child Care Tax Credits, and unemployment insurance payments made during the pandemic.

In the CSBG area, 46,755 persons lived in poverty in 2020 (14.57%). Cocke County had the highest poverty rate (19.7%); Sevier County and Monroe County had the lowest (13.8%). From 2010 to 2020, the poverty rate for the CSBG report area decreased by 5.29%, compared to Tennessee’s decrease of 4.2% and the nation’s decrease of 3.4%. Cocke had the largest decrease (12.2%) and Sevier the smallest (2.7%).

	Persons in Poverty 2010	Poverty Rate 2010	Persons in Poverty 2020	Poverty Rate 2020	Change in Poverty Rate 2010-2020
Report Area	59,958	19.86%	46,755	14.57%	-5.29%
Cocke County, TN	11,255	31.9%	7,044	19.7%	-12.2%
Grainger County, TN	4,516	20.1%	3,321	14.2%	-5.9%
Hamblen County, TN	12,688	20.6%	9,561	15.0%	-5.6%
Jefferson County, TN	8,307	16.7%	6,948	12.9%	-3.8%
Monroe County, TN	8,526	19.4%	6,396	13.8%	-5.6%
Sevier County, TN	14,666	16.5%	13,485	13.8%	-2.7%
Tennessee	1,102,643	17.8%	911,097	13.6%	-4.2%
United States	46,215,956	15.3%	38,371,394	11.9%	-3.4%

In the non-CSBG counties, 61,848 persons lived in poverty in 2020. Bell County had the highest rate (29.8%); Blount County had the lowest (9.2%). From 2010 to 2020, the poverty rate for the non-CSBG counties decreased by 5.04%. Union County reported the greatest decrease (9.5%); Bell County had the smallest decrease (0.4%). Kentucky's poverty rate decreased by 4%. Tennessee's rate decreased by 4.2%. In the United States, the rate decreased by 3.4%.

	Persons in Poverty 2010	Poverty Rate 2010	Persons in Poverty 2020	Poverty Rate 2020	Change in Poverty Rate 2010-2020
Report Area	79,845	21.53%	61,848	16.50%	-5.04%
Bell County, KY	8,373	30.2%	7,293	29.8%	-0.4%
Harlan County, KY	9,679	33.7%	7,015	28.0%	-5.7%
Blount County, TN	16,861	14.0%	12,219	9.2%	-4.8%
Campbell County, TN	9,728	24.3%	7,807	20.0%	-4.3%
Claiborne County, TN	7,760	25.1%	5,779	18.9%	-6.2%
Hancock County, TN	2,062	30.9%	1,808	28.6%	-2.3%
Hawkins County, TN	10,567	18.8%	8,674	15.5%	-3.3%
Morgan County, TN	3,930	20.3%	3,598	18.8%	-1.5%
Scott County, TN	5,908	27.0%	4,292	19.8%	-7.2%
Union County, TN	4,977	26.4%	3,363	16.9%	-9.5%
Kentucky	796,208	18.9%	647,158	14.9%	-4.0%
Tennessee	1,102,643	17.8%	911,097	13.6%	-4.2%
United States	46,215,956	15.3%	38,371,394	11.9%	-3.4%

Poverty by Gender

In the CSBG area, 17.4% of females live in poverty, compared to 14.2% of males. Cocke County has the highest poverty rate for females (23.71%); Jefferson County has the lowest (14.4%). Cocke County also has the highest percentage of males in poverty (17.48%); Sevier County has the lowest (13.09%). In comparison, in Tennessee, 13.2% of males and 15.9% of females live in poverty. In the United States, 11.6% of males and 13.9% of females live in poverty.

In the non-CSBG area, 19.91% of females live in poverty, compared to 16.91% of males. Harlan County has the highest poverty rate for females (31.66%); Blount County has the lowest (10.66%). Harlan County has the highest percentage of males in poverty (32.72%); Blount County has the lowest (8.79%). In Tennessee, 13.27% of males and 15.89% of females live in poverty. In Kentucky, 14.97% of males and 18.17% of females live in poverty. In the United States, 11.6% of males and 13.9% of females live in poverty.

Poverty by Ethnicity

36.63% of the Hispanic population in the CSBG area live below the Federal Poverty Level. In comparison, 14.32% of non-Hispanic households live in poverty. Hamblen has the highest percentage living in poverty (44.89%); Monroe County has the lowest (18.2%). In comparison, 24.52% of the Hispanic population in Tennessee and 18.29% in the United States live in poverty.

26.88% of the Hispanic population in the non-CSBG area live below the Federal Poverty Level. In comparison, 8.27% of non-Hispanic households live in poverty. Bell County has the highest percentage living in poverty (47.94%); Claiborne County has the lowest (7.9%). In comparison, 24.52% of the Hispanic population in Tennessee, 24.4% in Kentucky, and 18.29% in the United States live in poverty.

Poverty by Race

In the CSBG area, 14.54% of the White population live in poverty compared to 32.63% of Black/African-Americans. Hamblen County has the highest percentage of Black/African-Americans living in poverty (40.2%); Grainger County has the lowest (0%). In the non-CSBG area, 18.16% of the White population live in poverty compared to 27.49% of Black/African-Americans. Hancock County has the highest percentage of Black/African-Americans living in

poverty (100%); Scott County has the lowest (4.84%). In comparison, 24.34% of the Black/African-American population in Tennessee, 26.58% in Kentucky, and 22.07% in the United States live in poverty.

Poverty by Age

24.4% of children 0-17 in the CSBG counties and 25.5% in the non-CSBG counties live in poverty. In the CSBG counties, Jefferson County has the lowest rate (19.5%); Cocke County has the highest (33.3%). In the non-CSBG counties, Harlan has the highest rate (43.2%); Blount County has the lowest (12.7%). In Tennessee, 20.8 % of children live in poverty. In Kentucky, 22.2% of children live in poverty. In the United States, the childhood poverty rate is 17.5%.

In the CSBG area, adults 18-59 have the lowest rates of poverty of any age group – 7.8%. Cocke County has the highest rate (10.6%); Jefferson County has the lowest (6%). In the non-CSBG counties, the poverty rate for this age group is 11.7%. Harlan County has the highest rate (18.1%); Blount County has the lowest (4%). In Tennessee, 7.4% of the age group lives in poverty. In Kentucky, 8.6% of the age group lives in poverty. In the United States, the rate is 6.5%.

In the CSBG counties, 8.5% of adults age 65 and older live in poverty. Cocke County has the highest percentage (8.4%); Hamblen County has the lowest (6.2%). In the non-CSBG counties, 11.4% of the age group lives in poverty. Harlan County has the highest percentage (19.4%); Blount County has the lowest (7.4%). In comparison, 9.3% of those 65 and older in Tennessee, 11% in Kentucky, and 9.3% in the United States live in poverty.

Education

In DCEA's service area, over 58% of jobs in the future will require at least some postsecondary education (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2021). A two or four-year college degree has the potential to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Increasingly, certificate or apprenticeship programs requiring less than two years of postsecondary training are viewed as pathways out of poverty provided that the training is directly connected to placement in a high demand occupation in the local area.

Currently 24% of adults in the CSBG counties and 24.7% in the non-CSBG counties have an associate's degree or higher. In the CSBG counties, Sevier County has the highest percentage of adults with an associate's degree or higher (26.1%); Cocke County has the lowest (16.9%). In the non-CSBG counties, Blount County has the highest percentage with an associate's degree or higher (32.4%); Hancock County has the lowest (15%). 37.5% in Tennessee, 33.7% in Kentucky, and 41.5% in the United States have an associate's degree or higher.

17.1% of adults in the CSBG counties and 16.5% in the non-CSBG counties have a bachelor's degree or higher. In the CSBG counties, Sevier County has the highest percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher (18.3%); Cocke County has the lowest (11.3%). In the non-CSBG counties, Blount County has the highest percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher (24.6%); Harlan County has the lowest (9.5%). In comparison, 28.2% in Tennessee, 25.1% in Kentucky, and 32.9% in the United States have a bachelor's degree or higher.

15.5% of adults in the CSBG counties and 16.7% in the non-CSBG counties do not have a high school diploma or equivalent credential. In the CSBG counties, Grainger County has the highest percentage without a diploma/credential (19.89%); Sevier County has the lowest percentage (13.54%). In the non-CSBG counties, Harlan County has the highest

percentage without a diploma/credential (26.81%); Blount County has the lowest (10.58%). 11.78% in Tennessee, 12.84% in Kentucky, and 11.47% in the United States do not have a high school diploma or equivalent credential.

Personal Barriers to Self-Sufficiency

With the exception of Blount County, all counties have labor force participation rates that are lower than the rates for the United States (63.6%), Tennessee (61.8%), and Kentucky (59.5%). Unlike unemployment rates, labor force participation rates include working age adults who have given up looking for work. In the CSBG counties, Sevier County has the highest participation rate (60%); Monroe County has the lowest (51%). In the non-CSBG counties, Blount County has the highest percentage in the workforce (60%); Harlan County has the lowest (37.5%). In comparison, 63.6% of adults in the United States, 61.8% in Tennessee, and 59.5% in Kentucky are in the labor force.

Top employers in the CSBG counties are: manufacturing (22,331 workers); accommodations and food service (21,873 workers); and health care and social assistance (6,703 workers). Top employers in the non-CSBG counties are manufacturing (19,898 workers); accommodations and food service (9,779 workers); and health care and social assistance (7,314 workers). Across all employment sectors, workers in CSBG and non-CSBG counties earn less than their counterparts in the states or nation.

Welfare to work programs acknowledge the role personal barriers play in impeding gainful employment by low-income individuals. DCEA's assessments of program staff, partners, clients, community members, and board members identified personal barriers to employment and self-sufficiency, including substance abuse, mental health challenges, disability,

absence of a strong work ethic, deficient interpersonal skills required for success at work, inability to manage emotions and carry through on tasks required to reach goals, lack of affordable child care, teen pregnancy, poor life and/or parenting skills, lack of transportation, and ex-offender status. Some personal barriers may stem from the experience of childhood poverty and other adverse conditions.

Early Poverty

Early poverty is a severe problem in DCEA's service area, with 24.4% of children 0-17 in the CSBG counties and 25.5% in the non-CSBG counties living in poverty. In the nation, the childhood poverty rate is 17.5%. In CSBG counties, childhood poverty rates range from a low of 19.5% in Jefferson County to a high of 33.6% in Cocke County. In non-CSBG counties, Harlan County, Kentucky, has the highest rate (43.2%); Blount County, Tennessee, has the lowest (12.7%). In Tennessee, the childhood poverty rate is 20.8%. In Kentucky, the rate is 22.2%. In the United States, the rate is 17.5%.

Assessment results confirm that early poverty is often a predictor for life-long economic disadvantage. Early poverty is also associated with other adverse circumstances, such as exposure to violence, parental substance abuse and mental illness, and child abuse, which can lead to high levels of toxic stress in children and subsequent lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and mental and physical health. Childhood poverty is strongly associated with teen parenthood and unemployment. The longer children live in poverty, the worse their adult outcomes are. For young adults, living in poverty makes it more difficult for them to access quality education and training programs. When they do enroll, low-income young adults are more likely to have to work full time while in school, thus prolonging the time it takes them to earn a degree and putting them at risk for non-completion.

Disability

About a third of clients served by DCEA report having a disability. People with disabilities have much lower work participation rates and much higher poverty rates than people without disabilities. In the CSBG counties, 18.35% of the age group 18-64 have one or more disabilities. In the non-CSBG counties, 18.9% persons aged 18 to 64 report at least one disability. In comparison, the national rate is 10.25%, Tennessee's rate is 13.2%, and Kentucky's rate is 15.9%. Because having a disability frequently results in a lack of employment and poverty, children of parents with a disability face multiple obstacles to their own self-sufficiency as they grow up.

Affordable Housing

Cost-burdened renters (those paying more than 30% of their income for housing) are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and health care to pay the rent and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions. In 2021/22, the agency's CSBG funds helped 3,737 clients in the six CSBG counties to avoid eviction/homelessness. In the CSBG counties, renters make up 44.22% of households. 37.42% of renters pay monthly rental costs that are more than 30% of their incomes – these are cost-burdened renters. Hamblen County renters have the highest cost burden rate (45.24%); Monroe County has the lowest (32.24%). In the non-CSBG counties, renters make up 38.25% of households. 45.66% of renters pay monthly rental costs that are more than 30% of their incomes. Bell County renters have the highest cost burden rates (43.37%); Scott County has the lowest (33.98%). In comparison, 38.28% of rental units in Kentucky are cost-burdened. In Tennessee 42.41% are cost-burdened. The national rate is 45.66%.

Cost burdens are much lower for homeowners. In the CSBG counties, 25.26% of

homeowners with a mortgage and 8.42% without a mortgage are cost-burdened. Jefferson County has the highest rate for homeowners without a mortgage (10.12%); Monroe County has the lowest rate (8.3%). Sevier County has the highest rate of cost burden for homeowners with a mortgage (30.47%); Hamblen County has the lowest (20.44%). In the non-CSBG counties, 23.52% of homeowners with mortgages and 8.8% without mortgages spend 30% or more of their income on housing. The highest cost burden is in Hancock County -- 31.01% of homeowners with mortgages are cost-burdened. The lowest cost burden for owners with a mortgage is in Union County (19.9%). For those without a mortgage the highest cost burden is in Scott County (13.7%); the lowest is in Blount County (7%). In comparison, in Tennessee 23.71% of homeowners with mortgages, 22.79% in Kentucky, and 27.25% in the United States are cost-burdened. The rates of cost burden for homeowners without a mortgage are: Tennessee 9.38%, Kentucky 10.62%, and the United States 13.07%.

Seniors

The senior population is growing, with an accompanying need for health care, supportive housing, and transportation. In the CSBG counties, seniors make up 19.85% of the population, compared to 16.03% in the United States and 16.35% in Tennessee. Cocke County (21.25%) has the highest percentage of the aging population; Hamblen County has the lowest (18.10%). In the non-CSBG counties, seniors make up 19.95% of the total population, compared to 16.03% in the United States, 16.35% in Tennessee, and 16.36% in Kentucky. Hancock County (21.12%) has the highest percentage of seniors; Scott County has the lowest (16.84%).

Seniors in poverty suffer from poor nutrition/health, from living in housing that is in disrepair, and from lack of reliable, convenient transportation. Senior poverty rates in the

CSBG target area average 8.5%, lower than the rate for Tennessee (9.3%) and the United States (9.3%). Three counties have higher rates than the state's or nation's rates – Sevier County (9.6%), Grainger County (10.3%), and Monroe County (11.7%). In the non-CSBG counties, Blount County (7.4%) has a rate lower than the United States (9.3%), Tennessee (9.3%), or Kentucky (11%) rates. Harlan County has the highest percentage of seniors in poverty (19.4%).

Seniors in the CSBG and non-CSBG counties have higher rates of disability than seniors in the United States (34.05%, Tennessee (38.62%), and Kentucky (40.13%). In the CSBG counties, 41.15% of seniors have one or more disabilities. Hamblen County has the highest rate of seniors with disabilities (44.85%); Monroe County has the lowest (40.39%). In the non-CSBG counties, 44.38% of seniors report disabilities. Bell County has the highest percentage (59.07%); Blount County has the lowest (33.04%).

Rural areas lack ready access to essential basic needs and health care services. A higher percentage of residents aged 65 and older in the CSBG counties (57.16%) live in rural areas than their counterparts in the United States (22.26%) and Tennessee (38.09%). 100% of Grainger County's seniors live in a rural area. Hamblen County has the lowest percentage of seniors residing in rural areas (20.86%). In the non-CSBG counties, 55.18% of seniors live in rural areas, compared to 22.26% in the United States, 38.09% in Tennessee, and 43.90% in Kentucky. Hancock County and Union County have the highest percentage of seniors living in rural areas (100%); Blount County has the lowest percentage (33.09%).

Grandparents aged 65 and older who are responsible for their grandchildren face economic hardship and social/emotional challenges stemming from the necessity of assuming parental roles at a time in their life when health problems become more prevalent. In the

CSBG counties, 11.1% of grandparents are raising grandchildren; in the non-CSBG counties 11.2% are responsible for their grandchildren. In the CSBG counties, Grainger County has the highest percentage (20.2%); Cocke County has the lowest (2.9%). In the non-CSBG counties, Scott County has the highest percentage (19.2%); Hancock County has the lowest (0%). Comparisons: Kentucky (3.4%); Tennessee (13.8%); United States (17%).

Transportation

With the exception of Hamblen County, CSBG counties are served solely by public transportation services provided by the East Tennessee Human Resource Agency (ETHRA). ETHRA and other Human Resource Agencies provide public transportation in the non-CSBG counties in Tennessee. The City of Morristown (Hamblen County) currently offers fixed route public transportation and Lift van services for people with disabilities Monday through Friday. On-call Human Resource Agency van transportation must be requested three days prior to trips and is available Monday through Friday. Some non-CSBG counties such as Knox County offer fixed route services all days of the week. In the Kentucky counties, pre-scheduled van service is provided by Rural Transit Enterprises Coordinated Monday through Saturday.

Child Care (Early Childhood Education)

Affordable childcare for lower income families is a major challenge in all counties. Child Care Development Block Grant subsidies reach only 12.6% of eligible children under age 6. Head Start serves 22.68% of eligible children, while Early Head Start services 5.65% of eligible children. 18.3 7% of three and four-year old children attend public pre-K. The Tennessee Commission on Children & Youth's 2022 survey of parents across Tennessee found that 70% said that accessibility was the most significant challenge in finding care for

their child. Finding care for times outside of daytime Monday-Friday is a significant hurdle for working families. The annual cost of center-based care for infants is \$10,780; for toddlers \$9,998; for 4-year-olds, \$8,759, and for before/afterschool, \$2,938. On average, a low-income single parent will pay 40.3% of his/her annual income for childcare.

Mental Health

In the CSBG counties, 18.2% of adults age 18 and older reported that they had poor mental health for 14 or more days during the past 30 days. Cocke County reported the highest rate (19.5%); Jefferson County reported the lowest (17.7%). In the non-CSBG counties, 18.7% of adults 18 and older reported poor mental health for 14 or more days during the past 30 days. Harlan County reported the highest rate (22.10%); Blount County reported the lowest (17%). In comparison, Tennessee's rate was 16.98%; Kentucky's rate was 18.32%; and the rate for the United States was 13.90%. Poor mental health among adults is strongly associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences, unemployment, and substance abuse. **Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021.

Physical Health

In the CSBG counties, 12.2% of adults 18 and older reported that they had poor physical health. Cocke County reported the highest rate (13.7%); Jefferson County reported the lowest (11.2%). In the non-CSBG counties, 12.9% of adults 18 and older reported that they had poor physical health. Harlan County reported the highest percentage (18.5%); Blount County reported the lowest (10.4%). In comparison, the rates for Kentucky were 13%; for Tennessee 10.9%; and for the United States 9.4%. In all counties, the higher the poverty rates the higher the rates for adults with poor physical health. **Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021.

Dental Health

Easy access to dentists in all counties is limited. The rates described are expressed as the number of dentists per 100,000 population. In the CSBG counties, there are 20.41 dentists per 100,000 population. Hamblen County has the largest number (32.56); Cocke County has the smallest number (11.11). In the non-CSBG counties, there are 22.12 dentists per 100,000 population. Scott County has the largest number (29.05); Hawkins County has the smallest number (10.58). Tennessee has 27.52 dentists per 100,000 population; Kentucky has 29.87; and the United States has 35.62.

Deaths of Despair

Deaths of despair for all age groups are deaths caused by suicide, alcohol-related disease, and drug overdoses. The rates described are per 100,000 population. In the CSBG counties, the rate is 75.2. Sevier County has the highest rate (85.5); Jefferson County has the lowest (65.1). In the non-CSBG counties, the rate is 72.1. Union County has the highest rate (94.5); Scott County has the lowest (56.1). In comparison, the rate for Kentucky is 67.1; for Tennessee the rate is 60.9; and for the United States the rate is 47. Nationally, deaths of despair are most prevalent among the White male population without a college degree. Deaths of despair have been linked to the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs once held by workers without higher education. **Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021.

Counties in Economic Distress

The Appalachian Regional Commission designates one CSBG county as economically distressed (Cocke). Five non-CSBG counties are classified as economically distressed (Hancock, Morgan, Scott, Bell, and Harlan). To be designated as distressed, counties must have median family incomes no greater than 67% of the U.S. average and a poverty rate that is 150% or greater of the U.S. average.

Root Causes of Poverty

Root causes of poverty in the communities served were identified as **employment-related** (lack of employment, less than full-time year-round employment, mismatch of residents' skills with skills required by employers, jobs that do not pay enough to support a family); **education-related** (low educational attainment levels and poor literacy or numeracy skills regardless of educational level attained, inadequate digital skills, lack of knowledge about educational opportunities and financial aid, lack of social/emotional skills required for success in college, inability to juggle work and school, inadequate academic preparation for college); **income-related** (lack of income from any source that is sufficient to meet the basic needs of life, inability to manage money wisely); and **personal barriers to self-sufficiency** (substance abuse, mental health challenges, disability, poor attitudes toward work, lack of workplace and life skills, teen pregnancy, lack of child care and transportation, poor parenting skills, ex-offender status, poverty in childhood/intergenerational poverty/adverse childhood experiences).

Services That Are Essential to Self-Sufficiency

The majority of DCEA's working-age clients are motivated to achieve self-sufficiency. In 2023, DCEA's CSBG program helped 3,012 clients who were seeking employment. 2,896 (96%) obtained full-time employment. The majority of DCEA clients who work earn little more than the minimum wage (\$7.25/hour). Family-supporting wages are the hourly wages families need to be able to pay for basic food, childcare, medical and dental care, housing, transportation, and other household expenses without receiving public benefits. The average hourly wage required to adequately support a family with two adults (one adult is presumed to be working) and one child in CSBG and non-CSBG counties averages \$22 an hour (MIT, *Self-Sufficiency Standard*, 2022).

Assessments reveal that many low-income children and seniors are food insecure. Poor seniors need improved access to food assistance programs, including SNAP and home-delivered meals or congregate meal programs. Children and their parents can benefit from increased family access to SNAP benefits, Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), free and reduced-price school lunches and breakfasts, the Child and Adult Care Food program, Summer Food programs, and nonprofit and faith-based nutrition education and food resources.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, rental housing (at fair market rates) in DCEA's service area is not affordable to people with low incomes. The Tennessee Housing Development Agency reports a severe shortage of public and other government-assisted rental housing in all DCEA's service counties in Tennessee.

Seniors living only on Social Security or Supplemental Security Income need safe, affordable housing that is kept in good repair and convenient transportation to medical and community services.

Stakeholders identified a need for additional licensed childcare slots, with a focus on infant and toddler care, for increases in state/federal childcare subsidies for low-income working parents, and for expanded day and time options to accommodate the needs of working parents.

Affordable, convenient, safe, and reliable public transportation is a high need in all counties. Without it, low-income residents and seniors or those with disabilities confront severe barriers to getting to work, school, and needed services of all kinds. All program staff identified a need to expand current transportation options (reimbursement for fuel costs, federally subsidized rural public transit service) to include affordable services offered seven days a week,

on holidays, and during expanded hours each day of the week to accommodate the schedules of shift workers.

The majority of stakeholders identified a need to design and target services to grandparents raising children.

Strengths of Program Staff

All program staff members focus on client outcomes rather than units of service; receive annual training in mental health and Adverse Childhood Experiences; practice effective customer service; and collaborate with other DCEA programs and external partners.

Customer Satisfaction

97% of DCEA's clients surveyed in 2023 were satisfied with the services received and the manner in which services were delivered.

High Priority Needs Identified by Stakeholders

High priority needs are the needs identified by three or more of the stakeholder groups who responded to the surveys or participated in focus groups, interviews, or observation. These are the needs that will be further analyzed during the development of the new Strategic Plan.

CSBG Counties

1. Basic needs services for all ages
2. Affordable housing
3. Transportation services
4. Employment services
5. Quality, affordable childcare (early childhood education)
6. Mental health services
7. Substance abuse treatment

8. Dental care
9. Services for homeless individuals or families
10. Services for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Non-CSBG Counties

1. Mental health services
2. Health/medical care services
3. Affordable housing
4. Services for homeless individuals or families
5. Services for grandparents raising grandchildren.
6. Employment services

Basic Needs Come First

Assessment results reveal that basic needs must be met to enable individuals of all ages and families to begin the journey to self-sufficiency. Low-income individuals need to be able to put nutritious food on the table; to have a reliable source of transportation to work, school, and necessary services; and to possess sound emotional and physical health with reliable access to medical and dental care and to mental health and substance abuse treatment services. When these needs are met, low-income clients are better prepared to take advantage of the educational, employment, and personal development opportunities that lead to family stability and permanent self-sufficiency.

Building on Strengths in the Community

Partners in the Communities: The assessment identified key service providers for low-income residents working toward self-sufficiency. DCEA partners with a comprehensive range of service providers in all counties, including employment and job training providers (Workforce Investment Act Career Centers); transportation providers (the Human Resource Agencies);

educational institutions (K-12, community colleges, four-year colleges, postsecondary vocational/technical educational institutions, and adult education); medical, social services, and other providers in the Aging Network; basic needs providers (agencies and organizations delivering welfare to work services, food assistance, children's services, mental health/substance abuse treatment, services for those with special needs, medical and dental health prevention and treatment services, and public and assisted housing); economic development agencies; and employers. Program staff identified faith-based organizations, other anti-poverty organizations, and community-based and business organizations as key assets in addressing basic needs, reducing poverty, and expanding economic and educational opportunities for low-income residents in the service area. Stakeholders recognized the need to help prepare unemployed or underemployed residents for jobs that are in high demand in the service area.

Assets/Partners

Program Directors identified assets or partners for their programs. These assets/partners, as well as new assets/partners identified during strategic planning, will play important roles in implementing priority services.

Head Start Partnerships

First United Methodist Church Madisonville
Connect Church
Living Promise Church
New Center Baptist Church
Legal Aid
Lions Club Sevier County
Smoky Mountain TN Reconnect
Blount County Library
Jefferson County Community Center
Food for Kids
Clinch Mountain Printing
College Square Mall

Culy Contracting
Echo Valley Corn Maze
Food City #602
Home Depot
Lakeshore Hardware
Village Outfitters
Mullins Shaolin Kung-Fu
Tri-County Bean Station Animal Control
Tennessee Department of Children's Services
Tennessee Department of Human Services
Public health departments
First Bank
Alcoa City Schools
Cocke County Schools
Jefferson County Schools
Grainger County Schools
Hamblen County Schools
Maryville City Schools
Monroe County Schools
Newport City Schools
Sevier County Schools
Sweetwater City Schools
Union County Schools
UT Extension Office
Tennessee Early Intervention Services
Westmoreland Dentistry
Women Infants and Children (Supplemental Nutrition Program)
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Career Centers and Adult Education

Affordable Housing Partnerships

Anderson County Community Action Agency
East Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Legal Aid Society of Middle TN and the Cumberlands
Legal Aid of East TN
Cigna Health Spring
United Health Care
Setcares
My Ride of East TN
Sharon's Adult Day Care
The Caring Place
Eagle Homecare
Goodwill Helps
UT Extension Office

Caris
Cooke's Pharmacy
Area Agency on Aging and Disability
TN Blind and Visual Impaired Services
Home Helpers
Tennova Home Health
Bradley-Cleveland Community
Assistance and Resource Ministry
Burgie Drug Store
Charlotte Taylor Center
Elizabethton Senior Center
Hale Community Ministries
Lingerfelt Drug Store
Roane Mountain Medical
Veteran's Services
First TN Resource Services
Greenville/Greene County Community Ministries
Vietnam Veterans of America
UT Extension Office
Smile on 60 Plus
Clear Captions
Elder Watch
VFW
Clinch Powell RC&D
Second Harvest Food Bank
CVS Pharmacy Rogersville
Rogersville Fire Dept.
Hawkins County EMS
UT Home Care
Signature Lifestyles
Signature Healthcare
Rogersville Senior Center
People Loving People
Appalachian Miles for Smiles
Addus Home Care
Friend in Need Health Center
Silver Angels
United Way
One Accord Ministry
West Park Baptist Church
Knoxville Knox County Community Action Committee
Mid-East Community Action Agency
East Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Bradley-Cleveland Community Services Agency

Upper East Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Southeast Human Resource Agency
Mid-East Community Action
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church
Legal Aid of Chattanooga/Cleveland
Monterey Mission Center
Monterey Food Bank
Monterey Liberty
Monterey Senior Citizens Center
U-Carts
Neal's Taxi
Ft. Sanders-Sevier Senior Center
Family Resource Center Sevier
Amedisys Home Health
Slater Center
Choices
Faith and Action
Net Trans
VA Van Services
Healing Hands Health/Dental
First TN Resource Services
Rural Health/Dry Creek Medical
United Church of God
Cherry Grove Baptist Church
University Parkway Baptist
American Cancer Society

Upward Bound Partnerships

Hawkins County Board of Education
Grainger County Board of Education
Morgan County Board of Education
Scott County Board of Education
Carson-Newman University
U.S. Department of Education

Talent Search Partnerships

Campbell County Board of Education
Claiborne County Board of Education
Harlan County Board of Education
Middlesboro Independent School District
Pineville Independent School District
U.S. Department of Education

Educational Opportunity Centers Partnerships

Hancock County Board of Education
Hamblen County Board of Education
Claiborne County Board of Education
Grainger County Board of Education
Hamblen County Board of Education
Jefferson County Board of Education
Cocke County Board of Education
Carson-Newman University
Walters State Community College
TCAT-Morristown
TCAT-Knoxville
TCAT-Athens
Lakeway Christian Academy
U.S. Department of Education

Low Income Home Energy/Water Assistance Program and Neighborhood Service Centers Partnerships

Central Services
Appalachian Electric Cooperative
Tennessee Department of Human Services
Tennessee Department of Children's Services
Tennessee Early Intervention Services
Tennessee Information Payment System (Tennessee Department of Human Services, Food Program)
Daily Bread Food Program
Cherokee Mental Health
Social Security Administration
Public health departments
Public housing authorities
Senior Centers
Appalachian Outreach
St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Catholic Charities
Public utilities

Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program Partnerships

Hispanic Outreach Leadership Association of Lakeway
First Priority Tri-States Missions
C.O.P.E Ministries
Operation Christmas Child
Jubilee Project
The Mission
MATS (homeless shelter)
Daily Bread
TN Reconnect
TN Voices
Upper East Tennessee Resource Center
Wyman Center
Morristown-Hamblen Library
Hancock County Library
Hamblen County Excell
Rose Center Council for the Arts
Morristown-Hamblen Animal Shelter
Public health departments
Cherokee Health Systems
Hamblen County Substance Abuse Coalition
Hancock Mental Health Center
Hancock County Manor Nursing Home
Ballad Health Hospital
Pregnancy Crisis Center
Hancock County EMS
Frontier Health
Hamblen County School System
Hancock County School System
Hillcrest Elementary School
Hancock Elementary School
East Tennessee State University
Nolachucky Association of Baptists
First Baptist Church
Iglesia Bautista LaGran Comision
Captive Free Ministries
Hancock County Government
Hamblen County Government
Sneedville City Hall
Hancock County Sheriff's Department
Hale Springs Inn
Chamber of Commerce Morrystown
Chamber of Commerce Sneedville/Hancock

Morristown Parks and Recreation
Morristown-Hamblen Central Services
Shepherd's Corner

21st Century and LEAPs Partnerships (Afterschool Programs)

Bean Station Elementary School
Fairview Marguerite Elementary School
Public health departments
Grainger County School System
HC Excell
Health Department Hamblen
Hamblen County School System
Hamblen County Substance Abuse Coalition
Hillcrest Elementary School
HOLA Lakeway
Cherokee Health Systems
Horace Maynard Middle School
John Hay Elementary School
Joppa Elementary School
Lincoln Heights Elementary School
Lincoln Heights Middle School
Luttrell Elementary School
Maynardville Elementary School
Meadowview Middle School
Migrant Education Program
Paulette Elementary School
Rutledge Elementary School
TN Voices
Health Department Union
Union County School System
Union Heights Elementary School
UT Extension Office
Walters State Community College
Washburn School
West Elementary School

Senior Nutrition Program Partnerships

Laurelwood Apartments
Henry Manor Apartments
Cora Veal Senior Center
Renaissance Apartments

Adult Protective Services
Offices on Aging
United Ways
East Tennessee Nissan
Central Services
Walmart
Our Savior Lutheran Church
UT Extension Office
Mossy Oak Car Club
Catherine Nenny Baptist Church
Crossroads Tabernacle Church
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Rarity Bay Women's Club
UT Home Health and Hospice
Amedisys
Smoky Mountain Home Health
Senior Citizens Home Assistance Services
Life Care Center
At Home Health Care
Allcare
St. Mary's Home Health and Hospice

Strategic Planning

Needs assessment outcomes and priority needs will be the foundation of the new Strategic Plan. During the strategic planning process, staff, key partners/assets, community and client representatives, and board members will further refine and define priority needs; develop potential strategies to meet identified needs; evaluate alternative solutions; select solutions; and develop action plans to implement the solutions.