



2021 Community Needs Assessment

Community Action of Laramie County, Inc. (CALC)

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PREPARED FOR COMMUNITY ACTION OF LARAMIE COUNTY

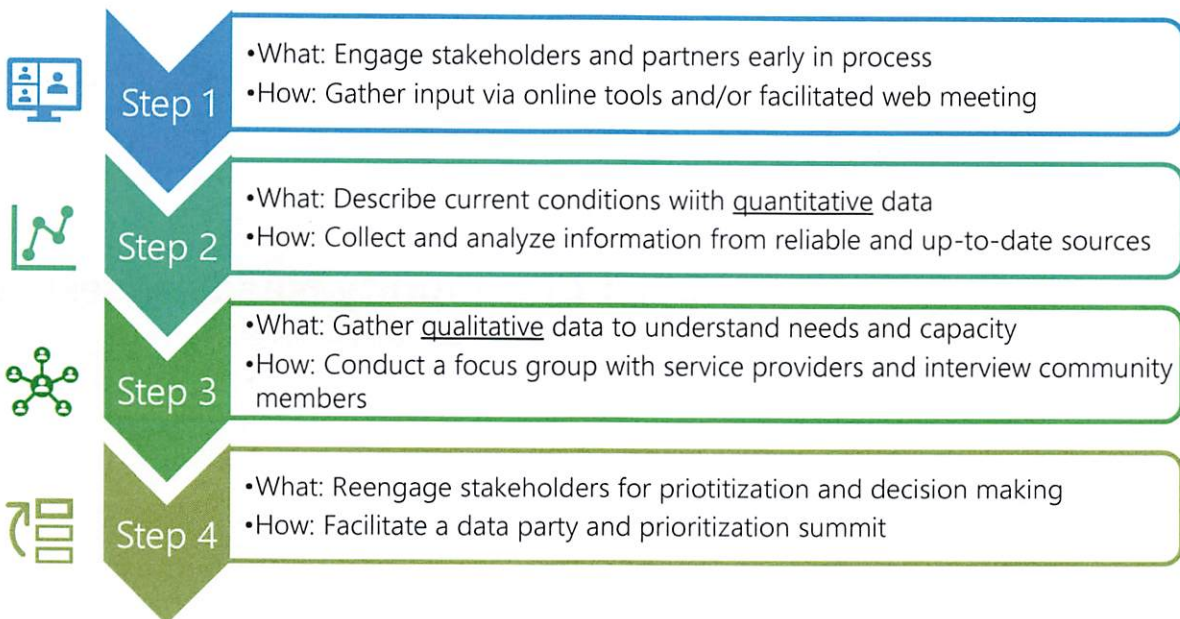
BACKGROUND

Community Action for Laramie County (CALC) is a leader dedicated to reducing poverty in Laramie County by empowering people to achieve self-sufficiency through education, advocacy, intervention and community partnerships.

In 2021, CALC hired Corona Insights, a Denver-based research and consulting firm, to conduct a community needs assessment to understand how human services could best be delivered to Laramie County residents. The needs assessment also partially fulfilled requirements to receive funding through the Community Service Block Grant program. This report summarizes the needs assessment process and the most notable outcomes, including key findings and valuable insights garnered through the research.

WORK PLAN

Corona Insights conducted the needs assessment in four steps:



HUMAN SERVICES INPUT: INITIAL RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is conducting a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. CALC hired Corona Insights to assist with this assessment and employing the Human Services Input Tool was the first of several steps.

INPUT TOOL GOALS

The overarching goal of the Human Services Input Tool is to quickly get a general understanding of the most pressing human service needs and opportunities in Laramie County, from the perspective of CALC board members, partners, and stakeholders. This input will 1) help jumpstart the facilitated web meetings to be held with these groups and 2) ensure that board members and partners are engaged early and often throughout the needs assessment process. Input received from this tool will begin to shape the direction of the rest of the needs assessment.

INPUT TOOL QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

1. Many Laramie County residents benefit from human services provided by dedicated partners. What are some of the **most successful human services** that are currently provided to residents in Laramie County?
 - **Healthcare and human services organizations:** Crossroads Health Clinic; Needs, Inc.; Community Action of Laramie County;
 - **Government human services and social assistance programs:** Emergency assistance (including rent, utilities); Food assistance; Housing assistance (including emergency shelter services, public housing, and Section 8); Jobs assistance; Department of Family Services; Department of Workforce Services, Wyoming 211
 - **Nonprofits:** Salvation Army; Habitat for Humanity; Volunteers of America; Climb WY; Comea Shelter; Churches (including Catholic charities); Grace for 2 Brothers

2. Please list up to three of Laramie County's **strongest assets or resources** currently:
 - **Healthcare and human services organizations:** Crossroads Health Clinic and Needs, Inc.; Community Action of Laramie County;

- **Government human services and social assistance programs:** Rent assistance, food assistance, low-income housing, utility assistance, Department of Family Services; Department of Workforce Services, Wyoming 211, Department of Health
 - **Nonprofits:** Family Promise, Comea Shelter, United Way, multiple active volunteer organizations
 - **Other assets:** Library, parks, private money, economic stability due to state and USAF, people at LCSD #1, excellent K-12 education system, geographic location, jobs, minerals, people, faith communities, aid for those who qualify
3. Regardless of these successes and assets, many residents are still vulnerable. Other communities have identified vulnerable populations as single-parents, people living with a disability, people experiencing homelessness, non-citizens, etc. Who do you think are the **most vulnerable populations** living in Laramie County currently?
- **Housing:** People experiencing homelessness or at risk (including youth and their families), Seasonal workers
 - **Mental Health:** People struggling with mental illness, People struggling with substance abuse
 - **Economics:** Economically disadvantaged. People who have always had job stability only to see it disappear with the collapse of the oil and gas industry and COVID, Poorly educated people, Uninsured individuals
 - **Parents and Children:** Single-parents, Children, Unaccompanied adolescents
 - **Older Adults:** Seniors, People living with disabilities
 - **Other:** Non-citizens, Any person requiring assistance, Recently released from incarceration, Individuals in domestic violence situations
4. Communities and their residents can face a variety of challenges and unmet needs. For example, there might be unmet need for affordable housing, utility assistance, public transportation, help to quit using drugs or alcohol, and many others. What do you think are **the most pressing challenges** or unmet needs facing Laramie County's most vulnerable populations?
- Knowledge of resources available and *navigating the system* in order to receive assistance
 - Access to the right resources payment for services with no insurance lack of continuity between services
 - Financial planning/credit counseling
 - Affordable and transitional housing (rent assistance, low-income housing, there is a critical gap of rentals available for families with evictions (even from 6 or 7 years ago), a criminal history, or bad credit; transitional housing for veterans
 - Transportation

- Utilities
- Substance abuse, including treatment and mental health treatment
- An overall sense among the non-vulnerable populations that COVID-19 lockdowns and the collapse of the oil and gas industry have "not been that bad."

5. To follow up, what challenges or issues in the community do **you need to know more about?** In other words, what information do you need to make immediate and effective decisions?

- **Data:** A housing needs assessment; I believe we need an accurate account of how many homeless individuals that are currently in Laramie County; Update services monthly surveys possibly to address needs more quickly and effectively; Accurate Data
- **Resources:** An updated list of who is providing what services, especially with the changes required during COVID; Agencies that are providing transportation assistance
- **Guidance:** Income Guidelines Eligibility Criteria; Need to know how to get the aid to the people who need it the most; what is the most effective way to reach them?; What are the highest immediate needs of the community?
- **Other:** Who are the partners willing to accept change for the betterment of those we serve?; Education; I think narratives are helpful and have a place but the hard data is the best option for assessing the needs of our community.
- 1. How many people in the community have become unemployed or underemployed (which I define as working a lower paying job) since January 1, 2020. 2. How many of the people above have been faced with chronic or long-term unemployment in the past? 3. How familiar are people new to long-term to unemployment or underemployment with available social services? 4. How are other organizations in the community using COVID relief funds? What services are potentially being duplicated?

6. What do you think is the **one most winnable challenge** facing Laramie County today?

- **Hunger:** (providing) food resources; Food/meal programs for seniors and youth
- **Chronic homelessness:** we have a charitable community and we can make it so no family sleeps in their car.
- **Mental health/substance abuse:** COVID-19 and the collapse of the oil and gas industry have challenged our sense of ownership and control over our lives. Wyomingians (and residents of Laramie County) are a resilient lot, but we all must be reminded that as dark as things can be - each of us can and must take action to improve our lives. Providing information regarding addiction and mental health treatment.
- I think collaboration between agencies could be the most winnable challenge facing our community.
- With the ongoing pandemic in mind, I think the most winnable challenge right now is getting the

vulnerable population vaccinated so that they can be safer.

- Getting the word out that Community Action is here to help.

7. What are the **most pressing health care needs** for the vulnerable populations of Laramie County?

- **Access to and affordability of health care** - Not enough affordable access to health care; Medicaid Expansion; we need more affordable options for treatment of various ailments; healthcare insurance; insurance follow-up care long-term care for those who cannot pay or are homeless; Access to health needs services
- **COVID-19 vaccinations** - Currently, it is to get vaccinated against COVID; Barriers to COVID testing and vaccination so these populations can get back to work.
- **Healthcare services** - Lack of good doctors in every field; addiction and mental health services; Preventive healthcare, such as things that could be addressed early on rather than down the road in an emergency room. This would include dental care; chronic disease management and increased literacy on their pharmaceutical needs

8. Lastly, what else would you like to say about human service resources and needs in Laramie County?

- Let get the best doctors to come to Laramie County
- I truly believe that each agency in Laramie County goes above and beyond to serve and help our community.
- It is great to work with so many amazing people who are coming together to create a community where all can thrive.
- Right now, there is a deluge of resources being pumped into Laramie County human services as a result of COVID-19 relief funds from the federal government. Three things need to happen to make the use of those resources most effective: 1. We have to look at these relief funds not as a means of relieving suffering, but a means to help our neighbors get back to work and back to living their lives. These funds should be used to get people out of poverty - not to make poverty more bearable. 2. We have to recognize that our local, state, and federal governments have a terrible track record on distributing funds in a way that makes a genuine difference for the people who need the assistance most. Government must recruit our nonprofits to help with the distribution of these funds and give those nonprofits wide latitude to direct COVID funds to where they are needed most. 3. We have to collaborate. Government, the nonprofit sector, and the for-profit sector have to work together to address the needs in Laramie County. Unfortunately, government often distrusts and micromanages our nonprofits, and nonprofits are often biased against for-profit businesses. This needs to end.
- I feel that we all work very well together to make our community a healthy and safe place.
- I think that Laramie County has a lot of resources available, the problem is getting the resources to the population that would benefit the most.
- Many Cheyenne residents need help during this time. Community Action can help with assistance.

EXISTING HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is conducting a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. CALC hired Corona Insights to assist with this assessment.

GOALS

The goal of this report section is to collect and analyze a small amount of up-to-date quantitative data that will help describe the current conditions in the community. Specifically, it sought to meet the needs assessment requirements set forth by the Health Resource and Services Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services, which are listed below.

1. **Explore Access to Healthcare:** Factors associated with access to care and health care utilization, for example geography, transportation, occupation, transience, unemployment, income level, and educational attainment.
2. **Identify Morbidity and Mortality:** Identify the most significant causes of morbidity and mortality, for example, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, low birth weight, behavioral health, as well as any associated health disparities.
3. **Reveal Community Characteristics:** Show any other unique health care needs or characteristics that impact health status or access to, or utilization of, primary care. For example, social factors, the physical environment, cultural/ethnic factors, language needs, and housing status.

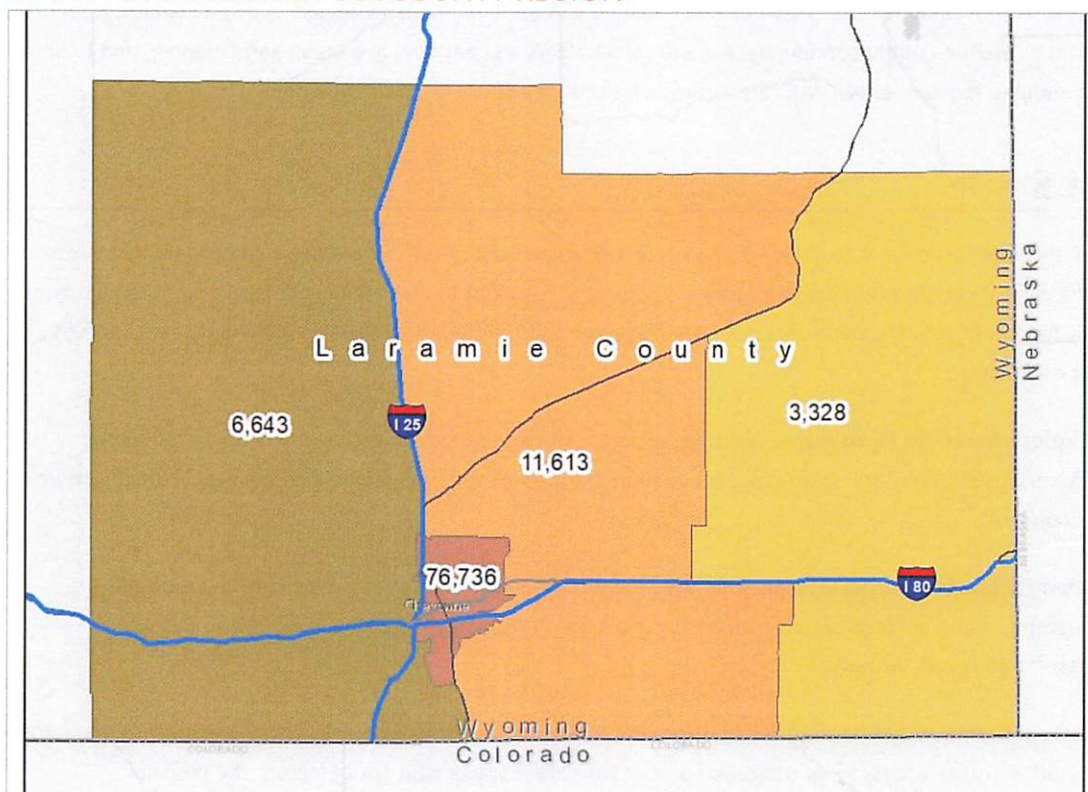
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Factors associated with access to care and health care utilization:

GEOGRAPHY AND TRANSPORTATION

With nearly 100,000 residents, Laramie County is the most populated county in Wyoming, and most county residents live in or near Cheyenne.

TOTAL POPULATION BY SUBCOUNTY REGION

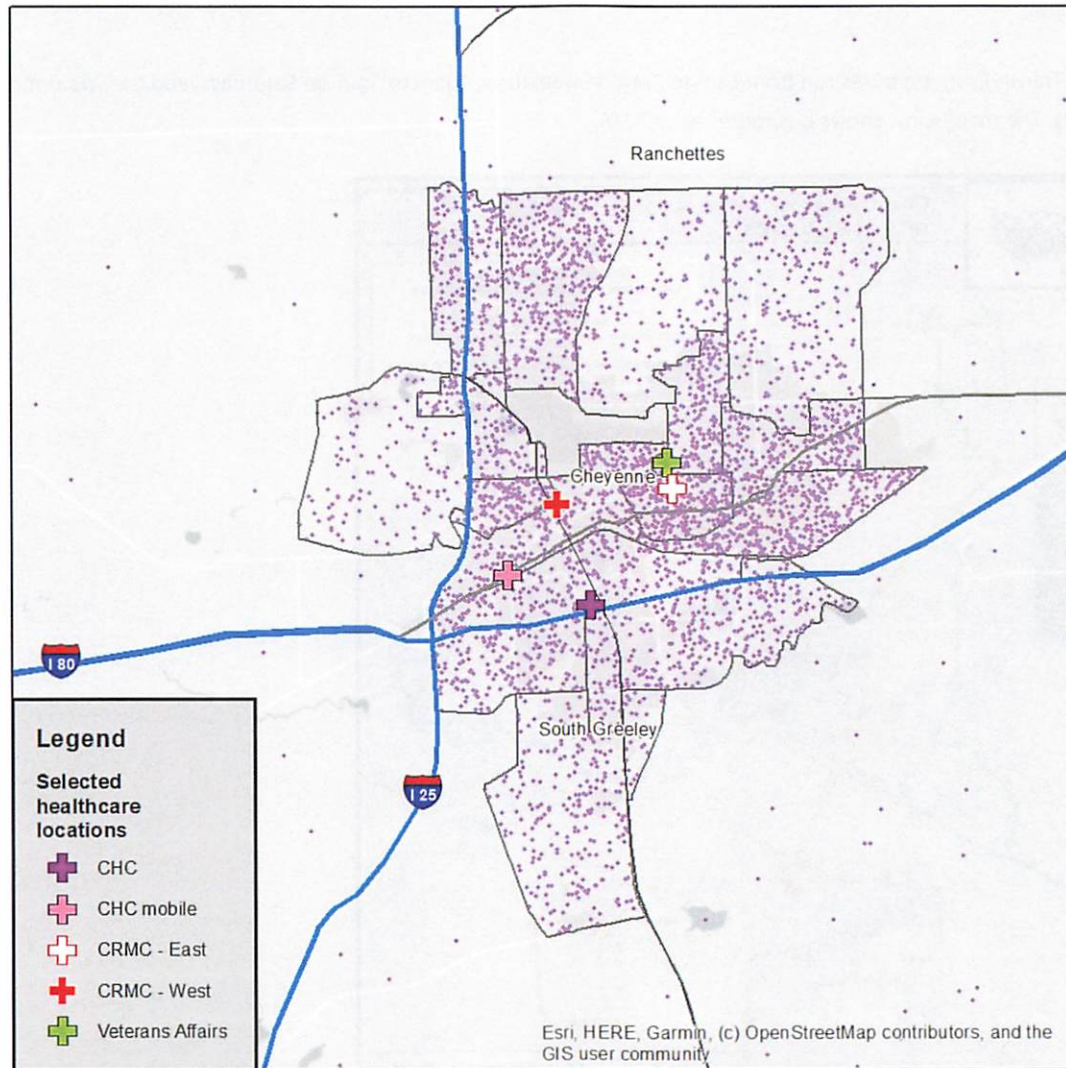


Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

The map below shows the population density based on census tract. The map also shows selected relevant health care service locations in the Cheyenne area. The large census tracts to the West, North, and East of Cheyenne stretch to the county boarder. Note, the airport is located in the middle of the city, in a census tract that has no population.

TOTAL POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT

Each dot represents 20 residents.

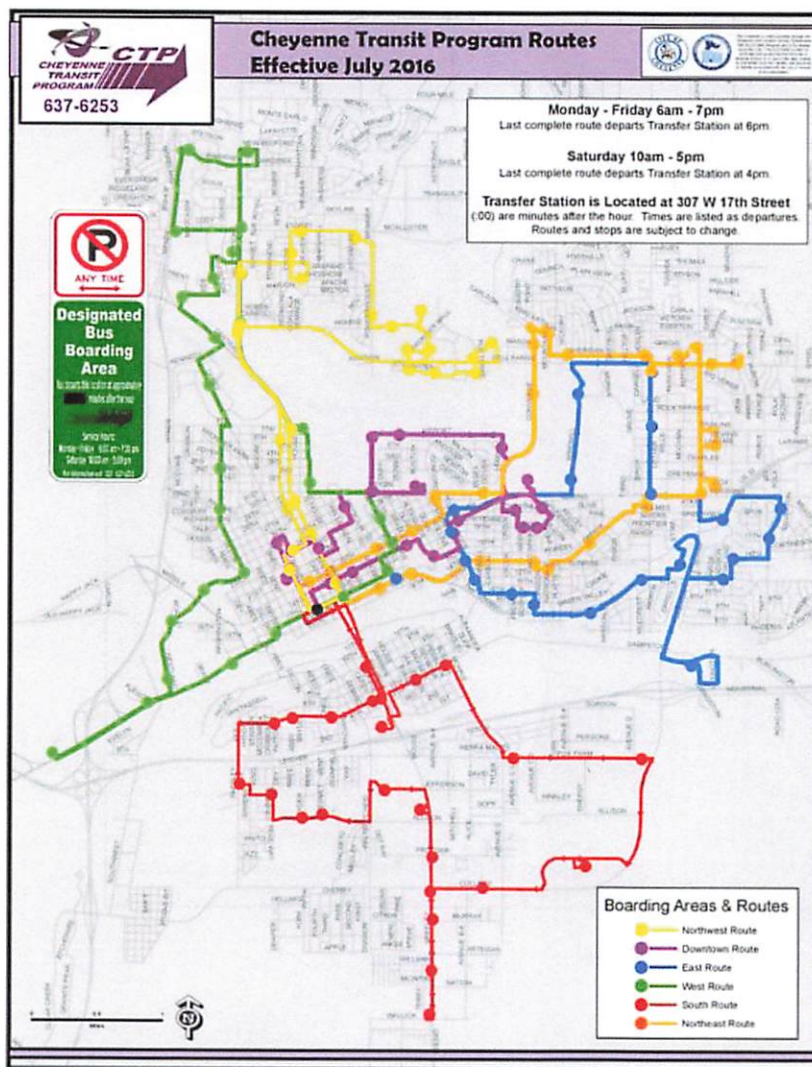


Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

TRANSPORTATION

The most common way that Laramie County workers commute to work was by driving a car, truck, or van alone (81%), followed by carpooling (11%), walking (2%), and bus (0.5%). Workers who took public transit were very likely to be renters and work in service operations for private companies. Workers who took public transit were much more likely to make less than \$10,000 a year than residents who drove to work. (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 5-year estimate)

Cheyenne Transit Program buses run from 6am to 7pm on weekdays, 10am to 5pm on Saturdays, and they do not run on Sundays. The map below shows bus routes as of 2016.



Source: City of Cheyenne <https://www.cheyennecity.org/Your-Government/Departments/Public-Works/Transit/Route-System-Map>

OCCUPATION

Among civilian employed Laramie County residents age 16 or older, a plurality (39%) worked in management, business, sciences, and art occupations, followed by sales and office occupations (21%); service occupations (18%); production, transportation, and material moving occupations (12%); and natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (10%). (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

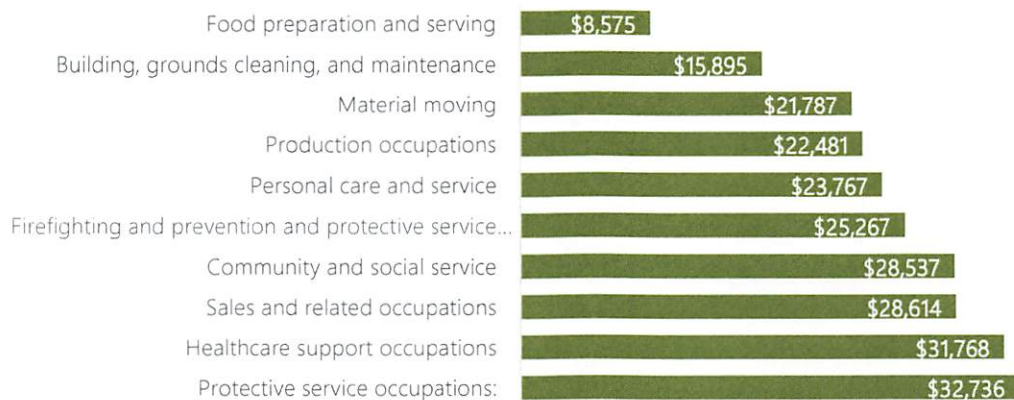
The table below shows that residents in management, business, and science occupations were most likely to be government workers whereas residents in all other occupations were most likely to work for private companies. About 5% of the labor force (e.g., 2,500 people) worked in the Armed Forces, which has been steady since 2015.

	Private companies	Self-employed (incorporated)	Not-for-profits	Government	Self-employed (not incorporated)
All civilian workers	55%	6%	7%	27%	6%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	31%	6%	11%	46%	5%
Service occupations	58%	8%	8%	16%	10%
Sales and office occupations	71%	4%	4%	17%	4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	81%	4%	0%	13%	3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	76%	8%	0%	12%	4%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate)

The ten lowest paying occupations, based on median earnings, are shown below. Food preparation and serving earned the least, followed by ground cleaning and building maintenance. Note that these results represent all civilian workers, not just full-time, year-round workers.

Median Earnings by Occupation



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate)

TRANSIENCE

Among all 42,000 households in Laramie County, about two-thirds were owner-occupied and one-third were renter occupied. In all of Wyoming, 72% of households are owner-occupied, so there is a higher proportion of renters in Laramie County compared to the state. (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

The median year that an owner moved into the household was 2011, which is, unsurprisingly, sooner than 2017, the median year moved into household among renters. About 9% of renters lived in their homes for 10 years or longer.

According to the American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate), about 8% of Laramie County residents moved within the county that year, 1% moved to Laramie County from somewhere else in Wyoming, and 7% moved to Laramie County from out-of-state. This pattern was very similar to Wyoming's statewide pattern. Males were more likely than females to move to Laramie County from out-of-state, and residents who moved from out-of-state were more likely to be renting a home.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Laramie County in June 2021 was 5.0%, which was slightly lower than the 5.4% for Wyoming overall. However, it was much higher than the low of 3.6% in June 2019, but much lower than the 7.9% in May 2020, during the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic downturn. The unemployment rate for all of Wyoming in May 2020 was 8.5%. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Prior to 2019, the unemployment rate had slowly but steadily declined since 2010, both in Laramie County and statewide.

The median household income in Laramie County was \$70,600 in 2019, which was higher than the \$65,000 median for the state overall (American Community Survey, 1-year estimate). The county's median annual income in 2019 was slightly higher than the roughly \$65,000 it had been across the four years prior. In 2019, almost 6% of all households had incomes less than \$10,000 and 33% had incomes under \$50,000.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS TRACT

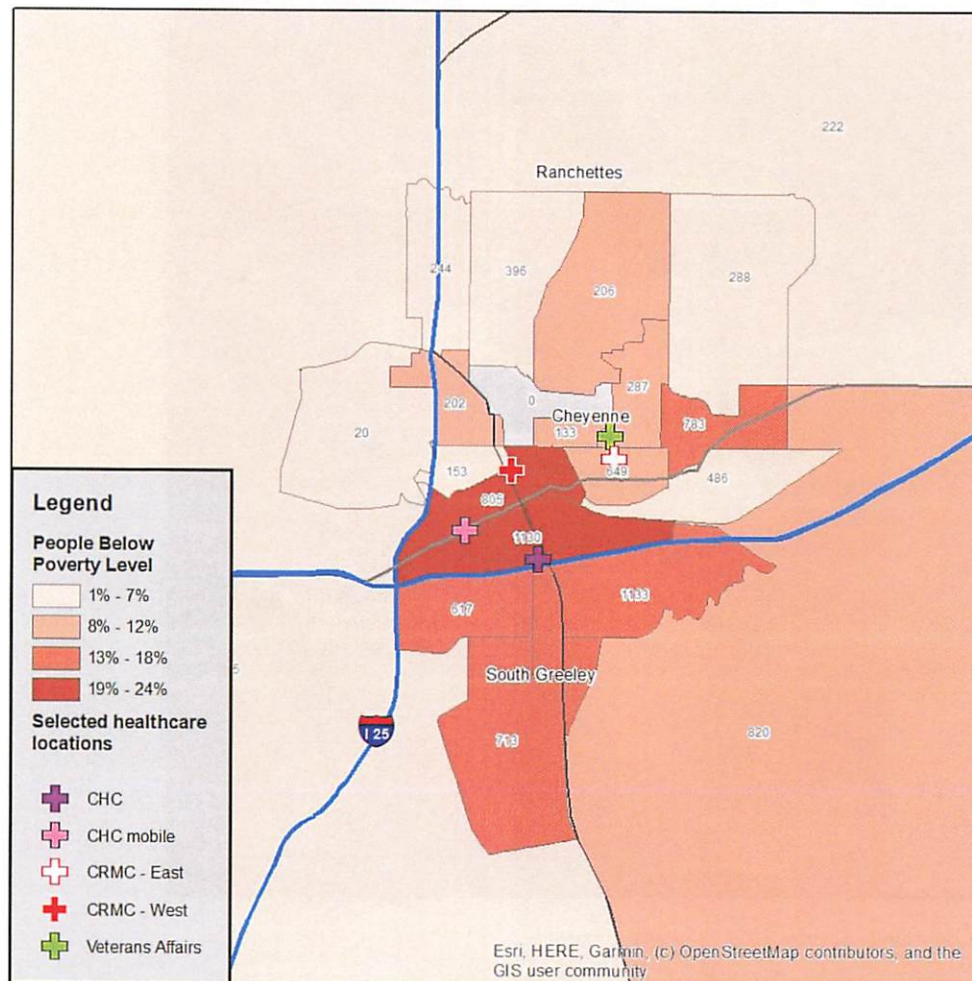


In all of Laramie County, about 9,500 residents (i.e., 10% of the population) live in households that are classified as below the poverty level, and nearly half (i.e., 4,600) live in households classified at 50% of the poverty level. The poverty level is based on the total family/household income in the last year and the family size and composition. That is, poverty level is a way to compare income and households of different sizes. Households at 50% of the poverty level have half as much income as households of the same size and composition at 100% of poverty. The percentage of residents experiencing poverty in Laramie County is similar to the statewide estimate of 10.1%.

Laramie County residents 16 years or older who worked full-time, year-round were much less likely to be experiencing poverty (2%) than people who worked part-time or part-year (19%) or did not work (14%). (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

People in poverty were concentrated on the south side of Cheyenne and south of Cheyenne, although there were people experiencing poverty in every census tract with households.

HOUSEHOLD EXPERIENCING POVERTY BY CENSUS TRACT



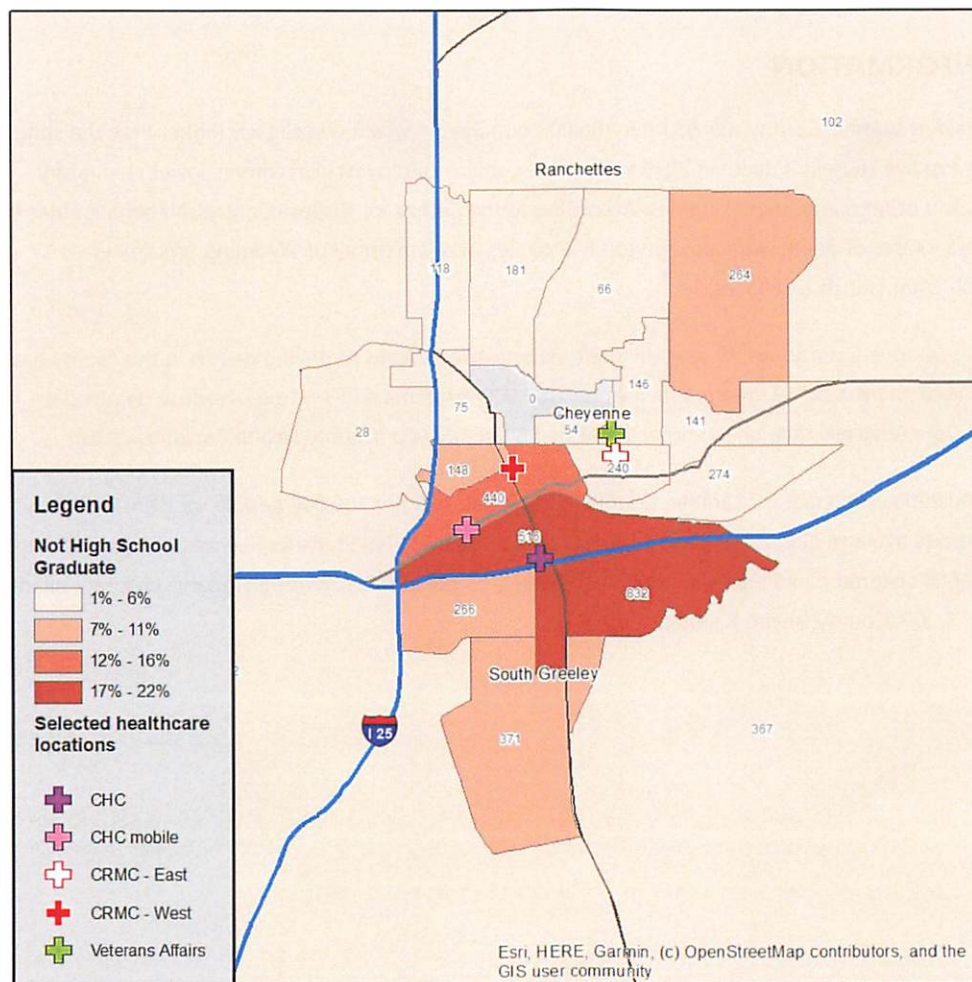
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Similar to statewide estimates, most (94%) of Laramie County residents age 25 or older had a high school diploma or equivalent. However, this percentage was lower for Hispanic residents (84%). About 30% of people 25 or older had a Bachelor's degree or higher, which was similar to the state as a whole.

Most census tracts in Laramie County had relatively few adults with less than a high school diploma. However, the areas on the South side of Cheyenne had up to 20% of adult residents with less than a high school diploma.

LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BY CENSUS TRACT



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

Most significant causes of morbidity and mortality and associated health disparities

BIRTH INFORMATION

In Laramie County, the percentage of low birth weights of babies (i.e., infants weighing less than 2500 grams), was 11% in 2019, which was about the same as the prior five years. The number of teen resident births in Laramie County was 59 in 2019. Teen births have steadily decreased from a high of 165 in 2006 (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services).

MORTALITY INFORMATION

The resident death rate in Laramie County was 933 per 100,000 population, which was slightly higher than the state average of 885. The top five causes of death in 2019 were cancer, major cardiovascular, chronic lower respiratory, Alzheimer's disease, and other unintentional injuries. According to the Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, these causes of death were also the top five causes of death for all of Wyoming (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services).

The life expectancy in Laramie County was 79 years in 2020. Twenty-two percent of driving deaths in the county had alcohol involved. In 2020, there were 19 firearm fatalities per 100,000 residents and 11 drug overdose deaths per 100,000. Homicides were relatively rare, occurring at a rate of 3.8 per 100,000 (County Health Rankings 2020).

The ten-year age-adjusted suicide rate for Laramie County in 2019 was 26.0 per 100,000 people, which was slightly higher than the statewide average of 25.1 (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services). Child mortality in 2020 was 57 per 100,000 children. Child mortality was much higher, 75 per 100,000, among Hispanic children. Infant mortality was 5.2 per 1,000 (County Health Rankings 2020).

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

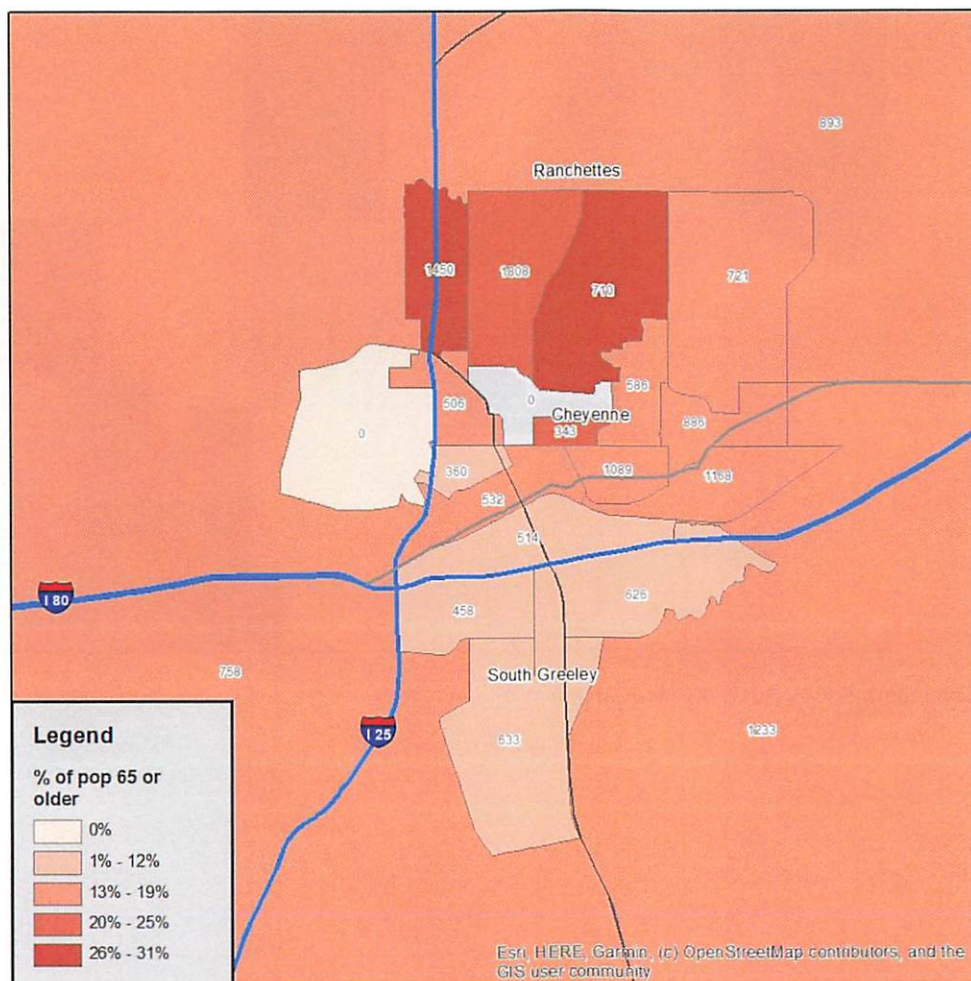
Unique health care needs or characteristics

SOCIAL FACTORS

About 15,300 adults age 65 or older lived in Laramie County, comprising 15% of the county's population. In Wyoming, 17% of the population was 65 years or older. The greatest concentrations of older adults are in the northern end of the county while the south end had lower concentration of older adults.

OLDER ADULT POPULATION CONCENTRATION

Labels represent the number of adults 65 or older.



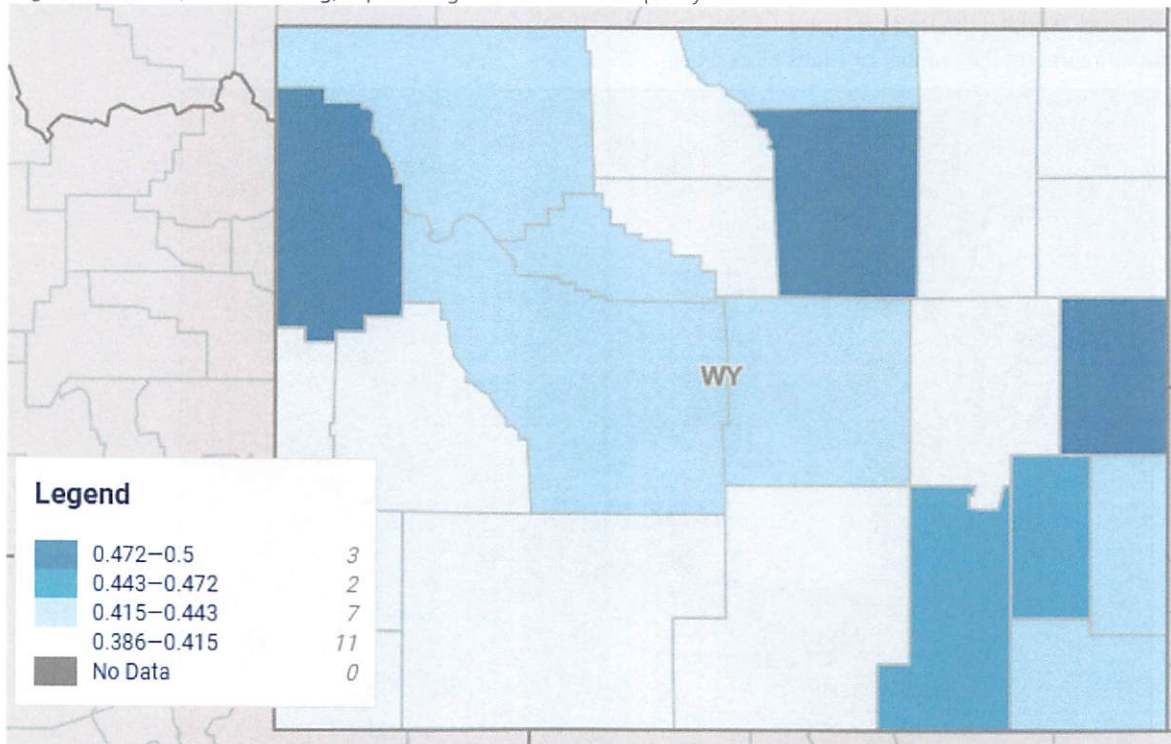
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

The GINI Index measures income inequality in a region. Theoretically, a score of zero (0) would mean that all income is distributed exactly equally among all residents, while a score of 100 would mean one person has all of the income in the region and everyone else has no income. The GINI Index score in Laramie County was 0.44 in 2019 (American Community Survey, 5-year estimate), which ranked it in the middle compared to other Wyoming counties.

The GINI Index for Laramie County was 0.39 in 2016, 0.40 in 2013, and 0.42 in 2010, suggesting that income inequality in Laramie County is slightly higher now than it was throughout the 2010's.

INCOME INEQUALITY

Higher numbers (darker shading) represent greater income inequality.



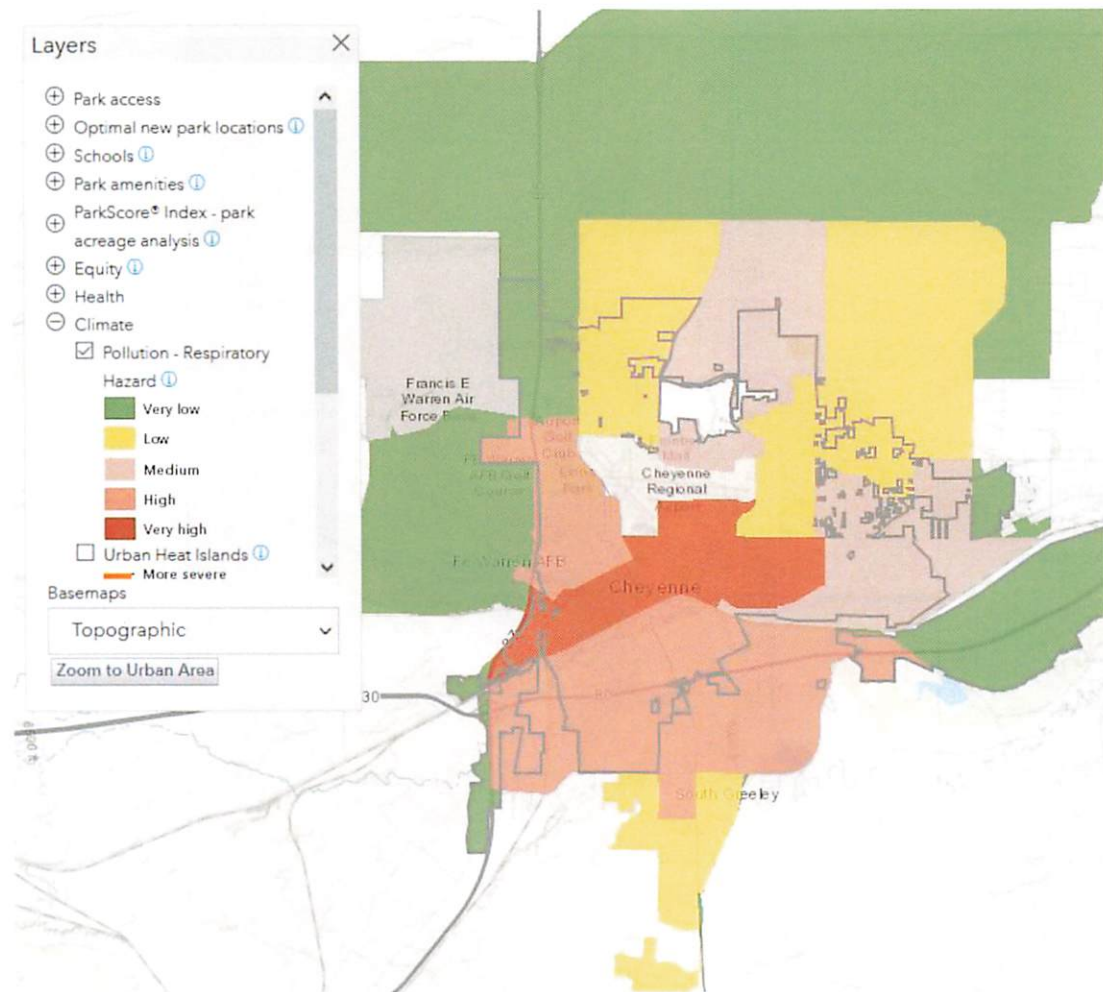
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

PHYSICAL ENVIRONEMNT

Generally, the air quality in the area surrounding Cheyenne was good, with very low or low hazard. However, the air quality was worse in the central part of the city and along the I-80 and railroad corridors.

AIR POLLUTION

EPA EIScreen NATA repository hazard index metric is based on the 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment.



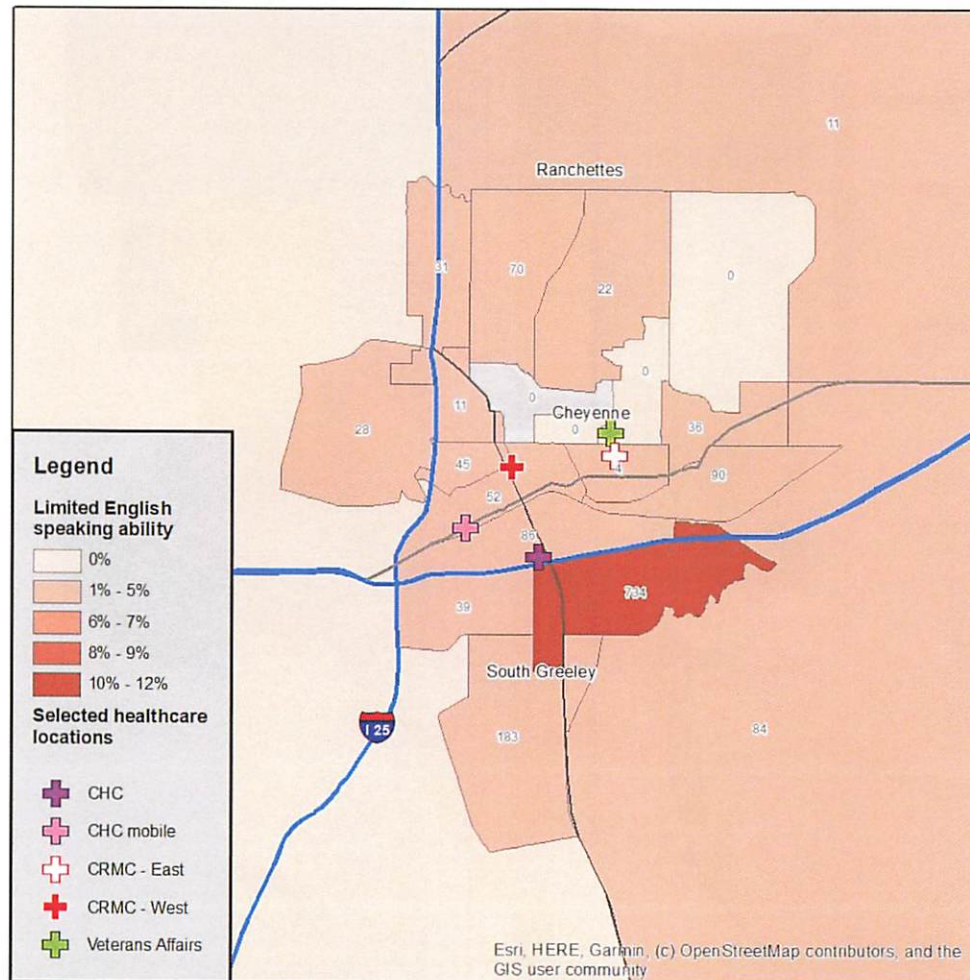
Source: The Trust for Public Land ParkServe®

CULTURAL & ETHNIC FACTORS

More than 1,500 people living in Laramie County had limited English speaking ability. That is, they were five years or older, spoke English less than very well, and spoke Spanish at home. This population was mostly concentrated south of Cheyenne's city limits.

LIMITED ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION CONCENTRATION

Labels represent the number of residents.



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

HOUSING

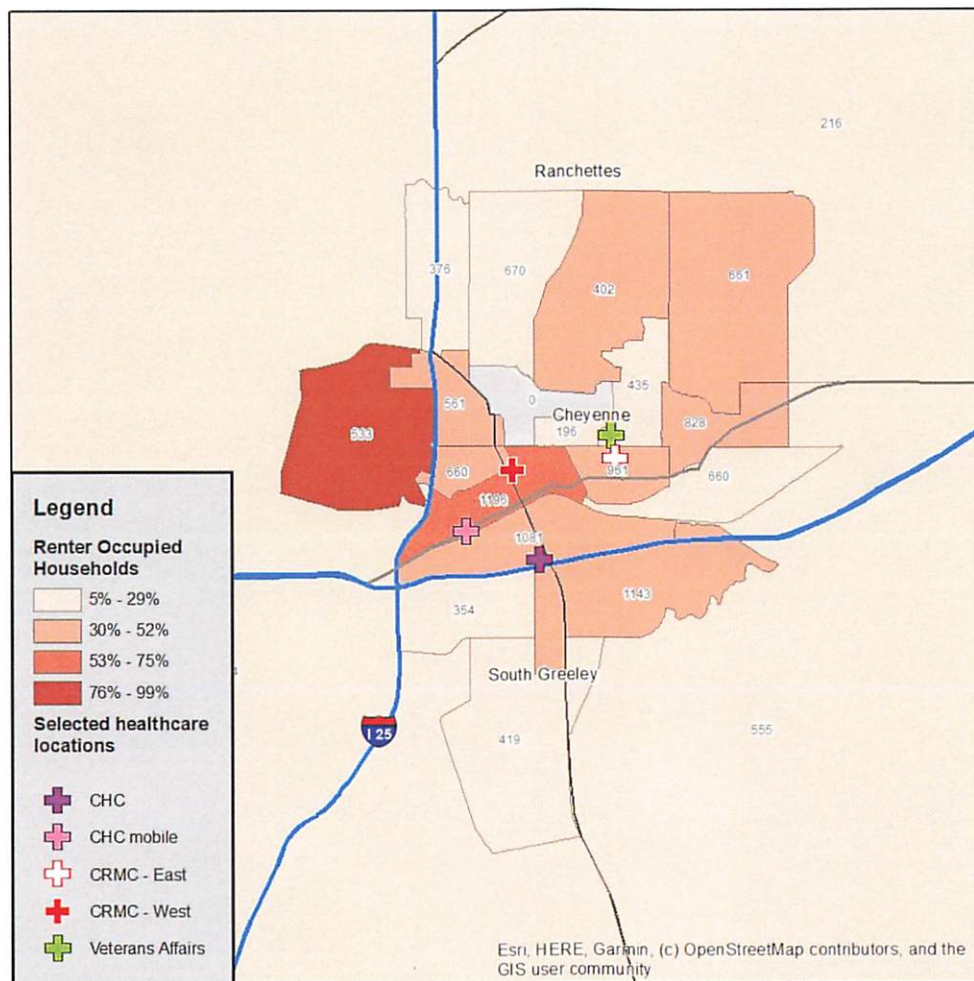
Out of the 42,000 occupied housing units in Laramie County, 13,300 (32%) were not occupied by the owner. Most were occupied by renters, although a small proportion were occupied by residents who were not paying cash rent.

In 2019, 6% of all housing units were vacant, down from around 10% in the four years prior. The rental vacancy rate, which is the proportion of the rental inventory which was "vacant and for rent," was 1.0, down from around 4.5 the prior four years. However, median gross rent in 2019 was \$841, statistically lower than it was in 2017, 2016, or 2015. In 2019 and 2018, about 49% of rented households spent 30% or more of their household income on housing, which was up slightly compared to 2016 and 2015. The fact that median rents dipped slightly while the proportion of rent burdened households increased is a bit perplexing. It could be that higher value homes were renting at higher rates, which would not affect the median rent price but would increase the proportion of housing burdened renters.

Within Laramie County, rural census tracts all had low proportions of renters, whereas many Cheyenne area census tracts had more than half of all households being rented. The concentration of renters was highest on the West end.

HOME RENTERS

Labels represent the number of rented households.



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

HOUSING SERVICES QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK: PROVIDERS AND RECIPIENTS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) hired Corona Insights to assist with a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. The primary objective of the qualitative feedback phase was to explore and understand the housing assistance system in Laramie County, including challenges and opportunities, from the perspective of housing assistance providers and recipients. To meet this objective, Corona Insights collected and analyzed data gathered through a focus group and in-depth interviews.

PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW

- > On June 29, 2021, Corona Insights conducted a 90-minute online focus group with multiple representatives of housing assistance providers. The focus group consisted of six attendees and one moderator.
- > Attendees represented a range of service provider organizations that offer assistance with finding and keeping affordable housing across Laramie County.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- > More deeply understand the perspective of partners and experts that provide or help connect Laramie County residents with affordable housing.
- > Learn more about the opportunities for providers to partner and collaborate to address the issues of affordable housing and navigating systems to help obtain affordable housing.

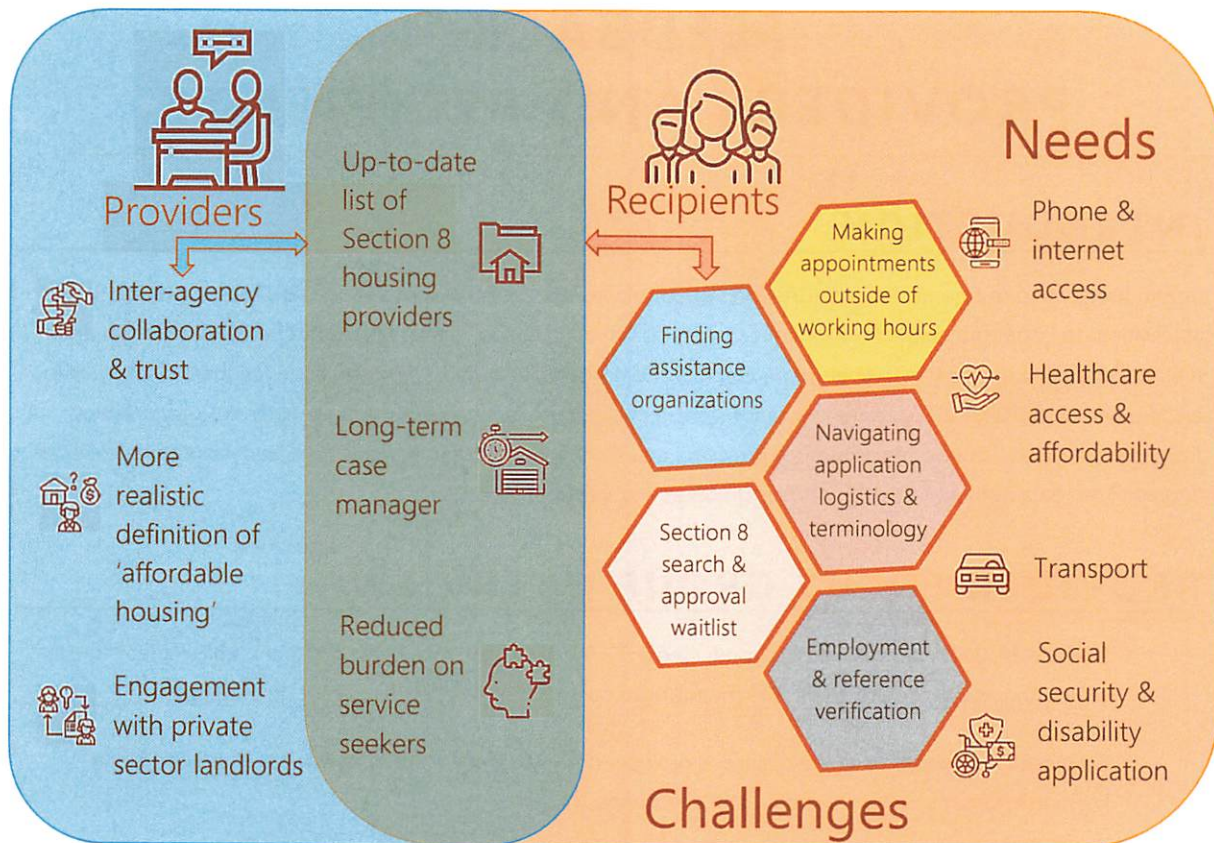
RECIPIENT INTERVIEWS OVERVIEW

- > In July and August of 2021, Corona Insights conducted phone interviews with five housing service recipients to gather insights on their experiences and needs around finding and keeping affordable housing.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- > Illuminate the experience of Laramie County residents trying to obtain affordable housing.
- > Reveal challenges and barriers that some residents have faced obtaining affordable housing assistance.
- > Identify solutions that Laramie County residents think could improve access to affordable housing.

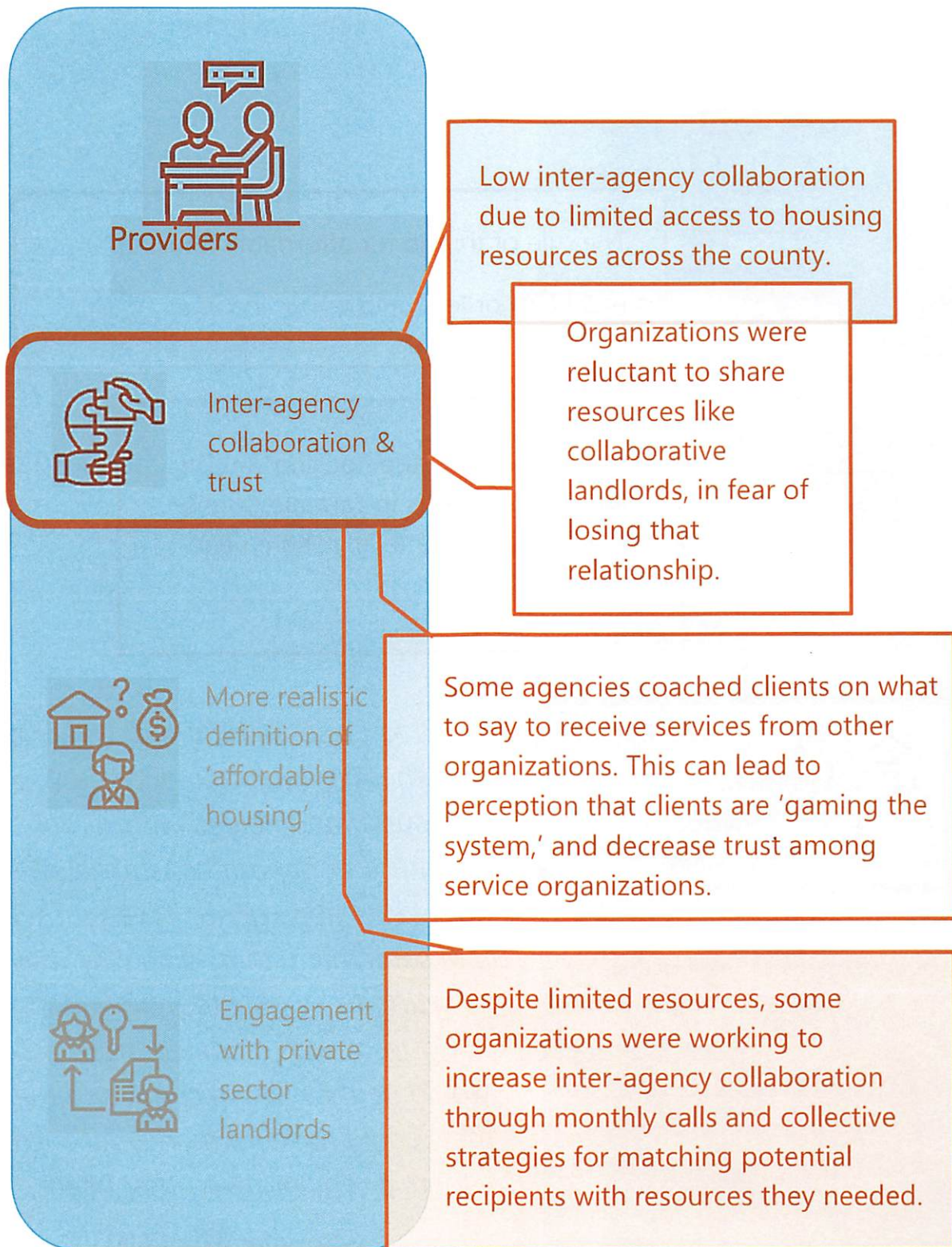
Key Needs & Challenges



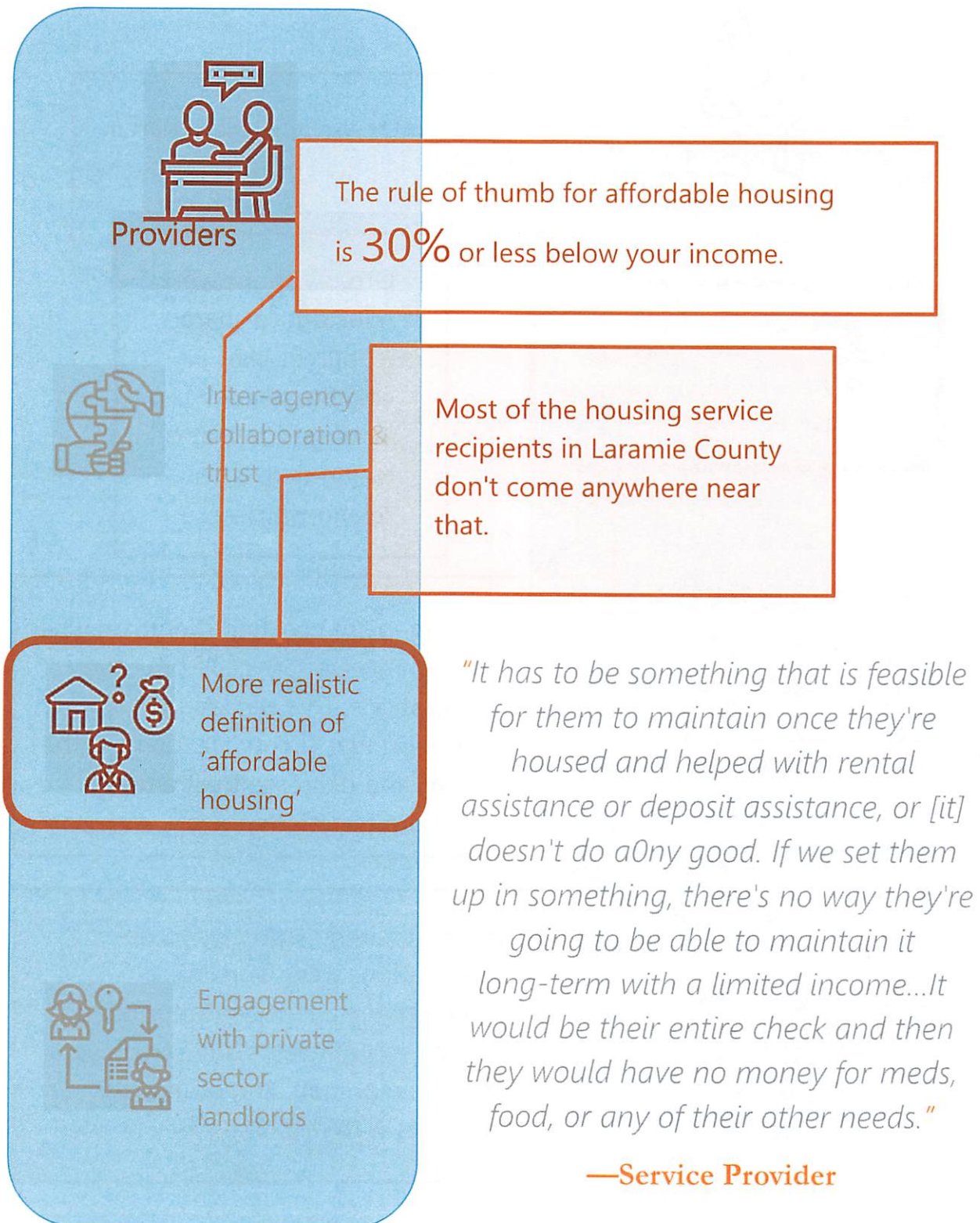
SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

- > Key challenges were identified by **service providers**: inter-agency trust and collaboration; the need for a more realistic definition of 'affordable housing,' and engagement and collaboration with private sector landlords as a possible resource for affordable housing opportunities in the community.
- > Key challenges identified by **service recipients** fell into two categories: needs that directly impacted housing, and additional needs and resources that also played a role in access to housing and other quality of life needs for service recipients. The **challenges** directly associated with housing were finding the needed information on what kinds of assistance organizations are available within the community; difficulty navigating the logistics, jargon, and terminologies associated with the application process; getting employment and references verification; inability to make appointments outside of the regular working hours for fear of losing employment; and frustrations associated with Section 8 waitlists and approval notifications. Additional **needs** that impacted quality of life and housing were access to transportation, phone and internet; access to affordable healthcare; and assistance with applying for social security and disability.
- > Some challenges were identified by **both providers and recipients**: need for an up-to-date list of Section 8 housing providers; reducing the burden of seeking assistance; and the need for longer-term case management that allows service providers to maintain contact with service recipients after they have been placed in housing.

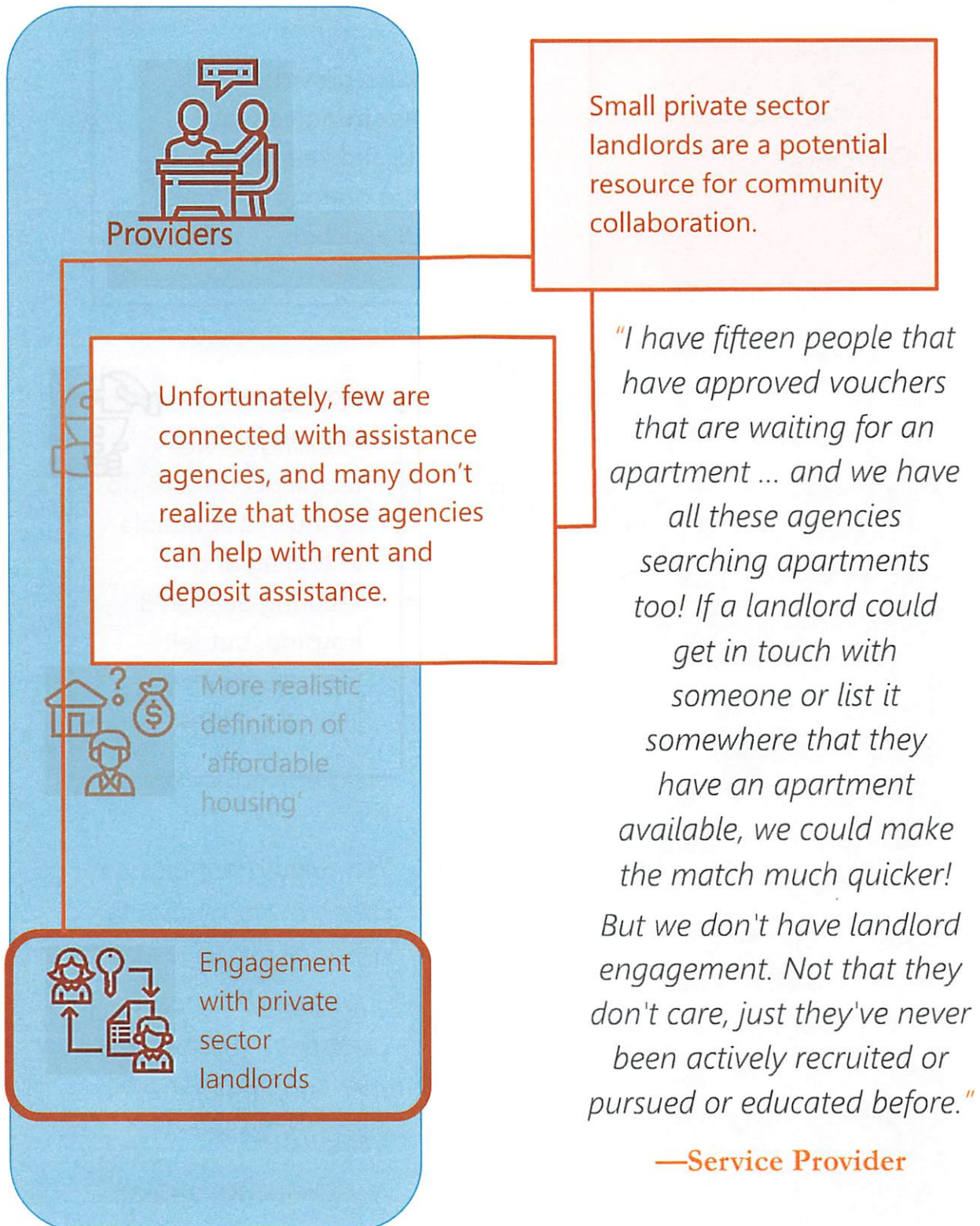
Inter-agency collaboration & trust



Affordable housing definition



Engaging with private sector landlords



Up-to date list of Section 8 housing providers



Both service providers and recipients struggled with searching and keeping track of housing options that take Section 8 vouchers.

Up-to-date list of Section 8 housing providers



Housing service recipients tried to do as much as possible in finding and securing Section 8 housing, but felt frustrated with limited options.

Long-term case manager



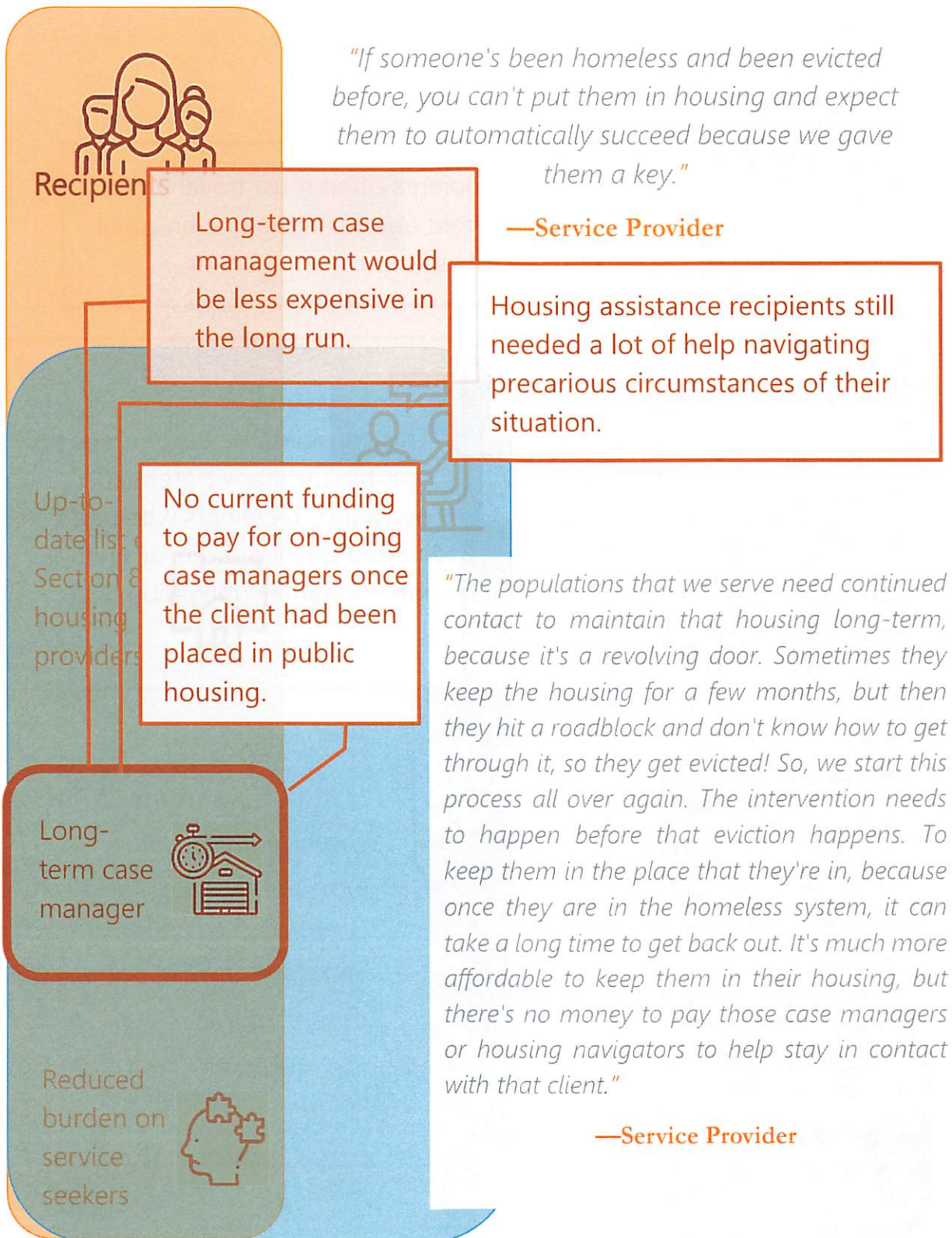
Reduced burden on service seekers



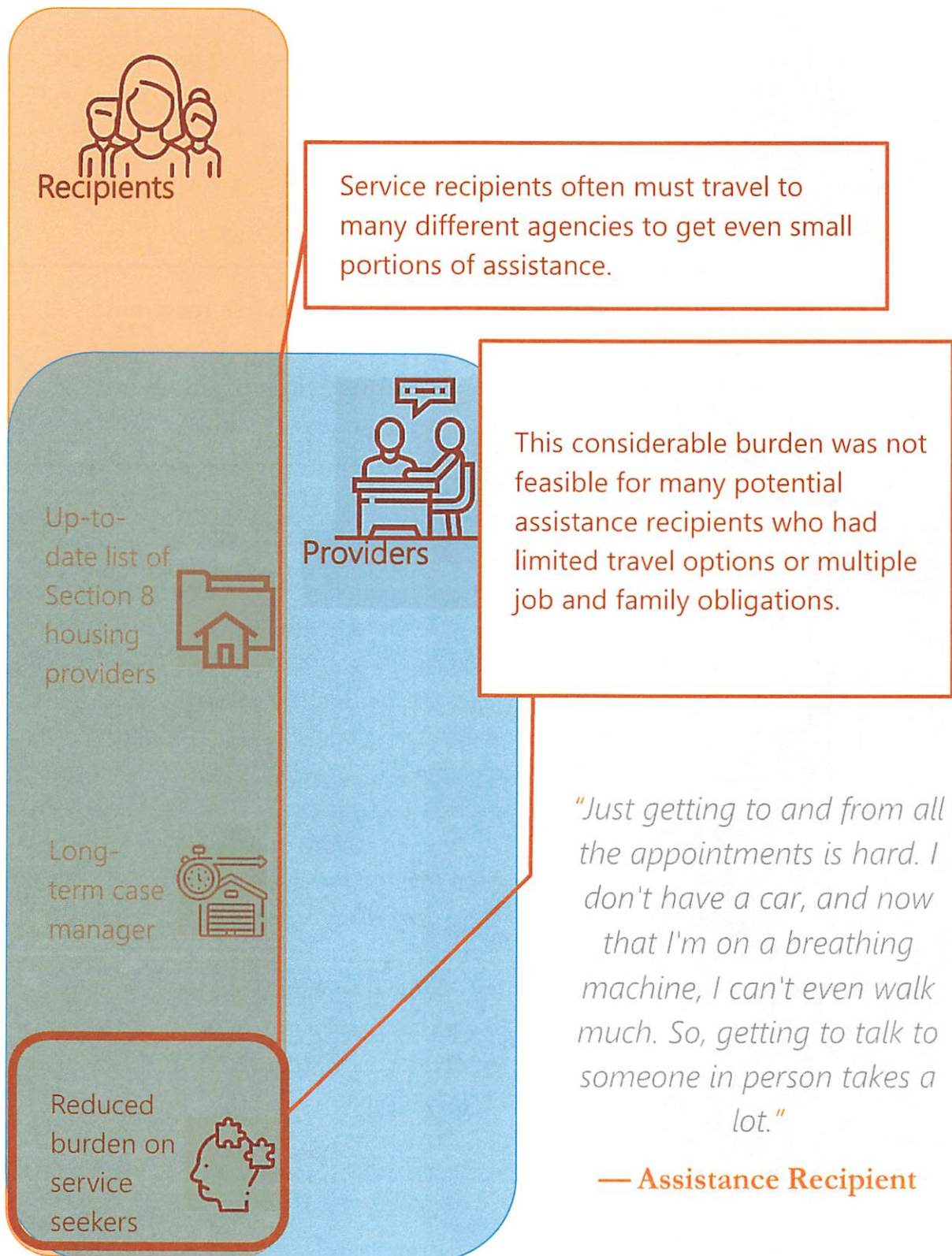
"I'm feeling hopeless. I called every available number for Section 8 housing, but heard back from just a few. Most people don't even answer."

—Service Recipient

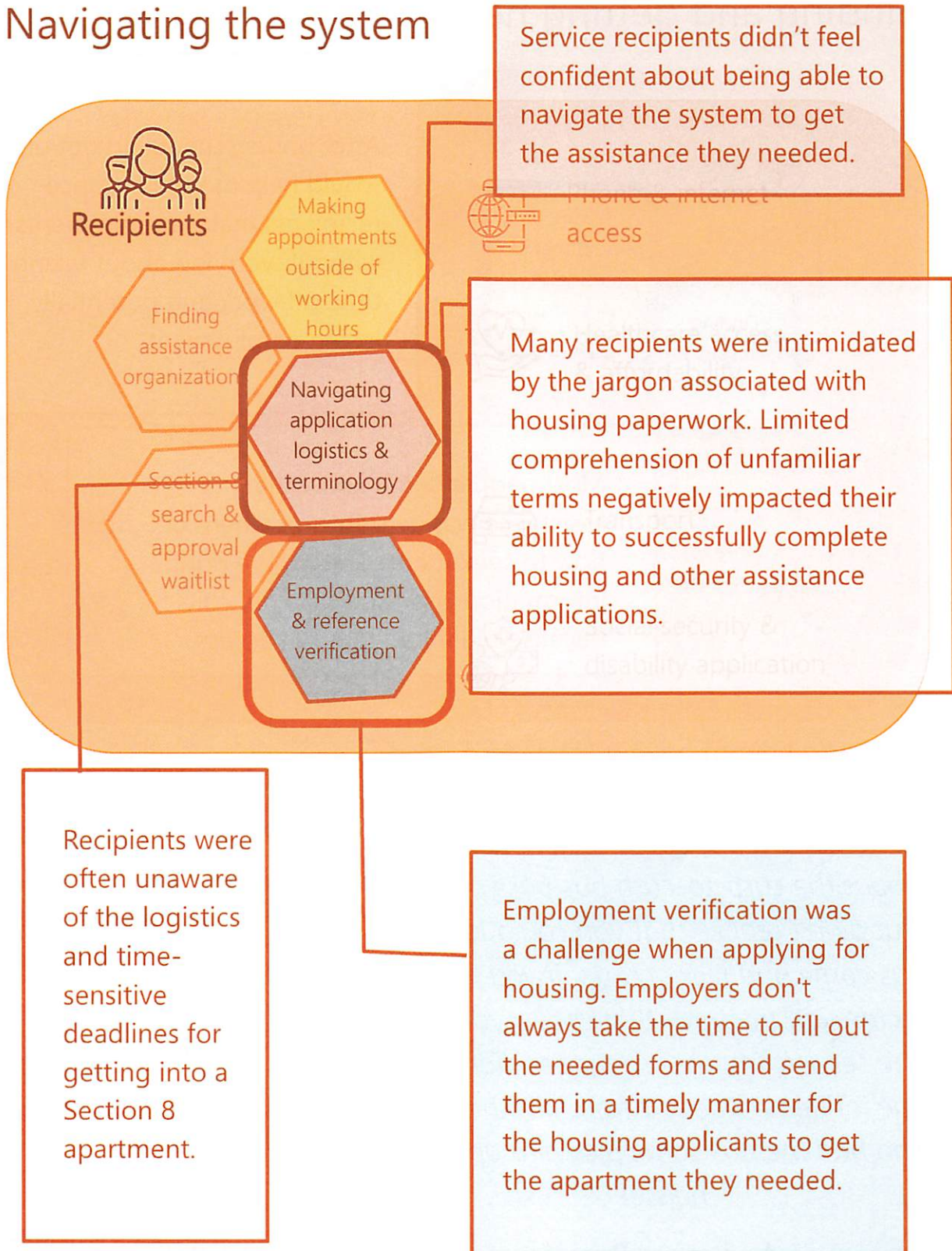
Long-term case manager



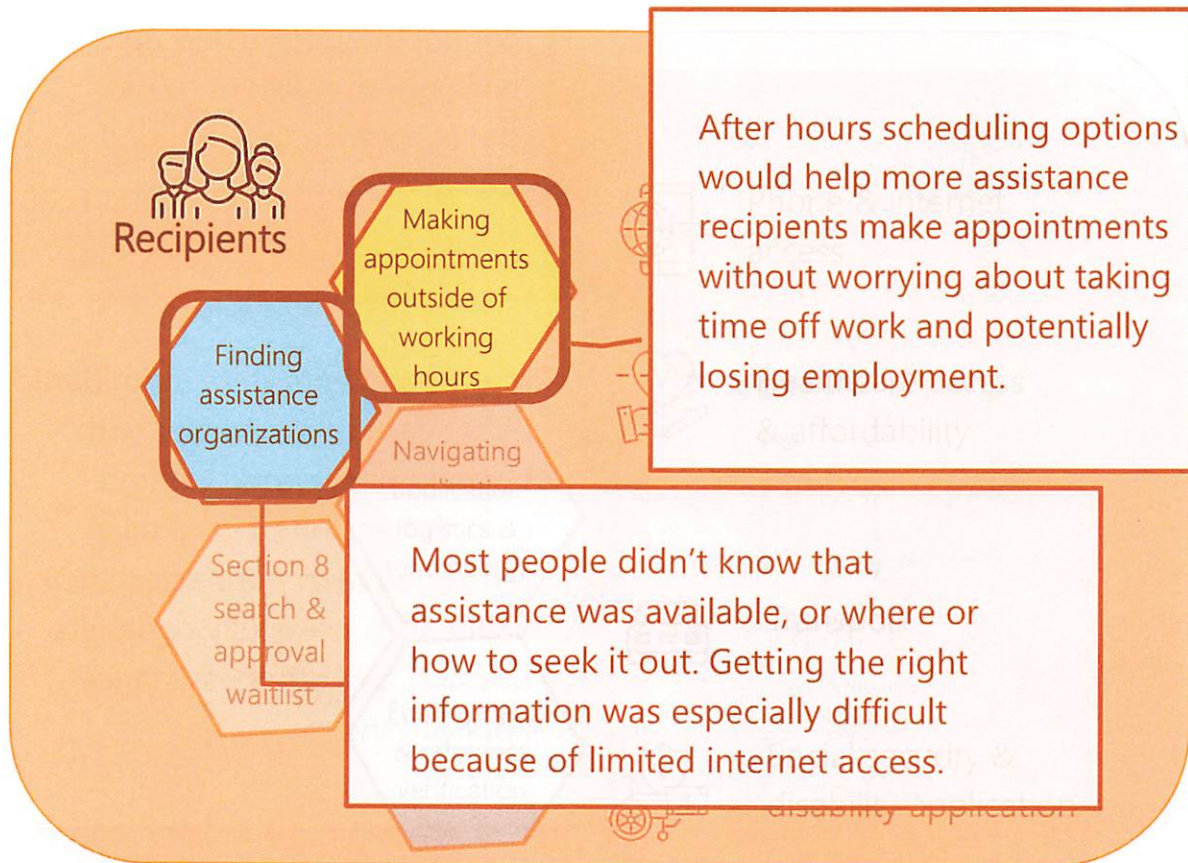
Reduced burden on service seekers



Navigating the system



Finding and getting help



"It would help to have a list of resources and different agencies and the types of assistance they offer. For example, I knew about the curb-to-curb bus pass option, but didn't realize that you could have a bus come and pick you up, if you have a doctor sign the form that shows you need the service. My case manager didn't tell me – I heard about it from another guy who had the bus come pick him up at his house!"

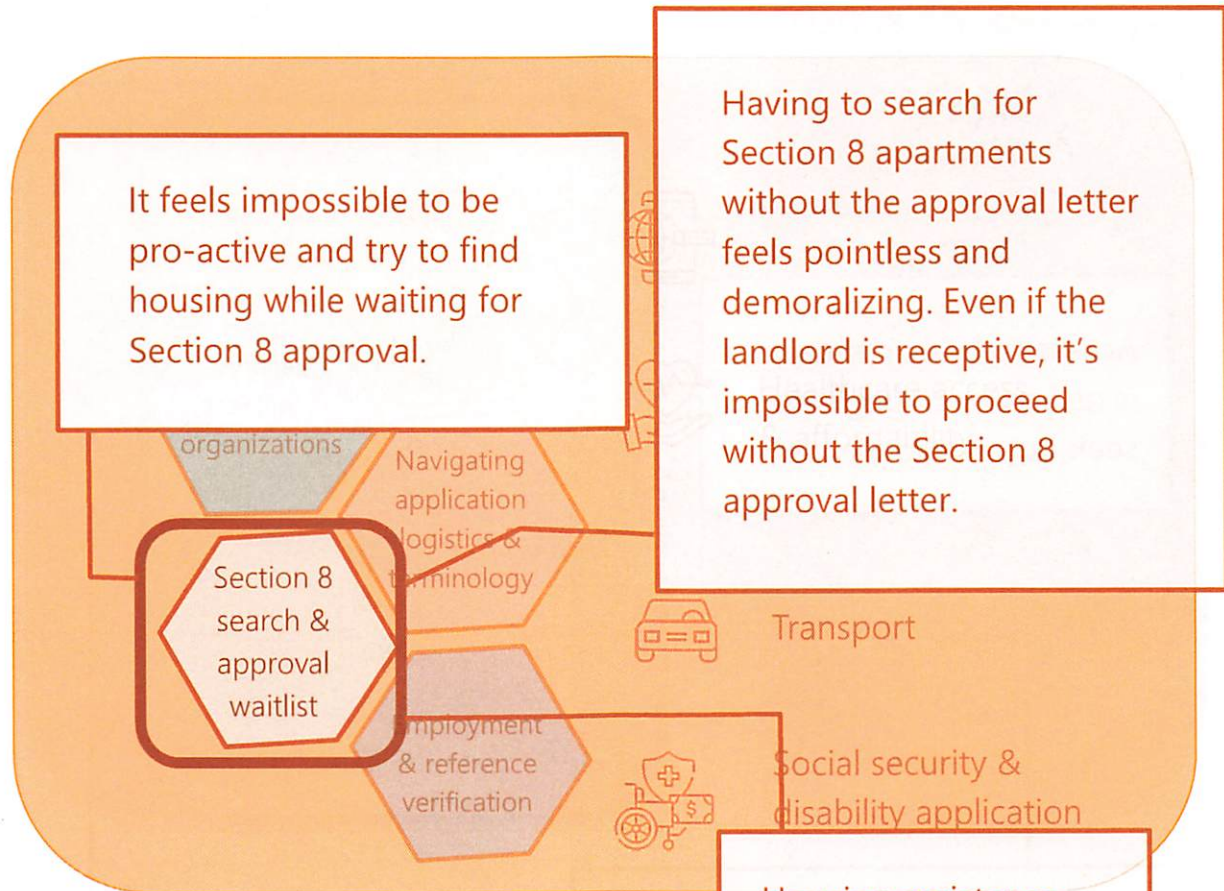
— Assistance Recipient

"I'm getting information through word of mouth.

There are lots of different little programs out there, but if you don't know who to ask, and what to ask for, then you won't hear about them."

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Section 8 approval waitlist

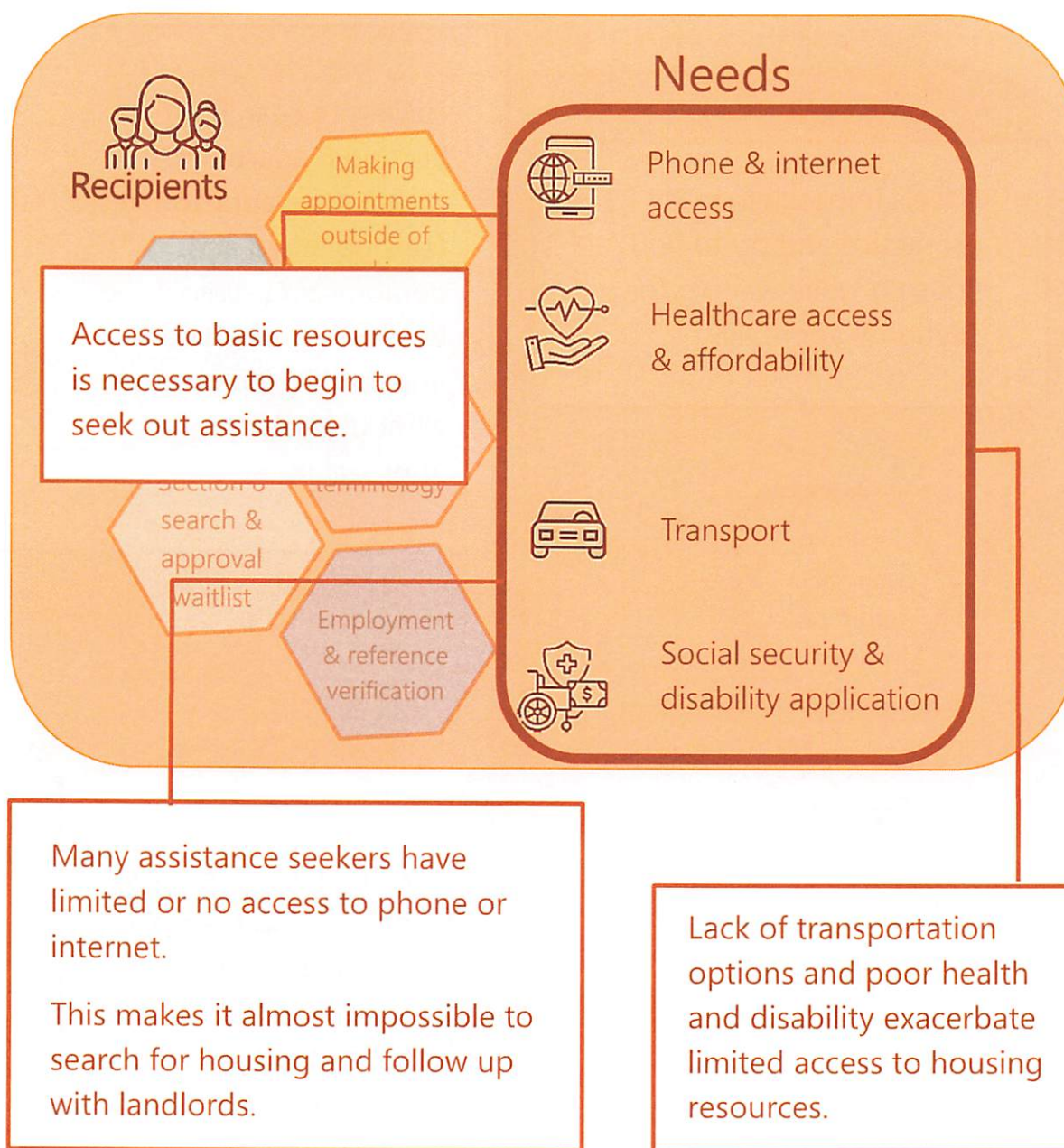


"It's up to me to find a place. I searched around and found one, but they told me that I can't apply for this apartment until I have the Section 8 voucher. So, I stopped looking. You're on your own for searching. It's pretty frustrating, because you want to feel like you're doing something!"

—Assistance Recipient

Housing assistance recipients have no way of knowing their place on the Section 8 'waitlist' or the estimated timeline for receiving the approval letter.

Additional needs



"I didn't have a cell phone until recently, so landlords didn't even want to talk to me, because I don't have a cell phone and I don't have your typical references."

—Assistance Recipient

HUMAN SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PRIORITIZATION SUMMIT RESULTS
OCTOBER 8, 2021 (1:00PM-4:00PM)

BACKGROUND

The last step in the Laramie County Human Services Needs Assessment was the completion of a challenges and opportunities prioritization summit held on October 8, 2021. Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) hosted the meeting and Corona Insights presented research results, lead a prioritization activity, and facilitated a subsequent discussion of the prioritization outcome. Thirteen people attended at least part of the meeting, including staff from partner agencies, CALC staff, and CALC board members.

The meeting began with a review the data and insights collected throughout the needs assessment: results from the stakeholder input tool, demographics and community profile data, and insights gained from the focus group of housing services providers and interviews with Laramie County residents who needed or received housing assistance. Then, Corona Insights led a vetted prioritization activity so that all participants could weigh in on the strategic direction for addressing community challenges such as housing, transportation, job training, and healthcare. After the activity, Corona Insights facilitated a group discussion of the prioritization results to begin brainstorming ideas for future strategic planning.

MEETING GOALS

- Foster a shared understanding based on assessment research
- Garner input from partners, stakeholders, and board members
- Reveal the human service needs that should be prioritized
- Identify potential funding, partnerships, and implementation strategies

PRIORITIZATION ACTIVITY

The prioritization activity asked participants to rank the top human service issues based on a set of 14 criteria. After receiving instructions, each participant logged into an online survey and ranked the top three issues they personally thought could be addressed based on each of the individual criterion alone. For example, participants ranked the top three issues if the only criterion was "urgency" (see definition below). Then they identified their top three issues if the only criterion was "permanency," and so on. Each issue was then scored on a three-point scale; issues that received a #1 rank for a criterion received three points, issues ranked #2 received two points, and issued ranked #3 received 1 point. All other issues received zero points. Scores were calculated by summing each issue by each criterion, and for each issue across all criteria. Because the highest ranked issues were assigned a larger number (3) than the second—

highest ranked issue (2), and so on, the highest sums represented the issues that ranked high across many dimensions for many participants.

The table below shows the score for each issue by each dimension and as the total. The issues with the highest totals were affordable housing, mental health, transitional housing, and transportation, which are highlighted in blue. The red cells represent issues that had a sum in the top three for that column (i.e., criterion). For example, affordable housing, food security, and reducing drug abuse had the top three highest sums for the “public will” criterion.

As a starting point for discussion, the issues with the largest number of high scores were considered, but with the understanding that a high score alone didn’t mean that the issue was to be considered a top priority. Rather, the issues with high scores were discussed in more detail as strong candidates.

CRITERIA

The criteria used for prioritization, and their definitions, are listed below.

Personal Benefit - Addressing this will have a great benefit on people who are currently facing this issue.

Community Benefit - Improving this issue directly or indirectly will benefit a lot of people.

Vulnerable Populations - Addressing this issue will help people who are the particularly vulnerable.

Permanency - Progress on this issue will have a long-lasting impact.

Cooperation - Addressing this issue is of interest to a broad array of social organizations.

Equity - Addressing this issue will help to improve social equity in the community.

Resource Efficiency - We get a good “bang for the buck” on investing in this issue.

Progress - This is an issue that we can make reasonable progress on.

Urgency - This is an urgent issue to address.

Momentum - We already have momentum in this area.

Leadership - There is a strong champion(s) in the community to lead/organize this as a priority.

Stakeholder will - Leaders and practitioners are strongly on board with this being a priority.

Public will - The public is on board with this being a priority.

Complementary - Addressing this issue will prevent, mitigate, or solve other issues.

RESULTS

Criteria															
	Personal Benefit	Community Benefit	Vulnerable Populations	Permanency	Cooperation	Equity	Resource Efficiency	Progress	Urgency	Momentum	Leadership	Stakeholder will	Public will	Complementary	Combined Score
Improving local transportation options	6	10	3	9	8	6	8	1	8	0	0	2	2	9	72
Improving the ability to pay for needs in retirement	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	8
Increasing access to the banking system (for the unbanked)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Obtaining enough food	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	15	0	13	7	8	11	0	58
Paying for utilities	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	8	3	1	1	0	20
Reducing alcohol abuse	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	2	11
Reducing drug abuse	2	5	3	2	5	0	1	3	4	0	0	4	7	2	38
Improving access to mental health care	16	6	11	10	6	7	12	7	9	4	4	12	4	15	123
Overcoming barriers faced among people living with disabilities	1	1	7	1	3	6	2	0	2	0	4	4	0	2	33
Providing job training opportunities	1	0	0	1	8	4	12	9	0	3	0	0	2	2	42
Increase opportunity for full-time, year-round, secure employment	0	6	0	11	0	6	2	3	0	8	4	4	3	4	51
Providing emergency shelter	5	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	6	2	1	1	33
Providing transitional housing (transitioning from homelessness, addiction treatment, abuse, etc.)	8	4	15	5	11	5	2	6	7	9	15	4	6	7	104
Reducing overcrowded housing (doubling-up)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Helping to provide affordable housing	12	16	9	14	10	16	13	3	16	2	6	13	14	10	154

CONCLUSIONS

Two issues – helping to provide affordable housing and improving access to mental health care – scored high in nearly every category. These issues were discussed in terms of priorities, funding, partnerships, and implementation, with the following conclusions:

- > Housing is a difficult and expensive issue to address, and the key barriers to overcome to address housing are a lack of momentum and the need for more funding. Discussions during the summit centered on how to build momentum by recruiting area leaders and other influencers to support work in this area.
- > Mental health was seen as an area where much work is occurring, but it's decentralized and disjointed at the moment. Discussions centered on ways to coordinate efforts and referrals among organizations, as well as reduce negative attitudes towards mental health among area residents.

Four other issues scored in the second tier – transportation, food security, year-round employment, and transitional housing. The group was particularly interested in transportation as a foundational issue that affects the ability to obtain other services, and discussion centered around the ability to re-institute reliable public transportation in the era of Covid.

HOUSING SERVICES QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK: PROVIDERS AND RECIPIENTS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) hired Corona Insights to assist with a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. The primary objective of the qualitative feedback phase was to explore and understand the housing assistance system in Laramie County, including challenges and opportunities, from the perspective of housing assistance providers and recipients. To meet this objective, Corona Insights collected and analyzed data gathered through a focus group and in-depth interviews.

PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW

- > On June 29, 2021, Corona Insights conducted a 90-minute online focus group with multiple representatives of housing assistance providers. The focus group consisted of six attendees and one moderator.
- > Attendees represented a range of service provider organizations that offer assistance with finding and keeping affordable housing across Laramie County.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- > More deeply understand the perspective of partners and experts that provide or help connect Laramie County residents with affordable housing.
- > Learn more about the opportunities for providers to partner and collaborate to address the issues of affordable housing and navigating systems to help obtain affordable housing.

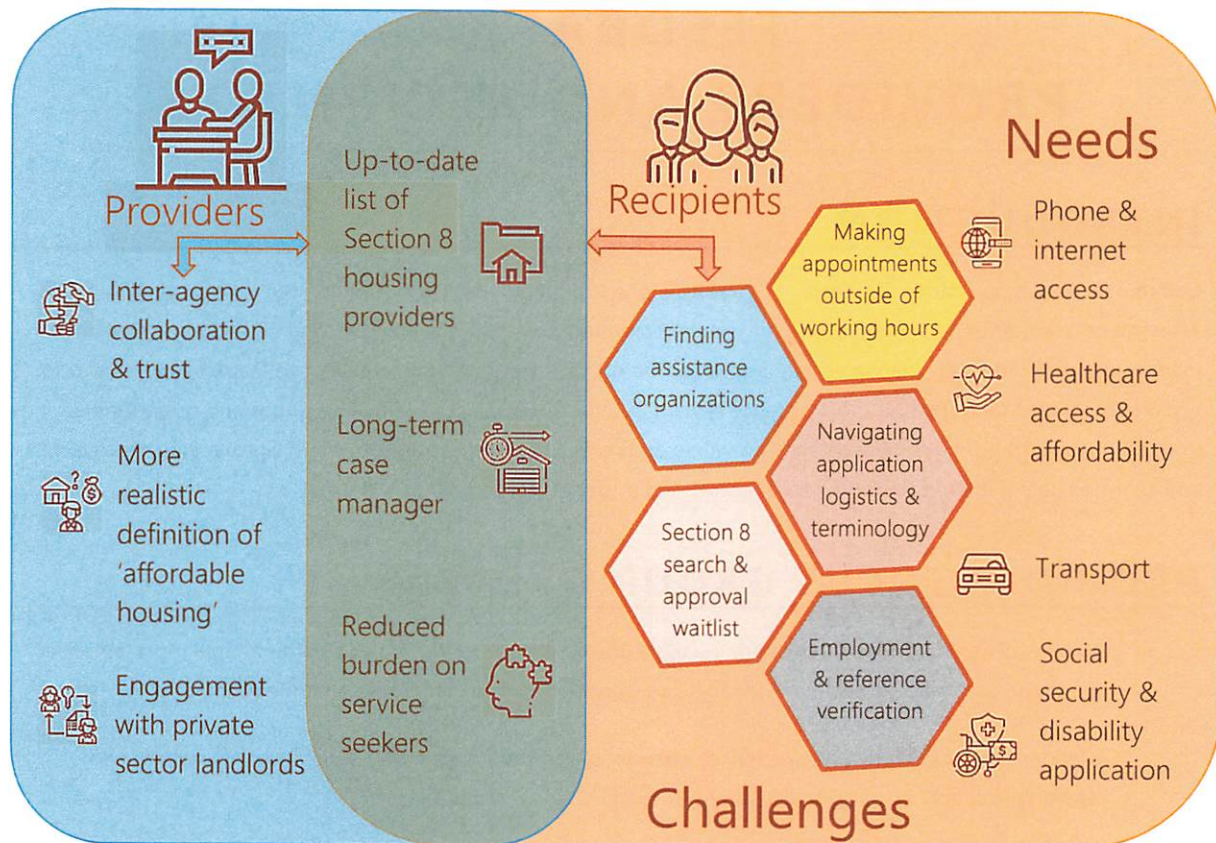
RECIPIENT INTERVIEWS OVERVIEW

- > In July and August of 2021, Corona Insights conducted phone interviews with five housing service recipients to gather insights on their experiences and needs around finding and keeping affordable housing.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- > Illuminate the experience of Laramie County residents trying to obtain affordable housing.
- > Reveal challenges and barriers that some residents have faced obtaining affordable housing assistance.
- > Identify solutions that Laramie County residents think could improve access to affordable housing.

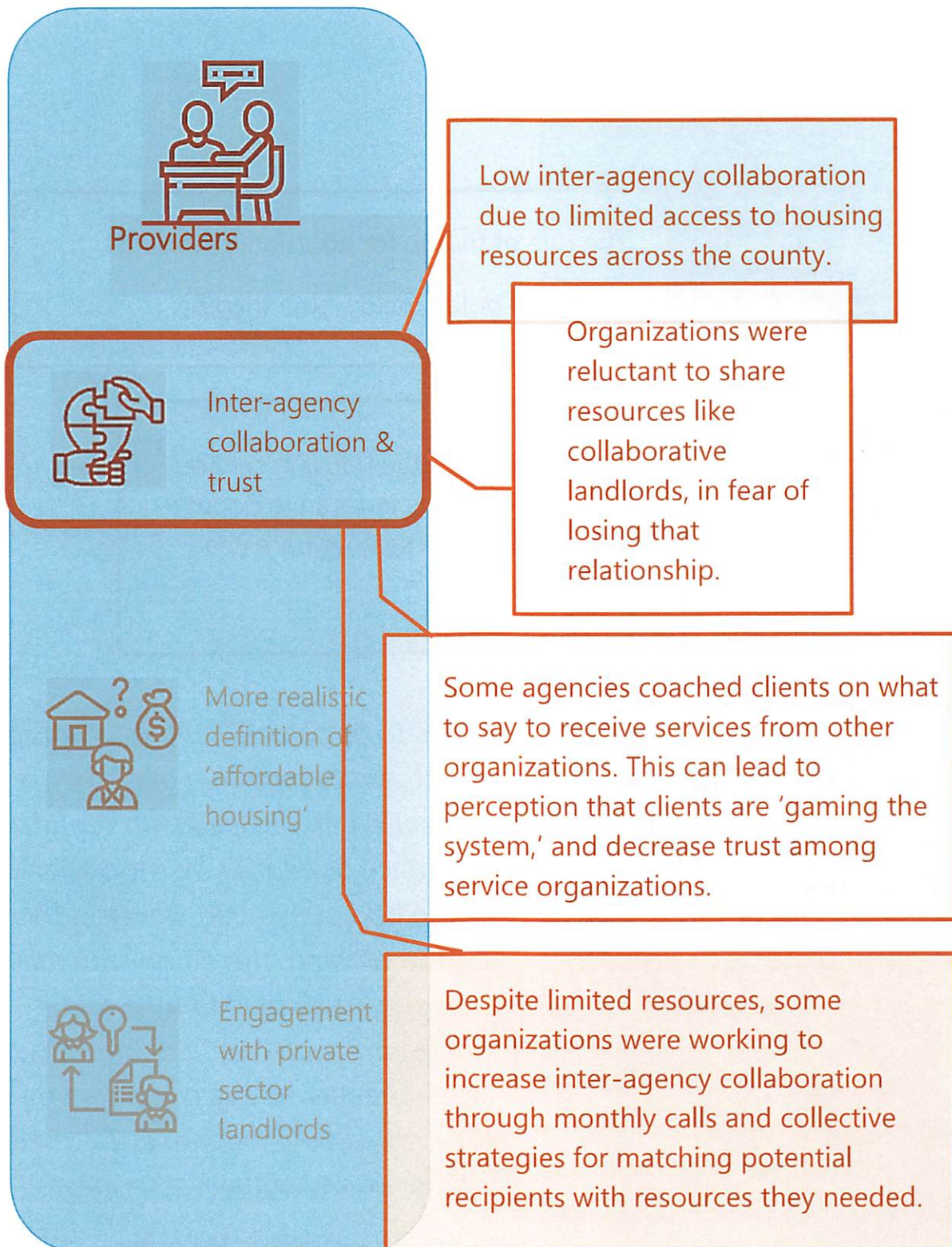
Key Needs & Challenges



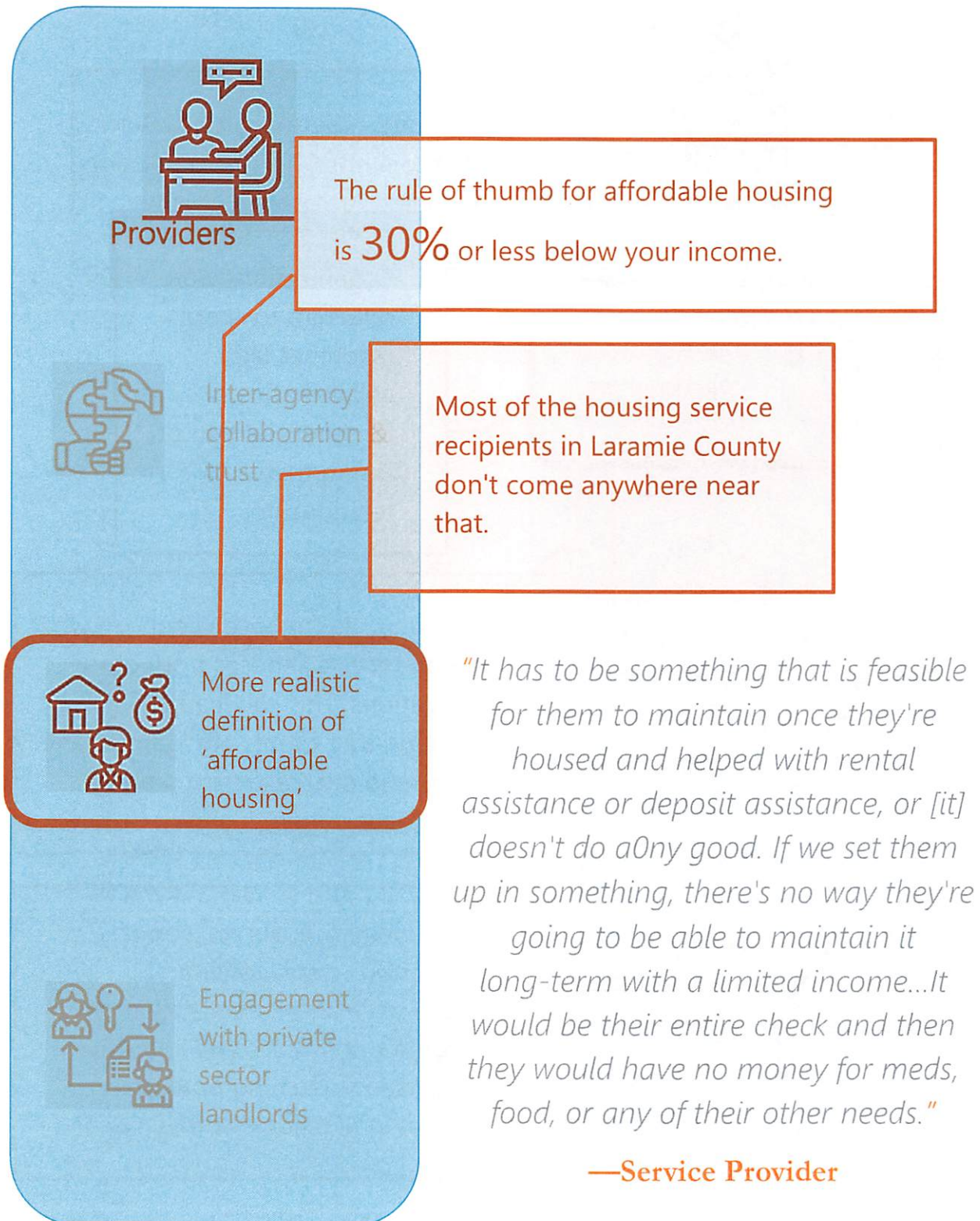
SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

- > Key challenges were identified by **service providers**: inter-agency trust and collaboration; the need for a more realistic definition of 'affordable housing,' and engagement and collaboration with private sector landlords as a possible resource for affordable housing opportunities in the community.
- > Key challenges identified by **service recipients** fell into two categories: needs that directly impacted housing, and additional needs and resources that also played a role in access to housing and other quality of life needs for service recipients. The **challenges** directly associated with housing were finding the needed information on what kinds of assistance organizations are available within the community; difficulty navigating the logistics, jargon, and terminologies associated with the application process; getting employment and references verification; inability to make appointments outside of the regular working hours for fear of losing employment; and frustrations associated with Section 8 waitlists and approval notifications. Additional **needs** that impacted quality of life and housing were access to transportation, phone and internet; access to affordable healthcare; and assistance with applying for social security and disability.
- > Some challenges were identified by **both providers and recipients**: need for an up-to-date list of Section 8 housing providers; reducing the burden of seeking assistance; and the need for longer-term case management that allows service providers to maintain contact with service recipients after they have been placed in housing.

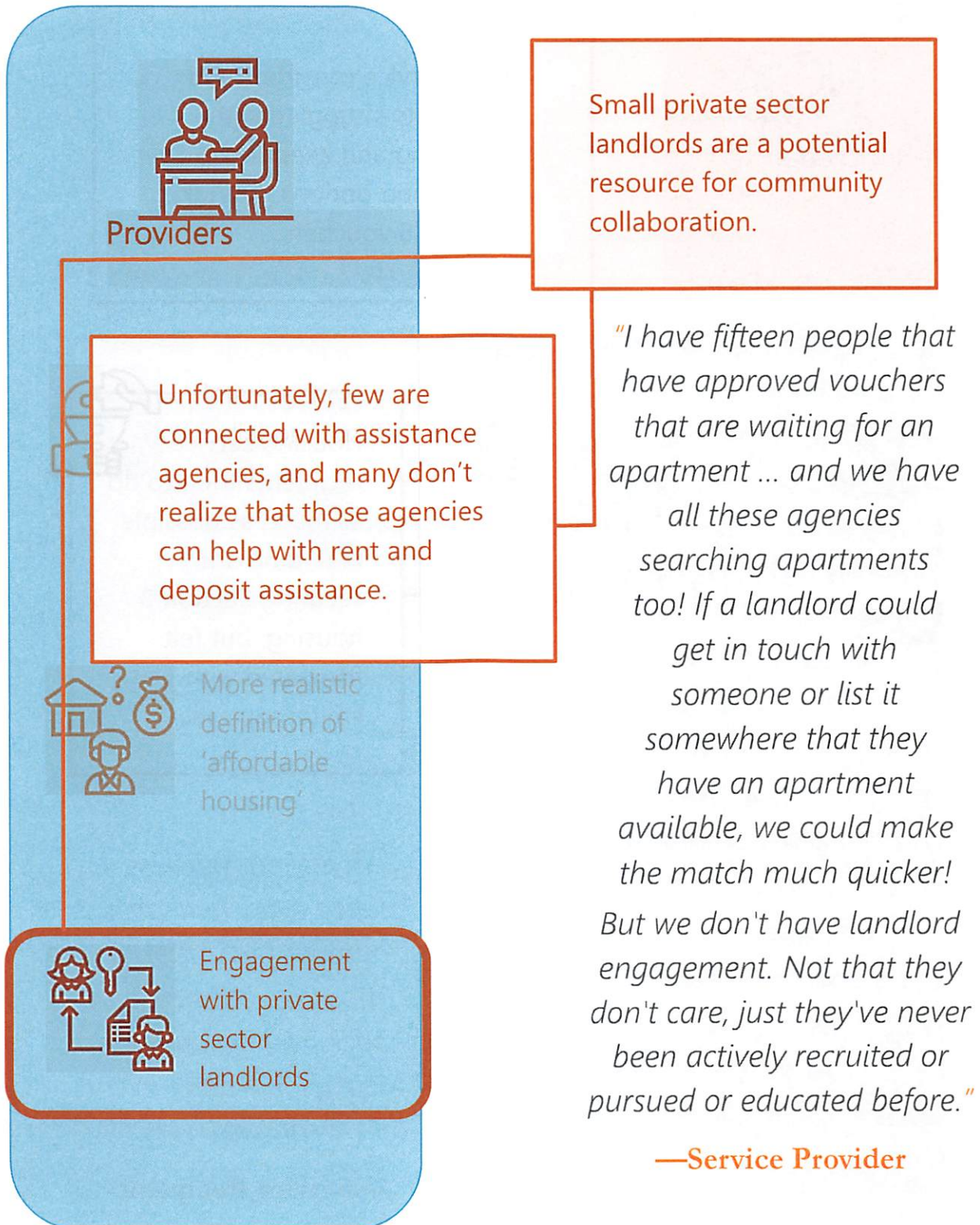
Inter-agency collaboration & trust



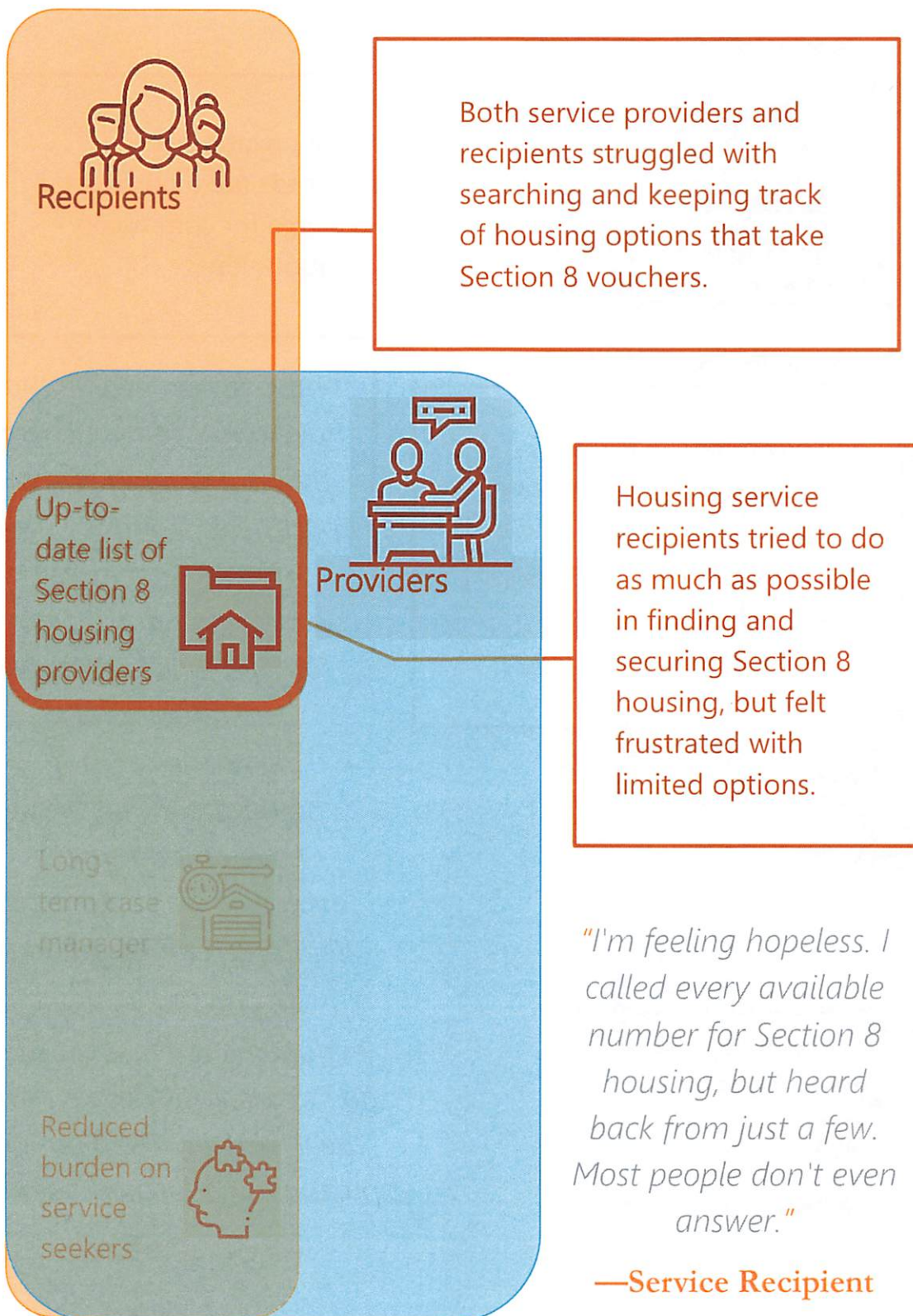
Affordable housing definition



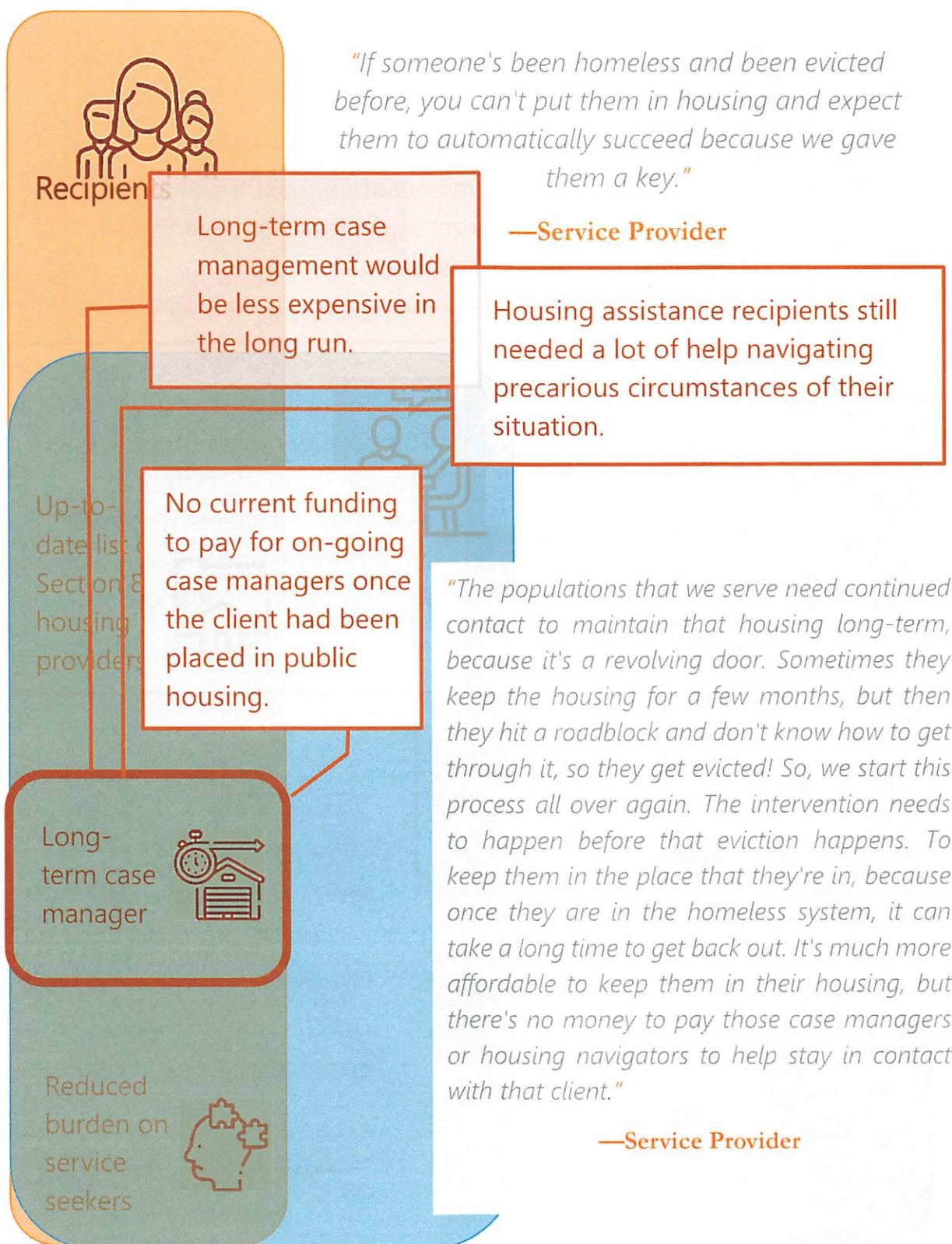
Engaging with private sector landlords



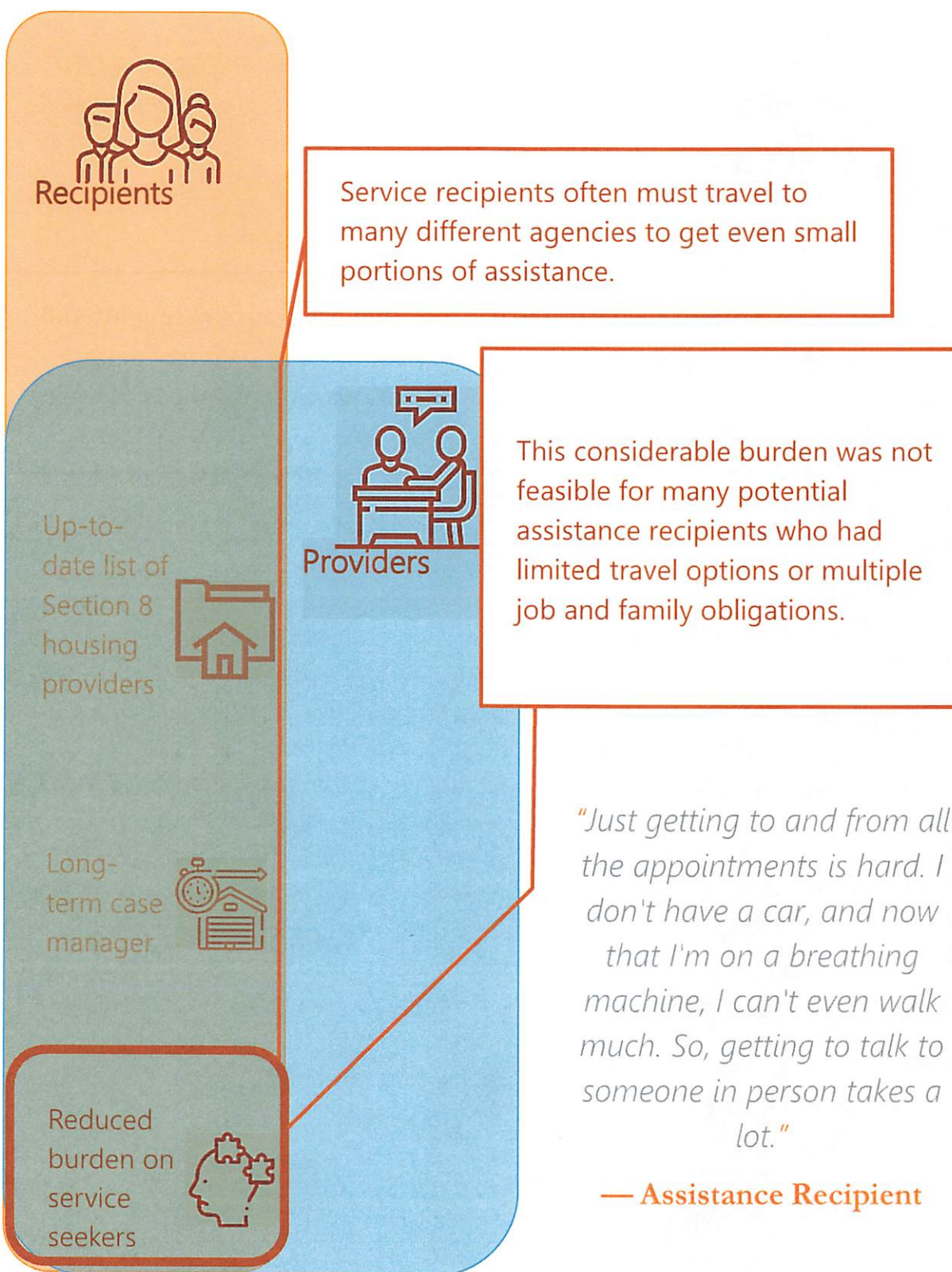
Up-to date list of Section 8 housing providers



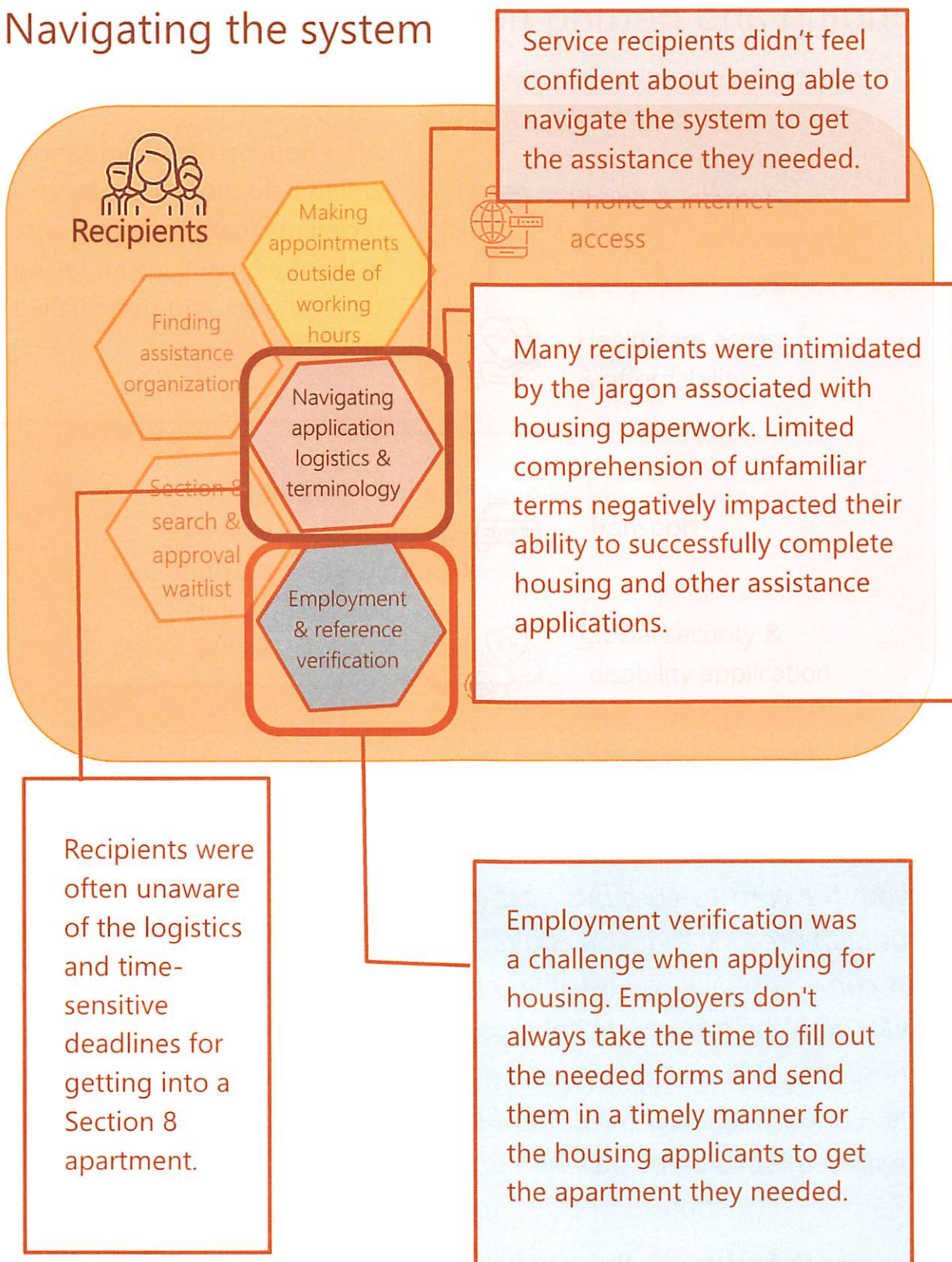
Long-term case manager



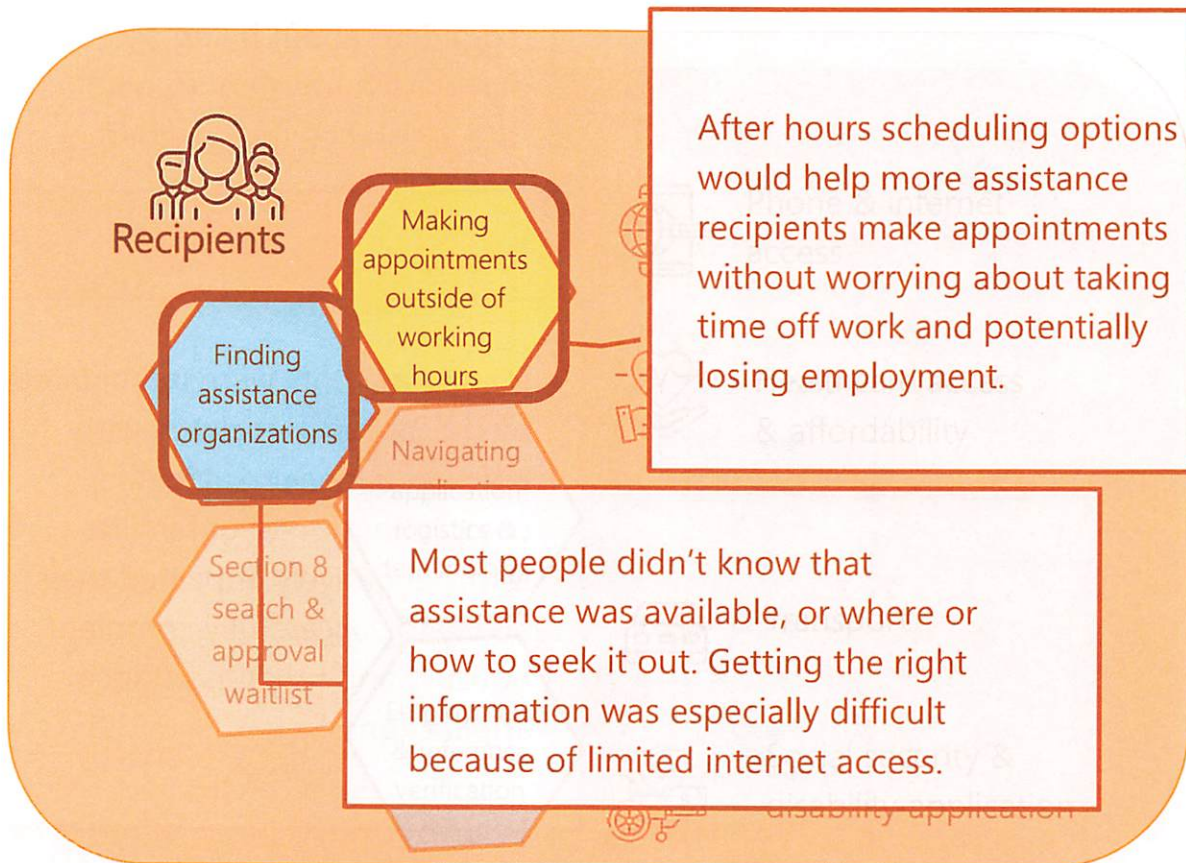
Reduced burden on service seekers



Navigating the system



Finding and getting help



"It would help to have a list of resources and different agencies and the types of assistance they offer. For example, I knew about the curb-to-curb bus pass option, but didn't realize that you could have a bus come and pick you up, if you have a doctor sign the form that shows you need the service. My case manager didn't tell me – I heard about it from another guy who had the bus come pick him up at his house!"

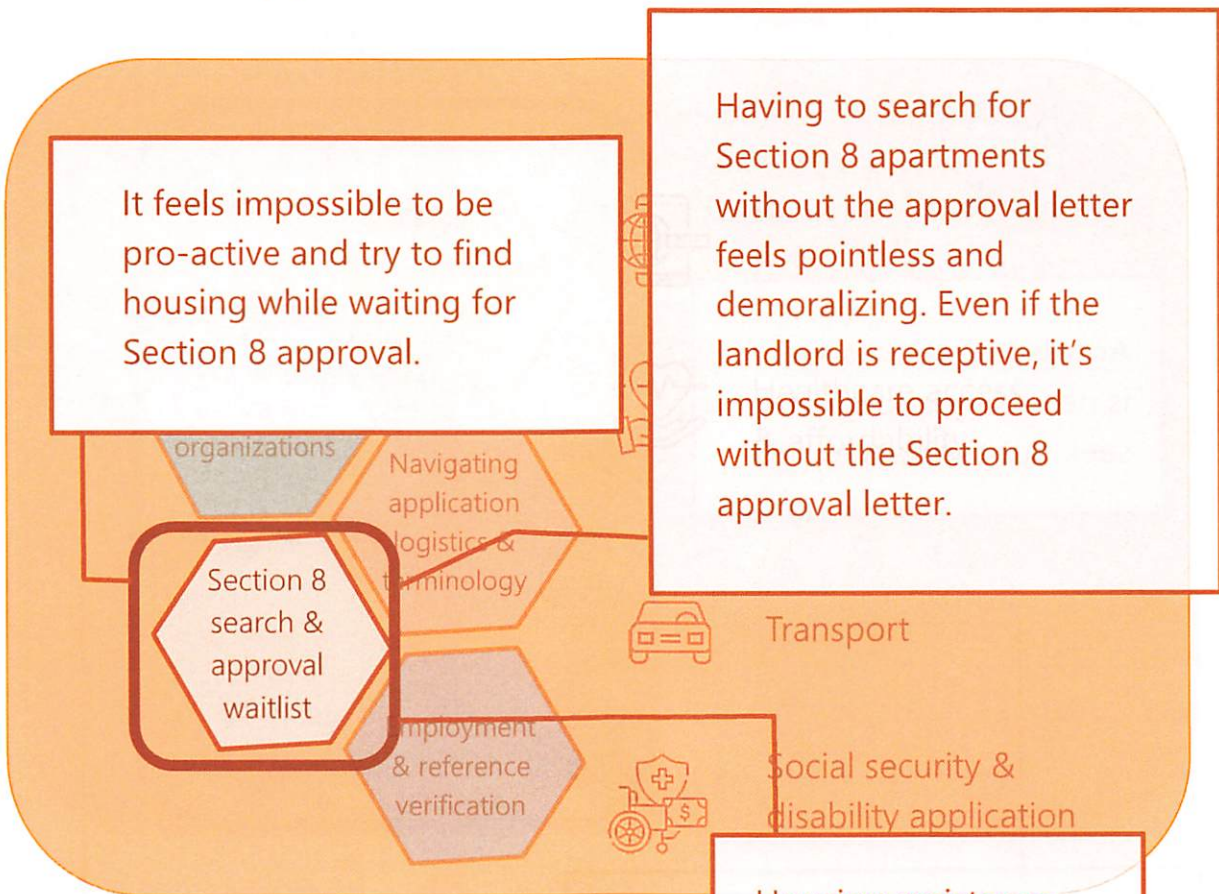
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Section 8 approval waitlist

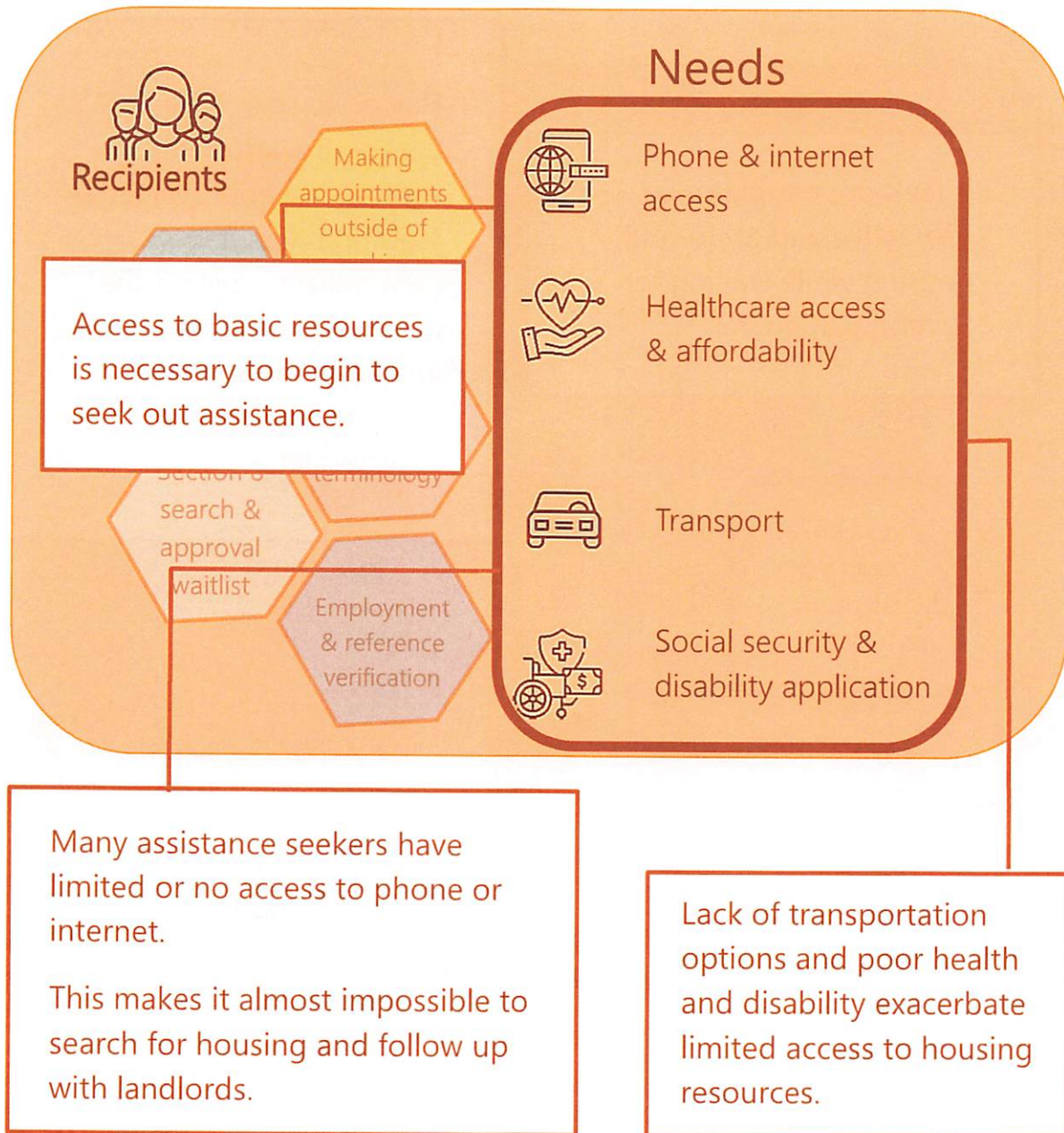


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—Assistance Recipient

EXISTING HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is conducting a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. CALC hired Corona Insights to assist with this assessment.

GOALS

The goal of this report section is to collect and analyze a small amount of up-to-date quantitative data that will help describe the current conditions in the community. Specifically, it sought to meet the needs assessment requirements set forth by the Health Resource and Services Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services, which are listed below.

1. **Explore Access to Healthcare:** Factors associated with access to care and health care utilization, for example geography, transportation, occupation, transience, unemployment, income level, and educational attainment.
2. **Identify Morbidity and Mortality:** Identify the most significant causes of morbidity and mortality, for example, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, low birth weight, behavioral health, as well as any associated health disparities.
3. **Reveal Community Characteristics:** Show any other unique health care needs or characteristics that impact health status or access to, or utilization of, primary care. For example, social factors, the physical environment, cultural/ethnic factors, language needs, and housing status.

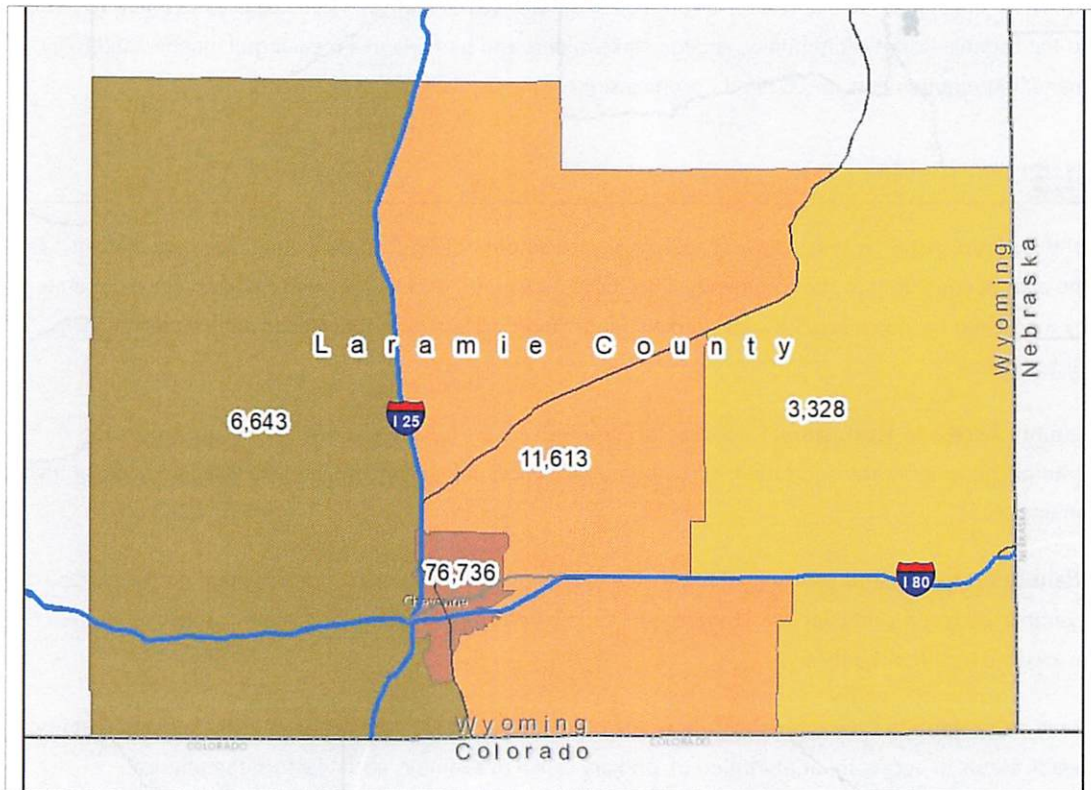
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Factors associated with access to care and health care utilization:

GEOGRAPHY AND TRANSPORTATION

With nearly 100,000 residents, Laramie County is the most populated county in Wyoming, and most county residents live in or near Cheyenne.

TOTAL POPULATION BY SUBCOUNTY REGION

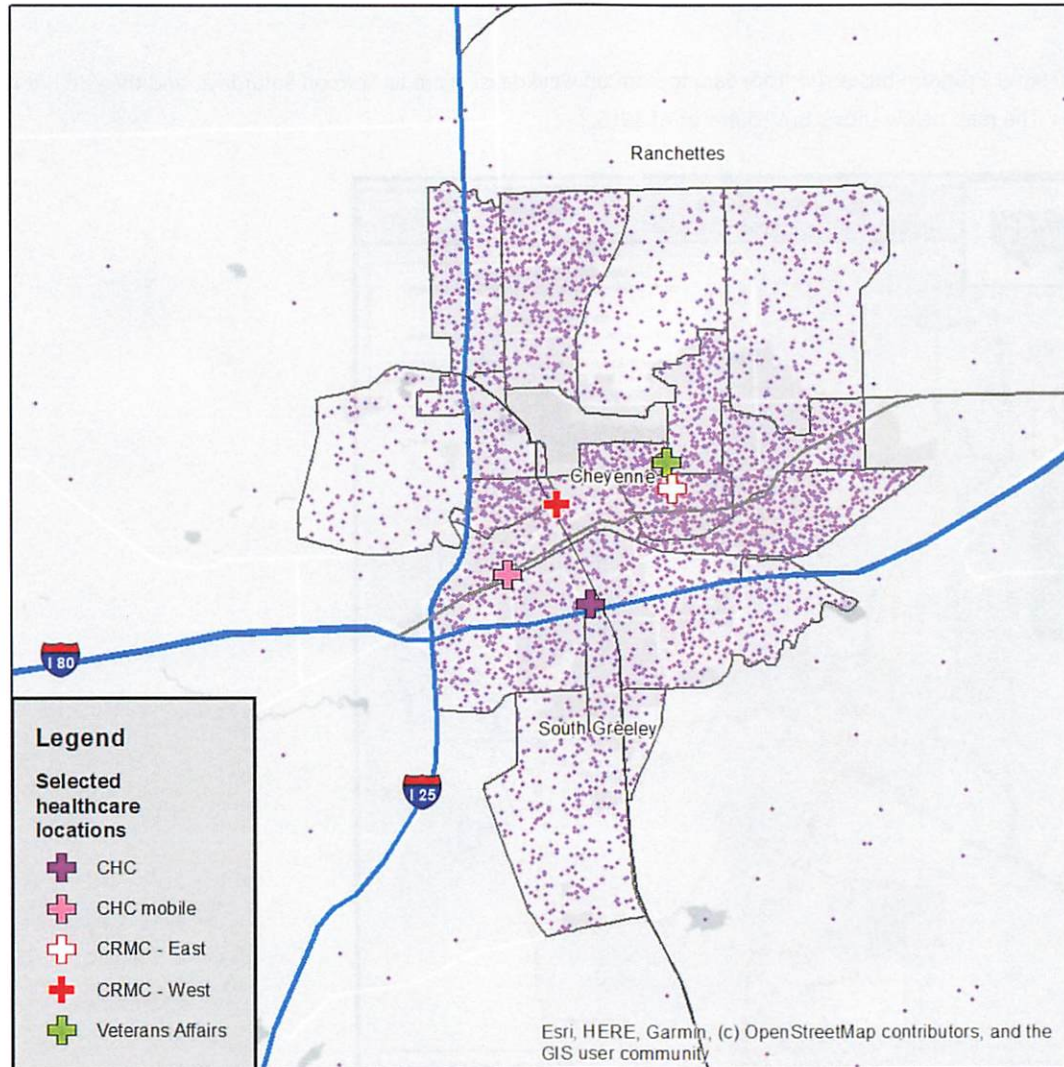


Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

The map below shows the population density based on census tract. The map also shows selected relevant health care service locations in the Cheyenne area. The large census tracts to the West, North, and East of Cheyenne stretch to the county boarder. Note, the airport is located in the middle of the city, in a census tract that has no population.

TOTAL POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT

Each dot represents 20 residents.

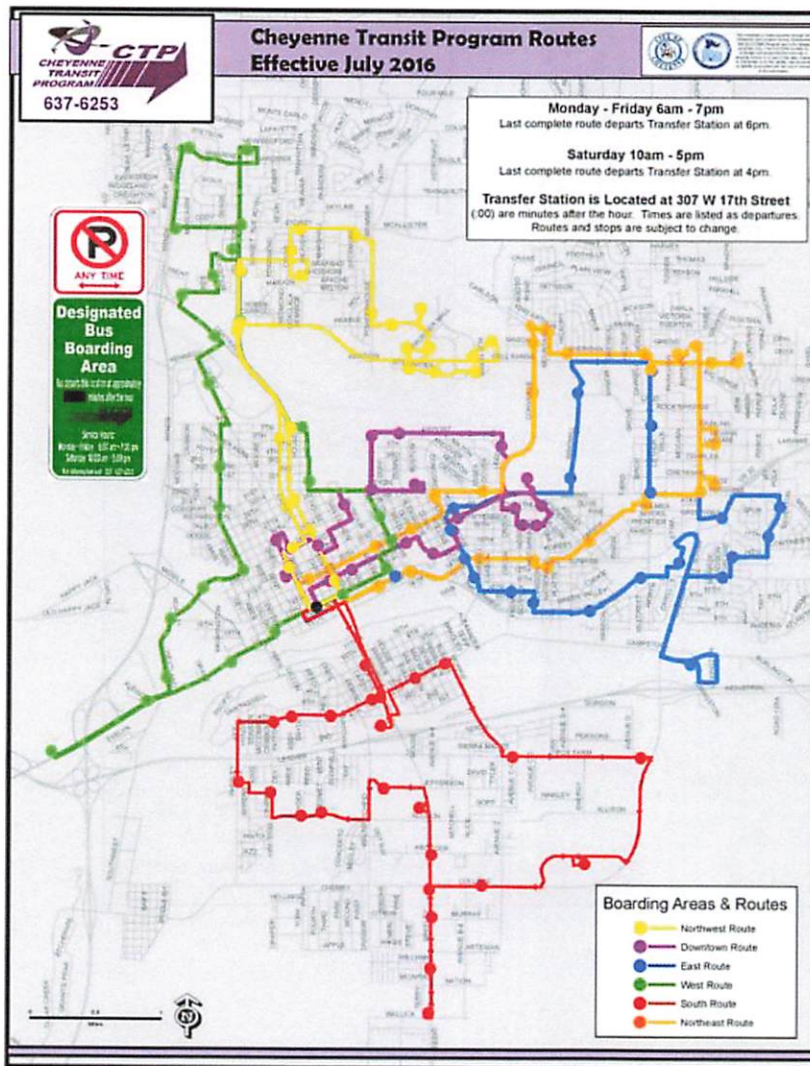


Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

TRANSPORTATION

The most common way that Laramie County workers commute to work was by driving a car, truck, or van alone (81%), followed by carpooling (11%), walking (2%), and bus (0.5%). Workers who took public transit were very likely to be renters and work in service operations for private companies. Workers who took public transit were much more likely to make less than \$10,000 a year than residents who drove to work. (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 5-year estimate)

Cheyenne Transit Program buses run from 6am to 7pm on weekdays, 10am to 5pm on Saturdays, and they do not run on Sundays. The map below shows bus routes as of 2016.



Source: City of Cheyenne <https://www.cheyennecity.org/Your-Government/Departments/Public-Works/Transit/Route-System-Map>

OCCUPATION

Among civilian employed Laramie County residents age 16 or older, a plurality (39%) worked in management, business, sciences, and art occupations, followed by sales and office occupations (21%); service occupations (18%); production, transportation, and material moving occupations (12%); and natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (10%). (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

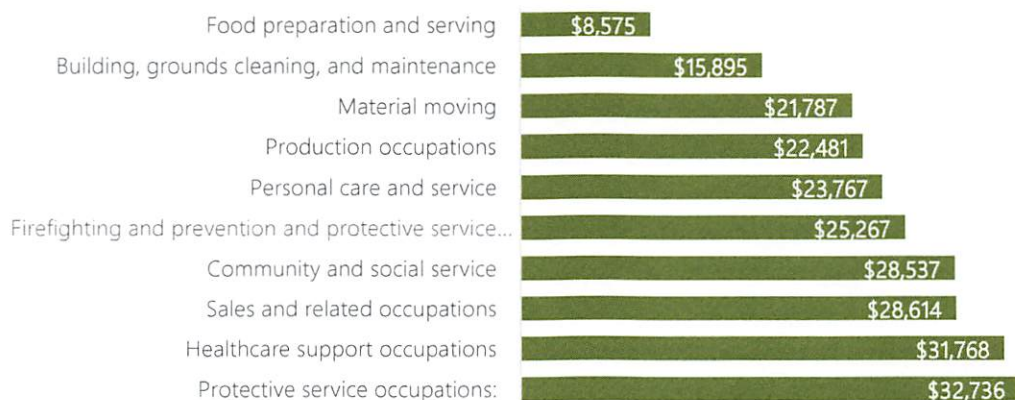
The table below shows that residents in management, business, and science occupations were most likely to be government workers whereas residents in all other occupations were most likely to work for private companies. About 5% of the labor force (e.g., 2,500 people) worked in the Armed Forces, which has been steady since 2015.

	Private companies	Self-employed (incorporated)	Not-for-profits	Government	Self-employed (not incorporated)
All civilian workers	55%	6%	7%	27%	6%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	31%	6%	11%	46%	5%
Service occupations	58%	8%	8%	16%	10%
Sales and office occupations	71%	4%	4%	17%	4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	81%	4%	0%	13%	3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	76%	8%	0%	12%	4%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate)

The ten lowest paying occupations, based on median earnings, are shown below. Food preparation and serving earned the least, followed by ground cleaning and building maintenance. Note that these results represent all civilian workers, not just full-time, year-round workers.

Median Earnings by Occupation



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate)

TRANSIENCE

Among all 42,000 households in Laramie County, about two-thirds were owner-occupied and one-third were renter occupied. In all of Wyoming, 72% of households are owner-occupied, so there is a higher proportion of renters in Laramie County compared to the state. (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

The median year that an owner moved into the household was 2011, which is, unsurprisingly, sooner than 2017, the median year moved into household among renters. About 9% of renters lived in their homes for 10 years or longer.

According to the American Community Survey, 2019 (1-year estimate), about 8% of Laramie County residents moved within the county that year, 1% moved to Laramie County from somewhere else in Wyoming, and 7% moved to Laramie County from out-of-state. This pattern was very similar to Wyoming's statewide pattern. Males were more likely than females to move to Laramie County from out-of-state, and residents who moved from out-of-state were more likely to be renting a home.

UNEMPLOYMENT

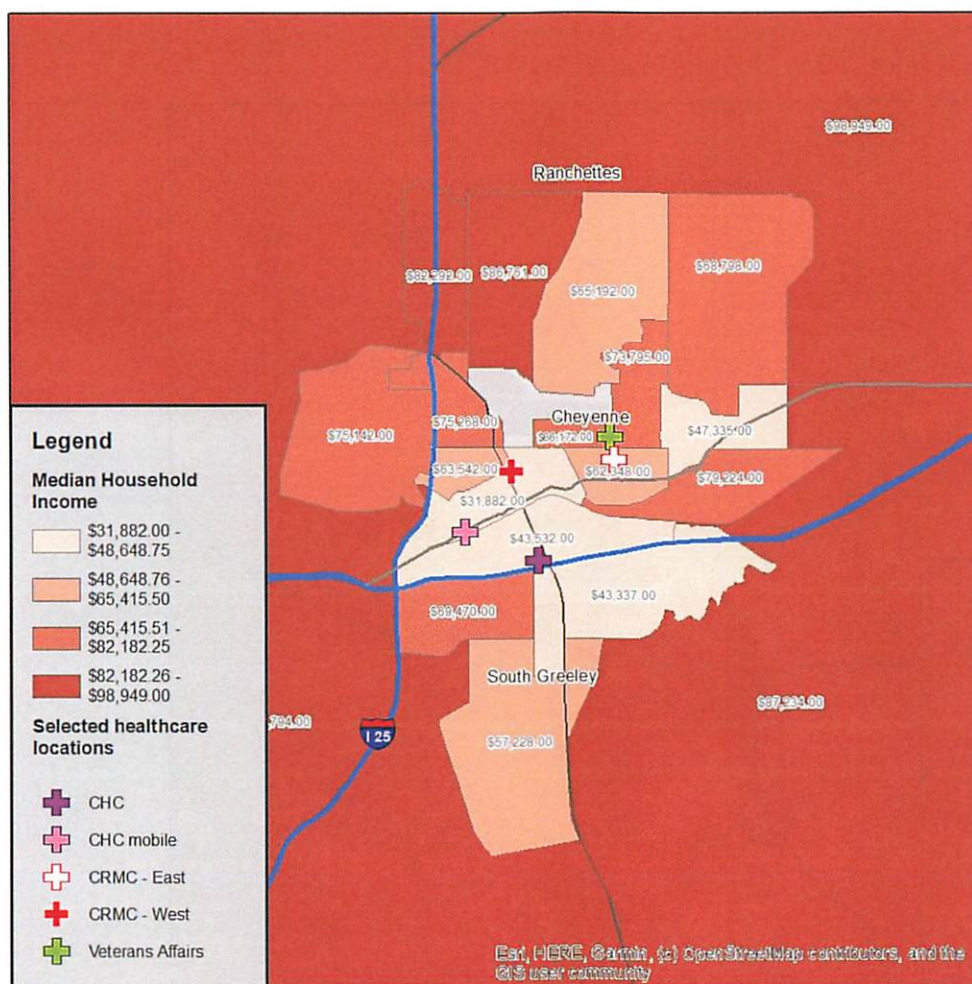
The unemployment rate in Laramie County in June 2021 was 5.0%, which was slightly lower than the 5.4% for Wyoming overall. However, it was much higher than the low of 3.6% in June 2019, but much lower than the 7.9% in May 2020, during the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic downturn. The unemployment rate for all of Wyoming in May 2020 was 8.5%. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Prior to 2019, the unemployment rate had slowly but steadily declined since 2010, both in Laramie County and statewide.

INCOME LEVEL

The median household income in Laramie County was \$70,600 in 2019, which was higher than the \$65,000 median for the state overall (American Community Survey, 1-year estimate). The county's median annual income in 2019 was slightly higher than the roughly \$65,000 it had been across the four years prior. In 2019, almost 6% of all households had incomes less than \$10,000 and 33% had incomes under \$50,000.

Household income varies greatly across the county. Median household income tends to be higher in the census tracts in northern Cheyenne or outside Cheyenne than in central Cheyenne. Crossroads Health Clinics are located in the area with the lowest median household income in all of Laramie County.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS TRACT



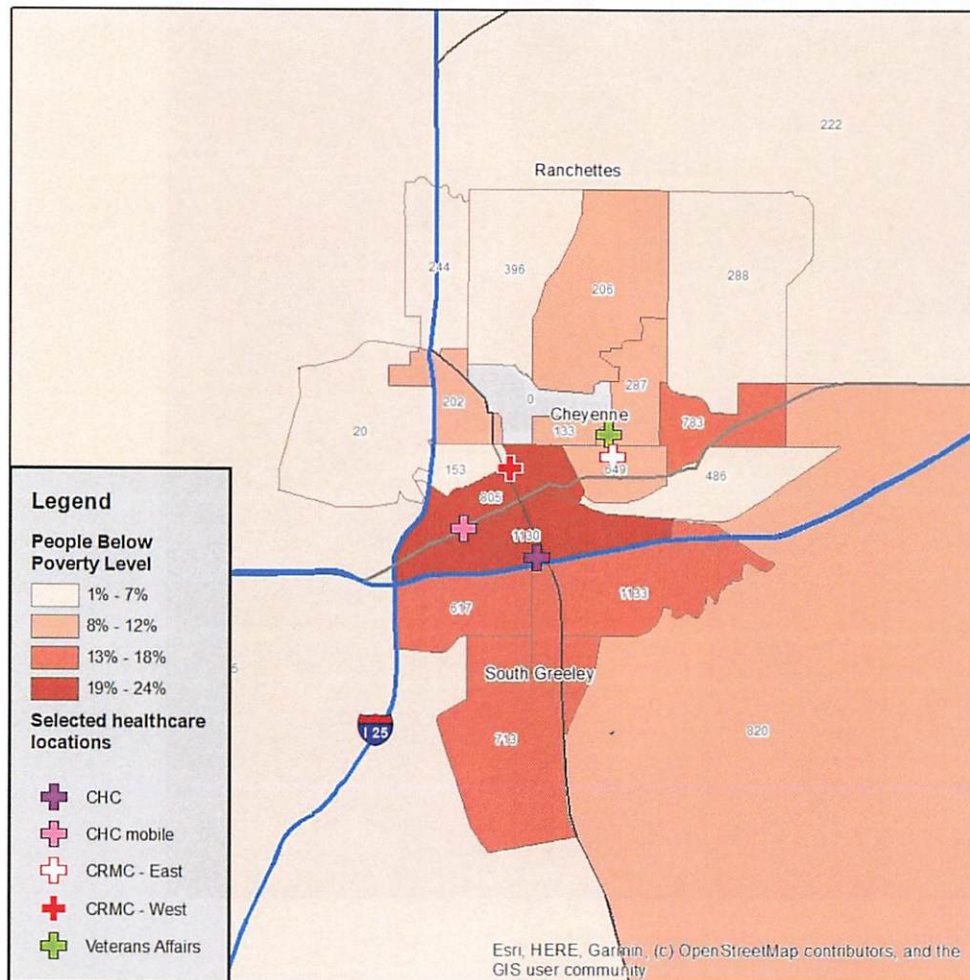
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

In all of Laramie County, about 9,500 residents (i.e., 10% of the population) live in households that are classified as below the poverty level, and nearly half (i.e., 4,600) live in households classified at 50% of the poverty level. The poverty level is based on the total family/household income in the last year and the family size and composition. That is, poverty level is a way to compare income and households of different sizes. Households at 50% of the poverty level have half as much income as households of the same size and composition at 100% of poverty. The percentage of residents experiencing poverty in Laramie County is similar to the statewide estimate of 10.1%.

Laramie County residents 16 years or older who worked full-time, year-round were much less likely to be experiencing poverty (2%) than people who worked part-time or part-year (19%) or did not work (14%). (Source: American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimate)

People in poverty were concentrated on the south side of Cheyenne and south of Cheyenne, although there were people experiencing poverty in every census tract with households.

HOUSEHOLD EXPERIENCING POVERTY BY CENSUS TRACT



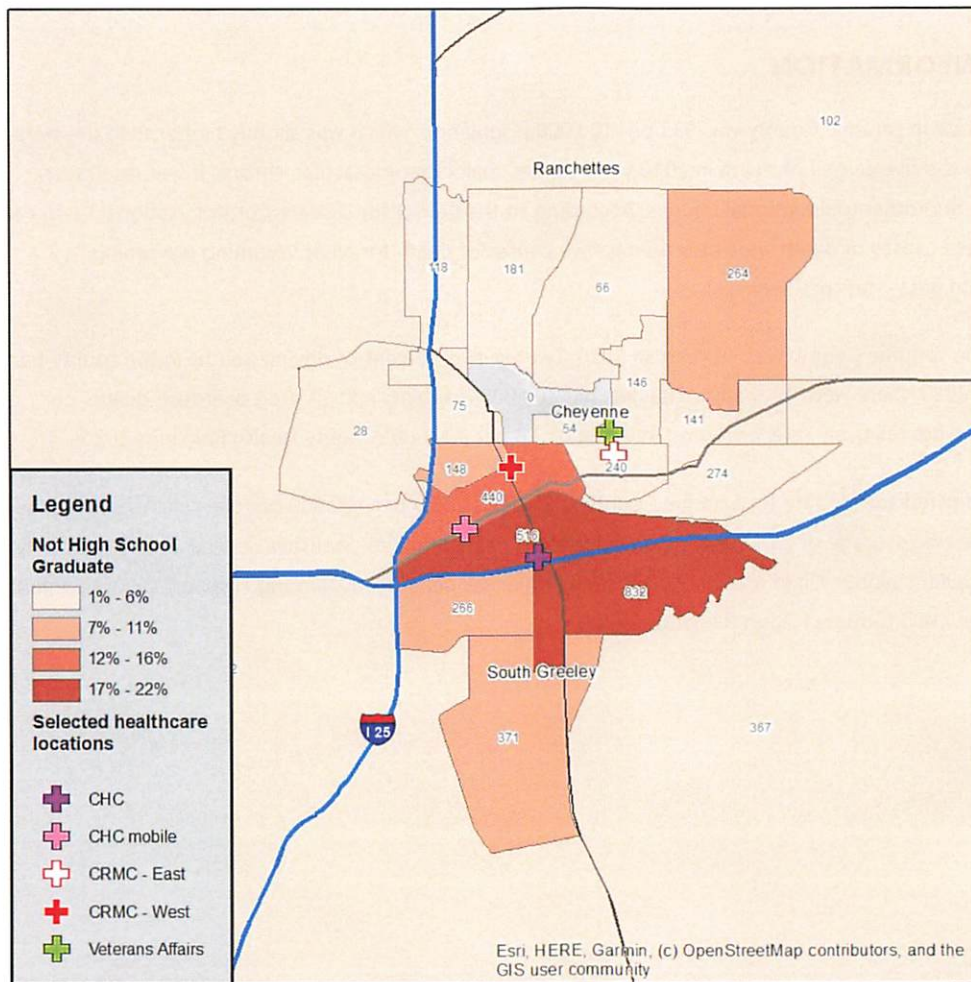
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Similar to statewide estimates, most (94%) of Laramie County residents age 25 or older had a high school diploma or equivalent. However, this percentage was lower for Hispanic residents (84%). About 30% of people 25 or older had a Bachelor's degree or higher, which was similar to the state as a whole.

Most census tracts in Laramie County had relatively few adults with less than a high school diploma. However, the areas on the South side of Cheyenne had up to 20% of adult residents with less than a high school diploma.

LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BY CENSUS TRACT



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

Most significant causes of morbidity and mortality and associated health disparities

BIRTH INFORMATION

In Laramie County, the percentage of low birth weights of babies (i.e., infants weighing less than 2500 grams), was 11% in 2019, which was about the same as the prior five years. The number of teen resident births in Laramie County was 59 in 2019. Teen births have steadily decreased from a high of 165 in 2006 (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services).

MORTALITY INFORMATION

The resident death rate in Laramie County was 933 per 100,000 population, which was slightly higher than the state average of 885. The top five causes of death in 2019 were cancer, major cardiovascular, chronic lower respiratory, Alzheimer's disease, and other unintentional injuries. According to the Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, these causes of death were also the top five causes of death for all of Wyoming (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services).

The life expectancy in Laramie County was 79 years in 2020. Twenty-two percent of driving deaths in the county had alcohol involved. In 2020, there were 19 firearm fatalities per 100,000 residents and 11 drug overdose deaths per 100,000. Homicides were relatively rare, occurring at a rate of 3.8 per 100,000 (County Health Rankings 2020).

The ten-year age-adjusted suicide rate for Laramie County in 2019 was 26.0 per 100,000 people, which was slightly higher than the statewide average of 25.1 (Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services). Child mortality in 2020 was 57 per 100,000 children. Child mortality was much higher, 75 per 100,000, among Hispanic children. Infant mortality was 5.2 per 1,000 (County Health Rankings 2020).

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

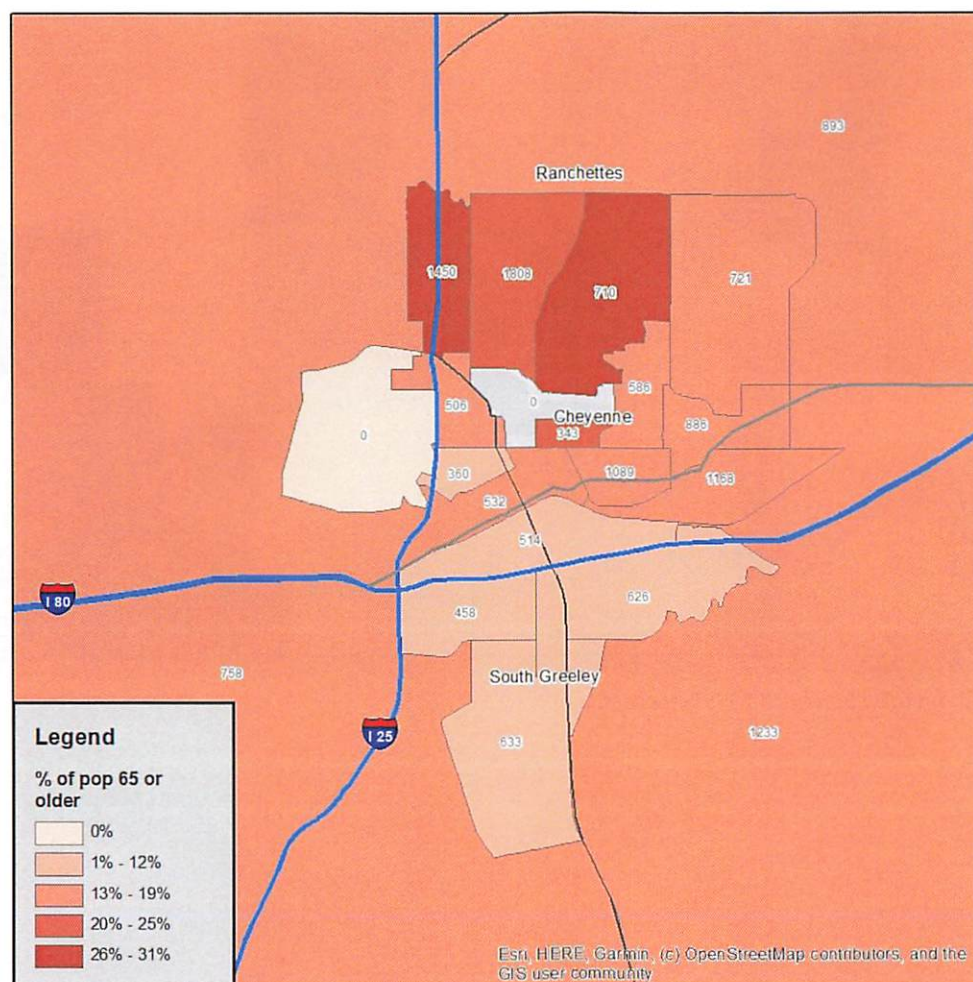
Unique health care needs or characteristics

SOCIAL FACTORS

About 15,300 adults age 65 or older lived in Laramie County, comprising 15% of the county's population. In Wyoming, 17% of the population was 65 years or older. The greatest concentrations of older adults are in the northern end of the city while the south end had lower concentration of older adults.

OLDER ADULT POPULATION CONCENTRATION

Labels represent the number of adults 65 or older.



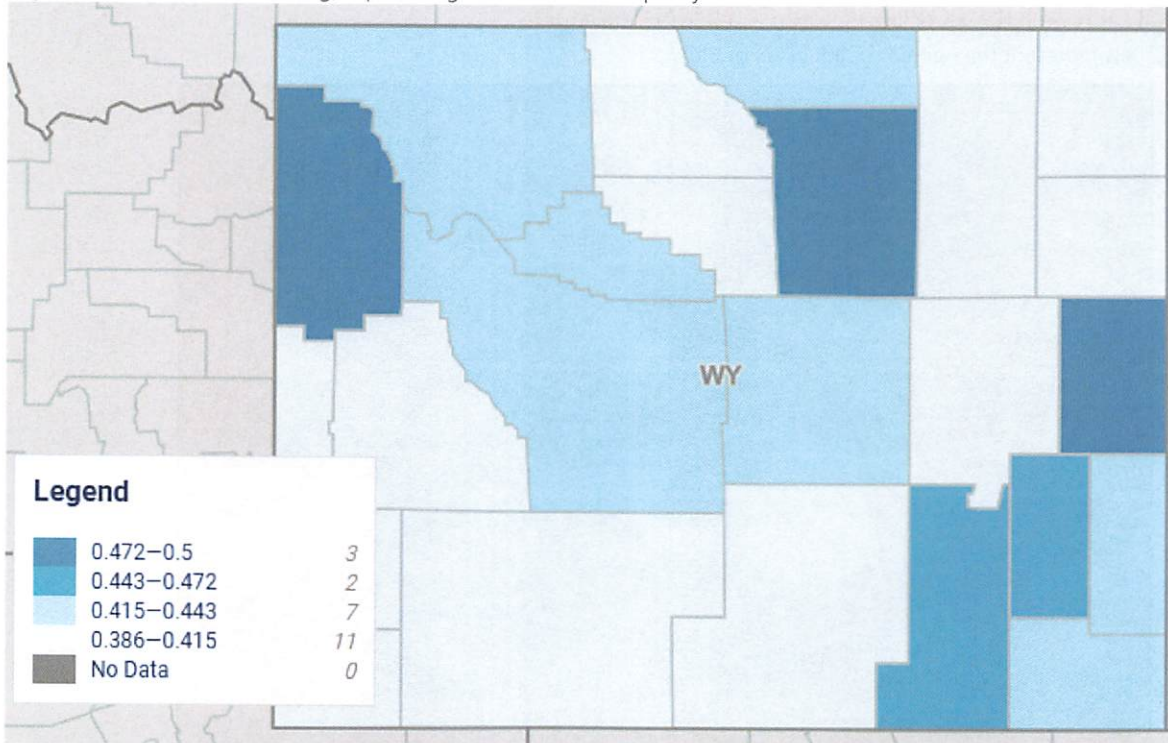
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

The GINI Index measures income inequality in a region. Theoretically, a score of zero (0) would mean that all income is distributed exactly equally among all residents, while a score of 100 would mean one person has all of the income in the region and everyone else has no income. The GINI Index score in Laramie County was 0.44 in 2019 (American Community Survey, 5-year estimate), which ranked it in the middle compared to other Wyoming counties.

The GINI Index for Laramie County was 0.39 in 2016, 0.40 in 2013, and 0.42 in 2010, suggesting that income inequality in Laramie County is slightly higher now than it was throughout the 2010's.

INCOME INEQUALITY

Higher numbers (darker shading) represent greater income inequality.



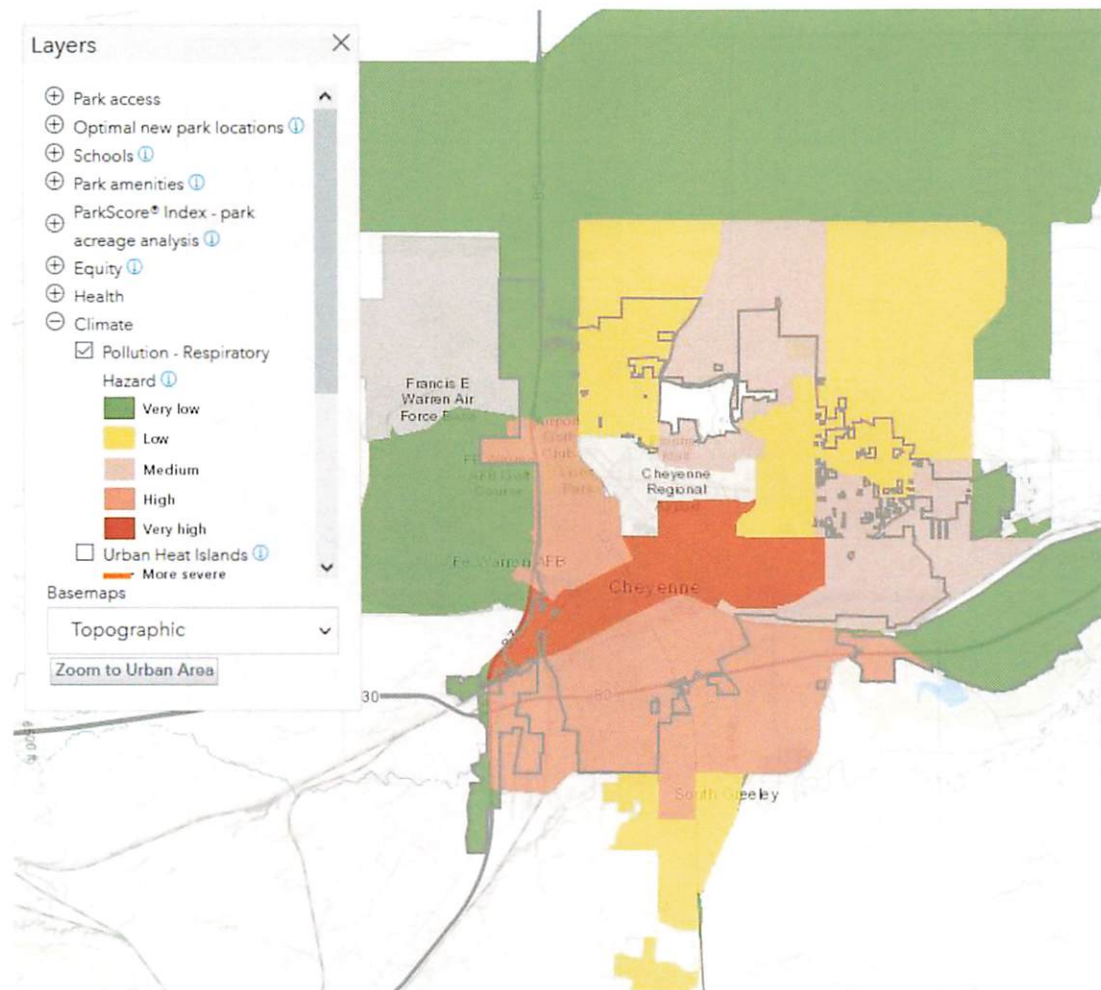
Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

PHYSICAL ENVIRONEMNT

Generally, the air quality in the area surrounding Cheyenne was good, with very low or low hazard. However, the air quality was worse in the central part of the city and along the I-80 and railroad corridors.

AIR POLLUTION

EPA Elscreen NATA repository hazard index metric is based on the 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment.



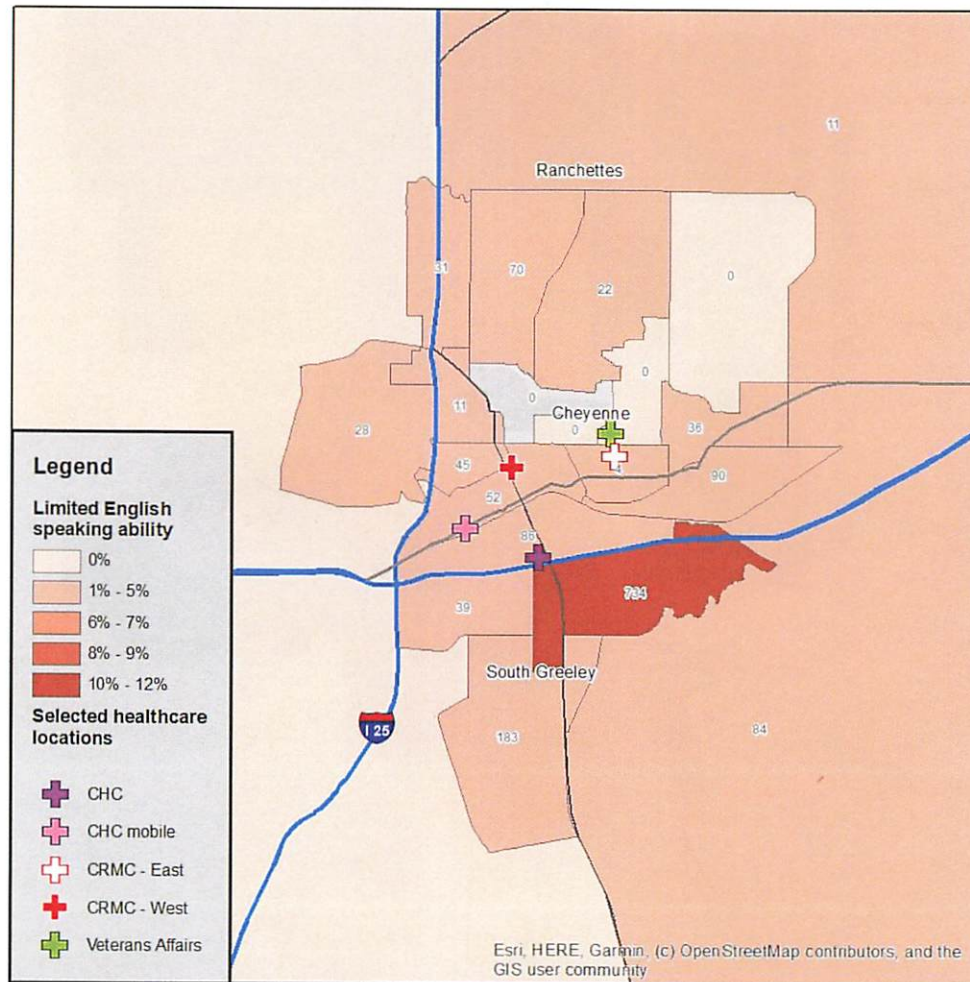
Source: The Trust for Public Land ParkServe®

CULTURAL & ETHNIC FACTORS

More than 1,500 people living in Laramie County had limited English speaking ability. That is, they were five years or older, spoke English less than very well, and spoke Spanish at home. This population was mostly concentrated south of Cheyenne's city limits.

LIMITED ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION CONCENTRATION

Labels represent the number of residents.



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

HOUSING

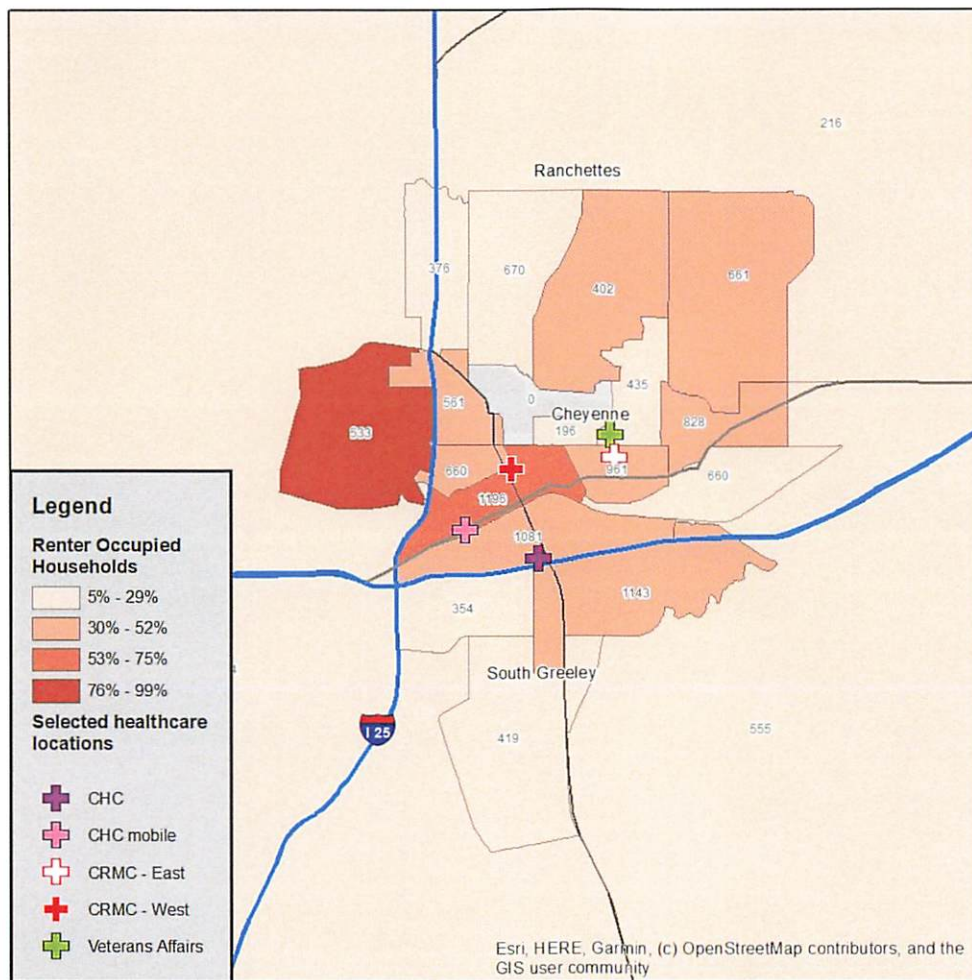
Out of the 42,000 occupied housing units in Laramie County, 13,300 (32%) were not occupied by the owner. Most were occupied by renters, although a small proportion were occupied by residents who were not paying cash rent.

In 2019, 6% of all housing units were vacant, down from around 10% in the four years prior. The rental vacancy rate, which is the proportion of the rental inventory which was “vacant and for rent,” was 1.0, down from around 4.5 the prior four years. However, median gross rent in 2019 was \$841, statistically lower than it was in 2017, 2016, or 2015. In 2019 and 2018, about 49% of rented households spent 30% or more of their household income on housing, which was up slightly compared to 2016 and 2015. The fact that median rents dipped slightly while the proportion of rent burdened households increased is a bit perplexing. It could be that higher value homes were renting at higher rates, which would not affect the median rent price but would increase the proportion of housing burdened renters.

Within Laramie County, rural census tracts all had low proportions of renters, whereas many Cheyenne area census tracts had more than half of all households being rented. The concentration of renters was highest on the West end.

HOME RENTERS

Labels represent the number of rented households.



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 (5-year estimate)

HUMAN SERVICES INPUT: INITIAL RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is conducting a multi-step human services needs assessment to better understand the Laramie County community, engage stakeholders and partners in a meaningful manner, and fulfill federally mandated requirements. CALC hired Corona Insights to assist with this assessment and employing the Human Services Input Tool was the first of several steps.

INPUT TOOL GOALS

The overarching goal of the Human Services Input Tool is to quickly get a general understanding of the most pressing human service needs and opportunities in Laramie County, from the perspective of CALC board members, partners, and stakeholders. This input will 1) help jumpstart the facilitated web meetings to be held with these groups and 2) ensure that board members and partners are engaged early and often throughout the needs assessment process. Input received from this tool will begin to shape the direction of the rest of the needs assessment.

INPUT TOOL QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

1. Many Laramie County residents benefit from human services provided by dedicated partners. What are some of the **most successful human services** that are currently provided to residents in Laramie County?
 - **Healthcare and human services organizations:** Crossroads Health Clinic; Needs, Inc.; Community Action of Laramie County;
 - **Government human services and social assistance programs:** Emergency assistance (including rent, utilities); Food assistance; Housing assistance (including emergency shelter services, public housing, and Section 8); Jobs assistance; Department of Family Services; Department of Workforce Services, Wyoming 211
 - **Nonprofits:** Salvation Army; Habitat for Humanity; Volunteers of America; Climb WY; Comea Shelter; Churches (including Catholic charities); Grace for 2 Brothers

2. Please list up to three of Laramie County's **strongest assets or resources** currently:
 - **Healthcare and human services organizations:** Crossroads Health Clinic and Needs, Inc.; Community Action of Laramie County;

- **Government human services and social assistance programs:** Rent assistance, food assistance, low-income housing, utility assistance, Department of Family Services; Department of Workforce Services, Wyoming 211, Department of Health
 - **Nonprofits:** Family Promise, Comea Shelter, United Way, multiple active volunteer organizations
 - **Other assets:** Library, parks, private money, economic stability due to state and USAF, people at LCSD #1, excellent K-12 education system, geographic location, jobs, minerals, people, faith communities, aid for those who qualify
3. Regardless of these successes and assets, many residents are still vulnerable. Other communities have identified vulnerable populations as single-parents, people living with a disability, people experiencing homelessness, non-citizens, etc. Who do you think are the **most vulnerable populations** living in Laramie County currently?
- **Housing:** People experiencing homelessness or at risk (including youth and their families), Seasonal workers
 - **Mental Health:** People struggling with mental illness, People struggling with substance abuse
 - **Economics:** Economically disadvantaged. People who have always had job stability only to see it disappear with the collapse of the oil and gas industry and COVID, Poorly educated people, Uninsured individuals
 - **Parents and Children:** Single-parents, Children, Unaccompanied adolescents
 - **Older Adults:** Seniors, People living with disabilities
 - **Other:** Non-citizens, Any person requiring assistance, Recently released from incarceration, Individuals in domestic violence situations
4. Communities and their residents can face a variety of challenges and unmet needs. For example, there might be unmet need for affordable housing, utility assistance, public transportation, help to quit using drugs or alcohol, and many others. What do you think are **the most pressing challenges** or unmet needs facing Laramie County's most vulnerable populations?
- Knowledge of resources available and *navigating the system* in order to receive assistance
 - Access to the right resources payment for services with no insurance lack of continuity between services
 - Financial planning/credit counseling
 - Affordable and transitional housing (rent assistance, low-income housing, there is a critical gap of rentals available for families with evictions (even from 6 or 7 years ago), a criminal history, or bad credit; transitional housing for veterans
 - Transportation

- Utilities
- Substance abuse, including treatment and mental health treatment
- An overall sense among the non-vulnerable populations that COVID-19 lockdowns and the collapse of the oil and gas industry have "not been that bad."

5. To follow up, what challenges or issues in the community do **you need to know more about?** In other words, what information do you need to make immediate and effective decisions?

- **Data:** A housing needs assessment; I believe we need an accurate account of how many homeless individuals that are currently in Laramie County; Update services monthly surveys possibly to address needs more quickly and effectively; Accurate Data
- **Resources:** An updated list of who is providing what services, especially with the changes required during COVID; Agencies that are providing transportation assistance
- **Guidance:** Income Guidelines Eligibility Criteria; Need to know how to get the aid to the people who need it the most; what is the most effective way to reach them?; What are the highest immediate needs of the community?
- **Other:** Who are the partners willing to accept change for the betterment of those we serve?; Education; I think narratives are helpful and have a place but the hard data is the best option for assessing the needs of our community.
- 1. How many people in the community have become unemployed or underemployed (which I define as working a lower paying job) since January 1, 2020. 2. How many of the people above have been faced with chronic or long-term unemployment in the past? 3. How familiar are people new to long-term to unemployment or underemployment with available social services? 4. How are other organizations in the community using COVID relief funds? What services are potentially being duplicated?

6. What do you think is the **one most winnable challenge** facing Laramie County today?

- **Hunger:** (providing) food resources; Food/meal programs for seniors and youth
- **Chronic homelessness:** we have a charitable community and we can make it so no family sleeps in their car.
- **Mental health/substance abuse:** COVID-19 and the collapse of the oil and gas industry have challenged our sense of ownership and control over our lives. Wyomingians (and residents of Laramie County) are a resilient lot, but we all must be reminded that as dark as things can be - each of us can and must take action to improve our lives. Providing information regarding addiction and mental health treatment.
- I think collaboration between agencies could be the most winnable challenge facing our community.
- With the ongoing pandemic in mind, I think the most winnable challenge right now is getting the

vulnerable population vaccinated so that they can be safer.

- Getting the word out that Community Action is here to help.

7. What are the **most pressing health care needs** for the vulnerable populations of Laramie County?

- **Access to and affordability of health care** - Not enough affordable access to health care; Medicaid Expansion; we need more affordable options for treatment of various ailments; healthcare insurance; insurance follow-up care long-term care for those who cannot pay or are homeless; Access to health needs services
- **COVID-19 vaccinations** - Currently, it is to get vaccinated against COVID; Barriers to COVID testing and vaccination so these populations can get back to work.
- **Healthcare services** - Lack of good doctors in every field; addiction and mental health services; Preventive healthcare, such as things that could be addressed early on rather than down the road in an emergency room. This would include dental care; chronic disease management and increased literacy on their pharmaceutical needs

8. Lastly, what else would you like to say about human service resources and needs in Laramie County?

- Let get the best doctors to come to Laramie County
- I truly believe that each agency in Laramie County goes above and beyond to serve and help our community.
- It is great to work with so many amazing people who are coming together to create a community where all can thrive.
- Right now, there is a deluge of resources being pumped into Laramie County human services as a result of COVID-19 relief funds from the federal government. Three things need to happen to make the use of those resources most effective: 1. We have to look at these relief funds not as a means of relieving suffering, but a means to help our neighbors get back to work and back to living their lives. These funds should be used to get people out of poverty - not to make poverty more bearable. 2. We have to recognize that our local, state, and federal governments have a terrible track record on distributing funds in a way that makes a genuine difference for the people who need the assistance most. Government must recruit our nonprofits to help with the distribution of these funds and give those nonprofits wide latitude to direct COVID funds to where they are needed most. 3. We have to collaborate. Government, the nonprofit sector, and the for-profit sector have to work together to address the needs in Laramie County. Unfortunately, government often distrusts and micromanages our nonprofits, and nonprofits are often biased against for-profit businesses. This needs to end.
- I feel that we all work very well together to make our community a healthy and safe place.
- I think that Laramie County has a lot of resources available, the problem is getting the resources to the population that would benefit the most.
- Many Cheyenne residents need help during this time. Community Action can help with assistance.

HUMAN SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PRIORITIZATION SUMMIT RESULTS
OCTOBER 8, 2021 (1:00PM-4:00PM)

BACKGROUND

The last step in the Laramie County Human Services Needs Assessment was the completion of a challenges and opportunities prioritization summit held on October 8, 2021. Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) hosted the meeting and Corona Insights presented research results, lead a prioritization activity, and facilitated a subsequent discussion of the prioritization outcome. Thirteen people attended at least part of the meeting, including staff from partner agencies, CALC staff, and CALC board members.

The meeting began with a review the data and insights collected throughout the needs assessment: results from the stakeholder input tool, demographics and community profile data, and insights gained from the focus group of housing services providers and interviews with Laramie County residents who needed or received housing assistance. Then, Corona Insights led a vetted prioritization activity so that all participants could weigh in on the strategic direction for addressing community challenges such as housing, transportation, job training, and healthcare. After the activity, Corona Insights facilitated a group discussion of the prioritization results to begin brainstorming ideas for future strategic planning.

MEETING GOALS

- Foster a shared understanding based on assessment research
- Garner input from partners, stakeholders, and board members
- Reveal the human service needs that should be prioritized
- Identify potential funding, partnerships, and implementation strategies

PRIORITIZATION ACTIVITY

The prioritization activity asked participants to rank the top human service issues based on a set of 14 criteria. After receiving instructions, each participant logged into an online survey and ranked the top three issues they personally thought could be addressed based on each of the individual criterion alone. For example, participants ranked the top three issues if the only criterion was “urgency” (see definition below). Then they identified their top three issues if the only criterion was “permanency,” and so on. Each issue was then scored on a three-point scale; issues that received a #1 rank for a criterion received three points, issues ranked #2 received two points, and issued ranked #3 received 1 point. All other issues received zero points. Scores were calculated by summing each issue by each criterion, and for each issue across all criteria. Because the highest ranked issues were assigned a larger number (3) than the second—

highest ranked issue (2), and so on, the highest sums represented the issues that ranked high across many dimensions for many participants.

The table below shows the score for each issue by each dimension and as the total. The issues with the highest totals were affordable housing, mental health, transitional housing, and transportation, which are highlighted in blue. The red cells represent issues that had a sum in the top three for that column (i.e., criterion). For example, affordable housing, food security, and reducing drug abuse had the top three highest sums for the “public will” criterion.

As a starting point for discussion, the issues with the largest number of high scores were considered, but with the understanding that a high score alone didn't mean that the issue was to be considered a top priority. Rather, the issues with high scores were discussed in more detail as strong candidates.

CRITERIA

The criteria used for prioritization, and their definitions, are listed below.

Personal Benefit - Addressing this will have a great benefit on people who are currently facing this issue.

Community Benefit - Improving this issue directly or indirectly will benefit a lot of people.

Vulnerable Populations - Addressing this issue will help people who are the particularly vulnerable.

Permanency - Progress on this issue will have a long-lasting impact.

Cooperation - Addressing this issue is of interest to a broad array of social organizations.

Equity - Addressing this issue will help to improve social equity in the community.

Resource Efficiency - We get a good “bang for the buck” on investing in this issue.

Progress - This is an issue that we can make reasonable progress on.

Urgency - This is an urgent issue to address.

Momentum - We already have momentum in this area.

Leadership - There is a strong champion(s) in the community to lead/organize this as a priority.

Stakeholder will - Leaders and practitioners are strongly on board with this being a priority.

Public will - The public is on board with this being a priority.

Complementary - Addressing this issue will prevent, mitigate, or solve other issues.

RESULTS

	Criteria														
	Personal Benefit	Community Benefit	Vulnerable Populations	Permanency	Cooperation	Equity	Resource Efficiency	Progress	Urgency	Momentum	Leadership	Stakeholder will	Public will	Complementary	Combined Score
Improving local transportation options	6	10	3	9	8	6	8	1	8	0	0	2	2	9	72
Improving the ability to pay for needs in retirement	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	8
Increasing access to the banking system (for the unbanked)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Obtaining enough food	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	15	0	13	7	8	11	0	58
Paying for utilities	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	8	3	1	1	0	20
Reducing alcohol abuse	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	2	11
Reducing drug abuse	2	5	3	2	5	0	1	3	4	0	0	4	7	2	38
Improving access to mental health care	16	6	11	10	6	7	12	7	9	4	4	12	4	15	123
Overcoming barriers faced among people living with disabilities	1	1	7	1	3	6	2	0	2	0	4	4	0	2	33
Providing job training opportunities	1	0	0	1	8	4	12	9	0	3	0	0	2	2	42
Increase opportunity for full-time, year-round, secure employment	0	6	0	11	0	6	2	3	0	8	4	4	3	4	51
Providing emergency shelter	5	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	6	2	1	1	33
Providing transitional housing (transitioning from homelessness, addiction treatment, abuse, etc.)	8	4	15	5	11	5	2	6	7	9	15	4	6	7	104
Reducing overcrowded housing (doubling-up)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Helping to provide affordable housing	12	16	9	14	10	16	13	3	16	2	6	13	14	10	154

CONCLUSIONS

Two issues – helping to provide affordable housing and improving access to mental health care – scored high in nearly every category. These issues were discussed in terms of priorities, funding, partnerships, and implementation, with the following conclusions:

- Housing is a difficult and expensive issue to address, and the key barriers to overcome to address housing are a lack of momentum and the need for more funding. Discussions during the summit centered on how to build momentum by recruiting area leaders and other influencers to support work in this area.
- Mental health was seen as an area where much work is occurring, but it's decentralized and disjointed at the moment. Discussions centered on ways to coordinate efforts and referrals among organizations, as well as reduce negative attitudes towards mental health among area residents.

Four other issues scored in the second tier – transportation, food security, year-round employment, and transitional housing. The group was particularly interested in transportation as a foundational issue that affects the ability to obtain other services, and discussion centered around the ability to re-institute reliable public transportation in the era of Covid.