**Executive Summary of Findings**

**LINCOLN COUNTY**

**COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**April 11, 2022**

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Prepared For:

**High Country Behavioral Health and**

**Lincoln County Tripartite Board**

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**Executive Summary of Findings**

As a requirement to the receipt of Community Services Block Grant funds for Lincoln County a community needs assessment is required by the State of Wyoming Department of Health and is to be conducted every three years. The goal of the 2022 Lincoln County Community Needs Assessment was to better understand the needs of people who are in poverty in Lincoln County Wyoming. The intent of the needs assessment was to find out the following:

* Extent of poverty in Lincoln County that includes data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, race and ethnicity
* Factors that support the creation of poverty
* Factors that exacerbate the impact of poverty
* Services and resources currently available to offset creation or impact of poverty
* Gaps in services
* Priorities for meeting needs
* Barriers to services

To complete the Lincoln County Community Needs Assessment a four-pronged strategy was used in gaining information that included the following:

* Community surveys administered to low-income individuals and providers of services to low-income
* Community Dialogue on Poverty meetings in three county locations, including Kemmerer, Afton and Etna and an all Lincoln County ZOOM meeting
* Review of relevant quantitative data about Lincoln County in key documents
* Dialogue on Poverty with Lincoln County Tripartite Board and High Country Behavioral to review the results of the Lincoln County Needs Assessment and receive comments

**Survey Results**

The survey consisted of demographic questions and questions related to human services needs. Ten service categories allowable under the Community Services Block Grant Program were used to guide the development of the categories of need used throughout the study. These categories were as follows:

* Education
* Emergency Services
* Employment and Training
* Health
* Housing (non-emergency)
* Linkages with Other Programs
* Income Management/Making Better Use of Available Resources
* Nutrition/Food (non-emergency)
* Self-Sufficiency
* Transportation

The community survey was completed by **69 out of 165 (41.8% rate of return)** low-income clients of agencies that provide services to the low-income population and **42 out of 75 (56% rate of return)** agencies that provide services to the low income. Survey respondents could either complete the survey on-line or in writing.

The survey demographic questions for the clients were based on similar questions that are obtained for the annual CSBG/IS (Information Systems) Survey. A comparison of the **average** responses of Northern Lincoln County client respondents and Southern Lincoln County client respondents is as follows.

|  |
| --- |
| **COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHICS OF** **NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN LINCOLN COUNTY** **SURVEY OF CLIENT RESPONDENTS** |
| **Demographic Characteristic** | **Northern Lincoln County** **(43 respondents)** | **Southern Lincoln County** **(26 respondents)** |
| **Community** | Thayne | Kemmerer |
| **Gender** | Female | Female |
| **Age** | 24-44 and 55-69 | 24-44 and 55-69 |
| **Ethnicity** | Not Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin | Not Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin |
| **Race**  | White | White |
| **Highest Grade Completed** | 12+ Some Post-Secondary | High School Graduate/GED and 2-4 Year College Graduate |
| **Has Health Insurance** | Yes | Yes |
| **On Medicaid** | No | No |
| **On Medicare** | No | No |
| **Disabled** | No | No |
| **Family Type** | Single Person | Single Person |
| **Number of Persons that Live in the Household** | 1 | 2  |
| **Children Under Age of 18 That Live in the Household** | 0 | 0 |
| **Household Yearly Income** | 0-$25,760 | 0-$25,760 |
| **Number of Sources of Family Income** | Single Source  | Single Source  |
| **Number of Adults Employed in Household**  | 1 | 1 |
| **Source of Family Income**  | Employment Only | Employment Only and Social Security |
| **Housing Situation** | Own home | Own home |
| **Amount Spent Per Month on Housing** | 0-$250 and $1,001 and + | 0-$250, $251-$500 and $1,001 and + |
| **Amount Spent Per Month on Groceries** | 0-$150 and $150-300 | $500 and + |
| **Amount Spent Per Month on Medical** | $0-$150 | $0-150 |
| **Amount Spent Per Month on Prescriptions** | $0-$150 | $0-150 |

The survey demographic questions for the agency respondents were asked so that a baseline of services data was determined. Following is a summary of the demographics:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Demographic Characteristic** | **Provider Response (42 respondents)** |
| **Organization Status** | State Government: 24.4%, Private, Not for Profit: 19.5% and Other: 19.5% |
| **Part of a Larger Organization** | Yes: 65%. |
| **Employees** | 1-175 FT, Average: 28; 1-150 PT, Average: 6; 0-608 Volunteers, Average: 10 |
| **People Served** | 0-30,000, Average: 3,659 |
| **Low Income Served** | 3-10,000, Average: 959. |
| **Age Groups Served** | Adults: 21; Seniors: 19; Adolescents: 18 |
| **Majority serve** | Lincoln County: 5; South Lincoln County: 3 |
| **Criteria to Receive Services** | None: 11; Age:10 |
| **Kinds of Services Provided** | Education/Literacy: 12 |

From the surveys, the clients and agencies ranked the highest priority of need for the community as follows:

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| --- |
| **Comparison Of Needs Between Clients and Providers** |
| **Need** | **Clients** | **Providers Serving Low Income** | **Total Points**  |
| Education | 273 (#4) | 119 | **392 (#5)** |
| Emergency Services | 316 (#1) | 136 (#3) | **452 (#1)** |
| Employment and Training | 245 | 131 | **376** |
| Health | 283 (#3) | 146 (#2) | **429 (#3)** |
| Housing | 255 | 135 (#4) | **390 (#6)** |
| Linkages with Other Programs | 228 | 130 | **358** |
| Income Management | 245 | 121 | **366** |
| Nutrition/Food | 270 (#5) | 134 (#5) | **404 (#4)** |
| Self-Sufficiency | 255 | 129 | **384** |
| Transportation | 284 (#2) | 152 (#1) | **436 (#2)** |

A comparison of clients with agencies is graphically shown below:

**Community Meetings**

Community meetings were held with 22 low income and community members including representatives of CSBG agencies, and human service agencies in three Lincoln County locations including Kemmerer, Afton and Etna on March 22, 2022 and a ZOOM all-county meeting on March 24, 2022. A final report was presented at the Dialogue on Poverty with the Lincoln County Tripartite Board and High Country Behavioral Health on April 11, 2022 via ZOOM. The purpose of the community meetings was to determine from the attendees the following:

* What human service agencies in your community that are available to offset creation or impact of poverty that you are familiar with?
* What gaps are there in services in their community?
* What are the most important needs?
* What are the least important needs?
* What do you think would help people in their community to get out of poverty and become self-sufficient?
* Who in the community is most affected by poverty?
* What are the barriers to services?
* Any other comments?
* Do the comments verify information in survey?

A great deal of information was obtained from these community meetings. Comments made by participants closely paralleled the needs as stated above in the community surveys. Following are some of the comments made:

***Human Service Agencies in Community***

**Southern Lincoln County – Kemmerer and Cokeville**

* Kemmerer Senior Center and Cokeville Senior Center
* Veteran’s Office
* Department of Family Services
* AARP
* AA
* Cokeville Farmer’s Market
* Cokeville Food Bank
* Bishop’s Store House in Cokeville
* Cokeville Clinic
* County Library
* Lincoln County Library
* Emerald Housing, Inc.
* Kemmerer Food Bank
* High Country Behavioral Health
* Community Services Block Grant
* LDS Church
* Cokeville Episcopal Church
* Lincoln County School #1

**Northern Lincoln County**

* AZAR House Pregnancy Resource Center
* High Country Behavioral Health – also provides skills coaching and other skills
* Afton, Alpine and Thayne Food Banks
* Salt River Community Foundation
* Lincoln Self-Reliance
* Lincoln County Library and Branches
* Cent$ible Nutrition
* Lincoln County School District #2
* Afton and Thayne Senior Centers
* Star Valley Search & Rescue
* Star Valley Medical Center
* Quality Case Management
* Lincoln County Extension Office
* North Lincoln County In-Home Services/Uinta Senior Citizen’s Center
* Western Wyoming Community College – Adult Basic Education, GED & ESL, Community Education
* Wyoming 2-1-1
* Wyoming Winterization Program
* LIEAP Program
* WIC
* Surplus Commodities
* 4-H Skills Training
* Lincoln County Public Health – Free car seats, vaccines, pre-natal classes and many other services, Hand in Hand (formerly Best Beginnings), Ryan White HIV program and Children’s Health Services program
* CLIMB Wyoming
* E-Wrap through Department of Family Services
* Specific skills training provided by religious entities include LDS church
* BYU Pathways
* Department of Workforce Services and Vocational Rehabilitation services
* Medicaid funds wrap-around program for youth with mental disabilities and coordinates in-school counseling with mental health counseling.
* Turning Point
* Human Resources Council
* LDS Church

***Gaps in Services in their Community***

**Southern Lincoln County**

* Transportation is needed in Southern Lincoln County to medical services located outside city limits.
* Child care
* Dental services
* Mental health services as need more counselors
* Long-term affordable HUD housing
* Services for the elderly – housekeepers that come into the home
* Assisted living facility
* Employment and training – graduates leave and don’t come back
* Juvenile Diversion program
* Cokeville – Help with utility bills for those that can’t afford it.
* Cokeville – Need grocery store, recreation center with a swimming pool
* Cokeville – Affordable and livable housing.
* Better linkages to other resources

**Northern Lincoln County**

* Public transportation is needed up and down the valley. There is only transportation to and from Jackson/Smoot on the START bus.
* Transportation is needed to out-of-the-area medical specialists as many are located in Salt Lake City or Casper.
* Need for more low-income HUD housing. Families are living in camping trailers.
* Employment and training for workers that have disabilities. Employers need training as well.
* Clients don’t know what the resources are and where they are located.
* Most clients that were seen at the Afton Food Banks were elderly due to the fact that as baby boomers age they do not have enough income to cover the cost of living after they quit working.

***Most Important Needs***

 **Northern Lincoln County**

* Health – Accessibility and affordability to medical services, dental, services, mental health and substance abuse services, prescription drugs and eye care.
* Transportation – There are people that can’t drive or do not have the resources to drive.
* Nutrition – Affordable and available food
* Affordable low-income housing (non-emergency)
* Income management/Making better of available resources

**Southern Lincoln County**

* Senior services
* Food and Nutrition
* Dental Services
* Affordable/livable housing in the form of rent payments
* Mental health services
* Substance abuse services
* Transportation
* Employment and training
* Linkages to other resources
* Emergency services – help with utility bills including water and sewer.
* Cokeville - More recreational opportunities

***Who is Most Affected by Poverty?***

**Northern Lincoln County**

* Kids
* Disabled
* Those with a lot of medical issues and chronic diseases.
* Those with mental health issues
* Pockets of people who will always need a safety net. Chronic people don’t have enough safety nets.
* Those that are not connected to resources.
* Single moms

**Southern Lincoln County**

* Seniors
* Single Moms/Parents
* Unemployed
* Children 0-5

***Work on so Families Become Self-Sufficient***

 **Northern Lincoln County**

* Gap between the need and the resources to address it.
* Have providers update the Wyoming 2-2-2 web site.
* In the Afton community, help is usually found next door, caring for your neighbor.

 **Southern Lincoln County**

* Affordable housing and living in habitable housing
* Funding for those who can’t afford utilities.
* Provide job training for seniors as well as younger residents. Need training for those who lost their job.
* Transportation to medical services that are located out-of-town.
* Cokeville – grocery store where people can get milk, meat and eggs.

***What are the barriers to services in your community?***

 **Northern Lincoln County**

* Transportation.
* Attitudinal barrier – “if you can’t fix it yourself, it ain’t worth fixing” or “Pick yourself up by your boot straps” or “Cowboy up”. All of these attitudes contribute to a high suicide rate.

**Southern Lincoln County**

* People are unaware of the services available. The Lincoln County Resource Directory is a good resource and should be more widely distributed.
* Addicted don’t see their drug use as a problem. Need education initiative to make people aware of the problems and availability of counseling.
* Transportation.
* People are very proud and don’t want to ask for and accept help.

**Relevant Data Regarding Lincoln County**

Forty-two (42) local, state, regional and federal data resources were scanned for quantitative data on the low income of Lincoln County including:

* Population by age and poverty
* Race and poverty
* Ethnicity and poverty
* Cities and towns
* Income/wages
* Median household income
* Number of households by income
* Employment
* Housing
* Food Insecurity
* Cost of living
* Community service block grant poverty factors
* General health
* Health care access
* Teen births
* Maternal and infant health
* Child care
* Mental health
* Disabilities
* Suicide rates
* Divorce rates
* COVID-19 rates
* Free and reduced lunch rates
* District graduation rates
* Child care

The data mirrors the priority of needs as discussed in the surveys and community meetings.

**Conclusions**

Based on the strategies as described above, the following can be concluded to answer the original questions set out in this community needs assessment:

**1. Extent of Poverty in Lincoln County:**

* According to the Wyoming Department of Health, Lincoln County holds 2.5% (1,381) of the statewide population (55,776) who live in poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that the low-income population is higher at 1,574.
* Over eight percent (8.2%) of total Lincoln County population lives in poverty. Of this population of 1,574 low-income people, 660 (41.9%) are males and 914 (58.1% are females.
* The “Some Other Race Alone” in Lincoln County showed the greatest amount of poverty at 43.2% or 41 people.
* The greatest number of people in poverty are the “White Alone” race of 1,395 people.
* Of ethnicity, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity showed the greatest percentage of people living in poverty with 140 people (16% of total people living in poverty).
* The largest age population that lives in poverty is under 5 years old with 210 children.
* In Lincoln County there are 6,908 households; of these there are 365 households that earn under $15,000 and 133 households that earn $15,000-$19,999.
* Of the 4,695 families in Lincoln County there are 169 families living in poverty with related children; of these, 60 (35.5%) families are married couples, 28 (16.5%) are single fathers and 81 (47.9%) are single mothers.
* Nearly twenty-two percent (21.8%) or 787 school aged children in Lincoln County School Districts #1 and #2 are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Lincoln County School District #2 had the most children on free and reduced lunch at 727 children or 24.4% of their total population.

**2. Factors that Support the Creation of Poverty:**

* The cost of living in Lincoln County is the second highest in the state. Housing is the highest cost of living category Lincoln County at 108. Recreation and personal care are the second highest categories at 105. Apparel and transportation are the next highest at 103. Medical is the second lowest at 102 and food is the lowest at 100. One Hundred (100) is the statewide average.
* Some smaller communities in Lincoln County, i.e., Cokeville do not have a grocery store and allocate more of their budget to food cost than in the other communities that have a grocery store.
* Women working full time year-round in Lincoln County are paid only 61 cents to every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men working full time. The average hourly wage for males is $30.23 and for women it is $18.29.
* Headwater Economics states that leisure and hospitality workers make an average annual wage of $15,973. Many low-income women work in the leisure and hospitality field with no health benefits. Based on the disparity of wages between men and women a female worker would get .39 less/hour or an annual wage of $9,743.53.
* Nearly eleven percent (10.5%) of the Lincoln County population indicated that they needed to see a doctor at least one time in the past 12 months but couldn’t because of the cost.
* Jobs that do not pay enough to match the cost of living in the area.

**3. Factors that Exacerbate the Impacts of Poverty:**

* Rent for an average apartment has increased from $635 in 2nd quarter 2019 to $745 in fourth quarter 2020. Considerably higher is the cost of renting a home at $1,120 per month, a 4% increase over the previous year. As an example, for a low-income service worker making $15,973, 84.4% of income would be allocated for rent and only 15.6% would be allocated for food, clothing, utilities, transportation and prescription cost.
* Many families are extremely cost-burdened by their housing cost. According to Wyoming Community Development Authority there are nearly 1,025 (14.8%) households in Lincoln County were cost burdened as their housing cost was 31%-50% of total income and 514 (7.4%) households were severe-cost burdened as their housing cost was above 50% of their total income.
* Subsidized housing is limited for low-income families as there are two subsidized housing unit in Afton, Swift Creek Apartments and in Alpine, Alpine Park Apartments. In Kemmerer, there is Emerald Housing (primarily elderly/handicapped) and the Kemmerer Apartments which is low income.
* There is an influx of people moving into the area and they are willing to pay a lot of money for homes. This trend forces the low income out of adequate and safe housing as it becomes too expensive to afford.
* There is no public transportation system in Lincoln County except for senior transportation through Kemmerer Senior Center and Afton Senior Center and the START bus that goes from Smoot to Jackson. There is a need for transportation for further destinations for medical services including Salt Lake City, Evanston and Casper.
* High cost of medical care, dental care, vision care and prescription drugs are burdening low-income families.
* In Southern Lincoln County, there is a lack of child care during working times which keeps moms and dads out of good paying jobs.
* Chronic substance abuse and mental health issues lead to repeated cycles of job problems and housing problems.
* Lack of low-income knowing what the community resources are and where they are located.

**4. Services and Resources Currently Available to Offset Creation or Impacts of**

 **Poverty:**

* Most services are available in Kemmerer and Afton but few services available in outlying areas.
* There are a number of food banks in Lincoln County that support the nutritional needs of those in need in Lincoln County.
* Fair linkages/referrals among various providers of services and resources in two pockets of population but in outlying areas information services are sketchy or non-existent.
* The North Lincoln County Human Resources Council and the South Lincoln County Human Resources Confederation in partnership with the Lincoln County Commissioners produces the Lincoln County Directory of Community Services which is an excellent listing of resources listed for both North Lincoln County and South Lincoln County. Unfortunately, clients are not necessarily aware of the resource directory.
* Wyoming 2-1-1 on-line statewide web site provides information for providers in Lincoln County. This site needs to be updated by providers.
* There needs to be better **communication**, **coordination** and **collaboration** among agencies to look at resources and see how they can be better utilized. For example: Senior Centers provide transportation to low income and the disabled.
* The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints assists the low income to meet a variety of needs.

**5.** **Gaps in Services**

* Public Transportation is needed in both Northern and Southern Lincoln County for employment, medical services and obtaining needed commodities.
* Long-term affordable HUD housing as there isn’t enough currently to accommodate the need.
* There is a need for more mental health counselors.
* There is a need for elderly services in the home, i.e., housekeeping.
* There is a need for an assisted living facility in Southern Lincoln County.
* There is a need for employment and training for new high school graduates, workers that have disabilities, employers that hire the disabled and the unemployed.
* There is need for a Juvenile Diversion program in Southern Lincoln County.
* Clients don’t know what resources are available and where they are located.
* There is a need to create a better system for people that are in need and assist them in accessing the services. The One 22 program in Jackson is an example of a system working. See tetonwyo.org/1975/One22
* Emergency dental services, dentures and restorative dental work are needed.
* There is a need for affordable child care that is available on evenings and week-ends and 12-hour shifts.

**6. Recommended Priorities for Meeting Needs:**

* **#1 Emergency Services** is provided so that the low income receives temporary housing, clothing, and food and other needs until they are stabilized.
* **#2 Transportation** is provided to the low income so that they can go work, receive medical services and to obtain needed commodities and services.
* #3 **Health Services** including affordable medical care, **dental care**, eye care, prescription drugs, travel to medical services and specialists, and mental health and substance abuse services is provided to the low income.
* **#4 Nutrition/Food** is provided so that the low income is provided access to consistent food and nutrition.
* **#5** **Education/Employment and Training** is provided so that workers can obtain necessary skills and education to receive a job, and be successful in their work environment. This may include training for the employer as long as it is designed to assist the worker.

Note: While housing is a major concern of most of the respondents in this study, it is not something that will be accomplished with the meager Community Services Block Grant funds and therefore is not a recommended priority.

**7. Barriers to Services:**

* Clients need to know of services available and how to apply for them. Some possible aids would be:
	+ The Lincoln County Directory of Community Services is an excellent tool for determining resources in the community. While it appears that copies of document had been made and distributed to both Afton and Kemmerer office of Lincoln County Public Health, the document hasn’t been distributed throughout the county. There needs to be circulation list of this document for all communities and agencies, i.e., senior citizen centers.
	+ A handy flier or business card to be prepared with the names/numbers of agencies and services provided.
	+ Is it possible that the individual that compiles the Lincoln County Directory of Community Services also be the central depository of the information help individuals with finding resources?
* Agencies – It is becoming more difficult to keep agencies operating due to less funding, more paperwork, etc. Many Lincoln County agencies are operated by volunteers but it is more and more difficult to recruit them. Funding sources are competitive, limited and have barriers.
* Lack of basic services in some rural Lincoln County communities, i.e., medical, grocery, gasoline and human services produces problems for the low income if they don’t have the gas for their car or if they don’t have transportation to travel to other locations to obtain services.
* The addicted don’t see their drug use as a problem. There needs to be an education initiative to make people aware of the problem and the availability of counseling.
* There is an attitudinal barrier in the communities that prevents people from seeking out help.
* Confidence among the low-income population is lacking as they don’t believe their lives will improve and they don’t believe they have a voice in their community.

The complete needs assessment report is available at the https://www.hcbh.org

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