JEFFERSON COUNTY
Community Action
PARTNERSHIP

Helping People. Changing Lives.

STRATEGIC PLAN
2026-2030

PROMISE

Community Action embodies the spirit of home, improves communities and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

MISSION STATEMENT

The CAC is continuing a Commitment to restore and revitalize the quality of life in Jefferson County, and move the residents towards self-sufficiency. We achieve this goal by adapting and providing programs that are accessible, affordable, and culturally-sensitive to meet the needs of the community

Introduction

Community Action: Who We Are and What We Do

Community Action began as a centerpiece of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act created the independent Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to administer Community Action and other groundbreaking initiatives, many of which continue in some form today. In addition to Community Action, these include Head Start, Job Corps, Legal Services, Adult Basic Education, Community Health Centers, Weatherization Assistance, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance, Job Training for adults and youth, VISTA, and many others. In 1981, OEO (then called the Community Services Administration) was dismantled and the Economic Opportunity Act was mostly repealed. Community Action and the nationwide network of CAAs continue today under the CSBG Act.

Community Action also provides much credit for the War on Poverty to the advocacy efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. America was built on the promise that every family should have an opportunity for success. Yet, today's uneven economy has put a good quality of life out of reach for too many Americans. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the Community Action Network of national and locally-focused organizations that connect millions of children and families to greater opportunity.

A Community Action Agency (CAA) is a local organization with the mission of poverty reduction through locally designed and delivered programs and services, targeted to the specific needs of the community. CAAs exist in virtually every county in the U.S., numbering more than 900 nationwide. Most are private nonprofits but some are units of local government. They are state-designated but locally controlled, governed by a tripartite board that represents the low-income community, local elected officials, and private and public community stakeholders including individuals from the education and religious communities.

The nation's Community Action Agencies embody our nation's spirit of hope, change people's lives, and improve communities. When national, state and local leaders tap into these agencies' experience, they can promote workable solutions that connect more families to opportunity – and make America a better place to live for everyone. Each Community Action agency is different. Some provide a multitude of services, while others may focus on simply a few. The size of their annual budget and number of employees are different. However, there is one funding source that all Community Action Agencies receive which is the Community Services Block Grant.

Community Services Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was enacted in 1981 and authorizes block grants to states, to be administered federally by the Office of Community Services within the Department of Health and Human Services. States must pass through at least 90% of their block grant allotments to local "eligible entities," (i.e., Community Action Agencies). States may keep up to 5% of allotments for administrative costs and use the remainder for statewide discretionary activities. The CSBG Act specifies the purposes of Community Action; establishes federal, state, and local requirements; and authorizes funds to be appropriated.

Importance of Strategic Planning in Community Action

Strategic planning is more important than ever for Community Action Agencies serving Appalachian Ohio. As funding sources continue to evolve and resources remain limited, Community Action Agencies are expected to do more with fewer resources while responding to increasingly complex community needs. Public funding, grant opportunities, and charitable contributions have become increasingly competitive, requiring organizations to make thoughtful decisions about where to invest their limited financial, human, and organizational resources.

At the same time, many individuals and families throughout the region continue to face economic hardship. Rising living costs, economic uncertainty, and a limited supply of living-wage employment have increased the number of households struggling to meet basic needs. Communities also continue to experience challenges related to affordable housing, workforce development, transportation, healthcare access, child care, and persistent poverty. These changing conditions reinforce the importance of proactive planning that is responsive to current community conditions and emerging needs.

Community Action Agencies were established to reduce poverty by empowering individuals and families and strengthening communities. Central to this mission is the principle of maximum feasible participation, ensuring that low-income individuals, community members, partner organizations, elected officials, and other stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to participate in identifying community needs and shaping agency priorities. A comprehensive Community Needs Assessment serves as the foundation of the strategic planning process by combining quantitative data with qualitative input from residents, customers, staff, community partners, and the Board of Directors. This process ensures that organizational priorities reflect the voices of those served and are supported by reliable data.

Consistent with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards, the strategic plan is built upon the findings of the Community Needs Assessment and provides a clear framework for achieving the agency's mission. The plan establishes measurable goals, identifies priorities, guides resource allocation, and supports continuous evaluation of programs and services. It also enables the Board of Directors to fulfill its governance responsibilities by setting the agency's direction, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability.

No single organization can address the complex causes and effects of poverty alone. Community Action Agencies serve as conveners and collaborators, working alongside local governments, schools, healthcare providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, and other community partners to provide comprehensive services. Each organization contributes its expertise and resources, creating a coordinated system of support that maximizes available resources, minimizes duplication of services, and improves outcomes for individuals and families.

A well-developed strategic plan allows the agency to move beyond responding to immediate challenges and instead focus on long-term, sustainable solutions. It aligns programs, partnerships, funding opportunities, and organizational capacity with documented community needs while providing a roadmap for continuous improvement. The planning process also demonstrates accountability to funders, community stakeholders, and the citizens the agency serves by showing that decisions are data-driven, community-informed, and focused on achieving measurable results.

Ultimately, strategic planning positions the agency to remain flexible in a changing environment while continuing to fulfill the Community Action mission of reducing the causes and conditions of poverty, promoting economic stability, and improving the quality of life for the residents of Appalachian Ohio.

Community Action Organizational Standards

Community Action Agencies receiving Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding are required to meet the Community Action Organizational Standards. These standards establish a framework for sound organizational management, accountability, and continuous improvement. They help ensure that agencies operate effectively, maintain strong governance and financial oversight, engage the communities they serve, and deliver high-quality services.

The Organizational Standards are designed to strengthen Community Action Agencies while providing consistency and accountability across the national Community Action Network. They also reinforce the core principles of Community Action by emphasizing community engagement, data-driven decision-making, strategic planning, partnerships, and ongoing evaluation of programs and services.

This strategic plan was developed in accordance with the Community Action Organizational Standards and is informed by the agency's Community Needs Assessment. Together, these processes ensure that the agency's priorities reflect current community needs, support responsible stewardship of public resources, and position the organization to effectively carry out its mission of reducing the causes and conditions of poverty.

Standards Addressing Strategic Planning

Standard 6.1

The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.

Standard 6.2

The approved strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.

Standard 6.3

The approved strategic plan contains family, agency, and/or community goals.

Standard 6.4

Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process

Standard 6.5

The governing board has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months.

Strategic Plan
2026-2030

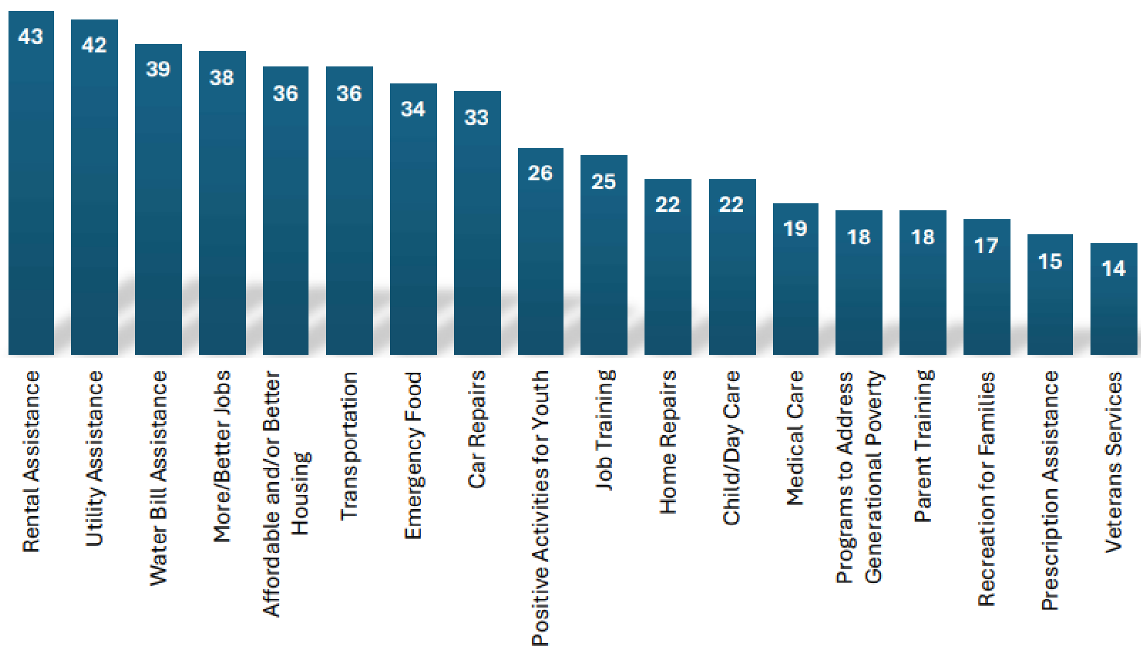
Plan Development

The Ohio Community Action Training Organization (OCATO) assisted in developing this strategic plan by providing an Internal Consultant to assist in facilitating and preparing the final document. OCATO serves as the training and technical assistance arm of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies.

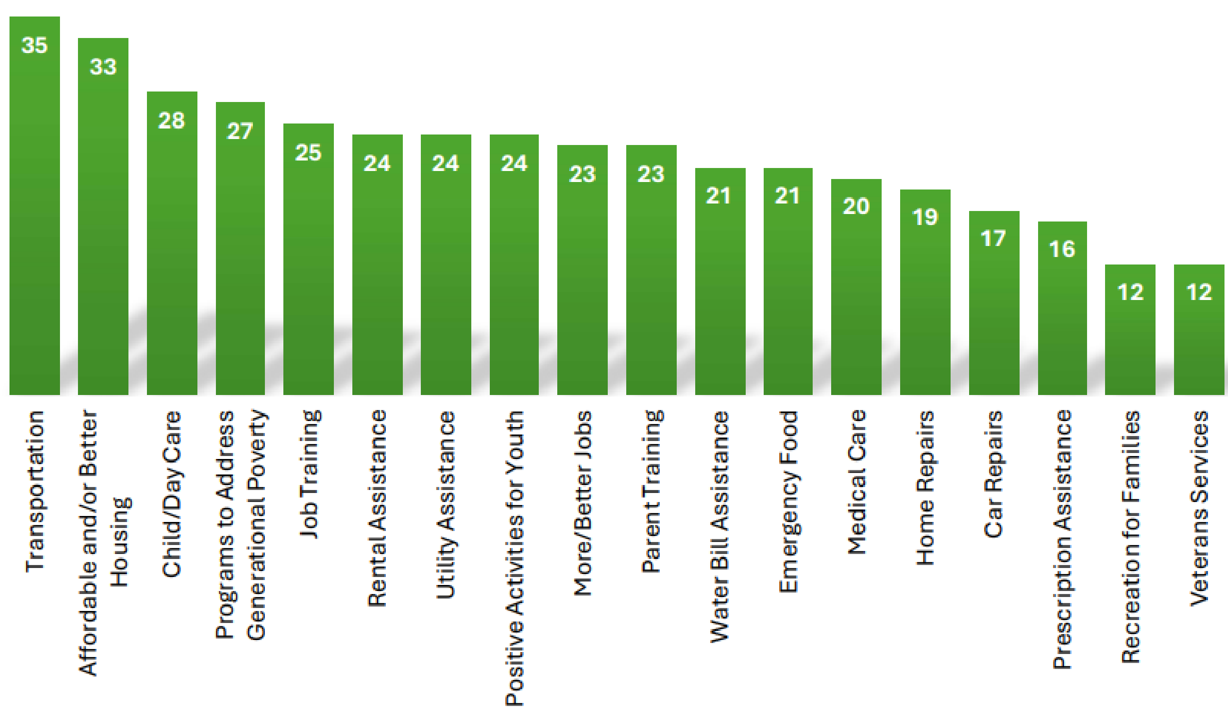
In developing this Strategic Plan, various sources of quantitative and qualitative data was utilized including meetings with staff and board members to evaluate the success of the previous plan as well as to focus on the next steps to meet the agency mission statement.

The agency community needs assessment was prepared by the staff of Jefferson CAC. Surveys, collected through the process, provided information regarding what the participants identified as needs. It clearly indicates that data and customer input was collected as part of the community needs assessment and was addressed in the strategic plan. The complete needs assessment is included further in this document. However, examples of some the data collected follows.

Top Needs per Client Survey Results



Top Needs per Community Partner Survey Results



Work Plans

The Internal Consultant from the Ohio Community Action Training Organization worked collaboratively with organizational leadership and staff to translate the strategic plan into actionable work plans. Through review of the currents needs assessment and previous strategic plans, on site meeting, and individual discussions, the consultant helped identify priorities, define objectives, assign roles and responsibilities, establish timelines, and develop measurable performance indicators.

The administration and staff were actively engaged throughout the process to ensure the work plans reflect operational realities, build organizational ownership, and align with available resources and capacity. The complete work plans are included further in this document. However, a brief overview of the desired outcome, goals and rationale are identified below.

Agency Program/Information

DESIRED OUTCOME All employees of Jefferson County CAC, Inc. will fully understand all programs and program guidelines provided by the organization and external agencies, to make appropriate referrals and follow-ups.

GOAL (Destination)   To provide staff with training and tools to increase employee awareness of programs the agency operates.

RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal) It is beneficial for staff to understand all programs and services offered so they can better serve clients through informed referrals, coordinated support, and consistent communication. Staff who are knowledgeable about the agency's full range of services can identify additional resources that may benefit clients, improve collaboration across departments, reduce duplication of efforts, and ensure individuals receive necessary services.

Unrestricted Funds

DESIRED OUTCOME All individuals and business in Jefferson County will be aware of the organization and provide donations to assist with program operations.

GOAL (Destination) To provide opportunities for the residents of Jefferson County to learn more about the organization and provide volunteer or financial support to assist with operations.

RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal) Participating in community events and activities increases a nonprofit organization's visibility, builds public trust, and strengthens relationships with community members, businesses, and potential partners. By sharing information about its mission, programs, and impact, the organization can attract new donors, sponsors, volunteers, and funding opportunities that help support operational costs and ensure the long-term sustainability of its services.

Operational Efficiency

DESIRED OUTCOME The organization will operate at peak efficiency with state of the art tools and equipment in place.

GOAL (Destination) Jefferson County CAC will explore and work to implement new technology and processes to improve organizational efficiency.

RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal) Strong internal controls and cybersecurity practices are essential to protecting the agency's financial resources, employee information, and daily operations. Without appropriate security measures—such as secure payroll processes, multi-factor authentication (including Duo authentication), role-based system access, regular password updates, and ongoing monitoring—the agency faces increased risks of fraud, unauthorized access, data breaches, payroll errors, and operational disruptions. Implementing and maintaining these safeguards helps ensure compliance with funding requirements, protects sensitive information, and supports the agency's responsibility to be a good steward of public and private resources

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Affordable Housing

DESIRED OUTCOME All individuals in Jefferson County reside in safe and affordable housing.

GOAL (Destination) To increase access to safe and affordable housing throughout the county.

RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal) Expanding access to safe and affordable rental and homeownership opportunities is essential to improving the quality of life and economic stability of individuals and families in Jefferson County. Many communities face housing shortages, aging housing stock, rising housing costs, and limited access to affordable financing, making it difficult for residents to obtain stable housing. Increasing the availability of affordable housing supports workforce retention, promotes healthier and more stable families, strengthens local communities, and contributes to long-term economic growth by providing residents with safe, secure housing that meets their needs and allows them to thrive.

Review of the Previous Strategic Plan

Strategic plans are designed to provide direction, but they must also remain flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances. While not every goal from the previous strategic plan was completed within the original timeline, the plan continued to serve as a valuable guide for the agency. Many of the delays were the result of changing community needs, funding shifts, and operational challenges that required the agency to adjust priorities while remaining focused on its mission.

Several factors impacted implementation of the previous strategic plan:

1. Limited and changing funding. Community Action Agencies operate in an environment where funding sources frequently change. During the life of the previous plan, COVID-related funding ended, resulting in reduced staffing and fewer resources available to support some planned initiatives.
2. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous strategic plan was developed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when additional funding became available to address emergency community needs. Along with these resources came new program requirements and reporting expectations. The staff and the board of directors had to focus their efforts on responding to these immediate challenges and ensuring essential services continued without interruption.
3. Staff capacity. Community Action staff often manage multiple responsibilities, including program operations, compliance, grant management, fundraising, and community partnerships. Balancing these daily responsibilities with long-term strategic initiatives affected the pace of implementation.
4. Changing community needs. Community conditions, funding priorities, regulations, and grant requirements continued to evolve throughout the planning period. As new needs emerged, the agency adjusted its priorities to ensure resources were directed where they would have the greatest impact.
5. Leadership transitions. During the implementation period, both the Executive Director and Finance Director retired. Leadership transitions required time for organizational continuity, onboarding, and maintaining day-to-day operations while new leadership assumed their roles.

6. Partnerships and external factors. Many strategic goals relied on collaboration with funding agencies, community partners, contractors, and government entities. Project timelines were often influenced by factors outside of the agency's control.
7. Long-term initiatives. Some strategic objectives require several years to complete, particularly those involving capital development, infrastructure, or large-scale community projects. For example, housing initiatives utilizing Low-Income Housing Tax Credits require extensive planning, funding approvals, and construction timelines before measurable outcomes can be achieved.
8. Balancing innovation with daily operations. Meeting the immediate needs of individuals and families remains the agency's highest priority. Strategic initiatives are implemented alongside the delivery of essential services, which can extend project timelines while ensuring uninterrupted support for the community.

Although some objectives required additional time or were modified to reflect changing conditions, the previous strategic plan provided valuable direction for the agency. The lessons learned during its implementation have informed the development of this strategic plan, ensuring it remains responsive to community needs while maintaining the flexibility necessary to adapt to future opportunities and challenges.

The Internal Consultant provided by the Ohio Community Action Training Organization which developed the current (2026-2030) plan with assistance of the board and staff of Jefferson CAC, also assisted in the development of the prior plan which began in 2021. The consultant was very pleased to see the excellent progress that the organization had made in achieving several of these goals.

One of the most impressive was the ability of the organization to increase public awareness of the agency and services. The agency social media followers now exceed 1.2K individuals and posts our made almost daily to provide the community and staff information about the agency.

Another area identified was staff retention. One of the key areas was raising staff wages. However, overall funding has decreased during this time period with majority, if not all, COVID programs ending. However this increase was needed and occurred. In order to maintain staff, several of the top leadership have taken reduced hours in order to avoid layoffs throughout the organization. This is amiable.

Previous Goals

GOAL (Destination) To increase the number of housing units which are quality and affordable within the county

GOAL (Destination) To decrease staff turnover in the organization.

GOAL (Destination) To increase staff awareness of current programs in the agency, current needs within the community and provide current trainings for staff benefit.

GOAL (Destination) To improve awareness of the agency programs in order that the residents can know where to access them and what is available.

GOAL (Destination) To offer quality training to all residents throughout the county.

Conclusion

A strategic plan is more than a document—it is a living guide that helps the organization stay focused on its mission while adapting to changing circumstances. Successful implementation requires an ongoing commitment from both the board of directors and staff to work together, communicate openly, and regularly monitor progress toward the plan's goals and objectives.

As priorities evolve and new opportunities or challenges emerge, the strategic plan should be reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the organization and the community it serves. Flexibility, accountability, and a willingness to make thoughtful adjustments are essential to achieving long-term success.

Equally important is taking time to recognize and celebrate accomplishments along the way. Celebrating milestones and successes reinforces the organization's shared commitment, acknowledges the contributions of board members, staff, volunteers, and partners, and builds momentum for continued progress.

By embracing collaboration, continuous learning, and a culture of accountability and celebration, the organization will be well positioned to advance its mission, strengthen its impact, and create lasting positive change for the communities it serves

AGENCY WORK PLANS

Agency Program/Information	**Standard 6.2:** ***Reduction*** *of poverty,* ***Revitalization*** *of low-income communities, and/or* ***Empowerment*** *of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient,* **Standard 6.3:** Community, Agency & Family

OUTCOME All employees of Jefferson County CAC, Inc. will fully understand all programs and program guidelines provided by the organization and external agencies, to make appropriate referrals and follow-ups.

GOAL (Destination) To provide staff with training and tools to increase employee awareness of programs the agency operates.	**RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal)** It is beneficial for staff to understand all programs and services offered so they can better serve clients through informed referrals, coordinated support, and consistent communication. Staff who are knowledgeable about the agency's full range of services can identify additional resources that may benefit clients, improve collaboration across departments, reduce duplication of efforts, and ensure individuals receive necessary services.

OBJECTIVE/PERFORMANCE TARGET (measurable, time specific and measure success). By December of 2027, 75% of all agency staff will be knowledgeable of agency programs, through provision of scoring of their knowledge in pre and post training tests beginning in October of 2026.

STRATEGIES/MILESTONES	Updates	2026		2027		2028		2029	2030	Done
		Jan-Jun	July -	Jan - June	July –	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	
A pre-test, regarding the agency programs and mission, will be given to all staff regarding agency services in October of 2026.			X							
Monthly trainings will be provided through various means to continually educate staff regarding services. Each program will be assigned two months per year to distribute materials to all staff regarding services provided, income guidelines and other eligibility requirements.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
A post-test will be provided to staff in December of 2027 with the same questions asked in October of 2026. The pre and post tests will be evaluated to assure staff have gained knowledge to assist them in making appropriate referrals.					X					

The information distributed to staff, will be distributed to external partners, as well.				X	X	X	X	X	X	
The information will also be provided to the Governing Board at their regular meetings.				X	X	X	X	X	X	
The Administration will randomly pull 10 files from each department twice per year to assess documentation of referrals made both internally and externally.				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Jefferson County CAC, Inc. will make Facebook posts at a minimum of twice per week highlighting programs, programmatic pictures, and poverty information. (This is beyond Job Postings, ODOD mandated postings, etc.)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

SUMMARY:

Unrestricted Funds	**Standard 6.2:** ***Reduction*** *of poverty,* ***Revitalization*** *of low-income communities, and/or* ***Empowerment*** *of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient,* **Standard 6.3:** Community, Agency & Family

OUTCOME All individuals and business in Jefferson County will be aware of the organization and provide donations to assist with program operations.

GOAL	RATIONALE
GOAL (Destination) To provide opportunities for the residents of Jefferson County to learn more about the organization and provide volunteer or financial support to assist with operations. *This work plan aligns with the work plan Agency/Program Information.*	**RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal)** Participating in community events and activities increases a nonprofit organization's visibility, builds public trust, and strengthens relationships with community members, businesses, and potential partners. By sharing information about its mission, programs, and impact, the organization can attract new donors, sponsors, volunteers, and funding opportunities that help support operational costs and ensure the long-term sustainability of its services.

OBJECTIVE/PERFORMANCE TARGET (measurable, time specific and measure success) Prior to June of 2029, the organization will have acquired over $50,000 in unrestricted funds from individuals and businesses by participating in and sponsoring community events.

STRATEGIES/MILESTONES	Updates	2026		2027		2028		2029	2030	Done
		Jan-June	July -Dec	Jan - June	July –	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	
Jefferson County CAC, Inc. will hold an Open House each year where local businesses, other nonprofits, elected officials, school, churches, residents and other community partners can learn more about the organization and its volunteer and financial needs.			X		X		X		X	
The organization will work to increase their social media (Facebook) followers to 2,000 individuals through additional posts about poverty in general and agency needs for more organizational visibility.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Employees from each department will provide information at a minimum of 3 events, each year, regarding agency services. This can include Parent/Teacher Conferences, County Fairs/Festivals, local community and church groups and networking through the Chamber of Commerce and with other businesses.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Agency will explore online giving campaigns, round-up programs with other businesses, charity golf outings or Annual Gala as an avenue to raise additional resources. These campaigns could be led by a certified fundraising professional.				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Explore opportunities to make funds through Low Income Housing Tax Credits as a nonprofit sponsor or developer. This aligns with Affordable Housing Work Plan.				X	X	X	X			
The Administration will visit ten large businesses throughout the county and seek donations of $2,500 or more.				X	X	X	X	X	X	

Summary:

Operational Efficiency	**Standard 6.2:** ***Reduction*** *of poverty,* ***Revitalization*** *of low-income communities, and/or* ***Empowerment*** *of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient*, **Standard 6.3:** Community, Agency & Family

OUTCOME The organization will operate at peak efficiency with state of the art tools and equipment in place.

GOAL (Destination)	**RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal)**
Jefferson County CAC will explore and work to implement new technology and processes to improve organizational efficiency.	Strong internal controls and cybersecurity practices are essential to protecting the agency's financial resources, employee information, and daily operations. Without appropriate security measures—such as secure payroll processes, multi-factor authentication (including Duo authentication), role-based system access, regular password updates, and ongoing monitoring—the agency faces increased risks of fraud, unauthorized access, data breaches, payroll errors, and operational disruptions. Implementing and maintaining these safeguards helps ensure compliance with funding requirements, protects sensitive information, and supports the agency's responsibility to be a good steward of public and private resources.

OBJECTIVE/PERFORMANCE TARGET (measurable, time specific and measure success) By July of 2029, the organization will have implemented at least one new tool or process which staff will indicate is more efficient in agency operations.

STRATEGIES/MILESTONES	**Updates**	**2026**		**2027**		**2028**		**2029**	**2030**	**Done**
		Jan-June	**July-Dec**	**Jan-June**	**July-Dec**	**Jan – June**	**July-Dec**			
The administration will consult with other CAA's, their insurance and technology providers to determine how to improve and secure operations.				X	X	X	X			
The Administration will meet with other agencies, who no longer utilize paper timesheets or physical timeclocks, regarding pros, cons and cost efficiency. This could improve payroll accuracy and reduce administrative time by replacing traditional time clocks with electronic timekeeping or payroll-integrated attendance systems.				X	X	X	X			

Agency will meet with other agencies to learn more about enhanced cybersecurity by implementing multi-factor authentication (Duo) for all staff accessing organizational systems.				X	X	X	X			
Administration will explore utilizing cloud-based collaboration tools to improve communication and document sharing across departments.					X	X				
Administration will secure a consultant to provide staff training on new cybersecurity best practices, and digital workflows to ensure successful adoption.					X					
Documentation of all new tools and processes implemented provided to the Governing Board.				X	X	X	X	X	X	

Summary:

Affordable Housing	**Standard 6.2:** ***Reduction*** *of poverty,* ***Revitalization*** *of low-income communities, and/or* ***Empowerment*** *of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient,* **Standard 6.3:** Community, Agency & Family

OUTCOME All individuals in Jefferson County reside in safe and affordable housing.

GOAL (Destination) To increase access to safe and affordable housing throughout the county.	**RATIONALE (Identifies the reason for the goal)** Expanding access to safe and affordable rental and homeownership opportunities is essential to improving the quality of life and economic stability of individuals and families in Jefferson County. Many communities face housing shortages, aging housing stock, rising housing costs, and limited access to affordable financing, making it difficult for residents to obtain stable housing. Increasing the availability of affordable housing supports workforce retention, promotes healthier and more stable families, strengthens local communities, and contributes to long-term economic growth by providing residents with safe, secure housing that meets their needs and allows them to thrive.

OBJECTIVE/PERFORMANCE TARGET (measurable, time specific and measure success) By December of 2030, Jefferson County CAC, Inc. will have worked either as the nonprofit sponsor and/or developer or simply grantee to rehab or construct 25 units of safe and affordable housing.

STRATEGIES/MILESTONES	**Updates**	**2026**		**2027**		**2028**		**2029**	**2030**	**Done**
		Jan-June	**July -Dec**	**Jan - June**	**July –**	**Jan - June**	**July - Dec**	**Jan-Dec**	**Jan-Dec**	
The Director and other management team members will meet with other organizations, developers and financial partners that are involved in the creation of affordable housing throughout the State, to determine their successes and avenues which they took to provide additional units.			X	X						
The Administration will evaluate where the greatest need for affordable housing is within the service territory as well as how this area would score in the pursuit of tax credit funding.			X	X						

Staff will meet with elected officials in the target area, to address and justify the need, to gain their support for housing creation/development and expanded opportunities for homeless services.				X						
Jefferson County CAC will serve as the non-profit sponsor for a development or rehabilitation of 25 units of affordable housing the within the target area.						X	X	X	X	
Jefferson County CAC will determine if within the county another organization is providing the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) through the State of Ohio. In areas where there is no organization pursuing or administering CHIP grants the organization will pursue those opportunities.					X					
The organization will look at other opportunities such as the Welcome Home Program at a State Level to purchase, renovate and build housing through foreclosures.						X	X	X	X	

Summary:

Community Needs Assessment

JEFFERSON COUNTY
community
Action
PARTNERSHIP

Helping People. Changing Lives.

Community Assessment
2025

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Rich Gualtiere
Chief Executive Officer

Mission Statement

The CAC is **C**ontinuing **A C**ommitment to restore and revitalize the quality of life in Jefferson County, and move the residents towards self-sufficiency. We achieve this goal by adapting and providing programs that are accessible, affordable and culturally-sensitive to meet the needs of the community.

Overview

The Jefferson County Community Action Council, Inc. is a private non-profit organization, established in 1965 - one of a nationwide network of Community Action Agencies. As mandated by federal law, it is operated by a Board of Directors made up of one-third representation from the low-income sector; one-third governmental representation; and one-third private.

Since its formation the CAC has grown from its initial staff of 4 people to 41 employees, with an annual budget of over $5 million. Most of that money is pumped into the local economy.

Meeting the needs of Jefferson County residents will always be first priority for the CAC; collaboration with other community agencies has become one of the most efficient ways to accomplish this goal. Since the CAC competes for grants to fund its programming, it enjoys the flexibility of designing its services to fit community needs.

All C.A.C. services are offered to Jefferson County residents free of any charge. While many programs are based on income-eligibility, some are available regardless of income. All participation in programming is entirely voluntary.

County Profile

Jefferson County is located in eastern Ohio. According to the Ohio Development Services Agency County Profile, Jefferson County has a total area of 409.6 square miles. The U.S. Census Bureau population estimate for 2024 was 63,900 which is lower than the 2020 census count of 65,249. The three largest municipalities are Steubenville (2024 estimated population – 18,029), Island Creek Township (2024 estimated population – 5,850) and Toronto (2024 estimated population – 5,187).

Population by Age: The median age of Jefferson County's population is 44.3 years. People in the 45 to 64 age group comprise the largest percentage at 27.5%. People 65 years and more is the second largest group at 21.9%. People in the 25 to 44 age group are 21.5% of the population. A total of 9.9% of the population are young adults aged 18 to 24 years who live in Jefferson County. Children are divided: ages 5 to 17 years, 14.2%; under 5 years, 5%.

Race/Ethnicity: Race/ethnicity population data is: 90.3% White, 5.4% African American, .1% Native American, .6% Asian, 1.7% Hispanic, and 3.1% Two or More Races.

Poverty Status of Families by Family Type by Presence of Related Children: Of the 16,643 families reportedly living in Jefferson County, 2,172 (13.1%) are living below the poverty level. The group with the highest percentage below the poverty level is the female householder, no husband present, with related children – 945 families (5.7%). The percentage of families with no related children living in poverty is 3.5% (586 families); married couples with related children is 2.2% (363 families); and male householder, no wife present, with related children is 1.7% (278 families).

Family Type by Employment Status: Adults in the workforce can be divided into several categories. A total of 5,206 couples (31.4%) are married with both members in the workforce. Married couple, husband and wife not in labor force accounts for 19.8%; Married couple, husband in labor force, wife not, 14.2%, followed by Female householder, in labor force making up 12.2% of the population. Female householder, not in labor force percentage is 7.1%; married couple, wife in labor force, husband not, is 7.4%; male householder, in labor force, is 5.1%; leaving male householder, not in labor force making up the final 2.9%. Ohio Department of Development lists the unemployment rate in 2023 as 5.1%, which is a decrease from the 10.1% unemployment rate in 2020.

Jefferson County lists the total work force as 28,400 people– 26,600 are employed; 1,800 are unemployed. In order to be counted as unemployed, a worker must be both jobless and actively looking for work. Of the 65,767 residents, approximately 13,000 able-bodied residents are not actively seeking employment at this time; the remainder are disabled, retired or not of age. According to data provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the unemployment rate for Jefferson County as of June 2025 is 6.3%.

Education: Jefferson County's highest education attainment level for adults over the age of 25 is predominantly those with a high school diploma (43.4%). 17.6% have completed some college, and 31.6% have completed a degree program (Associate’s Degree, 12.1%; Bachelor’s degree, 12.4%; Master’s degree, 7.1%). A total of 7.4% do not have a high school diploma.

Housing Units: The total number of housing units in Jefferson County is 31,246. Of those, 19,179 (71.1%) are owner occupied, 7,794 (28.9%) are renters, and 4,273 (13.7) are vacant housing units. Median gross rent in the area is $760 per month; as a percentage of household income, 28.3%.

Self-Sufficiency: According to the Self-Sufficiency Calculator provided by Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies, in order for a single adult to be self-sufficient, the hourly rate of pay required is $12.89/hour (2025 minimum wage in Ohio is $10.70/hour). However, a family of four would need $18.19/hour per adult to obtain self-sufficiency.

Community Assessment Overview

As part of the CSBG Standards, a Community Assessment is required to be completed by community actions agencies every three (3) years.

> The organization conducted a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years. *(CSBG Standard 3.1)*

The Assessment helps determine the needs of the low-income population of Jefferson County. We utilize the information gathered to tailor programs to the residents.

Two different surveys were administered to collect data from a variety of individuals invested in the community. The first was completed by CAC clients; the second was completed by community partners, members of the CAC's Board of Trustees and employees of the CAC.

A total of 70 surveys were returned by the clients of the following CAC's programs:

CSBG Emergency Services
Electric Partnership Plan (EPP)
Growing Rural Independence Together (GRIT)
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)
OhioMeansJobs – Jefferson County
Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)
Supportive Housing Program (SHP)
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

A survey was mailed to area agencies (community partners) in order to include their opinion on services offered by the Jefferson County CAC.

> The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at a minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institution. *(CSBG Standard 2.2)*

Organizations informed to participate in the Community Partner Survey include: Community-based organizations - United Way, CHANGE, Inc., Ohio Valley Health Center; Faith-based organizations - Urban Mission Ministries, Catholic Charities; Private Sector - Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce; Public Sector - Jefferson County Department of Job & Family Services, Jefferson Count Metropolitan Housing Authority, and Educational Institutions – Steubenville City Schools, Jefferson County Joint Vocational School, Jefferson County Educational Service Center. There were other respondents in the five sectors – the above listed are a few in each sector. A total of 62 surveys were returned from community partners.

Members of the Jefferson County CAC Board of Trustees were asked to complete surveys – 10 were returned. Employees of the CAC were also asked to complete surveys – 24 surveys were returned. We thought it would be interesting to see employees' responses to determine which programs their clients are being referred to within our agency.

Summary of Analysis

Client Survey

Total number of surveys received: 70

Age	Under 18	5 responses
	18 - 25 years	13 responses
	26 - 40 years	17 responses
	41 - 60 years	26 responses
	Over 60 years	7 responses
	No response	2
Gender	Male	18 responses
	Female	30 responses
	No response	22
Race	Caucasian	30 responses
	African American	15 responses
	Caucasian & African American	1 response
	Other Race	1 response
	No response	23
Status	Head of Household	15 responses
	Head of Household/Parent	6 responses
	Parent/Custodian	8 responses
	No response	41

Of the above Status, 4 females indicated they were Head of Household and Parent/ Custodian of minor children; 9 females indicated Head of Household.

Cross-tabulation of demographics yields:

- Two respondents did not mark age, gender or race. (2 surveys)

- Of those clients under the age of 18 who completed a survey, three males marked their race as African American; one male marked Caucasian; and one client marked their race as African American but did not respond to the gender question. (5 surveys)

- Of those 18-25 years of age who responded to gender and race questions, 3 were female African American and 2 were male African American; 4 were female Caucasians and 1 was male Caucasian; 1 male who marked both Caucasian and African American, and 1 marked male, but did not mark race. (12 surveys)

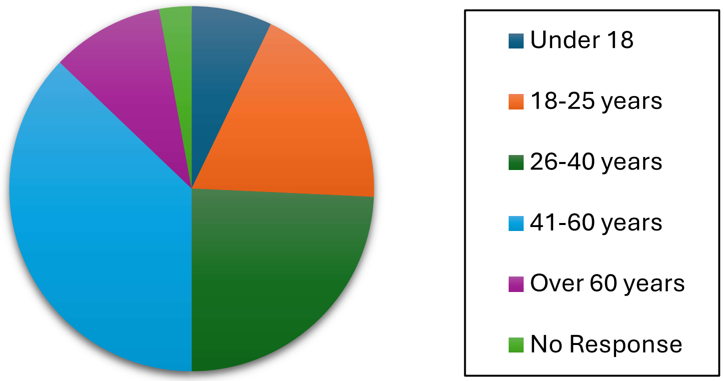
- Of those 26-40 years of age and who responded to gender and race questions, 3 were female African Americans; 3 were female Caucasian and 2 were male Caucasians; 1 marked female but did not mark race; 1 marked Caucasian, but did not mark gender. (10 surveys)

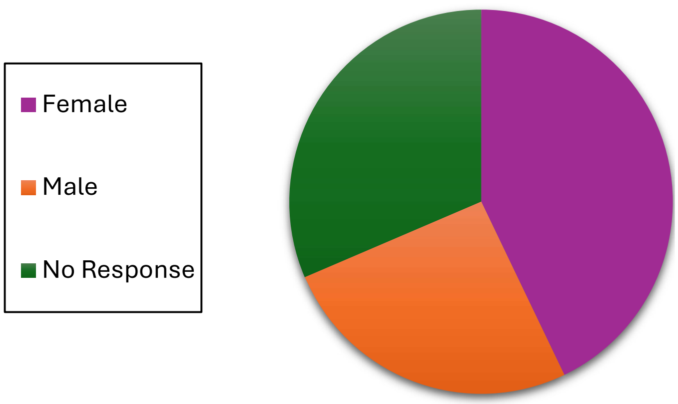
- Of those 41-60 years of age and who responded to gender and race questions, 1 was female African American and 1 was male African American; 10 were female Caucasians and 3 were male Caucasians; 3 marked female but did not mark race; 1 marked African American and 1 marked Other for race, but did not mark gender. (20 surveys)

- For those respondents over 60 years of age 2 were female Caucasians and 3 were male Caucasians. (5 surveys)

Total percentage of surveys received (bold print indicates the most responses in that category):

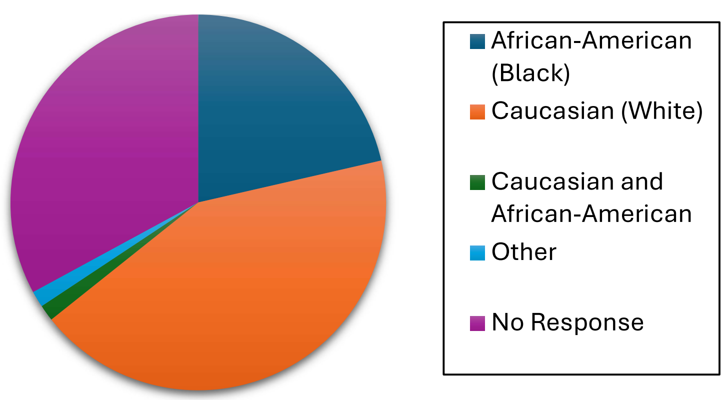
Under 18 years (5)	7.1%
18 - 25 years (13)	18.6%
26 - 40 years (17)	24.3%
41 - 60 years (26)	**37.1%**
Over 60 years (7)	10.0%
No Response (2)	2.9%





Female (30)	**42.9%**
Male (18)	25.7%
No Response (22)	31.4%

African American (15)	21.4%
Caucasian (30)	**42.9%**
Caucasian and African-Amer. (1)	1.4%
Other (1)	1.4%
No Response (23)	32.9%



Services Received

Service	Number of Responses
Access Point (Emergency Homelessness)	9
Birth Certificates	12
Bus Pass	7
Cleaning Supplies Gift Card	10
Emergency Rent/Mortgage Assistance	27
EPP (Refrigerators/Lightbulb Replacement Program)	3
Food Vouchers	11
Gas Cards	7
GRIT (Growing Rural Independence Together)	1
HEAP/PIPP	28
Housing Services	16
HWAP	4
Hygiene Supplies Gift Card	7
One Stop Employment Services	10
Pathway Home	1
Prescription Assistance	5
Summer Youth Employment	10
Water Assistance	9
WIOA	9

28 (40%) of the clients responding to this survey received HEAP assistance within the past three years. The second highest percentage of respondents received services through the Emergency Rent/Mortgage Assistance Program.

After collecting demographics and marking services received, Question 1 of the survey asked if the respondents were satisfied with services received. Of the 60 responses received (10 did not respond to the question), one answered "No." That means that 59 respondents – 84% – were satisfied with services received at the CAC.

Question 2 asked if there were any services that the respondent needed and have not been able to find. 53 answered "No", 8 answered "Yes", and 9 did not respond to this question.

For those answering "Yes," we asked respondents to describe the services they have not been able to find. The following comments were received:

- Assistance with property taxes
- Assistance with reinstatement of drivers license
- Employment services…need more than one person to help with questions for filling out application online
- Driving classes
- Food stamps

For Question 3, respondents were asked to rate each answer as “Yes”, “No”, or “Not Sure”. The question was designed to determine if clients felt the agency made a difference in their lives. If a survey was marked N/A for Question 3, it was counted as No Reply.

Question 3a asked: “Since receiving services from JCCAC, would you say that you are better able to care for yourself and/or your family.” The following is the total of all responses:

Yes	50 or 71.4%
No	2 or 2.9%
Not Sure	6 or 8.6%
No Reply	12 or 17.1%

Question 3b asked: “Has your household income increased since you received JCCAC services?” The following is the total of all responses:

Yes	20 or 28.6%
No	29 or 41.4%
Not Sure	8 or 11.4%
No Reply	13 or 18.6%

Question 3c asked “Has anyone in your household searched for a new or better job in the past year? Has that been successful?” The following is the total of all responses:

Yes	19 or 27.1%
No	33 or 47.1%
Not Sure	5 or 7.1%
No Reply	13 or 18.6%

Question 3d asked: “Do you believe that your living conditions have improved as a result of the agency’s services?” The following is the total of all responses:

Yes	46 or 65.7%
No	6 or 8.6%
Not Sure	8 or 11.4%
No Reply	10 or 14.3%

Question 3e asked: “Do you think you’re a better parent as a result of the agency’s service?”

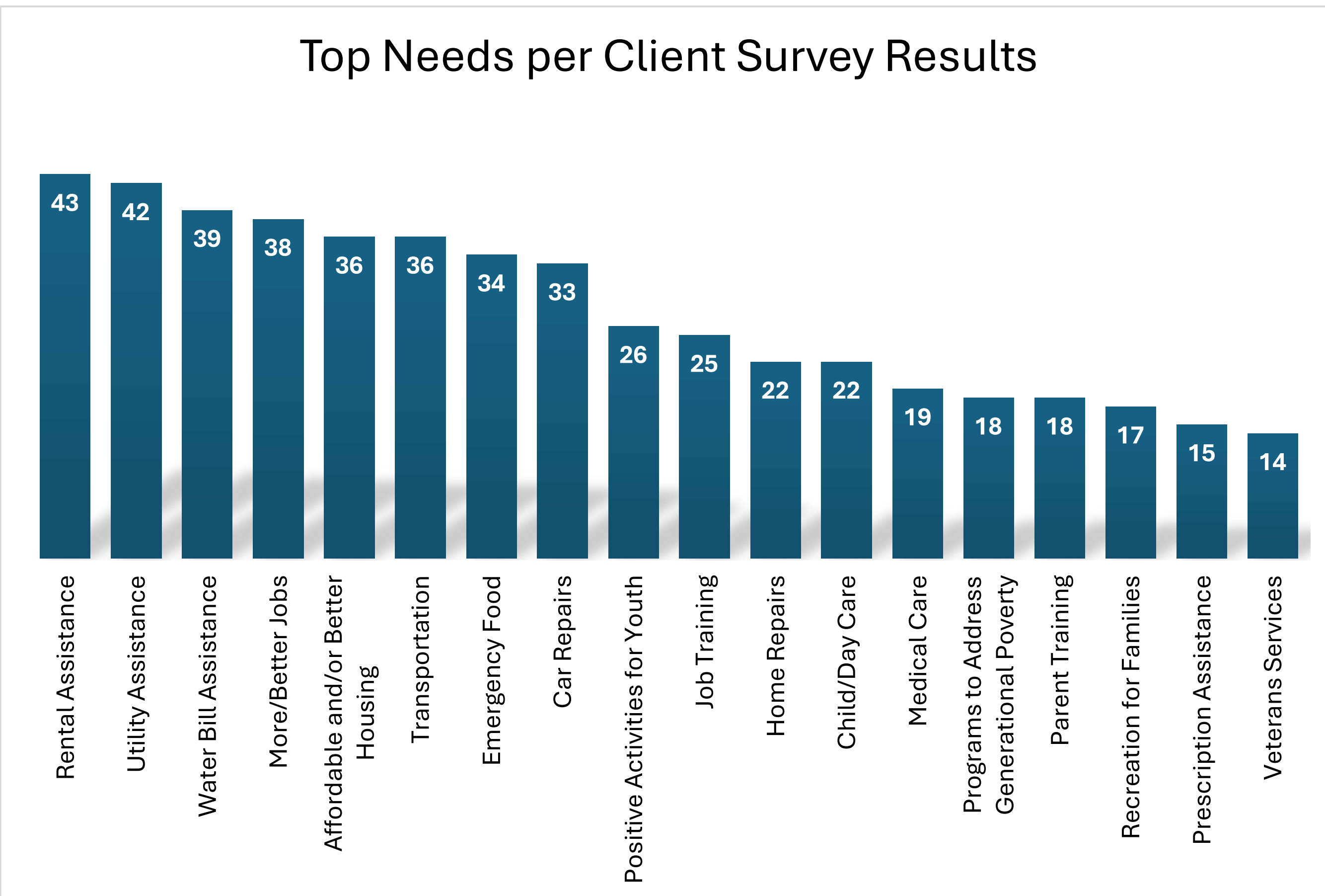
Yes	26 or 37.1%
No	12 or 17.1%
Not Sure	14 or 20.0%
No Reply	18 or 25.7%

Question 3f asked: "Are your children doing better (at school and/or at home) as a result of the agency's services?"

Yes	21 or 30.0%
No	12 or 17.1%
Not Sure	16 or 22.9%
No Reply	21 or 30.0%

Question 4 asked clients to select what they thought to be the top needs of low-income people from a list of 18, and allowing for an open-ended "Other" choice. Of the 70 surveys completed, 4 clients did not mark any choices.

Among the total surveys received, the top 3 needs indicated are Rental Assistance, followed by Utility Assistance and Water Bill Assistance. The following chart shows the full results for all 18 on the list, with one respondent commenting "drivers ed" as an "other" option.



Community Partner Survey

Surveys were sent to agencies in Jefferson County so that we could determine other agencies' focus and supplemental services provided by them. We then asked what the agencies see as a definite need that is not currently addressed or needs to be expanded by any agency. This year, we also asked Board of Trustee members and employees to complete a Community Partner Survey so that their responses could be included in the results.

Community Partners' Relationship with the CAC

The first question asked respondents to share what population within the county they best represented. In accordance with CSBG Standard 2.2 (*The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions),* noted below are the number of community partners who responded to the Community Partner Survey and described their relationship with Jefferson County CAC.

Sector	
Community-Based Organization	10
Educational Institution	3
Elected Official	3
Faith-Based Organization	5
Private Sector Business	1
Public Sector Organization	6

Although some Board Members may fall into the above categories, their relationship to the CAC was not reported above.

Total number of surveys received from agencies:	28
Total number of surveys received from Board of Trustees:	10
Total number of surveys received from employees:	24

Question 2 of the Community Partner survey asked what services provided by the CAC have respondents referred their customers to. Across the 62 surveys received, there were a total of 419 responses, with many respondents having referred consumers to multiple services. This indicates many of our community partners have a strong knowledge of the programs the CAC provides and are utilizing this information to connect individuals in need with the appropriate services.

Based on the responses, the most referred services are HEAP with 49 respondents, Emergency Rent Assistance with 35 respondents, and WIOA with 29 respondents. This closely aligns with both the most utilized services and top needs of the county residents based on responses from the client survey and indicates that the CAC is providing a variety of services that are needed by the community. This also highlights the importance of the CAC's relationship with our community partners who often connect clients to the CAC for needs other community partners may not be able to meet.

Question 3 and 4 of the Community Partner survey aim to determine what needs need to be addressed or expanded.

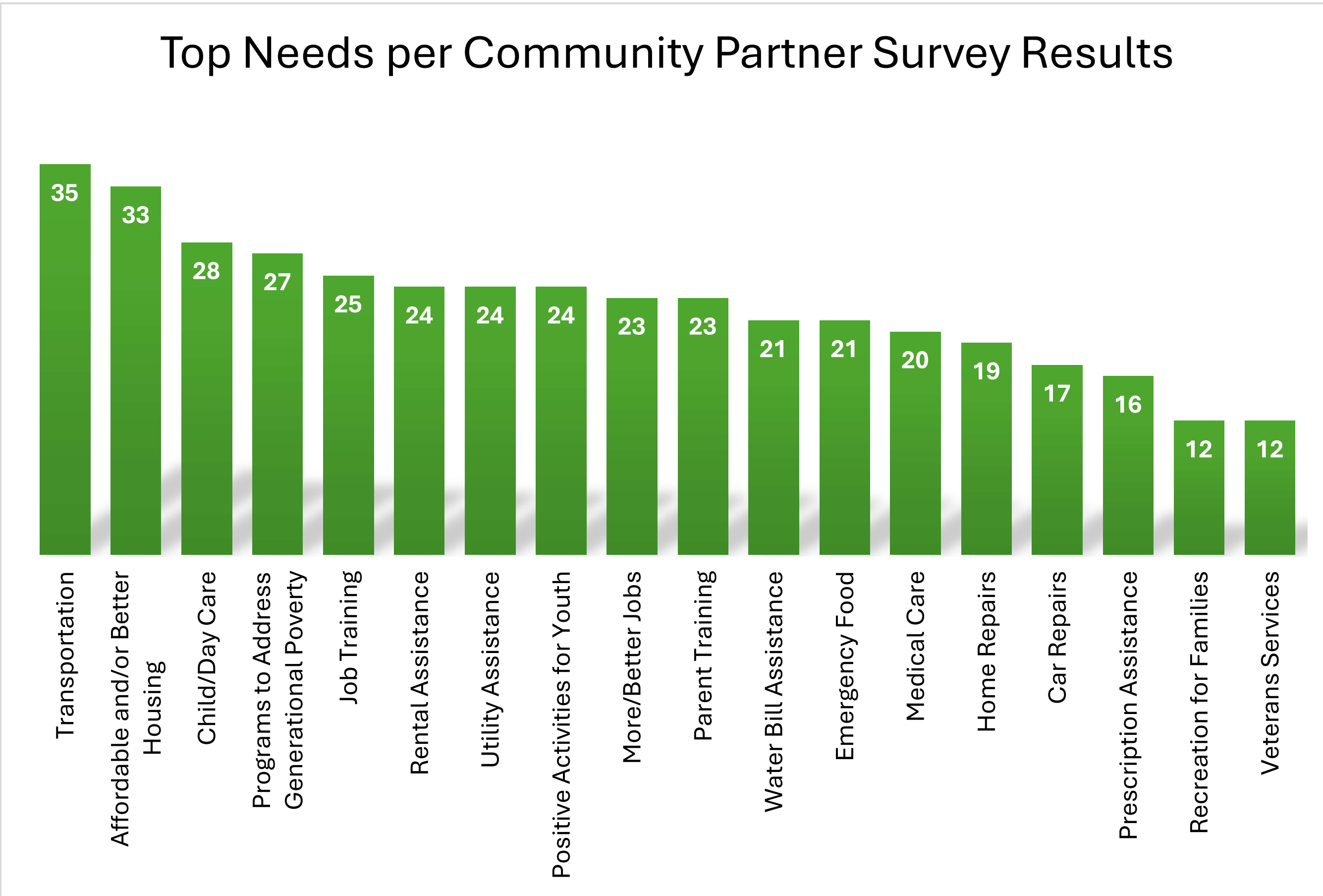
Needs not being addressed or need to be expanded by any agency (Question 3), as noted by the community partners responding to our survey:

- Case managers for people who seek help understand the programs and the documents that are needed
- Child care- reliable
- Helping the public fill out the applications and getting the proper paperwork needed for services
- Classes teaching young people (and some older) how to manage a household (bill paying, balancing money). Nothing like that is taught in school anymore and young people don't know how to pay a utility
- Medical services in the southern end of county
- Too many to mention, starting with employee attitudes
- Programs to help with home repairs like roofs, doors and windows
- More accessibility to the county overall
- The CAC provides all resources available to our area and assists everyone that qualifies, even giving bus passes for SVRTA. Rural areas don't offer that resource so therefore the CAC can't assist rural areas with transportation
- Funding
- Community based group classes/training
- More accessible public transportation
- A partnership or relationship with a local dental provider for basic needs. Often times repeat tooth infections end up giving rise to pericarditis or similar. This ends up costing local ERs when the pt allows problem to get to that point
- Public transportation not available in rural areas
- Public transportation for rural areas, housing, emergency housing, employment for felons
- Affordable Housing
- Transportation in Toronto, Yorkville, Tiltonsville, Richmond, Amsterdam, Bergholz, transitional housing
- I believe more affordable housing should be expanded, especially for low income or for those starting out
- Rural area transportation services.
- Childcare, medical/dental care for children
- Public transportation especially for senior citizens- outreach program for wellness care

- Public transportation not available outside city limits (such as Toronto). Also, wheelchair ramps.
- Transportation for doctors appointments. dental care access
- Expand public transportation
- Getting people off the streets, but there is only so much you can do. Needs are great
- Public transportation- longer hours in the evening. More housing options. More and better job opportunities. Second chance programs
- Transportation to medical
- Public transportation not available in rural areas of the county. Homeless shelters. Other transportation help
- Transportation. Seems more people are excluded than included
- Public transportation in our district
- Section 8 housing. Youth employment. rural broadband
- Affordable housing. Increased routes for transportation
- Public transportation in rural areas. Affordable child care
- More communication with each department. Communication is lacking. I think the better we can communicate with each other the better we can serve our community
- Medical Care
- Better paying jobs
- Transportation in outer/rural areas of Jefferson County. Not just in the rural areas, but in towns outside of Steubenville.
- Additional transportation, help getting people connected to internet providers, housing repairs
- Simplify processes to access services
- Public transportation, security deposit assistance
- Family and homeless housing
- Transportation in rural areas for doctors appointments
- Maybe get the word out more so more people know what help is offered
- More access to services, more pop up events/community outreach events
- Food delivery to the people who do not drive
- The ability to serve the elderly who live on social security, yet somehow barely exceed the income requirements, and less of serving the generational poverty clients continuously
- Healthcare assistance and transportation in rural areas
- Transportation to rural areas
- Mentorship for youth
- More shelters and/or housing for the homeless in the area

Based on the responses provided for Question 3, transportation is a consistent concern for residents. Many comments cite the need for expanded public transportation options, especially to more rural areas of the county. Other top needs expressed are more affordable housing options and better job opportunities.

Question 4 asked agencies to choose the top needs of low-income people from a list of 18, also allowing for an open-ended "other" choice. The top 3 needs indicated by community partner respondents are transportation, affordable and/or better housing, and child/day care. The chart below shows the full results for Question 4.



Of the 26,973 households in Jefferson County, approximately 1,998 households have a total household income of $10,000 or less per year; 2,917 households earn $10,000 to $19,999 per year. Approximately 18.1% of residents live in poverty. Those not in the work force may be attending school full-time, retired, not able to work due to a disability, no longer receiving Unemployment Benefits and not part of the formula, or not looking for employment. We estimate this to be approximately 11,597 individuals. This figure is obtained by identifying individuals 18 through 64 years of age (38,397), minus the current identified workforce according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (26,800), leaving a total of 11,597 not identified in the workforce.

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies' Self-Sufficiency Calculator for Jefferson County, Ohio estimates a single adult needs to earn $27,216 per year to achieve self-sufficiency, while a family of four needs $76,824 per year.

Our Mission Statement states, in part: "…move the residents towards self-sufficiency." The primary goal of WIOA is to assist the client to secure permanent, unsubsidized employment, which will lead to individual self-sufficiency. A client may progress through Career or Training services to achieve this goal. Training services are for those with no marketable job skills and must be in a growth or demand occupation that can lead to a self-sufficient wage.

Presently, the programs at the CAC are diverse in that most offer assistance for basic living needs such as rent or utility bills, and some, such as job training and employment programs, aim to help achieve self-sufficiency, in accordance with our Mission Statement:

> The CAC is **C**ontinuing **A** **C**ommitment to restore and revitalize the quality of life in Jefferson County, and move the residents towards self-sufficiency. We achieve this goal by adapting and providing programs that are accessible, affordable and culturally-sensitive to meet the needs of the community.

We will continue to tailor our programs to meet the needs of the residents of Jefferson County with the goal being to help the residents achieve self-sufficiency.

This Community Needs Assessment provides a vision into the county's areas of relative strength and areas of relative need. Specifically, the feedback provided by the Community Needs Assessment participants reveals strong agreement that rental assistance, affordable housing, utility assistance, transportation, and more/better jobs are the top needs among low-income residents in Jefferson County.

Key Findings

More and/or Better Jobs/Job Training

According to civilian labor force data provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Jefferson County's estimated work force is 28,400 people – 26,600 are employed; 1,800 are unemployed. To be counted as unemployed, a worker must both be jobless and actively looking for work. Of the 65,767 residents, approximately 13,000 able-bodied residents are not actively seeking employment at this time; the remainder are disabled, retired or not of age. Approximately 2,172 families have a total income below the poverty level. In order to attain self-sufficiency, a family of four must earn $76,824, which is $18.19 per hour for each working parent in the household. A barrier to finding a higher paying wage may be due to more than half the population having only a high school diploma or not graduating from high school at all. While job growth is occurring in Ohio, the majority of the growth is occurring in occupations that require a postsecondary education. According to the 2023 Ohio Attainment report, by 2031, 65% of all jobs will require some postsecondary education. Other barriers may include lack of access to reliable transportation, based on the high number of survey respondents citing transportation as a top need among low-income people in Jefferson County.

Jefferson County CAC's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a program that assists the customer to secure permanent, unsubsidized employment, which will lead to self-sufficiency. Training services are provided for those with no marketable job skills and must be in a growth or demand occupation that can lead to a self-sufficient wage. These services aim to equip job seekers with the skills needed to meet the demands of the growing education requirements in the job market, since often times prior experience or demonstratable skills can supplement a lack of post-secondary education.

OhioMeansJobs was created for Jefferson County businesses and citizens to provide a single system that offers an array of employment, education, training programs and partner services. The goal of OhioMeansJobs Jefferson County is twofold:

- Coordinate programs and resources in Jefferson County so individuals have easy access to a seamless system of WIOA services that will enhance their long-term employability; and

- Access for businesses to provide employment and training information that will meet their workforce and developmental needs.

Housing and Utility Assistance

Jefferson County residents face numerous challenges when addressing housing and utility assistance. There are limited rental units in the area and many available are older and in poor condition. Housing-related costs, including rent and utilities, are growing at a rate that outpaces wage increases. According to the 2024 Out of Reach Ohio Report, the hourly wage necessary to afford a 2-bedroom home at fair market rent is $16.54, while the estimated average hourly wage of renters is $12.82 (Ohio minimum wage in 2025 is $10.70). Frequently, individuals will not be able to find housing due to this gap in costs and income. Many individuals are living in overcrowded housing with friends and relatives, in homeless shelters, or are actively homeless. By providing affordable housing enhanced with supportive services (such as utility assistance, food cards, bus passes etc.), the CAC can help build sustainable communities that provide great opportunities and empowerment for our residents.

Transportation

The average travel time for residents in Jefferson County that are employed is 23 minutes. Residents without vehicles are hindered by the lack of public transportation, which is not available for those in most of the outlying areas of the county. Those employed who cannot afford a personal vehicle are limited to areas accessible by public transportation, creating a barrier to higher paying job opportunities that may be outside of the service area of public transportation.

Jefferson County CAC offers gas cards or bus passes to help eligible residents overcome transportation barriers for employment, education and medical care. These are available through the CSBG Emergency Services Program.