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Executive Summary

North East Community Action Corporation was established in 1965 through the passage of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act in response to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty”.

“Some because of their poverty, and some because of their Color, and all to many because of both. Our task is to help Replace their despair with opportunity. This administration Today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty In America.”

“We shall not rest until that war is won, the richest nation on Earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it.”

North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC) serves 12 Counties in Missouri including Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph, St. Charles, Shelby, and Warren County.

Our mission is to assist the disadvantaged within our service area in their efforts to rise above poverty by providing needed services to enable each individual to function at his or her own improved financial, physical, mental, and social level.

NECAC’s mission statement is “Empowering People, Changing Lives and Building Communities.

Currently 596,863 individuals live in NECAC’s service Area which is 9.87% of Missouri’s population.

There are 220,633 households in the report area with 20,936 or 9.49% in Poverty.

17,947 or 12.28% of children ages 0-17 live in poverty in the service area.

5,359 or 6.68% of elderly residents are living in poverty in the service area.

1. President Lyndon B. Johnson’s State of the Union address on January 8, 1964.

The following Community Assessment report will cover the following conditions that affect individuals and families in poverty:

- Income
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Nutrition
- Transportation
- Health
- It will also include information from the agency performance assessment.

The Community Assessment report contains three main parts:

- Collected Data
- Analysis
- Priority Needs

Data was collected by electronic and paper surveys distributed to staff, board members, clients and community members.

Focus Groups were held in each county with community members.

Missouri Association for Community Action’s (MACA) Website was used to obtain statistics for this assessment.

Once NECAC staff reviewed the data it was tabulated into charts and organized so that it could be analyzed.

**Lincoln County Service Center**
Overview of North East Community Action Corporation

- NORTH EAST COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY (NECAC)
  - Established in 1965
  - Non-profit agency
  - Funded by contracts and grants with federal, state, and local governments, other non-profit agencies and private business
  - Operating budget of 27 million dollars per year
  - Central Office located in Bowling Green, Missouri
  - Largest of the 19 Missouri agencies in geographical territory
  - Provides Services through twelve county service centers located in each county

- Serving 12 Counties in Missouri, 9 rural and 3 metropolitan

- The 9 rural counties are:
  - Lewis
  - Macon
  - Marion
  - Monroe
  - Montgomery
  - Pike
  - Ralls
  - Randolph
  - Shelby

- The 3 metropolitan counties are:
  - Lincoln
  - St. Charles
  - Warren

- 94 Full time/120 part time staff

- Governed by a 36 member Board of Directors
  - Each County has one elected official, one civic interest group and one low income representative.
Overview of North East Community Action Corporation

- NECAC offers 60 programs through 30 different funding sources,
- NECAC offers the following programs:
  - LIHEAP – Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
    - EA-Energy Assistance
    - ECIP-Emergency Crisis Intervention Program
  - Emergency Services
    - Dollar More
    - Dollar Help
    - Keeping Current
    - Heat Up/Cool Down St. Louis
    - Round Up – Cuivre River & Macon RECs
    - Lewis County REC
    - MO American Water
    - Macon Public Water Supply
    - Housing First/Missouri Housing Trust Funds
    - FEMA
    - Community Block Grant
    - Community Assistance Board (CAB)
  - Weatherization
  - Section 8
    - Housing Rent Assistance/Home Ownership
    - Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS)
  - Foster Grandparents
  - Housing Development
    - Home Ownership
    - Property Management
  - Community Health Programs
    - Family Planning
    - WIC
    - In-Home Services

Fairview Estates
The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family threshold, then that family is considered to be in poverty. The official poverty threshold uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits such as public house, Medicaid, or food stamps. 3

2014 income levels for programs that NECAC administers are listed on the chart to the right. Clients must be at or below the levels in order to qualify for services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>CSBG 125%</th>
<th>LIHEAP 135%</th>
<th>Weatherization 200%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$14,850</td>
<td>$16,038</td>
<td>$23,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20,025</td>
<td>$21,627</td>
<td>$32,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$25,200</td>
<td>$27,216</td>
<td>$40,320</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$30,375</td>
<td>$32,805</td>
<td>$48,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Process

Surveys

- Client Satisfaction Survey
  - Completed by 2,736 Random Clients

- Staff Self Assessment
  - Completed by 64 Staff Members

- Community Needs Assessment
  - Completed by 1,952 Individuals including Board Members

- Agency Self Assessment
  - Completed by the Executive Director, Deputy Directors and Directors
Percentage of Total Client Surveys Completed

- Lewis
- Lincoln
- Macon
- Marion
- Montgomery
- Monroe
- Pike
- Ralls
- Randolph
- Shelby
- St. Charles
- Warren
Data Collection Process

Percentage of Staff Respondents

- Upper Level Management: 9%
- Middle Level Manager: 27%
- Non Manager: 64%
**Data Collection Process**

### Staff Comments

- **What is the best thing about working at NECAC?**
  - Making a positive difference in our clients' wellbeing
  - Changing peoples lives in a very positive way
  - The commitment to one another, the agency and our customers
  - The wages and benefits, helping people
  - Knowing that we can and do help those in need

- **What would be the one thing that we would do that would improve our company the most?**
  - Better communication when making decisions
  - Recognize staff for their efforts
  - Create more full time positions with benefits
  - More partnerships within programs
  - Teamwork from every department
FOCUS GROUPS

- Focus groups were held in all 12 counties between March and April of 2017

- Total of 163 people attending

- The meetings consisted of community members, low income individuals, business, faith based organizations, school faculty, nonprofit and other social service organizations

- The purpose of these meetings was to have meaningful discussion and sharing of information to obtain a clear vision on working together as a partnership to develop and implement better services and programs in each community.

- “The commitment to assisting our clients”
Focus Group Participants By County

- Lewis: 5
- Lincoln: 7
- Macon: 15
- Marion: 10
- Monroe: 15
- Montgomery: 9
- Pike: 35
- Ralls: 4
- Randolph: 8
- Shelby: 4
- St. Charles: 10
- Warren: 6
At each focus meeting a poverty quiz was given and the group was asked the five questions:

- What do you think of when I say the word poverty?
- What programs or services do you have in your community to reduce poverty?
- What barriers do low-income, elderly and disabled face in order to be self-sufficient?
- What could be some solutions to have more people stable and self-sufficient?
- What do you do next or next steps?

Answers to the questions prompted good discussions and a desire to set goals and an action plan to address one or more issues.

The most common issue in all 12 counties were:

- Employment
- Education
- Housing
- Transportation

It was repeated in several counties that they were unaware of who provided what services in their county. Several counties indicated interest in meeting more often to maintain communication within their counties of what services were available.
Client needs assessment asks: Employment is a problem in your community because?

The top three answers were:
- Lack of good living wage jobs with benefits in your community
- Few jobs for people without skills
- Lack of job searching skills

Client comments include:
- “Employment support present, no jobs”
- “Not enough jobs, no living wage. Full time workers are losing health insurance through Medicaid, but don’t make enough to afford other insurance.”

Outcomes out of focus group conversations about employment included:
- Assistance for working poor
- Employment based training
- Create jobs with a living wage
- Internship work programs to gain specialized skills
- “The factories do not pay enough to pay bills and live on too”
- “The jobs are low paying, and if you purchase the benefits you lose your whole paycheck”
Living wage is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family if they are the sole provider and working full-time. The living wage for a family of four with 2 adults and 2 children in the 12 county area range from $22.98 in Lewis and $24.36 in Lincoln, Warren, and St. Charles. Statewide average is $23.93.  

Data – Employment Statistics

Hourly Living Wages for a family of 4

- Warren
- St. Charles
- Shelby
- Randolph
- Ralls
- Pike
- Montgomery
- Monroe
- Marion
- Macon
- Lincoln
- Lewis

Hourly Living Wages for a family of 4

- $22.00
- $23.00
- $24.00
- $25.00

4. Poverty In American, Living Wage Calculator, 2017
According to the U.S. Department of Labor in May 2014, unemployment in the 12 county area varied from 4.0 in Ralls to 5.2% in Randolph compared to the statewide rate of 4.5%.
The Client Needs Assessment asks: Use of income in this area is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Payday loans are easily accessible
- Fixed Income
- Difficulty with Money Management
- Lack of Savings

Client comments include:

- “Can’t budget money you don’t have”
- “I can’t afford daycare to be able to get a job”
- “When you are on a fixed income it can be hard to have extra money for things you need or want”
- “Minimum wage is below poverty level”
- “The factories do not pay enough to pay bills and live on too”
- “I think it was probably because I’m older and jobs are fewer”

Outcomes out of focus group conversations about employment included:

- Lack of education
- Work ethics with an increase in soft skills
- Create jobs with a living wage
- Work programs to gain specialized skills
Hourly wages in the 12 county area range from $13.36 in Shelby to $20.56 in St. Charles compared to $22.17 statewide.

**Average Hourly Wage**

![Bar chart showing average hourly wages for various counties in Missouri.](chart.png)
The Client Needs Assessment asks: Education is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Lack of Tuition Money
- Cost of Child Care
- Cost of Transportation

Client comments include:

- “Lack of means to support yourself or a family while in school”
- “Programs are available, but they are not accessible. Low income families cannot afford to participate”
- “Tuition help is hard to find”
- “Child care is expensive”
- “Make too much for financial aid but not enough to pay for education on own”

Outcomes from the focus group conversation meetings about employment include:

- Need Employment based training
- Need more collaboration with schools in student career readiness
- Need More life skills classes for family values, budgeting, resume writing
- Need more specialized job skills training
- Need youth programs

The National Center for Education Statistics produces estimates for adult literacy based educational attainment, poverty, and other factors in each county. Estimated literacy rates for the 12 county area range from 4 percent in St. Charles County to 11 percent in Pike County. The average for the 12 county area is 8.6 percent and statewide is 7 percent.

As an example the estimated population over 16 in Pike County is 12,997 with 1429 of those individuals having low literacy skills.
The 2012 Department of Social Services Childcare Market Rate Survey shows the average costs for child care based on responses from licensed care providers in each county.

The daily cost for an infant ranges from $16 to $42.40 in the 12 county area. 8

High child care costs are a barrier to low income families trying to improve their education.
The Client Needs Assessment asks: Housing is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Cost of utility/rent deposit
- Affordable housing not available
- Lack of safe and decent affordable housing available

Client comments include:

- “Slum lords with no regulations, no enough affordable housing, lots of couch surfers that aren’t technically homeless so they get no help”

- “There is some affordable housing options, but not enough to meet the needs of the low-income community. There are no shelters available. Some housing is safe and decent, but other landlords have unsafe homes that people rent because it is all that they can afford. There are no local resources for Tenant rights or advocates for landlord/tenant disputes.”

For 2012, the hourly wage a worker must earn to afford a 2 bedroom rental ranged from $12.12 in Shelby County to $16.15 in Lincoln County in the reporting area. The average renter hourly wage in Montgomery County $7.23 and $11.29 in St. Charles County.

Foreclosure rates for the area averaged 2.96% which is below the statewide 4.02%. Lewis County was the top rate in the area with 7%.

9. National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2014 Report
Data - Housing

9. National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2016, Source Geography: County

Data - Nutrition

The Client Needs Assessment asks: Nutrition is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Not enough income to purchase food
- Food Stamps run out before end of the month
- Not eligible for food stamps

Client comments include:

- "There are two food pantries in the county, but each one is only open once a month, and they are not well advertised. The one in XXXXXXX has changed management and it has been declining."

- "I know one of the teachers at school is involved in feeding the youth, but I am not sure what is available for adults"

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers assistance to low income individuals to fight hunger.

In the 12 county area SNAP benefits average $258 per household of those receiving. The average benefit ranges from $236 to $281.

Outcomes from the focus group conversations concerning nutrition included:

- Need more food pantries
- Need accessible places to purchase food with EBT
- Lessen the loss of SNAP benefits if individual comes employed
In NECAC's 12 county area 23,163 or 10.05% of all households receive SNAP benefits as Compared to the state average of 17.5%. Marion, Montgomery and Pike are among the highest at 19.6%, 17.7% and 17.7% respectively.  

12. Missouri Department of Social Services, 2010-14
The client Needs Assessment asks: Transportation is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Inadequate programs available within the community to assist low income persons with transportation, car repair and counseling services
- Lack of reduced rates available for the disabled, seniors and children
- Lack of public transportation with hours and routes of operation that are adequate for community members

Client comments include:

- “Public transportation is not available in this rural area. The Oats bus is the only public transportation that I know of.”
- “Oats exists, but we do not have a bus for adults to ride around town.”

Outcomes out of the focus group conversations about transportation included:

- More accessible public transportation
- Transportation program – car repair, car maintenance program, loan assistance
- Credit counseling and repair

Of the 290,842 workers in the 12 county area only 0.2% used some form of public transportation. The county that uses it most is Macon at 0.9%. The statewide average is 1.5%. In most of our rural counties there are very few if any form of public transportation.

85.2% of workers use private automobiles to travel to work.

The Community Needs Assessment asks: Healthcare is a problem because?

The top three answers were:

- Dental/vision services are not available in all counties.
- Lack of support services for elderly and disabled are not available in all counties.

Client comments include:

- “The local doctor is not one I would ever choose to go to. Unless a person has the means to go out of town, the county health department is the only reliable service and they, of course, are limited in what they offer.
- “Lack of dental/vision offices”

For the 12 county area there are an average of 1.22 physicians per 1,000 persons. Ralls is the lowest at .20 and Marion the highest at 2.98. Statewide average is 2.59. 15

For dental professionals the average for the area is 1.12 per 1,000 persons. Montgomery is the lowest at .25 and St. Charles the highest at 1.44. Statewide the average is 1.02. 13

In 2014, the percentage of persons uninsured ranged from 8.1 in St. Charles County to 17.20% in Shelby County. The statewide average is 11.29%. 16

The three leading causes of death in the report area are:

- Other – 1,554
- Heart Disease – 1,202
- Cancer – 1,171

Outcomes from the focus group conversations concerning health were:

- Need access to affordable medical/dental/vision care particularly in rural areas
- Need available and affordable healthcare insurance for many individuals fail to access healthcare due to cost
- Need transportation to healthcare facility
Client satisfaction surveys were completed online and by paper.

2,736 clients completed the survey

94.41% felt that the county service center provided them with the needed information

99.21% would return to NECAC for a future service

98.42% would refer someone else to NECAC

- “They are doing just fine”
- “When asked how NECAC could improve their services, comments from clients included:
  - “More updated website”
  - “Have more people at window helping”
  - “Everything is great, keep it up”
Agency Performance – Agency Self Assessment

The summary of the overall scores of the assessment are as follows:

- Planning and Community Invest Section – fully meets standard
- Operational Management Section – exceeds standard; approaching excellence
- Governance Section – fully meets standard
- Information Technology Section – exceeds standard; approaching excellence
- Human Resources Section – fully meets standard
- Finance and Budget Section – exceeds standard; approaching excellence
After all data was received and reviewed the NECAC Leadership Team sat down to review the results on May 5, 2017 at the Pike County Service Center. The needs of the agency, community and our families were analyzed.

The group used the nominal group process to identify each priority.

Each priority was looked at as to what had been done in the past, what we can do different, do we have control over this issue, do we have the capabilities to address the issue, and do we have a program that can help address this issue?
The top three identified needs for the community and clients were:

- Employment (community and agency)
- Education (family, agency and community)
- Affordable Housing (community and agency)
The top 5 items that were identified for agency and staff as needs were:
- Use of needs assessment data
- Comprehensive training for new employees
- Participation among all departments on agency events and projects
- Development of Resource Development Plan
- Centralized intake assessment system between all agency programs

The top 3 items that were identified for IT Software and training needs were:
- Intermediate training on various software programs
- Method of training that would be most effective would be web-based.
- The need for advance training in PowerPoint,
Works Cited

1. President Lyndon B. Johnson’s State of the Union address on January 8, 1964
4. Poverty in America, Living Wage Calculator, 2017
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7. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, December 2013
8. Missouri Department of Social Services, Children’s Division, Early Childhood and Prevention Services, 2012 Childcare Market Rate Survey
9. National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2014 Report
12. Missouri Department of Social Services, 2010-14.
14. Missouri Division of Professional Registration, 2014 Data Release
15. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, 2014
16. MO Dept of Health and Senior Services, MO Information for Community Assessment, Deaths, 2014