

**TWO RIVERS REGIONAL COUNCIL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS  
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**2023 CSBG COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**SECTION 1: SUMMARY**

**A. Introduction and Agency Profile**

The Community Action Plan (CAP) is prepared by both the Community Services Department of Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials (TRRC), and with the members of the Community Action Agency (CAA) Board and is used as a planning guide for the administration of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The CAP details the cooperation between TRRC and other agencies through community wide efforts to reduce the causes and effects of poverty to our region. The CAP helps us to identify specific needs of a community or of a particular group; determine the strengths and weaknesses of resources both within TRRC and the region, and to determine a general plan to address those needs.

Our Mission is to strengthen communities by reducing poverty through financial assistance, education, and training.

Two Rivers Regional Council was formed in 1974 as a local planning commission and an economic development agency to the member counties discussed below. The opportunity presented itself in 1976 to become involved in the Weatherization program and the county elected officials that made up the Regional Council took the step of becoming involved in a program that directly served their low-income constituents. In 1982, the agency was recognized as a Community Action Agency after establishing the Community Action Administrative (CAA) Board. It has administered the CSBG program since that time and has added many other Federal and State grant programs along with funding through private foundations.

These grants include the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), Percentage of Payment Plan (PIPP), Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP), Workforce Investment Act (WIOA)

Community Development Assistance Program grants (CDAP), Emergency Food and Shelter Programs, Emergency and Transitional Housing

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds are used to support the administration of vital programs in the counties of Adams, Brown, Pike, and Schuyler. Many of the grants that TRRC administers only allow funding of direct client services. CSBG funds allow TRRC to administer these grants to provide emergency assistance through Brown and Schuyler County United Way grants, Department of Human Services (DHS) Emergency Food and Shelter. These funds also allow us to help low-income, at-risk youth through a school supply program and scholarships. We also operate two food pantries and a Reach Out Center (Thrift Store) with CSBG funds. Most of those grants are 100% direct client funds allowing no funds for administration or program support. CSBG supports the overall administration of TRRC.

A Board of Directors made up of elected officials from the counties of Adams, Brown, Pike, and Schuyler currently governs TRRC and is known as the Governing Board. The CAA Board is advisory in nature and is responsible for overseeing the operation of all Community Action Programs administered for the counties currently governed by TRRC. They provide direction to the CAA staff in the administration of grants, provide their input into the effectiveness of the programs and services in their respective counties, and participate in evaluating the services.

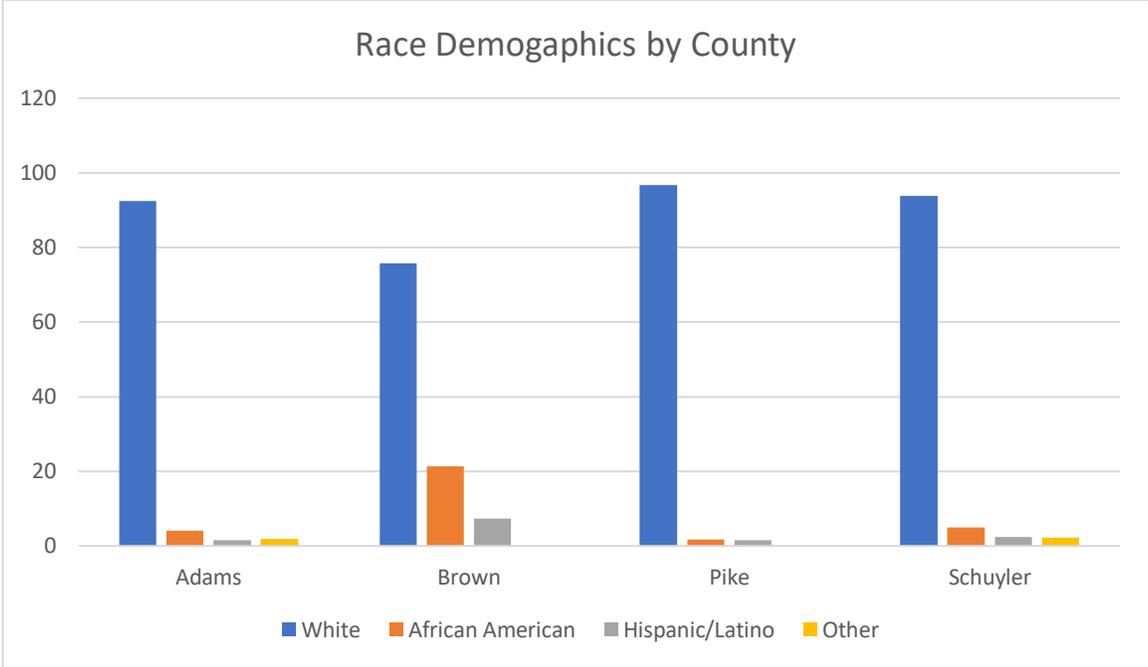


## **B. Profile of Counties**

Adams, Brown, Pike, and Schuyler Counties are located in the west-central region of Illinois. Our region has both the Illinois and Mississippi rivers running through their borders which accounts for our agency name. Our four counties cover 2,430 square miles and have a total population of 93,622. We show this as loss of 3.5% from Census. The city of Quincy is our only “urban” area and contains nearly 70% of the total population with the balance of our region considered rural non-farm and rural farm.

Of our four counties, Brown County data reflects numbers at the Western Illinois Correctional Center, located in Mt. Sterling, which houses 1,452 inmates, nearly 23% of Brown County’s entire population. The State workcamps in Adams and Pike do not reflect a significant enough change to be noted. The DHS Rushville Treatment and Detention Center accounts for 8.67% of the Schuyler County population.

Disregarding the prison population that alters the figures for Brown County, the percent of minorities in our region is very minimal. Adams County shows 93.01% of the population is white, 3.8% Black, with less than 1% each American Indians, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders. The other counties have 92.77% and overall white population.

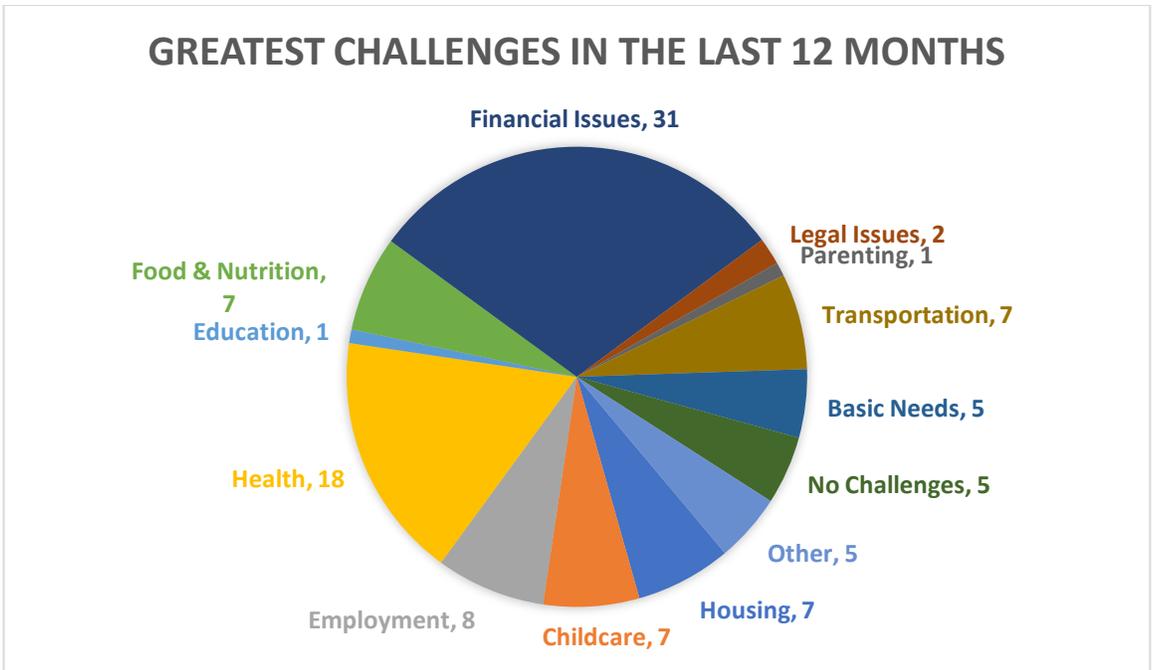


Median family income for our region averages \$49,743.75 according to census information. Of the total population for our region, an estimated 13% live below the poverty level.

**C. Process Used to Develop CAP**

The CAP was developed in large part by using our historical data and demand of specific types of services throughout the past year. Information and Referral records and input from our CAA Board members and other service providers throughout the region. Voids in services throughout the region are easily identified through our participation with the Unmet Needs committee. Involvement in Interagency Councils in all four counties keeps us informed of services or the lack of them. Attached to this document is the analysis of our survey.

Based on individuals that took the Community Needs Assessment, caseworkers report having witnessed a greater percent of said needs pertaining to the chart below.



## D. Section Summary

### 1. Needs Assessment

The needs of the low-income population of our region were first considered using the client survey data and from our files that showed the type of services requested, provided, or secured by referral to other resources. We also looked at data gathered via the Internet from the Census Bureau.

A survey was conducted of the clients to gather information on our services. Information collected from a survey given to clients of TRRC of the other department staff to determine any changes or trends they are seeing with their client's needs. Information is gathered informally through our participation with the Interagency Councils, other service provider boards and committees, cooperative projects, and the Unmet Needs Committees. TRRC works with the Continuum of Care.

TRRC Governing Board members and the CAA Board members are provided with activity reports from each department and participate in the review and discussion of this information.

Their input is considered when developing programs or services for their respective counties or for the region.

## **2. Service Delivery System**

TRRC reviews the service delivery system on an on-going basis to assure services and our facilities are easily accessible to all clients. Changes and recommendations by field staff and caseworkers are given careful consideration to assure they will improve our services. Staff collaborate closely with other providers and play an active role in each of the regions' four interagency Councils fostering cooperation and coordination in services between the many social service providers. CSBG funds and services are combined with other local resources in nearly all our work program components. This results in increased case management services, leveraging of funds, technical assistance and counseling services.

## **3. Linkages**

No changes have been made to our system of linkages over the past year. We continue to work on several collaborations throughout our four county regions. Everyone from the Executive Director to the Caseworkers seek to improve and build on new linkages for services to our clients. Communication between the departments within TRRC and other providers is key in making appropriate referrals, avoiding duplication and misuse of services.

## **4. Coordination**

There are many social service agencies providing multiple services to the low-income families of this region. Because of this, coordination of services is vital in meeting the multiple needs many families have. This allows us to use our limited funding more efficiently and effectively in addressing low-income family's needs. TRRC staff participates in presentations, fairs, and other functions that promote our services and improve the coordination between providers.

## **5. Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives**

The agency participates in several projects throughout our region that affect individual families, targeted groups or a community. Due to the flexibility of program design, we are able to work closely with social service agencies, schools, community leaders, neighborhood groups, churches, clubs, and organizations in the development of services.

## **6. Outcome**

The priorities of the CSBG program were reviewed and strategies were selected that could be effectively administered and have the greatest positive impact on the targeted population. The outcome section includes problem statements and the goals to correct those problems.

### **SECTION 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Two Rivers has been collecting data to identify regional needs of our customers over the past year. This information has been gathered from a variety of sources and individual contacts. Other data was reviewed on demographics, family type, education, low-income housing and more. Unmet Needs Committee throughout our service area have indicated that the request and types of services has grown over the past year with a greater demand for service, mostly due to COVID.

The demands for assistance with rent or mortgage, housing repairs, utilities, medicine, and support services such as car repairs are constant with funds never adequate to meet the needs. Referrals are made when we are out of funding. We experience a constant level of request for assistance with housing repairs or rehabilitation due to deteriorating housing conditions. but few other agencies have funds to support the needs.

Two Rivers Regional Council continues in their participation with the West Central Illinois Continuum of Care which has been successful in receiving funding for transitional housing projects across our region. The common factor for this eleven-county project is the three Community Action Agencies: Two Rivers, WIRC and MCS. A Gaps Analysis survey showed us the high priority participating agencies place on job training, life skills and other employment services for their clients.

In combination with CSBG funding, the REACH OUT Center resources along with funding from other programs we administer, will help to provide such things as clothing, household items, basic needs and transportation to help aid families in their efforts toward stability.

On an ongoing basis, The Governing Board and the Community Action Board of Two Rivers are made aware of all services of our agency and the flexibility we have in designing programs to meet a need in their respective counties along with providing input to the development and delivery of our services.

Food insecurity is a concern for our region; we have served three times as many individuals in Brown and Pike since the pandemic started. All of the food pantries in our region are struggling with the increase of need. Food insecurity exists in every county in the country; the struggle for food is not only experienced by the households but also by the food pantries. We are not able to purchase in bulk which makes it difficult to ensure food access. The schools are closed during the summer, and this also takes a toll on the family food budget. No longer having free breakfast and lunch adds to the families overall physical and mental well-being. Also, with the rising cost of food, families are being forced to choose between food and other necessities.

According to data collected from Feeding America, it shows that Adams County has 7,310 food insecure people with a food insecurity rate of 11.1%; Brown County has 560 food insecure people with an 8.4 % insecurity rate; Pike County has 1,870 food insecure people with a food insecurity rate of 11.9% and Schuyler County has 990 food insecure people with a food insecurity rate of 14.2%. Hunger can affect people from all walks of life. Many people are one job loss or medical crisis away from food insecurity – but some people, including children and seniors may be at a greater risk of hunger than others. Children in our region make up 20,488, which is 22% of the population that were food insecure at one point in the past year.

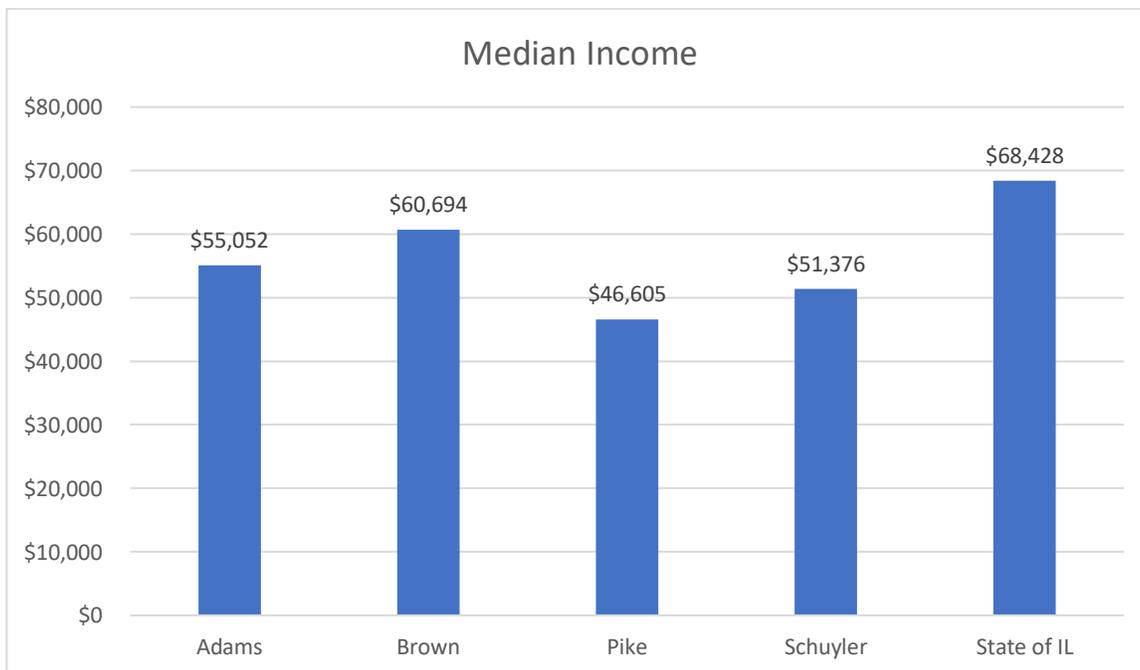
Our food pantries play a vital role in our communities because a large population is not eligible for State and Federal Assistance.

According to data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the labor force in Adams County is 30,308; employed is 29,205; unemployed 1,103 which is 6.3% of the unemployment rate.

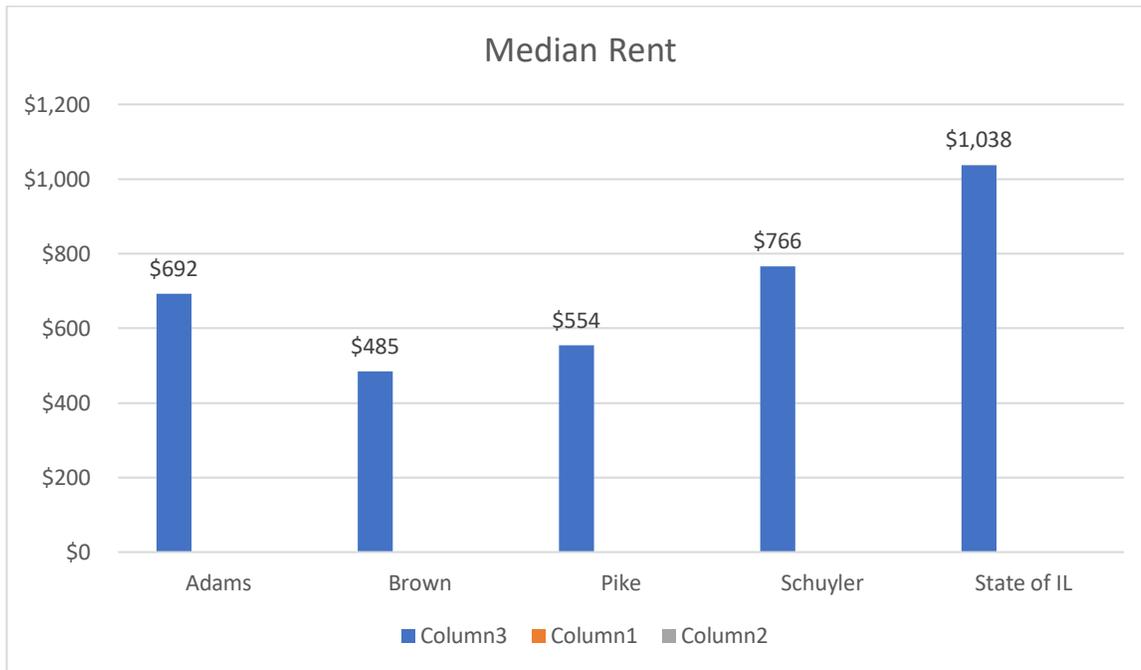
Brown County labor force is 3,086; employed 3,008; unemployed 78 which is 2.5% of the unemployment rate. Pike County labor force is 6,760; employed 6,469; unemployed is 291 which is 4.3% of the unemployment rate. Schuyler County labor force is 3,284; employed 3,161; unemployed 123 which 3.7% of the unemployment rate.

County	Year	Month	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	%
ADAMS COUNTY	2022	5	30,308	29,205	1,103	3.6
BROWN COUNTY	2022	5	3,086	3,008	78	2.5
PIKE COUNTY	2022	5	6,760	6,469	291	4.3
SCHUYLER COUNTY	2022	5	3,284	3,161	123	3.7

According to data from the Census Bureau the median household income in Adams County is \$55,052.00; Brown County is \$60,694.00; Pike County is \$46,605.00; Schuyler County is \$51,376.00. The State median is \$68,428.00.



Rental costs average in Adams County is \$692.00; Brown is \$485.00; Pike is \$554.00, and Schuyler is \$766.00. for our region with the State at \$1,038.00. Those living in poverty in our region in Adams County is 10.6%; Brown is 16.7%; Pike is 13.5%; Schuyler is 11.7% compared to the State average of 12%.



Those with a high school diploma or equivalent in Adams County is 92.2% Brown County is 82.4%; Pike County is 89.7%; Schuyler is 91%.

The Client survey shows that 67% feel that there are insufficient affordable homes in the community. Our Rental Housing Support program has a possible opening once per year. Currently there are 26 units in Adams, 4 in Pike; we are currently working with landlords in Brown and Schuyler County to be able to assist in those counties. The rates are \$650.00 for 2 bedroom and \$750.00 for 3 bedrooms.

TRRC is the primary provider of utility assistance in the counties that we serve. LIHEAP, Warm Neighbors/Cool Friends, and the Ameren Grant programs are utilized to assist clients. The demand remains high for these programs. There are times that income eligible clients are still unable to be served due to timing or other eligibility requirements set forth by the grants. Clients that do not meet eligibility or income guidelines for these programs are referred to other agencies in the community.

TRRC addresses the need for training by administering the Workforce in Action Act program. There are offices and staff available in all four counties to assist low income and untrained individuals, and displaced workers. Job Club will be offered to anyone who wants assistance in seeking jobs online, creating or updating resumes, online application assistance, mock interviews and labor market information on careers, including current rate of pay, job growth, and labor demand. It will be advertised with flyers in local businesses, the local papers and on social media, as well as the TRRC website and the American Job Center website.

### **SECTIONS 3 – Description of the Service Delivery System**

Two Rivers Regional Council serves four counties totaling 2,430 square miles of rural areas, small towns and villages. We have seen an increase in the number of households we are able to serve since the percent of poverty guideline went up from 125% to 200%. Each county has an office that is staffed at least two days per week that delivers intake and referral services for the programs offered by the Community Services Department, Low Income Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Program. Most applications are completed at the agency offices, but special intake sites are set up as needed. During the pandemic we were not able to see households face to face which resulted in a lot of incomplete applications that were denied. Our ability to open our offices and do in person applications has greatly increased the number of households served with complete applications.

Transportation is often a problem in the rural area. Two Rivers deals with this by working to schedule consecutive appointments with neighbors or relatives, coordinating appointments with senior transportation services, collaborating with the clients to designate individuals to represent them and by providing home visits. We continue to refer our customers to West Central Mass Transit in their respective county. According to the Community Needs survey it shows 44% of clients feel there are insufficient public transportation options in our area.

The service delivery system is effective overall; however, it does become cumbersome for clients to travel from one agency to another when they are already low on funds. TRRC has also identified that clients have trouble filling out all the required paperwork for other agencies. Many other agencies do not provide

home visits, which can be a hurdle for those with disabilities. Communities without unmet needs committees have limited options if TRRC cannot help them.

#### **SECTION 4: DESCRIPTION OF LINKAGES:**

Two Rivers and other social service organizations participate in monthly “Inter-Agency Councils” in each of the four counties. The purpose of the monthly meetings is to bring service providers together to discuss their activities and maintain an ongoing referral network. All employees of Two Rivers are knowledgeable about the services offered within the agency and with the other organizations in and around our service area.

The field staff from the Brown and Pike County Office and the Community Services staff from Adams County office are active participants in the Unmet Needs Committees. Unmet Needs was established in Adams County after the flood of 1993 and has continued to operate successfully. The purpose of Unmet Needs is to present cases that have had detailed casework and have been screened closely for consideration for assistance by the group. The members of Unmet Needs include social service agencies, churches, local businesses, and private citizens. All participants bring money and/or services to the table where they are combined to meet the client needs. Types of assistance include those things there are no other resources for such as minor housing repair, medical needs, transportation, handicap ramps, etc. and car repairs to name a few. The linkage with the non-traditional partners has helped to bring a more comprehensive service to our clients and has opened the door for donations from a different group of funders.

TRRC utilizes press releases, flyers, social media, and the television to inform the public as programs become available. We have a Marketing Director on staff that promotes the agency as a whole. Previous clients are contacted by TRRC staff to make them aware that a service that they have received in the past is available again. Several departments participate in many service providers fairs throughout the counties.

TRRC also has direct contact with other social service providers to ensure that they are aware of current programs. Caseworkers make referrals and ask clients to follow-through to make sure that needs are being met. This past year, TRRC has made a concerted effort to assist clients with applications for services from other agencies when they experience difficulty completing them. Example of applications that may be difficult for clients to complete is subsidized housing.

## **SECTION 5: COORDINATION:**

Coordination is key in the administration of the CSBG grant. Activities include information and referral services between agency operated programs; information and referrals services between other service providers across the region; and coordination of financial resources.

Two Rivers department supervisors meet to share program information. Not only are existing services discussed but so are client needs and potential funding opportunities. CAP staff are kept informed of grants and the Planning Department is working on, that could greatly impact housing rehabilitation needs across our region. This information is relayed to all intake staff so they may make appropriate in-house referrals.

The I & R with other organizations is exchanged at monthly Inter-Agency Council meetings held in each county and through regular contacts with outside caseworkers. Also meeting every two weeks are the Unmet Needs Committees of Adams and Pike counties where financial coordination occurs. Referrals in Brown and Pike counties are coordinated closely with General Assistance.

DOT Foods in Brown County is a long-standing supporter of our food pantries in Brown and Pike Counties, as well as other endeavors through their foundation. DOT Charitable also supports the Brown County and Pike County food pantries with a yearly monetary donation and a donation of products available at Dorothy's Market.

TRRC has a school supply program for Brown, Pike and Schuyler counties that is primarily funded through numerous donations from faith-based organization contributions, local private donations, and

donations from individuals and businesses. Area high schools and colleges are contacted directly with information about our scholarship program. LIHEAP staff cross refers customers to the GED and WIOA programs but also equip all customers with an agency resource brochure.

TRRC in Adams County primarily refers clients to General Assistance or The Salvation Army. TRRC partners with West Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging and West Central Illinois Center for Independent Living to receive referrals for information and assistance with programs available to assist with client care. Two Rivers Regional Council partners with the United Way in Brown, and Schuyler Counties. Brown and Schuyler County United Way funds allow us to administer emergency funds in those counties which provide assistance with rent, medical expenses, gas for medical appointments, car repairs, and other emergency needs. The Salvation Army in Quincy coordinates with TRRC in securing shelter for homeless clients that are not eligible to be served through Salvation Army shelter. TRRC works to provide temporary shelter for clients with limited resources through the DHS Emergency Food and Shelter grant.

#### SECTION 6: INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED INITIATIVES:

TRRC partners with the Illinois Department of Corrections in Pike County with a garden program. We provide seeds and plants, they plant, care for, and harvest the produce. The produce is brought to the food pantry and handed out through our pantry. This provides nutritional options to families while giving inmates the knowledge of gardening and giving back to the community by helping others. Fresh produce can be expensive on a tight budget; it also helps with the monthly cost of operating a pantry.

We also work with the Illinois Department of Corrections with inmates unloading food trucks and putting the food on the shelves and/or freezers. The inmates also assist with Christmas basket project by unloading food trucks, sorting food, and putting the food boxes together. They assist in our REACHOUT Thrift store by help lifting heavy items and moving merchandise. This is an important project; it helps

with an aging volunteer base at the thrift store and gives the inmates a sense of pride and giving back to a community.

The Brown County Food Pantry is a recipient of fresh vegetables grown at the YMCA Community Garden during the summer months.

## **COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Community Needs Assessment overview shows the following:

37% of respondents feel there are sufficient job opportunities in the community

55% of respondents feel that the schools in our area meet the educational needs of children in our community

78% of respondents feel that there insufficient childcare programs in our area

89% of respondents feel that there are insufficient childcare programs with non-traditional hours in our area

50% of respondents feel that there are sufficient pre-school programs in our area

61% of respondents feel that there are insufficient affordable youth activities available in our community

33% of respondents feel that the housing stock in the community is safe and well-maintained

33% of respondents feel that the housing stock in the community is not safe and well-maintained

33% of respondents were neutral about the housing stock in the community being safe and well maintained

67% of respondents feel that there are insufficient affordable homes available in the community

61% of respondents feel that there are sufficient emergency shelters available in the community

67% of respondents feel that there are sufficient medical services available in the community

39% of respondents feel that there are insufficient dental services available in the community

28% of respondents feel that there are sufficient dental services available in the community

33% of respondents were neutral on the availability of dental services in the community

72% of respondents feel that there are sufficient emergency food resources available in the community

78% of respondents feel that there are sufficient non-medical emergency services in the area

44% of respondents feel that there are insufficient public transportation options in the area

33% of respondents were neutral about the availability of sufficient public transportation options in the area

79% of respondents said that they had a positive relationship with TRRC.

75% of respondents said that TRRC makes a significant difference in the lives of low-income families and individuals

## **SECTION 7: OUTCOME**

### **EMPLOYMENT**

#### **01.012 Skills Training and Opportunities for Experience**

**Narrative:** Program staff will attend meetings and trainings to ensure the new Federal Standards are met. Staff will attend training that will enhance their job duties

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 2.08 Individuals who obtained a recognized credential, certificate or degree relating to the achievement of educational or vocational skills

### **EDUCATION and Cognitive Development**

#### **02.021 School Supplies**

**Narrative:** Provide school supplies, clothing and shoes to students in income eligible families

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 2.04 Youth who are achieving at basic grade level (academic, social, and other school success skills

## **02.061 Educational Financial Aid Assistance**

**Narrative:** Provide scholarships for CSBG eligible persons for post-secondary education

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome Measure 02.11** Individuals who made progress to a post-secondary degree.

## **HOUSING**

### **04.011 Housing payment Assistance**

**Narrative:** Clients may be eligible for rental assistance or Security Deposit if they are in imminent danger of becoming homeless. The client must have suffered a temporary hardship that has caused them to seek assistance with first months' rent and they must show adequate income to pay future rent.

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 04.05** Households who avoided eviction/Households who obtained safe and affordable housing

### **04.021 Eviction Prevention Services**

**Narrative:** Provide food, shelter, rent assistance and other support services to homeless individuals

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 05.03** Individuals who demonstrated improved mental and behavioral health and well being

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **PUT ON HOLD DUE TO COVID**

#### **05.051 Support Groups**

**Narrative:** The purpose of this group is to target at risk youth in areas that have very limited if any, activities for youth. Many of these children are in need of guidance from an outside source. This group

was developed to show that by working together as a group they can make a difference in their community and themselves. Life Skills is an area that is focused upon in working with the children.

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 05.02 Individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well being

#### **05.071 Nutrition and Food/Meals**

**Narrative:** Partner with the Department of Corrections to plant a garden at the Work Camp facility in Pike County. This program allows inmates to give back to the community while learning a skill: it provides low-income families with fresh vegetable and provides nutrition for our families

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 05.01 Individuals who demonstrated increased nutrition skills (e.g. cooking, shopping and growing food)

#### **05.072 Nutrition and Food/Meals**

**Narrative:** Provide low-income person with food through pantries in Brown and Pike Counties

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 05.02 Individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well-being

#### **05.73 Nutrition and Food Meals**

**Narrative:** This program is a way of reaching those in need during a time of the year that adds extra stress to the household budget. Each household receives enough food to last two weeks which includes the holiday meal. The baskets average 80 pounds. The clients are also assistance with personal care items, Christmas gifts, socks under garments, hats, mittens and gloves.

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome:** 05.02 Individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well-being

### **05.092 Emergency Hygiene Assistance**

**Narrative:** Provide basic hygiene supplies to children from Pre K-12 that participate in the school supply project

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 05.02** Individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well-being

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

### **06.011 Civic Engagement and Community Involvement**

**Narrative:** The volunteer program is a diverse group that is made up of individuals that assist with the agency services throughout the year.

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 06.1** Community Action program participants who increased skills, knowledge, and abilities to enable them to work with Community Action to Improve conditions in the community

## **SERVICES SUPPORTING MULTIPLE DOMAINS**

### **07.011 Case Management**

**Narrative:** Staff will assist clients with emergency situations. We will provide the following services: Emergency car repair , Emergency Transportation, Emergency disaster relief, Emergency clothing, Obtain safe and affordable housing, and other emergency assistance.

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 07.01** An Individual who achieved one or more outcomes as identified by the National Performance Indicators in various domains

### **7.031 Referrals**

**Narrative:** Provide comprehensive information and referral services

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 06.01 C** Community Action program participants who gained other skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance their ability to engage

**07.111 Emergency Clothing Assistance**

**Narrative:** Provide access to donated clothing, furniture, appliances etc through the thrift store

**Goal:** Individuals and Families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security

**Outcome: 05.03** Individuals who demonstrated improved mental and behavioral health and well being