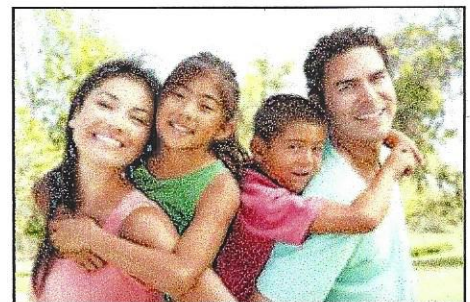




The Hidalgo County Community Service Agency

Community Needs Assessment

November 17, 2015



Executive Summary

Hidalgo County Community Service Agency (HCCSA) is a community action agency serving the County of Hidalgo in deep South Texas. They have undertaken a community needs assessment and developed a strategic plan for the 2016 program year. This report documents the assessment process, analysis and identifies the particular needs to be addressed in the next phase of the this important process.

The purpose of this document was to invite program users and non-users to lift their voices and have a place at "the discussion" regarding the causes of poverty and how best to address those causes. In addition, this process reached out to local elected officials, board members and social service agency executives regarding their perceptions of poverty and how best to address them. Finally, the agency utilized trusted data sources to use as a backdrop for the analysis. These sources include the US Census, WorkForce Solutions, Texas Association of Realtors and the National Center for Education Statistics.

Agency administrators compiled this report and led the discussion process. For the next program year, the plan is for this process to be outsourced to insure a more objective approach to the identification of issues and possible ways to address them.

The needs identified in this report will drive the strategic planning process. They range from improving the communication channels among the County's social services network to providing direct emergency services to those persons living in poverty. In addition, improved services for veterans and the elderly were of particular importance to respondents. Finally, the report cites the need for continued efforts in the area of job skills training and educational attainment.

This report is a starting point in the planning process and will be utilized for that purpose. The authors certainly recognize the need for a more scientific approach that is more representative of the entire indigent population of Hidalgo County.

The structure of this report follows the guidance of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

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Introduction

The Community Needs Assessment is a required document that allows leaders of the Community Service Agency (CSA) to do a careful review of the needs of the population they are charged with serving. At the same time, they match identified needs with the social services supporting that particular population. The United States Department of Health and Human Services through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs are charged with administering funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). This funding supports the efforts of the local CSA.

This process is helpful in identifying specific social issues that are possibly within the purview of the agency's service delivery model. This assessment and other similar studies are tools that the agency utilizes as it attempts to better understand the complexity of the issues and seek the resources and partnerships needed to address those identified needs.

Agency Description

The Hidalgo County Community Service Agency (HCCSA) is a department of the County of Hidalgo. The agency was funded in 1985. In previous years, the agency has provided direct services to the county's most vulnerable populations in the form of weatherization, medical transportation, commodity distribution and the like. Most recently, the agency provides utility assistance and comprehensive case management. Both of these programs are funded through the grants from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

In addition, HCCSA administers the county's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). This program is funded via a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Finally, the program houses a local non-profit agency known as Advocacy Resource Center for Housing (ARCH). This agency is an independent organization administered by a separate board of directors.

HCCSA is governed by the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court. A set of formally adopted by-laws grants limited guidance and oversight responsibilities to a nine member advisory board. These two bodies work together to develop policy and set the overall course for the agency. Commissioners Court is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the agency.

The nine member board is comprised of three democratically elected representatives of the poor. Three of the members are selected amongst the elected city officials of the county. Finally, three members are selected from the many community based organizations that work with the vulnerable populations served by the agency.

This nine member board reviews financial documents, develops budget allocations, makes policy recommendations and serves as a voice for the vulnerable populations of the county. Working with the Executive Director and other agency staff, these recommendations are presented to the Commissioners Court for their consideration and approval. This document will follow that particular path to ultimate approval.

Demographics of Agency Clientele

According to reports compiled for the month of August 10, 2015, HCCSA served a total of 15,748 unduplicated persons. The total number of households served was 6,654. Thus the typical household served by the agency consists of approximately 2.4 persons.

The overwhelming majority of those persons are Hispanic (98.7%). Six out of ten are female. All adult household comprise 60.7% of all the clients served by the agency. The agency serves a relatively small number of the county's large migrant population. They comprise only 0.41% of the total number of people served.

In addition, 71.4% of those served receive Social Security Income or Supplemental Security Income. Over 88% of clients served by the agency fall below the federal poverty line and over 71% receive food stamps.

Overview of Assessment Process

The assessment was conducted primarily via surveys developed by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The Spanish version of the survey was produced in-house using the local dialect. Surveys were made available to residents as they came into the main office located in Edinburg, Texas. In addition, survey instruments were made available to local non-profit agencies charged with serving the targeted populations. Board members and elected officials were also included in the assessment process. The instruments were also produced by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Both groups used the same instrument.

Once the instruments were distributed, completed and collected, results were compiled by agency staff. Tally strokes were used to determine particular needs and a spreadsheet of the results was developed. For elected officials and board member responses, a degree of interpretation was needed. The two instruments varied in that while the resident questionnaire listed specific choices and used a rating system, the elected official/board member instrument utilized open ended questions. Nonetheless, real attempts were made to interpret the intent of the board member/elected official.

Two focus groups were convened for purposes of this community needs assessment. The groups consisted of members of the Advisory Board and key staff members of the agency. Summary results of the elected officials/board members were juxtaposed with those of the residents and clients. Discussions ensued about the correlation between the various groups.

Quantitative data for this document was derived primarily from the state recommended site called Community Commons. This information was augmented with data from the U.S. Census Bureau and a local entity charged with compiling workforce related information. WorkForce Solutions provided information regarding unemployment rates and industrial trends for this report.

Description of Service Area

Hidalgo County Community Service Agency is charged with serving those individuals living within the geographic boundaries of the County of Hidalgo at the southernmost tip of Texas. The county is the eighth most populous county in Texas. The county is bordered by Brooks County to the north, Cameron, Willacy and Kenedy Counties to the east, Starr County to the west. There are twenty two incorporated cities within the geographical boundaries of the county. The population is served by sixteen public school districts and three public universities and one community college.

The American Community Survey, the 2013 estimated population was 815,996 persons (U.S. Census, 2015). Over 90% of the population is of Hispanic origin. In 2013, per capita income was \$14,222 as opposed to \$26,019 for the state of Texas as a whole. The median household income was \$34,146 in Hidalgo County compared to \$51,900 statewide. (U.S. Census, 2015). During the 2011-2012 academic year, 83.89% of school age children were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The national average for that period was 48.34% (National Center for Education Statistics).

Children (under the age of 18 years) make up 33.6% of the population in Hidalgo County compared to 26.4% of the Texas population. Females make up 51.2% of the local population as opposed to 50.4% of those living in Texas as a whole. The typical household in Hidalgo County consists of 3.6 persons versus 2.82 persons per household statewide. The median value of an owner occupied home in the county is \$78,100. Statewide that number is \$128,900 (U.S. Census, 2015).

Review of Quantitative Data

A review of the data provided by the Community Commons website describes a part of the United States that is under extreme pressures exacerbated by population growth. The socioeconomic indicators point to a young population facing high unemployment rates with relatively low literacy rates as compared to other parts of the state and country. These two indicators alone give rise to high levels of poverty which in turn perpetuates the cycle. A closer examination of the indicators will paint a more accurate picture.

Population Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Hidalgo County's population was 569,463 persons. By 2013, the American Community Survey estimated the county's population to be 815,996. The population change was 246,533 over those 13 years. This represents 43.29% growth over those years. This change is in comparison to the statewide average of 22.96% and the national barometer of 10.7%. Hidalgo County's growth rate was over three times the national average (U.S. Census, 2015).

Single Parent Family Households/ Female Householder

The majority of Hidalgo County reports well over 37% of single family households living below the federal poverty level. Geographically speaking, with the exception of the Mission-Edinburg-McAllen-Pharr metropolitan area, the rest of the county's single family households living in poverty are above 37% (Community Commons, 2015). For families with a female head of household, the rate is alarmingly high at 12.3% (Community Commons, 2015). This number is double the statewide and national rates.

Employment and Workforce Indicators

For the most part, unemployment has tracked significantly higher than other parts of Texas and the nation. According to WorkForce Solutions the figures for the month of August, 2015 indicate 7.9% of the workforce is unemployed. When compared to the statewide rate of 4.4% and the national unemployment rate of 5.2%, Hidalgo County's rate is exceedingly high (WorkForce Solutions, August, 2015).

The growth rate for non agricultural employment is rebounding from the May, 2015 low of 1.9%. This segment of the economy is slightly below 3%. This indicates a bit of improvement but certainly is ominously low in terms of job prospects. Leading non-farm industries are education/health services, trade/transportation and utilities, government and leisure/hospitality (WorkForce Solutions, August, 2015).

Educational Attainment and Literacy Rate

Those having graduated from high school comprise 61.8% of the county's population as opposed to 81.2% statewide. Those obtaining at least a bachelor's degree comprise 15.9% of the local population compared to 26.7% of the statewide population. In Hidalgo County, almost 85% of the local population over the age of 5 years speak a language other than English at home. This number is compared to 34.7% of the statewide population (U.S. Census, 2015).

For the general population, over 38% of adults have no high school diploma. The rate for the state is 18.83% and nation is 13.98%.

Veterans and Educational Attainment

Information from the United States Census Bureau estimates that there are 23,498 veterans in Hidalgo County. Anecdotal evidence (discussions with veteran advocacy groups, Congressional aides, etc) point to a higher number of veterans living in Hidalgo County. For the winter months it is safe to say that the number significantly increases as the Winter Texan population returns. However, for purposes of this discussion, the official census information will be utilized. The American Community Survey indicates that 10% of the veterans living in Hidalgo County have no high school diploma. This number is significantly higher than the Texas rate of 6.98% and the national rate of 7.73%

Housing Indicators

Hidalgo County boasts a relatively high percentage of owner occupied homes. In 2012, over 59% of the population own their homes in the County. However, this is down from a high of 73.06% in the year 2000 (Community Commons, 2015). The median value of these homes is slightly over \$33,000. Statewide the median home value is almost \$52,000 (U.S. Census, 2015). A significant percentage of these homeowners are also living without indoor plumbing. The American Community Survey details 4,992 homes without indoor plumbing. This translates to 2.33% of the housing stock. The rest of the state is well below 1% of population as is the nation (Community Commons, 2015).

Uninsured Population

Hidalgo County is home to an alarmingly high number of uninsured persons. Almost 39% of the population currently has no health insurance. Statewide the number is 25.2% and nationally the uninsured population stands at 17%.

Review of Qualitative Data

The following describes the various methods utilized in the collection of first hand data via the use of surveys. The top five needs are also presented.

Agency Client Surveys (Main Office)

Four hundred thirty five responses were received from clients who applied for services at the Edinburg location. The top five identified needs were the following:

- Utility Assistance
- Weatherization of their homes
- Affordable Medical Care
- Prescription Assistance
- Rental Assistance

Given the location of the office and the fact that the residents actually were coming in to apply for services at this location, there is a strong possibility that responses would be skewed in favor of utility assistance. In addition, given that over 33% of the clients that access agency services are over the age of 55 years of age, there exists a further possibility of skewed responses. The assessment team was keenly aware of this and made the focus group aware of these possibilities.

Targeted Population Surveys

One hundred thirty eight responses were received from various populations that represented the low income and vulnerable populations of the county but may or may not have been receiving services from the agency. These surveys were received from partnering agencies with access to those particular populations. Three responses tied for fifth. They are shown. The top five identified needs were the following :

- Crime Awareness Education / Reduction
- Trade or Technical School
- Public Parks
- Neighborhood Clean ups
- Employment

Help Finding a Job

Prescription Assistance

Elected Officials/Organizations

Three hundred nineteen surveys were returned by organizational leaders and elected officials. Board member input would be requested during the focus group portion of the assessment. The top five identified needs were the following:

Education

Housing Assistance

Employment

Emergency Assistance

Income Management

Given that this survey instrument was formatted and worded differently from the others, the assessment made was given latitude to interpret responses and group like responses together.

Summary of Qualitative Data

For ease of presentation, the following table was developed. The three sources of survey responses correspond with the description above.

Rank	Main Office	Targeted Population	Elected Official / Org.
1	Utility Bills	Crime Awareness	Education
2	Weatherization	Trade School	Housing Assistance
3	Affordable Medical Care	Public Parks	Employment
4	Prescription Assistance	Neighborhood Cleanups	Emergency Assistance
5	Rental Assistance	Employment	Income Management
5	-	Help finding a job	-
5	-	Prescription assistance	-

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group consisted of three members of the Advisory Board of Directors and three staff members of the Community Service Agency Supervisory staff. The purpose for the group was to examine the various types of data and draw educated inferences from the information.

The group was presented with each of the top five needs as identified by the various groups. Immediately, the group began to draw parallels from each set of data. Once these similarities were discussed thoroughly, a master list of the combined top five needs was developed and posted for discussion. The discussion involved the urgency of the need, existing efforts in the community to address the need, possible gaps in addressing the need and finally possible strategies for addressing the need over the next twelve months.

The final list of community needs and their respective rankings are as follows:

Utility Assistance/Emergency Assistance

Housing / Rental Assistance

Affordable Medical Care / Prescription Assistance

Education / Low Educational Attainment

Employment Opportunities

Key Findings and the Causes and Conditions of Poverty

- The community at large is concerned about the prevalence of crime especially fraud perpetrated against the elderly.
- There exists a need of temporary assistance for those living in poverty who experience acute events such as loss of employment, illness or other emergencies.
- Safe, affordable housing shortages exist in Hidalgo County. Many residents improvise by living in homes that are substandard and oftentimes unsafe.
- Low literacy levels and low educational attainment exacerbate the issues of unemployment and underemployment.
- Residents report high levels of ambiguity regarding the quality of information they receive regarding other services. Communication and coordination among the social service agencies must be improved.

- There exists a need for more a more comprehensive approach to serving veterans in Hidalgo County.
- Financial illiteracy is prevalent in Hidalgo County especially among the vulnerable populations.
- Single head of household families, especially those led by females are at high risk for perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Community Strengths and Assets

Hidalgo County is comprised of twenty two municipalities. Each of these communities has its own list of strengths. However, the county can count on four major assets that set it apart from any other area in the state.

Responsive Community Leaders

Hidalgo County boasts a resilient population with leaders who are responsive to the community's needs. For example, the County leads other parts of the nation with regards to the prevalence of type 2 diabetes. Community leaders, social service agencies, healthcare organizations, the general population and the academic community have united under this one threat to develop strategies to educate and screen persons at risk of developing this insidious disease. The results are demonstrated via the many coalitions throughout the county.

Higher Education

The recent merger of the two universities serving deep south Texas into one University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has put the spotlight on the higher education investments in Hidalgo County. The school will also be home to the area's first medical school. These two historic undertakings represent tremendous growth opportunities for the area. In addition, Texas A&M University and the University of Houston have also developed plans to expand into Hidalgo County. Finally, the continued growth of South Texas College allows for unprecedented opportunities for students in the area.

Highly Organized Vulnerable Populations

For years, advocates for the area's underserved population have voiced their needs and concerns to community leaders. However, in recent years, these groups have developed a more organized umbrella group that has allowed for a more unified and louder voice to be heard throughout Hidalgo County. The dialogue has become more evident as these groups approach leaders with needs such as street lighting, improved police protection and better drainage infrastructure.

Tight Knit Social Services Network

Although Hidalgo County's population is well over the 800,000 person mark, it still maintains its small town feel when it comes to social services. In the county, there exists a relative small group of social service leaders who work very well together in all facets of their work. This is particularly evident during times of crisis such as hurricanes and the like.

Barriers

The area is not immune from experiencing some of the things that hinder forward momentum. The top three challenges to progress are detailed below.

Limited Regional Planning Efforts

Because of the scarce resources of the past and the existence of twenty two municipalities and sixteen independent school districts, regionalism is sometimes lost. An important note to add is that each of these governmental entities has its own elected board and respond to smaller subsets of the population. Because of this, leaders have to work twice as hard to convince their constituencies and their neighbors of the virtues of regional visions

Limited Tax Base

The county has been beset by poverty for many years. In addition, during times of extraordinary population growth of the 1980's thru the 1990's, the tax base grew at disproportionate rates. This discrepancy placed extreme fiscal pressures on many communities as they tried to provide vital public services with little increase in tax base growth.

Unprecedented Growth Rates

Hidalgo County experienced tremendous population growth beginning in the late 1970's and it remained unabated through 2010. The decennial growth rates between 1980 and 2010 were 56%, 35%, 48% and 36%. Anecdotal evidence describe school districts that were building two elementary schools and one middle school every year.

Trends

Population Growth

Population growth will continue to be a consideration for leaders of Hidalgo County. The issue is compounded by immigration given the county's proximity to the border. In addition, Hidalgo County's young population (28 years is the median) points to continued positive growth.

Need for Skilled Workforce

As more and more industry makes its way to South Texas, Hidalgo County will experience a tremendous need for a more highly skilled workforce. The emergence of the nascent medical industry can only mean increased need for a more highly skilled pool of employees.

Improved Economic Opportunity

The development of the I-69 corridor and the improved super highways of Mexico will lead to increased economic opportunity for persons living in Hidalgo County. In addition to a strong retail and service sector, budding technologies will offer unprecedented opportunities.

Improved Educational Access

The academic sector will continue to play a vital role in the development of Hidalgo County. The creation of the new university and the inauguration of several others will offer new opportunities for professional degrees and bring the important research dollars to Hidalgo County. Continued collaboration amongst school districts and South Texas Community College will continue to propel Hidalgo County forward.

Priority Needs and Possible Recommendations

Given a vigorous analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data and the various discussion group forums, the agency puts forth this list of priority needs and possible recommendations. They include:

Improved Collaboration Among Social Service Agencies

Necessary Targeted Outreach for the Elderly with regard to Elder Abuse and Fraud

Continued Need for Emergency Services (Utility, Rental, Food)

Improved Services for Single Family Households

Improved Quality of Coordinated Services for Veterans

Development of Financial Literacy Courses for the Vulnerable Populations of Hidalgo County

Support for Educational Programs that Produce Highly Skilled Workers

Creation and Adoption of Minimum Housing Standards

Concluding Comments

This document is intended to be used for the purpose of planning Hidalgo County Community Service Agency's 2015-2016 Program Year. It is presented as a starting point for discussion and will be used as such. The agency Administration and Advisory Board present this document from this perspective.

Works Cited

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WorkForce Solutions. (August, 2015). *McAllen - Edinburg - Mission - MSA Monthly Report*.

Mike Willis.

Attachment A - Community Needs Survey for Residents

Hidalgo County - Community Service Agency would like your input to better serve you.

City and County where you live: Hidalgo County

Check one of these choices to let us know who completed the survey:

Local Official Client Volunteer Board Member Resident Other, describe: _____

Circle the number that reflects your opinion on the need for each item.

CATEGORY	NEEDS	Don't Know (0)	Not Needed (1)	Rarely Needed (2)	Needed (3)	Very Needed (4)
<i>Asistance</i>	Help with applying for Social Security, SSDI, WIC, TANF, etc.	0	1	2	3	4
	Help finding resources in the community	0	1	2	3	4
	Finding Child Care	0	1	2	3	4
	Food	0	1	2	3	4
	Transportation	0	1	2	3	4
	Legal Services	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Case Management</i>	Assistance with goals and self-sufficiency	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Community</i>	Neighborhood clean-up projects	0	1	2	3	4
	Crime awareness or crime reduction	0	1	2	3	4
	Public parks and facilities	0	1	2	3	4
	Employment opportunities	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Education</i>	GED classes	0	1	2	3	4
	English as a Second Language Classes	0	1	2	3	4
	Adult Education or Night School	0	1	2	3	4
	Computer Skills Training	0	1	2	3	4
	Assistance to attend trade or technical school, or college	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Employment</i>	Help finding a job	0	1	2	3	4
	Help with job skills, training & job search	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Family Support</i>	Financial Education/ Budgeting Classes/ Credit Counseling	0	1	2	3	4
	Parenting Classes	0	1	2	3	4
	Nutrition Education/ Healthy Eating Education workshops	0	1	2	3	4
	Classes on healthy relationships, resolving conflicts, etc	0	1	2	3	4
	Counseling services	0	1	2	3	4
	Programs and Activities for Youth (ages 12-18)	0	1	2	3	4
	Programs and Activities for Seniors	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Housing</i>	Affordable Housing	0	1	2	3	4
	Help paying rent	0	1	2	3	4
	Help with utility bills	0	1	2	3	4
	Help to make my home more energy efficient (weatherization)	0	1	2	3	4
<i>Medical</i>	Health Insurance/ Affordable Medical Care	0	1	2	3	4
	Prescription Assistance	0	1	2	3	4

Thank you for taking time to provide us your feed back!

Anexo A - Necesidades de la Comunidad Encuesta de Residentes

Community Service Agency del Condado de Hidalgo pide su participación en esta encuesta para mejor servirle.

Ciudad y Condado en el que vive: _____

Marque una de estas opciones para hacernos saber quien completo la encuesta:

Official Local Cliente Voluntario Miembro de Junta Residente Otro, describa: _____

Circule el número que refleja su opinión sobre la necesidad de cada elemento.

Categoría	Necesidades	No se (0)	No es necesitado (1)	Rara vez se necesita (2)	Necesaria (3)	Muy necesaria (4)
Asistencia	Ayuda para aplicar para Seguro Social, SSDI, WIC, TANF, etc.	0	1	2	3	4
	Ayuda para encontrar recursos en la comunidad	0	1	2	3	4
	Encontrar ayuda para el cuidado de niños	0	1	2	3	4
	Comida	0	1	2	3	4
	Transportacion	0	1	2	3	4
	Servicios Legales	0	1	2	3	4
Gestión de casos	Asistencia con objetivos y autosuficiencia	0	1	2	3	4
Comunidad	Proyectos de limpieza en la colonia	0	1	2	3	4
	Conciencia de crimen o reducción de delincuencia	0	1	2	3	4
	Parques públicos e instalaciones	0	1	2	3	4
	Oportunidades de empleo	0	1	2	3	4
Educación	Clases de GED	0	1	2	3	4
	Clases de ingles como segundo idioma	0	1	2	3	4
	Educacion para Adultos o Escuela Nocturna	0	1	2	3	4
	Entrenamiento en Computación	0	1	2	3	4
	Asistencia para atender escuela tecnica ó Colegio	0	1	2	3	4
Empleo	Ayuda para encontrar empleo	0	1	2	3	4
	Ayuda con habilidades de trabajo Y busqueda de empleo	0	1	2	3	4
Apoyo Familiar	Educacion Financiera/Clases de Presupuestos/ asesoria de credito	0	1	2	3	4
	Clases para padres	0	1	2	3	4
	Educación en Nutrición /clases de Alimentación Saludable	0	1	2	3	4
	Clases en relaciones sanas , resolución de conflictos , etc.	0	1	2	3	4
	Servicios de consejería .	0	1	2	3	4
	Programas y Actividades para jovenes (edades 12-18)	0	1	2	3	4
	Programas y Actividades para la tercera edad	0	1	2	3	4
Vivienda	Vivienda Economica	0	1	2	3	4
	Ayuda para pagar Renta	0	1	2	3	4
	Ayuda para pagar factura de luz	0	1	2	3	4
	Ayuda para hacer hogar más eficiente con energía (climatizacion)	0	1	2	3	4
Medico	Seguro de Salud / Cuidado Médico economico	0	1	2	3	4
	Asistencia con los medicamentos	0	1	2	3	4

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para darnos sus comentarios.

Attachment C - Interview of Elected Officials and Board Members

Name of Elected Official: _____ Title of Elected Position: _____

City or County Represented: _____ / _____ Date: _____

_____ (agency name) is conducting a Community Needs Assessment as part of the requirements to receive Community Services Block Grant funds from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. As part of the survey, we are interviewing key stakeholders in the community.

1. **What do you know about our Community Action Agency and the services we provide that help address needs of low-income persons?** (Note: persons that serve on the agency board do not need to answer question #1.)

2. **What do you think are the top five key needs of low-income persons in your community?** The needs could be in the areas of employment, education, income management, housing, emergency assistance/services, nutrition, helping persons to become self-sufficient, or coordination of services and connecting persons to services, community revitalization, or other needs.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
 - 5)

3. **What suggestions can you provide on how the needs could be addressed?**

4. **What do you think are some key community revitalization needs?**

5. **How do you think our community can address the identified community revitalization needs?**

6. **Do you have any other feedback?**