

# Big Sandy Area Community Action Program

## Community Needs Assessment 2021

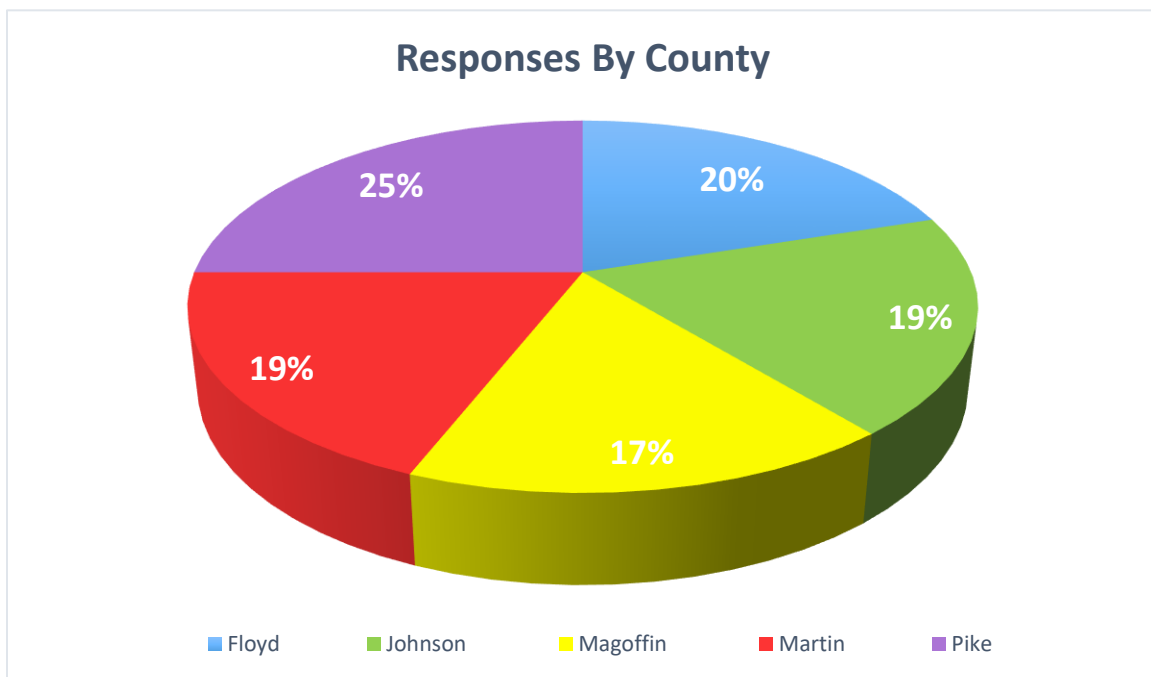


## Needs Reported Through BSACAP Needs Assessment Survey

The annual needs assessment process was conducted by the Big Sandy Area Community Action Program from August 2020 to March 2021. Raw data was gathered from 1,227 respondents using Agency assessment survey forms. In order to compile a comprehensive and accurate community cross section, assessment forms were distributed to community members throughout the five-county service region.

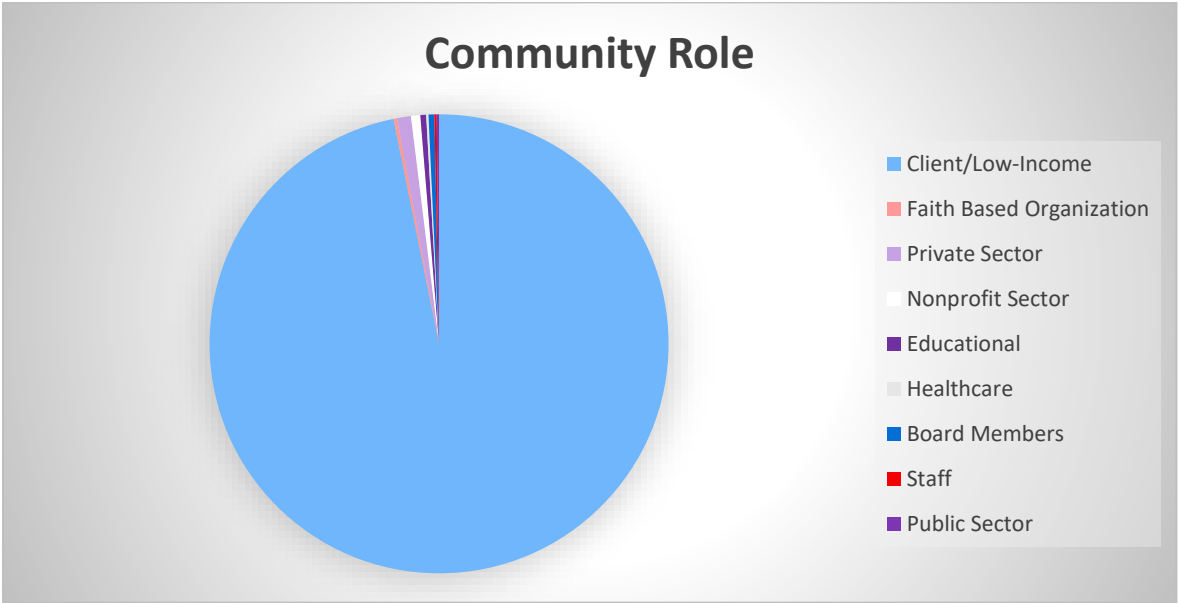
The complete results, as well as a list of locations that the surveys were conducted can be found in the appendices. The survey was available online or completed in the presence of staff at the local service offices. The results were compiled and tallied. As proven by the responses, the needs for services that assist the impoverished are great.

With Kentucky having one of the higher national poverty levels, the survey results will help us align programs to assist individuals and families living in poverty.



The graph above indicates the survey responses by county. As indicated, Pike County had the largest number of responses. We find that surveys roughly aligned with the population distributed throughout the BSACAP service area except for the increase in the Martin County responses.

Assessments were completed by low-income representatives, individual program participants, faith-based organization representatives, local service providers, community partners, educational institution staff, members of the board, and members of both the private and the public sector.



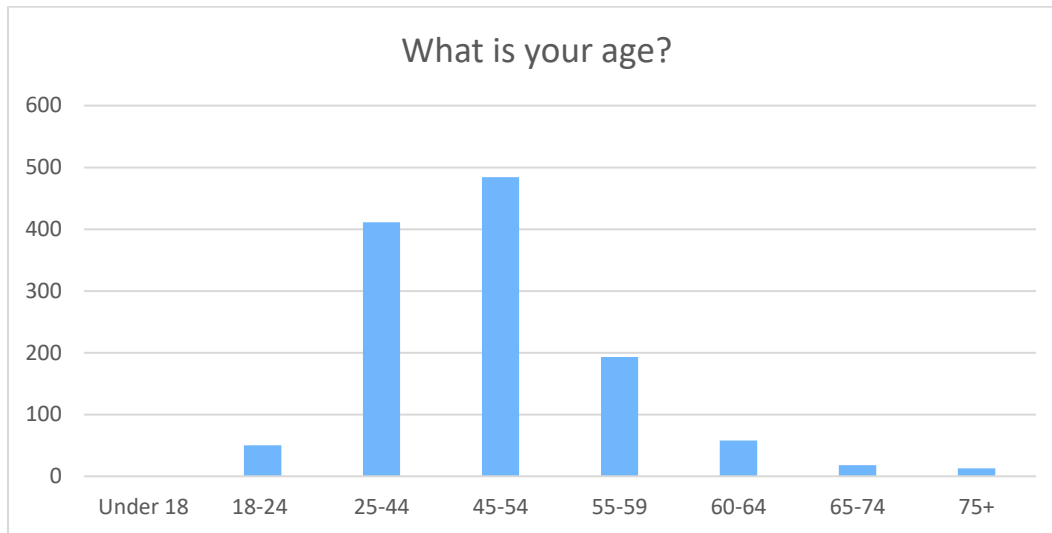
The graph above indicates the category of community member that respondents felt they most represented. Nearly all of the respondents this year, 97%, came directly from our clients or members of the low-income community. Less than one-third came from representatives of the health, education, public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 28% of the population in the Big Sandy Area are living in poverty. This is higher than both the state and the national poverty levels. This information is shown in the table below.

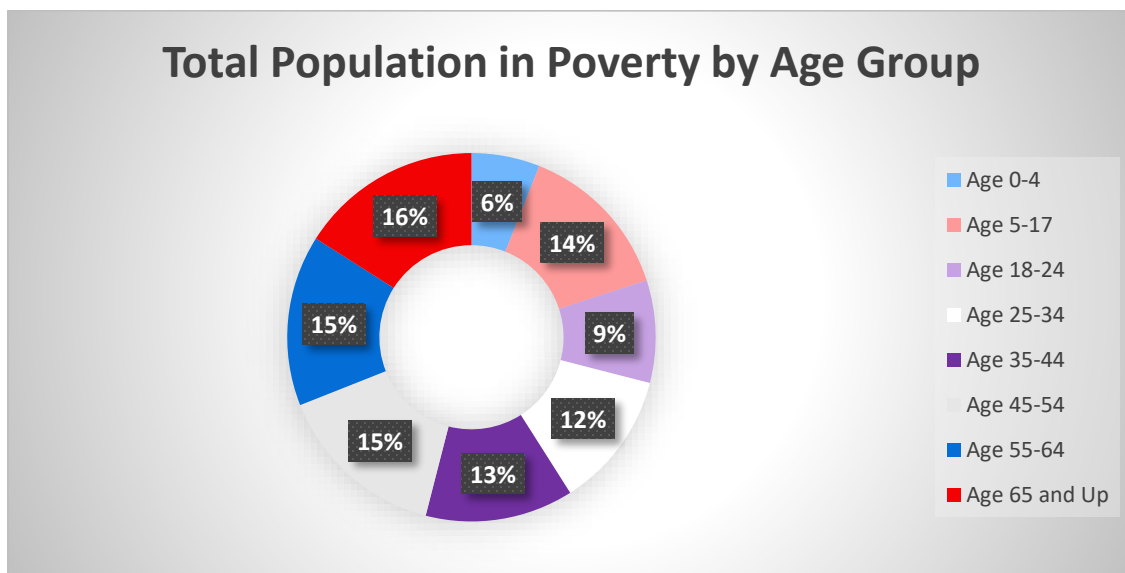
Report Area	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Percentage of Population in Poverty
Report Location	139,009	38,923	28%
Floyd County, KY	35,589	9,609	27%
Johnson County, KY	22,188	5,769	26%
Magoffin County, KY	12,161	3,527	29%
Martin County, KY	11,195	3,806	34%
Pike County, KY	57,876	13,890	24%
Kentucky	4,467,673	714,828	16%
United States	328,239,523	36,106,348	11%

## Demographic Information

Respondents were asked several questions regarding their demographic categorization, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, and military status.

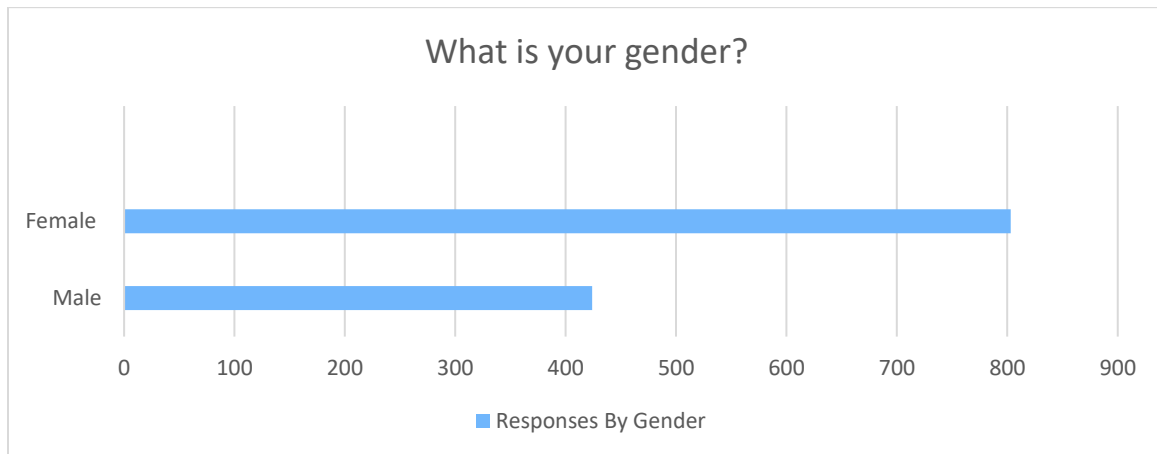


As the graph above indicates, over 72% of respondents were middle-aged, between 25 and 54 years of age. Thus, the responses to the survey are largely from people who are in their prime working years who may be caring both for children and aging parents. The next highest number of responses came from those age 55-59 who are nearing or have entered retirement age. Aside from age group under 18 with zero responses, the fewest number of responses came from those age 75 and older.



Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2015-19.

The graph above shows the total population by age groups in the Big Sandy Area. A total of 141,237 people live in the 1,980.04 square mile report area defined for this assessment according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020. The population density for this area, estimated at 71.33 persons per square mile, is less than the national average population density of 93.41 per square mile.

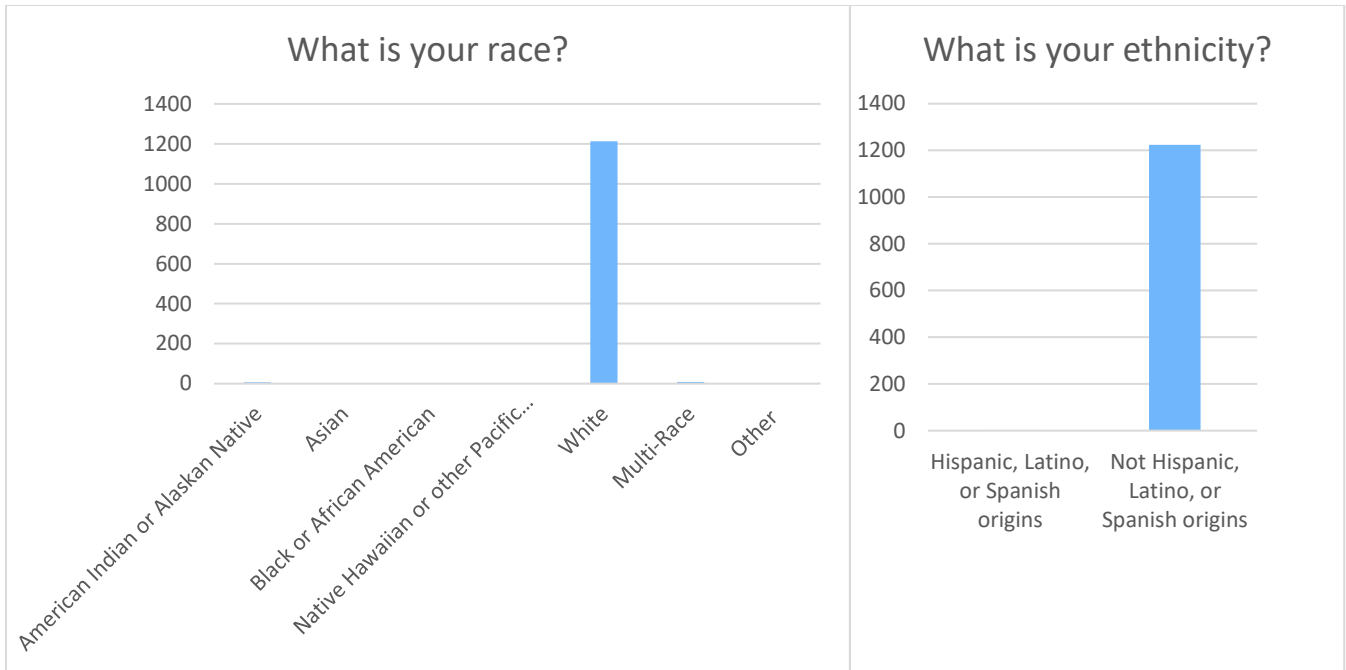


As the graph above indicates that the respondents of the 2021 Community Needs Assessment were split nearly 65/35, female to male. This number largely reflects the gender disparity in social service workers and clients we serve, particularly within programs funded through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

The chart below identifies the number of residents in the Big Sandy Area living in poverty as well as the percentage by gender. When compared to the state and national levels, poverty is nearly doubled in the Big Sandy Area.

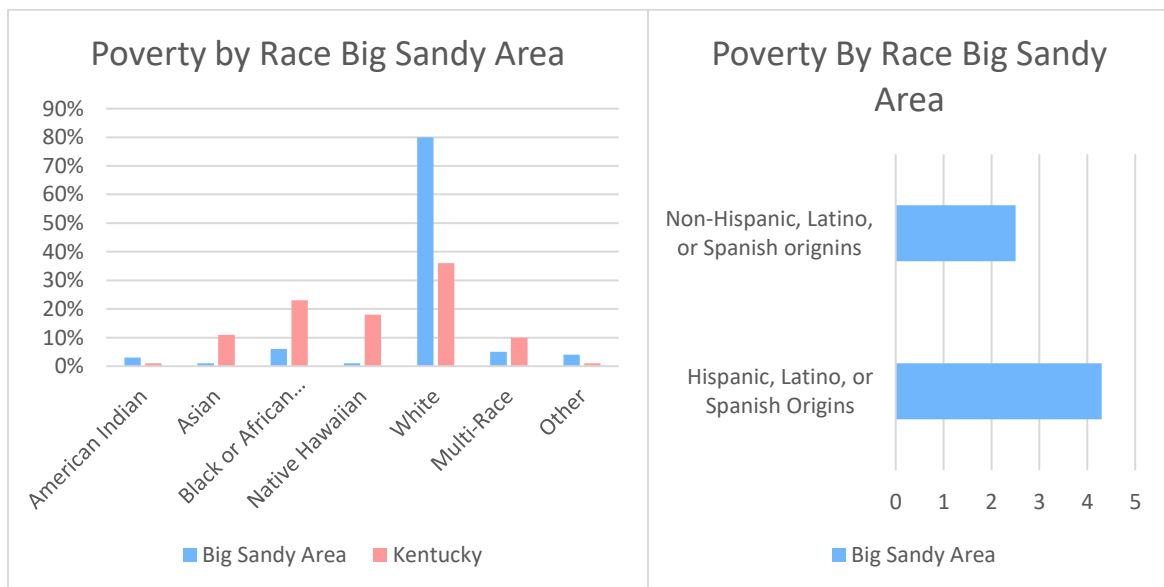
Report Area	Total Male	Total Female	Percent Male	Percent Female
Report Location	17,524	21,007	25.34%	29.26%
Floyd County, KY	5,250	6,241	29.58%	33.71%
Johnson County, KY	2,315	2,804	21.32%	24.48%
Magoffin County, KY	1,766	1,690	28.11%	27.17%
Martin County, KY	1,317	1,446	24.97%	27.57%
Pike County, KY	6,876	8,826	23.72%	29.07%
Kentucky	343,398	428,682	16.30%	19.53%
United States	19,737,150	24,520,829	12.80%	15.26%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2015-19

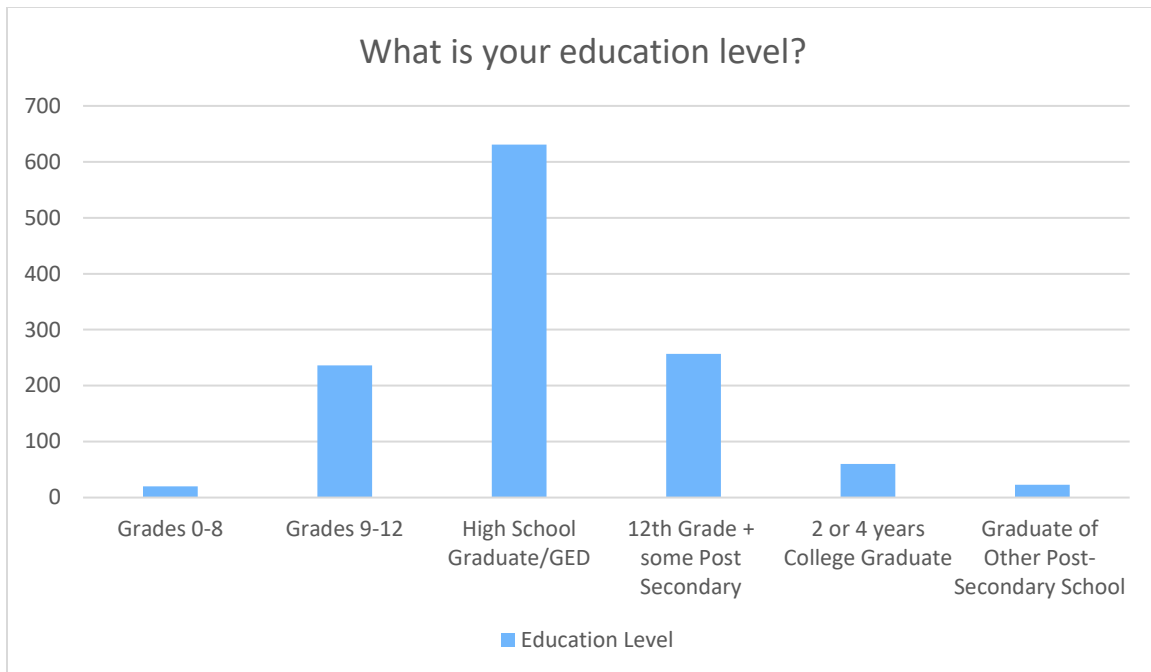


The results of the questions regarding race and ethnicity indicate that the vast majority of respondents in our area were White, Non-Hispanic or Latino people, which reflects local demographic information showing that the BSACAP service area is approximately 99% White and Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origins.

The graphs below show the poverty level averages by race and ethnicity. Chart showing race is also compared to state levels of poverty by race.



Data from [Engagementnetwork.org/assessment](https://engagementnetwork.org/assessment) 2020.

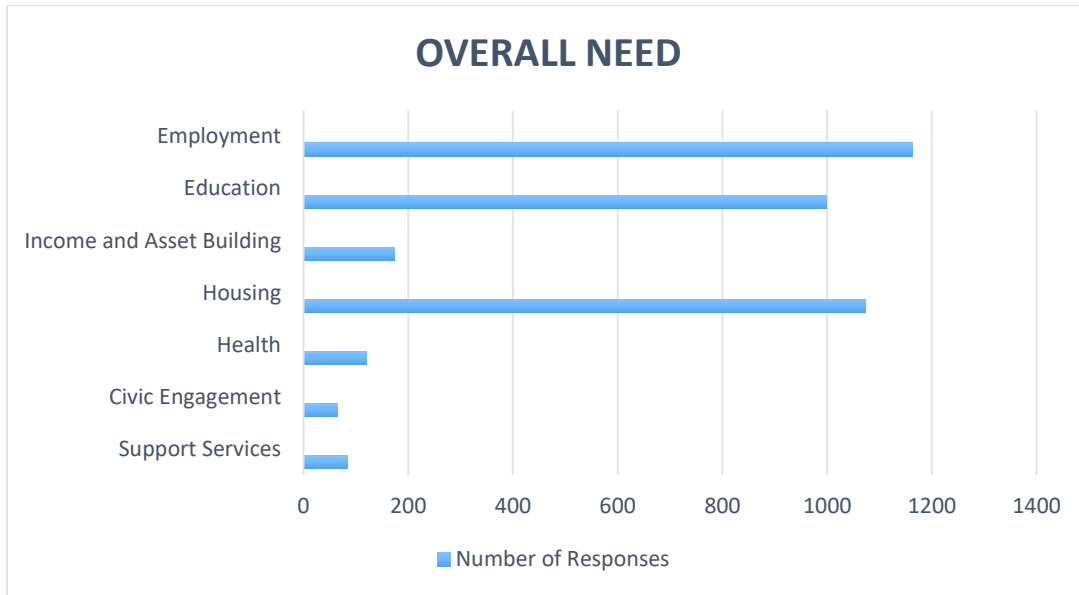


As the chart above indicates, while nearly 52% of respondents have their high school diploma or equivalent, another 20% of respondents either did not attend or did not complete high school. Just over 26% of respondents have attended but not completed some post-secondary education, while 2% completed a two or four-year degree course or higher.

The survey was completed by only three military veterans this year. This number has decreased since last years' ten responses and we still have a long way from having reliable data for our area regarding veterans. These survey response results do indicate a need on the part of the agency to conduct outreach to current and former military members and to form stronger partnerships with local veterans' service programs.

## Areas of Need

Respondents were asked to mark their top three most important needs (in no particular order) among the agency's planning areas: health, employment, education, housing, income and asset building, support services, and civic engagement. The chart below indicates what the community ranks as the most important services needed. The results were used to rank the agency's top priorities in the SFY 2021-2022 Plan and Budget Proposal.



Employment was identified as the most needed service in the 2021 Community Needs Assessment with 95% of respondents marking it as a top priority, followed by housing, education, income and asset building, health, support services, and civic engagement.

### Overall Needs Assessment Results 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Rank 1</b>	Health	Employment	Employment	Employment
<b>Rank 2</b>	Employment	Housing	Housing	Housing
<b>Rank 3</b>	Education	Education	Education	Education
<b>Rank 4</b>	Housing	Health	Health	Income and Asset
<b>Rank 5</b>	Income and Asset Building	Support Services	Income an Asset Building	Health

*Please note that a different scoring system was used in 2018. Previously, respondents were asked to rank all service areas in order of their need and overall rank was determined by the number of points each category received. In 2019 through 2021, respondents were asked only to mark the top three needs, but in no particular order.*

Respondents were then asked to mark their top three concerns among several subcategories within each service area in order to determine the particular aspects of each area respondents find most challenging to overcome.

**Employment** was ranked as the top need among survey respondents. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program considers Employment to be a community-level need. Within the service area of employment, barriers to self-sufficiency rose to the top of list of concerns. Chief among those concerns was that the area needs more training for the types of jobs available in the area as well as affordable transportation to and from work and the need to improve the workforce readiness skills of people who are able to work.



## Employment

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	More Training for the Jobs Available	48%
2	Affordable Transportation	44%
3	Improve the workforce readiness skills	44%
4	Affordable childcare during work hours	43%
5	Increased knowledge of resources	40%
6	More jobs with better pay and benefits	39%
7	Affordable Adult Daycare	22%
8	Early reinforcement of the values of entering the workforce	20%
9	Other	Less than 1%

The agency's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program participates in a wide variety of economic development initiatives in partnership with other local service organizations in addition to a number of other job seeker services. The agency acts as the area's One-Stop Operator meaning that comprehensive workforce services and support services can be accessed at our local offices. The agency also hosts an annual East Kentucky Workforce Partners Conference in order to allow all area organizations to improve communication and work toward common goals. BSACAP's local county offices are Kentucky Career Center Jobsight Affiliated Access Points. The individual centers provide job seekers access to services carried out by a wide network of partners operating within one physical location.

Staff operate in conjunction with the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP), local Offices of Employment and Training, Vocational Rehabilitation, and others, as well as serve with the local Work Ready Community initiatives. The agency also has an Employer Account Representative who acts as a liaison between the private sector and the nonprofit sector. The Employer Account Representative is able to coordinate employer needs with agency services such as creating incumbent worker trainings, job fairs, vetting and hiring of employees, connections to economic development projects, and more in order to ensure that businesses that open in the area have what they need to succeed.

Unfortunately, the majority of new businesses in the area do not offer a living wage or benefits. The chart below shows the median annual income for households in the Big Sandy Area. You can see that residents in the Big Sandy Area annually earn approximately \$16,000 lower than the state average and approximately \$28,000 lower than the national average. According to the US Census Bureau, Kentucky alone is ranked 46th of the 50 states in level of poverty. Over the past few years, many people move out of the Big Sandy Area in order to obtain employment elsewhere.

	Floyd County	Johnson County	Magoffin County	Martin County	Pike County	Kentucky	United States
Average Annual Income per Household	\$32,730	\$37,055	\$28,147	\$41,013	\$34,856	\$50,589	\$62,843

The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program's service area is predominately rural with a mean commute time for workers of 30 minutes, according to recent census data, and virtually no public transportation. With the rise of lost wages during COVID-19, we are also seeing more and more people lose automobiles due to their inability to pay monthly payments.

The chart below indicates the average daily commute for the Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, and Pike counties as well as the state average.

	Floyd County	Johnson County	Magoffin County	Martin County	Pike County	Kentucky	United States
Average Commute Time (minutes) for individuals in the Big Sandy Area	23.6	30.2	37.0	34.3	25.9	23.6	26.9

Without a reliable personal vehicle and the ability to afford repairs, employment is difficult to maintain. Similarly, lack of affordable childcare options prevents many from entering or remaining in the workforce, especially the working poor. During the global pandemic in the previous year, unemployment increased and many in our area lost vehicles due to lack of payment.

The second highest ranked service category in 2021 according to the Community Needs Assessment was **Housing**. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program considers Housing to be a community-level need. Nearly 88% of respondents to the CNA considered Housing to be in the top three overall needs of the community.

### Housing

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	Rental housing for Disabled & Seniors	55%
2	Grants for Home Ownership/Rehab	47%
3	Security/Utility Deposit Programs	41%
4	Programs for Free Home Repair	38%
5	Counseling resources for Homeowners	37%
6	Community supports for Homeless Families	32%

7	Monthly Rental Assistance Programs	31%
8	Grants to provide services that reduce energy costs	18%
9	Other	Less than 1%

BSACAP operates a housing program that provides rental and utility assistance with funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of Tenant-Based Rental Assistance and Emergency Solutions grant monies. The program is financially exhausted nearly as soon as funds are available and maintains a wait-list at all times.

The agency also operates the Weatherization Assistance Program and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, both of which aim to reduce the burden of utility costs.

The U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, show that between 2014 and 2018, an average of 65% of renters in the BSACAP service area were housing burdened, meaning that the household income is not sufficient to afford the average cost of rent plus utilities, without having to spend 30 percent or more of their income on those costs. Big Sandy currently has an average rent of over \$600 per month and an average mortgage of nearly \$900. Many individuals and families seeking housing live on a fixed income making this nearly impossible unless they overlap families. Often times, this causes many generations to live together. There are currently four emergency shelters in the five-county service area. Two of these are homeless shelters that house 45 individuals each and the other two are emergency shelters for women and children escaping sexual assault or domestic violence that house even less. Of these 4 shelters, 3 are located in the same county leaving the other 4 counties that are served by BSACAP with low options for homeless individuals or families.

As we see a greater number of our senior population fall into the range of poverty, we are also seeing a greater need for home repair and home accessibility programs.

In addition to strengthening our referrals to home repair groups, the agency could benefit from assisting with financial education and pathways to homeownership for low-income people. Searching for partners that will assist homeless families through community supports is one way we can accomplish this.

The Community Needs Assessment data showed that **Education** ranked as the third highest need among those surveyed. This is the third consecutive year that Education has ranked as the third highest need in the CNA. Education is deemed a *family-level* need for Big Sandy Area Community Action Program.

## Education

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	Assessable counseling to prepare students for college	66%
2	Preschool activities for child(ren) to develop school readiness skills	56%
3	Affordable Childcare Options	53%
4	More Parents Involved in Student's Education	46%
5	Increasing the community's knowledge of available education resources	29%
6	More Certificate/Degree Programs Offered Locally	25%
7	Affordable Transportation options to and from school	24%
8	Other	Less than 1%

All BSACAP programs have an educational component. The WIOA program connects people with colleges and trade schools, assists with paperwork and technical assistance, and offers financial assistance with tuition, required books and tools, test fees, and travel. The Head Start program not only addresses the needs of early childhood but offers financial assistance to parents and teachers who wish to further their education or obtain early childhood credentials. The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) assists participants with earning their GED and offers computer and customer service training. The CSBG program offers workshops on going back to school, scholarships, and financial assistance.

While graduation rates are on the rise, roughly a quarter of the area's population is without their high school diploma or GED. Of those able to attend, many people believe they cannot afford higher education and are unaware of the financial aid available to them. Additionally, there is a need for trade work and trade school to be incorporated into "college and career ready" discussions. The agency must continue to find ways to share knowledge of educational opportunities and best practices for parenting.

The fourth highest ranked concern in 2021 by survey respondents to the Community Needs Assessment survey was **Income and Asset Building**. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program considers this to be a *family-level* need.

## Income & Asset Building

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	More information on how to access financial resources	54%
2	Information on how to access credit counseling	47%
3	More education on how to build assets	44%
4	Increasing the community's knowledge of available mainstream financial resources	43%
5	Anonymous and confidential budget counseling	42%
6	Anonymous and confidential savings counseling	30%
7	Information on how to access credit counseling	33%
8	Other	Less than 1%

In addition to CSBG and CARES workshops regarding budgeting and financial health, through an agreement with the Social Security Administration, the Agency receives Social Security and Supplemental Security Income checks for referred clients through the Social Security Representative Payee Program. Agency staff, trained by representatives from the Internal Revenue Service, electronically complete and file income tax returns.

Cyclical and generational poverty have plagued eastern Kentucky for decades. Many families struggle to maintain subsistence levels of income and assets, so future planning has been difficult for most to envision.

The area is also serviced by a large number of predatory “payday” lenders (i.e. five payday lenders in a town with a population of 4,259 (2021 data) which trap people in a repayment cycle that is difficult for them to break. Clients need education on how to make the most of a small income and potential pathways to homeownership and savings.

Assisting clients with information regarding financial opportunities for low-income people is something the agency must research further. Several federal programs are available through HUD and the USDA that provide pathways to homeownership for the working poor, for instance, and such information should be disseminated to agency clients.

The fifth priority for the agency, according to the Community Needs Assessment survey results was **Health**. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program considers Health to be a family-

level need.

### Health

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	Payment Assistance for Adult Dental, Hearing, & Vision Services	52%
2	Access to affordable comprehensive health care services	39%
3	Affordable Transportation for health care services	35%
4	More education on maintaining personal hygiene	32%
5	More knowledge of available food resources	30%
6	Increasing the Community's Knowledge of Available Health Resources	25%
7	More Assistance/Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence	23%
8	More Nutritional Counseling (one on one and free)	22%
9	More community focus on preventative healthcare	17%
10	More Emphasis on Reinforcing Healthy Eating Habits	13%
11	More Assistance/Resources for Victims of Elder Abuse	7%
12	More Emphasis on Early Childhood Nutrition Education	5%
13	Other	Less than 1%

The agency's CSBG program offers yearly Community Health Fairs in our service counties. The Community Health Fairs offer free preventative health screenings such as dental screenings, Hepatitis A vaccinations, A1C tests, EKGs, cholesterol, blood pressure, and others. This allows that CSBG staff to work with community partners from health agencies such as county health departments and medical clinics in the area. The agency also assists clients with accessing the Kentucky Vision Project year-round to help residents obtain assistance with eye exams and prescription eyeglasses. The agency makes referrals via Benefind and the Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange.

The agency addresses mental and physical well-being in its monthly workshops and promotes good nutrition with its Garden Seed Program each year. The Garden Seed Program provides vouchers for garden seed, plants, and fertilizer to allow families to raise and preserve nutritious foods.

The Big Sandy Valley, and indeed the majority of eastern Kentucky counties, reports high rates of obesity, smoking, and lack of exercise, along with a need for chronic disease management. The County Health Rankings report for 2020 found that Floyd County is ranked 116th in the state. In addition, of the 120 Kentucky counties, Martin County ranked 105th; Pike County ranked 97th; Johnson County, 94th; and Magoffin County, 102nd. Other outcomes in the Big Sandy Area include an average of 10% of babies born with low birth weight and an average of 12,000 premature deaths annually.

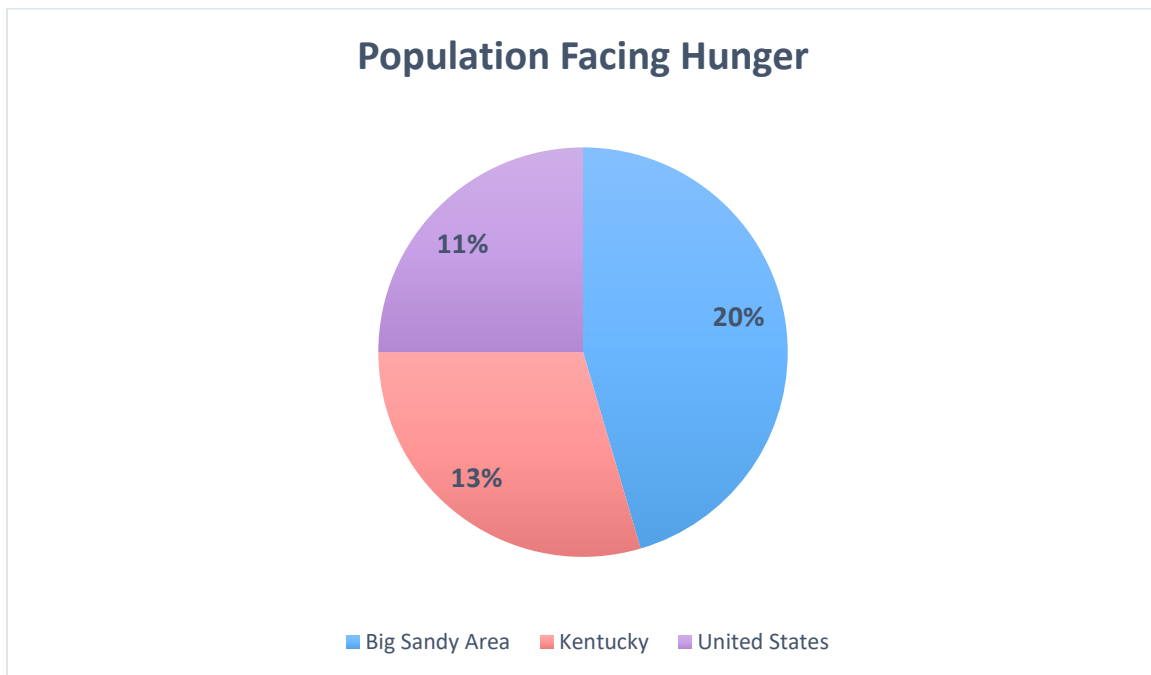
**Support Services** was found to be the sixth priority for the agency. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Program considers Support Services to be a family-level need.

### Support Services

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	Legal Services	38%
2	Life Skills Programs and Services	37%
3	Youth Services	35%
4	Meal Programs	33%
5	Substance Abuse Resources	32%
6	Disabled Services	29%
7	Transportation Services	25%
8	Child Support	22%
9	Elderly Services	16%
10	In-Home Services-Seniors	16%
11	Sexual/Emotional/Physical Abuse Services	12%
12	Senior Centers	5%
13	Other	Less than 1%

BSACAP uses the Emergency Food & Shelter Program to provide financial assistance to local food banks and makes referrals to area food banks, community meals, and the USDA's summer feeding program in which local schools participate. Data gathered in 2020 by Feeding America for shows that an average of 20% of the area's population is food insecure and struggles with hunger. According to data provided by the Kentucky Youth Advocates' 2020 County Data Book, an average of 46% of children live in low-income homes and nearly 19% of children across the service area live in food insecure homes. According to the USDA's latest Household Food Insecurity in the United States report, 662,660 people in Kentucky are struggling with

hunger. The graph below shows that 20% of the population in the Big Sandy Area face hunger and compares it to the 13% of Kentucky and the national level of 11%.



The agency's SCSEP program assists people ages 55 and over to enter or re-enter the workforce. Referrals are also made to Big Sandy Area Development District which manages several services for the elderly designed to help them stay in their homes and remain as independent as possible.

It is widely known that central Appalachia and eastern Kentucky is in the heart of the nation's prescription drug abuse (opioid and other) epidemic, and that the manufacture and distribution of methamphetamine is prevalent. The agency's WIOA currently runs the Opportunity Youth Program. This program targets youth ages 18-24 who have been involved in the criminal justice system by providing mentorship, educational opportunities, one-on-one job and career counseling to help them recover from their mistakes. Providing targeted assistance to families suffering from substance abuse through drug-free housing, employment of ex-convicts, and programs for child victims of parental substance abuse can be ways that we engage with the community on these issues.

**Civic Engagement** was found to be the seventh priority among those surveyed. Civic Engagement is deemed by Big Sandy Area Community Action Program to be an agency-level need but has continued to rank last in the seven domain categories.



## Civic Engagement

Rank	Need	Percent of Total Responses
1	Increasing the Community's Skills and Knowledge for Leadership Development	98%
2	More Education on How to Join Neighborhood Associations, Community Boards, Advisory Groups or Similar Organizations	96%
3	More Knowledge on Civic Activities	74%
4	More Citizenship Classes	31%
5	Other	Less than 1%

Big Sandy Area Community Action Program strives for community participation in all programs administered by the Agency, and realizes the importance of Civic Engagement, identified as the seventh priority. Customers are informed about and invited to volunteer in the Agency and are elected or invited to participate on Agency boards, policy councils, or advisory committees. The interagency meetings coordinated by BSACAP provide valuable linkages to faith- and community-based organizations across the area. Staff from education based and health-based organizations are also part of the interagency meetings. BSACAP encourages customer suggestions and participation in the Agency's community needs assessment process.

Finding opportunities for low-income people to have a stake their communities is critical to the success of the area as it could provide a significant portion of the population with a say in decision-making and an understanding of how political changes affect their lives, along with empowering them to speak out on behalf of their communities' needs.

### Why Community Action is Important

The final question on the 2021 Community Needs Assessment Survey was "What do you think is the most important reason you or your community needs Community Action?" Below is a cross-section of some of the responses collected in the respondents' own words.

- To help the community with programs that assist residents become self-sufficient.
- To help the community come out of poverty.
- To assist the community and the residents in the community.
- Helping family in the past and hoping for the future as well.
- Without our community action service, a lot of our elderly would suffer.
- They help fix my house and pay my electric bills.
- Help find jobs since the coal mines shut down.

- To help pay electric bills in the winter months
- This county is really poor and it needs resources.
- To help find jobs and send people to school.
- Community Action people are there to help you with anything you need.
- To help the community get food/pay bills/and pay rent.
- Heating Assistance is the only way we can pay bills in the winter.
- To help people with heating and utility assistance that can't afford it.
- Liheap helps us get kerosene to stay warm.
- They helped me get training for the job.
- Help with getting clothes for homeless people.
- They help homeless people into shelters and sometimes into their own home.
- To help pay my rent so I am not homeless again.
- To help kids in Head Start get ready for school.
- Help fix houses to make electric bills cheaper and help pay electric bills.
- The Community Action Program assisted me in getting my GED and I was finally able to get a decent job.
- To help people in the community pay bills and find jobs.
- They helped me fix my home when I couldn't afford to fix it.
- Heating assistance and housing for the homeless.
- To help with heating expenses.
- They helped me when I was homeless to get off the street.
- They sure have been there when we've really needed the help.
- To pay electric bills and help my family get kerosene in winter.
- To help get us off the street and find shelter.
- The Community Action helped me get seed to grow a garden to feed my family.
- The Goodwill voucher they gave me helped me get clothes for my job interview at Wendy's and I got the job.
- Better paying jobs, more vocational training programs, and transportation.

### **Key Findings and Initial Conclusions**

- CSBG staff must continue to expand on the agency's resource guide, which is currently in process and kept up to date. Referrals to proper agencies and partners will assist our clients in having all of their needs met including those that are outside the purview of the agency.
- More agencies and community officials must be encouraged to attend interagency meetings in order to build stronger communication about available resources, which can be shared with those in need at even more entry points into the system.
- The agency must continue to work toward finding more program funding so that a greater number of people can be served.
- The agency needs to conduct outreach to current and former military members and to form stronger partnerships with local veterans' service programs.
- At this point of uncertainty due to COVID-19, the Big Sandy Area Community Action Program must continue creating ways to provide services remotely to the public in order to keep staff and clients safe.