



Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.  
8265 State Rte. 812  
Lowville, NY 13367

# 2026 Community Assessment

Approved by the LCOI Board of Directors on September 28, 2026

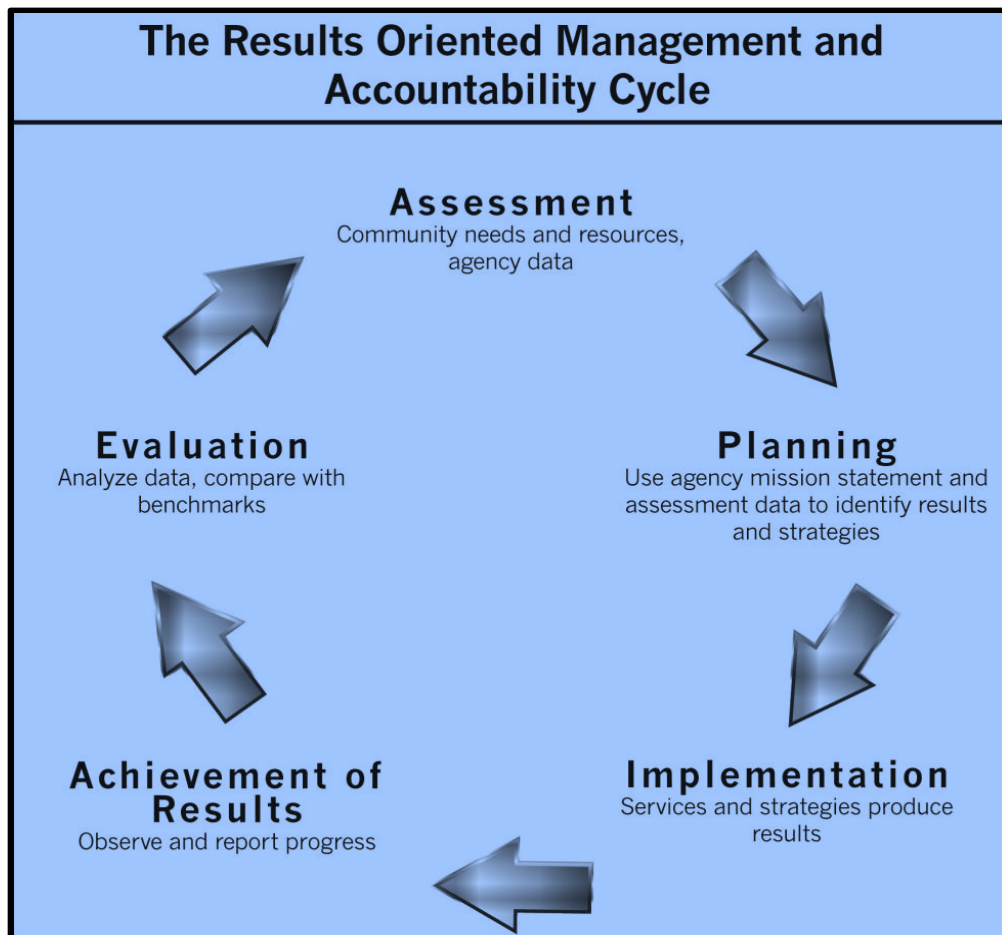


*Diagram 1, which illustrates how the Community Needs Assessment relates the ROMA Accountability cycle.*

## Table of Contents

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Community Needs Assessment Methodology ..... | 3   |
| Agency Profile.....                          | 3   |
| CSBG Domains/Summary of Services.....        | 4   |
| Service Demographics .....                   | 5   |
| Statistics.....                              | 8   |
| Local Survey Data .....                      | 110 |
| Consumer Satisfaction Survey Data .....      | 112 |
| Key Findings.....                            | 13  |
| Needs Statements/Program Priorities: .....   | 17  |

**Acknowledgements:** The CAAG is comprised of representatives from major sectors of the Lewis County community, including community-based organizations (CBO), private, public, and faith-based organizations, and educational consortia.

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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## Community Needs Assessment Methodology

In compliance with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the core principles of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Cycle (Diagram 1), and the Federal Organizational Standards by which all Community Action Agencies are evaluated, Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. (LCOI) conducts periodic assessments of community needs. This is accomplished through the creation of a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) developed by the Community Action Advisory Council (CAAG), an advisory group to the LCOI Board of Directors.

Since 2016, the CAAG has promoted cross-sector participation in agency planning in an effort to promote maximum feasible participation by low-income families, or advocates of low-income families. The agency believes maximum feasible participation can occur in many ways, such as low-income representation on our Board of Directors, volunteers, or even advisory groups to the Board. The CAAG fulfills an advisory group function with regard to planning, primarily with the development of the CNA and Strategic Planning process, which are two key areas of the ROMA cycle (Diagram 1).

With regard to the CNA development process, the CAAG was instrumental in the creation and distribution of surveys to low-income families, partners (private, public, faith-based, and educational sectors), and agency workforce (LCOI Board members, employees, and volunteers). Data from these surveys, as well as US Census data, LCOI consumer comment survey data gathered over the past year, and service provision observations communicated by CAAG members were analyzed to determine key findings regarding individual/family (F), agency (A), and community (C) needs. Program Priorities and Needs Statements were then identified and included in this report as the basis for a planned strategic planning process following the completion of the CNA and acceptance by the LCOI Board of Directors on September 28, 2026. The 2026 CNA is available to the public at [www.lewiscountyopportunities.com](http://www.lewiscountyopportunities.com) or via hard copy upon request.

## Agency Profile

LCOI is a private 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Since 1965, LCOI has provided services and supports to help economically or other disadvantaged families attain self-sufficiency. The agency employs 27 individuals, and utilizes the services of approximately 70 volunteers, 12 of whom serve as LCOI Board members. More information, including agency impact can be accessed at [www.lewiscountyopportunities.com](http://www.lewiscountyopportunities.com).

**Mission:** Working with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community.

**Vision:** A community where people are empowered to live safely without economic barriers.

**Service Area:** Lewis County, NY (and Jefferson County, NY for select housing-related services).

## CSBG Domains/Summary of Services

The services LCOI provides are categorized within one or more CSBG domains that organize the work of the Community Action Network across the USA. Domains include Employment, Education and Cognitive Development, Income and Asset Building, Housing, Health and Social/Behavioral Development, and outcomes and services across Multiple Domains.

- **Employment:** Transportation assistance is a workforce development support provided to low-income individuals who face the barrier of unreliable transportation to obtain or maintain employment. Outputs include vehicle repairs, tires, insurance premiums, licensing fees, gas cards, and other alternative forms of transportation assistance (recipients who don't own a vehicle, but who face a transportation barrier to and from work).
- **Education and Cognitive Development:** The Child Passenger Safety Program ensures low-income families who cannot afford to purchase child passenger seats have access to this resource to promote the safe travel of their children. Parents/caregivers are educated about the proper installation, fit, and maintenance of the particular seat(s) received.
- **Income and Asset Building:** The Money Management Program provides financial skills training to low-income individuals to help them acquire and/or enhance skills to create and manage a household budget, in an effort to promote increased financial stability. This includes individuals who need assistance to manage their social security funds and maintain their independent living situation by ensuring these funds are appropriately used for allowable needs as defined by the Social Security Administration.
- **Housing:**
  - The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program enables low-income families in both Jefferson and Lewis Counties to obtain safe and affordable housing through rental assistance subsidies. Other target populations are also served, such as homeless veterans through the Veterans Affairs Subsidized Housing (VASH) program. In Lewis County, LCOI also administers the NYS Rental Supplement program for individuals who are unable to enroll in the Section 8 program. Jefferson and Lewis Counties also administer the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) vouchers, specifying vouchers for homeless individuals in the counties.
  - The Weatherization/EmPower Programs helps reduce energy costs through energy-efficient home improvements, appliance replacements, and education about energy reduction and conservation.
  - Emergency Utility/Rent/Mortgage Assistance is a temporary support service to ensure low-income families can remain in their homes for at least 30 additional days to prevent sudden homelessness.
- **Health and Social/Behavioral Development:**
  - Through the New Bremen Food Pantry, emergency food and hygiene items are provided to families in need and typically involves a 7-day supply in a given month. Opportunities also provides technical support and 501c3 fiduciary oversight with regard to public funding for the Copenhagen, Harrisville, and Port Leyden food pantries, which collectively comprise the Lewis County Food Pantry Network.
  - The Victim Services Program empowers victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other crimes in regaining control of their lives and ultimately move toward healing. The program is certified for residential and non-residential services and includes

24-Hour crisis hotline availability. The Victim Services program also conducts evidenced-based primary prevention education to students in area schools.

- **Outcomes and Services across Multiple Domains:**

- The Opportunity Knocks Thrift Store provides a community resource for the public to obtain daily living items that are either new or gently-used at very affordable prices. Inventory typically includes clothing, kitchenware, books, and bedding. For low-income families who cannot afford to purchase items, the agency utilizes a vouchering process to help these families obtain needed items at no charge. The thrift store is operated by volunteers.
- Critical Needs Services provide emergency support services for a variety of short-term emergencies not funded by other resources.

## Service Demographics

The following tables illustrate the composition of individuals and families who received services during Federal fiscal year 2024 (10/1/24 - 9/30/25).

### Analysis:

The CAAG observed:

- 96% of families served were at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level;
- 58% of individuals served were female;
- 31% of individuals served were children;
- 20% of individuals served were seniors (age 60+)
- 28% of individuals served identified with a disabling condition;
- 26% of families served were single-parent families;
- 75% of families served were renters.

A. Total unduplicated number of all INDIVIDUALS about whom one or more characteristics were obtained:

| Report | Reference |
|--------|-----------|
| 3153   | 3153      |

B. Total unduplicated number of all HOUSEHOLDS about whom one or more characteristics were obtained:

| Report | Reference |
|--------|-----------|
| 1624   | 1624      |

### C. INDIVIDUAL LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

| 1. Gender                      | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Male                        | 1304   | 1304      |
| b. Female                      | 1840   | 1840      |
| c. Other                       | 2      | 2         |
| d. Unknown/not reported        | 7      | 7         |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b> | 3153   | 3153      |

| 2. Age                         | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| 0 - 5                          | 214    | 214       |
| 6 - 13                         | 522    | 522       |
| 14 - 17                        | 238    | 238       |
| 18 - 24                        | 261    | 261       |
| 25 - 44                        | 726    | 726       |
| 45 - 54                        | 302    | 302       |
| 55 - 59                        | 168    | 168       |
| 60 - 64                        | 184    | 184       |
| 65 - 74                        | 295    | 295       |
| 75+                            | 137    | 137       |
| Unknown/not reported           | 106    | 106       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b> | 3153   | 3153      |

| 3. Education Levels                        | Number of Individuals |           |            |           |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                                            | Report                | Reference | Report     | Reference |
|                                            | {ages 14-24}          |           | {ages 25+} |           |
| a. Grades 0-8                              | 70                    | 70        | 30         | 30        |
| b. Grades 9-12/Non-Graduate                | 261                   | 261       | 207        | 207       |
| c. High School Graduate                    | 108                   | 108       | 897        | 897       |
| d. Equivalency Diploma                     | 10                    | 10        | 153        | 153       |
| e. 12 grade+ Some Post-Secondary           | 15                    | 15        | 124        | 124       |
| f. 2 or 4 Years College Graduate           | 5                     | 5         | 115        | 115       |
| g. Graduate of Other Post-Secondary School | 1                     | 1         | 18         | 18        |
| h. Unknown/not reported                    | 29                    | 29        | 268        | 268       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>             | 499                   | 499       | 1812       | 1812      |

| 4. Disconnected Youth                                    | Report | Reference |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Youth ages 14-24 who are neither working or in school | 99     | 99        |

| 5. Health              | Number of Individuals |      |         |        |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------|---------|--------|
|                        | Yes                   | No   | Unknown | Total: |
| a. Disabling Condition |                       |      |         |        |
| Report                 | 872                   | 1829 | 452     | 3153   |
| Reference              | 872                   | 1829 | 452     | 3153   |
| b. Health Insurance    |                       |      |         |        |
| Report                 | 2707                  | 20   | 426     | 3153   |
| Reference              | 2707                  | 20   | 426     | 3153   |

| Health Insurance Sources                       | Report | Reference |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| i. Medicaid                                    | 2264   | 2264      |
| ii. Medicare                                   | 430    | 430       |
| iii. State Children's Health Insurance Program | 70     | 70        |
| iv. State Health Insurance for Adults          | 86     | 86        |
| v. Military Health Care                        | 28     | 28        |
| vi. Direct Purchase                            | 5      | 5         |
| vii. Employment Based                          | 55     | 55        |
| viii. Unknown/not reported                     | 9      | 9         |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>                 | 2947   | 2947      |

| 6. Ethnicity/Race                          | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| <b>1. Ethnicity</b>                        |        |           |
| a. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins     | 195    | 195       |
| b. Not Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins | 2847   | 2847      |
| c. Unknown/not reported                    | 111    | 111       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>             | 3153   | 3153      |

| II. Race                               | Report | Reference |
|----------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. American Indian or Alaska Native    | 9      | 9         |
| b. Asian                               | 3      | 3         |
| c. Black or African American           | 258    | 258       |
| d. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 4      | 4         |
| e. White                               | 2520   | 2520      |
| f. Other (single race)                 | 18     | 18        |
| g. Multi-Race (2 or more)              | 227    | 227       |
| h. Unknown/not reported                | 114    | 114       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>         | 3153   | 3153      |

| 7. Military Status (Individuals 18+) | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Veteran                           | 83     | 83        |
| b. Active Military                   | 1      | 1         |
| c. Never Served in the Military      | 1855   | 1855      |
| d. Unknown/not reported              | 134    | 134       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>       | 2073   | 2073      |

| 8. Work Status (Individuals 18+)              | Report | Reference |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Employed Full-Time                         | 174    | 174       |
| b. Employed Part-Time                         | 220    | 220       |
| c. Migrant or Seasonal Farm Worker            | 0      | 0         |
| d. Unemployed (Short-Term, 6 months or less)  | 29     | 29        |
| e. Unemployed (Long-Term, more than 6 months) | 120    | 120       |
| f. Unemployed (Not in Labor Force)            | 1046   | 1046      |
| g. Retired                                    | 238    | 238       |
| h. Unknown/not reported                       | 248    | 248       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>                | 2075   | 2075      |

#### D. HOUSEHOLD LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

| 9. Household Type                   | Report | Reference |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Single Person                    | 682    | 682       |
| b. Two Adults No Children           | 157    | 157       |
| c. Single Parent Female             | 371    | 371       |
| d. Single Parent Male               | 52     | 52        |
| e. Two Parent Household             | 151    | 151       |
| f. Non-related Adults with Children | 12     | 12        |
| g. Multigenerational Household      | 47     | 47        |
| h. Other                            | 14     | 14        |
| i. Unknown/not reported             | 138    | 138       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>      | 1624   | 1624      |

| 10. Household Size             | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Single Person               | 842    | 842       |
| b. Two                         | 344    | 344       |
| c. Three                       | 174    | 174       |
| d. Four                        | 122    | 122       |
| e. Five                        | 73     | 73        |
| f. Six or more                 | 69     | 69        |
| g. Unknown/not reported        | 0      | 0         |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b> | 1624   | 1624      |

| 11. Housing                    | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Own                         | 365    | 365       |
| b. Rent                        | 1216   | 1216      |
| c. Other permanent housing     | 20     | 20        |
| d. Homeless                    | 9      | 9         |
| e. Other                       | 14     | 14        |
| f. Unknown/not reported        | 0      | 0         |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b> | 1624   | 1624      |

| 12. Level of Household Income  | Report | Reference |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Up to 50%                   | 593    | 593       |
| b. 51 - 75%                    | 164    | 164       |
| c. 76 - 100%                   | 449    | 449       |
| d. 101 - 125%                  | 164    | 164       |
| e. 126 - 150%                  | 83     | 83        |
| f. 151 - 175%                  | 67     | 67        |
| g. 176 - 200%                  | 34     | 34        |
| h. 201 - 250%                  | 45     | 45        |
| i. 251 and over %              | 25     | 25        |
| j. Unknown/not reported %      | 0      | 0         |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b> | 1624   | 1624      |

| 13. Sources of Household Income                | Report | Reference |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. Income from Employment Only                 | 34     | 34        |
| b. Income from Employment and Other Income     | 8      | 8         |
| c. Income from Emp, Other Sources and Non-Cash | 147    | 147       |
| d. Income from Employment and Non-Cash         | 222    | 222       |
| e. Other Income Source Only                    | 58     | 58        |
| f. Other Income Source and Non-Cash Benefits   | 1038   | 1038      |
| g. No Income                                   | 7      | 7         |
| h. Non-Cash Benefits Only                      | 110    | 110       |
| i. Unknown/not reported                        | 143    | 143       |
| <b>TOTAL (auto calculated)</b>                 | 1767   | 1767      |

Below, please report the types of Other income and/or non-cash benefits received by the households who reported sources other than employment

| 14. Other Income Sources                        | Report | Reference |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. TANF                                         | 74     | 74        |
| b. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)           | 541    | 541       |
| c. Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)     | 406    | 406       |
| d. VA Service-Connected Disability Compensation | 18     | 18        |
| e. VA Non-Service Connected Disability Pension  | 4      | 4         |
| f. Private Disability Insurance                 | 8      | 8         |
| g. Worker's Compensation                        | 11     | 11        |
| h. Retirement Income from Social Security       | 134    | 134       |
| i. Pension                                      | 36     | 36        |
| j. Child Support                                | 130    | 130       |
| k. Alimony or other Spousal Support             | 3      | 3         |
| l. Unemployment Insurance                       | 13     | 13        |
| m. EITC                                         | 0      | 0         |
| n. Other                                        | 307    | 307       |
| o. Unknown/not reported                         | 245    | 245       |

| 15. Non-Cash Benefits           | Report | Reference |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| a. SNAP                         | 1175   | 1175      |
| b. WIC                          | 143    | 143       |
| c. LIHEAP                       | 751    | 751       |
| d. Housing Choice Voucher       | 1032   | 1032      |
| e. Public Housing               | 6      | 6         |
| f. Permanent Supportive Housing | 4      | 4         |
| g. HUD-VASH                     | 58     | 58        |
| h. Childcare Voucher            | 4      | 4         |
| i. Affordable Care Act Subsidy  | 0      | 0         |
| j. Other                        | 5      | 5         |
| k. Unknown/not reported         | 218    | 218       |

## Statistics

These following tables illustrate demographic and statistical information for Lewis County from the NYSCAA NYS Poverty Report for 2025 as well as the 2024 ACS survey through the US Census Bureau. The CAAG selected these statistics given their relevance to our mission and as they relate to diversity and community composition. An analysis appears under each major heading, with additional analysis included with certain tables discussed by the CAAG, as applicable. The following charts will provide a breakdown of statistics regarding population; poverty as compared to age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education; language; disability; veteran status; income, housing; insurance; and transportation.

**Total Population:** The CAAG observed population in Lewis County has not substantially changed since the 2023 CNA, nor has there been any substantial changes to gender, racial, ethnic, and age composition. Lewis County is experiencing neither substantial overall population gain or loss, which has been the case for the past several decades, with population hovering in the 26,000 to 27,000 range. Lewis County's poverty rate is 12.3%, compared to the NYS 13.7% poverty rate.

| Report Area  | Total Population | Total Land Area (Square Miles) | Population Density (Per Square Mile) |
|--------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lewis County | 26,618           | 1,274.64                       | 20.88                                |
| New York     | 19,872,319       | 47,125.54                      | 421.69                               |

**Total Poverty by Age:** The CAAG noted 17.2% of children under 18 are living in households with income below the Federal Poverty Level; this is relevant because poverty creates barriers to access, including health services, healthy food, and other necessities that contribute to poor health status.

| Report Area  | Total Population | Under 18  | 19-64      | 65+       |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Lewis County | 26,618           | 6,069     | 15,387     | 5,162     |
| New York     | 19,872,319       | 4,028,700 | 12,472,213 | 3,371,406 |

**Total Poverty by Race/Ethnicity:** The CAAG noted that 27.7% of households in Lewis County live below the poverty threshold; while this is lower than the state average of 31.1%, it is still significant.

| Report Area  | Total Population | White | Black | Asian | American Indian/<br>Alaska Native | Native Hawaiian/<br>Pacific Islander | Other | Multiple<br>Race | Hispanic/<br>Latino |
|--------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|------------------|---------------------|
| Lewis County | 26,618           | 12%   | 50.5% | 0%    | 28.6%                             | 0%                                   | 4.6%  | 13.7%            | 26.4%               |
| New York     | 19,872,319       | 10%   | 20.6% | 13.9% | 22.7%                             | 22.2%                                | 21.9% | 16%              | 20.1%               |

**Total Poverty by Gender:** The CAAG observed that of female head of household families (w/children) in Lewis County, 32.3% live in poverty, compared to 32.5% in NYS.

| Report Area  | Total Population | Male  | Female |
|--------------|------------------|-------|--------|
| Lewis County | 26,618           | 11.7% | 12.8%  |
| New York     | 19,872,319       | 12.6% | 14.8%  |

**Total Poverty by Education:** The CAAG noted that for adults 25+, education had a great impact on those living in poverty, specifically for those individuals who did not have a degree.

| Report Area  | Population<br>(25+) | No<br>Degree | No Degree<br>Poverty | HS    | HS<br>Poverty | Associate | Associate<br>Poverty | Bachelors<br>+ | Bachelors +<br>Poverty |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------|---------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Lewis County | 18,316              | 8.6%         | 21.3%                | 42.7% | 11.5%         | 29.3%     | 7%                   | 19.4%          | 6.2%                   |
| New York     | 13,829,209          | 11.9%        | 27.7%                | 24.4% | 16%           | 23.9%     | 10.8%                | 39.9%          | 5.1%                   |

**Limited English Proficiency:** The CAAG observed the percentage of the population ages 5 and older in Lewis County who speak a language other than English at home likely have difficulty speaking English. Although the statistics are very low for Lewis County, they are rising compared to previous years; the CAAG felt this indicator is relevant because an inability to speak English may create additional barriers to community integration or access to community services such as victim services, healthcare, health literacy/education, or other daily living needs thus increasing likelihood of living in poverty situations.

\*Data from ACS survey- 2024 US Census

| Report Area  | Total Population | Population Age 5+ | Population age 5+ w/LEP | Percent Population Age 5+ w/LEP |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lewis County | 26,607           | 25,068            | 901                     | 3.6%                            |
| New York     | 19,867,248       | 18,828,181        | 5,958,251               | 31.6%                           |

**Population with Any Disability:** The CAAG noted the percentage of civilian non-institutionalized population with a disability in Lewis County is 15.1%, higher than the state average of 13.5%; this is relevant because disabled individuals comprise a vulnerable population that requires targeted services and outreach by providers to help decrease the chance of living in poverty.

\*Data from ACS survey- 2024 US Census

| Report Area  | Total Population (for whom Disability Status is Determined) | Total Population with a Disability | Percent of Population with a Disability |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Lewis County | 26,322                                                      | 3,968                              | 15.1%                                   |
| New York     | 19,666,716                                                  | 2,652,359                          | 13.5%                                   |

**Veteran Population:** The CAAG noted that the percentage of the population age 18 and older that served (even for a short time) but is not currently serving on active duty in the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard, or that served in the US Merchant Marines during WWII is more than double the state average; this is important as veterans are included in the vulnerable populations that often missed when reaching out to individuals in order to assist and provide services.

\*Data from ACS survey- 2024 US Census

| Report Area  | Total Veterans | Veterans, Percent of Total Population 18 years and older |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Lewis County | 1,703          | 8.3%                                                     |
| New York     | 550,582        | 3.5%                                                     |

## Unemployment Rate

Unemployment rate for Lewis County 2025 annual average: 4.3%

Unemployment rate for New York 2025 annual average: 4.6%

**Income – Median Income:** The CAAG determined that median income in Lewis County is generally lower than that in the state as a whole. Females have a far less median earning than males.

| Report Area  | Median Income w/HS Diploma | Male Median Earning | Female Median Earning |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Lewis County | \$38,979                   | \$46,980            | \$30,458              |
| New York     | \$39,815                   | \$46,695            | \$32,220              |

**Living Wage:** The CAAG determined that the living wage shown is the monthly household rate that must be earned to remain outside of poverty guidelines. The Minimum Hourly Wage for the majority of New York counties is \$16.00. In New York City, Long Island, and Westchester Counties it is \$17.00/hr.

| Report Area  | One Adult | One Adult, One Child | Two Adults | Two Adults, Two Children | Senior Adult |
|--------------|-----------|----------------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Lewis County | \$2,286   | \$3,442              | \$3,255    | \$5,432                  | \$2,591      |
| New York     | \$2,733   | \$4,077              | \$3,831    | \$6,211                  | \$3,087      |

#### **Housing: Monthly Fair Market Rent (FMR)- 2027**

| Report Area  | FMR: 0 Bedrooms | FMR: 1 Bedroom | FMR: 2 Bedrooms | FMR: 3 Bedrooms | FMR: 4 Bedrooms |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Lewis County | \$743           | \$860          | \$1,014         | \$1,404         | \$1,591         |
| New York     | \$1273          | \$1,400.36     | \$1,714.14      | \$2,132.36      | \$2,365.86      |

**Health/Insurance:** The CAAG noted that vulnerable populations are more likely to have multiple health access, health status, and social support needs. When combined with poverty data, providers can use this measure to identify gaps in eligibility and enrollment.

\*Data from ACS Survey- 2024 US Census

| Report Area  | Total Population (for whom Insurance Status is determined) | # w/Health Insurance | % receiving Medicare | % receiving Medicaid | # without Health Insurance |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Lewis County | 26,322                                                     | 24,810               | 12.4%                | 16.9%                | 1,512                      |
| New York     | 19,666,716                                                 | 18,693,001           | 18%                  | 20.8%                | 973,715                    |

**Use of Public Transport:** The CAAG noted public transportation usage in Lewis County is substantially less than the state average (which factors in New York City). However, with such a wide service area in an entirely rural county, public transportation within Lewis County has limited resources in its ability to replace private transportation as an effective commuting option to and from work.

\*Data from ACS Survey- 2024 US Census

| Report Area  | Total Population Employed Age 16 and Older | % Using Public Transit for Commute to Work | % Using a Bicycle or Walking to Commute to Work | % Using a Taxi or other to Commute to Work | % Working from Home |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Lewis County | 11,622                                     | 1.1%                                       | 4.8%                                            | 1.3%                                       | 7.5%                |
| New York     | 9,557,920                                  | 24.2%                                      | 5.8%                                            | 2.9%                                       | 11.8%               |

## Local Survey Data

### **Methodology:**

Appendix A through C contain aggregated data compiled from surveys targeted toward three target populations within Lewis County: low-income individuals/families (Appendix A), LCOI workforce (Appendix B), and LCOI partners (Appendix C). The surveys were developed by the CAAG by reviewing previous survey tools used for the 2023 CNA and selecting the questions most relevant for the gathering of new data.

Once the tools were finalized, the surveys were distributed in August 2026. To encourage as much participation as possible, including from low-income individuals and families, the CAAG elected to utilize both an online tool and printed copies for the distribution of all three surveys. Once the tools were released, significant outreach was conducted to the public to inform them of the availability of the surveys, which could be completed on personal mobile devices, computers, and tablets either at home, work, or at locations where public Wi-Fi is available such as public libraries, community business districts, or private businesses (including LCOI).

Completed surveys were received as follows:

- 62 surveys from low-income individuals/families (Appendix A);
- 50 surveys from the workforce of LCOI, which included 20 employees, 11 Board members, and 19 community volunteers (Appendix B);
- 28 surveys from LCOI partners (Appendix C), which included community-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions. Although faith-based organizations were invited to complete the survey, none elected to complete it.

In addition, the CAAG reviewed survey data obtained from low-income families who received LCOI services throughout 2025-2026, through the agency's "Customer Satisfaction" survey tool.

## Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results

Consumer satisfaction surveys are always available to consumers who receive services from our main office in New Bremen (Lewis County) and our Housing office in Watertown (Jefferson County). Consumers have access to these forms in the waiting rooms and intake rooms. The results of these surveys are reported at bi-monthly LCOI Board meetings.

Consumer Comment Cards: Of the responses received, all consumers indicated good quality of service from our workers. Qualitative data included:

- “Very helpful,” “thank you,” “great service,” and similar responses;
- “Worker was helpful and answered everything I needed”;
- “Thanks so much for everything you did. It helped a lot.”
- “I am thankful for the time you took to help me.”
- “Thank you for helping me to go to summer camp.”

Victim-specific surveys: Of the responses received, all stated they feel more hopeful about the future, know more about community resources, have learned strategies to establish a plan for safety, etc.

Qualitative data included:

- “I am very thankful for everything I have received and will receive in the future. Everything I am getting help with will put me in good standing to start college in a couple weeks.”
- “LCOI is such a great program. I truly could not be more grateful for what they have done for me.”
- “The staff is great. Thank you for everything.”
- “I feel so much safer because of the help I received. I do not know what I would have done without the help I got.”

WAP-specific surveys: Of the responses received, all were very positive and indicated good quality of service. Qualitative data indicated:

- “I am so happy with what the crew did. They were always on the go and did awesome work.”
- “I truly appreciate everything you all did, and your kindness.”
- “I really appreciate the help and the crew for all they did. Everything was neat and tidy. The crew was polite and funny and they worked hard. Thank you for all your help.”
- “Very professional and courteous.”
- “I was very pleased with the work. The crew went above and beyond, always checking in with me. I highly recommend the crew. Thanks so much.”
- “Very good at explaining things so you understand.”

Consumer Complaints: Such complaints are generally discussed at routine Board of Director meetings. One specific complaint was received over the past year that was based on regulations out of the agency’s control.

## Key Findings

The CAAG developed Key Findings based upon an analysis of quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from low-income, partner, and workforce survey responses, customer satisfaction data, as well as CAAG member discussion based upon their history of service delivery experiences. As applicable, US Census Bureau and ALICE data were analyzed to support key findings.

The following Key Findings are the result of an analysis of survey data provided by **low-income families**, which reflect conditions of poverty experienced within Lewis County. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed:

### **Employment:** Of survey respondents:

- 36% indicated they are employed full or part-time, with about ¼ of the employed individuals indicating they receive benefits with their employment;
- 64% indicated they are unemployed. Of this percentage:
  - 29% are retired;
  - 48% indicated disability/physical health issues;
  - 19% indicated lack of childcare;
  - 16% indicated mental/behavioral health issues;
  - 13% indicated domestic violence/abuse;
  - 10% indicated lack of transportation;
  - 10% indicated incompatible work hours;
  - 10% indicated low wages/benefits;
  - 3% indicated alcohol/drug addiction;
  - 3% indicated fear of loss of benefits/assistance if income increases;
  - 3% indicated lack of permanent, affordable housing;
  - 3% indicated lack of jobs.

Analysis: For survey respondents who are not retired, gaining/maintaining employment is predominantly hampered by disability/physical health issues distantly followed by lack of childcare, mental/behavioral health issues, domestic violence/abuse, lack of transportation, incompatible work hours, and low wages/benefits. Only 3% indicated lack of permanent, affordable housing, lack of jobs, fear of loss of benefits/assistance if income increases, and alcohol/drug addictions.

### **Education and Cognitive Development:** Of survey respondents:

- In 2023, 49 low-income families received a total of 57 car seats;
- In 2024, 48 low-income families received a total of 59 seats;
- In 2025, 37 low-income families received a total of 47 car seats.

Analysis: Although survey data didn't single out child passenger safety needs, the CAAG turned to LCOI data gathered over the past several years, which revealed a consistent market demand for car seats needed by low-income families to improve the safety of their children while riding in the family vehicle. The CAAG concluded this is a continuing need within the community.

Survey respondents also indicated the need for more after-school programs/tutoring and recreational opportunities for youth.

**Income and Asset Building:** Of survey respondents:

- 90% indicated their household income is either at or below \$41,676 which is the 200% income threshold for a family of two;
- 43% indicated they are able to pay their bills but are unable to save;
- 41% indicated they are behind on more than one bill/payment;
- 33% indicated they are overwhelmed by managing their own finances;
- 27% indicated they have sought assistance to manage their money;
- 16% indicated they are saving on a regular basis.

Analysis: The majority of survey respondents indicated they are just getting by each month and are unable to save any money or they are behind on more than one bill/payment. One-third of the respondents indicated they are overwhelmed by managing their own finances, and only about one-third of survey respondents indicated they have sought assistance to manage their finances. The CAAG inferred low-income families often lack education/skill sets to manage their finances, are afraid of losing government supports, or are embarrassed to seek help. At the ground level, when observing common challenges experienced by low-income families who participate in LCOI's Money Management/Financial Empowerment program, common problems include lack of ability to identify wants vs. needs, education about budget basics, and committing to a disciplined budget plan to stabilize their financial situation. The CAAG concluded budgeting assistance/money management remains a significant continuing need.

**Housing:** Of survey respondents:

- 33% indicated they own their home while 63% rent their home, while 4% reported they are homeless and staying with friends;
- 24% indicated they cannot find affordable housing to either buy or rent;
- 51% indicated minor repairs are needed to their home, while 14% indicated they cannot make necessary repairs to their home, and 8% reported needing home modifications;
- 8% of survey respondents reported housing affordability is hampered by bad credit;
- 98% indicated neither they nor their household members have been discriminated against;

Analysis: Nearly one-quarter of respondents indicated they cannot find affordable housing to rent or buy. More than half of respondents' homes need minor repairs while a little more than a tenth of the respondents cannot afford to make the repairs. Nearly all indicated they had not experienced discrimination. As for recommended LCOI priorities, survey respondents indicated a continued need for increasing safe and affordable housing. The CAAG acknowledged limited resources are a factor, especially given the continuation of the NYS Housing Freeze. However, LCOI has implemented and expanded upon related services since the last CNA, including the Rent Supplement program, the HAVP program, and new project-based housing programs that complement LCOI's Section 8 program, as well as a Cooling Initiative program, which mitigates excessive heat inside qualifying homes during the summer months. LCOI also capitalizes on additional funding whenever possible to provide for emergency rent, mortgage, and utility assistance for qualifying families. The CAAG concluded the continuing high importance of these services provided by LCOI.

**Health and Social/Behavioral Development:** Of survey respondents:

- 96% indicated they felt safe within their community with the remaining 4% indicating that their neighbors made them feel unsafe or that they felt safe sometimes, but not always.
- Indicating some sort of abuse:
  - 22% Emotional abuse;
  - 14% Physical abuse;
  - 22% Verbal abuse;
  - 6% Financial abuse;
  - 8% Sexual harassment and/or assault;
  - 12% Crime
  - 6% Bullying
- 47% struggles to pay for utility/heating bills;
- 39% struggle to pay for car payment/insurance/repairs/maintenance;
- 33% struggle to pay for clothing (self/children);
- 33% struggle to pay for gasoline;
- 31% struggled to pay for food/groceries;
- 29% struggle to pay for cable/internet bills;
- 27% struggle to pay for rent/mortgages;
- 20% struggle to pay for cell phone bills;

Analysis: Utility/heating assistance is a struggle for nearly half of the survey respondents; this is an important need in the community among low-income individuals. Transportation (car payments/insurance/repairs/maintenance) was indicated as a need in more than a third of the survey respondents. Food insecurity was evident with one-third of the survey respondents who indicated they struggled to pay for food/groceries; emergency food distribution continues to be an important need.

The vast majority of respondents reported they felt safe within their community; the remainder stated they felt safe most of the time, but not always, or they had issues with a neighbor. 88% of survey respondents also indicated domestic violence needs are currently being met within the community. The CAAG concluded LCOI's Victim Services program, as the only certified Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault services provider in the county, remains an important program for the community.

Mental/behavioral health services was a notable service survey respondents felt community need was not meeting, including for youth.

**Multiple Needs:** Of survey respondents:

- 24% indicated they are unable to afford vehicle repairs, maintenance, inspections, and/or registrations;
- 18% indicated they are unable to afford gas;
- 20% indicated they do not have access to a vehicle;
- 2% indicated they have no vehicle insurance;
- 20% indicated utilization of public transportation including Medicaid transportation and Birnie Bus Services;
- The lack of childcare was also cited, with 31% of survey respondents indicating such services were lacking or insufficient.

Analysis: Nearly one-fourth of survey respondents indicated they are unable to afford vehicle upkeep and about one-fifth indicated they are unable to afford gas or do not have access to a vehicle. For those who do not have a vehicle, public transportation utilization was indicated by one-fifth of the respondents. LCOI continues to be an important contributor to transportation challenges in Lewis County through its Transportation Assistance program for qualifying families.

Childcare was one other service in which community need was not being met.

Although not included in the survey, the CAAG observed the Thrift Store continues to be an important resource for low-income families for affordable goods, when reflecting upon daily store traffic.

The following Key Findings are the result of an analysis of survey data provided by **workforce and partner surveys**, which reflect conditions of poverty experienced within Lewis County. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed:

- Gaining/Maintaining employment (assuming jobs are available) are hampered by lack of childcare, poor work ethic/motivation, fear of loss of government supports if income increases, lack of transportation, and mental/behavioral health issues.
- Adult services that are lacking/insufficient in the county include job skills training, higher education/skill development, substance use/abuse services, mental/behavioral health services, and transportation.
- Youth services that are lacking/insufficient in the county include affordable childcare/daycare services, job skills training/lack of youth-appropriate positions, recreational activities, and mental/behavioral health services.
- Top needs not being met in the community include affordable childcare/daycare, safe/affordable housing, homeless services, mental/behavioral health services, transportation, and job training.

## Needs Statements/Program Priorities

The CAAG developed the following Needs Statements and Program Priorities which are based upon key findings above.

When deliberating Program Priorities, the CAAG took great care to align program priorities based on conditions in our community believed to be causes and/or results of poverty. Program priorities must also align with LCOI's mission to avoid the potential of mission drift. Consequently, the CAAG also took into consideration existing services offered by other providers within Lewis County, which may or may not be readily apparent to a portion of the survey respondents. In these situations, more public awareness of available services within the community may be warranted rather than duplicating services. In other situations, services may be limited by income or other eligibility guidelines, resource constraints originating at the Federal, State, or local levels, or other limitations beyond LCOI's control. In these situations, LCOI may be able to contribute by adding its voice along with fellow provider agencies (through various consortia or associations) to advocate for regulatory changes at the local, State, or Federal levels. Other opportunities to mitigate various barriers through a strengthened referral process with local partners or collaborating to some degree with service provision may also potentially exist.

Needs Statements and Program Priorities are categorized under the applicable CSBG National Domain. Program Priorities are further denoted by Community (C), Agency (A), or Individual/Family (F) related priorities. All program priorities include the presumption that all people accessing LCOI have access to language translation services (A).

### **CSBG Domain: Employment**

**Needs Statement:** *Low-income individuals lack transportation and other workforce development supports to obtain or maintain employment.*

The above needs statement is based on data indicating obtaining and maintaining employment (assuming jobs are available) continue to be substantial issues in Lewis County. The CAAG observed basic consistency among the survey responses, which expressed the need for job skills training, transportation supports, and other supports listed under the Multiple Domain category later in this CNA.

### **Program Priorities:**

- (F) Transportation Assistance as a workforce development support to help remove the barrier of unreliable transportation to obtain or maintain employment;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level to address barriers to workforce development (job training) and other supports.
- (A) Continued availability of the Thrift Store as a venue for work skills development (Lewis County One Stop);
- (A) Community awareness to inform low-income families about workforce development supports within the community.
- (A) A strong referral process to community service providers who offer other workforce development supports.

## **CSBG Domain: Education and Cognitive Development**

Needs Statement: *Low-income families lack education about child passenger safety, as well as access to affordable car seats that meet current regulatory standards.*

The above needs statement is supported by the continual market demand for regulatory-compliant car seats sought by low-income families who otherwise cannot afford them. These families often lack the education to properly install car seats, which is provided to them through training by Certified Car Seat Technicians.

### Program Priorities:

- (F) Standards-compliant car seats are provided to low-income families;
- (F) Education is provided to low-income families on how to properly install a car seat for their child;
- (A) Community awareness to inform low-income families about the availability of the Child Passenger Safety program;
- (A) A strong referral process with other community service providers to ensure low-income families in need of Child Passenger Safety services can be referred to the program;
- (C) Continued engagement as an active member of the Lewis County Local Traffic Safety Board where traffic safety issues experienced by low-income families can be discussed;

## **CSBG Domain: Income and Asset Building**

Needs Statement: *Low-income families lack education/skill development for basic management of their household budgets.*

The above needs statement is based on data indicating that low-income families often struggle with basic budgeting concepts and their relationship to money. Excessive debt to income is a common problem, recognizing wants vs. needs can compound the problem, and lack of education/skill development in basic budget creation/management often exasperates the problem into a sense of hopelessness.

### Program Priorities:

- (F) Money Management/Financial Empowerment program
  - Representative Payee Services for eligible individuals (Social Security funds);
- (C) Continued availability of the Thrift Store as a community resource for affordable household items and clothing;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level to address barriers to basic financial skills development.
- (A) Increased community awareness to inform low-income families about the availability of financial skills training programs within the community;
- (A) A strong referral process to community consortia who offer other types of financial skills training or awareness
- (A) Education/skill development through collaborative partnerships, such as Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead

## **CSBG Domain: Housing**

### **Needs Statement #1:** *Low-income families lack safe and affordable housing.*

The above needs statement is based on data indicating that many low-income families cannot afford rent, mortgage, or as applicable, repairs to their residence. Nearly half of survey respondents also found it financially difficult to pay for their utility/heat bills. Although consumer survey data did not indicate significant homelessness, significant efforts have been made at the county level to mitigate homelessness, including the creation of a warming center in the autumn of 2022.

### **Program Priorities:**

- (F) Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program;
  - > Housing Choice Vouchers;
  - > Family Self Sufficiency;
  - > Homeownership (as applicable);
  - > VASH (as applicable);
  - > HAVP;
- (F) Emergency Utility/Rent/Mortgage assistance;
- (F) NYS Rental Supplement program;
- (F) Weatherization/EmPower/Cooling Initiative, to promote energy efficiency and affordability;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level to address barriers to homelessness and/or safe, affordable housing;
- (C) Continued participation with Warming Center planning/development as applicable;
- (C) Active engagement at the State and/or Federal level for expansion of eligibility guidelines.
- (A) Community awareness to inform low-income families about availability of the housing and energy-efficiency programs, and in the case of renters, their rights as tenants;
- (A) A strong referral process with other community service providers to ensure low-income families in need of safe and affordable housing can be referred to applicable programs;
- (A) Continued service collaboration with area partners;

## **CSBG Domain: Health and Social/Behavioral Development**

### **Needs Statement #1:** *Low-income families lack food security.*

The above needs statement is based on data indicating that many low-income families skip meals to stretch their limited food supplies. Furthermore, low-income families typically have to rely upon support services such as SNAP, free school breakfast and lunch programs, area food pantries, Giving Boxes, and Stone Soup to ensure their family has enough access to food each month.

### **Program Priorities:**

- (F) Continued LCOI operation of the New Bremen Food Pantry;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level and/or advisory boards to address barriers to food security.

- (A) Continued technical assistance and service collaboration with the Copenhagen, Harrisville, New Bremen, and Port Leyden Food Pantries;
- (A) Community awareness to inform low-income families about availability of emergency food assistance of various types within Lewis County, as well as supplemental food available through various programs, community events, or faith-based initiatives.
- (A) A strong referral process with other community service providers to ensure low-income families in need of emergency or supplemental food can access services;

**Needs Statement #2:** *There is a need for a locally based victim services program in Lewis County to ensure families who have been victimized by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other crimes can access help to improve their safety.*

The above needs statement is based on a cross section of data indicating varying levels of safety concerns. While Lewis County is regarded as an overall safe place to live, our own long-term program experience validates the need for a locally based, comprehensive victim services program which provides both residential and non-residential services as a resource for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. Education to area community groups and professionals as well as age-appropriate primary prevention education to students has also been validated through program observations and partner surveys.

Mental/behavioral health services (either enhanced or improved) were also cited in each survey type as a need in the community, which falls outside LCOI's core mission. However, LCOI does serve on a number of committees, most notably the Lewis County Priorities Council, and can advocate on this issue.

**Program Priorities:**

- (F) Victim Services (Residential and Non-residential), including 24/7 Hotline, Safe Dwelling, Advocacy, Counseling, and Criminal/Family/Hospital Accompaniment for victims, and age-appropriate Primary Prevention Education to students in area schools;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level and/or advisory boards to address barriers to holistic victim services delivery and mental/behavioral health services within our community;
- (A) Community awareness to inform the public about issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other crimes, and the availability of services within our community to see help;
- (A) Training human service professionals and community groups regarding the dynamics of victimization, new regulations and protections for victims;
- (A) A strong referral process with other community service providers to ensure low-income families in need of victim services are aware of resources;
- (A) Continued collaborations with service delivery partners to ensure a holistic approach to victim services.

## **CSBG Domain: Multiple**

Needs Statement: *Additional community resources are needed to address the daily living concerns of low-income residents.*

The above needs statement is based on data indicating which community resources are perceived as inadequate to address daily living needs. The two most often cited were transportation and childcare.

Youth services perceived to be lacking/absent/need improvement include affordable childcare/daycare services, job skills training/lack of youth-appropriate positions, recreational activities, and mental/behavioral health services.

Although not included in the survey, the CAAG observed the Thrift Store continues to be an important resource for low-income families for affordable goods, when reflecting upon daily store traffic.

### Program Priorities:

- (F) Transportation assistance to address daily living needs, such as vehicle repairs, tires, insurance assistance, licensing fee assistance, gas cards, and alternate forms of transportation;
- (F) Back to school supplies/hygiene products;
- (F) Miscellaneous critical needs not falling under any other domain;
- (F) Technology assistance and training support to low-income families to access online school, work, employment, or daily living needs;
- (F) Vouchers to access needed items at the Thrift Store;
- (C) Active engagement in consortia at the local level and/or advisory boards to address barriers (real or perceived) to the identified above services.
- (A) Community awareness to inform the public about the availability of the above identified services;
- (A) Exploration during the Strategic Planning process of the above identified services perceived as inadequate; duplication of these services in the community (if any); and suitability to the agency's mission, capacity, and resources when considering future exploration.

### **Linkages:**

Needs Statement: *The agency requires partners/partnerships to meet its mission.*

In order to effectively meet its mission, LCOI must forge partnerships through a variety of partners across major sectors of the community who specialize in various services or capabilities. With leveraging created through partnerships, LCOI is able to more effectively provide services to low-income families.

### Priorities:

- (A) Identify public/private agencies mutually accessed by our consumers and prioritize those which need inter-agency development and/or strengthening;
- (A)(C) Active engagement in consortia/partnerships at the community level to address barriers/issues identified with:

- Mental Health
- Workforce development/EAP;
- Local traffic safety/transportation;
- Financial literacy/empowerment such as Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead;
- Homelessness/Safe and affordable housing/Fair housing;
- Energy efficiency (including audits);
- Food security/technical oversight;
- Affordable health insurance;
- Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; Primary Prevention Education; Community education/training;
- Language interpretation services;
- Suicide prevention;
- Early childhood intervention, youth development;
- Leadership development (volunteers);
- Countywide emergency response and human services priorities;
- Information and Technology.

### **Agency Capacity Needs (A):**

Needs Statement: *Agency capacity-building is needed in order to address program priorities and implement effective strategies for successful program operation.*

In order to develop and implement program strategies, LCOI must have the agency capacity to do so. The following Agency Capacity Priorities are identified, some of which also appear under program priorities.

### Agency Capacity Priorities:

1. LCOI focuses on Results Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) principles and strategies when assessing, identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating its program and services;
2. LCOI maintains a qualified and well-equipped workforce;
3. LCOI maintains an effective volunteer function for coordinated initiatives benefiting low-income families;
4. Training venues are provided for consumer work skills development (i.e. continued availability of the Thrift Store or agency programs as a venue for work skills development via Lewis County One Stop);
5. The internal consumer assessment methodology increases the effectiveness of cross-program service in meeting individual outcomes;
6. The agency maintains (or increases as applicable) its on-site availability within the community;
7. The IT function effectively meets the agency's data management and communications needs;
8. The safety and health needs of the agency's workforce and facilities are addressed;
9. The community is educated about the agency's mission, services, impacts, and relevant community awareness issues;
10. The agency maintains fiscal competency;
11. The agency maintains competent agency governance;
12. Low-income representation is maintained with formal community organizations, governments, boards or councils that provide input into topics supported by agency mission.