2021

Community Needs Assessment

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission

SETRPC

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Executive Summary

A community assessment is required by the Community Services Block (CSBG) Act of 1981 (reauthorized 1997), United States Health and Human Services (USHHS) Information Memorandum (IM) 49, and by contract with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). Eligible CSBG entities remain eligible through many steps and preparing a community assessment every third calendar year is one of those steps. Additionally, IM 138 requires information obtained through a community assessment to comply with Organizational Standards.

SETRPC conducted a community assessment for the counties of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange. This assessment was conducted over a span of January through June of 2021. Some of the data collected is from surveys that were completed during the year by customers, partners, elected officials and some through focus groups. The last assessment was conducted in 2018.

An assessment of family, agency, and community needs was conducted, and the results are contained herein, with emphasis on family and community issues for those living below the poverty level. Additionally, an assessment of community resources was conducted during the same period.

A list of five top needs was created from information received for each county. A list of five top needs for the Agency was then determined. The major findings and recommendations contained herein specifically address the top five needs of the Agency as a whole. While multiple needs were revealed, the final 5 to be addressed by SETRPC's CSBG program, were selected based on program capacity and partnerships. This information will be useful to the program in developing its Community Action Program Plans (2022, 2023 and 2024) and its Strategic Plan.

Final Ranking	Need #1	Need #2	Need #3	Need #4	Need #5
All Counties	Help obtaining living wage employment through educational opportunities	Help accessing nutrition education and nourishing food	Help accessing health insurance and medical care	Help to obtain literacy skills, English language proficiency, and financial skills	Help making homes more energy efficient

Background and Organizational Profile

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) is a voluntary association of local governments serving 19 member cities and 21 special purpose districts in the Southeast Texas counties of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange. SETRPC is organized into 9 functional divisions: Administration, 9-1-1 Emergency Communications, Disaster Recovery, Experience Corps®, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Criminal Justice / Homeland Security, Foster Grandparent Program, Transportation & Environmental Resources, and the Community Services Division.

The SETRPC provides direct social services by way of its Community Services Division (CSD). The CSD carries out programs for the poor, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the homeless, and families seeking self-sufficiency. Contracts include the designation of the Area Agency on Aging, 2-1-1 Area Information Center, CSBG eligible entity, Lighthouse Weatherization Program and Jefferson County Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

The mission of the SETRPC contract with TDHCA for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is to empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs and increase their opportunity to realize their full potential through education and community service collaborations.

Community Profile

Identification of Counties and Major Communities

The SETRPC region is located between Houston, Texas and Lake Charles, Louisiana, the tri-county region of Southeast Texas is connected by Interstate Highway 10, as well as US Highways 69, 96, 90, 105 and 287. Southeast Texas includes part of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and most of the Texas portion of the Intracoastal Waterway. The area is also crossed by numerous rivers and streams, the largest being the Sabine River and Neches Rivers. The Big Thicket is an area of dense forest that begins in Hardin County and goes farther north than the tri-county. In April 2021, Governor Abbott approved the move of Jasper County from the Deep East Texas Council of Governments to the SETRPC. The Greater East Texas Community Action Program is the designated CSBG entity for Jasper County which will not change.
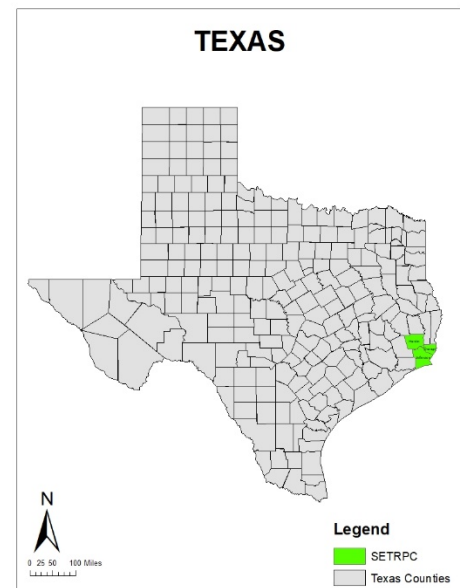
Population

Population change within the region from the 2010 to the 2020 U.S. Census is shown below. The region showed an increase of 11,698 residents over the 10-year span.

	Hardin	Jefferson	Orange	Region
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	56,231	256,526	84,808	397,565
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	54,635	252,273	81,837	388,745
Increase/Decrease	1,596	4,253	5,849	11,698

Poverty Data

The 2018 U.S. Census poverty estimates showed a total of 62,818 persons living below the poverty level in the region based on those at 100% of the federal poverty income guidelines. Following is the bases for determining poverty in the U.S.

2021 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines at 100%	
Persons in Family/Household	100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
1	$12,880
2	$17,420
3	$21,960
4	$26,500
5	$31,040
6	$35,580
7	$40,120
8	$44,660

SOURCE: U.S Department of Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines

According to the U.S. Census, the poverty rate change from 2000 to 2018 increased for the region by 0.96%, compared to a national increase of 1.8%. There were an estimated 23,736 (16.2%) households living in poverty in 2018. Of that, Hardin County had 2,824, Jefferson County had 16,519, and Orange County had 4,393 households living in poverty. Both Hardin and Jefferson Counties experienced an increase in the poverty rate by .6% and 1.7% respectively, while Orange County poverty rate decreased by .6% from 2000 to 2018.

Population in Poverty, Percent

The poverty rate is a population estimate for all persons in poverty in the region. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, an average of 16.51% of all persons lived in a state of poverty during 2014-2018 which was greater than the national average of 14.05%.

Report Area	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Population in Poverty, Percent
Report Location	377,325	62,305	**16.51%**
Hardin County, TX	55,794	7,010	12.56%
Jefferson County, TX	238,628	43,850	18.38%
Orange County, TX	82,903	11,445	13.81%
Texas	27,264,694	4,213,938	15.46%
United States	314,943,184	44,257,979	14.05%

0% 25%
- Report Location (16.51%)
- Texas (15.46%)
- United States (14.05%)

Population Below the Poverty Level, Percent by Tract, ACS 2014-18

- Over 20.0%
- 15.1 - 20.0%
- 10.1 - 15.0%
- Under 10.1%
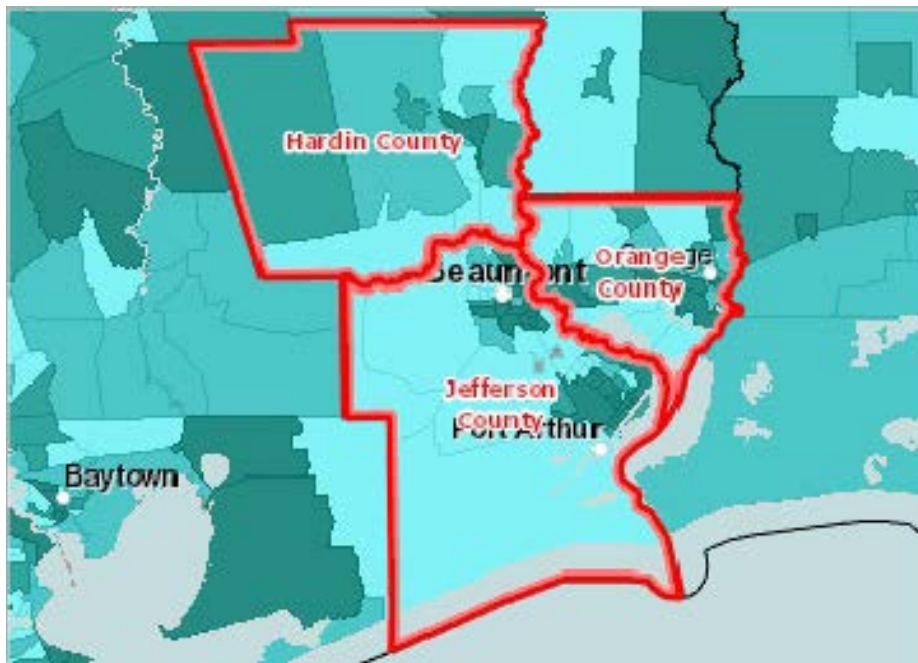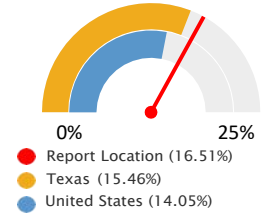
The CSBG Program is contracted to assist households living at 125% or less of the federal poverty level.

2021 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines at 125%	
Persons in Family/Household	125% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
1	$16,100
2	$21,775
3	$27,450
4	$33,125
5	$38,800
6	$44,475
7	$50,150
8	$55,825
Families with more than 8 persons	Add $4,540 for each additional person

SOURCE: U.S Department of Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines

The SETRPC Region has 16,465 family households living with income below 125% of the federal poverty level. Of these, 7,372 are single female head of households, 1,093 are single male head of household, and 3,995 are married couples.

Family Poverty Rate < 125% FPL (ACS)

| Report Area	Family Households, Total	Families with Income at or Below 125% FPL	Families with Income at or Below 125% FPL, Percent
Report Location	97,503	16,465	16.89%
Hardin County, TX	14,822	1,866	12.59%
Jefferson County,TX	60,264	11,565	19.19%
Orange County, TX	22,417	3,034	13.53%
Texas	6,629,325	1,077,472	16.25%
United States	78,697,103	10,803,905	13.73%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Education

Educational Attainment shows the distribution of the highest level of education achieved in the report area, and helps schools, businesses and the CSBG program to understand the needs of adults, whether it be workforce training or the ability to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics opportunities. The following chart shows educational attainment calculated for persons over 25, and an estimated average for the period from 2014 to 2018. Southeast Texas had 12.6% with at least a college bachelor's degree, while 34.9% stopped their formal educational attainment after high school. This is better than the national average but lower than the state average.

Percent Population with No High School Diploma

Report Area	No High School Diploma	High School Only	Some College	Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Report Location	**14.5%**	34.9%	24.5%	8.1%	12.6%	5.4%
Hardin County, TX	12.14%	39.4%	24.1%	9.1%	10.8%	4.5%
Jefferson County, TX	15.98%	32.6%	24.2%	7.6%	13.3%	6.3%
Orange County, TX	11.71%	38.8%	25.4%	8.9%	11.8%	3.5%
Texas	16.80%	25.0%	21.9%	7.1%	19.1%	10.2%
United States	12.34%	27.1%	20.6%	8.4%	19.4%	12.1%

0%   50%

- Report Location (14.5%)
- Texas (16.80%)
- United States (12.34%)
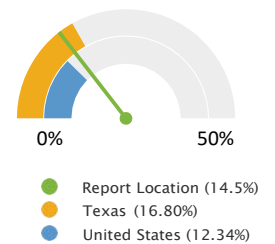
For those between the ages of 16 and 19, our region has far more youth not working or in school compared to both the U.S and the State of Texas. Of the 20,385 youth (16-19), over 2,200 (11.12%) are not in school nor employed.

Income

Two common measures of income are Median Household Income and Per Capita Income based on the American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Both measures are shown for the report area below.

Report Area	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Report Location	No data	$27,176
Hardin County, TX	$59,105	$29,108
Jefferson County, TX	$48,463	$26,205
Orange County, TX	$55,700	$28,826
Texas	$59,570	$30,143
United States	$60,293	$32,621

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2014-18. Source geography: County

The number of jobs and total wage and salary earnings from the top six employment fields in the SETX report area are broken down by county and economic sector in the tables below. These figures include both private and government employment. The sectors listed below represent private employment except for the government column.

Hardin County	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX
Field of Work	Retail Trade	Government	Health Care and Social Assistance	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	Mining
# Jobs	2,964	2,472	2,261	987	671	658
Average Income	$ 29,306	$ 51,320	$ 57,724	$ 45,721	$ 14,563	$ 53,626

Jefferson County	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX
Field of Work	Health Care and Social Assistance Jobs	Construction	Government	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Accommodation and Food Services
# Jobs	18,961	18,236	17,879	16,879	16,870	12,433
Average Income	$ 57,916.00	$ 74,461	$ 71,276	$ 142,065	$ 26,423	$ 23,601

Orange County	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX
Field of Work	Manufacturing	Government	Retail Trade	Construction	Accommodation and Food Services	Health Care and Social Assistance
# Jobs	4,985	4,345	4,146	3,721	2,556	1,771
Average Income	$ 115,765	$ 57,600	$ 27,302	$ 58,838	$ 20,785	$ 41,176

Unemployment

In the 2018 Community Needs Assessment, the region had a reported 6.6% unemployment rate as opposed to the state's 4.1% in April of that year. According to the Texas Workforce, by July 2021, the regional unemployment rate was up to 13. 8%, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate decreased by July 2021 to 9.8% but remains much higher than our 2018 assessment. The impacts of the pandemic are still being felt.

From July 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021 there were 43,107 Unemployment Claims. Hardin County with 5,462, Jefferson County with 28,895, and Orange County with 8,750.

Demographics by County

Hardin County

Child Poverty Rate (ACS) Ages 0-17	
Number	**Percent**
2,136	15.50%

Seniors 65+ Living in Poverty	
Number	**Percent**
1,021	11.60%

Living in Poverty by Gender		
Gender	**Number**	**Percent**
Female	4,070	14.20%
Male	2,940	10.84%

Population in Poverty by Ethnicity Alone			
Hispanic or Latino	**Not Hispanic or Latino**	**Hispanic or Latino, Percent**	**Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent**
556	6,454	17.73%	12.26%

Population Living in Poverty by Race Alone, Total						
Non-Hispanic White	**Black or African American**	**Native American or Alaska Native**	**Asian**	**Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander**	**Some Other Race**	**Multiple Race**
5,864	1,117	8	0	0	0	21

Jefferson County

Child Poverty Rate (ACS) Ages 0-17	
Number	**Percent**
16,621	27.80%

Seniors 65+ Living in Poverty	
Number	**Percent**
3,760	11.00%

Living in Poverty by Gender		
Gender	**Number**	**Percent**
Female	25,256	20.68%
Male	18,594	15.96%

Population in Poverty by Ethnicity Alone			
Hispanic or Latino	**Not Hispanic or Latino**	**Hispanic or Latino, Percent**	**Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent**
10,594	33,256	22.73%	17.32%

Population Living in Poverty by Race Alone, Total						
Non-Hispanic White	**Black or African American**	**Native American or Alaska Native**	**Asian**	**Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander**	**Some Other Race**	**Multiple Race**
17,828	21,341	119	2,514	0	1,080	968

Orange County

Child Poverty Rate (ACS) Ages 0-17	
Number	**Percent**
3,834	18.80%

Seniors 65+ Living in Poverty	
Number	**Percent**
868	6.90%

Living in Poverty by Gender		
Gender	**Number**	**Percent**
Female	6,715	16.03%
Male	4,730	11.53%

Population in Poverty by Ethnicity Alone			
Hispanic or Latino	**Not Hispanic or Latino**	**Hispanic or Latino, Percent**	**Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent**
929	10,516	15.37%	13.68%

Population Living in Poverty by Race Alone, Total						
Non-Hispanic White	**Black or African American**	**Native American or Alaska Native**	**Asian**	**Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander**	**Some Other Race**	**Multiple Race**
8,887	1,930	74	186	0	42	326

Timeline, Outreach and Data Collection Methodologies Conducted in Each County

Following the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Cycle, the CNA was conducted to identify the needs and resources of the region, then prioritized those needs, identify outcomes and indicators that align with the CNA and design our services on those identified outcomes to be achieved and resources to utilize.

On March 24, 2021, a CSBG Advisory Council committee comprised of individuals from Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange counties met (private, public, low-income, faith-based and education sectors) with the South East Texas Regional Planning Committee (SETRPC) staff to discuss the 2021 Community Needs Assessment (CNA). A systematic process was set forth to create a profile of the needs and resources of the low-income population in our region. This process involved collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from a broad array of sources. In the initial meeting the committee discussed the questions that would appear on three surveys aimed to determine what needs were most prominent in each county. The survey questions provided by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' CNA Guide were adopted with a few minor changes. After some discussion, the committee also decided to include questions to determine the impact of natural disasters (including COVID-19) on residents and how that would affect their financial status.

On March 30, 2021, the committee reviewed the final copy of each survey to be used. Three surveys forms were made for Elected Officials; Social Service organizations and agencies; and Residents (targeting low-income). The surveys were then transferred to Survey Monkey so that they could be tallied electronically.

On April 7, 2021, the committee approved the final survey links and began drafting language for sending the surveys to various participants. At the monthly Healthcare Networking Association meeting the SETRPC staff announced that the survey was available. A committee member who was covering Orange County began compiling a list of officials and potential participants who could assist in distributing the surveys in Orange County. She also began distributing surveys in manual form. The manual copies were distributed to Orange Christian Services, Special Angels Rodeo, Jefferson County Commissioners Court, and the Orange Community Action Association which is responsible for delivering Meals on Wheels to eligible seniors, aged 60 and over. In Orange 2000 surveys and possibly more were distributed by these methods; in addition to those surveys which were distributed electronically.

On April 13, 2021, a committee member from Hardin County suggested the use of a Quick Response Code (QRC) so that participants could quickly access the survey and go directly into Survey Monkey. Also, a committee member from Jefferson County translated the surveys into Spanish so that a higher portion of the Hispanic community could complete the surveys. After the addition of the QRC and the Spanish translation the committee began to distribute flyers to a distribution list of five major associations of social service organizations and agencies: the

Social Service Coalition, the Southeast Texas Coalition for the Homeless, the Healthcare Networking Association, the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, and the Stand Down Committee for Homeless Veterans.

A committee member from Hardin County had a strong connection with the Head Start program and various parent groups. He agreed to distribute the surveys to these groups during the month of April. On April 28, 2021, the committee met to discuss their actions and possible ways to go forward in eliciting responses.

A committee member from Jefferson County had a strong association with school districts in the County; since he was also bilingual, he reached out to the Hispanic organizations as well. Assistance was also solicited from the Director of Multicultural Affairs at the Catholic Diocese of Beaumont. He agreed to distribute the surveys to members of his group who spoke Spanish as a first language. The Director of Nutrition and Services for Seniors in Jefferson County offered to distribute 300 Individual surveys to residents who were receiving congregate meals and collected responses from that location. The Beaumont Housing Authority agreed to include the surveys in its 1500 client house-to-house health fair distribution area in Beaumont. Some Other Place, an organization for low-income individuals, agreed to distribute surveys to its clientele who came to their location for assistance.

The committee continued to distribute and collect surveys for Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange counties throughout the month of May, with circulation to more organizations and outreach to local media to publicize the survey activity and the reason it was being conducted. Responses were reported to the entire CSBG Advisory Committee on May 26, 2021. The committee decided that May 31st would be the final date for survey distribution.

The overall responses from Survey Monkey were surprising in that the majority of respondents (615 total respondents) from the Individual Residents did not indicate significant needs for assistance. Following are examples:

Question #	The Question Asked	YES	NO
16	Do you need help paying rent?	7.32%	92.68%
18	Do you need help paying utility bills?	10.98%	89.02%
31	Do you need food?	15.66%	84.34%

Since the quantitative data from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey do not align with the responses, four focus groups were formed to examine the survey questions as well as discuss responses that had been received.

The focus groups were held on June 17, for Hardin County; June 22, for Jefferson County; and June 23, for Orange County where two separate focus groups were held. Each focus group

reviewed where the surveys were targeted to ensure responses were predominantly from low-income residents. It was determined that the surveys were targeted appropriately.

Another theory was that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the arrival of stimulus checks, increased food stamps, and additional unemployment checks may have given survey participants the opinion that their financial needs were presently being met. One committee member shared that she was assisting Food Bank clients to complete the survey. These respondents just picked up food boxes and when responding to question #31 (Do you need food?) most answered "no."

Analysis of Data

Description of Causes of Poverty

- Lack of access to living wage employment opportunities
- Lack of access to Nutritious food
- Healthcare is too expensive and only a few specialists who accept Medicaid
- Individuals lack the education and skills to hold more than minimum wage jobs
- High cost of utilities
- Lack of affordable and safe housing
- Lack of broadband access in the outlying areas of the region
- Lack of knowing where to find help and the need for navigation through the maze of helping agencies and government programs

Description of Conditions of Poverty

- Inability to pay for daily needs and bills
- High rates of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, COPD, high cholesterol and cancer
- Inability to be hired in a living wage job
- Homelessness
- Unsafe and unsanitary living conditions
- Inability to use the worldwide web for educational opportunities
- Feelings of powerlessness and depression
- Seniors living in isolation

Community Strengths and Assets

- Trust among partners
- Intellectual capacity
- People who are committed to the work
- Right people at the table
- History of collaboration
- Experience in community development

Gaps in Services and Barriers

- Mental health programs
- Affordable safe housing
- Technology availability including broadband access
- Lack of medical specialists accepting Medicaid and Medicare
- Cost of healthcare
- Lack of work-family policies to support caregivers
- Affordable safe housing
- Education for living wage jobs

Top Needs for Each County

Resident, organization, and elected officials' surveys were tracked by county. The rankings were derived from results of the surveys in combination with focus group discussion and quantitative data

Hardin County	
1	Health insurance and medical care
2	Food
3	Affordable housing
4	Help making your home more energy efficient
5	Broadband access

Jefferson County	
1	Employment
2	Food
3	Financial assistance paying bills
4	Help finding resources in the community
5	Education

Orange County	
1	Employment
2	Food
3	Health insurance and medical care
4	Help making home more energy efficient
5	Nutrition Education

Top Needs from Hispanic and Latino Survey Respondents

Spanish Speaking Resident Survey Responses Jefferson & Orange (no responses from Hardin)	
1	English as a Second Language
2	Increased Job Skills or job training for better wages
3	Adult Education or Night School
4	Setting goals to become more self-sufficient
5	Nutrition Education

Disaster Impact Profile

Southeast Texas has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic just as the rest of country. In addition, the region is prone to natural disasters including tropical storms and hurricanes. In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey, a category 4 hurricane, made landfall on the region causing catastrophic flooding and more than 100 deaths. In a four-day period, many areas received more than 40 inches of rain as the system slowly meandered over the area. The peak accumulation of 60.58 inches occurred in Nederland,

a city within Jefferson County. On September 19, 2019, Tropical Storm Imelda once again devastated the region with some areas experiencing over 43 inches of rain.

Federal assistance from these two storms was just making it to Southeast Texas to aid recover efforts when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. The pandemic caused a massive lockdown forcing residents to stay in their homes for months. Disaster recovery efforts were stalled, the economy declined, unemployment increased, needed medical procedures ceased.

The CNA Committee decided to include the following two questions to gain some insight on the impact of these disasters. The outcome of the 616 resident surveys is below.

	Hardin YES	Jefferson YES	Orange YES	Spanish Speaking YES
Were you affected physically or financially by any of the natural disasters from 2019 to the present? (ex: Tropical Storm Imelda, Hurricane Laura, Hurricane Delta, February 2021 Winter Freeze, the COVID-19 Pandemic or any others not listed?	30.12%	50.71%	49.17%	32.14%
Are you in need of financial assistance in recovering from any of the recent natural disasters from 2019 to the present?	13.41%	20.43%	22.36%	21.43%

Results: Top 5 Needs for Service Area Categorized by CSBG Domains

Utilizing a ranking tool provided by TDHCA, the committee and staff determined the following needs will be our focus in the coming three years.

Rank	Need	Level	Domain
1	Help obtaining living wage employment through educational opportunities	Family	Employment
2	Help accessing nutrition education and nourishing food	Family	Education
3	Help accessing health insurance and medical care	Family	Health and Social Behavior
4	Help to obtain literacy skills, English language proficiency, and financial skills	Family	Education
5	Help making homes more energy efficient	Family	Housing