

2018

CSRA Community Needs Assessment Report



Leveraging resources,
Empowering peOple,
and **A**dvocating
to alleviate poverty
in the **CSRA**



Prepared By: CSRA EOA, Inc.

7/31/2018

Table of Contents

Organization of this Report.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
Overview of the Agency/Background	5
Purpose of Report	7
Community Assessment (Needs/Strengths) Methodology	7
Demographic Profile of the CSRA	9
Key Findings & Identified Needs	16
Key Finding # 1	17
Key Finding # 2	17
Key Finding # 3	18
Key Finding # 4	18
Key Finding # 5	19
Key Finding # 6	19
Key Finding # 7	20
Community Needs and Priorities	20
Considerations for the Future.....	20
Community Resources and Strengths.....	22
Data Sources	22
Appendices.....	24

Organization of this Report

This Community Needs Assessment Report begins with an Executive Summary, followed by an Overview of the Agency, the Purpose of the Report, the Methodology used in conducting the community needs assessment, Key Findings and Identified Needs from the research, a brief summary specific to the Community Services Block Grant counties, a summary specific to Head Start/Early Head Start counties, Data Sources for the Report, and Appendices. Appendices 1 to this document includes by county and region (CSBG and HS/EHS) the following data:

- Community Summary
- Demographics, Population Profile
- Employment
- Income, Assets, Poverty, & Income Supports/Public Benefits
- Education
- Post-Secondary Education and Training
- Health & Wellness
- Insurance
- Medicaid by Age Group
- Food & Nutrition
- Transportation
- Special Populations
 - Children
 - Youth/Teens
 - Military Veterans
 - Persons with Disabilities
 - Population with Limited English Proficiency
 - Returning Citizens
- Community Supports/Physical Environment

Appendices 2 consists of the EasyTrak database Primary Barriers Report for families served. Appendices 3 contains data from surveys, forums and discussion groups. Appendices 4 consists of documents demonstrating the data analysis process with the Board of Directors Planning Committee and staff. Appendices 5 contains local community resources and Appendices 6 includes county summaries and breaks down data by county, with all data for each county available for use as needed in planning.

Executive Summary

In 1964 the crusade to create a “Great Society” in America was launched through the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), legislation that created the more than 1,000 Community Action Agencies across the country whose mission it is to confront poverty on the local level. This legislation reminded us that we had a “compassionate commitment to keep faith with the morality of our society”, to relieve the poor “from the oppression of poverty” through Community Action, which would be “local effort, local leadership, local vision” (Bradley, 2006). CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. (CSRA EOA, Inc.) mobilizes both government and private resources locally, and at the state and federal levels, to work toward accomplishing our mission. We work to eliminate causes of poverty, improve conditions, educate the public, advocate on behalf of the low-income population and plan and implement (with maximum feasible participation of the low-income population) programs and services that increase opportunity, equity, skills, and knowledge, thus leading to increase self-sufficiency and decreased poverty in the CSRA.

As part of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability planning phase, we conduct a Community Needs Assessment every three years (with annual data updates) to help gauge the community condition, determine gaps in services, and set need priorities that will be used to best serve the low-income community. The information gathered in the Community Needs Assessment allows us to “see the face of poverty” in our communities, and use that information to mobilize resources to addresses the causes and conditions of poverty, organize communities, and develop innovative ways to serve CSRA families and communities. This assessment process helps guide CSRA EOA, Inc.’s strategic planning process (and updates) and annual work plan which includes core programs and services to address poverty in the CSRA.

The CSRA is a mix of urban, suburban and rural communities and though the population has grown over the past 14 years, most growth has occurred in only a few counties. Many rural counties continue to suffer population loss, higher unemployment, higher rates of poverty, lower incomes, limited transportation options, and less available affordable, standard housing. Incomes from wages are lower in all but one area county than the state average weekly income, and in a few of our counties, mean and median incomes decreased from 2012 to 2016. Per capita income was the only income that increased in all counties, though in most counties it continues to be lower than the state per capita income (See Demographic Profile of the CSRA for more information). Though unemployment rates have steadily been decreasing, poverty rates have been rising. The poverty rate range for the area includes a low of 9.49% in Columbia County, to a high of 31.55% in Bulloch County, with a rate for the 14-county area of 22.47%. Female-headed households are much more likely to live at or below the poverty level than male-headed households and 2-parent households.

Our minority populations continue to be most likely to experience poverty; additionally, the rate of children ages 0-4 living in poverty is higher in the area (34.5%) than for the state of Georgia (28.8%) or the US (23.6%).

The “typical” person served by CSRA EOA, Inc. is fairly representative of the citizens living in our tri-county region, with the exception of race. The majority of participants served by the agency (between the ages of 18 and 65) are either working or disabled and are struggling to meet their household needs. Lack of income (earned and public assistance) makes meeting household needs, accessing transportation and child care, affording safe housing and obtaining access to medical care more difficult. As evidenced by the data, some counties in the area have had decreased in household income, including mean household income and median household income from 2012 to 2016.

At the most basic level, the best way to increase household income is through employment; but employment alone, does not seem to be the answer; even though unemployment has continued to go down, rates of poverty continue to increase in the area. Many jobs are part time and/or minimum wage and many low-income families in our region lack career paths. Instead, the focus is on getting someone a job, but the ongoing supports to allow for an improvement in that job are missing. Additionally, the high cost of transportation and child care present significant barriers to employment. The high cost of housing is another issue faced by low-income families.

Recommendations for combating the causes and conditions of poverty include prioritizing career pathways and working with the community and economic development in partnership to attract living wage jobs; integrating direct services with community development; finding creative solutions to transportation; continuing to provide quality child education and support services and family services for Head Start and Early Head Start families; developing and expanding partnerships to create more affordable housing options; continuing the work with the Continuums of Care to decrease homelessness across the CSRA through Coordinated Intake and Assessment and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families; increasing home ownership opportunities through housing counseling, financial literacy, the IDA program, and homebuyer education; and to continue providing home weatherization to reduce energy costs for low income families.

In Richmond County, many changes are occurring with population locations due to changes in the Housing Authority stock. Low-income families have been moved out of the downtown area and are relocating, often in the southern part of the county, where there is affordable housing, but little access to services and public transportation. CSRA EOA, Inc. is going to continue researching this trend and working with the community to seek solutions.

Overview of the Agency/Background

Introduction & Community Action History

Community Action agencies were created as a direct result of the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, to address the root causes of and ameliorate poverty at the local level in communities across the United States of America. The EOA was key legislation in the War on Poverty; designed to provide local community with resources to determine the causes of poverty and work to improve conditions and provide opportunity for people to get out of poverty. Approximately 1,000 Community Action Agencies exist in the US and its territories, all working to meet local needs and achieve three national goals:

- Goal 1: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
- Goal 3: People with low-incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

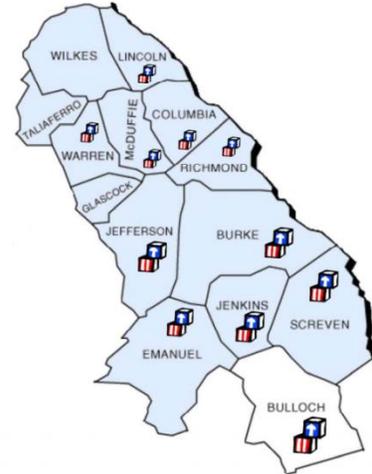
These goals focus on the family, in which agencies assist them in attaining skills, knowledge, and motivations to “secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient”; the community, by working to ensure the entire community is more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor and mobilizes resources and creates opportunity; and the agency, which is responsible for determining needs, developing strategies and plans, and making the best possible use of available resources, and strengths to work toward achieving the mission of the agency and the goals of community action.

Each Community Action Agency is operated locally, led by a volunteer board of directors consisting of one-third members of the low-income community, one-third public officials, and one-third members of the private sector. As each community is unique in their needs for assistance, services provided by each CAA varies, although the promise of Community Action is the same, *“Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”*

As a member of the network of Community Action Agencies across the country, CSRA EOA, Inc. uses a results-oriented and outcome-focused approach to managing and operating programs and services that promote self-sufficiency, family stability and community revitalization and strengthening to reduce and alleviate poverty, through empowerment and helping people help themselves and each other.

CSRA Service Area

CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. (CSRA EOA) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency, created in January 1966 and serving the Central Savannah River Area, which includes Burke, Columbia, Emanuel, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes counties and also provides Head Start in Bullock County.



Mission Statement

The agency's mission is to leverage resources, empower people, and advocate to alleviate poverty in the CSRA. We work to promote self-sufficiency and ease the human suffering of the CSRA citizens, by acting as a catalyst within the low-income community to identify poverty-related and human rights problems and to identify resources and develop services to address those problems; promoting the attitude of self-help in the low-income community; providing community education to the low-income population, raising their awareness of their rights as citizens and focusing their attention on the causes of poverty and human rights problems; and working with the community, rather than for the community, to promote self-sufficiency and leadership among the poor.

Leveraging resources,
Empowering peOple,
and Advocating
to alleviate poverty
in the CSRA 

Programs & Services

Toward achieving our mission, the agency utilizes a wide range of tools to address the needs of the community, including the operation of programs such as:

- Head Start
- Early Head Start
- Weatherization
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Supportive Services for Veterans' Families
- Coordinated Intake and Assessment
- Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons and Families with Disabilities
- Senior Nutrition and Wellness
- HOPE: Housing Counseling, Foreclosure Intervention, Home Buyer Education and the Individual Development Account Project
- Services: Intake & Referral, Case Management, Emergency Assistance (Housing, Utilities, Food), Personal Household Items, Financial Literacy Workshops, Budgeting Assistance.
- Job and Resource Fairs
- Partnerships and participation in Collaborative efforts and Continuums of Care.

Purpose of Report

Community Action Agencies conduct Community Needs Assessments (Community Assessments for Head Start), at least once every three years, with updates as needed, to help guide the strategic planning, operational planning, and program service delivery of the agency. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“USDHHS”) issued Information Memorandum 49, requiring eligible community action agencies to conduct needs assessments and use the results of the assessments to design programs to meet community needs. In 2015, USDHHS issued Information Memorandum No. 138 establishing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards requiring CAAs to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and develop a Community Action Plan to address the needs identified in the needs assessment.

The report and the appendices provide current poverty data in the CSRA, its prevalence in relation to age, gender, and race/ethnicity, other factors including employment, income, education, disabilities, housing, transportation, and other factors that may contribute to the causes or conditions of poverty, provides an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, and includes key findings on poverty and the needs of the poor in the CSRA. Information from the Community Needs Assessment is used to inform core agency services and efforts with the community to address the causes and conditions of poverty.

Community Assessment (Needs/Strengths) Methodology

The research and data collection for this needs assessment was guided by the framework required by both Head Start/Early Head Start and Community Services Block Grant. A Community Needs Assessment Work Group, comprised of staff members and board planning and evaluation committee members reviewed and analyzed aggregated data. Senior leadership, key program staff, and members of the Board of Directors Planning & Evaluation Committee developed the needs statements included in our Key Findings. Members of the CSRA EOA, Inc. staff who contributed significantly to this document include: Lola W. Johnson, Sharon DuBose, Mary Harrison, Ernestine Smith, Keesha Johnson, and Shaundra Dority. Sharon DuBose (Planner/Evaluator) served as lead in facilitating data collection, and focus group and resource fair planning and facilitation, and data analysis.

Methods Used to Gather Data for Community Assessment (Needs/Strengths)

- **Utilizing a listing from the previous Community Needs Assessment, a plan for data collection was developed with the agency Department Heads, with input to the Department Heads from staff members in their departments.**

- **Online research of statistical data from government and nonprofit resources (see Data Sources section of this report).**
- **Surveys were updated from previous surveys used, and were approved by the Department Heads before use in collection.**
- **Department Heads worked with staff and developed and submitted a list of partner agencies to survey.**
- **Utilize SurveyMonkey for online surveys.**
- **Resource Fairs for distributing information, discussion of needs, distributing community needs assessment surveys and collecting surveys.**
- **Database for reports on presenting needs, services utilized, and barriers.**
- **Customer Satisfaction surveys on services requested and unmet needs.**
- **Data Analysis Meetings with Departments, Department Heads and Board of Directors Planning & Evaluation Committee.**

Numerous sources were consulted including national, state and local databases, state and county government reports, and other community agency data. Opinions and perceptions were also collected from stakeholder groups including program participants/clients, community partners, CSRA EOA, Inc. staff members and volunteers, the agency Board of Directors, and local elected officials.

Surveys were distributed by a SurveyMonkey email link to partners, local government, agency staff members and volunteers, and the Board of Directors, as well as to clients for whom we had an email address in the database. The link was also available on the agency Website, and at agency neighborhood/service centers, and a hard copy was also made available for clients, staff, or volunteers who preferred hard copy to digital. Appendices 3 includes the survey forms and a list of partners (267 partners which include nonprofits, government service entities, faith based, for profit such as banks, colleges, technical colleges, the schools systems, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) and elected officials (60) to whom the surveys were distributed throughout the 13-county CSBG and 11-county HS service areas. Surveys were available for all counties served by CSRA EOA, Inc. In Burke County, a Pre-Forum Survey was distributed to the senior center, and of approximately 100 hard copy surveys distributed, 59 were returned and over 60 Senior Center participants took part in the Forum/Focus Group held at the Burke County Senior Center in Waynesboro, Georgia on March 12, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. Resource Fairs with Focus Group sessions and survey distribution/collection were also held in Burke County, McDuffie County, and Jenkins County (See Appendices 3 for locations, dates and times). Sharon DuBose (Planner) led the Focus Group discussions at the Burke County Senior Center, the Burke County Resource Fair, and the Jenkins County Resource Fair, and Jennifer Speth (Special Projects Coordinator) led the discussion at the McDuffie County Resource Fair. At the resource fairs, information was provided on the agency and county data, and surveys were distributed and collected. Information gathered by hard copy (paper format) was entered into the

electronic/digital format through SurveyMonkey for data compilation and analysis. Customer Satisfaction Surveys from May 2017 through April 2018 were utilized, as was data from the EasyTrak database.

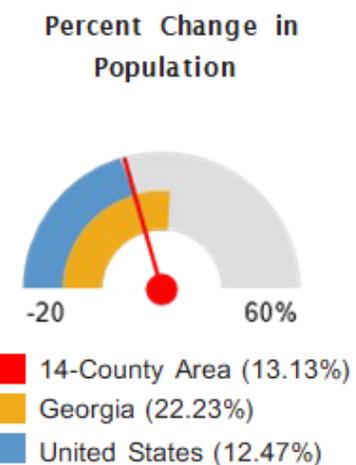
In the future, we will need to determine a more effective way to gather local needs assessment qualitative data, as collecting data by survey does not elicit a high response rate. The relationships we have with partner agencies in the community may assist in a larger distribution rate, as we will request that our partners complete the survey and forward to their contacts and to their clients, as applicable. The distribution and response rate should only increase in the future, as these relationships are strengthened and our presence in the community increases.

We also had better success in obtaining qualitative data when holding meetings in each county in which information is shared, statistical data is shared and surveys are completed in the meeting. This method requires additional resources, but produces increased data, and may be considered for the next 3-year Community Needs Assessment.

Demographic Profile of the CSRA

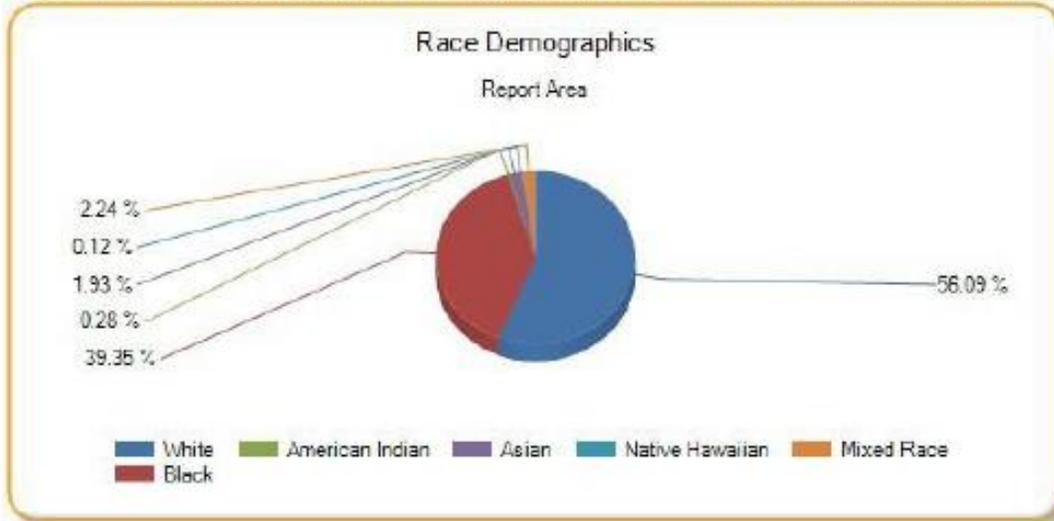
Community Profile

The CSRA is located along the eastern border of Georgia, with the Savannah River serving as the border between Georgia and South Carolina. Over the past 14 years, the total population grew by 14.01 percent, increasing from 481,576 persons in 2000 to 549,049 in 2016. Population actually grew significantly (exceeding state or national population growth) in two counties (Columbia and Bulloch), and actually six of our rural counties experienced population loss (Jefferson, Lincoln, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes). Racially, approximately 55.41% of the area is white, 38.87% is black, and the balance are spread across other races. Some counties, Burke, Jefferson, Richmond, Taliaferro and Warren, are majority black. Families with children comprise 32.76% of families, and 13.05% of the population are senior citizens (as compared to 12.34% in Georgia).

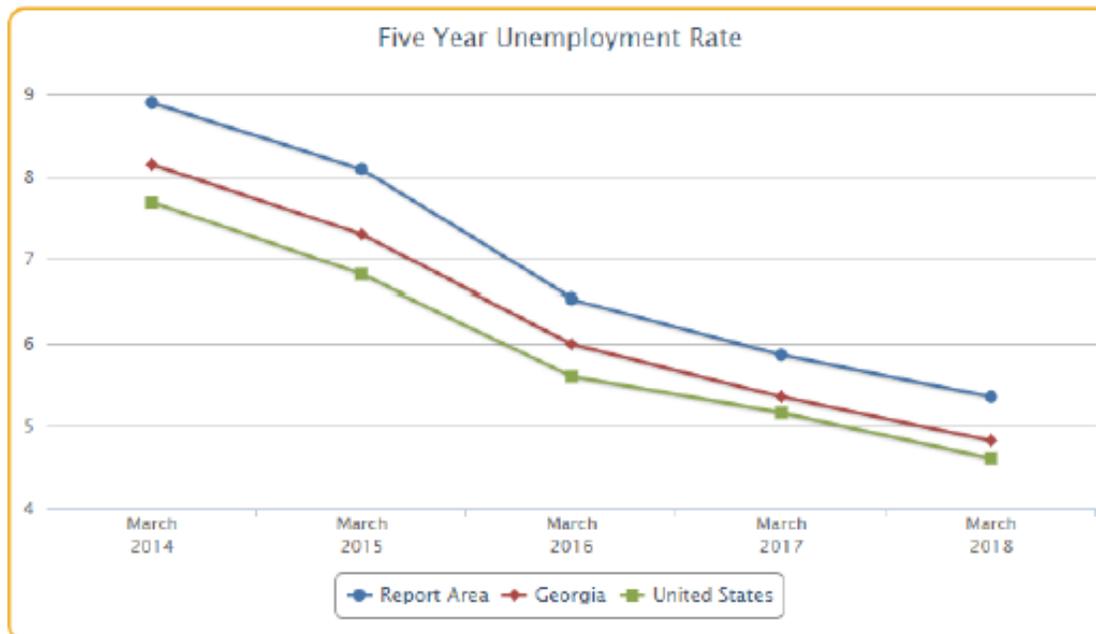


The CSRA includes urban and rural areas, with 67.10% of the population living in urban areas, and 32.90% of the population living in rural areas.

CSRA (14-County Area) Race Demographics, 2012-16, US Census Bureau, ACS



The unemployment rate for the area in 2016 ranged from a low of 4.7% in Columbia County to a high of 7.6% in Burke, Jenkins, and Screven counties. The five year unemployment rates have continued to drop steadily across the counties from March 2014 through March 2018. Average weekly wages range from a low of \$508 in Glascock County to a high of \$1,355 in Burke County, with Burke County being the only county that exceeds the State average weekly wage of \$1,028. Excluding Burke, the range of weekly wage averages for the CSRA is from \$508 to \$887.



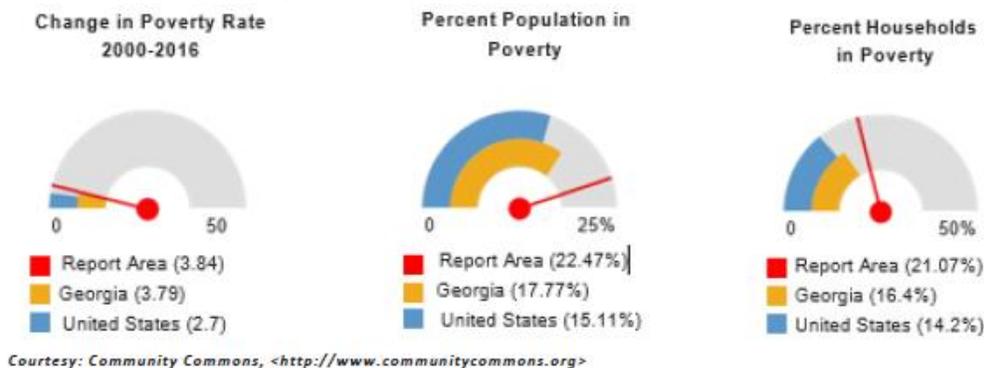
Courtesy: Community Commons, <<http://www.communitycommons.org>>

From the 2012 ACS to the 2016 ACS, Per Capita income increased in all counties, but only in Columbia County was it greater than the State Per Capita Income rate. In all other counties it was lower than the state average; in Taliaferro County, the per capita income was only 58% of

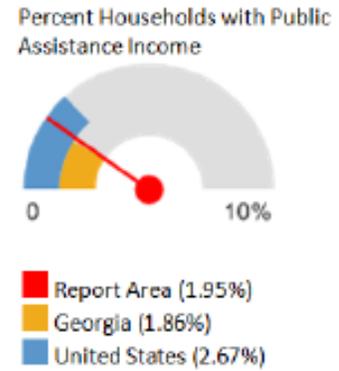
the State's Per Capita Income (\$15,469 as compared to \$26,678). During that same time period, there was a Mean Household Income increase for all counties except Jenkins and Warren, which actually had lower Mean Household Income in 2016 than in 2012. Median Household Income has increased in 10 counties from 2012 to 2016, but decreased in 4 counties. Only Columbia County had a Median Household Income (MHI) that exceeded (or was equal to) the State Median Household Income. The State MHI was \$50,433, Columbia County's MHI was \$71,962, and the rest of the counties ranged from a low of \$27,398 (Jenkins) to a high of \$43,884 (Glascocock), with Richmond having an MHI of \$38,595 and being one of the counties that suffered a loss in MHI (\$38,952 in 2012, \$38,595 in 2016).

Another significant income statistic is that of households and families with less than \$10,000 annual income. Approximately 11.1% of households in the 14-county area have an annual income of less than \$10,000, 7.1% have an annual income ranging from \$10,000 to \$14,999, and 12.4% have an income from \$15,000 to \$24,999.

Though unemployment rates continue to drop across the CSRA, household income remains low and the poverty rate remains high, with 12 of 14 counties having a higher poverty rate than the state of the nation, and the overall poverty rate for the 14 county area being 22.47% as compared to 17.77% for the state and 15.11% for the US (2016). Columbia and Glascocock counties have lower than state rates with the percent of the population living in poverty at 9.49% and 15.19% respectively; but Bulloch County suffers a 31.55% poverty rate, with Taliaferro and Burke counties not far behind at 31.38% and 30.5%. The poverty rate range for the area includes a low of 9.49% in Columbia County, to a high of 31.55% in Bulloch County, with the majority of the counties between 25% and 29.49%. In the 14 county area, **119,039 of 529,862 residents live at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**. In the 13-County CSBG area, **98,117 of 463,547, or 21.17%** of the population lives at or below the FPL, and in the 11-County Head Start area, **115,376 of 515,212, or 23.39%** of the population lives at or below the FPL. In the 14-County area, 41,046 Households are in poverty (21.07%), as compared to Georgia's rate of 16.4% and the US rate of 14.2%. In the 13-County CSBG area, 33,573 households (19.92%) are in poverty and in the 11-County Head Start area 39,700 households (21.01%) are in poverty.



In considering the poverty rates, it is also important to mention that of the 41,046 households living at or below the poverty rate in the 14-county area, only 3,801 households in the same area receive public assistance income (general assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families); this does not include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or noncash benefits such as Food Stamps. The average annual public assistance payments for households is \$2,801 for the 14-county area (\$2,836 for the 13-county CSBG area and \$2,848 for the 11-county HS area).



For families living in poverty, male householders have the lowest percent of those in poverty, comprising only 8.9% of those in poverty in the 14-County area, 9.0% in 13-County CSBG area, and 8.8% of those in poverty in the 11-County HS area. Comparatively, in Georgia, 10.0% of households in poverty are male householders; for the US, that rate is 10.7%. Married Couples comprise 23.9% of the impoverished in the 14-County area, 23.1% in the 13-County CSBG area, and 23.7% in the 11-County HS area. Over 67% of those living in poverty in the CSRA are female householders. (67.2% 14-County area, 67.9% 13-County CSBG, 67.5% 11-County HS; 56.2% Georgia, 53% USA).

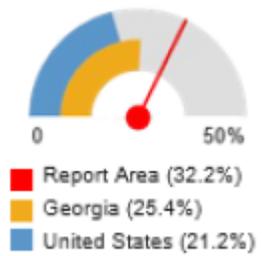
For the Hispanic population, though the percent in poverty is similar to that of the general population when you look at the 14-, 13-, and 11-county areas, (28.34%, 27.5%, and 28.72%), in some counties (McDuffie 91.23%, Taliaferro 70.37%, Warren 70.27%, Emanuel 65.71%, Wilkes 63.92%, and Jenkins 52.97%) the percent of persons living in poverty is the majority, or vast majority of Hispanic residents. The following chart shows the population in poverty by race (percent):

Report Area	White or Anglo-American	Black or African American	Native American / Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
11-County HS	15.18%	32.56%	41.18%	15.00%	48.33%	29.18%	24.12%
13-County CSBG	13.09%	31.62%	38.43%	13.47%	46.36%	34.26%	23.60%
14-County	15.07%	32.78%	40.75%	15.18%	48.33%	32.11%	24.91%
Georgia	13.12%	25.77%	28.04%	13.15%	27.14%	32.03%	20.91%
United States	12.44%	26.22%	27.59%	12.33%	20.07%	25.37%	19.27%

The poverty rates of White/Anglo-Americans and Asians is much lower than that of all other groups. The Black/African-American poverty rate is approximately twice the rate of the White and Asian rates; this is also true of the Native American, Alaskan, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders as well; the difference in rates is not quite as great with those of multiple races, as compared to White and Asian populations. In the 14-County area, 44,340 white people, 67,349 black people, and 7,350 people of other races live in poverty.

The child poverty rate increased from 2000 to 2016 by 6.3% for the 14-County area, and by 6.2% for the 11-County HS area. The poverty rate for children 0-17 for the 14-County area was 29% in 2016, as compared to the State’s rate of 23.10%, and the national rate of 19.50%. The 11-County HS area rate was 28.9% and the 13-County CSRA area rate was 29.2%. The 14-County area also has a significantly higher rate of ages 0-4 living in poverty (32.2%) as compared to the State (28.8%) and the United States (23.6%). Important to note is that the poverty rate in most counties is much higher, ranging from a low of 12% in Columbia County to a high of 76.3% in Jenkins County. For specific rates, please see the Appendices, “Poverty Rate (Age 0-4).

Ages 0-17 Poverty Rate



US Census Bureau, ACS 2012-2016

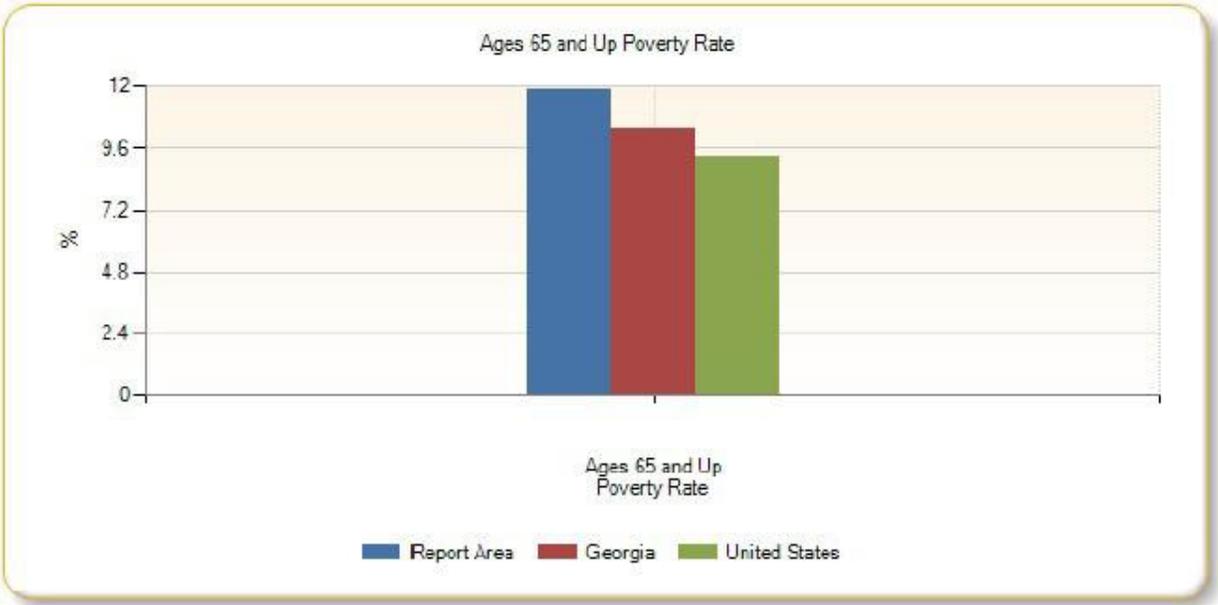
Child poverty rates are much lower, overall, for Non-Hispanic Whites than for other populations in the CSRA. Please see the chart below of data from the 2012-2016 ACS from the US Census Bureau. More specific data can be found in the Appendices, which demonstrates a range for non-Hispanic white children from 9.11% to 34.73% in poverty, based on county, but a range of 14.92% for 68.17% of black children living in poverty, based on county. In the CSRA, a black child is about 3 times as likely to be living at or below the Federal Poverty Level. In the 14-county area, 37,499 children lived at or below the FPL in 2016.

Ages 0-4 Poverty Rate

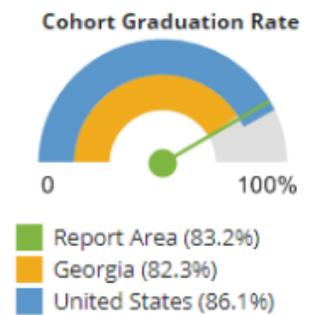


Report Area	Non-Hispanic White	Black or African American	Native American / Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
11-County HS	16.32%	48.09%	66.13%	9.29%	50.79%	33.72%	31.73%
13-County CSBG	16.08%	47.35%	58.82%	10.36%	50.79%	42.62%	33.54%
14-County	16.29%	48.44%	64.67%	9.25%	50.79%	38.51%	32.83%
Georgia	13.52%	37.01%	33.28%	14.99%	32.11%	44.96%	24.02%
United States	12.72%	37.42%	35.2%	12.54%	26.76%	34.63%	21.62%

In the 14-county area, 8,271 senior citizens (11.9%) ages 65 and older live in poverty. For the 13-County CSBG area, that number is 7,442 and the rate is 12%; for the 11-County HS area, 7,776 live in poverty for a rate of 11.7%. The area suffers a higher senior citizen poverty rate than Georgia or the US.



The Cohort Graduation Rate for the 14-county area is up to 83.2% (2015-2016 school year data), which is slightly above the Georgia rate, but still a little below the rate for the United States. The rate varies by county, with Wilkes County experiencing the lowest rate (76.8), and Glascock experiencing the highest rate (95.9). All but two counties (Emanuel and Wilkes) are at or above the state Cohort Graduation Rate. In the 2012-2016 ACS, the 14-county area included 2,157 teenage (16-19) dropouts, a significant reduction as compared to the 2018-2012 ACS number which was 3,093.



Education is an important factor in obtaining living wage jobs in the area, and the percent of our population in the CSRA with no high school diploma still exceeds that of the state (see chart below).

Report Area	Percent No High School Diploma	Percent High School Only	Percent Some College	Percent Associates Degree	Percent Bachelors Degree	Percent Graduate or Professional Degree
11-County HS	15.1%	30.94%	22.05%	8.3%	14.34%	9.26%
13-County CSBG	15.6%	31.76%	27.76%	8.25%	13.91%	8.72%
14-County	15.35%	31.29%	21.92%	8.18%	14.12%	9.14%
Georgia	14.16%	28.1%	21%	7.4%	18.3%	11.1%
United States	13.02%	27.5%	21%	8.2%	18.8%	11.5%

Food insecurity is the household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. Data in the chart is from the 2014 Feeding America Report. Based on the Feeding America 2014 Report, 20.27% of the 14-County area population (109,640 people) experienced food insecurity in 2014. For the 13-County CSBG area, that rate is 20.01% (93,860 people), and for the 11-County HS area, the rate is 20.25% (106,530 people).

Percentage of Total Population with Food Insecurity

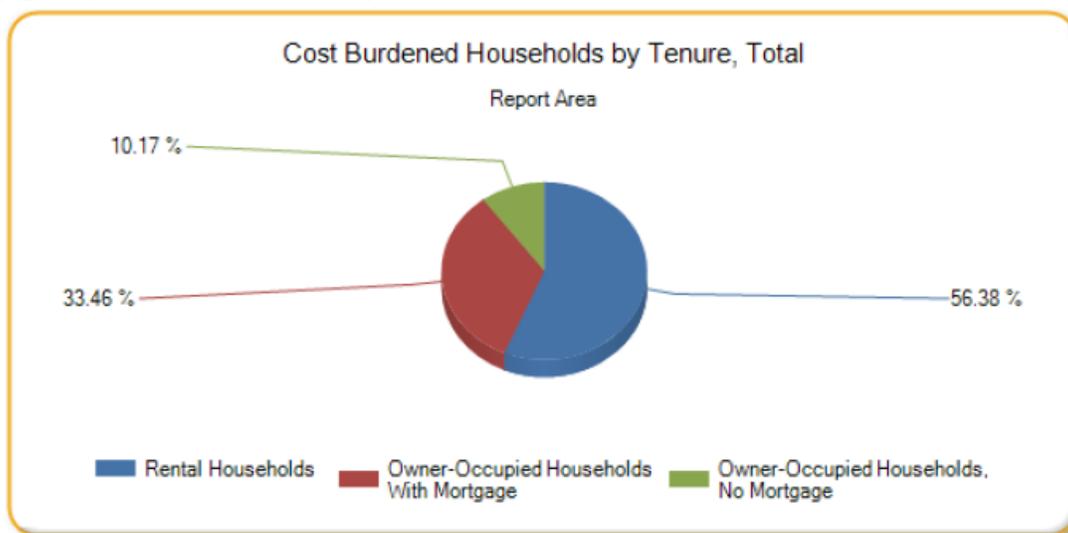


- Report Area (20.27)
- Georgia (17.7)
- United States (14.91)

The Child Food Insecurity Rate is higher than for the general population; specific rates and numbers of children under age 18 experiencing food insecurity are provided in the chart below and for all counties in the Appendices.

Report Area	Population Under Age 18	Food Insecure Children, Total	Child Food Insecurity Rate
11-County HS	128,370	36,350	28.32%
13-County CSBG	117,269	33,270	28.37%
14-County Area	131,789	37,450	28.42%
Georgia	2,490,381	700,870	28.14%
United States	73,580,326	17,284,530	23.49%

The 14-County CSRA includes 62,845 households that are considered “Cost Burdened Households” because their housing costs exceed 30% of their income. The rates for the area are: 14-County area 32.26%, 13-County CSBG Area 31.55%, and the 11-County HS area 32.23%. These rates are comparable to and somewhat better than the state (32.25%) and national (32.89%) rates. A chart with cost burdened households by tenure is below. As is evident, rental households are most likely to be cost burdened and owner-occupied households whose mortgage is paid off are least likely to be cost burdened.



The 14-County area has 10,331 units of HUD assisted housing to provide affordable options for low income families, but this number is far lower than the number of households experiencing poverty in the area. But homelessness, both in the Augusta-Richmond Continuum of Care and in the Balance of the State (covers all other CSBG counties) has been on a steady decline, based on the Point in Time County.

Homeownership rates throughout the CSRA have been on a decline from 2000 to 2016; during the housing crisis many people lost their homes and due to credit issues, are now renters. The rates for the 14-, 13-, and 11-County areas follow (note that the State and Federal rates have decreased as well).

Report Area	Owner Occupied Homes 2000, Total	Owner Occupied Homes 2000, Percent	Owner Occupied Homes 2016, Total	Owner Occupied Homes 2016, Percent
11-County HS	113,861	66.68%	116,850	52.17%
13-County CSBG	106,537	68.20%	107,703	52.84%
14-County Area	118,589	67.02%	120,907	51.73%
Georgia	2,029,154	67.50%	2,266,411	54.53%
United States	69,815,753	66.19%	74,881,068	55.86%

Transportation continues to pose a problem for many low income persons, especially those living in the rural communities, as public transportation is limited, and 7.92% of households in the 14-county area, 8.23% in the 13-County CSBG area, and 7.8% in the 11-County HS area do not have an automobile (motor vehicle). Most of these are Renter-Occupied Households.

The Teen Birth Rate in the area continues to exceed the Georgia (45.3) and United States (36.6) rates, with the 14-County area rate at 46.96, the 13-County CSBG area rate at 52.23, and the 11-County HS rate at 46.87. In many cases, teen parents have unique social, economic, and health support service needs, may have unsafe sex practices, and may experience a higher rate of poverty.

The CSRA is also home to a significant Veteran population, with 48,127 Veterans in the 14-County area (43,975 in the 13-County CSBG area and 47,150 in the 11-County HS area).

Key Findings & Identified Needs

The following findings and identified needs are to be used in planning sessions for strategic and programmatic/operational planning and may guide future projects, staff training, and resource development activities, but the needs are vast and many may be beyond the scope of the

resources available to meet the needs. The purpose of this comprehensive assessment is to inform strategic choices.

Key Finding # 1

Employment is not a single-bullet solution for getting households out of poverty; the area needs more living wage jobs.

In Georgia, the minimum wage remains at \$7.25 per hour, thus a person earning minimum wage who works full time, 52 weeks per year, earns less than 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$15,080 as compared to 125% of the poverty level at \$15,125). If that person is a single parent of one child, he or she would need to earn at least \$9.90 per hour to be just dollars above 125% of the FPL. Many jobs in the CSRA, especially service jobs, work less than 40 hours per week, and many work less than 30; often 20-25 to keep the company from having to provide insurance. The Community Needs Assessment Survey results also indicated, based on the opinion of those taking the survey, that living-wage jobs were a major need in the CSRA. In 2016, 30.6% of households had an annual income of less than \$24,999. The poverty rate in the 14-County area has increased and is now 22.47% even though the unemployment rate has significantly decreased and was down to 5.35% in March 2018.

For those living wage jobs available, many low-income persons lack the education and skills to access those jobs and would benefit from apprenticeship opportunities and on-the-job training. In the Community Needs Assessment Survey, 43.48% of respondents listed “Not Enough Living Wage Jobs” as a major cause of poverty in the CSRA, and for those requesting assistance with services from CSRA EOA, Inc., the majority requested either Utility assistance or Rent/Mortgage assistance.

Key Finding # 2

Lack of transportation and the high cost of childcare keep many people from accessing employment.

Many of our rural community have very limited public transportation, often only available for doctor appointments and/or transportation of senior citizens to the senior center in the community. In the survey, 47.83% of respondents listed lack of transportation as a major cause of poverty in the CSRA.

Augusta-Richmond County has a public transit system that work most days, but is closed at night and early morning, and is closed on holidays, making transportation for low-income workers inaccessible for those jobs requiring night or early morning shifts and that are open on holidays. This is especially difficult for those living or working outside of the service area, and many of the factories in the county are located out in South Augusta past the bus stops. Travel

by bicycle can be very difficult, as many roads do not have bike lanes and have higher speed limits, and walking outside of the city limits often means either walking on the street or in very high grasses.

For persons earning minimum wage or just over minimum wage, the cost of child care can be a tremendous barrier. The low-range cost of child care in the area is around \$75-\$85, whereas gross earnings for a person working 40 hours at minimum wage are only \$290. Approximately 25-30% of before tax wages would go directly to child care for one child. If the person has two children, almost half of their before tax wages would go to child care. Head Start, Early Head Start, Georgia Funded Pre-K slots, and DFCS funded Child Care slots provide opportunities for many low-income people to access care and education for their children while working, but there are more low-income children than there are slots available.

Community Needs Assessment Surveys supported the data that transportation and child care costs were major barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

Key Finding # 3

The high cost of housing (and utilities), in comparison to income, creates a significant housing cost burden on many households.

Almost one third of households pay over 30% of their income in housing costs. This information offers a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs and demonstrates the fact there is an “at-risk” population. Homeowners are less likely to be “housing cost burdened” than renters, especially if they have paid off their mortgage, but the homeownership rate has dropped from 2000 to 2016 in every county in the CSRA, from a rate of 67.02% in the 14-County area in 2000 to 51.73% in the 14-County area in 2016 (13-County CSBG area 68.20% dropped to 52.84% and 11-County HS area 66.68% dropped to 52.17%).

In the community needs assessment survey, 43.48% of respondents listed “High Cost of Housing” as a major cause of poverty in the CSRA, and 34.78% listed “High Cost of Utilities” as a major cause of poverty.

Key Finding # 4

Single-Female Head of Households continue to be the highest household type in poverty across the service area.

Families in poverty that are Female Householders comprise 67.2% of the families in poverty in the 14-County CSRA (67.9% in 13-County CSBG area and 67.5% in 11-County HS area). The US Department of Labor published a report in January 2016 that stated that “Women’s earnings as

a percentage of men's varied by occupation" and that "women who worked full time in wage and salary jobs had median usual weekly earnings" that were "83 percent of men's median weekly earnings" (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/womens-earnings-83-percent-of-mens-but-vary-by-occupation.htm>). There are many studies that discuss reasons for this, including differences in wages for traditional jobs held by each gender, family caregiving responsibilities that often cause interruptions in career paths for women, and the possibility of gender discrimination (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/09/gender-pay-gap-facts/>).

Key Finding # 5

Non-White and non-Asian households continue to experience poverty at a much higher rate than White and Asian households in the CSRA.

In the 14-County CSRA area, the poverty rate for white people is 15.07%, whereas the poverty rate for black people is 32.78%, which is more the double the rate. For Native Americans, the poverty rate is 40.75% and for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders it is 48.33%. The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality released a report in 2017 that stated, "Though some gaps have narrowed, there remain substantial racial-ethnic differences in poverty, with blacks and Native Americans continuing to experience the highest poverty rates, Hispanics following with slightly lower rates, and whites and Asians experiencing the lowest poverty rates."

(https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways_SOTU_2017_poverty.pdf) The CSRA is indicative of those findings. Intergenerational poverty may be a contributing factor to this pattern, but the difference in poverty rate cannot be contributed to that factor alone. Inequalities and lack of equity must be addressed to reduce the gap and reduce poverty overall in the CSRA.

Key Finding # 6

Low Income Senior Citizens continue to need support systems, in addition to Social Security and Medicare, to survive.

The poverty rate for senior citizens in the 14-County area was 11.9%, and was 12.0% in the 13-County CSBG area and 11.7% in the 11-County HS area. These rates are higher than the Georgia rate of 10.4% and the United States rate of 9.3%. In the Forum at the Senior Center in Burke County, participants stated that Social Security and retirement payments do not keep up with the cost of living, causing many to be in poverty. Groceries, utility costs, medical/dental costs and home repairs often are too high. Additionally, many senior citizens lack transportation and must often rely on others, whom they must often pay or give gas money to, to take them places they need to go. Assistance with dental care costs was listed as the top need in the community by senior citizens because "Medicare won't pay for extractions or dentures".

Key Finding # 7

Drug Abuse/Alcohol Abuse is considered to be a major cause of poverty over the past 5-10 years by survey respondents.

Additional Data will be collected on this topic in the 2019 Update to the Community Needs Assessment. CSRA EOA, Inc. does not operate any programs related to drug or alcohol abuse, but does work with the local health, mental health, and substance abuse providers to refer people in need of assistance.

Community Needs and Priorities

Findings from our needs assessment indicate broad needs for services which support low-income working households (especially female-headed households with children), Veterans, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, children, teens, returning citizens (ex-offenders), and persons with mental health, substance abuse/addiction and alcohol abuse/addiction. Lack of transportation, living wage jobs, education, affordable child care, affordable housing, affordable utilities, affordable medical and dental care, and the high cost of groceries were all considered causes of poverty in the area.

Continuing to operate and provide support services through our Head Start, Early Head Start, Emergency Assistance, Homeless Prevention, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, and Coordinated Intake and Referral Programs will help support low-wage workers, Veterans, and low-income families as they work to improve skills, employment history, and education and try to access living wage jobs as they become available in the community.

Recommendations for combating the causes and conditions of poverty include prioritizing career pathways and working with the community and economic development in partnership to attract living wage jobs; integrating direct services with community development; finding creative solutions to transportation; continuing to provide quality child education and support services and family services for Head Start and Early Head Start families; developing and expanding partnerships to create more affordable housing options; continuing the work with the Continuums of Care to decrease homelessness across the CSRA through Coordinated Intake and Assessment and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families; increasing home ownership opportunities through housing counseling, financial literacy, the IDA program, and homebuyer education; and to continue providing home weatherization to reduce energy costs for low income families.

Considerations for the Future

Though there is generally a large list of needs not being fully met, we must examine the needs in relation to our mission as an agency then develop a list of which needs are addressable given funding availability and staffing. We specify which services we will be able to devote our energies and resources to, in order to meet the needs of the community in the most effective manner. Priorities must be reviewed and possible consequences of implementing or choosing not to implement a program are compared before determining which programs and services will remain, which will be expanded, which will be reduced and what new programs and services we may want to add to enhance our success in meeting our agency mission and our outcome measures. We will continue to work to bring together partners so we may effectively utilize available resources, and we will continue to analyze the trends, the community concerns, and the issues that most concern the citizens.

Community Resources and Strengths

Key resources throughout the CSRA that provide assistance for those living in poverty and that help people out of poverty continue to include CSRA EOA, Inc. programs and services, Housing Authorities, the Area Agency on Aging, Goodwill Industries, The Salvation Army, Communities in Schools, Family Connections, Region 7 Workforce Development (Areas 12 and 13), the Department of Public Health, the local transit systems in most counties, the Technical College of Georgia, the public school systems (especially in the Head Start counties), the faith-based community, including churches and other nonprofits that help provide resources, homeless shelters, training, and mentoring, government entities such as Department of Family and Children Services (TANF, SNAP/food stamps, Child Care), Georgia Pre-K funded child care providers, and other nonprofit entities to whom we refer people for services.

Several counties in the area are growing, adding jobs and adding living wage jobs. Additionally, though many rural areas have low access to health and dental care, in summer 2018 five counties in the CSRA served as a training site for the military (Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training) and received over \$1,000,000 in medical, dental, and other health care. Counties are working with hospitals to find ways to access to affordable health care.

Data Sources

Data sources consulted for this Community Needs Assessment include numerous federal, state, and local databases and statistical reporting systems. The COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards – Category 3 Community Assessment - Technical Assistance Guide recommended a useful tool (Community Commons) to gather demographic and geographical data.

Local measures were compared to the CSRA, across counties, and with state and national benchmarks to provide context for understanding the data and interpreting the findings. Sources utilized in the compilation of this data and in data analysis include:

- American Public Transportation Association (www.apta.com/resources)
- Asset Building Policy Network, “The Ever-Growing Racial Wealth Gap: Policy Origins, Policy Solutions (2017)
- Asset Poverty & Liquid Asset Poverty: 2016 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard, Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)
- Augusta Housing Authority Report
- Augusta-Richmond County Continuum of Care
- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

- Burke County Focus Group/Forum & Survey – February 2018
- Community Commons (www.communitycommons.org)
- CSRA EOA, Inc. EasyTrak Database
- CSRA EOA, Inc. Head Start ChildPlus database
- CSRA Regional Commission Annual Report
- Georgia Center for Opportunity
- Georgia Crime Information Center
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health
- Georgia Department of Human Services Strategic Plan (SFY 2017-2019)
- Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Labor Market Explorer
- Georgia Department of Public Health Strategic Plan 2016-2019
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Kids County
- Goodwill Industries Annual Report
- Governor’s Office of Student Achievement Report Card
- National Center for Education Statistics
- National Low Income Housing Coalition, The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes (March 2018)
- Screven County United Way Annual Report
- The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- United Way of the CSRA, United Way Screven County,
- US Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey
- US Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016”
- US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service
- US Department of Commerce
- US Department of Education EDFacts
- US Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Stakeholder input was collected through focus groups and surveys with participants, the general population, partner organizations, local elected officials, staff and volunteers.

- A pre-forum survey was conducted through the Burke County Senior Center, with 59 respondents to the survey. The forum followed and was attended by more than 60 participants.

- A survey of community partners and elected officials was conducted November 2017 – January 2018.
- A survey of program participants/clients, the general population, staff and volunteers was conducted November 2017 – March 2018.
- CSRA EOA, Inc. Customer Satisfaction Survey Results from May 1, 2017-April 30, 2018.
- Focused group discussion with the Board of Directors Planning & Evaluation Committee and the agency Department Heads.
- Focused group discussion with the Community Services Department Leadership Team (all program and site coordinators).

Appendices

See CSRA EOA, Inc. Community Assessment Appendices Document.