

Dodge County Community Needs Assessment Report

April 2020

Available at www.unitedwayofdodgecounty.com/community-needs-assessment



**Mobilizing Action Toward
Community Health (MATCH)**
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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Introduction

According to national datasets, for the first time since the 1980's, the difference in life expectancy of individuals in rural areas vs urban areas has been widening. The current decline in life expectancy in rural America appears to be tied to three “diseases of despair”: overdose (including opioids), alcoholic liver disease, and suicide.¹ In response, communities are coming together across the nation to foster rural conditions more supportive of thriving. This needs assessment represents one such endeavor to collect input from the residents of Dodge County, a rural area of 900 square miles in south central Wisconsin. The ensuing report summarizes a three-phase program to assess the unmet needs of the most economically vulnerable residents. The key goals of the needs assessment were:

- (1) Identify priority needs of this population in order to develop innovative ways to enhance rural wellbeing
- (2) Confirm (or refute) the hypothetical existence of a population of non-working adults who want to work but face surmountable barriers that prevent them from doing so. Provide data to local employers seeking to invest in solutions that reduce these obstacles.

This needs assessment and report were significantly influenced by the [United Way ALICE Project](#). ALICE is a nationwide effort to quantify and describe the number of households that are struggling financially. According to the United Way, “ALICE, an acronym for *A*sset *L*imited *I*ncome *C*onstrained *E*mployed, is a new way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford a bare-bones household budget.”

Data were collected in three phases: (1) key informant interviews with local leaders; (2) paper and online surveys; and (3) follow-up phone-interviews with survey participants. Each phase was designed to minimize the time burden on our target population - the most vulnerable residents of Dodge County. Recruitment locations included local Bingo nights, libraries, and purposeful sampling at food pantries and job centers to target those most likely to be in the ALICE population. In the end, we successfully oversampled our target population with completed surveys from 1.6% of the target households in Dodge County.

Summary of Key Findings

The absence of services and resources to support families is believed to contribute to economic instability. Specifically, the absence of affordable quality childcare and sufficient opportunities for youth engagement in community activities are thought to be top barriers to rural thriving and economic stability. Conversely, a key strength is the abundance of friendly people in Dodge County.

Most households in Dodge County are struggling with unmet needs. As expected, ALICE households reported unmet concerns at a noticeably higher rate compared to households with income above the ALICE threshold. Even so, 46% of the households that indicated economic stability still reported unmet concerns.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Achieving Rural Health Equity and Well-Being: Proceedings of a Workshop*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/mapping-health-equity-tackling-structural-inequities-in-rural-communities-a-workshop

The top five concerns declared by ALICE households were: Depression/Anxiety; Dental Care; Money Management; Nutritious food; and Affordable Healthcare.

42% of survey respondents indicated that at least one adult in the household was not working and wished to work (labelled as “Work-Gap” households). 70% of these Work-Gap households identified at least one barrier to employment with an average of 3 barriers per household. Barriers to work varied with the age of the respondent.

80% of these Work-Gap households indicated they were in the ALICE population. This suggests that assisting such individuals into the workforce could be an important strategy to lifting them above the ALICE threshold.

The top three work barriers for Work-Gap respondents in the prime working age range (18-45) were: Pay is Too Low; Cost of Childcare; and No Driver’s License. One interpretation of the “Pay too Low” concern across age ranges is the “welfare cliff” where earning just a little extra income disqualifies folks from State support but is not enough to self-finance healthcare or childcare.

Health-related work barriers rise to the top when the older age groups are included. The top three work barriers for all Work-Gap respondents are: Existing Jobs are Too Hard on the Body; Pay is Too Low and Health/Disability. This suggests there is a portion of people over the age of 46 that could or would work if available jobs were not so physically demanding.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The results of this Dodge County community needs assessment mirror the nationwide pattern of growing disparities in health in rural America. Across methodology, concerns related to health (i.e. addiction, anger issues, alcohol use, depression and anxiety and chronic health conditions) were listed most often. In fact, in terms of prevalence and priority, the top issue identified by the most economically unstable respondents of our representative survey was depression and anxiety. Additionally, health and physical well-being concerns surfaced as key barriers to work for Work-Gap households, especially those over the age of 46. A closer look at the respondents in their prime working years suggests that while the diseases of despair remain a concern, the practical needs for childcare, a living wage, and reliable transportation would remain barriers to employment even if mental well-being was achieved. This implies that employers may need to develop strategies to support the mental well-being of new employees that they bring into the workplace through work barrier reduction efforts.

Coordinating local services to address the top five concerns identified by ALICE households should be a priority. These include addressing mental health, dental health, money management, and nutritious food. On the state and federal policy level, advocating for affordable healthcare is also essential for creating the conditions for rural thriving, according to this needs assessment.

There is a population in Dodge County that is willing to work but encounters barriers that vary with age. Targeted investments to provide transportation options and childcare emerge as likely candidates to draw more willing individuals into the Dodge County workforce.

In order for rural thriving to be equitably achieved, those most impacted by the negative consequences of rural America should play a central role in the local decision-making processes. For Dodge County, this would involve more engagement with LatinX residents, young people, the elders and those who qualify as working poor.

Key Contributors: It Takes a Village to Build a Community

Strategic planning to advance rural equity, with a focus on community services and workforce development, must be guided by the perspective of those most in need of services and investment. Representatives of five entities with a commitment to equity in rural thriving played a key role in coordinating, shaping and conducting this needs assessment.

The Gathering Source: Where it all began

Founded on the value of neighbors caring for neighbors, [The Gathering Source](#) (TGS) is a volunteer-run community service agency serving south-central rural Dodge County with a focus on the [Dodgeland School District](#). What began as the humble work of a single woman delivering food to families in need, has grown into a network of volunteers running a food pantry and providing for the needs of schoolchildren. Through tireless fundraising efforts, TGS is on the verge of expanding its services beyond food insecurity into that of a rural resource hub with the explicit purpose of supporting rural thriving.

In order to ensure that expansion plans would be of practical service to the community, the executive director of TGS joined forces with several local leaders to gather data and better understand barriers to rural thriving. With data that reflect the true challenges and perspectives of those most impacted, TGS and other Dodge County service organizations can move forward with community-driven strategic planning.

Specialty Cheese Company and the Getting-to-Work Coalition: Funding Support

Like many small businesses across rural America, [Specialty Cheese Company, Inc.](#) (SCCI) in Reeseville, WI couldn't find enough workers to fill open positions. Realizing that every other business in Dodge County faced the same challenge, business owner Paul Scharfman decided to tackle the problem by forming a coalition of leaders from like-minded businesses, nonprofits, workforce and economic development agencies, and local government. This group became known as the Dodge County Getting-to-Work (GtW) program.

Based purely on local knowledge, the GtW coalition theorized that lack of transportation could be a significant obstacle preventing willing adults from taking a job. United by this theory, the GtW team earned grant funding from the [Easterseals Accessible Transportation Community Initiative](#) to pilot a rural rideshare program for low-income workers. This transportation solution focused on lower-skill positions upon which the agriculture, food processing, and light manufacturing industries depend and which are approachable for many neighbors with a lower level of education. Such residents, the theory went, lack access to a car or do not have a driver's

license – clear showstoppers in a rural setting of large distances and no mass transit. However, since this entire perspective was based on a hunch, the GtW team was eager to join forces with TGS to gather data on actual barriers that prevent Dodge County residents from getting to work.

The United Way of Dodge County: A Locus of Connection

The [United Way of Dodge County](#) is a non-profit organization that strives to be a catalyst for change and collaboration. Their main goal is to unite people to build a strong community through service to others, creative problem solving, and efforts to help people become self-sufficient and contributing members of the community. To do this they work to match community needs with community resources including financial resources, educational resources, and networking opportunities for local non-profit agencies. The United Way of Dodge County was a founding member of the GtW program. Naturally interested in identifying and exploring available community resources to address evidence-based community needs, the United Way was eager to lend their time and efforts to collect data on the areas of greatest need in Dodge County.

Boris Frank Associates

Boris Frank provides consultation in management, planning, and development for Not-for-Profit and Government Agencies. He is particularly interested in supporting rural non-profits in their quest for sustainability.

The MATCH Group of the UW-Madison Population Health Institute

Housed in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute, the [MATCH group](#) works with partners to evolve practice, focus priorities and shift power to support action on root causes of health. MATCH emphasizes community-based strengths and community-driven action in its services to promote health equity in communities across Wisconsin.

The MATCH Group does this through:

- (1) **Training & Technical Assistance (T/TA):** Building capacity on critical practices, including health equity, evaluation research, systems, and collaborative leadership lenses.
- (2) **Engaged Research and Development:** action research and evaluation to amplify community voice; developing and sharing scholarship, frameworks, and tools for change
- (3) **Statewide Alignment:** Leading learning and action networks; convening, coordinating and deepening relationships for shared action.

The MATCH Group was eager to support decision-making with an equity lens via technical assistance for this community needs assessment.

Dodge County: The Potential



With the county seat in Juneau, Dodge County covers 907 square miles² with 22 zip codes. The total population is 88,068 residing in 34,648 households³. The largest city is Beaver Dam with a population just over 16,000. Overall, the county has a low population density of approximately 97 persons per square mile.

Rural communities across the nation face significant challenges and Dodge County is no exception. Even in an environment of historically low unemployment, wages have stagnated and the basic cost of living continues to rise (see Figure 1 for estimated increases in the Wisconsin average household survival budget between 2010 and 2016).⁴

Household Survival Budget, Wisconsin Average, 2016

Household Survival Budget, Wisconsin Average, 2016			Percent Change 2010-2016	
	SINGLE ADULT	2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER	SINGLE ADULT	2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER
Monthly Costs				
Housing	\$492	\$735	6%	12%
Child Care	\$-	\$1,231	N/A	-9%
Food	\$158	\$525	0%	10%
Transportation	\$349	\$698	15%	15%
Health Care	\$215	\$802	90%	76%
Technology*	\$55	\$75	N/A	N/A
Miscellaneous	\$150	\$467	24%	18%
Taxes	\$235	\$602	38%	43%
Monthly Total	\$1,654	\$5,135	24%	18%
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$19,848	\$61,620	24%	18%
Hourly Wage**	\$9.92	\$30.81	24%	18%

*New to budget in 2016

**Full-time wage required to support this budget

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Internal Revenue Service; Tax Foundation; and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2016. For the Methodology Overview and additional data, visit our website: UnitedWayALICE.org

Figure 1.

² National Association of Counties, Dodge County details. Retrieved from: https://ce.naco.org/?county_info=55027

³ Alice in Dodge County: 2016 Point in time data. (2018). *United Way ALICE Report-Wisconsin*. Retrieved from: <https://unitedwaywi.site-ym.com/page/2018ALICEbyCounty>

⁴ The United Way of Wisconsin: ALICE Project. (2018). *ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/wisconsin>

According to the most recent United Way ALICE report for Dodge County, 30.4% of households live just above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but struggle to afford basic household necessities. This ALICE population lives on the verge of poverty and is most vulnerable to the economic fluctuations in income and the rising costs of living. Additionally, 9.4% live day in and day out below the FPL (See Figure 2). Taken together, this means that approximately 13,517 of the 34,648 households in Dodge County struggle to make ends meet, put food on the table and keep the lights on. Each day, families make tough decisions about which needs to meet and which to delay.⁵

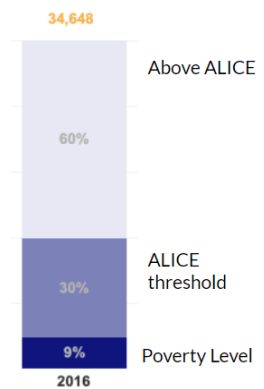


Figure 2.

Dodge County's low official unemployment rate of 3%⁶ may not capture all individuals interested in working. Analysis by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors⁷ indicates a population in the county of approximately 8100 civilian and non-institutional individuals between the ages of 18 and 64 who are not in the labor force (neither employed nor officially unemployed). This work estimates that between 1580 and 1920 of these 8100 individuals want a job. While this may indicate an opportunity to draw more folks into the labor pool, the analysis does not describe why they are not working or what prevents them from doing so.

There are leaders in the county with a strong sense of community and a commitment to better understand and face these challenges together. This needs assessment is a reflection of this ethic of care. Via the efforts of three community leaders and the generous input of hundreds of residents most impacted by these trends we are now able to identify and prioritize the key actions needed to improve rural thriving within Dodge County.

The Plan and the Process

A multi-method approach deployed in three phases was designed to reduce the burden of a lengthy information-gathering process with our target population of chronically under-resourced households.

Phase One Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews

Individuals in positions of leadership with many points of contact in Dodge County were identified by the key contributors of this needs assessment. Boris Frank conducted these interviews. Although the majority of questions posed to these key informants regarded the current utility and future direction of TGS, key

⁵ Alice in Dodge County: 2016 Point in time data. (2018). *United Way ALICE Report-Wisconsin*. Retrieved from: <https://unitedwaywi.site-ym.com/page/2018ALICEbyCounty>

⁶ Dodge County unemployment rate (2019 annual). Retrieved from: www.jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconomy/query

⁷ Unpublished analysis performed by Tom Pethan, Senior Research Analyst, using Dodge County data from: US Census, 2018 1-Year ACS (Tables S1810 and S2301); Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 Annual LAUS; and Wisconsin data from BLS 2018 CPS sourced from IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org

informants were also asked to report more generally about patterns in needs they have observed as emerging in Dodge County. See **Appendix A** for the list of questions addressed in these interviews.

Flash-point Data Collection: Bingo Night

In order to gather a broad amount of input on challenges and assets of living in Dodge County from community members not benefitting from the privileges of occupying prominent roles in the county, flash-point data collection was arranged and executed at a monthly Bingo Night. Attendees of the Bingo event were offered a free Bingo card to answer two questions while waiting in the entry line. Data collectors, carefully chosen to facilitate trust, consisted of two prominent social service individuals well known within the community. The questions were: (1) Please circle the 3 most important things we as a community need to address in Dodge County and (2) What do you like most about the community you live in? (open answer response). The options listed in the first item were derived from themes that emerged from Phase One. See **Appendix B** for the actual hand-out used at the event.

Phase Two Data Collection

13-item Survey

Surveys were distributed online and in paper in English and Spanish. An online domain was purchased and participants were electronically recruited for online completion of the survey via the TGS website and Facebook page, email, and flyers in public places promoting the website on tear sheets. Participants were also passively recruited using flyers and paper surveys distributed at food pantries, libraries, job centers and social service agencies across Dodge County. Lastly, data collectors from TGS and the United Way actively recruited folks to fill out paper surveys while waiting in line at food pantries. See **Appendix C** for recruitment materials and **Appendix D** for a full copy of the survey. In-person recruitment for immediate paper survey completion was incentivized with a coupon for milk. Data collection lasted for 9 months from July 2018 through March 2019.

The survey was made up of 13 questions that addressed the following key components:

- Do you have a hard time affording your basic needs?
- Do you need help with unmet concerns?
- Are there adults in your household who are not working but want to work?
- What barriers have prevented you from working?

Target Sample Size

As mentioned earlier, United Way estimates there are 13,517 ALICE households in Dodge County. We set a goal to receive completed surveys from at least 1%, or 135, of these households.

Phase Three Data Collection

Follow-up Interviews

A total of 75 participants of the 13-item survey indicated a willingness to speak further and provided contact information. A total of 55 respondents were contacted multiple times via email and phone (when provided) for further questions, 18 of which indicated living in a zip code that falls within TGS service area. Despite

numerous attempts at various times of day and via multiple venues, interviewers successfully contacted only 11 respondents, yielding 9 complete interviews. Participants were asked to answer questions honestly and in as much detail as possible and were asked if they could be recorded (see **Appendix G** for protocol). All interviews were conducted over the phone and recordings were made through a third party application and later reviewed by interviewers for themes. The interviews with those outside of the TGS zip codes had one question removed that was specific to TGS programming.

Results

Phase One Findings

Results of Key-Informant Interviews

A total of 12 individuals were interviewed representing viewpoints ranging from the Juneau Chief of Police to the Dodge County School district superintendent. In addition to highlighting the important role TGS currently plays in meeting food insecurity in Dodge County, interviewees emphasized an opportunity for TGS to provide services to support families during early childhood and to utilize a new facility currently under development to expand their services in this direction. Interviewees suggested co-locating with the following services in the expanded facility: the public library, behavioral health services (e.g. mental health and substance use support), a licensed day care, and a satellite location for the University of Wisconsin Technical College. Respondents also suggested expanding the TGS board to include youth voices to ensure that service expansion more effectively meets the needs of adolescents. Finally, respondents believed that the lack of reliable transportation serves as a barrier to both health and employment. See **Appendix H** for the full summary of the key informant interviews conducted by Boris Frank and Associates.

Results of Flash-point Data collection at Bingo Night

One hundred forty-eight (148) individuals completed our two item survey. Respondents indicated living in 16 separate zip codes with 33% indicating they reside in Reeseville (n=50), 20% in Beaver Dam (n=29), 11% from Waterloo (n=17), 10% in Watertown (n=14), and the remaining 25% of the participants scattered across the county. According to these respondents, the top issues needing attention in Dodge County are:

- (1) Activities to keep kids “out of trouble” (n=97)
- (2) Addiction (n=59)
- (3) Support for the Elderly (n=56)
- (4) Disability Support (n=49)
- (5) Housing (n=43)

The two main assets of Dodge County, as identified by Bingo-goers, were:

- (1) Friendly People
- (2) Quiet Atmosphere

Phase Two Findings

Survey Sample Size

A total of 416 individuals initiated the survey, with 342 completing it to the end. Sixty-six respondents who did not answer the questions regarding basic needs and work status were dropped from analysis. Additionally, 10 respondents with a zip code outside Dodge County and another 10 using an IP address with GPS coordinates outside of Dodge County were excluded from analysis. The final sample contained n=330 eligible responses.

Sample Demographics Eighteen of the 22 zip codes that make up Dodge County are represented in the final sample with just over half of respondents residing in one of the following three towns: Beaver Dam (32%), Juneau (12%), or Reeseville (11%). Just under a third of the households surveyed indicated living within the TGS service area zip codes (n=102). See Table 1 for a full breakdown by zip code.

Table 1

Sample Zip Codes Table

Zip code	City	n	%	Zip code	City	n	%
53916	Beaver Dam	104	32	53098	Watertown	6	2
53039	Juneau	40	12	53035	Iron Ridge	5	2
53579	Reeseville	35	11	53956	Randolph	4	1
53032	Horicon	28	8	53048	Lomira	4	1
53963	Waupun	27	8	53034	Hustisford	2	<1
53933	Fox Lake	18	5	53078	Rubicon	2	<1
53016	Clyman	15	4	53047	Lebanon	1	<1
53050	Mayville	14	4	53091	Theresa	1	<1
53557	Lowell	12	3	53922	Burnett	1	<1
In DC	Dodge County	11	3				

Note: Total demographics are based on n=330

Over half of the respondents were long-term residents of Dodge County with 36% indicating they had lived in Dodge County for ten or more years and 24% indicated living in Dodge County for their entire lives.

The age distribution of the sample ranged between 15 years old and 65+ with the majority of respondents between the ages of 31 and 64. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents identified as women, 55% reported one or more children living in the home, and 49% reported two adults living in the home. See Table 2 for full sample demographics breakdown.

Table 2

Sample Demographics Table

Age	n	%	Gender	n	%	Adults in Household	n	%	Children in household	n	%
15-17	3	1	Man	95	29	1	84	25	0	142	43
18-25	24	7	Woman	226	68	2	163	49	1	77	23
26-30	29	9	(blank)	8	2	3	42	13	2	50	15
31-45	98	30	Other	1	0	3+	33	10	3	26	8
46-64	141	43				(blank)	8	2	3+	28	8
Older than 65	31	9							(blank)	7	2
(blank)	4	1									

Note: Total demographics are based on n=330

Two Key Questions Categorize Survey Respondents

Figure 3 segments the sample into four quadrants based on responses to two prominent survey questions. Sixty-six percent (n=219) affirmed they have a hard time affording basic needs and, while the correlation is approximate, were thus deemed to be in the ALICE/FPL population. Forty-two percent (n=139) of households indicated the presence of at least one non-working adult who wishes to work; such households were called “Work-Gap”. Households that were not Work-Gap include adults who are either working, not working by choice, or retired.

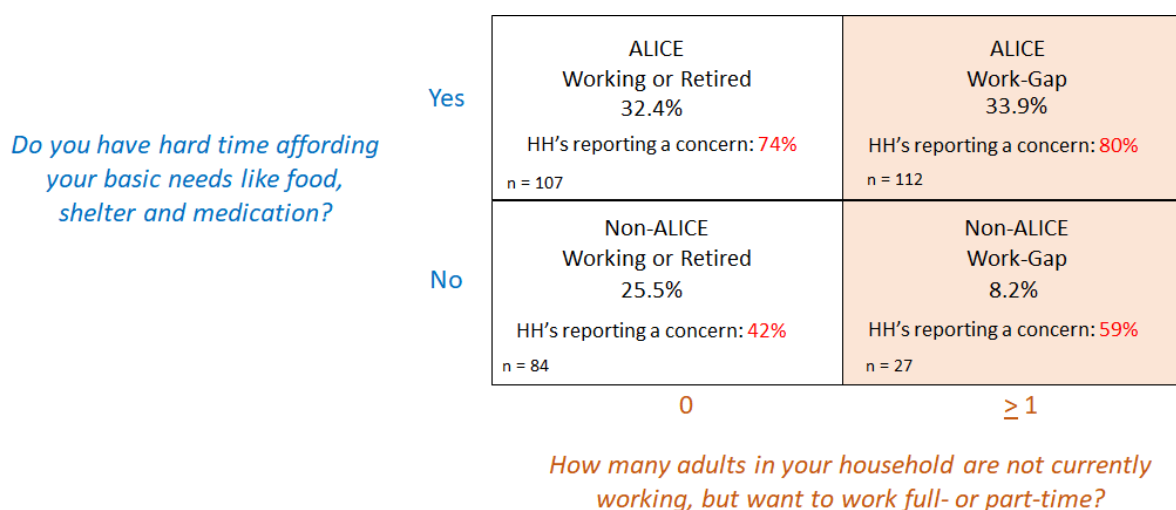


Figure 3.

A major strength of this needs assessment was our success in oversampling the target population. According to 2016 data provided by the United Way, approximately 39% of households in Dodge County qualify as ALICE or living below the FPL. With 219 of our 330 surveys completed by individuals indicating trouble affording their basic needs, our results disproportionately represent the perspectives of our target population.

The 219 ALICE households are approximately evenly split between those that experience a work gap (n=112) and those that are either employed or retired (n=107). Conversely, a full 80% of Work-Gap households

(112/139) are characterized as ALICE. In three of the quadrants, well over 50% of the households report some type of concern with which they need assistance. At 74% and 80%, households in the two ALICE quadrants report concerns at a noticeably elevated rate. Even in the one quadrant that may contain economically stable households, 42% still report unmet concerns.

Household Concerns/Unmet Needs

Types of Concerns and Prevalence

Data on life challenges that were of primary concern were collected via a question asking respondents to choose from a list of 29 unmet needs (plus “Other”), or concerns, with which they need help. Respondents could select as many concerns as applied without limit. As illustrated in Figure 4, 110 respondents reported no concerns. The remaining 220 respondents in the sample reported between 1 and 29 concerns with an average of 4.1 concerns per household.

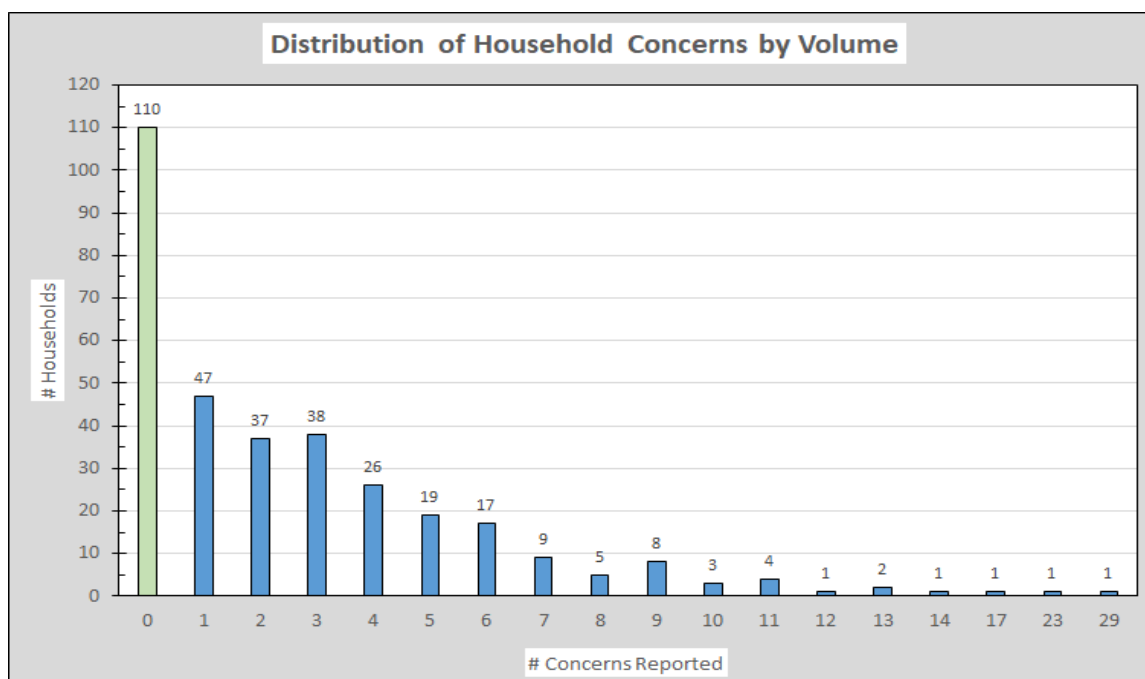


Figure 4.

For ease of interpretation, the list of 29 unmet concerns has been collapsed into nine major themes: (1) Health/Physical, (2) Transportation, (3) Social Services/Support, (4) Childcare, (5) Family Issues, (6) Money Management, (7) Housing/Homelessness, (8) Community Connections, and (9) Eldercare. See **Appendix E** for a list of the 29 specific concerns and the thematic groupings. Figure 5 illustrates the number of households reporting concerns in each thematic group. Across the entire sample, concerns related to health were reported most frequently followed by Social Service/Support, Money Management, and Housing/Homelessness.

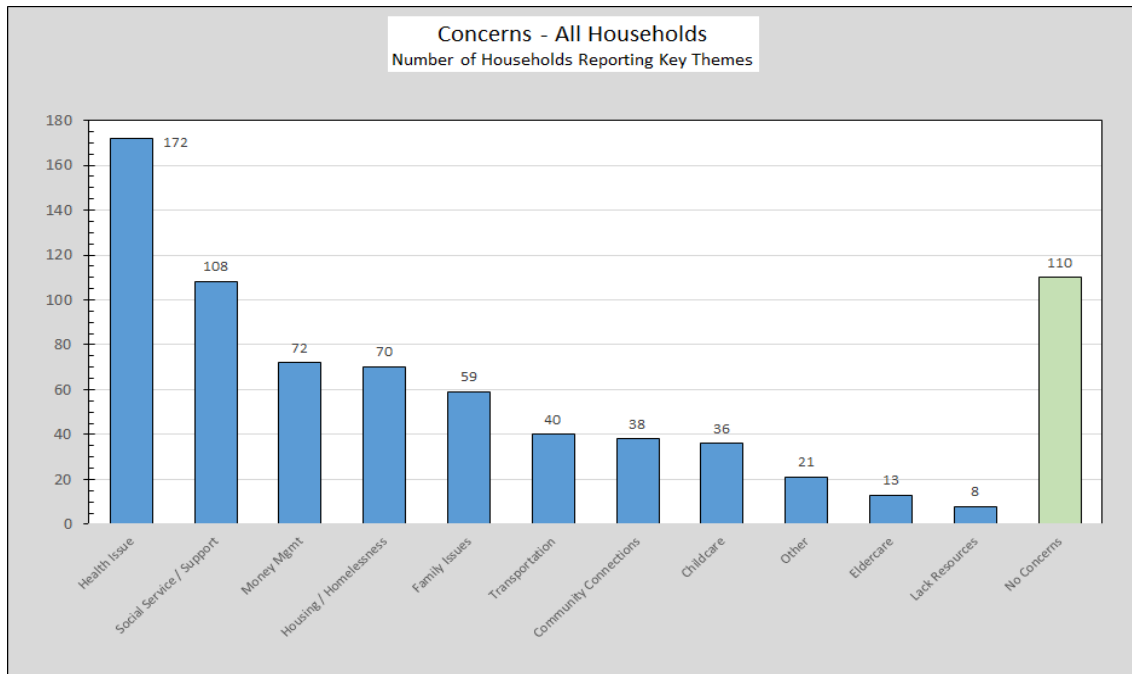


Figure 5.

Comparisons of ALICE households to non-ALICE (presumed economically stable) households suggest a consistent pattern, although the percentage that indicated an unmet need was higher for ALICE households. Figure 6 presents data by specific need, rather than high-level theme, and illuminates two exceptions to this pattern: non-ALICE households are more likely to indicate a need for help with addiction and alcohol use.

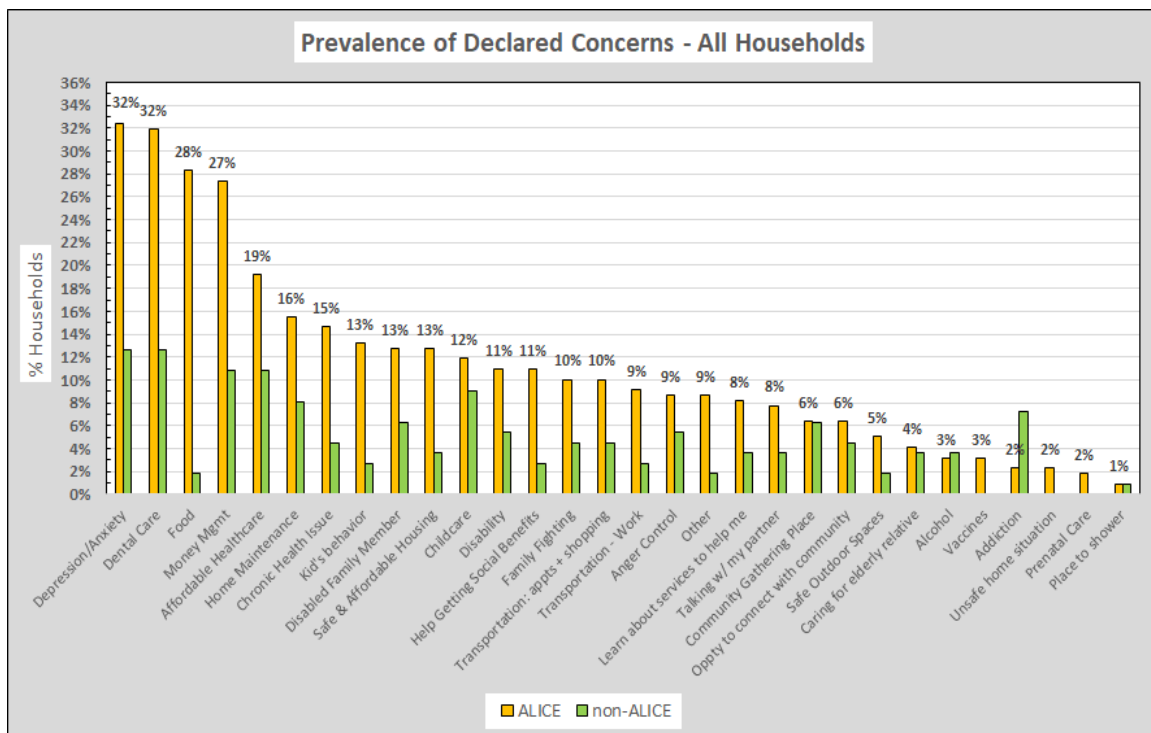


Figure 6.

Which Unmet Concerns Deserve Priority Attention and Investment?

In order to identify the most pressing unmet needs in Dodge County, respondents were also asked to rank their selected unmet concerns in order of importance with 1= most important and 10= least important. During analysis, concerns were examined by prevalence and priority. Prevalence refers to the percentage of households declaring each specific concern. A simple “Priority Factor” was calculated to indicate the percentage of concerns ranked highly with a 1 or 2.

For the ALICE respondents specifically, Figure 7 maps each concern in the two dimensions of Prevalence and Priority. Four unmet needs conspicuously separate themselves from the rest:

- (1) Depression/Anxiety
- (2) Dental Care
- (3) Money Management
- (4) Nutritious Food

Although not shown in Figure 7, the unmet concern of “Affordable Healthcare” shows up in a strong fifth position from within the entire sample of 330 (ALICE and Non-ALICE).

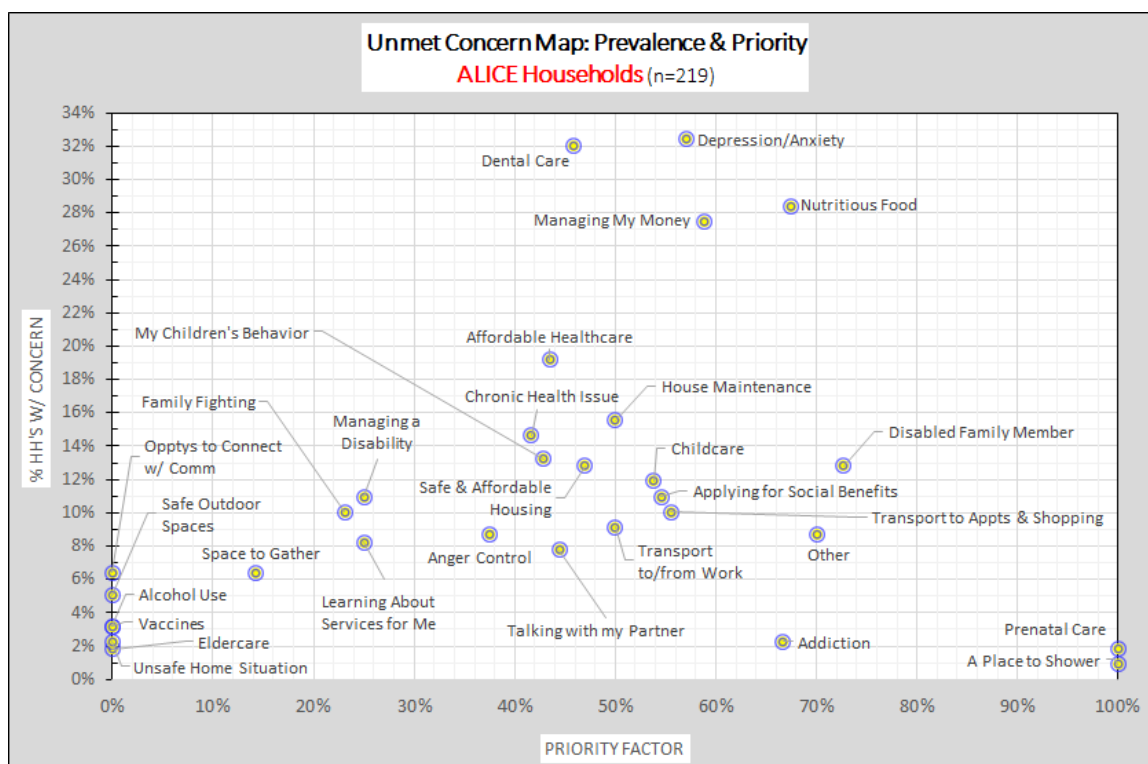


Figure 7.

Non-Working Adults and Barriers to Work

Are There Non-Working Adults Who Wish to Work?

With forty-two percent (n=139) of responding households in the Work-Gap category, these survey results point to the presence of a sizeable population of potential workers that would be of great interest to local employers who struggle to fill job vacancies. In addition, as mentioned earlier, a full 80% of Work-Gap households (112/139) are characterized as ALICE. This indicates that helping these individuals to enter the workforce, thereby increasing household income, may lift them above the ALICE threshold.

What Prevents Willing Adults from Working?

As illustrated in Figure 8, 143 respondents reported no barriers to work. The remaining 187 respondents in the sample reported between 1 and 17 barriers with an average of 3 barriers per household. Seventy percent (70%) of the Work-Gap households reported at least one work barrier compared to only 47% of working/retired households.

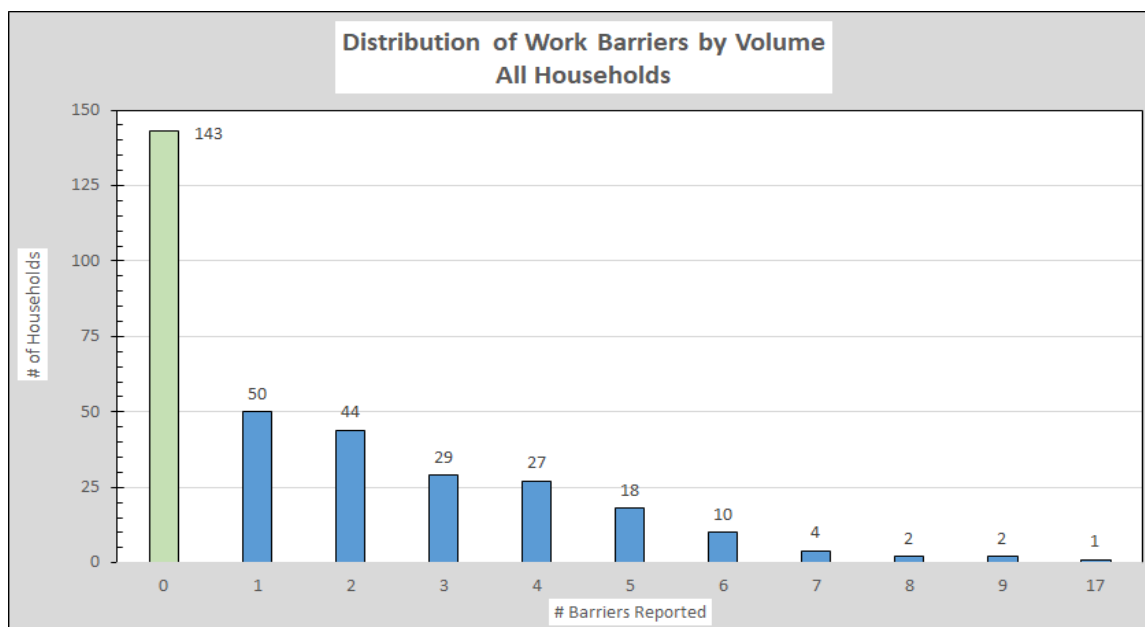


Figure 8.

From a list of 20 barriers (plus “other”), respondents were asked to indicate all that have ever prevented them from working or looking for work. These 20 items were consolidated into eight major themes: (1) Health/Physical Issue, (2) Transportation, (3) Pay Concern, (4) Childcare, (5) Lack of Resources, (6) Skills/Education, (7) Criminal Status, and (8) Eldercare. See **Appendix F** for the complete list and thematic groupings. Split by Work-Gap and Working/Retired households, Figure 9 shows the percentage of households reporting employment barriers in each thematic group.

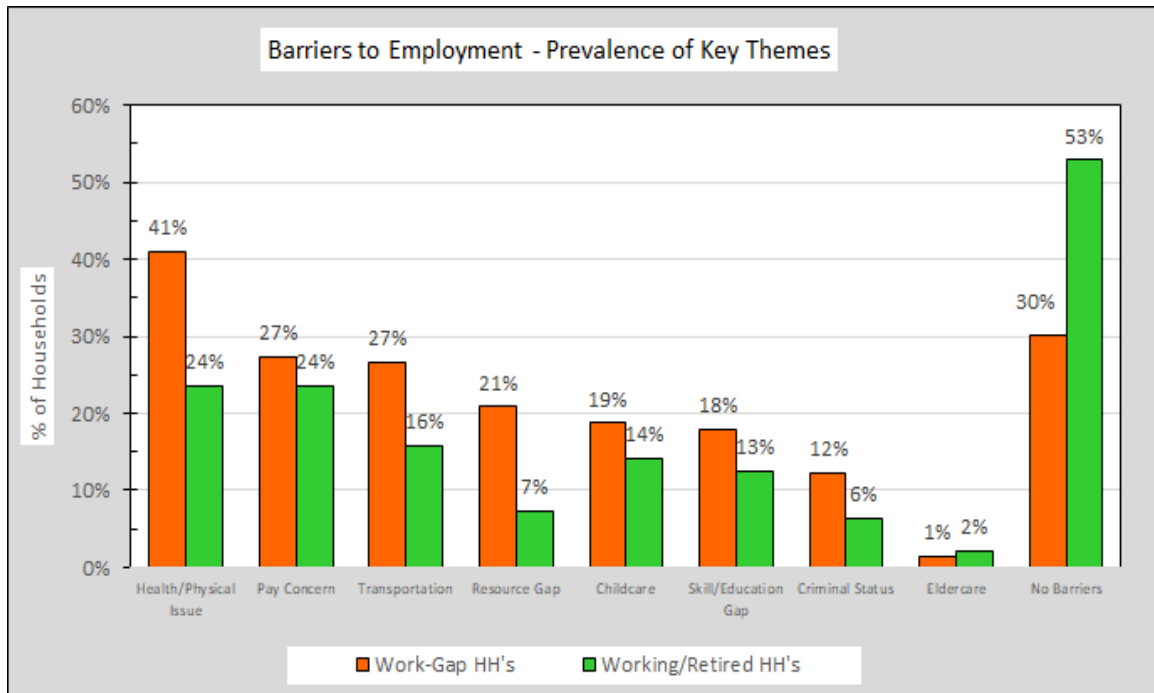


Figure 9.

Figure 10 drills beyond the thematic groups to show the prevalence of specific work barriers reported.

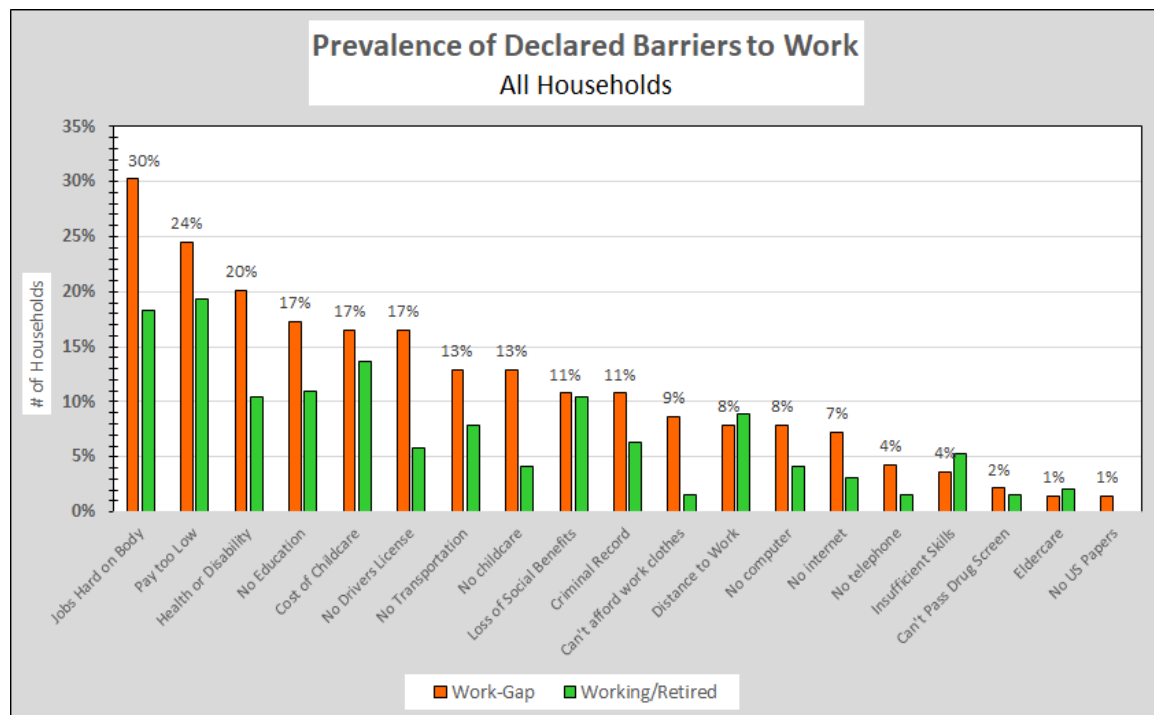


Figure 10.

Which Barriers to Work Deserve Priority Attention and Investment?

In order to identify the most pressing work barriers in Dodge County, respondents were also asked to rank their selected barriers in order of magnitude with 1= biggest barrier and 10= smallest barrier. During analysis, work barriers were examined by prevalence and priority. Prevalence refers to the percentage of households declaring each specific work barrier. A simple “Priority Factor” was calculated to indicate the percentage of barriers ranked highly with a 1 or 2.

For the Work-Gap sample, Figure 11 maps each concern in the two dimensions of Prevalence and Priority. Two barriers conspicuously stand out from the rest with both high prevalence and high priority:

- (1) Jobs too hard on the body
- (2) Pay too low

An additional four barriers form a second tier for attention:

- (3) Health/Disability
- (4) No Driver’s License
- (5) Cost of Childcare
- (6) No Childcare Available

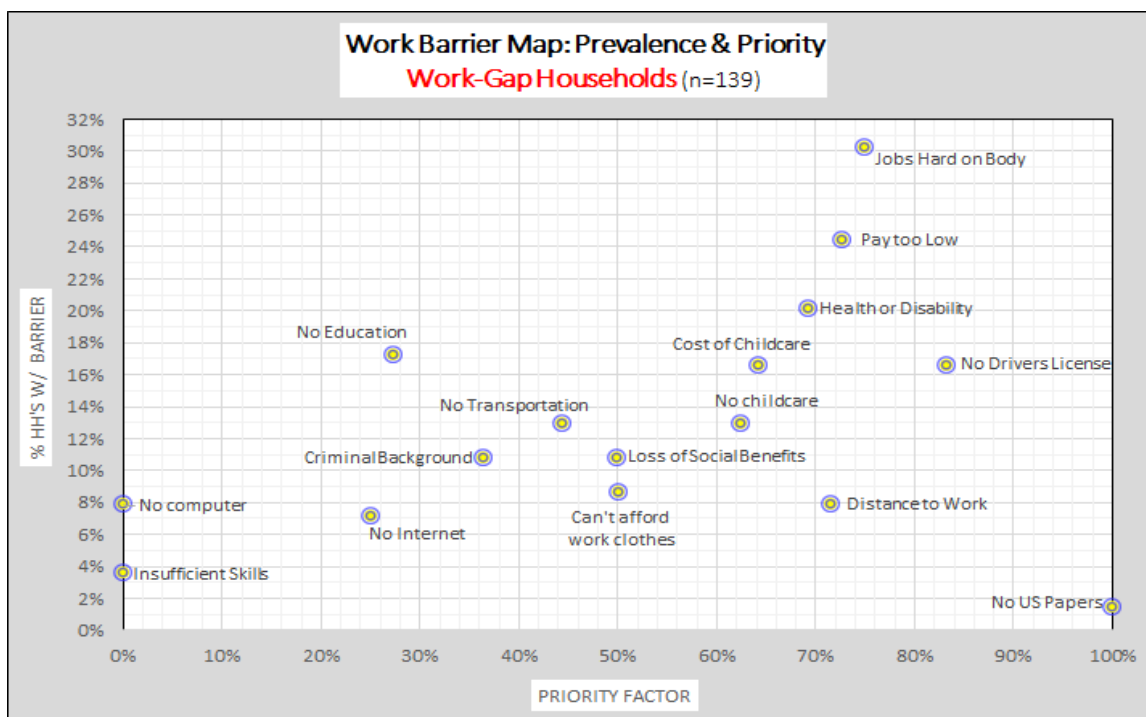


Figure 11.

The sample of Work-Gap households in the age range of 18 to 45 (n=72) reflects these same barriers but with a different emphasis. Figure 12 indicates this working age “sweet spot” places higher prevalence and priority on childcare, lack of a driver’s license, and concerns with low pay while deemphasizing physical issues.

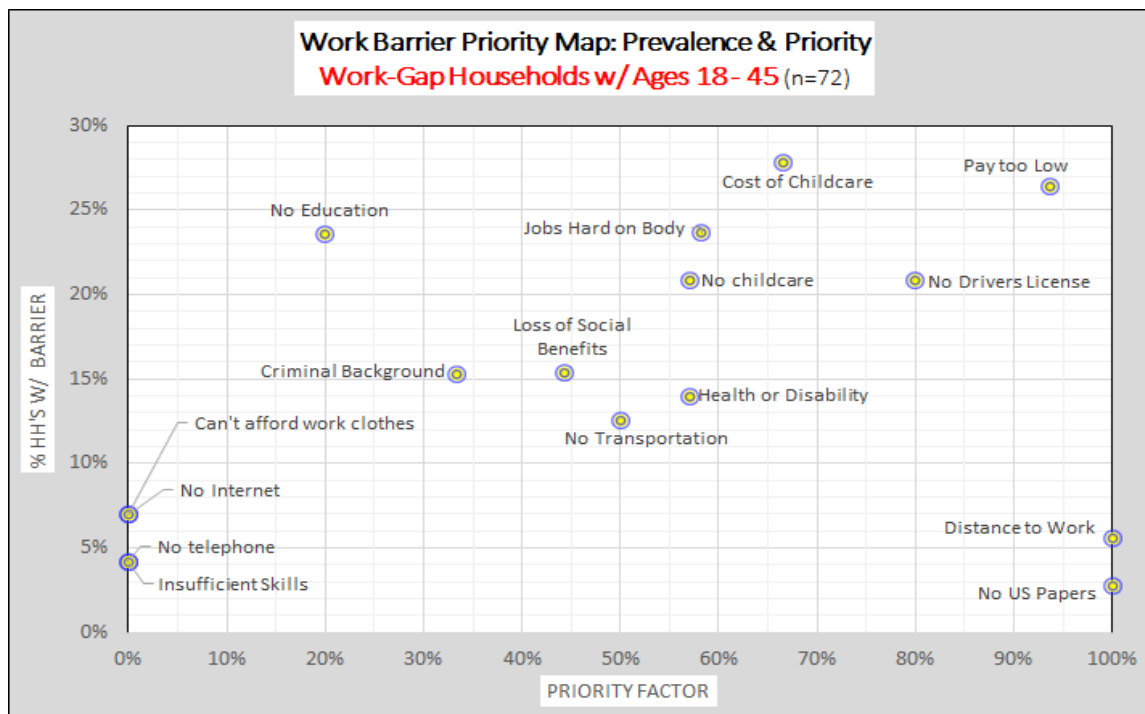


Figure 12.

Phase Three Findings

Of the nine completed follow-up interviews, four involved individuals from zip codes in the TGS service area and five from other zip codes in Dodge County. All responding residents shared openly and answered all the questions that were asked. Although not all of the respondents related to some of the issues that the questions posed, many had opinions on the needs in their community and answered to the best of their capabilities.

Fixed-Answer Questions

The Gathering Source. One question specific to TGS was posed only to the four respondents in the TGS zip codes. These respondents were asked whether or not they would be interested in workforce development training, and all respondents appeared interested in the prospect of skill development. Ideas on workforce development ranged from business courses, to factory job training, to general training.

Employment Status. Two respondents indicated experiencing unemployment due to disability or health concerns. Four individuals indicated that they were working part-time. Their reasons for not being in full-time work included health challenges and disabilities that limit the type of work that they can do; going to school or training part-time; or loss of government benefits if they worked full-time and still might not be able to support themselves. Two individuals were working full-time or close to full-time and one individual was self-employed. None of the respondents were currently in need of either transportation or childcare; all

participants owned at least one car and none had young children in their care. Several respondents had cars in some level of disrepair or had concerns about affording gas. Additionally, most individuals acknowledged that childcare is currently lacking in the area, but many didn't have strong or informed opinions about local employer-provided childcare. Even without a critical need, respondents were generally enthusiastic about a carpool option offered by an employer.

Community events and staying informed. Respondents used a variety of methods to stay informed including mailings, word of mouth, as well as the news and newspaper. But, the method shared by the largest amount of individuals was social media. Respondents reported learning of events and services through friends or by following the pages of organizations or relevant public service agencies. While most individuals already had several ways in which they kept informed of community events and services, there was interest in the possibility of “just one place where you can find everything.” When asked about what events they would like to see in their community, half of respondents named family-focused activities including hay rides, carnivals, events for teenagers, multicultural festivals, and flea markets. A quarter of respondents expressed an interest in events that could also boost small businesses or give community members a chance to earn a profit.

Open-Ended Questions

Quality of Life. In response to a question about what gives people “energy”, several respondents answered family; a few more mentioned work; and others indicated helping others. Although most reported they were able to connect with others when desired, a couple reported severe health issues or demanding work schedules that served to isolate them from community. When asked about what might hold them back from living their best life, respondent's answers were wide-ranging. One person mentioned a lack of time prevented them from accomplishing some of their goals and another said pending house repairs were causing difficulties for them personally.

Is it worth it to work? When asked if they had ever experienced the feeling of “it's not worth it to work” the majority of respondents said yes, but only in brief periods of time, not consistently or to a degree in which they followed that feeling. One respondent said that at times it felt like they were “working just to pay the bills.” When asked how an employer could help make work more appealing, the majority of respondents who indicated work could be more worthwhile said higher wages. Another common suggestion was better healthcare options and more understanding employers for health-related issues.

Prejudice in the Community. Although there were no questions that specifically asked about race or prejudice in the community, the topic of discrimination came up three unduplicated times in different questions. These unsolicited comments were made specifically about sentiments in the community against Hispanic or Latinx community members and distinct anecdotes were detailed. Two of the incidences had to do with racial profiling while driving or undocumented individuals not being able to work. One individual felt uncomfortable with the amount of prejudice seen in their previous Dodge County community and was relieved to move to a different community in the county that was more accepting. Another individual made a comment about their general community and how exposure is important to understanding: “There's that racism there... I think a lot of people are scared of the unknown and I think culture is really important to help people accept diversity.”

Last thoughts. When asked about their last thoughts, the majority of individuals found that they had discussed what they felt were major needs in the community. A few individuals did have comments ranging from a desire for improved service availability to reflections on general community issues. One individual mentioned that many people experience a “labyrinth of services” that they have difficulty navigating. Others mentioned not enough resources or services for those who are single and not disabled.

The majority of respondents were working, with all of them having transportation and none of them with young children in the home. Even so, many would consider themselves in need of services. The interviews came to a general consensus of having more options for those who are employed and still feeling insecure in their ability to make ends meet. Although they all varied in their specific barriers they did generally see trends in the community that coordinated with what the survey found.

Discussion

The results of this Dodge County community needs assessment mirror the nationwide pattern of growing disparities in health. According to national datasets, for the first time since the 1980’s, the difference in life expectancy of individuals in rural areas vs urban areas has been widening. The current decline in life expectancy in rural America appears to be tied to three “diseases of despair”: overdose (including opioids), alcoholic liver disease, and suicide.⁸

The term diseases of despair was coined to convey the impact that the conditions of the area in which we live, work and play - also known as the social determinants of health (SDoH) - have on our physical and psychological health and well-being. Many factors interact to shape the patterns of ill-health we see growing around the country. These include experiences of social connectedness with the greater community; the ability to influence the response to shared community conditions; and access to essential resources such as safe housing, nutritious food, affordable health care, and reliable transportation. Increases in rates of poverty, stagnated wages, and limited access to support and care resources in sparsely populated areas are thought to contribute to the sense of isolation and hopelessness that connects the prevalence of these diseases of despair.⁹

Across methodology, concerns related to health (i.e. addiction, anger issues, alcohol use, depression and anxiety and chronic health conditions) were listed most often. In fact, in terms of prevalence and priority, the top issue identified by the most economically unstable respondents of our representative survey was depression and anxiety. Similarly, when asked specifically about barriers to work, health and physical issues surfaced as the number one barrier to work across the sample, particularly Work-Gap households. A strong sense of neighborliness is often identified as a strength of rural areas, and this was no different for the residents of Dodge County.

⁸ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Achieving Rural Health Equity and Well-Being: Proceedings of a Workshop*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/mapping-health-equity-tackling-structural-inequities-in-rural-communities-a-workshop

⁹ Case, A., & Deaton, A. (2017). Mortality and morbidity in the 21st century. *Brookings papers on economic activity*, 2017(1), 397-476.

Data Suggest Our Needs Change as We Live, Grow, Work and Age

As expected, the findings from this needs assessment demonstrate that the patterns in the most pressing barriers to employment in Dodge County vary depending upon where the potential employees are in their lifecourse. As individuals and families move through their lifecourse, their needs change reflecting the different stages of life; for example, young children and the elderly require more support than do adults.¹⁰ The degree of pressure and vulnerability individuals and families experience as their needs change over time illustrate the gaps in the conditions in which we are born, live, work and play - the social determinants of health (SDoH).

For example, the absence of paid parental leave or family supportive wages does not squeeze the resources of someone without young children as much as this absence does for individuals or families with small children. Adult caregivers of small children often have to decide between the needs of the child and the needs of their job, often forced to leave jobs without parental leave or those that don't cover the costs of childcare. Similarly, the absence of jobs that accommodate management of chronic health issues via associated family/medical leave practices and policies may not be a problem for young adults with the healing capacities of youth, yet among older adults that have sustained injuries from physically demanding jobs the absence of accommodations for disability may pose a significant barrier to employment. Alternatively, the consistent concern about pay across the lifespan may suggest that the pay range is insufficient for covering healthcare costs, as well as basic costs of living and the consequence of entering the workforce may result in being kicked off of social welfare benefits, and so may not be feasible.

Physical Access to Resources is Tied to Health and Wellbeing

Certainly the fact that transportation ranked as the third highest priority factor for prime work age respondents suggest that interventions to address this barrier may very well pay for themselves, particularly if it could be combined with addressing child care concerns. This could entail allowing working parents to utilize the rideshare to drop off children at day care whether that day care is located at the job site or a different location. However, the latter scenario could increase the cost of a rideshare program due to accommodations for child car seats and increased liability insurance coverage.

The rideshare model currently being piloted by the GtW coalition is a promising practice for addressing rural transportation needs.¹¹ For example, as highlighted in the recently released Arriving Together report, the GtW pilot is capitalizing on the engagement of an anchor employer to provide the infrastructure for the pilot. Although the GtW pilot remains population-specific, part and parcel funding for targeted transportation¹² as opposed to a regional model, this has preserved the flexibility of the program to meet the needs of the third-shift workers and distributes the burden of the program more equitably on the employers. Anecdotally, the

¹⁰ Health Across Life Stages. HealthyPeople2020.gov www.healthypeople.gov/2020/leading-health-indicators/Leading-Health-Indicators-Development-and-Framework

¹¹ Bayne, A., Siegfried, A., Stauffer, P., & Knudson, A. (2018, April). Promising Practices for Increasing Access to Transportation in Rural Communities. *Rural Evaluation Brief* by The Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis. Retrieved from: www.norc.org/PDFs/Walsh%20Center/Rural%20Evaluation%20Briefs/Rural%20Evaluation%20Brief_April2018.pdf

¹² Ananchev, G., et al. (2018, October). ARRIVE TOGETHER: TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND EQUITY IN WISCONSIN. Retrieved from: www.worh.org/sites/default/files/Arrive%20Together%20Transportation%20Access%20and%20Equity%20in%20Wisconsin-compressed.pdf

rideshare program has been seen as a success measured by the waitlist of applicants to work at the anchor organization. Other promising practices include broader efforts toward regional transportation structures in order to support access to resources beyond employment.

An Opportunity to Build on the Asset of Neighborliness

There is an increased capacity for those that feel integrated within the community to come together and ensure the caring spirit lives in all community practices, especially decision-making regarding shared resources such as land. One promising practice on the national scale for this level of institutionalizing local efforts to look out for one's neighbors is to commit to considering Health in All Policies (HiAP). The HiAP initiative is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas.¹³ In practice, this involves pausing the process of policy development in a municipality to surface the various potential impacts on health each policy can have. For example, zoning laws have tremendous impact on health and well-being, particularly when the most affordable housing is designated adjacent to pollution-producing businesses. Committing to a HiAP approach looks like utilizing a tool for critical thinking before finalizing any decisions. It is an increasingly common approach and there are a variety of technical assistance providers available to support its adoption.

Policies and Practices that Address the Causes of Diseases of Despair

Taken together, these findings suggest that leveraging resources to creatively address these diseases of despair via a HiAP approach are warranted and may help to broaden the pool of available workers. First, there appears to be a need to address the management of depression and anxiety and their common consequences, addiction and suicidality.

Identifying which upstream mechanisms of diseases of despair should be prioritized for improving rural thriving the fastest is not easy. However, since many of the same causes are at the root of health inequities in both rural and urban environments, there are opportunities to connect with statewide efforts to improve the conditions of our lives, and specifically, a number of policy-level interventions that are strongly suggested to be effective for reducing these diseases of despair.

However, in order to move beyond simply ensuring rural survival and actually enhancing rural thriving, efforts need to focus on addressing the causes of the diseases of despair in addition to supporting the management of these diseases. For example, compelling new research demonstrates how even a \$1 increase in the minimum wage is associated with a 2% drop in suicide rates.¹⁴ An increase in the minimum wage statewide has the potential to improve health and reduce barriers to employment. Similarly, it is well-established that the transition to parenthood is a critical window for adult health,¹⁵ which points to its significance as an opportunity to effectively address diseases of despair. Moreover, policies that provide paid parental leave for new parents have been shown to improve job continuity for women and increase

¹³ CDC. Health in All Policies. *Office of the Associated Director for Policy and Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hiap/index.html>

¹⁴ Gertner, A.K., Rotter, J.S., & Shaffer, P.R. (2019). Association Between State Minimum Wages and Suicide Rates in the U.S. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 56(5), 648 - 654.

¹⁵ Saxbe, D., Rossin-Slater, M., Goldenberg, D. (2018). The transition to parenthood as a critical window for adult health. *American Psychologist*, 73(9), 1190-1200

employment rates several years after childbirth as well as improving children's short- and long-term outcomes.¹⁶

Additionally, there is strong evidence that firearm regulations can reduce deaths by suicides¹⁷ and that safe injection sites reduce opioid overdoses.¹⁸ Ultimately, while policy levers can be either local or statewide efforts, typically their outcomes reap benefits beyond their boundaries. For example, states neighboring others with strict firearm regulations see significant drops in their suicide rates by firearms following policy changes.

Relevant resources available to support community change efforts for rural health include the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (CHRR) project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund). The CHRR project offers a website of resources to support data-driven action for improving community health including a list of promising and effective interventions for improving rural health as well as a roadmap for identifying which strategies to target based upon community needs.¹⁹ Whereas the CDFI Fund plays an important role in generating economic growth and opportunity in some of our nation's most distressed communities by offering tailored resources and innovative programs that invest federal dollars alongside private sector capital. With this approach the CDFI Fund serves mission-driven financial institutions that take a market-based approach to supporting economically disadvantaged communities.²⁰

Although the causes of inequities may share the same root, the day-to-day experiences of managing the disadvantage that accumulates in a particular area is not the same for everyone. Just as there is no single definition that distinguishes rural from urban and suburban, there is no singular experience in rural America. Promising practices strongly suggest that the strategies designed to improve the health and well-being of rural Americans should center on the needs and leadership of the groups most impacted by the conditions in rural areas associated with declining health.

¹⁶ Rossin-Slater, M. (2018). Maternity and Family Leave Policy in The Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190628963.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190628963

¹⁷ Kaufman EJ, Morrison CN, Branas CC, Wiebe DJ. (2018). State Firearm Laws and Interstate Firearm Deaths from Homicide and Suicide in the United States: A Cross-sectional Analysis of Data by County. *JAMA Intern Med.*; 178(5):692–700. [doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.0190](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.0190)

¹⁸ Ng, J., Sutherland, C., & Kolber, M. R. (2017). Does evidence support supervised injection sites? *Canadian family physician Medecin de famille canadien*, 63(11), 866.

¹⁹ <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health>

²⁰ U.S. Department of Treasury. <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Limitations

While the results of this multi-method community needs assessment present a compelling representation of this community, there are definitely limitations to our work that should be noted. The major limitation of this needs assessment is our inability to form definitive conclusions regarding the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of Dodge County - our Spanish-speaking residents, some of whom are undocumented. Although the overall population of Dodge County is predominantly white, data from the United Way suggests that economic instability afflicts racial minority populations (i.e. non-white groups) at much greater rates than it does racial majority (i.e., white) populations. As indicated in Figure 13, 39% of white households qualify as ALICE or as living in poverty compared to 59% of Hispanic households, 42% of multi-racial households, and 66% of Asian households in the county.

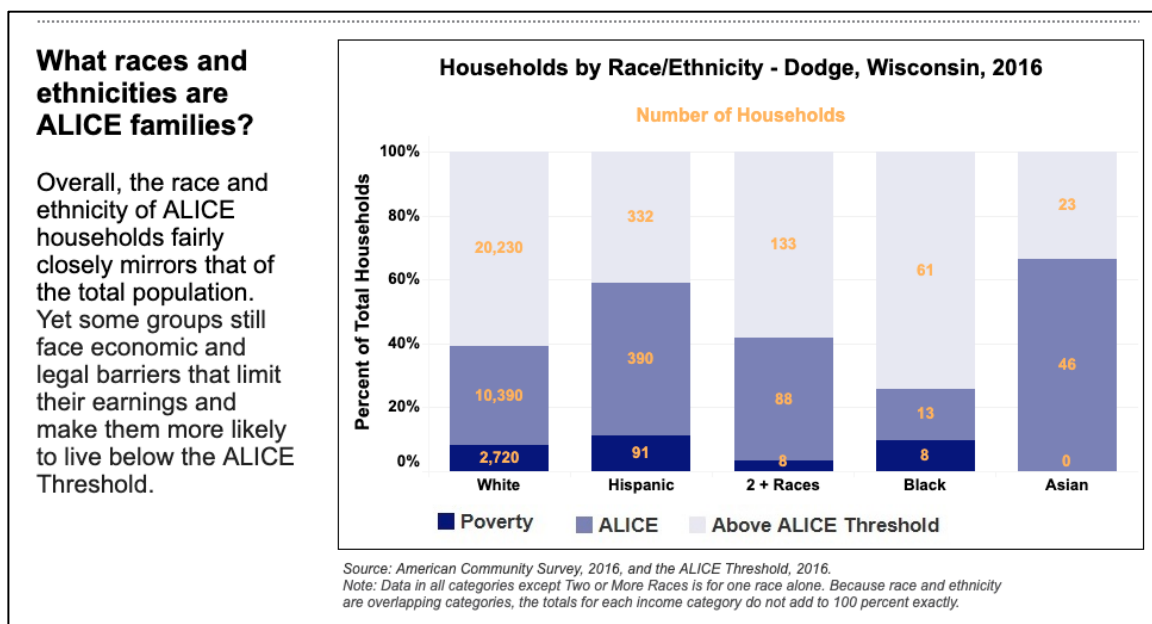


Figure 13.

Although we were successful oversampling for economic instability, we did not include a question assessing race and, therefore, can neither confirm nor deny that we captured the perspectives of residents of the sub-communities that bear the greatest burden of economic instability.

Neither can we confirm nor deny that we successfully captured the perspectives of non-English speaking residents. Dodge County has a sizeable and struggling Spanish-speaking community. Although we offered the survey in Spanish, we did not receive a survey completed in Spanish. It is entirely possible that children or other trusted family members translated for some adult respondents. However, we cannot conclude with confidence that we have successfully captured these perspectives. This is of particular concern given the unsolicited concern regarding harassment and isolation these residents face that was shared in phase three key informant interviews.

Although a strength of conducting key-informant follow-up interviews was our ability to gather a more nuanced understanding of the struggles facing Dodge County residents, the main limitation was sample size. Due to time and other resource constraints we were unable to conduct a more thorough recruitment strategy. This may imply that the individuals we successfully interviewed are more likely to be well-resourced than those with whom we were unable to connect. To begin, our pool of potential key informants were only eligible for recruitment if they had completed an online survey in its entirety and opt-in for further contact. Already, we can assume that our pool of eligible individuals felt resourced enough to volunteer their time to answer questions and therefore are likely not stuck in survival-level functioning, nor do they likely have a fear of authorities. Second, of our eligible pool of interviewees, only those with working phone lines and email addresses were able to be interviewed. Third, we were unable to connect with a number of respondents who did not answer unknown phone numbers, had full voicemail boxes, or breaks in either phone or internet services. We did not ensure that the participating individuals were representative of all demographics and, in fact, we may not have been able to reach those facing the most hardship. Due to the small sample of individuals interviewed we cannot confirm or deny that their attitudes were generalizable to the greater Dodge County community. Finally, we can neither confirm nor deny that we captured the perspectives of non-literate residents, people that do not access food pantries or public or nonprofit services.

Conclusion

Best practices to promote community health and rural equity include strategically leveraging existing resources by encouraging multi-sector collaborations and building on community strengths. This Dodge County community needs assessment reflects this best practice in action. Local leadership from the United Way, The Gathering Source, the Getting-to-Work (GtW) coalition and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute effectively deployed a variety of skill sets, connections and knowledge across non-profit, for-profit, higher education and philanthropic sectors. The result of this collaboration was a community needs assessment that conservatively represents the perspectives of Dodge County residents most in need of enhanced services.

Already, results of this needs assessment have influenced local planning. First, The Gathering Source acquired a new property and invested in major renovations to expand beyond a food pantry and into a more complete hub of rural thriving. Tangible examples in the short term include a partnership with Church Health Services to host a free mobile dental clinic and a program plan to deliver money management training to local patrons. Longer term, the renovation plan for the new facility consciously allocates floor space to accommodate medical and mental health care services in the future. Second, the Getting-to-Work team is sharing data on work barriers in order to show additional employers that further investments in transportation solutions may, in fact, be justified. Third, one employer is actively developing a pilot childcare program to validate that such a solution will draw new people into the workforce. All these efforts may deserve increased investment for expansion.

Still, a number of top priority unmet concerns may need additional attention, especially outside the service area of The Gathering Source. Most notably, the concerns regarding a living wage and healthcare are only

partly under the influence of local businesses. Expansion of Medicaid, for example, is a state-level decision that has powerful impacts on creating the conditions for rural thriving. The results of this needs assessment suggest that educating state representatives on the importance of these decisions to rural health is an important area for action.

Likewise, at least two top priority barriers to work call for new or more expansive solutions. First, it may be warranted to launch a focused effort to match older workers who wish to work and who live with some type of physical challenge with open jobs that do not carry strenuous physical demands. If such older individuals are made aware of better-matched job opportunities and job search resources, they might proactively engage even if they gave up in the past. Second, there may be a need to raise visibility of the “welfare cliff” in Wisconsin that prevents willing workers from taking a job for fear of losing support benefits for their family.

Finally, in order for rural thriving to be equitably achieved, it is essential that members of populations most negatively impacted by rural inequities need to play central decision-making roles in future efforts for collective action toward thriving. This looks like including adolescents, the elders, LatinX and ALICE individuals on the boards of organizations leading the efforts or employing them as staff with meaningful strategic roles.

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Vigna, A., Stoltman, J., Lunde, L., Jentz, S., Frank, B., & Evans, L., (2020). *Dodge County Community Needs Assessment*. Dodge County, WI. www.unitedwayofdodgecounty.com/community-needs-assessment

Appendix A - Semi-Structured Key-Informant Interview Script

Introduction and Context

TGS recognizes that health inequities exist in their community and would like to meet the needs of these disadvantaged rural populations in order to improve opportunities and outcomes for those who need it most. The vision is to become a hub for rural thriving.

In pursuit of the vision of serving as a hub of equitable opportunities for rural thriving, TGS seeks to center the perspectives of those most impacted by disadvantage by pursuing a targeted, community-wide needs assessment. With data that reflects the true challenges and perspectives of those most impacted, TGS can move forward with community-driven strategic planning. Phase one of this process is to conduct 1:1 interviews with well-networked individuals to get a sense of what are the most pressing needs facing DodgeLand and phase two is to develop a survey from these interviews and collect as much data as possible from DodgeLand community residents.

We have contacted you because we perceive you to be a leader in the DodgeLand community with your finger on the pulse of some of its needs.

1. What are the top three concerns you hear about impacting DodgeLand community members?

Questions about barriers to employment, specifically

4. Do you believe there is a population of people that could be working, but are not?
 - Is it a meaningful size?
 - What are the barriers to employment are preventing these folks from working that you hear about through your networks?

[If needs prompting:]

- Some of the top barriers to work that other counties are contending with include:
 - Poor Wages,
 - Lack of Childcare,
 - Lack of transportation,
 - Distance from work too great,
 - Fear of deportation because of documentation status
 - Loss of gov't benefits/wage too low?
 - Loss of license,
 - Lack of skills
 - Drug test requirements an impediment to employment
 - Criminal background
 - Lack of internet access to apply

5. Do you believe there are factors in your community that are keeping it from doing what needs to be done to improve the health and quality of life?

- Are there any factors you feel may be preventing folks from getting the help they need? For example fear of deportation, embarrassment, etc

6. What role do you believe an organization like The Gathering Source is positioned to play in addressing some of the barriers you mentioned?

- Are there any specific services that are needed to address concerns and/or barriers you mentioned?

7. Are there any other community leaders you would recommend we reach out to in this process of initial information collection?

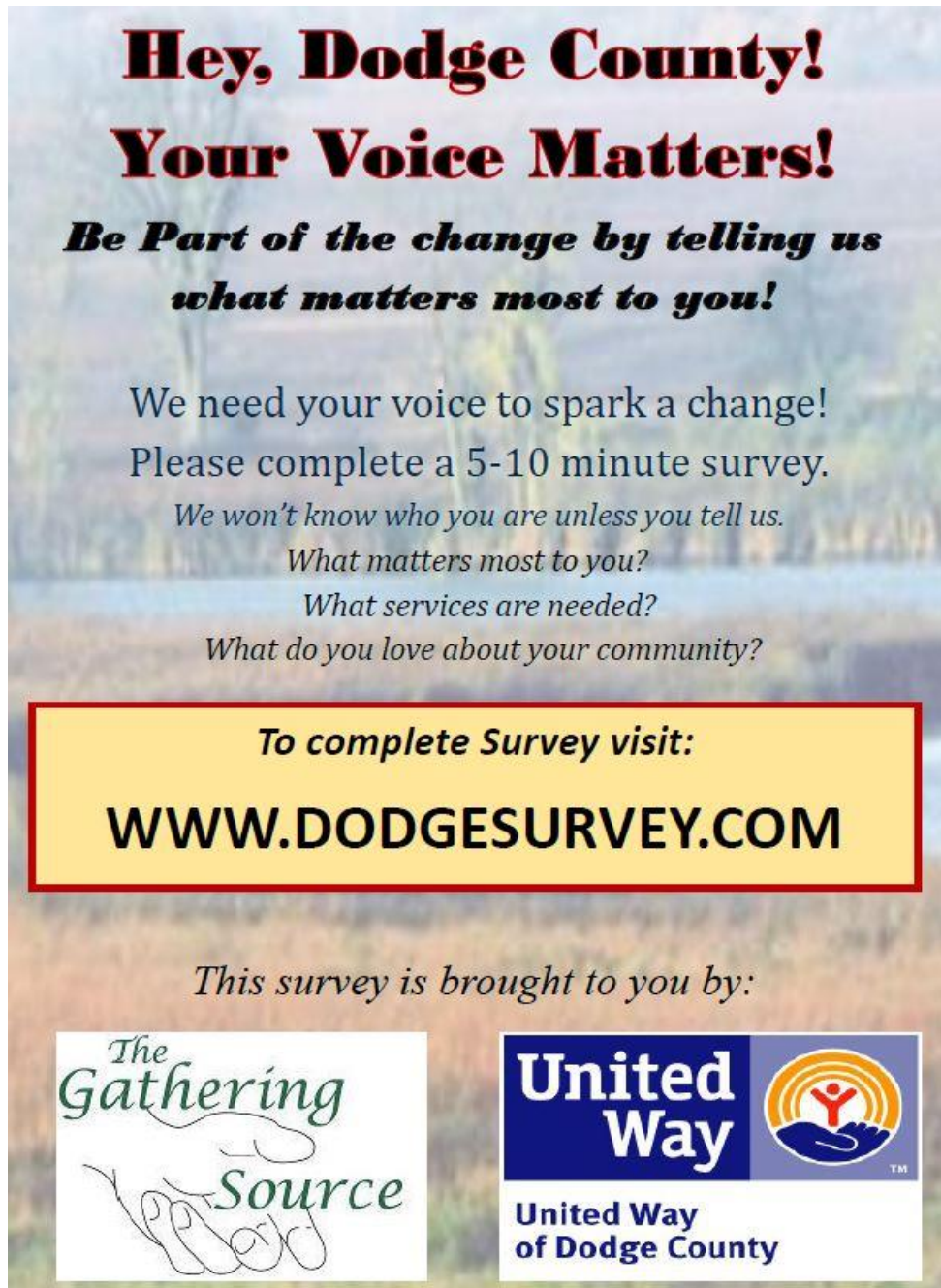
Appendix B - Bingo Data Collection



**Circle the 3 most important things
You feel need to be addressed in Dodge County:**

- Medical care too far away
- Things for kids to do so they don't get in trouble
- Childcare
- Affordable, fresh, and nutritious food
- Dental care
- Internet access
- Safe and affordable housing
- Transportation
- Support for the elderly
- Prenatal/pregnancy care
- Addiction/Alcoholism
- Support for people with disabilities
- OTHER_____

Appendix C - Survey Marketing Poster



The poster features a background image of a river and trees. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold, italicized, and standard fonts. A yellow box with a red border highlights the survey website. Logos for 'The Gathering Source' and 'United Way of Dodge County' are at the bottom.


Hey, Dodge County!
Your Voice Matters!


***Be Part of the change by telling us
what matters most to you!***

We need your voice to spark a change!
Please complete a 5-10 minute survey.
We won't know who you are unless you tell us.
What matters most to you?
What services are needed?
What do you love about your community?

To complete Survey visit:
WWW.DODGESURVEY.COM

This survey is brought to you by:

The Gathering Source logo features the text 'The Gathering Source' in a green, cursive font, with a stylized line drawing of a person's head and shoulders below it.

The United Way of Dodge County logo consists of a blue square with the text 'United Way' in white, a circular icon with a red figure and yellow sun rays, and the text 'United Way of Dodge County' below it.

Appendix D - Survey Questions

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Be part of the change by telling us what matters most to you in Dodge County, Wisconsin.



The Gathering Source is working in partnership with the *United Way* and other service organizations to build stronger, thriving communities in Dodge County. **We need your help!** Your voice matters! Be part of the change by telling us what matters most!

Won't you please take 5-10 minutes to complete this brief survey? We will not know who you are (unless you want to tell us).

Please do not complete this survey if you or another adult from your household have already completed it either on-line or on paper.

1. What is your Zip Code? _____
2. How many years have you lived in Dodge County?
 - ☐ Less than 1 year
 - ☐ 1-2 years
 - ☐ 3-5 years
 - ☐ 6-10 years
 - ☐ More than 10 years
 - ☐ All my life

3. How many children under 18 years of age live in your household?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ More than 3

4. How many adults live in your household?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ More than 3

5. How old are you?

- ☐ 15-17
- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 31-45
- ☐ 46-64
- ☐ 65 or older

6. How many adults in your household are not currently working, but want to work full- or part-time?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ More than 3

7. Do you have a hard time affording your basic needs like food, shelter and medication?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Do you (or someone you know) need help - that you are not currently receiving - with any of the following concerns? Check all that apply and then rank those you checked. (1=most important, 2= next most important, and so on).

Area of Concern	Check all that apply	Rank by what matters most starting with 1
Alcohol use		
Addiction		
Anger control		
Taking care of a disabled family member		
Childcare		
Talking with my partner		
Depression or Anxiety		
Support managing a disability		
Managing chronic health problems like asthma or diabetes		
Family fighting		
My children's behavior		
Managing my money		
Unsafe home situation		
Finding a safe place to live that I can afford		
A place to shower		
Help with house maintenance		
Getting nutritious food for my family		
Safe places to be outdoors		
Prenatal/pregnancy care and support		
Getting healthcare I can afford		
A space to gather with other community members		
Money to meet all my basic needs		
Getting vaccines		
My teeth and gums		
Applying for benefits such as Social Security, FoodShare, Medicare/Medicaid		
A way to get around for appointments and shopping		
Opportunities to connect with my community		
Taking care of an elderly family member		
A way to get to and from work each day		
Other (please specify):		
Finding out what services are available to me for the above needs		

☐ N/A Does not apply. I/We do not need any help.

9. For as long as you have been an adult living in Dodge County, have any of the following barriers ever prevented you or another household member from working or looking for work? Check all that apply and then rank those you checked (1 = biggest barrier, 2 = second biggest barrier, and so on).

Barrier to Employment	Check all that apply	Rank the barriers that you checked
Jobs too hard on the body		
Pay too low		
Don't have the education		
No childcare		
Childcare costs too much		
Don't have transportation I can count on		
Available jobs pay just enough to get kicked off of SNAP or BadgerCare		
Work is too far from home		
Don't have papers to work in the US		
I don't have a driver's license		
Don't have the skills		
Criminal background		
No internet where I live		
Don't have a computer		
No telephone		
Can't afford clothing for work		
Don't have a permanent mailing address		
Have to take care of my older kin		
Health/Disability (or inability to find a supportive employer)		
Won't pass a drug screen		
Other (please specify):		

☐ N/A Does not apply. I/We do not have barriers that prevent me/us from working.

10. What community services do you need to become your best self?

11. Are any of the following preventing you from seeking assistance at The Gathering Source or another service agency?

- ☐ Location- too public
- ☐ Location- too hard to get to
- ☐ Don't want to ask for help
- ☐ I think I'm doing ok
- ☐ I don't know what services are available to me
- ☐ Other _____

12. What do you like most about living in your community?

13. Are you willing to visit with someone about your answers?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes! I'd like to talk more about all this!

First Name: _____

Last Name (optional): _____

You can me reach by:

Phone number: _____

E-mail: _____

Appendix E - Thematic Grouping of Household Concerns

A. Theme: Health/Physical Issue

1. Alcohol use
2. Addiction
3. Anger Control
4. Depression or Anxiety
5. Support managing a disability
6. Managing chronic health problems like asthma or diabetes
7. Prenatal/pregnancy care and support
8. Getting healthcare I can afford
9. Getting vaccines
10. My teeth and gums

C. Theme: Transportation

15. A way to get around for appointments and shopping
16. A way to get to and from work each day

E. Theme: Childcare

21. Childcare

G. Theme: Housing/Homelessness

23. Finding a safe place to live that I can afford
24. A place to shower
25. Help with house maintenance

I. Theme: Eldercare

29. Taking care of an elderly family member

B. Theme: Social Services/Support

11. Taking care of a disabled family member
12. Getting nutritious food for my family
13. Applying for benefits such as Social Security, FoodShare, Medicare/Medicaid
14. Finding out what services are available to me for the above needs

D. Theme: Family Issues

17. Talking with my partner
18. Family fighting
19. My children's behavior
20. Unsafe home situation

F. Theme: Money Management

22. Managing my money

H. Theme: Community Connections

26. Safe places to be outdoors
27. A space to gather with other community members
28. Opportunities to connect with my community

Appendix F - Thematic Grouping of Work Barriers

- A. Theme: Health/Physical Issue
 - 1. Jobs too hard on the body
 - 2. Health/Disability (or inability to find a supportive employer)
 - 3. Won't pass a drug screen
- B. Theme: Transportation
 - 4. Don't have transportation I can count on
 - 5. I don't have a driver's license
 - 6. Work is too far from home
- C. Theme: Pay Concern
 - 7. Pay too low
 - 8. Available jobs pay just enough to get kicked off of SNAP or BadgerCare
- D. Theme: Childcare
 - 9. No childcare
 - 10. Childcare costs too much
- E. Theme: Lack of Resources
 - 11. No internet where I live
 - 12. Don't have a computer
 - 13. No telephone
 - 14. Can't afford clothing for work
 - 15. Don't have a permanent mailing address
- F. Theme: Skills/Education
 - 16. Don't have the education
 - 17. Don't have the skills
- G. Theme: Criminal Status
 - 18. Criminal Background
 - 19. Don't have papers to work in the US
- H. Theme: Eldercare
 - 20. Have to take care of my older kin

Appendix G - Follow-up Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Staying Informed

One of the biggest challenges of living in the country can be staying informed of all the things going on; this includes events happening as well as services available. Some people watch bulletin boards at the grocery store or the library, others go to certain websites or sign up for mailing lists, and lots of people just rely on the newspaper or word of mouth.

1. In your opinion, what is the best way for you to stay informed about what's going on in Dodge County?
 - o **Furthering Prompting (if necessary):**
 - What methods do you currently use to stay informed about what's going on?
 - Do you use the internet to stay informed? What websites do you go to in order to learn about events or services?
 - Are there places in town you go to get informed?
 - Are mailings a good way to learn about services or events, or do you tend to just throw your mail away?
 - What could be improved about these methods?

Mental Health Questions

The next three questions are to get a sense of what supports would help each person in Dodge county live their best lives.

2. What, other than money, might hold you back from living your best life, if anything?
3. What helps you find the energy you need to take care of yourself and connect with others?
4. Are you having trouble connecting with others?
5. What events would you like to see in your community?
 - Monthly bingo
 - Summer festivals [name location]

Workforce Barriers

Another common challenge we heard about through the survey was around employment.

6. Are you currently working?
 - If **YES**: Are you satisfied with your employment?
 - If **NO**: why not?
 - If **NO**: Do you want to work?
 - If **YES**: what is getting in the way?
7. Are you currently looking for employment?
 - If **NO**: Why not?
 - If **YES**: What do you think would help you gain employment?

Some people indicated that the main thing keeping them from working was a lack of transportation.

8. Is that true for you or anyone you know?

IF YES, continue to Q9, if NO, skip to Q11

9. Why is transportation a barrier to work for you? Things to listen for:

- I don't have a car
- Our family only has 1 car and my spouse uses it
- I don't have a driver's license
- I don't like driving... (long distances, in the snow, at night)

10. If a Dodge County employer offered a safe door-to-door carpool solution to bring you between home and work each day, would you take a job?
would you take that job?

ANSWER OPTIONS:

- I definitely would take a job
- I probably would take a job
- I might or might not take a job
- I probably would not take job
- I definitely would not take a job
 - IF DEFINITELY NOT: why not?

10a. If this solution cost you \$3 for each trip, would you still be interested in taking a job?

ANSWER OPTIONS:

- I definitely would take a job
- I probably would take a job
- I might or might not take a job
- I probably would not take job
- I definitely would not take a job
 - IF DEFINITELY NOT: why not?

Some people also indicated in the survey that the lack of quality an/or affordable childcare in Dodge County was preventing them from working.

11. Is that true for you or anyone you know?

IF YES, continue to Q12, if NO, skip to Q13

12. If licensed child care was available at your worksite or within walking distance to your worksite, would you take that job?

ANSWER OPTIONS:

- I definitely would take a job
- I probably would take a job
- I might or might not take a job
- I probably would not take job
- I definitely would not take a job

IF NO: why not? Then skip to Q9

Some people indicated that they feel they don't have the skills needed to get a good job.

13. If we were to offer free skills training at The Gathering Source, how likely is it that you would attend?

If **LOW**, what is holding you back from attending?

- Would you be able to attend if you got money for gas?
- Would you be able to attend if the skills training were offered at a different location? (prompt: where?)
- Do you feel like you have the energy to attend workforce development training?

What kinds of skills training would you be interested in? Money management, workforce development?

Other people have said that they don't feel like it's worth it to work. Is this a feeling you have had?

14. What do you need from an employer/boss to feel like work is worthwhile?

Further Prompt: Would you be able to work for a shorter workday?

Further Prompt: What if your employer provided low-cost healthcare solutions?

Further Prompt: Do you need to be paid a higher wage? Why won't (or can't) you take a job at the prevailing rate-of-pay?

15. Is there anything else that you would like to weigh in on about needs in Dodge County? Do you have any last thoughts?

Thank you for your time. If you have any more thoughts or questions about this interview please don't hesitate to reach out. You can either reach me via Laurel at The Gathering Source, or if you have a paper and pencil, I can give you my email address or phone number right now. Would you like to write either down?

info@thegatheringsource.com

Appendix H – Phase One Community Interviews

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THE GATHERING SOURCE

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

March 26, 2018

PARTICIPANTS

To date, Boris Frank has met with the following individuals to assess the effectiveness of TGS, and the potential for continuing, expanding and sustaining the organization.

Participants as of March 26, 2018:

Beal, Dave	Juneau Chief of Police
Bell, Becky	Dodge County Human Services and Health Director
Borchardt, Brittany	Dodgeland School District Police Liaison
Bublitz, James	Reeseville Village Trustee
Crave, Tina	Watertown Health Foundation; Dodge County Economic Dev. Bd.
Kromm, Kay	Reeseville Public Library
Linfield, Tom	Madison Area Community Foundation
Pratt, Vicki	JCEDC & GHDP
Scharfman, Paul	Specialty Cheese
Schmidt, Dale	Dodge County Sheriff
Schultz, Patrick	WI DWD
Thompson, Annette	Dodgeland School Supt.

EFFECTIVENESS

Those interviewed describe TGS as having significantly addressed issues of hunger in its service area.

Services provided are considered of high quality, professionally and effectively delivered.

Words often used to describe TGS and its volunteer staff were:

- Respectful;
- Confidential;
- Non-judgmental;
- Friendly;
- Generous;
- Doing a great deal efficiently and economically.

Weekend food distribution was particularly mentioned as a highly successful and vital service provided by TGS...a good example of identifying a community need and delivering a cost effective and well executed solution.

Some concerns expressed:

- Location and public visibility can be a deterrent to some who do not want to be identified as utilizing a food bank;
- More space is needed for the pantry;
- There is a need for more confidential interview meeting space.

Conditions expressed for TGS success were the need to:

- Be sure that there is a succession plan for the Executive Director. There is hope that Laurel will remain engaged, especially in the capacity of identifying and approaching major donor prospects. She is clearly the “face” TGS;
- Retain paid staff;
- Establish a strong and effective administrative structure;
- Diversify the Board;
- Engage the Board in actively seeking funding;
- Adequately fund overhead and administrative costs;
- Continue to strengthen the bonds with other human service initiatives and programs in the community;
- Create and engage a diverse Advisory Board.

FUNDING

Most of those interviewed expressed concern regarding the ability of TGS to secure adequate funding to secure the building and maintain a viable, effective, sustainable organization.

Major foundation, corporate and public grants should be pursued. Among those interviewed, several clearly have the ability to assist TGS in securing meaningful funding. Engaging them and nurturing those relationships will be essential to the success of TGS.

A robust annual community fund appeal should be implemented.

Small group ‘friendraising’ events should be part of the development strategy.

A diversified Community Foundation planned giving and endowment program should be created.

Individual and corporate sponsorships should be pursued for specific programs and activities.

MEMBERSHIP MODEL

It has been suggested that the TGS create a 'member' structure that includes:

- Individual, family and corporate classifications;
- A Local and regional business supported service and purchase discount program;
- Premiums and 'thank-you gifts';
- Member driven events, programs and engagement.

YOUTH FOCUS

Needs of younger residents and families were emphasized. The earlier their core needs can be identified and addressed, and positive relationships and experiences introduced, the greater the chance of positive results.

Students should be added to the Board.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A critical first step in creating a sustainable and effective TGS Center will be the need to update and adopt a refined and workable strategic plan and development strategy.

The strategic plan should include:

- Impact and outcomes. What difference will TGS and the venue make?
- Updated mission and 'elevator speech';
- Basic values and principles;
- Long range vision;
- Short, medium and long range goals;
- Measurable objectives;
- Implementation strategies and responsibilities;
- Administrative and management structure;
- Financial plan and budget.

The development plan should include:

- Capital and operating fundraising strategy;
- Marketing structure;
- Public information and public relations plans and initiatives including maintenance of an effective website, media relations and partnerships, and a social media strategy.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

There is strong support for moving the TGS food pantry to a new facility with the site serving as a location for other community and human service programs and providers including:

- Relocating the Reeseville Library to the new site;
- In partnership with the Dodgeand School District and the Library, supporting the increasing number families home schooling their children;
- Providing other human service organizations with convenient part time office, meeting and treatment space, especially for delivery of medical and dental services;
- Housing a licensed day care center with pre- and post-school services;
- Community meeting space;
- A location for University of Wisconsin and Technical College classes and adult education opportunities;
- Serving as a 'convener' and coordinator of community services and projects, assisting in creating partnerships, collaborations and co-ventures.

Limited, or lack of, transportation is a barrier to some in need of basic services, especially those with disabilities. TGS can serve as a more convenient, less distant alternative location for delivery of services in sparsely populated rural areas.

Lack of adequate and reliable transportation is also clearly a barrier to steady employment for many.

Law enforcement agencies would welcome a neutral site to engage youth in addressing respect and behavioral issues that put them at risk of unacceptable behavior that can significantly impede their ability to effectively deal with family, school and societal pressures and relationships.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe there is sufficient interest on the part of program partners to proceed with the Gathering Source initiative.

Still to be determined is the potential of securing funding to support acquisition and remodeling of the facility, and assuring program and operating sustainability.

In addition to updating the strategic and development plans, we recommend several essential steps and considerations in moving the project forward:

- Vigorously pursuing major (6-figure) lead planning and implementation grants and pledges;
- Diversifying and expanding Board of Directors and Advisory Board membership and participation;
- Creating a Reeseville Community Foundation that includes a Gathering Source dedicated fund;
- Preparing a well-thought-out leadership and administrative succession plan.

Considering the encouraging and positive response and expressions of interest on the part of those interviewed, there is reason to believe that the TGS initiative can serve as a workable model for delivery of services in other rural communities.