

**BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 19, 2021
7:00 PM**



**R. Jay Foster Hall of
Justice Womack
Building Columbus, NC**

Roll
Call

1. Public Hearing
 - A. Call the Public Hearing to Order - Chairman Melton. The purpose of the public hearing is to take public comments on proposed new road names, Beauty Hill Lane, Foch Mountain Trail, Morgan Run, Dragonfly Trail, Wildcat Way, Friendly Hills Lane, the public hearing was properly advertised in the Tryon Daily Bulletin.
 - B. Citizen Comments.
 - C. Commissioner Comments.
 - D. Adjourn Public Hearing.
2. Call to Order Regular Meeting - Chairman Melton.
3. Invocation - Commissioner Yoder.
4. Pledge of Allegiance - Vice-Chairman Beiler.
5. Chairman and Commissioner Comments.
6. Approval of Agenda
 - A. Motion to approve agenda.
7. Consent Agenda
 - A. December 7, 2020 Regular and Organizational meeting minutes.
 - B. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) - Submit for review and comments Community Action Opportunities, Inc. CSBG application, and Community Anti-Poverty Plan.
Motion to approve the consent agenda.
8. Citizen Comment(s)
9. NC Geological Survey - Landslide Map Update - Richard (Rick) M. Wooten, P.G. Senior Geologist for Geohazards and Engineering Geology Asheville Regional Office – North Carolina Geological Survey Division of Energy, Minerals and Land Resources Dept. of Environmental Quality.

10. 2021 Polk County Revaluation Information - Gary Eanes, Wampler-Eanes Appraisal Group.
11. Green Creek Volunteer Fire and Rescue request to extend the waterline - Chief Jeremy Gregg.
12. Resolution to assure Polk County citizens their safety is our top priority and to support their constitutional rights.
Motion to approve the resolution.
13. Proposed New Road Names - Beauty Hill Ln (Private Road-off SR1346) Township: Columbus Foch Mountain Trail (Private road-off SR NC108) Township: Columbus Morgan Run— Private Road off PVT Spicer Cove Rd Begins in Henderson County Township: Saluda Dragonfly Trail- Private Road off SR1306 Township: Cooper Gap Wildcat Way- Private road off- Lake Adger Rd off SR1161 Township: Cooper Gap Friendly Hills Lane- Private Road off- County Club Rd SR1107 Township: Tryon- Outside
Motion to approve new road names as presented.
14. Board of Commissioner meeting time change discussion - Chairman Melton.
15. Volunteer Board Application(s)
 - A. Application for Review - Karen Davidson, Library Board of Trustees.
16. Adjournment

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Type

Upload Date

Proposed New Road Names

Cover Memo

7/27/2020



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that at 7:00 p.m., on Monday, August 3, 2020, in the R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building, 40 Courthouse Street, Columbus, NC 28722, the Polk County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing to receive citizen input on the following list of proposed road names to be adopted in Polk County:

KEENAN WAY (Private road – off SC RED RADFORD RD) Township: Green Creek
RED BELL LN– (Private road - off SR1361 Blackwood Rd.) Township: Green Creek
LONG EARS LN– (Private road – off SR1361 Blackwood Rd.) Township: Green Creek
OLD KUYKENDALL DR– (Private road – off SR1137 Houston Rd.) Township: Columbus
LAKE POINTE LN – (PVT Rd – off PVT RD South Cove Rd. off SR1140 Garrett Rd.)
Township: White Oak-Mill Spring

For additional information about this Public Hearing, contact the County Manager's office, at (828) 894-3301.

Ange' High
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: A.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
Public Hearing Notice	Cover Memo	1/13/2021
Proposed New Road Names oronunciations	Cover Memo	1/13/2021



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that at 7:00 p.m., on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, in the R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building, 40 Courthouse Street, Columbus, NC 28722, the Polk County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing to receive citizen input on the following list of proposed road names to be adopted in Polk County:

Beauty Hill Ln (Private Road-off SR1346) Township: Columbus

Foch Mountain Trail (Private road-off SR NC108) Township: Columbus

Morgan Run— Private Road off PVT Spicer Cove Rd Begins in Henderson County Township: Saluda

Dragonfly Trail- Private Road off SR1306 Township: Cooper Gap

Wildcat Way- Private road off- Lake Adger Rd off SR1161 Township: Cooper Gap

Friendly Hills Lane- Private Road off- County Club Rd SR1107 Township: Tryon- Outside

For additional information about this Public Hearing, contact the County Manager's office, at (828) 894-3301.

Ange' High

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

January 19, 2021

Proposed road name to be adopted:

Beauty Hill Ln (Private Road-off SR1346)
(Bee-u-tee Hill Lane)

Township: Columbus

Foch Mountain Trail (Private road-off SR NC108)
(Faa-sh Mountain Trail)

Township: Columbus

Morgan Run— Private Road off PVT Spicer Cove Rd Begins in Henderson County
(Moore-gan Run)

Township: Saluda

Dragonfly Trail- Private Road off SR1306
(Drag-un-fly Trail)

Township: Cooper Gap

Wildcat Way- Private road off- Lake Adger Rd off SR1161
(Wild-kat Way)

Township: Cooper Gap

Friendly Hills Lane- Private Road off- County Club Rd SR1107
(Frend-lee Hills Lane)

Township: Tryon- Outside

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: A.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
draft minutes	Cover Memo	1/14/2021

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular and Organizational Meeting
December 7, 2020 - 7:00 PM
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Beiler, Commissioner Gasperson, Commissioner Melton, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Overholt, and Commissioner Yoder. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, Attorney Berg, and Clerk to the Board High, media, and citizens.

1. Call to Order - Chairman Yoder.

2. Invocation - Pastor Timothy Fortune, Columbus Baptist.

Vice-Chairman Melton introduced Pastor Timothy Fortune who gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance - Led by local Veterans in observance of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Today marks 79 years since the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii where more than 2,000 service members and civilians died on December 7, 1941.

4. Approval of Agenda

A. Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Consent Agenda

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

A. October 19, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

B. Tax refund requests through November 30, 2020 in the amount of \$265.36.

6. Citizen Comment(s)

There were five citizen comments. One was physically present, four presented their comments remotely, each were given four minutes to speak.

7. Commissioner Gasperson Plaque Presentation.

Chairman Yoder, and Commissioners presented Commissioner Gasperson a plaque commemorating him for his twelve years of service to the citizens of Polk County.

8. Polk County 2020 Annual Financial Report.

Dan Mullinix, Gould Killian CPA Group, presented the unmodified, clean opinion of the annual audit, a copy of which is hereby incorporated by reference into these minutes. He said they are still waiting on Medicaid numbers from the State then they will send the Board the final copy of the report. Mr. Mullinix commended Polk County for submitting the more detailed and complex, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) even though it is not required. He said Polk County has been awarded the CAFR for twenty-three consecutive years, and applauded the accomplishment.

9. County Employee Compensatory Time Discussion.

Manager Pittman said as in the two years prior, when the county receives a good audit report and has a surplus, the Board has chosen to pay off the debt of employee compensatory (comp) time. He said he is recommending doing so again this year, but prefaced the recommendation with the statement that this is not a requirement, or obligation (until a certain level is reached, which at that time, must be paid out to the employee by law) just good fiscal management to reduce a growing debt. He stated there may be a time in the future when the Board would choose not to pay off the comp time, and he wanted it on the record there is no obligation for them to do this each year.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to pay the employee compensatory time balances earned as

of December 6, 2020 in the amount up to \$140,000, seconded by Commissioner

Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Amendment to the Broad River Water District (BRWD), County of Polk, and Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) Management Agreement.

Manager Pittman presented the revised document extending the maintenance agreement with Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) two years until December 31, 2023. Chairman Yoder said he is happy with the extended timeline. Commissioner Gasperson said keeping ICWD maintaining the lines is a huge benefit to Polk County, saving money by not having to fund our own water department to manage a small system that is far from being self supporting.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the Amendment to the Broad River Water District (BRWD), County of Polk, and Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) Management Agreement, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Resolution to Amend the Current Tier Designation System in North Carolina.

Manager Pittman said the North Carolina Department of Commerce released the county tier designations for 2021 on November 30th and Polk County's

designation changed from a tier two to a tier three. He said the designations are mandated by state law and play a role in several programs that assist in economic development grants. He welcomed Representative Jake Johnson who thanked the Board for allowing him to come to speak about what the tier designation system is, and the effects it has on counties across the state. He said each county is assigned a tier designation ranking from one to three with Tier 1 counties generally being the most economically distressed and Tier 3 counties the least economically distressed, according to the assessment. He said the key factors used to determine the designation are the unemployment rate, median household income, population growth, and assessed property value per capita, and each the law calls for 40 counties to be designated as Tier 1, 40 counties to be designated as Tier 2, and 20 counties to be designated Tier 3. This year 22 counties will change tier designations including Polk. Representative Johnson said when you look at a county like Polk as a whole, the system doesn't factor in economic disparities within the county's boundary, He said there is diversity across county borders that should be considered and he would like this issue put on the radar for discussion, and he supports the resolution being presented for the Commissioners consideration. Commissioner Moore moved to adopt the Resolution to Amend the Current Tier Designation System in North Carolina, seconded by Vice-Chairman Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

12. Commissioner Comment(s)

Commissioner Gasperson requested his comments be inserted verbatim: When I review my 12 years on the Polk Board of Commissioners, my frequent approach toward contentious issues on which the BOC needed to take action would result in me on many occasions getting myself into "Good Trouble". This is a phrase coined by the late Representative from Georgia John Lewis. As Representative Lewis would say, "Good trouble philosophy is very simple, when you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, say something, do something, get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble". I believe this philosophy helps summarize the approach I took as Commissioner. I have always focused on taking the necessary actions that would put the interests of all the citizens of Polk County first and foremost, regardless of political affiliation.

Ten years ago, during the process needed to approve the site and build the county DSS building, known as the Howard B. Greene Human Services Building, I got myself into whole lot of "good trouble". It proved to be a very contentious issue, especially with many members of the community, for a desperately needed project that I was spearheading. Fortunately, in the end, the majority of the Board worked with me to see this project to completion. Through the years I have frequently engaged in "good trouble" over many issues, for example (just to name a few): zoning, subdivision regulation, Lake Adger and waterlines, annual county budgets, county revaluations, county personnel, and county Health District issues. Even though I often felt like a "voice in the wilderness", I was always working to find common ground with the

public and other members of the Board. And, more often than not, through compromise we did find common ground.

The “good trouble” that I created over the location of the new Sheriff office and Detention Center has been proved to be one of the most positive for me. Five years ago, the other four members of the Board, at that time, had chosen a location that I was convinced was inferior and would prove to be very problematic. Fortunately I was able to work behind the scenes to help secure the option to purchase the site where the new Sheriff office and jail is now located. The vote for this property purchase was unanimous! And, as a major bonus, we also now have a prepared site for a future Polk County Courthouse and County Government Services Building.

It’s important for me to note that the current members of the Board has worked very well together. Over the last couple of years this has greatly reduced me engaging in “good trouble”.

I am convinced that doing the hard work of having a vibrant and healthy democracy often requires getting into “good trouble”. My challenge for all citizens of Polk County is to commit yourselves to doing the hard work of democracy, and when necessary, not hesitating getting into “good trouble”. Finally, I would like to again thank the citizens of Polk County. My journey over the last 12 years serving on the Polk County Board of Commissioners has been one of the most challenging and satisfying experiences of my adult life. I have had the privilege to work with many remarkable and talented elected officials, county employees and volunteers all striving to make our county an excellent place to live, work, play, raise families, be educated and worship. I am very grateful to everyone who has supported me through several election cycles and years of public service, especially my wife Sue and my adult children Laura, Corey and Julia. I realize that “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven”. And now for me, the time has arrived to transition from serving as a Commissioner to other purposes and experiences. Of course I will continue to work to improve our county and, most likely, will occasionally get into “good trouble”.

Commissioner Moore said it was a pleasure serving with Commissioner Gasperson and wished him well.

Commissioner Beiler thanked Representative Johnson for coming to the meeting. He said he felt like the Board was unified with Commissioner Gasperson, and his wise counsel will be missed.

Vice-Chairman Melton said Commissioner Gasperson can walk away with his head held high, he has brought a lot to the Board as he served for the past twelve years. He said Commissioner Gasperson's family is impeccable, and he is proud to have served with him.

Chairman Yoder said he appreciates all the commissioners, and each one has their own thoughts and opinions. He said as a Board they sometimes have to deal with hard things, and he has appreciated being the Chair this year as each of them have gotten into good trouble.

13. Five minute recess.

14. Incoming Board Swearing In Ceremony

- A. Oath of Office - County Commissioners. Sheila Whitmire, Register of Deeds administered the oaths of office for the newly elected Commissioners J. David Moore; Andre Overholt; Myron Yoder.

15. Five minute recess.

16. Reconvene Meeting - Attorney Berg.

- A. Election of Chairman - Attorney Berg.

Ms. Berg opened the floor for nominations for chair of the board. Commissioner Yoder nominated Commissioner Melton. Ms. Berg asked if there were any more nominations. Having none, she asked for a motion for nominations to cease and each commissioner voted unanimously to appoint Commissioner Melton as Chairman.

- B. Election Vice-Chairman - Attorney Berg.

Ms. Berg opened the floor for nominations for vice-chair of the board. Commissioner Moore nominated Commissioner Beiler. Ms. Berg asked if there were any more nominations. Having none, she asked for a motion for nominations to cease and each commissioner voted unanimously to appoint Commissioner Beiler as Vice-Chairman.

17. Organizational Meeting Agenda Items - New Chairman Presiding.

Chairman Melton addressed the Board and thanked the county employees, veterans, hospital,, sheriff, emergency personnel, small businesses, school system, and citizens for making Polk County the best place to live. He said maintaining the rural character is a top priority for him, and he would like each Commissioner to think about what their goals are for the upcoming year to discuss at the next meeting. Commissioner Yoder thanked the citizens for their votes and said they made it clear they want a conservative, non-socialist government.

- A. Annual Examination of Public Official Bonds as required by § 58-72-20.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the required public official bonds and pay the associated premiums, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

- B. Polk County Code of Ethics – This information has been provided to the Commissioners, and is available for review in the County Manager's office.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to Motion to approve the Polk County Code of Ethics, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

- C. Meeting Procedures, Rules, Agenda Items Procedure, and Decorum.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to approve meeting and agenda item procedures and rules, and meeting decorum guidelines, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Commissioner Appointments to Boards.

Chairman Melton suggested Commissioner Overholt replacing Commissioner Gasperson and everyone else remaining the same until the next meeting. He said at that time they can make changes.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve Board appointments as stated, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

E. 2021 NCACC Legislative Goals Conference Voting Delegate.

Commissioner Moore moved to appoint a voting delegate for the 2021 NCACC Legislative Goals Conference, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

F. 2021 Polk County Local Government Holiday Schedule.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to Motion to approve the 2021 County Holiday Schedule, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

G. Board of Commissioners' Regular Meeting Schedule January 2021 through June 2021.

Commissioner Moore requested the Board consider changing the meeting time to earlier in the day. The Board agreed to discuss at a future meeting. Commissioner Overholt moved to approve the Board of Commissioner regular meeting schedule for January 2021 through June 2021, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

18. Commissioner Comments.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for coming out, and said they are looking forward to working together for the citizens Polk County. They also gave their condolences to the James Jolly family who the Sheriff shared had passed away earlier today.

19. Adjournment

Commissioner Moore moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

Ange High
Clerk to the Board

Tommy W. Melton
Chairman

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: B.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
CSBG	Cover Memo	1/15/2021

Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the consent agenda.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Division of Social Services



Community Services Block Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding

Project Period July 1, 2021– June 30, 2022

Application Due Date: January 15, 2021

Agency Information			
Agency:		Community Action Opportunities	
Federal I.D.		56-0817672	
DUNS Number:		074495532	
Administrative Office Address:		25 Gaston Street, Asheville, North Carolina, 28801-4327	
Mailing Address (include the 4-digit zip code extension):		25 Gaston Street, Asheville, North Carolina, 28801-4327	
Telephone Number:		828.252.2495	
Fax Number:		828.253.6319	
Proposed Funding:	CSBG: \$718,716	Additional Resources: \$30,000	Agency Total Budget: \$748,716
Application Period:		Beginning: July 1, 2021	Ending: June 30, 2022
Board Chairperson:		Edward R. Schell	
Board Chairperson's Address: (where communications should be sent)		25 Gaston Street, Asheville, North Carolina, 28801-4327	
Board Chairperson's Term of Office (enter beginning and end dates):		October 2020 – October 2021	
Executive Director:		Vicki Heidinger	
Executive Director Email Address:		Vicki.heidinger@communityactionopportunities.org	
Agency Fiscal Officer:		Darren Waugh	
Fiscal Officer Email Address:		darren.waugh@communityactionopportunities.org	
CSBG Program Director:		Trudy Logan	
CSBG Program Director Email Address:		Trudy.logan@communityactionopportunities.org	
Counties Served with CSBG funds:		Buncombe, Madison, McDowell	
Agency Operational Fiscal Year:		July – June	

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Economic Opportunity –
2420 Mail Service Center / Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2420

Proposed Funding

CSBG: Enter the proposed amount of CSBG funds allocated for FY 2021.

Additional Resources: Enter the amount of other resources the agency expects to receive during the 2021 program year. If an exact figure is not known at this time, the best possible estimate.

Agency Total Budget: Enter the sum of CSBG and Additional Resources for the period of July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

Checklist to Submit a Complete Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Application

Please put a check mark in the appropriate box to show that you have included the completed document with your application. All documents are required with the exception of those that say "if applicable."

Item	Included (✓)
Signed Application Certification (blue ink only)	✓
Signed Board Membership Roster (blue ink only)	✓
Board of Directors Officers and Committees	✓
Board of Directors Community Needs Assurance	✓
Planning Process Narrative	✓
Form 210 – Agency Strategy for Eliminating Poverty	✓
Form 212 – One-Year Work Program	✓
Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation Plan	✓
Form 212A – CSBG Administrative Support Worksheet (if applicable)	n/a
Form 225 – Agency Budget Information	n/a
Form 225N-Budget Narrative	n/a
<u>Appendices (to be attached by the Applicant):</u>	
• Organizational Chart (do not include names)	✓
• Job Description and Resume for the Agency's Executive Director	✓
• Job Description and Resume for the Agency's Chief Financial Officer	✓
• Job Descriptions for all CSBG employees (do not include names)	✓
• Affirmative Action Plan	✓
• Documentation of Public Hearings for Initial Planning Process:	
Copy of Public Notice(s) from Newspaper(s)	✓
Agenda of Public Meeting(s)	✓
Copy of Attendance Sheet(s)	✓
Minutes of Public Meeting(s)	✓
• Documentation for Notice of Intent to Apply:	
Copy of advertisement(s)	✓
• Documentation of Submission to County Commissioners:	
Notarized document from county clerk	
Commissioners' comments or minutes (if applicable)	
• Cognizant-Approved Indirect Cost Agreement	✓
• Copy of the Proposal Application submitted to the cognizant agency for approval of the Indirect Cost Rate	✓
• Cost Allocation Plan (if applicable)	✓
• Vehicle Registrations (<i>must be up-to-date and after July 1, 2021</i>)	✓
• State Certification-No Overdue Tax Debts	✓
• State Certification-Contractor Certification required by N.C. Law	✓
• Federal Certifications	Sent in Dec 2020
• Cost Allocation Plan Certification	✓
• Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	✓
• Central Contractor Registration (CCR) (<i>must be up-to-date and after July 1, 2021</i>)	✓

**Checklist to Submit a Complete Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Application
(continued)**

Item	Included (√)
• IRS Tax Exemption Verification- verifies the agency's 501 (c) (3) status <i>(must be dated after July 1, 2016)</i>	√
• Conflict of Interest Policy <i>(must have been approved within the past 5 years and must be notarized)</i>	√
• Contractual Agreements/leases <i>(must be current within contract period)</i>	√

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2020-21 Application for Funding
Certification and Assurances**

Public Hearing on the Initial Plan

We herein certify that a public hearing as required by 10A NCAC 97B .0402 Citizen Participation in the Application Process occurred on _____ for the initial planning process for the agency's current project plan and the agency has maintained documentation to confirm the process of the public hearing.

For multi-county providers, indicate the date and the county the hearing was held.

Date	County	Date	County
2/5/2020	Madison	2/6/2020	Transylvania
2/5/2020	Polk		
2/6/2020	Buncombe		
2/6/2020	Henderson		
2/6/2020	McDowell		

County Commissioners' Review

We herein certify that the application for this project period was submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for review and comment on _____ as required by 10A NCAC 97C .0111 and 10A NCAC 97C .0307(9).

For multi-county providers, indicate the county and date the application for funding was presented to the Board of County Commissioners as required by 10A NCAC 97C .0111(B).

Date	County	Date	County
01/08/2021	Buncombe	01/08/2021	McDowell
01/08/2021	Henderson	01/08/2021	Polk
01/08/2021	Madison	01/08/2021	Transylvania

Board of Directors Approval of the Application

I hereby certify that the information contained in the attached application is true and the Board of Directors has reviewed and approved this application for the Community Services Block Grant Program.

Date of Board Approval: 01/07/2021

Board Chairperson: Edward R. Scheer 01/07/2021
(Signature) (Date)

Finance Committee Chairperson: Max L. Hunter 01/07/2021
(Signature) (Date)

Board of Directors' Membership Roster

Total Seats Per Agency Bylaws	21	Total Current Vacant Seats	4
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Total Number of Seats Reserved for Each Sector	Poor	7	Public	7	Private	7
Total Number of Vacant Seats Per Each Sector	Poor	1	Public	2	Private	1

Name	County of Residence	Community Group/ Area Represented	Date Initially Seated [month/year]	Number of Terms Served [completed]	Current Term Expiration [month/year]
Representatives of the Poor					
1. Willie Mae Brown	Buncombe	Census Area 1 thru Mt. Zion	03/96	8	10/23
2. Edgar Bryant	Buncombe	Head Start	08/04	4	10/21
3. Vickie Lester	Buncombe	Head Start Policy Council	12/13	2	10/22
4. Tammy Stackable	McDowell	Head Start Program	04/14	1	10/22
5. Susan Travers	Buncombe	Head Start Policy Council	04/18	0	10/21
6. Marta Baker	Madison	Head Start Policy Council	02/20	1	10/23
Public Elected Officials					
1. Bill N. Clark	Madison	School Board	08/00	6	10/21
2. Max Haner	Buncombe	County Commissioners	12/07	4	10/22
3. Ed Hay	Buncombe	County Commissioners	02/20	0	10/22
4. Edward R. Schell	Buncombe	County Commissioners	03/83	13	10/23
5. Harriett Thomas	McDowell	Marion Town Council	10/12	2	10/21
Representatives of Private Organizations					
1. Karen Cragolin	Buncombe	RiverLink	12/15	2	10/23
2. Ophelia (Fifi) DeGroot	Madison	Mars Hill University	10/14	2	10/22
3. Dean Kanipe	McDowell	Rotary Club	06/18	1	10/23
4. Linda McDaniel	Buncombe	The Arc	12/15	1	10/21
5. Terika Percy	Buncombe	Self-Help Credit Union	06/19	0	10/21
6. Elizabeth Russell	Buncombe	ArtSpace Charter School	08/03	5	10/22

The signature of the Board of Directors Chairperson certifies that the persons representing the poor were selected by a democratic process and that there is documentation on file that confirms the selection of all board members. In addition, by signing below, the Board of Directors Chairperson confirms that the selection of all board members coincides with the directives outlined in the agency's bylaws and that a current Board of Directors Member Profile is on file for each member.



Board of Directors Chairperson

Board of Directors' Officers and Committees

Note: All committees of the board should fairly reflect the composition of the board (10A NCAC 97C .0109). Be sure to identify the chairperson and other committee positions.

Name	Office	Sector Represented	County Represented*
Officers of the Board			
Ed Schell	Chairperson	Public	Buncombe
Willie Mae Brown	Secretary	Low-Income	Buncombe
Max Haner	Vice-Chair of Finance	Public	Buncombe
Fifi DeGroot	Vice-Chair of Planning	Private	Madison
Committee Name: Personnel			
Willie Mae Brown	Chairperson	Low-Income	Buncombe
Bill Clark		Public	Madison
Linda McDaniel		Private	Buncombe
Committee Name: Function & Structure			
Karen Cragolin	Chairperson	Private	Buncombe
Edward Schell		Public	Buncombe
Dean Kanipe		Private	McDowell
Vickie Lester		Low-Income	Buncombe
Susan Travers		Low-Income	Buncombe
Committee Name: Finance			
Max Haner	Chairperson	Public	Buncombe
Harriett Thomas		Public	McDowell
Elizabeth Russell		Private	Buncombe
Terika Percy		Private	Buncombe
Edgar Bryant		Low-Income	Buncombe
Marta Baker		Low-Income	Madison
Committee Name: Planning & Evaluation			
Fifi DeGroot	Chairperson	Private	Madison
Tammy Stackable		Low-Income	McDowell
Vacant		Public	Buncombe
Committee Name: Executive Committee			
Edward Schell	Chairperson	Public	Buncombe
Fifi DeGroot	Vice-Chair of Planning	Private	Madison
Max Haner	Vice-Chair of Finance	Public	Buncombe
Willie Mae Brown	Secretary & Chair of Personnel	Low-Income	Buncombe
Karen Cragolin	Chair Function & Structure	Private	Buncombe

*To be completed by agencies serving multiple counties.

Community Service Block Grant

Board of Directors Contractual Certifications

I, **Edward R. Schell/ Community Action Opportunities**, certify the information in the following categories by initialing each certification and signing below:

- ☒ **A. Conflict of Interest:** I certify that a Conflict of Interest Policy is in place and that a copy of the policy can be found in the Employee Policy Manual and in the Board Member Handbook. I also certify that all members of the Board of Directors and all staff annually sign "Conflict of Interest" forms and that copies of Board member signatures are kept in the Board Minutes Book while copies of employee signatures are retained in the personnel files.
- ☒ **B. Board of Director Orientation/Training:** I certify that a Board Member Orientation Policy is in place and that it is utilized as new Board members are assigned to the Board. I also certify that all Board members attend an annual Board Training each year and record of such is reflected in the Board minutes. The most recent Board Training occurred on **June 23, 2020**.
- ☒ **C. Agency-wide Audit:** I certify that **Wipfli** performs an audit annually. The audit is completed each year and submitted for review by the Board. The most recent audit for program year **June 30, 2019** was submitted and accepted by the Board at the **February 25, 2020** meeting and is on record in said minutes.

Certification (Original Signature)


Signature of Chairperson/President

01/07/2021

Date

Community Service Block Grant

Certification of Community Assessment

Community Action Opportunities (applicant) has conducted a Community Assessment of its service area within the past three (3) years utilizing the following method(s):

(Check one or more of the following methods)

- ☒ Surveys of the community(s) - door to door, telephone, etc.
- ☒ Review of Records - agency intake forms, program participant records, etc. (may be used with at least one other type of needs assessment; will not meet compliance on its own)
- ☒ Review of demographical information - U.S. Census, welfare statistics, unemployment statistics, etc.
- ☒ Discussions/information/testimony provided by individuals and community members - social service professionals, agency staff, program participants, etc.
- ☒ Public meetings to solicit input on community needs
- ☐ Other (Describe) _____

The most recent Community Assessment was completed on: June 23, 2020

(date)

The Community Assessment was completed by: **Community Action Opportunities –Community Assessment Team and Spiridis Consulting (Independent Contractor; Rebecca Spiridis, President)**.

It is expressly understood that this Community Assessment should include community and consumer input. It is to be used as a basis for prioritizing the needs of the low-income population in the service area and for planning the applicant's projects to meet those needs.

It is further understood that documentation validating that a Community Assessment was completed and is to be retained by the applicant and is subject to review by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Please provide a 4-5 sentence summary of your most recent Community Needs Assessment:

*The most recently approved plan was the **2020 Community Wide Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment**, which aimed to identify the strengths, challenges and barriers to self-sufficiency of those living in poverty, specifically in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Polk and Transylvania counties, North Carolina. The Community Assessment process examines the capabilities of citizens, partner agencies and organizations while identifying services and solutions that support and nurture families and children. The Assessment is intended for the design of future program plans to meet community needs; to build on the current strengths and resources of the community; and to assist in reducing identified barriers to self-sufficiency for families living in poverty. Regular assessment of needs and resources at the community level is the foundation of Community Action and a vital management and leadership tool that is used across the organization and utilized by the community to set the course for both CSBG and all agency resources.¹*

¹(2016). CSBG Organizational Standards.

CAO is required to conduct a comprehensive Community Assessment during each three-year period per the CSBG Organizational Standards, and during each five-year period for Head Start, per the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

CAO annually reviews and updates the Assessment to reflect significant changes in the service area. The quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the Assessment will be used to make informed decisions which may include, but will not be limited to:

- Determination of long- and short-range program goals, objectives and priorities;*
- Types of services most in need for families living in poverty;*
- Recruitment areas that will be served by the Agency, if limitations in the amount of resources make it impossible to serve the entire service area;*
- Location of Head Start centers; and*
- Criteria for special populations who will be given priority for program services.*

*The Governing Board of Directors reviewed and approved the **2020 Community-Wide Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment on June 23, 2020.***

The following is a list of needs as prioritized, with community input, through the needs assessment process.

1. Community inequities	4. Jobs with livable wages
2. Quality care for children (birth to three)	5. Affordable Housing
3. Hours of care for children	6. Gender wage gap (women in poverty)

Certification (Original Signature)


Signature of Chairperson/President

01/07/2021

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
Planning Process Narrative**

1. Explain in detail how each of the following was involved in the planning and development of this strategic plan.
 - a. Low-Income Community: Community Action Opportunities (CAO) is committed to the mission: “We help people who live on limited resources transform their lives.” Entering into the second year of the three year plan, the Life Works Self Sufficiency Program (Life Works), examines community needs annually to ensure all services provided are directly meeting the applicable family, agency and community-levels needs while addressing the causes and conditions of poverty. CAO recognizes the expertise and insight those who live in poverty have to offer and greatly values the input provided by people living on low-incomes. CAO completed its most recent Community Needs Assessment in 2020. This assessment prioritizes the voice of people living on low-incomes, through the use of surveys and focus groups. However, this Community Needs Assessment was completed prior to the onset of COVID-19, and therefore a number of current prominent factors across the Life Works six-county service area are not included. Life Works Coaches stayed in communication with customer and representatives from the low-income community since March 2020 when the first Stay at Home mandates were put in place in order to gather input on what needs were most pressing, not only for the moment at hand but also to be used for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 planning. Life Works staff and CAO leadership attended multiple virtual community meetings and listening sessions since the pandemic began in order to hear directly from those most impacted by COVID-19, which has disproportionately included black, Indigenous and people of color, as well as those living in poverty. While the Community Needs Assessment is used as the basis for planning, this additional, current information is also considered and analyzed in an effort to create a plan that is as robust, responsive and accurate as possible. Additionally, CAO has low-income representatives on the Board of Directors and the Head Start Policy Council who help to guide the agency’s work and give voice to the needs of the communities served. Life Works surveys customers formally at least twice each fiscal year; this information is analyzed and used to inform the planning process. In February 2020, Life Works held public hearings in each of the six counties served so that the public, including people living on low incomes, would have the opportunity to review and offer insights on CAO’s plan.
 - b. Agency Staff: All CAO staff members, including those in administration and finance departments, participate in the Community Needs Assessment in order to provide key information about the families served, trends observed in their communities, feedback on program activities and unmet needs of people living on low-incomes. Life Works Coaches are consulted throughout the course of each year, as well as during staff meetings, to provide guidance on targeted outcomes, services provided and program activities. Each member of the Life Works team partners with community agencies and programs, serving on boards and committees, attending community meetings and soliciting feedback on an on-going basis in order to identify gaps in services, coordinate efforts toward common goals and plan for future work. This information, gathered on an on-going basis, is shared with appropriate members of the Leadership Team (agency supervisors) and is then compiled and examined prior to planning.

- c. Agency's Board Members: The Board of Directors provide input for the Community Needs Assessment via surveys and direct feedback, which is analyzed and incorporated into the final report. The current Community Needs Assessment was approved by the Board in 2020, and was then used for planning the CSBG application. Additionally, the Board created the current 2018-2023 Strategic Plan with input and support from staff, customers and Head Start Policy Council Representatives. CAO's Senior Team (key administration positions and department leadership) and Leadership Team (all agency supervisors) developed a working plan which includes details such as target dates, outcome indicators, progress over time and outcome effectiveness.
2. Describe how and what information was gathered from the following key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources during the community assessment process and other times. These should ideally be from each county within your agency's service area:

Community Action Opportunities developed the *2020 Community Wide Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment* to better understand and address the needs within each county service area, in accordance with CSBG Org Standards 3.1 – 3.5. Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 was the first year Life Works served the counties of Henderson, Transylvania and Polk, and therefore the 2020 Needs Assessment took a concerted effort to fully examine the needs and resources in these counties. Across all counties, each key sector was contacted via surveys, interviews and through community data resources. The 2020 assessment was complete in February 2020 but because of the significant impact of COVID-19 and movements such as Black Lives Matter, CAO determined it important to note the information gathered since February because the landscape of the communities has changed. Outside of the Needs Assessment, CAO relied on community meetings, partnerships, formal and informal communications throughout the fiscal year to gather, in combination with the findings from the Needs Assessment, the following:

- a. Community-based organizations: Quality child care and increased affordable housing were identified as top needs across all counties served by Life Works. Buncombe County especially continues to struggle with quality, affordable full-time child care spots for birth – three year olds, with waitlists averaging between eighteen months to two years. Specifically, in Buncombe County it was identified that there are approximately 981 infants/toddlers who are underserved in regard to childcare. Additionally, the childcare hours of operation do not align with the available shifts for many living-wage jobs resulting in an inability, especially for single parents, to obtain work which would help move them out of poverty. Key childcare partners across all counties were assessed, contacted, and included in gathering data, such as the Verner Center for Early Learning and Eliada Child Development Center in Buncombe County, Western Carolina Community Action and The Child and Family Resource Center in Henderson County, The Family Place in Transylvania County, Columbus Children's Center in Polk County, the Early Childhood Enrichment Center in McDowell County and Mars Hill Daycare Center in Madison County. Many of these agencies provide a variety of supplemental services to families, such as providing food boxes or holding coat drives for families. Across all counties, a shortage of available childcare spots was reported, especially for children birth through three years old. Buncombe, Henderson and Transylvania Counties especially continue to have a strong need for affordable housing. These three counties all have a high cost of living and long waitlists for income-based housing units. Homeless shelters and transitional living houses continue to be overbooked with long waitlists. In Henderson County, a new 78-unit affordable apartment complex opened in August 2020 (<https://www.blueridgenow.com/story/subscriber/2020/08/27/new-apartments-rent-starting-at-277-at-new-affordable-housing-complex-in-hendersonville/115015088/>) and in Buncombe County, Mountain Housing Opportunities (a nonprofit) opened a 95-unit affordable apartment

complex on the bus line in a rural community (<https://www.easthavenapartments.com/>). While these additional housing resources have been helpful, they do not fully meet the needs of the communities. Homelessness continues to be a struggle for many in Western North Carolina and the full impact of COVID-19 on housing has yet to be determined. Expanded home repair programs for low-income families are needed across all six counties served by CAO, especially in rural communities. In early 2020, the United Way in Transylvania County dissolved, resulting in increased strain on several community organizations across the county in regard to workload and fundraising (<https://www.transylvaniatimes.com/story/2020/01/02/news/united-way-of-transylvania-closing-its-doors-transylvania-county-nc/43368.html>). It is currently unknown what long-term impacts this might have for a number of community-based organizations in Transylvania County; Life Works staff continues to stay in communication with key partners and assess the community needs in an effort to be responsive and helpful. There is no public transportation in Transylvania County, which is a barrier for many residents. The Life Works Coach in Transylvania County sits on a transportation committee in hopes of bringing public transportation to the area. Residents of Buncombe and Henderson counties expressed a desire for expansion of public transportation, as routes and hours of operation are limited. The 2020 Community Needs Assessment concluded that overall, while many needs exist, there are a number of community agencies in each county to support people living on low incomes, and that the service areas are generally safe places to live. However, in Buncombe County especially, systemic racism was identified as an on-going issue for many families currently living in poverty and there are several areas of Asheville where residents report feeling generally unsafe. Families living in poverty additionally identified across the six-county service area a sentiment that is echoed in many areas across the United States, where one can find a tale of two cities for the haves versus the have-nots. While Western North Carolina (WNC) in many aspects thrives as a tourist and retirement community for those with great wealth, the families who have lived in the mountains for generations reported feeling unable to benefit financially from the wealth in the area and being unable to gain economic mobility. Just Economics, a local nonprofit, has worked to address the income disparity by promoting living-wage jobs across WNC and the YMI Cultural Center, another local nonprofit, is undertaking efforts to promote racial equity. All of these community-based organizations are monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on the community and working collaboratively in an attempt to meet the most pressing needs.

(While CAO's 2020 Community Needs Assessment was completed prior to the heightened rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the Life Works service area. Most notably in Buncombe County, where systemic racism has arguably had the most significant impact out of all the counties served, racial equity and cries from the community for changes with law enforcement funding, procedures, training and oversight became pressing issues over the past months. A number of Community-based organizations came to the forefront of giving voice to and providing work around the needs of the black families in Asheville, including the YWCA, The YMI Cultural Center, Umoja Health and Wellness Justice Collective, and the Racial Justice Coalition. These organizations all called for policy changes in Buncombe County as well as increased support from white allies in order to create equity.)

- b. Faith-Based Organizations: A number of Faith-Based Organizations came to the forefront to support the BLM Movement in Asheville, from showing up to protests and supporting efforts to create change at the City/County. Many of these churches released statements and provided masks to support BLM events, with one of the biggest issues being the currently proposed removal of the Vance Monument in downtown Asheville (<https://www.ashevilenc.gov/department/equity-inclusion/vance-monument-task-force/>). Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations are key to Life Work's operations across all six counties served. Each county has a number of organizations that provide additional supports

and services for families and individuals living on low incomes, such as Interfaith Ministries, The Sharing House, Eblen Charities, McDowell Ministries, Asheville-Buncombe County Christian Ministries (ABCCM), St. Paul de Vincent and Catholic Charities. Faith-Based Organizations in the region do an excellent job providing clothing, transitional housing and sober living. McDowell County's Friendship Home provide safes and sober housing for women and their children. In Transylvania County, The Sharing House provides significant food support to outlying municipalities, such as Rosman and Balsam Grove. These agencies continue to report an increase in demand for rent assistance, utility assistance and for food support, especially with COVID-19 resulting in many people losing their employment. The Haywood Street Congregation, a central hub for services in downtown Asheville for those experiencing homelessness and/or in need of food supports, announced in November 2020 that for the first time in over twelve years they have to scale down their services in order to help stop the spread of COVID. Many Faith-Based Organizations have had to restrict in-person meetings, which is a concern for those who have the highest needs. In FY 20-21, Life Works began a partnership with Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries (Thermal Belt) in Polk County, subcontracting funds for their case manager to provide Life Works services to the county. In Polk, Madison, Transylvania and McDowell counties, Faith-Based Organizations are central hubs for support for families and individuals in poverty, which was a major factor in deciding to subcontract programming. Thermal Belt has extremely strong relationships in Polk County, both with families and with other agencies. They employ a full-time case manager, which results in increased access for families seeking Life Works services in Polk County. COVID-19 negatively impacted Thermal Belt's operations, as they restricted in-person appointments beginning in March 2020 and therefore the full scope of this partnership has not yet been realized. However, with Thermal Belt's strong standing in their community, CAO plans to subcontract funding again in FY 21-22 and monitor progress on an on-going basis to determine impact and success.

- c. Private Sector: Beginning in FY 20-21, Life Works entered into a private-public partnership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, entitled Inclusive Hiring Partners (<https://www.ashevillechamber.org/business-environment/talent-workforce/inclusive-hiring-partners/>). The goal of this partnership is to directly connect social service/workforce development programs with private employers who are committed to paying a living wage and creating a diverse and equitable work environment. This partnership is currently available to Life Works customers in Buncombe and Henderson County who are interested in obtaining employment in the manufacturing, health care or construction fields. At the time of this application, 15 employers have fully signed up as Inclusive Hiring Partners and are committed to taking Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings and have guaranteed applicants an interview when referred from one of the social service/workforce development partners. These partnerships will be especially helpful as the economy in WNC shifts from tourism and food service industries as a result of COVID-19. The demand for CDL drivers continues to increase as more companies are relying on delivery, such as the Amazon Delivery Center in Mills River, NC, which is located in Henderson County. Madison, McDowell, Transylvania and Polk Counties each have various jobs available in manufacturing, health care, and the service field. That said, jobs in Madison and Polk County, in particular, are limited due to their small populations. Additional partners in the private sector include mental health agencies, substance abuse providers and financial institutions. Key employment partners continue to report a need for workers who are able to pass drug screens, who have reliable transportation and childcare. The need for true living-wage employment continues to grow across the Life Works service area.
- d. Public Sector: Buncombe County and the City of Asheville have been at the heart of the Black Lives Movement in Asheville, both in their efforts to hear and help community members create

change and due to the roles and responsibilities of public departments. In September 2020, the City of Asheville approved reparations for black residents, and Buncombe County quickly got behind these efforts by approving reparations at the county level (<http://thebluebanner.net/asheville-city-council-approves-reparations-for-black-residents/>) and the City of Asheville's Equity and Inclusion office released racial healing grants (<https://www.ashevilenc.gov/news/second-round-of-racial-healing-grant-funding-now-available-through-city-of-ashevilles-office-of-equity-and-inclusion/>). Issues around funding, training and supporting law enforcement continues to be a debate for the community. The City of Asheville has seen a high turnover rate for police chiefs in the past few years, especially following a police brutality case against an unarmed black man (<https://wlos.com/news/local/new-asheville-police-chief-resigns>). While the Black Lives Matter Movement has played a role in much of the WNC area, Buncombe County and the City of Asheville have been the most directly impacted by systemic racism. The City and County government offices in each of the six counties served by Life Works play a crucial role in helping to move people out of poverty. The 2020 Community Needs Assessment indicated strong partnerships with public offices across each county. The Transylvania County Manager recently received the Robert E. Shepherd Excellence in Local Government Excellence Award for showing great leadership in improving governance and service delivery, especially in the areas of regional cooperation and collaboration, and for her dedication and service to greatly enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Transylvania County. The City of Asheville and Buncombe County Governments are two of the biggest contributors to local services for community members in Buncombe County. The City of Asheville hosts the monthly Asheville Homeless Coalition meetings, has representation on the Second-Chance Housing Coalition (an informal private-public partnership), and oversees funding opportunities for nonprofits. Perhaps one of the most notable examples of responsiveness by the City of Asheville was the quick repurposing of a large downtown event venue to be used as emergency housing when shelters were forced to close due to COVID. Buncombe County Government has strong influence over the area, distributing Community Development Block Grant funding, numerous programs aimed at improving the lives of those in need, and operating the Justice Resource Center and Family Justice Center (both of which are sites that function as one-stop resources for those in need). Buncombe County has divested a number of efforts toward combating the opioid crisis, which has the most significant impact in Buncombe County of any of the six counties served by Life Works. That said, struggles within Buncombe County and the City of Asheville from years prior continue today, including the issues around bringing affordable housing to the area, internal disputes on how to define affordable housing and regarding which projects to fund. The City of Asheville continues to build its equity and inclusion office as diversity within City positions continues to be a struggle; the City Equity Director quit with little notice in September 2020 after reporting continued hostility and lack of buy-in from department heads (<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2020/09/19/asheville-city-equity-director-quits-over-pushback-race-related-training/5824400002/>). Efforts to expand public transportation have been somewhat halted due in part to COVID-19, the City of Asheville was responsive in efforts to continue public transportation during the pandemic, pairing out-of-use charter buses with in-route public buses to expand seating and ensure social distancing on major routes. Madison, Henderson and McDowell County offices all oversee various community-improvement efforts, funding opportunities and wellness efforts for their community members. Madison County government has prioritized additional job opportunities for their community, since current living-wage jobs are limited. They have also worked to increase tourism to the area in hopes of bringing in more dollars. While Madison County does not have public transportation, and transportation is a barrier for many living on low-incomes, at this time there are no plans to create a public transportation system in the county due to the lower population. Henderson County reported needing additional affordable housing, increased public transportation (which the County has

been working to improve over the past number of years) and a more educated workforce for their community members living on low-incomes. Polk County reported a need of transitional housing for people experiencing homeless and increased childcare spots. In McDowell County, the public sector continues to address the opioid crisis, which they have named as a top priority, along with high rates of methamphetamine use.

- e. Educational Sector: Perhaps of all the sectors examined and included in the Community Needs Assessment, K-12 schools in the Life Works service area have arguably been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with children living on low incomes suffering the more crucial impacts. Prior to the onset of COVID, the academic institutions across the Life Works service area generally met the needs for their communities. Transportation, increased broadband internet and childcare were cited as needs for those attending community and 4-year colleges. Input from the educational sector reported needing more living wage jobs, increased affordable housing, additional food supports, transportation and childcare for families living on low incomes to better move toward self-sufficiency. However, after the onset of COVID and once classes moved to remote learning in March 2020, everything shifted. Life Works customers have been unable to obtain or return to work because of the remote learning needs of their children. Despite best efforts, remote learning continues to pose serious issues for families living on low-incomes. In each county, creative efforts have taken place to ensure that children who need food assistance did not go hungry during the pandemic. Schools in each county have done amazing work to ensure that children receive support, in whatever ways needed, while learning remotely and/or moving back and forth between remote learning and in-person learning. However, access to technology supports and education assistance has caused unprecedented issues for many families living on low-incomes, the true impacts of which are not yet known. Several children within the Life Works program have had increased mental health needs since moving to remote learning. The Buncombe County Schools Board of Education is currently at odds with Buncombe County Schools teachers in regard to returning to in-person learning, since a number of clusters have broken out in Buncombe County schools; the Board wants students to return to in-person learning while the teachers do not. While Life Works has historically focused on partnerships with higher education institutions, since the beginning of 2020 the program has increased attention to K-12 education needs. Higher learning institutions continue to serve as key partners for the Life Works Program. Isothermal Community College in Polk County, McDowell Technical Community College in McDowell County, Blue Ridge Community College in Henderson and Transylvania Counties and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech) in Madison County have all reported a need for widely-accessible and reliable broadband internet for students, so they can access course materials when off campus. Each of Buncombe County's institutions for higher learning, including UNC-Asheville, AB Tech, Warren Wilson College, Montreat College, satellite campuses for Western Carolina University (WCU), Lenoir-Rhyne, and cohorts with Eastern Tennessee State University have served as supports to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic; many have hosted pop-up COVID testing sites, given out food boxes, offered students for volunteer efforts (virtually when appropriate), hosted listening sessions and webinars for responding to the pandemic and worked in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of students and the community during this time.

3. Describe your agency's method and criteria for identifying poverty causes including how the agency collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data in identifying those causes.

CAO uses a variety of methods for gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to help identify and prioritize the causes of poverty as well as the appropriate strategies for addressing them. CAO relies on various inputs to help identify both poverty causes and necessary strategies, including:

- a) **Community Needs Assessment:** CAO conducts a Community Needs Assessment every three years that includes data pulled from local, state and national sources pertaining to the economic, demographic and household statistics of the service areas. Primary and secondary data, including qualitative and quantitative data is collected to assess the status of housing, transportation, childcare, employment, education, mental and physical health services, nutrition and financial well-being. This assessment also relies on surveys of the community, focus groups of customers and staff and key informant interviews from partners across a variety of sectors. Primary data is collected from key informants whom CAO identifies as local experts that can provide additional support to secondary data sources. Key informant interviews generate important implications and connections to program needs and help guide strategic discussions in relation to program improvements. Focus groups are conducted to gather critical input from those that participate (or are eligible to participate) in CAO's programs. A community-wide survey is also conducted to solicit additional input from community members, partner agencies and other stakeholders willing to participate in providing input related to poverty causes and the strategies needed to address them.

- b) **Annual Data Tracking:** For the years between the formal Community Needs Assessments, CAO collects information and data from a variety of community partners, local agencies, state and county departments, and organizations dedicated to research that document local and national problems and trends. CAO consistently receives reports pertaining to workforce development, the state of the local economy and trending issues across the region, including information from the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, who acts as a key partner in helping families move out of poverty and addressing community needs. Just Economics, a local nonprofit, addresses a number of issues along with their work of certifying employers as living-wage; they are home to community public transportation improvement efforts and they are currently working to address affordable housing in the region. Also, CAO works closely with city and county governments to obtain current data. These combined efforts provide Life Works with a great deal of both quantitative and qualitative data for each of the counties served.

- c) **Ongoing Customer Engagement:** In addition to gathering input during the Community Needs Assessment and ongoing conversations with customers about their needs, Life Works distributes surveys at least twice annually to each customer. These surveys have been charted for both qualitative and quantitative data and aim to gather input regard family, agency and community level needs. Customers continue to report the top needs as affordable housing, transportation and childcare. For years, The Customer Advisory Committee, made up of both current and former Life Works customers, has served as a way to continue to gather customer input about family, agency and community level needs. However, the Customer Advisory Committee has been in transition over the past two years. With COVID impacting program operations, Life Works has been unable to bring customers together in person for meetings. Input and feedback gathered from customer feedback surveys and the Customer Advisory Committee are compiled and used as a direct input for strengthening program design on an ongoing basis, as well as during annual CSBG applications.

- d) **Annual Analysis of Conditions Faced by Customers:** Life Works regularly analyzes data collected on Customers served by the program in the previous program year in order to identify trends in a timely manner. This includes demographic and household data, information regarding employment, education and financial histories assessed at intake and reports from agency database. This activity helps us adjust services to be as responsive to Customer needs as possible.

- e) **CAO Staff Community Involvement:** CAO actively engages with a multitude of community agencies and organizations which informs understanding of the causes of poverty and necessary strategies for addressing them. CAO has strong ties to Work First Programs, Goodwill Training and Development centers, NC Career Works Centers, housing programs, government benefit offices, early childhood education programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, and Weatherization Programs. CAO employees regularly attend and participate in local work groups hosted by the cities/counties across the entirety of the CAO service area. Life Works representatives serve on a variety of committees, including the Transylvania County Transportation Coalition, the Henderson/Transylvania Re-Entry Initiative, Recovery Community Collaborative, GET SET Transylvania, Henderson Nonprofit Coalition, Service Provider Collective, Goodwill Business Advisory Council, Buncombe and Madison County Job Link Management Teams, Buncombe Emergency Assistance Coordinating Organizations Network, the Latino Steering Committee, the Employment Services Roundtable, Local Food Awareness Group, Buncombe County Second Chance Housing Coalition, McDowell Employer Pipeline and others that include representatives from various agencies within the community. One Life Coach sits on the Board of Working Wheels, which offers low-income families refurbished, reliable vehicles that are affordable to maintain. One Coach serves on Buncombe County's Racial Justice Coalition. Another Coach is on the Board of True Ridge, a domestic violence support program for people of Hispanic/Latin backgrounds. The Self-Sufficiency Program Manager sits on Buncombe County's Service Provider Collective, a group of key partners in the workforce development field which aims to streamline services, increase wrap-around supports, increase wealth for low-income families and within low-income neighborhoods and to increase partnerships with employers. With each partnership, Life Works gains access to additional data and insights which are incorporated into the planning for programming.

CAO analyzes the information collected in the processes outlined above (a-e) to inform understanding of the causes of poverty and the approach to addressing these root issues comprehensively across all counties served. The 2020 Community Needs Assessment results indicated the overall causes of poverty have remained generally consistent with previous years, however this Assessment was completed prior to the onset of COVID and the heightened rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement in Buncombe County so these key community issues were not addressed. **In order of significance, of those issues identified, CAO listed the following barriers to self-sufficiency in the communities it serves: Job Skills/Experience, Cost of Child Care, Reliable Transportation, Affordability/Availability of Housing Stock; Available Wage Rates Are Below "Living Wage" Rate, and Mental Health Issues.**

To help identify targeted strategies to address these issues, as well as prioritize strategies within Life Works, CAO used multiple criteria, including assessment of the severity of the impact of the problem on families, the degree to which the problem hinders a family's/individual's ability to move out and stay out of poverty, and other existing resources or services available in the community to address the needs and barriers families are facing. CAO maps out a continuum of existing resources and services in the communities that address these areas of need. This process allows CAO to identify both duplication of and gaps in services.

CAO continues to see a distinct need for wrap-around services and in-depth case management for families working to become economically stable as these services do not exist elsewhere in the communities. Many local agencies are able to provide limited services, such as emergency assistance, or services within a targeted area, such as with housing, but do not offer support to help families address the intersection of issues which create barriers to self-sufficiency on a long-term basis. This in-depth case management approach also ensures that CAO does not duplicate services of emergency assistance agencies that are limited in their ability to impact long-term change and stability for families.

In sum, CAO determined that the most impactful strategy for assisting low-income families gain and sustain upward mobility is a program designed to provide long-term intensive, holistic case-management services. CAO's primary approach is to work with families in the areas identified as causes of poverty and customize interventions based on each family's circumstances and needs.

4. Describe activities that your agency has undertaken to advocate for and empower low-income individuals and families to achieve economic independence and security.

Life Works believes that collaboration is key to this work, in order to provide the highest level of services, foster the development of a continuum of family-centered services and embrace a philosophy that promotes a community-wide responsibility for the healthy development of children and families from all cultures. Life Works also holds the belief that families are whole, resourceful and creative and this allows customers to be the experts in their own paths. Coaches help customers build skills necessary to attain what they need for themselves and their families through a partnership based on trust, strong rapport and collaboration. With the help of a Life Coach, each customer examines the family's support system and identifies individual strategies to enhance that support network.

Life Coaches work with customers on an on-going basis to develop action plans that outline immediate, short and long-term goals related to attaining self-sufficiency and upward mobility in their lives. Customers are encouraged and supported by Coaches to participate and/or take on leadership roles in the community such as volunteering in a Head Start classroom, serving on a city or county board or committee, or participating on the Housing Authority's Residents Council.

Life Works is a participant in the work of the Success Equation, which focuses on evaluating community concerns and exploring options to support the well-being of low-income families. CAO serves on Success Equation to provide insight to citizen concerns and support reliable research and data collection, which supports Community Action's National Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity. This work provides community stakeholders with material to make well-informed decisions which impact the families in general and those served by CAO. Successful efforts in recent years include advocating for delayed evictions during the COVID pandemic; supporting a child care subsidy market rate for allocations at the state level; supporting and drafting proposals for the City of Asheville Bond related to affordable housing investments; protecting and expanding consumer protections related to predatory lending at the state and federal level; supporting the expansion of city and county public transit routes; and supporting the Corner Store initiative at the state level which provides grants to convenience stores to carry healthy food options in low-income neighborhoods.

Life Works representatives attend and participate in public meetings hosted by other community organizations requesting input on the effect proposed or existing policies have on low-income families. Announcements and information related to public meetings or other opportunities for community input are included on the CAO Facebook page, listed on the CAO website when applicable and listed in Life Works' quarterly newsletter, the *Connector*, which CAO sends to current and past Life Works Customers.

Representatives in CAO's Children, Family and Community Partnerships Department (CFCP) actively engage families in their child's development. Helping these families connect with community resources is particularly important when a child has a disability that can impact his/her learning process. Parents/guardians of children enrolled in Head Start make up 51% of the Head Start Policy Council, a governing body that shares program-level decision-making responsibilities with the CAO Board of Directors. The CAO Board also asks the Head Start Policy Council to use a democratic election process to nominate and elect members to serve on the Board as low-income representatives. These opportunities offer low-income customers the chance to weigh-in on the selection and implementation of agency-wide and program-specific strategies designed to address the causes of poverty.

The Weatherization Assistance Program prioritizes customers who are elderly, disabled, families with children, high energy users and energy-burdened. Staff works closely with Council on Aging, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Rutherford Housing Partnership, Community Housing Coalition of Madison County and other agencies to ensure that low-income individuals are able to access the services they need to live in an energy-efficient home.

5. Describe how your agency plans to make more effective use of, coordinate and form partnerships with other organizations and programs including: State welfare reform efforts; public and private resources; religious organizations, charitable groups, and community organizations.

Partnerships are at the heart of the Life Works Program; helping move families out of poverty cannot be accomplished without the use of multiple resources. Furthermore, CAO has always embraced partnerships in various forms, recognizing that when multiple organizations and programs join together that efforts and quality are strengthened. While some partnerships rely on braiding funding, others are needed to make successful referrals or to provide additional services in order to help remove barriers or accomplish goals for Life Works families. Finally, Life Works aims to be of assistance to other programs in the community; wherever able, Life Works provides information, resources, referrals, ideas and collaboration to help the wider community and to function as a source of support.

One of Life Works' key partnerships has existed with the county Health and Human Services Departments; Work First, Food Assistance and Childcare Subsidy programs have always worked hand-in-hand both to provide referrals and work in partnership in helping families move out of poverty. In FY 21-22, these partnerships will be more crucial than ever, as families seek to obtain stability and rebuild from the financial impacts of COVID-19. From a financial standpoint, Life Works has leveraged and braided funding with social service agencies in order to maximize assistance for families in need whenever possible. Since Life Works sits on the Buncombe Emergency Assistance Co-Ordinating Network (BEACON), the program has been able to stay informed of funding opportunities for community members across Buncombe County and the region, such as Buncombe County's ONE Buncombe, a COVID-19 support (<https://onebuncombe.org/>). Life Works is diligent in tending to these partnerships in order to best serve families living in poverty. In years past, Life Works has received Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds in Buncombe County, which is distributed and monitored by the Department of Health and Human Services, as part of the collaborative efforts to meet the needs of those living on low incomes. The Service Provider Collective in Buncombe County includes Buncombe

County's Skills Training Education Program (STEP), which offers employment and training assistance to any family receiving food stamps. Life Works has built an effective and meaningful partnership with STEP over the past years and families reap many benefits as a result. Life Works also partners with NC Works across each of the counties served and the Life Works offices in Madison County and McDowell County are both located within NC Works buildings. The program works with the local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program to leverage resources for Life Works Customers' training and employment needs. CAO staff are members of both Madison and Buncombe County NC Works Management Teams. The Economic Development Director serves on the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board in order to address employment training and placement needs. She also completes grant application reviews for business training capacity and for services. Through these collaborations, Life Works is able to offer a variety of training opportunities to customers, including resume writing, interviewing skills, job referrals and technical degrees. The Management Teams work to ensure that trainings offered in the community are relevant and targeted to the needs of existing employers and aligned with areas of the private and public sector that provide living wage opportunities. Life Works has been scheduling meetings with NC Works Programs across all counties in an effort to increase referrals and strengthen partnerships. This shared meeting time is crucial to working together and maximizing resources. As funding, staff and programming are frequently changing within any agency, ongoing meetings to maintain relationships has been proven to be a key strategy to successfully collaborating. Additionally, Life Coaches work in partnership with staff at the Career Connections Center housed in Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina to recruit potential Life Works Customers and to refer customers to the center where they can receive individual support in job search, resume writing and interviewing techniques. Goodwill Career Connections Center offers in-kind space to Life Works in Henderson County. Life Works and Goodwill collaborate with Project Re-entry and UpSkill WNC staff to find employment for individuals with criminal backgrounds and with the Re-Entry Initiative in Henderson/Transylvania County. Life Works partners with Buncombe Partnership for Children and Henderson's Children and Family Resource Center in their workforce development program, Early Childhood Teacher Development. These programs are collaborations between various partners which aim to help people living on low-incomes obtain meaningful work in early childhood education by providing supports while people are obtaining training. Buncombe County had a new program develop during the FY 19-20, Successful Transitions, which is currently in the middle of its second cohort. This program is a matched-savings and workforce development program for people who will face the benefits cliff as they move forward with their employment and begin to earn higher incomes. Life Works is a key partner for this program; in-person classes have been housed at CAO and over half of the current participants are Life Works Customers.

In terms of public and private partnerships, Life Works has key collaborations with education institutions, landlords and housing programs, local employers, and a strong number of nonprofits in each county served. Key collaborations are with the local school systems, including Asheville City, Buncombe, Polk, Henderson, Transylvania, Madison, and McDowell County School systems. The Verner Center for Early Learning has strengthened its partnership with Life Works since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, referring a number of families who have been successfully enrolled into Life Works. Head Start services are provided to low-income families and their children at 14 schools in the

Buncombe County District, two in the Madison County District and in 10 classrooms at three child development centers in Asheville. Head Start also partners with Asheville City Schools Preschool, which currently serves 55 Head Start children distributed across seven classrooms. Life Works staff work with AB-Tech, Blue Ridge Community College, and McDowell Technical Community Colleges specifically to advocate for low-income and minority customers and to leverage financial resources collectively to increase support for customers. Life Coaches coordinate support and provide the encouragement for customers to reach their goals of earning a degree and/or certification to obtaining employment or better employment.

As affordable housing continues to be identified as a top need for families in the Life Works service area, CAO helps families secure adequate housing or qualify for homeownership in Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison and McDowell Counties through Section 8, relationships with private landlords, and income-based or public housing programs. Life Works connects customers with homeownership savings accounts offered by specific employers in Buncombe, including Biltmore and Mission Hospitals. CAO partners with community financial institutions such as Self-Help Credit Union and local USDA offices to help customers access affordable, safe homebuyer resources and products. The Second Chance Housing Coalition is a joint effort between Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, Buncombe County, The City of Asheville, Just Economics and Life Works, which advocates for housing for people with justice-involvement. In Henderson County, the Life Works Coach attends monthly Family Self-Sufficiency meetings to stay informed of updates and strengthen relationships. Life Works has a strong referral network established with various agencies that provide services to women and children in violent and abusive situations. These agencies include Our Voice, which works with rape and sexual assault survivors; Helpmate, which provides services and support for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, the Buncombe County Family Justice Center, which serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and elder abuse, My Sister's Place, a domestic violence center in Madison County and New Hope Domestic Violence Center of McDowell County. In Henderson County, Life Works is partnering closely with Safelight, the domestic violence and sexual assault shelter and in FY 20-21 began a new collaboration entitled Safe Works. This program streamlines the enrollment of women from Safelight into Life Works, so that as women are working toward self-sufficiency and stability, they have continuity of care and a wealth of supports available to them. In Transylvania, Life Works partners with SAFE, Inc. and the Family Resource Center, both of which provide services to those impacted by domestic/sexual violence. In Polk County, Life Works collaborates closely with Steps to Hope, the local DV shelter. In FY 20-21, Life Works has partnered with Helpmate's IRISE program, and will provide 4 spaces for women who have children and have resided at Helpmate's shelter, who are working toward employment goals. Life Works has a strong collaborative partnership with OnTrack Financial Education and Counseling Center (OnTrack) which helps people achieve their money and housing goals through financial education, counseling and support. Since 2016, all Life Works Coaches have completed a Financial Capabilities training program, developed in partnership with OnTrack and Life Works, focused on integrating a set of financial capabilities including budgeting, credit repair/building, savings, debt management and asset development into the existing bundled service delivery model. This partnership requires on-going attention and

maintenance, with both nonprofits turning to each other for problem-solving, brainstorming, collaboration with clients and in help examining community-level needs. Life Works Program staff collaborate with a multitude of community organizations to expand services to the children in the Life Works Program. CAO partners with the YMCA, YWCA, Parks and Recreation-City of Asheville, early childhood education centers, county social service agencies, Children First/Communities in Schools, Toys for Tots, etc. The Life Works Coach in Transylvania is part of GET SET Transylvania, which is an early childhood community-wide effort that has received numerous awards at the local and state levels. These many partnerships help families access child care services, afterschool care, summer care, early childhood programs, car seats, clothing, school supplies, holiday gifts, etc. Through CAO's Weatherization Program, families receive energy efficiency services which impacts household financial well-being. CAO works with Buncombe County Council on Aging, Social Service agencies in the eight-county service area, faith organizations and various other non-profits to obtain referrals. Because Weatherization does not have the capacity to make home visits to persons that need assistance with completing the program application, community partners often conduct these home visits. Weatherization staff make internal or external referrals for programs that can offer further assistance. Weatherization intends to continue to maximize private funding sources in order to serve more customers and address needs beyond the scope of the weatherization program. In terms of employers, CAO maintains strong relationships with local employers to connect Life Works participants to employment. Manufacturing positions exist across the Life Works service area which often pay at least a living wage. While there may be barriers to these positions (location and hours of shifts available to name the top two), these employers are often excited to work with service programs, such as Life Works, to help fill positions. The newly-opened Amazon Warehouse in Henderson County has worked to develop a relationship with Life Works and ensure that Customers have the ability to interview for positions.

The sale of Mission Health to HCA Health Care in February 2019 has had a huge impact on the workforce of the area. Mission Health was rated a top employer of the area for years and as a nonprofit, employees were extremely satisfied with their jobs. Since the sale to the privately-owned HCA, employees report huge dissatisfaction with the workloads, mismanagement of staff and critical situations and lower wages. Several advocacy groups have formed since HCA came to the area, including efforts to create a union for nurses and a very popular Facebook group, "Mission Maladies," which serves as a watchdog. Life Works has been committed to staying informed of these trends, as the program used to work diligently to get Customers hired on with Mission Health. In December 2020, a Life Works Customer was offered a position at Mission Hospital through HCA as a 3rd shift phlebotomist, a position which would have historically paid at least \$18 per hour and offered a sign-on bonus of approximately \$2,000 after six months of successful employment. This Customer was offered a rate of \$12 per hour and would have to pay in to their very expensive benefits package. This story only highlights the need for Life Works to stay abreast of current issues with employers and for the need of multiple partnerships in the area.

CAO partners with religious organizations and charitable groups to leverage and braid funding and to provide families with resources and services not offered through Life Works.

Several key partnerships include helping Customers get clothing for interviews/work (Goodwill Success Outfitters), access to medical services (ABCCM, Health Choice, Project Access), family mentoring (Youth Villages), counseling (All Souls), household furnishings/appliances (Habitat Re-Store, Goodwill), etc. CAO coordinates with Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministries (ABCCM), Interfaith Ministries of Henderson County, The Sharing House of Transylvania County, Eblen Charities in Buncombe County and Assisting Ministries of Madison in Madison County to offer subsistence services, such as clothing and emergency relief to families. CAO looks to these organizations for referrals to Weatherization and Heating and Air Repair/ Replacement Program (HARRP) and sends customers to them for assistance with immediate needs related to food, clothing and shelter.

Life Works and the other internal CAO programs are taking actions to eliminate silos in service delivery. Internal meetings are incurring to improve cross-knowledge of services and to develop a philosophy of serving the family with all internal programs that are appropriate. As applications for services occur, CAO is cultivating to view families as not just a customer for a program but a CAO customer.

6. Describe how your agency will establish linkages between governmental and other social services programs to assure the effective delivery of such services to low-income individuals, to avoid the duplication of such services and to fill identified gaps in services, through the provision of information, referrals, case management and follow-up consultations.

On-going communication and strategic partnerships are key to avoiding duplication, identifying gaps and ensuring proper referrals between government and social service agencies. This work is not accomplished in a one-off, check-the-box manner but instead relies on deep understanding of community resources, strong and fluid relationships with key personnel at other offices and continual updates between community partners. This is why Life Works Coaches are not simply tasked with working with Customers in the program but also with building relationships with other service providers, sitting on committees in the community and working in partnership with other programs. It is not enough for a Life Works Coach or the Program Manager to attend a meeting of a fellow service provider once a year; Life Works has to be at the table and at the water cooler with other programs in order to keep these linkages strong and fruitful. This has been a struggle during COVID. While Life Works staff continues to meet with community partners, virtual meetings do not allow the pre- and post-meeting chatter and sidebar conversations that often make partnerships personal and meaningful. This is not to suggest that Life Works has shied away from the crucial work of building and maintaining partnerships, but instead simply acknowledges that communication efforts had to become more intentional than ever in order to monitor trends and identify gaps in services.

Whenever possible, Life Works refers and helps enroll Customers in additional programs in order to increase services provided, add supports to the Customers' team, and make smart use of the programs available in the community. Life Works Coaches have direct communication with key partners and as part of a continuous quality improvement model, Life Works consistently examines program functions. Life Works asks community partners about the gaps in services they experience in order to gather a broad range of perspectives. Life Works partners with Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Security Commission, County Departments of Health and Human Services, Asheville-Buncombe

Technical Community College, McDowell Technical Community College, Blue Ridge Community College, Goodwill Industries and other organizations to coordinate training and skill-building employment services. These partnerships are central to the effective delivery of services for employment activities to customers. Life Works utilizes the training that NC Works Career Centers offer for employment seeking, job retention skills and job training activities. Life Works also receives referrals from NC Works Career Center partners to provide individual coaching and support to low-income customers and guide them in overcoming barriers to reaching their educational/vocational training goals.

CAO partners with the local Departments of Health and Human Services to maximize resources for basic services including transportation, food and child care, as well as education and employment services. For customers receiving Work First or Child Protective Services, CAO participates in team meetings and in the development of Action Plans in order to avoid duplication of services.

CAO's work with the Council on Aging is an additional example of working in partnership to ensure linkage and avoid duplication of service. The Council on Aging offers minor home repairs to individuals enrolled in their programs; however, volunteers run this program, and it offers limited services. Through the partnership with the Council on Aging, they refer their most in-need customers to CAO's Weatherization program, which allows them to use their limited resources in ways CAO cannot. In addition, the agency partners with other United Way agencies which work with housing programs such as Mountain Housing Opportunities and USDA to further leverage resources as to improve the standard of living for low-income, primarily elderly families.

7. Provide a description of how your agency will support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives related to the purposes of the Community Services Block Grant (fatherhood initiatives and other initiatives with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting).

As long as the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively impacting families, CAO has to be responsive and creative in strategies to meet family needs and ensure that neighborhood-based initiatives are successful. In FY 19-20, CAO opened its doors to the Black Men's Monday group, which aimed to help black men find support and comradery with issues such as leadership, fatherhood, being a role model to others and supporting the community at large. However, once CAO meeting restrictions were put in place, Black Men's Mondays found a new meeting place with Umoja Health, Wellness and Justice Collective (Umoja). Life Works has strong ties to this program and has referred Umoja to funding opportunities, new hires for employment and grants available at the community level. Beyond this, CAO provides both direct (parent education, case management) and indirect (referral) support to customers as they strengthen their families and increase their capacity to effectively parent their children. Agency program representatives also help families enroll in programs designed to provide access to affordable physical and mental health care, food assistance and educational opportunities.

CAO works in partnership with existing community groups, such as the Women's Wellbeing and Development Foundation, which is housed within public housing and has

helped facilitate the creation of Sistas Caring 4 Sistas, a doula program aimed at reducing the rate of death during childbirth for African Americans. MotherRead also takes place in public housing, for which Life Works is a strong advocate, source of referrals and partner. CAO partners with families to ensure that all parents are involved in their children's health, upbringing and development of their social value structure. Though the majority of customers are single mothers, the program is designed to provide comprehensive services addressing the needs of fathers as well, many of whom are not custodial parents, but who wish to play active roles in the lives of their children.

The Life Works Program plays a vital role in reducing the occurrence of child neglect by providing holistic, wrap-around services to customers that focus on increasing opportunities to rise out of poverty and enhance effective parenting techniques. One common denominator for these families is generational poverty, which often leads to an inability to access and secure resources needed to ensure the provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision and medical treatment. Life Works staff also provide resource and referral information to parents living on how to access Mother 2 Mother empowerment groups at the YWCA and Play and Learn groups offered through Smart Start.

Four Life Coaches and the Self-Sufficiency Program Manager are currently certified in the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) through the Department of Health and Human Services. Triple P is an evidence-based parenting support program with the goals of promoting the independence and health of families through the enhancement of parents' knowledge, skills, confidence, and self-sufficiency; promoting the development of non-violent, protective, and nurturing environments for children; promoting the development, growth, health and social competence of young children; and reducing the incidence of child maltreatment and behavioral/emotional problems in childhood and adolescence.

8. Describe activities that your agency has undertaken or plans to undertake, on an emergency basis, for the provision of such supplies and services, nutritious foods and related services, as may be necessary to counteract conditions of starvation and malnutrition among low-income individuals.

Life Works Program staff help families receive supportive services addressing food security and nutrition, especially since the onset of COVID-19. Beyond making referrals to existing pantries and notifying families of new resources to address food insecurity, Life Works has worked diligently to ensure all families served have their food needs met. Life Works dedicates CSBG funding to emergency services each year and has received Emergency Food and Services Program funding the past two fiscal years. CAO policy allows for Life Works Coaches to spend up to \$30 without requiring prior approval (and to then be reimbursed) if a family is in need of emergency support; this allows for a CAO to ensure that no family or individual is ever in a situation where they have no access to food. Furthermore, Life Works Coaches are dedicated to staying in the know about emergency food services in the community. For the Fall 2020 semester, Life Works hosted an intern and this individual's sole project was to compile a list of community resources for all six counties served, with special attention to emergency food resources in the wake of COVID-19. Close working relationships with emergency food assistance partners ensures that Life Coaches have access to a multitude of community agencies that provide low-

income individuals with tangible goods. CAO works with MANNA Food Bank, a distribution warehouse for emergency food supplies that serves 34 counties in Western North Carolina. By special arrangement, a Life Coach can work with a customer to place a food order online and pick-up the order at the food bank the following Wednesday. Coaches may also pick up bread and fresh produce daily at no cost to the agency. This arrangement allows the customer quick access to food and supplies while affording an opportunity for the Coach and Customer to explore meal planning, shopping patterns and selection of nutritional food for the family. Life Works Coaches are equipped with lists of food banks and locations providing meals and food boxes for every day of the week. Coaches distribute this information and are able to help pick up and deliver food as needed in each of the three counties serviced.

CAO also helps families with ongoing sources of support such as Women, Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Services (WIC) and Food and Nutrition Services. Life Coaches work closely with customers on how to budget to ensure the purchase of healthy foods on a regular basis. CAO refers families to OnTrack's class focused specifically on how to maintain a food budget. In addition, in past years, Life Coaches have worked with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension as they provide classes to consumers that focus on how to prepare nutritious meals at a reasonable price and how to shop with coupons in order to save money. In McDowell County, Life Works received a credit to "shop" with local food banks as a result of the partnership between Life Works and the McDowell Food Hub. In Transylvania County, Life Works attends the monthly MANNA food pop-up at the Sharing House in an effort to strengthen partnerships for food supports.

9. Describe how your agency will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities with entities providing activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Provide the dollar amount of your allocation that will go towards employment training.

CAO staff work with several grantees of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds to ensure that customers receive high-quality services targeted at increasing employment and training opportunities. These collaborations help the program leverage resources to support customers' employment and training activities.

CAO is a strong partner with the NC Career Works Centers in Buncombe, Madison, Henderson, Transylvania and McDowell Counties. Life Works Coaches serving Madison and McDowell Counties are housed at the respective NC Works Career centers in each county. Life Works' presence at each center has allowed CAO to enhance collaborations with Vocational Rehabilitation, NC Works, Department of Health and Human Services, etc. to coordinate essential customer employment preparedness training and skill building services.

CAO works closely with another WIOA grantee, Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina, to provide customers with resources to access employment. The Goodwill training center houses the Career Connections Center, where Life Works Customers and other residents of the community can go to access one-on-one help in job searching, resume writing and mock interview skills. The Life Works office in Henderson County is

located at the Goodwill Career Connections Center. Project Re-entry staff and Life Works Life Coaches coordinate services and share resources targeted at helping former offenders re-enter the workforce and establish themselves as positive members of the community.

Additionally, the Self-Sufficiency Program Manager participates in the Buncombe County NC Works Teams, and a Life Works Coach serves on the Goodwill Business Advisory Council.

10. Describe how your agency will ensure coordination with the emergency energy crisis intervention program under title XXVI (relating to low-income home energy assistance).

Life Works in both Buncombe and Henderson Counties has a direct relationship with the providers of Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, which is available to eligible community members from December through March, or until funds are fully dispersed. CAO coordinates with other agencies to ensure the best resources are available in an effort to improve service delivery to the poorest individuals and families in the communities served, CAO is an active member of a community consortium of emergency assistance providers, Buncombe Emergency Assistance Co-Ordinating Network (BEACON). The Agency also has a strong referral network with the Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, Eblen Charities, Emma Resource Center, Salvation Army, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Council on Aging, Adult Protective Services, Foster Memorial Church and other community agencies that address energy-related crisis needs of low-income families. In Polk County, Life Works partners with Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries, which provides LIEAP and other funding for emergency energy supports.

In addition to providing information, referral and follow-up services for low-income families who need emergency energy related assistance, the Weatherization and HARRP programs help low-income families stay safe in the winter and summer months and save significant money on heating and cooling sources.

11. Describe the needs of low-income youth and your agency's efforts to promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of low-income youth.

COVID-19 has drastically changed the needs of low-income youth in the past months. Never before have families had such a need for technology and reliable internet access, mental health supports, creative methods for obtaining food supports and a variety of wrap-around services. Low-income youth already face such a steep number of barriers due to the chronic trauma of poverty; COVID-19 has removed many natural supports from these already incredibly vulnerable populations with stay-at-home and meeting restrictions in place. While generally speaking, the community is aware of increased domestic violence cases, child abuse and mental health needs due to COVID-19, the full extent of these needs are not yet known. Often, youth who live in poverty rely on resources and supports outside of the home to offset the needs and trauma that might exist within the home; COVID-19 has cut youth from many of the built-in supports that have been put in place to protect them. In order to address this, Life Works is working diligently with families with children to ensure that all youth's needs are met. While Life Works has always used a

whole-family approach and tended to the needs of any family member in the home, special attention has been paid to youth since the onset of the pandemic. Life Works Coaches have requested to join in on mental health teams for children when not already involved, asked to meet with school officials to ensure that children are receiving the support services needed and have reached out to therapists to make sure that all providers know of Life Works' involvement and potential supports to offer to families. This has been a bold approach that Life Works has not taken in the past; typically, Life Works Coaches only offer this type of involvement when specifically requested. However, as it became clear at the beginning of the pandemic that many youth living in poverty are increasingly isolated (and after a few incidents within the Life Works Program of youth needing additional supports), Life Works took a much more proactive approach to being involved in the lives of the youth in the program. Additionally, it is not yet known what long-term health impacts the pandemic will have on youth, specifically around the issues of obesity and malnutrition. Since many sports have been cancelled and many youth are not attending school in-person, youth have been greatly limited on the typical outlets for physical activity. As many routine doctor and dentist appointments were cancelled when the pandemic began, it is likely that a number of youth will suffer from health issues that would have otherwise been detected at on-set. And still, the long-term impacts of the virus itself remain unknown. Life Works will monitor information as released by the State and local health officials in order to help meet families' needs. Life Works' holistic approach is designed to address many of these issues youth face. Life Coaches consider the needs of each family member as they help each customer to develop a Self-Sufficiency Action Plan. Children's needs are addressed through Action Plans that consider child care arrangements, health and mental health needs, parenting and other life skills, support systems, environmental issues and education and vocational services. Life Coaches have helped customers to help their children succeed in school by attending parent-teacher conferences, providing support during truancy hearings, securing school supplies, back packs, winter clothing, etc. Life Works in Transylvania County is involved with GET SET Transylvania, which specifically looks at ways to support underserved and youth living on low-incomes. In Henderson, Transylvania, Buncombe and Polk County, Life Works is currently exploring ways to better support youth as they transition out of foster care (typically 16 to 21 year olds). Transylvania County is home to Schenck Job Corp, one of the highest rated Job Corp training programs in the county. Life Works is exploring potential partnerships with this organization to better meet the needs of youth living on low-incomes.

All Life Works Coaches have been trained on how to recognize and report child abuse and neglect. CAO also offers Positive Parenting Program, (Triple P) training to help curb child maltreatment. The Economic Development Director sits on the Community Child Protection Team, which reports on patterns of common child endangerment and strategizes efforts to decrease fatality risks.

CAO works closely with YWCA, YMCA, Emma Family Resource Center, its own Head Start program and other children's programs through referral and advocacy to help families gain access to afterschool child care services for their children. CAO continues to be a part of The Success Equation, working in collaboration with other community partners to develop a plan to reduce the impact of poverty on children.

CAO also partners with Goodwill's ECHO program, which, through work with the Department of Health and Human Services, aims to provide foster youth with resources and services as they transition to adulthood.

12. Describe your agency's method for informing custodial parents in single-parent families that participate in CSBG programming about the availability of child support services. In addition, describe your method for referring eligible parents to the child support office[s].

During the initial intake process with a new Life Works customer, Coaches conduct an in-depth assessment to identify areas of strengths and needs with regards to the customer's achievement of self-sufficiency. Income, financial capabilities and parental support are three of the domains that Life Coaches assess with the customer. In situations where a custodial parent reports that there are barriers around income and limited parental support from the non-custodial parent, coaches discuss child support as an option for securing income. In addition, coaches discuss various options for increasing parental support, (emotional, physical and financial) through other services such as mediation or parenting classes.

North Carolina has adopted child support guidelines that apply to all cases and are based upon the income of both parents, the type of custodial arrangement that exists, and factors such as day care and health insurance costs. If a parent is interested in applying for child support in Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Buncombe, Madison or McDowell Counties, Coaches help him/her to complete an application. Customers may choose to complete an application on-line or at their local Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSE). The CSE program provides the following services: location of noncustodial parents, paternity establishment for children born outside of marriage, establishment of support obligations, collection and distribution of support, and enforcement of support obligations.

13. Describe activities that your agency has undertaken or plans to undertake, to address the Department's priorities which includes:

- Combat the **Opioid Crisis** by focusing on policies and practices that prevent opioid misuse, addiction and overdose;
Life Works' holistic case management model provides support for people struggling with addiction. This includes providing referrals for treatment, giving rides to obtain services, connecting Customers with Peer Support Specialists, coordinating with halfway and recovery houses for services, being a part of the Customer's recovery support team and providing direct assistance for services. The Self-Sufficiency Program Manager continues to serve as a moderator for the Facebook Group "WNC Community Resources," which has a large focus on recovery efforts and includes many key staff who work on opioid recovery across CAO's service area. To date, this Facebook Group has over 3,400 members and shares resources about detox and recovery programs, treatment centers, recovery houses, etc. which aims to help connect Life Works Customers and community members alike to support services. There have been exciting new efforts across WNC to address the opioid crisis, most notably the introduction and increase of Medicated-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA) meetings. For decades, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) has been the primary 12-step support group for people combatting opioid addiction. However, NA only recognizes a 100% substance-free lifestyle as being sober and has left people who are receiving Medicated Assisted Treatment alienated. MARA meetings provide an innovative and inclusive recovery model for those who are weaning

themselves off of opioids. These meetings are growing in popularity and currently exist in Buncombe County and Life Works is supporting efforts to expand these meetings into surrounding counties. Life Works Coaches have attended and plan to continue to attend webinars, conferences and local meetings that address the opioid crisis so as to stay informed on best practices and to continue to learn about additional resources available in the community. Additional efforts, such as expanding the availability of Narcan for EMT workers and providing safe needle exchanges, are taking place at the community level across all six of the counties Life Works serves. Life Works has supported these efforts by educating customers on the initiatives and providing information on dates and times of meetings and providing feedback to City and County officials.

- Develop better outcomes for **Early Childhood** learners to ensure that they are healthy, safe and nurtured, learning and ready to succeed;
Life Works is partnering with CAO's Head Start program in new and innovative ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. From sharing resources in a more intentional manner, to finding ways to create and apply CARES dollars to Head Start families, CAO is working to ensure the best possible outcomes for early childhood learners during this time. Life Works partners with CAO's Head Start program to ensure children who qualify receive quality childcare, kindergarten prep and the physical, social and emotional supports they need to thrive. As Life Works uses a whole-family approach, any child who is part of the Life Works Program receives supports tailored to their specific needs. Four Life Works Coaches and the Program Manager have professional experience working in the early childhood field and as a team, Life Works prioritizes the needs of our most vulnerable population. The Program Manager sits on the CARING for Children Advisory Board and Life Works provides supports to ensure that young children attend safe, quality childcare both via referrals to existing providers and by helping families identify natural supports. Life Works has a partnership with local libraries and receives free children's books on an on-going basis, which are appropriate for infants through school-age. Life Works Coaches support parents when there is DSS or CPS involvement with a family through whatever means necessary; this includes supports such as helping to improve living conditions in the home to increase safety, supporting parents as they attend parenting classes, attending Child and Family Team meetings, ensuring parents and children have the needed mental and physical health supports in place and supporting children with school/educational needs.

Life Works relies heavily on qualitative and quantitative data in assessing the needs that exist and in identifying program success. Life Works is able to identify goals for children in the home and work with the whole family to ensure young children are healthy, safe and engaging in learning opportunities. CAO's Head Start Program recently added a new classroom which provides wrap-around care for parents, providing families a greater opportunity to increase their income and move out of poverty. Living in poverty is known to have multiple potential negative impacts on young children; Life Works aims to move families out of poverty in an attempt to assist the whole family in increasing their quality of life.

- Expand **NCCARE360**, a statewide database that provides resource information for medical providers and human services professionals in response to social determinants of health like housing stability, food security, transportation access and interpersonal safety;

COVID-19 slightly interrupted the schedule for Life Works to become fully operational with NCCARE360 in FY 20-21. Life Works currently has one Coach who has signed up to begin the NCCARE360 training and CAO has been signed up as an agency to participate in this program. Life Works had hoped to be fully operational with the database with at least one Coach by the end of FY 20-21. There was a delay in the initial work around becoming operational as the original Coach slated to begin this work left the agency in March 2020. Since then, there has been turnover in the position at NCCARE360 for the region and the process to become fully up and running taking longer than originally planned. For FY 21-22, Life Works will assess how best to integrate this statewide database across all six county services areas to increase referrals and access to services for people living on low-incomes.

and

- Implement **Healthy Opportunities** that improve the health, safety and well-being of North Carolinians by addressing conditions in which people live that directly impacts health.

By helping families move out of poverty, Life Works aims to improve the health, safety and well-being of all Life Works Customers. During the pandemic, Life Works sought to lead healthy examples and provide resources for families wherever possible. CAO fully embraces the 3 W's and promotes virtual meetings at every opportunity. CAO recognizes that COVID-19 is disproportionately killing Black and Indigenous People of Color at rates that far exceed those of white people. Life Works is committed to dispensing accurate and helpful information to keep families safe during the pandemic and to promoting equal access to healthcare wherever possible. Life Works is partnering with the Pisgah Health Foundation to address the Social Determinants of Health; poverty, housing, food and connection, in Transylvania County. Life Works assesses living conditions of homes and makes referrals to programs such as CAO's Weatherization Program, Habitat for Humanity and repair programs when available, to ensure that Customers have healthy and safe living spaces. Certain areas in Buncombe County have high rates of violence, especially within Asheville Housing Authority's public housing units. An extremely high rate of Customer who enter Life Works that live in Asheville public housing report feeling unsafe and express a strong desire to move; Life Works Coaches advocate for Customers to move into safer neighborhoods whenever possible. Many affordable housing units across all six counties are not healthy or safe. To address this, Coaches provide supports to help Customers advocate for themselves and/or provide interventions with landlords, provide referrals to legal assistance when needed, educate Customers on their tenant rights, and provide referrals and assistance to help Customers obtain safer and healthier housing when improvements cannot be made. Life Works also addresses health needs of Customers to ensure that families have access to health care, medical providers, prescriptions and a healthy lifestyle. Life Works promotes healthy cooking and helps Customers meal plan and shop for healthy food options, and encourages healthy activities with Customers and their families.

Perhaps most importantly, Life Works Coaches continue to receive training in Resources for Resilience™, which allows them to work with people who are in crisis, who have high ACES scores and to keep a trauma-informed view of the work. Additionally, Life Works

Coaches and Program Manager were thankful to receive scholarships to the Buffalo School of Social Work to attend Trauma-Informed training in Spring 2020. These skills strengthen relationship-building between Coaches and Customers and help Customers access their best decision-making skills. As a strengths-based program, Life Works meets people where they are on their path toward success and must take an individualized approach when helping people set goals. Health, safety and well-being is at the heart of all Life Works does to move people out of poverty through an individualized, long-term, trauma-informed approach.

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
OEO Form 210**

Agency Strategy for Eliminating Poverty

Planning Period: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023

Section I: Identification of the Problem (use additional sheets if necessary)

1. Give the Poverty Cause name(s), rank the poverty cause(s) and identify which one(s) the agency will address.

Poverty is a complex issue often associated with economic and social policies that overlook equitable opportunity and access that push some ahead and leave the most vulnerable behind. Community Action Opportunities (CAO) has compiled and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to obtain an understanding of the community and its needs, with a focus on low-income residents in Buncombe, Madison, McDowell, Henderson, Transylvania and Polk Counties. The primary challenges facing this target population are, in the order prioritized:

- a. Job Skills/Experience,
- b. Cost of Child Care,
- c. Reliable Transportation,
- d. Affordability/Availability of Housing Stock;
- e. Available Wage Rates Are Below “Living Wage” Rate, and
- f. Mental Health Issues.

CAO will address each of these issues for the low-income families it serves in the Life Works Self-Sufficiency Program through ongoing provision of bundled service delivery, intensive case management and local advocacy at the community level.

2. Describe the poverty cause(s) in detail in the community with appropriate statistical data (include data sources).
 - (A) Explain why the problem exists.
 - (B) Identify the segment of the population and give the number of people experiencing the problem.
 - (C) Provide demographic information of those adversely effected inclusive of:
 - (a) Gender
 - (b) Age
 - (c) Race/Ethnicity for the agency’s service area
 - (D) Explain how the persons are adversely affected.

Demographics of Poverty

The following is a statistical breakdown of population and poverty percentages in the CAO service area and North Carolina:

Poverty Rate by Geography

	Total Population	% Poverty (actual # residents)	% Child Poverty (actual # of children)
Buncombe	267,046	11.5% (30,710)	16.8% (5,159)
Madison	22,843	16.3% (3,723)	26.1% (972)
McDowell	46,905	20.3% (9,522)	30.6% (2,914)
Henderson	119,730	9.7% (11,614)	15.5% (1,800)
Transylvania	35,806	12.8% (4,583)	22.6% (1,036)
Polk	21,852	11.8% (2,579)	20.4% (526)
North Carolina	10,630,691	14.1% (1,498,927)	20.2% (302,783)

Source: NC Budget & Tax Center's Economic Snapshots

[\(https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/county-economic-snapshots-2020/\)](https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/county-economic-snapshots-2020/)

Poverty rates are disproportionate across races, highlighting racial disparities. Black, Latinx and Indigenous People of Color have significantly higher rates of poverty than whites.

Poverty Rate by Race

	Black or African- American	White	Latinx	Asian	American Indian
Buncombe	18.4%	10.5%	29.5%	6%	6.9%
Madison	39.1%	17.5%	13.3%	17.9%	29.2%
McDowell	43.6%	15.8%	22.1%	0%	28.9%
Henderson	20%	8.8%	19.9%	14.7%	.3%
Transylvania	35.9%	12.3%	42.9%	26.1%	0%
Polk	16.8%	8.6%	20.7%	5.2%	68.8%
North Carolina	23.5%	10.6%	28.5%	11.9%	25.1%

Source: NC Budget & Tax Center's Economic Snapshots

[\(https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/county-economic-snapshots-2020/\)](https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/county-economic-snapshots-2020/)

Poverty rates are higher for women than for men, signaling continued wage disparity and social inequities for women in the workplace.

Gender and Poverty				
	Male	Female	% Male	% Female
Buncombe County	13,819	16,790	11.6%	13.1%
Henderson County	5,440	6,486	10.1%	11.7%
McDowell County	3,636	3,907	16.5%	17.8%
Madison County	1,552	2,034	15.8%	19.3%
Polk County	871	1,035	9.1%	9.8%
Transylvania County	2,031	2,745	13.2%	16.1%

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

Lack of Living Wage Employment Opportunities

Living wage is defined as the hourly rate that an individual working full-time (40 hours a week) must earn to support their family. Living wage is used to describe the minimum hourly wage necessary for an individual to meet basic needs, including housing, food, child care, health care, transportation and other necessary expenses. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, as referenced in the 2020 Community Needs Assessment, the living wage for 1 adult with 1 child in Buncombe County is \$25.51 per hour:

Living Wage							
	1 Adult Only	2 Adults Only	1 Adult 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Children	2 Adults Working 2 Children	2 Adults (1 Working) 1 Child	2 Adults (1 Working) 2 Children
Buncombe County	\$12.62	\$19.39	\$25.51	\$29.87	\$16.24	\$24.14	\$26.64
Henderson County	\$12.62	\$19.39	\$25.51	\$29.87	\$16.24	\$24.14	\$26.64
McDowell County	\$11.20	\$17.96	\$23.45	\$27.81	\$15.20	\$22.08	\$24.57
Madison County	\$12.62	\$19.39	\$25.51	\$29.87	\$16.24	\$24.14	\$26.64
Polk County	\$11.33	\$18.09	\$24.21	\$28.57	\$15.59	\$22.84	\$25.33
Transylvania County	\$11.30	\$18.04	\$23.56	\$27.92	\$15.26	\$22.19	\$24.68

(<https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/37/locations>)

While the area's rate of unemployment was below 5% at the time of the 2020 Community Needs Assessment, families living in poverty continue to struggle due to high costs of living. Furthermore, it is uncertain how COVID-19 will impact unemployment rates long-term. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board cited the region's unemployment rate at 5.8% for October 2020 (<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=ae81bf1c24&view=lg&permmsgid=msg-f%3A1686255852653125158&ser=1>).

2020 Data	Labor Force	# Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Buncombe	142,784	3,744	2.6%
Madison	10,344	336	3.3%
McDowell	20,909	731	3.5%
Henderson	55,879	1,591	2.8%
Transylvania	14,797	474	3.2%
Polk	9,209	312	3.4%

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
(<https://www.bls.gov/web/metro/laucntycur14.txt>)

Low-wage hourly jobs are increasingly subject to unpredictable and irregular schedules, which make it difficult for parents to arrange child care and transportation; erratic schedules also lead to volatile incomes. Additional challenges for workers in low-wage jobs is the lack of paid time off when they are sick, have a sick child, give birth, have an extended illness or need to care for a family member who is elderly or ill.

Wage growth is linked to a household's standard of living. Growth in wages is driven by a tight labor market where, to attract and keep workers, employers must raise wages. The Great Recession has had a significant impact on many people's lives, but the effects have not been felt equally by all. The gap between average hourly wages for males and females closed slightly during the Great Recession. The NC Justice Center reports this phenomena was largely driven by declines in male wages due to their concentration in the industries hardest hit by the downturn, such as construction and manufacturing. Currently, women are paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to men, putting the gender wage gap at 20%. Furthermore, workers in jobs done mainly by women earn only 66% of workers in jobs mainly done by men. (Source: Institute for Women's Policy Institute, 2015)

As of January 1, 2020, the current minimum wage in North Carolina remains at \$7.25 per hour, which is also the federal minimum wage; the state's minimum wage has not increased since 2009. A full time minimum wage worker in NC working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks/year, will earn \$58 per day, \$290 per week, and \$15,080 per year. The 2020 federal poverty line for a family of two people is \$17,240 per year (<https://aspe.hhs.gov/2020-poverty-guidelines>).

Lack of Affordable Housing

Safe and stable housing is required for achieving an acceptable standard of living. According to the Children's Defense Fund, the number one way to move children out of poverty is to "increase investments in housing assistance for poor families with children." Having a simple, decent, affordable place to call home would reduce the child poverty rate by 21%. (Source: Ending Child Poverty Now, Children's Defense Fund)

A family lives in "affordable housing" when 30% or less of the family's income is spent on shelter. Those paying more than 30% of income are considered cost-burdened. When a family is cost-burdened, they may not have enough resources to pay for other necessities such as food, clothing,

transportation and medical care. (Source: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development)

The following outlines the percentage of renters who are cost-burdened by county (paying more than 30% of their income toward their rent):

	Cost Burdened Households (Over 30% of Income)
Buncombe County	52.5%
McDowell County	38.4%
Madison County	48.8%
Henderson County	48.4%
Transylvania County	53.5%
Polk County	41.6%
North Carolina	52.9%

Source: <https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/county-economic-snapshots-2020/>

According to the North Carolina Justice Center, the 2019 fair market rent in North Carolina for a two-bedroom unit is \$881 a month. A family would need to work 94 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, to afford a two-bedroom apartment. In Transylvania County and in the City of Asheville, the challenge to find and afford housing is even greater. According to Transylvania County government, there is a .8% vacancy rate in the county

(<https://www.transylvaniacounty.org/departments/planning-and-community-development/housing>).

According to the 2015 Asheville, North Carolina Region Housing Needs Assessment conducted by Bowen National Research there is a 1% apartment vacancy rate across the region and a shortage of available rentals. With the demolition of Lee-Walker Heights, Asheville's oldest public housing unit, there is even less affordable housing immediately available. While Buncombe County and Henderson County both have plans to increase the number of affordable housing units, there is a concern that since the CAO service area is already in a deficit, that these efforts will not meet the demand as WNC continues to grow in population, cost of living continues to increase and the minimum wage remains \$7.25 an hour.

The Asheville area continues to have the highest cost of living in the state, which includes food, housing, utilities, transportation and health care while having a lower than state average earning rate. This high cost of living, places homeownership out of reach for many families, especially those who live on low-incomes. Since affordable housing is a significant issue in Asheville, voters passed a tax increase to sell bonds that will be used to build a \$10-million Housing Trust Fund. However, it will take city officials several years to sufficiently fund this initiative and make it available to qualified, low-income families.

Residents of Buncombe and Transylvania Counties in need of housing have a six- to twelve-month wait for public housing. The Madison County Community Housing Coalition reported no increase in housing stock since 2009. There are also approximately 8,103 occupied dwellings in Madison County, 20% of which were built before 1940. Nearly one-third of all dwellings are mobile homes and close to 50% of the housing is substandard. McDowell County has no public housing, and freezes to waiting lists for Section 8 housing are not uncommon. The need consistently outweighs the supply. Bad credit and previous criminal charges also create barriers families must also

resolve to secure one of the few units available.

According to the 2020 CAO Community Assessment, the following is the number of people experiencing homelessness in January 2019 for the counties listed:

Homelessness by County		
County	Total Number Homeless	Number of Children
Buncombe	590	24
Henderson	86	13
McDowell	72	5
Madison	9	5
Polk	20	2
Transylvania	44	6

(<https://www.ncceh.org/media/files/files/0f84c9de/2018-nc-bos-coc-pit-by-county.pdf>)

Limited Access to Transportation

A lack of adequate transportation puts many low income families at a disadvantage. Without owning a car, families must rely on public transportation to maintain reliable employment, and access to affordable housing, education, child care, etc. The local NC Works Center estimates that over 90% of low-income families they serve have transportation challenges. The transportation challenge is compounded in rural areas of Transylvania, Polk, Madison and McDowell counties by mountainous terrain and the total lack of public transportation.

For low-income families with a vehicle, it is often necessary to share one car between several adults and coordinate schedules. Car repairs are another concern, at times costing a whole month's salary that the customer does not have in savings.

The Asheville Transit has expanded in recent years and currently operates 17 routes from at least 8:30am – 6:30pm seven days a week, with expanded hours and routes on business days. However, just three routes extend beyond Asheville's city limits, making travel difficult to other parts of Buncombe County. The Asheville Transit scheduled were negatively impacted by COVID-19, with many routes being reduced or eliminated (<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2020/04/04/coronavirus-asheville-city-bus-schedule-reduced-temporarily/2947583001/>). Public transportation often does not accommodate families' varying work schedules. Parents report difficulty traveling with young children due to the walking distance to bus stops, and time spent waiting, riding, and transferring buses to reach the intended destination.

Public transportation in McDowell County is virtually non-existent, causing a heavy burden to residents without vehicles. Transportation services are only available for Medicaid recipients for medical appointments and are paid by Medicaid. In December 2016, the McDowell County Department of Social Services received a \$16,170 grant to expand the availability of county-provided transportation to medical appointments, health screenings, senior centers and the YMCA for West Marion residents who do not qualify for Medicaid. Medicaid recipients can now access transportation services to visit the YMCA, a farmer's market or other health improvement destinations.

The Madison County Transportation Authority (MCTA) provides transportation services to citizens of Madison County with 11 vans. MCTA coordinates transportation for human service agencies and for the general public. Services are free for residents 60 years of age and older and to Veterans. Regular fares for non-program qualified riders are \$5.00 in-county round trip, \$6.00 Weaverville round trip and \$12.00 Asheville round trip, which is costly for those living in poverty. Additionally, reservations must be made in advance.

In Henderson County, Apple County Transit operates three routes each business day from 6:30am to 6:30pm. While these routes cover a large geographical area, the limits on the operational times cause issues for employees who do not have transportation and wish to work in surrounding manufacturing plants, which often require twelve-hour work shifts. Also, the absence of public transportation on the weekends creates barriers for employees who do not work traditional Monday through Friday schedules. One major strength of Apple County Transit is the route which connects Hendersonville to Asheville and allows individuals great access to employment.

Polk County offers public transportation, which is available by reservation on limited routes, both within and outside city limits. This transportation makes a weekly trip to Hendersonville Walmart and nearby shopping centers (<http://www.polknc.org/transportation.php#X-Ap7thKjIU>). There is no public transportation available in Transylvania County.

While services such as Uber, Lyft and taxis are available throughout the service area, these options are cost prohibitive to customers and are challenging for parents who need to provide car seats for children's safety. Uber and Lyft continue to gain popularity despite their cost due to the convenience they offer in scheduling.

Lack of Affordable Child Care

Most low-income families in CAO's service area cannot afford the full cost of child care. Low-income families and families with more than one child have to pay a high percentage of their income for care. The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education reports that a single mother with one child earning \$24,984 or less per year can receive child care subsidy as funds are available. If funds are unavailable or if this parent's earnings exceed the income eligibility limit, a parent could pay up to 32% of her gross income for child care offered at the county rate. The cost of care per child in Buncombe County is \$879/month. In Madison County the cost is \$758/month, Henderson is \$780/month, Transylvania is \$770/month, Polk is \$700/month, while McDowell is \$614 (Source: <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/research-reports/nc-ece-data-repository/>). According to the Division of Child Development and Early Education, the rate of subsidized childcare in Buncombe County is up to \$922 per month as of October 2018.

To qualify for child care subsidy, parents must work or attend school at least 30 hours a week and have children between ages 0-5 and an annual income at or below 200% federal poverty level, or have children ages 6-11 and an income below 133% the federal poverty level.

Additionally, there is a scarcity of child care providers in the service area, so when families qualify for subsidies, finding available vacancies for children is a struggle. The Southwestern Child Development Commission reports that there is only a 1% vacancy rate for child care in Asheville. Many parents of infants wait 18 months to 2 years to get into a state-licensed center, causing them

to delay their return to work or to take advantage of less regulated child care options, which can be less safe and less reliable. Smart Start of Madison County reports that there are not enough child care programs in rural areas of the county. CAO's Head Start program and other service providers in Mars Hill and Brush Creek have wait lists for before and after school care.

(Source: <http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2016/11/26/ashevilles-child-care-dilemma/93596516/>)

When faced with the high cost of child care, parents must make difficult choices. Some choose to use public assistance instead of working, while others seek cheaper, often low-quality child care. CAO Life Coaches hear on a regular basis from enrolled Life Works customers that they cannot accept entry level job offers, as many local employers require new employees to start out working second or third shifts. Without child care, they are unable to accept those job offers.

Lack of Employment Skills and Education

An Employer Needs Survey conducted by the North Carolina Association of Workforce Development Boards indicates a skills gap that can explain the challenge employers have in finding qualified workers. Specifically, job seekers lack hard and soft skills, including: certifications or training, educational attainment and work experience. Key highlights of the report indicate that 50% of employers had difficulty hiring for at least one position within the past year (up from 40% the year prior) and it is taking three times longer to hire difficult-to-fill positions than regular positions. Other employability issues include work ethic and dependability, ability to pass a drug test or criminal record. (Source <https://files.nc.gov/nccommerce/documents/files/2018-employer-needs-survey.pdf>)

Over the past 40 years, wages have declined for workers without higher education as many manufacturing jobs moved offshore and were replaced by lower-paying, non-union jobs at home. Only the most highly educated and highly paid workers have seen their wages grow, while inflation-adjusted wages for the lowest-income workers have slowly but gradually fallen, and those for middle income workers have remained flat. There are few jobs available that pay family-sustaining wages without at least an associate degree.

The following outlines the percentage of individuals over the age of 25 who lack a high school diploma in each county:

Education Levels		
County	Population Age 25+	% Lacking High School Diploma
Buncombe	186,113	9.0%
Henderson	84,199	10.2%
McDowell	32,591	16.2%
Madison	15,256	14.6%
Polk	15,803	9.1%
Transylvania	25,365	11.4%

(Source: American Community Survey, 2014-2018)

According the CAO's 2020 Community Needs Assessment, the metro area's top employment sectors were management, sales and manufacturing. In Madison County, construction was identified as the top sector and in Polk County the top sector is healthcare (<https://datausa.io/>). Year-around tourism in the Asheville area has brought an increase in the hospitality industry;

however, many of those living in poverty are eligible only for minimum wage, or near minimum wage jobs, such as hotel staff, housekeeping, food service, and transportation services. Other industries have shown growth such as construction manufacturing, yet the skills of those living in poverty do not match the skills required for these higher paying positions. Locally, many growing job sectors are comprised largely of jobs that pay at or just above minimum-wage. Even though the leisure and hospitality sectors have added over 1,300 jobs in recent years, many are part-time, which drives down the weekly average paycheck to \$345 a week. (Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

To qualify for higher-paying jobs, families need access to education and training opportunities. Unfortunately, returning to school is often a cost-prohibitive option for low-income earners who would have to decrease work hours (income) or go into debt to return to school.

Mental Health

To quote the 2020 Community Needs Assessment, “In 2017, one in five U.S. adults (46.6 million) lived with a mental illness; this number represented 18.9 percent of all U.S. adults. Only 19.8 million (42.6 percent) received mental health services (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>).”

While Buncombe County is known regionally for having a number of resources for mental health and substance abuse issues, residents in surrounding counties report a lack of access. In fact, Customers in Madison County often reporting seeking services for mental health in Buncombe County due to a shortage of services. With COVID-19, the need for mental health services has increased, with many therapists moving to waitlists due to high demands. The following represents the number people that exist in each county per one mental health provider:

Mental Health Providers By County

County	Number of People per Mental Health Provider
Buncombe	163
Henderson	538
McDowell	591
Madison	605
Polk	542
Transylvania	403
North Carolina	409

(<https://www.ncjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020>)

While Buncombe County has one mental health provider for each 163 people, all other counties except for Transylvania have higher ratios of provider to residents than the state average. Madison County has the least number of mental health providers and also has the highest rate of DSS substantiated abuse/neglect cases per 1,000 children out of the counties served. While this does not indicate causation in any way, any time trauma is present, there is a need for mental health services and this data demonstrates a need for additional mental health services in Madison County specifically.

Substantiated Abuse/Neglect Cases By County

County	Rate per 1,000 Children
Buncombe	2.8
Henderson	7.8
McDowell	6.4
Madison	11.4
Polk	3.9
Transylvania	2.6

(http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Child_Protective_Investigations/Investigations/Victims.asp)

Availability is another source of concern. Where mental health providers exist, families may still lack access due to lack of insurance and/or inability to pay. Some mental health providers participate in a sliding scale program, Open Path Collective, a nonprofit, nationwide program which aims to increase access for individuals living on lower incomes (<https://openpathcollective.org/open-path-staff/>). Still, for families living on extremely low incomes, such as those served by Life Works, \$30 per session is not an option financially on an on-going basis. There are some agencies and programs available for people living on extremely low-incomes, such as Family Preservation Services, a for-profit mental health agency that provides care to uninsured and those with the inability to pay (<https://www.pathways.com/northcarolina>). Family Preservation Services provides services in each of the counties served by Life Works, however, wait lists are often long and hours of service is limited.

RHA is another regional provider of mental health services for people living on low incomes. They provide therapy, a low-cost pharmacy, a Peer Support Living Room and recovery services (<https://rhahealthservices.org/>). RHA is a provider in Buncombe, Madison and McDowell Counties. While many Life Works Customer access services from RHA, and have reported both positive and negative experiences, waitlists can be long and the hours of services, especially in Madison and McDowell Counties, can be limited.

In Buncombe County, All Souls Counseling Center, a nonprofit agency created to address the need for accessible and affordable mental health services in WNC, serves as a resource for people living on low incomes. Therapists offer deeply affordable counseling services, however there are not enough therapists to meet the demand of those in the Asheville area, let alone greater WNC. The typical waitlist for a therapist through All Souls Counseling Center is between six to twelve weeks. Clearly, while resources exist to address the need for increased affordable mental health services, there is still a demand for additional services and in the meantime, many individuals remain untreated for their mental health needs.

Section II: Resource Analysis (use additional sheets if necessary)**(E) Resources Available:****a. Agency Resources:**

Source	Amount
CSBG	718,716
DHHS – Head Start	5,146,116
LIHEAP – WAP	729,235
LIHEAP – CARES	70,302
HARRP – WAP	524,864
DOE – WAP	384,401
NCPREK	995,000
DUKE ENERGY	100,000
AR4CA	225,000
CACFP	400,000
BCBS – HHI	25,000
BCHHS	150,000
WOMEN TO WOMEN	12,500
SISTERS OF MERCY	40,000
CSBG – CARES	550,000
Total	10,071,134

b. Community Resources:

- Agencies/groups working on **increasing job opportunities:**
Asheville Chamber of Commerce, Asheville City Council, Buncombe County Commission, Goodwill Industries of Northwest NC, Just Economics WNC, SPARC Foundation, Madison County Commission, Land of Sky Regional Council, United Way, McDowell Chamber of Commerce, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, McDowell Employer Pipeline, Employment Service Roundtable, Asheville Business Advisory Council, Upskill WNC, NC Works, Transylvania County Commission
- Agencies/groups working on **increasing affordable housing:**
Asheville-Buncombe Homeless Initiative, Asheville City Council, Asheville Housing Authority, Buncombe County Commission, Children First/Success Equation, Eblen Charities, Habitat for Humanity, Homeward Bound, Pisgah Legal Services, Area Ministries of Madison, Madison Community Housing Coalition, Council on Aging, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries, Henderson Housing Authority, Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries, The Sharing House, Hendersonville Housing Authority
- Agencies/groups working on **improving affordable and adequate transportation and child care opportunities:**
Asheville City Council, Buncombe County Health and Human Services, Buncombe Partnership for Children, Children First/Success Equation, Smart Start, Self-Help Credit Union, Just Economics WNC, United Way, Working Wheels, YWCA, Madison County Health and Human Services, Madison County Partnership for

Children, McDowell Department of Social Services, GET SET Transylvania, Transylvania County Commission, Hendersonville Nonprofit Forum, The Sharing House, Region C Workforce Development Board, Henderson Department of Social Services, Polk Department of Social Services, Transylvania Department of Social Services, Western Carolina Community Action, Verner Center for Early Learning, The Family Place, Child and Family Resource Center of Henderson County, Polk County Health and Human Services

- Agencies/groups working on **improving employment skills:**
Asheville-Buncombe Technical College, McDowell Technical College, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, Madison County Schools, McDowell County Schools, NC Works Career Centers, Goodwill Industries of Northwest NC, Just Economics, Green Opportunities, Pisgah Legal Services, SPARC Network, UpSkill WNC, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, Vocational Rehab, Employment Securities Commission, Region C Workforce Development Board, Family Resource Center, Blue Ridge Community College, The STEP Program
- Agencies/groups working on **improving financial capabilities and asset ownership:**
OnTrack Financial Education & Counseling, Pisgah Legal Services, Self-Help Credit Union, Eagle Street Community Development Corporation, Asheville Housing Authority, Hendersonville Housing Authority, Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries
- Agencies/groups working on **reducing food insecurity:**
Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministries (ABCCM), Buncombe County Health Department, Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries, Bounty and Soul, YMCA of WNC, SPARC Network, Biltmore Christian Church, Children First/Success Equation, Foster Memorial Seventh Day Adventist, Emma Resource Center, Eblen Charities, Manna Food Bank, Area Ministries of Madison, Madison County Health Department, Salvation Army, Local Food Awareness Group of McDowell, The Sharing House, Interfaith Ministries, Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries
- Agencies/groups working on **increasing mental health access:**
RHA Health Services, C3356, Family Preservation Services, Meridian Health Services of Transylvania County, All Souls Counseling Center, October Road: North Carolina Addiction Treatment, McDowell Mental Health Center, Mission Hospital Outpatient Behavioral Health Services, A Caring Alternative, Daya Mental Health and Wellness, Skyland Behavioral Health, Appalachian Counseling and Wellness Center, Mary Benson House, Universal Mental Health, Willow Wellness and Recovery Center, The SPARC Foundation, THRIVE of Henderson County, Daymark Recovery Services, Alliance Crisis Services, Blue Ridge Health – Transylvania, Wellspring Psychological Services, Sunrise Community for Recovery and Wellness, Umoja Health, Wellness and Justice Collective

(F) Resources Needed:

c. Agency Resources:

With additional funding, CAO could increase its Life Works program staff to serve more families, especially in Buncombe County. This is a significant need; Life Works has strengthened partnerships in the past two years in Buncombe County which has resulted in an increased awareness of the program across the county. However, the FY 21-22 allocation is more than \$40,000 less than the allocation for FY 20-21. Life Works has worked to secure additional funding in the community to support expansion efforts, but without extremely careful planning, diversified funding can potentially lead to instability within the program. As CAO expanded into Transylvania, Henderson and Polk Counties in FY 19-20, having additional fleet vehicles, while require an added expense up front, would greatly reduce the funds spent on local mileage in the future. CAO could also provide more direct assistance to help Life Works families reach their self-sufficiency goals. In FY 20-21, Life Works contracted services with Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries for self-sufficiency programming in Polk County. It is currently unknown how successfully this contract will be executed and CAO will need to monitor progress during FY 21-22. Additional resources might be needed in order to successfully execute Life Works in Polk County.

d. Community Resources:

For Polk County, the FY 21-22 allocation is \$30,101. The needs in Polk County exceed our agency's ability to impact poverty in a significant manner with such a low amount of funding. Therefore, CAO has determined that in order to maximize these funds, subcontracting to an existing nonprofit in this county is the best way to help move families out of poverty. The region continues to need more public and private investments targeted at the causes of poverty identified above. Support is needed for local campaigns and coalitions to advocate for policies that create more equitable investments in: economic development that invests in the local workforce and generates living wage jobs; in affordable housing development; in expanded public transportation systems and increased child care subsidies to account for cost of living.

Section III: Objective and Strategy

(G) Objective Statement: By June 30, 2022, decrease by 14 the number of families and individuals at or below 200% of the US-DHHS Poverty Income Guidelines, as measured by goal completion, progress on ROMA scales.

Strategies for Objective:

- Provide intensive case management services that expand access and opportunity for low-income residents working to become self-sufficient. Case management services include education and training opportunities, permanent employment, increased financial capabilities, as well as securing basic needs such as reliable transportation, safe and affordable housing, quality child care, healthcare and food security.
- Partner and coordinate service delivery with local agencies and businesses to leverage community resources and strengthen service networks available to customers.
- Advocate for the resources and public infrastructure needed to support low-income families and help them become self-sufficient

OEO Form 210 (continued)**Section IV: Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle (use additional sheets if necessary)**

Organizational Standard 4.3 requires that an agency's strategic plan and Community Action Plan document the continuous use of the ROMA cycle and use the services of a ROMA trainer.

- (H) Community Needs Assessment: Please summarize the primary needs of your community as determined through the Community Needs Assessment, and explain which of those are Family, Agency, or Community Needs, and why.

CAO's independent consultant made the following conclusions based on the 2020 Community Needs Assessment:

1. Jobs/Skills Experience: Family level need. Families need job experience and/or increased skills. Life Works will work with individuals on helping them obtain training/education and to obtain employment, even if at an entry-level position, in a company where they have room for growth.
2. Cost of Childcare: Family level need. Families need higher income in order to qualify for subsidies or in order to pay for childcare. Families need childcare in order to be able to go back to work, to create rich, educational lives for their children and to ensure stability. Due to the fact that it is the families that suffer from a high cost of childcare, it is a family level need.
3. Reliable Transportation: Family level need. Families living on low incomes need vehicles in order to get to work and school. While public transportation can be helpful in the more metro areas, the majority of the Life Works service area is rural and requires private-owned vehicles. Life Works will work with community agencies, such as Working Wheels for Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and McDowell Counties, and the Wheels to Work program in Transylvania County, when applicable, to help families obtain affordable vehicles.
4. Affordability/Availability of Housing Stock: Community level need. Each of the communities in the Life Works Service area lacks affordable and/or available housing. Occupancy rates have been around 1% for the past number of years in Buncombe and Transylvania Counties specifically. Since increasing a family's income does not change the amount of housing units available, this is a community level need. To address this, Life Works has to
5. Available Wage Rates are Below "Living Wage" Rate: Community level need. The minimum wage in North Carolina is \$7.25. This issue has to be addressed at the State level first and foremost. Life Works partners with area employers to advocate for higher rates of pay. The Inclusive Hiring Partners program and Just Economics are two area resources working to increase the wage rates across the region.
6. Mental Health Issues: Family level need. Individuals need mental health services. Life Works will ensure that families know about programs in the community for people who are uninsured and/or living on low-incomes.

As noted, CAO used the independent consultant's conclusions as well as the full report to conduct its internal process to determine priorities and actions.

- (I) Achievement of Results and Evaluation: Please discuss your agency's achievement of results from last year. What were the successes and why were those areas successful? What areas did not meet targets or expectations and why were those areas not as successful? What Improvements or changes will be made for this year's work plan to achieve desired results and better meet the needs of the community?

To support 2018-2023 strategic plan achievement, CAO implemented following action steps:

- CAO Leadership Team received ROMA Training in May, 2019 in order to help inform best practices and emphasize tools for continual improvement.
- CAO launched a new website in 2020 to help increase access for people across CAO's service area.
- In working toward CAO's Strategic Plan Goal of Non-Traditional Job Development/Placement, Life Works has joined with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's Inclusive Hiring Partners, beginning FY 20-21. This partnership highlights jobs in health care, construction and manufacturing. Life Works has a goal of referring 20% of customers to this program in order to diversify non-traditional jobs across the service area.

As for Life Works FY19-20 program goals:

- Life Works did not meet targets for enrollment, partially due to COVID-19 and the meeting restrictions that were put in place in March 2020. However, even prior to the onset of COVID, Life Works was behind on the number of enrollments needed per quarter in order to meet the goal for the year. Of special note, Henderson County was targeted to serve 30 people through classes which were unable to take place, partially due to COVID-19 and partially due to lack of interest. Life Works has desired for years to reach more people, potentially through a "lighter touch" model or a separate tier of programming; Life Works was excited to try something new in bringing classes to Henderson County. After further examination of existing resources and getting to know the needs of this community, Life Works did not opt to offer classes in Henderson County moving forward. Targets have been adjusted accordingly for FY 21-22, with careful input from Life Works Coaches, since they have first-hand knowledge of trends and needs of families in their respective communities.
- Life Works struggled to meet targets across the board in FY 19-20. This was partially due to COVID-19, as much work ceased operations in March 2020. Families who were projected to meet goals were either unable to move forward or ending up decreasing self-sufficiency due to lack of childcare. The lower number of enrollments also contributed to the lower outcomes. After reflecting and analyzing with the Life Works Coaches, it was clear that CAO was not prepared to move to 100% virtual work. Life Works still does not have the ability to obtain electronic signatures. While Life Works has created an Interest Form, which can be sent out to community members, this Interest Form is not on the website. Life Works is dedicated to getting either the Interest Form or a revised, fillable version of the Application, onto the website in January 2021.
- Despite the fact that Life Works did not meet 80-120% of most targeted outcomes,

Life Works helped prevented housing evictions, provided over 1,000 services, such as transportation, problem-solving, advocacy, direct assistance, outreach, etc., and provided over 250 referrals to other community partners. In-depth, holistic case management was provided with integrity and as excellent stewards of CSBG funds.

- Although CAO was not prepared to move to remote work, Life Works continued excellent program operations throughout the pandemic. Life Works Information Technology staff was swift and responsive in their efforts to assist Coaches in moving to home offices. Life Works Leadership and Administration supported remote work fully, remaining solution-focused and quickly assessing needs and responding to barriers. Overall, while Life Works saw a decline in applications and many plans for helping families move forward were interrupted, the Life Works team is proud of the work accomplished during the final months of FY 19-20.
- Life Works identified and began creating partnerships with several nonprofits in Madison and McDowell Counties in order to address the lower enrollment numbers seen in these counties in years prior. While the work in Madison County is still on-going, McDowell County has already begun to see an increase in enrollments due to these partnerships. As of December 2020, McDowell County has served 15 of the targeted 19 customers (79%) and has a number of potential applications identified for future enrollments.

Achievement was presented to the Board of Directors, at Senior Team meetings, at Staff Meetings and during Supervision with Life Works Coaches to allow for deeper analysis and examination of trends.

- (J) Please name the ROMA trainer who provided services used in developing this community Action Plan and describe what specific services were provided.

Self Sufficiency Program Manager Kate Singogo is a National Certified ROMA Trainer and Economic Development Director Trudy Logan is a National Certified ROMA Implementer (and previous trainer). They worked collaboratively and reviewed data gathered from the Community Needs Assessment, Accountable Results for Community Action (AR4CA) database reports, ROMA scales, customer files, meetings with Life Works Coaches, satisfaction surveys, performance reports, and customer information gathered during Customer Advisory Committee meetings. Both ROMA Trainers provided a ROMA Training to the Leadership Team at CAO in May, 2019. Both ROMA staff have utilized Drucker's questions throughout this current fiscal year during all steps within the ROMA cycle, posing questions that challenge our work's adherence to our Agency Mission, examining our customers and identifying gaps. After reviewing this data, pertinent information was presented to Senior Team, at Staff Meetings, and to the Board of Directors for input/feedback and further analysis. All results were evaluated using a variety of benchmarks/measurements, corresponding to the data, such as Likert Scales, CSBG performance benchmarks (80% - 120% of targets), and narrative evaluation for qualitative data.

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
One-Year Work Program
OEO Form 212**

Section I: Project Identification				
1. Project Name:	Life Works Self Sufficiency Program			
2. Mission Statement:	We help people who live on limited resources transform their lives.			
4. Objective Statement:	By June 30, 2022, decrease by 14 the number of families and individuals at or below 200% of the US-DHHS Poverty Income Guidelines, as measured by goal completion and progress on Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) scales.			
5. Project Period:	July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022			
6. CSBG Funds Requested for this Project:	July 1, 2021	To	June 30, 2022	\$718,716
7. Total Number Expected to Be Served:	140			
a. Expected Number of New Clients	50			
b. Expected Number of Carryover Clients	90			

**One-Year Work Program
OEO Form 212 (continued)**

Section II: One-Year CSBG Program Objective and Activities				
Identified Problem	Service or Activity	Outcome Expected	NPIs (List all NPIs applicable to activity)	Position Title(s)
Low income families lack employment.	Develop and edit resumes, provide job coaching, develop and maintain strong working relationships with employment partners, provide referrals and letters of support, and provide direct assistance to eliminate any barriers preventing families from obtaining employment, such as transportation, child care, rent, required work items, etc.	Low income families obtain employment.	FNPI 1a – 1h.3	Economic Development Director, Self Sufficiency Program Manager, Program Assistant, Life Works Coaches, Finance Dept.
Low income families lack affordable housing.	Locate and refer customers to housing options, advocate on behalf of customers as potential tenants, write letters of reference, etc., engage in community work to advocate for more affordable housing options, provide direct assistance with security deposits/rent.	Low income families obtain affordable housing.	FNPI 4a – 4e	Economic Development Director, Self Sufficiency Program Manager, Program Assistant, Life Works Coaches, Finance Dept.
Low income families lack financial capabilities needed to obtain long-term self-sufficiency.	Provide financial capabilities services related to budgeting, saving, credit repair, debt management and asset building, refer customers to classes, improved financial products/services within the community, advocate for continued access to financial services with community partners/financial institutions, ensure access to free tax prep when applicable, advocate for increased asset ownership/wealth-building opportunities and provide direct assistance to help with credit reports, offsetting costs to allow for establishment of savings, bank accounts, reduction of debt, etc.	Low income families obtain financial capabilities needed to obtain long-term self-sufficiency.	FNPI 3a – 3h	Economic Development Director, Self Sufficiency Program Manager, Program Assistant, Life Works Coaches, Finance Dept.
Low income families lack immediate stabilization supports.	Provide referrals to community resources, food banks, emergency assistance programs, medical assistance programs, as well as referrals to food stamps, Medicaid, Work 1 st . STEP, etc., and provide direct assistance with utility payments, rent, food supports, etc.	Low income families obtain immediate stabilize supports.	FNPI 5a – 5e	Economic Development Director, Self Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant, Finance Dept.

Low income families lack the education needed to obtain living wage jobs.	Connect customers to learning opportunities that align with their education and work goals, assist with registration and retention support, provide direct assistance for enrollment in classes, books/class supplies, items needed for classes, and to remove barriers that would prevent families from obtaining education, such as transportation, childcare, lack of internet access, etc.	Low income families obtain the education needed to obtain living wage jobs.	FNPI 2g – 2j	Economic Development Director, Self Sufficiency Program Manager, Program Assistant, Life Works Coaches, Finance Dept.
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**One-Year Work Program
OEO Form 212 (continued)**

Section III: Program Administration and Operations						
Administration, Services, Operations Outcome Expected	Position Title(s)	Implementation Schedule				
		First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter	
Outreach, Community Education and Engagement						
Provide explanation of program purpose, benefits and eligibility to potential customers and other service agencies and businesses in the community through community meetings and other outreach efforts.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Economic Development Department Director, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Take customer referrals from local agencies and community partners.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Strengthen and broaden efforts to promote economic development to create new, higher paying jobs through engagement in community wide efforts led by the Workforce Development Board, Just Economics, Success Equation and Chamber of Commerce	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Resource Coordinator, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Maintain strong working relationship with education and employment partners, including Employment Securities Commission, community colleges, NC Career Works Centers, Goodwill, Veteran Affairs, local employers, etc. for job training, development, placement and retention.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Maintain collaborative partnerships with financial capabilities partners, including financial institutions, to help customers access safe, affordable financial services and products and increase their ability to manage income, save and build assets.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Maintain and grow partnerships with housing, child care, transportation, food access, health care access, legal and social service programs in Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, and Buncombe Counties to support and strengthen community-wide networks serving customers.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	
Customer Application and Enrollment Process						
Provide program information sessions to applicants. Applicants learn the program objectives, eligibility requirements and the expectations for program participants. The orientation is used as an opportunity to assess applicant strengths, needs and appropriateness for Life Works.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22	

Step One: receive and screen applications to determine eligibility for program benefits. Conduct virtual or in-person, individual assessments to gather details related to the applicant's family, education, employment and financial history. The information gathered informs a matrix which is scored to determine applicant's program readiness. In addition, staff conduct further assessment of applicant's strengths, needs and goals. Step Two: documentation is collected and analyzed to determine if the applicant is financially eligible for the program.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant, Executive Assistant – Economic Dept.	30	30 (60)	30 (90)	30 (120)
Enroll 50 new customers into the program.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	15	15 (30)	15 (45)	5 (50)
Comprehensive Case Management Services					
Develop and maintain a mutually agreed-upon Action Plan between coaches and customers to reflect goals and activities pursued in Program related to education, employment, financial capabilities, housing, child care, food security and health care.	Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Coordinate and track internal and community referrals to support customer goal achievement.	Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Advocate for customers in the community to ensure adequate services are provided.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Economic Development Department Director, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Collaborate with other organizations to develop and maintain resources/activities to support the well-being of Life Works customers and the general community.	Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Economic Development Department Director, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Provide supportive coaching, including referral, advocacy and training, to increase access and opportunities related to customers' Action Plans. Facilitate at least bi-monthly contact with 140 customers to provide ongoing support and assess activities and achievement. - Coach customers in soft skills such as decision making, communication skills, work ethic, problem-solving, conflict resolution, etc. - Educate and advocate for appropriate family resources such as child support from absent parents, social security administration funds, veteran support, etc. to enhance family stability and progression. - Provide customers with information to increase parental capacity via Triple P and Nurturing Parenting education. - Provide transportation for job search, job interviews, employment or training, and other activities consistent with supporting customers' Action Plans.	Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22

Assist customers in obtaining quality child care through referrals, access to support services, reduction of barriers, problem-solving, etc.					
Maintain an active customer advisory council in whatever format determined to ensure current and previous customers are able to create community, celebrate successes collectively, learn new skills and provide input regarding program implementation, customer development, community building, etc.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	0	1 (1)	1 (2)	0 (2)
Key Internal Operations					
Supervise program staff through individual and team meetings. Develop individual and team goals and monitor throughout program year.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Regularly review case management documentation and required customer activities.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Develop and participate in trainings to enhance and promote staff development.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Review program and expenditure results at least six times during fiscal year and submit reports to Executive Director, Board of Directors and others as requested and required.	Economic Development Department Director, Finance Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Review and approve grant proposals, realignments and amendments.	Board of Directors	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Prepare and submit program and financial reports to the NC Office of Economic Opportunity as required.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Executive Director, Finance Department, Information Technology Director, Information, Technology Engineer	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Maintain manuals, guidelines and Accountable Results for Community Action database to ensure that they accurately reflect program activities and procedures.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Information Technology Director, Information, Technology Engineer, Program Assistant	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Incorporate customer feedback into program design and delivery of self-sufficiency program to meet the needs of the customers.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22

	Program Manager, Life Works Coaches, Program Assistant				
Manage and monitor program budget. Ensure federal, state and local regulations are followed.	Executive Director, Finance Department, Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Provide guidance and monitor any subcontracted operations to ensure agreement compliance and report accuracy.	Economic Development Department Director, Self-Sufficiency Program Manager	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Assess funding leveraging opportunities to support program enhancements.	Program Resource Coordinator	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Install, train and maintain servers, local area network, Agency software, computer acquisition and maintenance, telephones, other technology needs.	Information Technology Director, Information Technology Engineer	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Maintain physical building space occupied by Life Works Staff to ensure that customers and staff have a safe, welcoming environment in which to interact.	Facilities Services Associate, Facilities and Fleet Manager, HVAC Technician	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22
Maintain agency vehicles to ensure that staff can meet with and provide time sensitive services and support to customers.	Facilities and Fleet Manager, Facilities Services Associate	07/21-09/21	10/21-12/21	01/22-03/22	04/22-06/22

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
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OEO Form 212 (continued)**

9. Use the tables below to enter your agency's targeted outcome results. The performance measures will be included in the agency's CSBG contract.

All CSBG grantees operating self-sufficiency projects are required to enter program targets in Table 1. Please refer to *Performance Measures and Outcomes Definitions* on page 7 of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 CSBG Application Instructions. If your agency operates more than one project, you will also need to complete Table 2 on the following page and also enter specific program targets. There should be one table of outcome measures per project.

Table 1 Outcome Measures for Project 1 (enter project name)	
Measure	Expected to Achieve the Outcome in Reporting Period (Target)
The number of participant families served.	140
The number of low-income participant families rising above the poverty level.	14
The number of participant families obtaining employment.	23
The number of participant families who are employed and obtain better employment.	23
The number of jobs with medical benefits obtained.	8
The number of participant families completing education/training programs.	28
The number of participant families securing standard housing.	20
The number of participant families provided emergency assistance.	51
The number of participant families provided employment supports.	114
The number of participant families provided educational supports.	51
The number of participant families to establish or improve financial products and services.	21
The number of participant families who improve credit.	8
The number of participant families who reduce debt.	13
The number of participant families who increase savings.	14
The average change in the annual income per participant family experiencing a change.	This measure does not require a target but must be reported.
The average wage rate of employed participant families.	This measure does not require a target but must be reported.

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
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OEO Form 212 (continued)**

CSBG Expenditure by Service Category					
A.2. CSBG Expenditures Domains	Target CSBG Funds	Actual Q1	Actual Q2	Actual Q3	Final
A.2a. Employment	10,000				
A.2b. Education and Cognitive Development	6,000				
A.2c. Income, Infrastructure, and Asset Building	5,000				
A.2d. Housing	12,000				
A.2e. Health and Social/Behavioral Development (<i>includes nutrition</i>)	5,000				
A.2f. Civic Engagement and Community Involvement					
A.2g. Services Supporting Multiple Domains	145,547				
A.2h. Linkages (<i>e.g. partnerships that support multiple domains</i>)	9,700				
A.2i. Agency Capacity Building	515,355				
A.2j. Other (<i>e.g. emergency management/disaster relief</i>)	10,114				
A.2k. Total CSBG Expenditures (auto calculated)	718,716				

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
One-Year Work Program
OEO Form 212 (continued)**

10. For Community Action Agencies that serve multiple counties, provide a breakdown of the expected *number of persons served* in each designated county in the table below. Show the total *number of persons served* in the table.

Number of Families to be Served Per County											
Agency Name: Community Action Opportunities											
Project Name: Life Works Self Sufficiency Program											
County	Buncombe	Madison	McDowell	Henderson	Transylvania	Polk					Total
Total Planned	57	11	19	19	19	15					140
Project Name:											
County											Total
Total Planned											

**Community Services Block Grant Program
Fiscal Year 2021-22 Application for Funding
Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation Plan**

1. Describe the role and responsibilities of the following in the assessment and evaluation of agency programs.

a. Board of Directors:

CAO's Board represents a wide range of citizens from across CAO's service area. This governing body's collective experience, knowledge and commitment to CAO's Values, Mission and Vision, ensures continued success in helping customers overcome poverty. It is with this perspective, that the Board assesses ongoing program effectiveness. If programs are unable to produce outcomes that match the mission and grant requirements in a cost-effective way, the Board authorizes the staff to redirect resources to other activities.

The Board's assessment processes include reviews of administrative compliance with grant and industry standards. Program accomplishments, updates and trends are presented at every board meeting, as well as information on how these issues impact the agency's strategic plan.

b. Low-Income Community:

Low-income individuals from CAO's programs and the community are members of the Board, Policy Council and Advisory committees. In these capacities, these members offer their valued opinions about community needs and program strategies. CAO also asks for input from community groups comprised of low-income residents to help them identify the causes of poverty and broaden CAO's understanding of community needs.

c. Program Participants:

At least 51% of the Agency's Head Start Policy Council (PC) must be current Head Start customers. The remaining 49% may include community stakeholder representatives and former parents. Since this body shares decision-making authority with the Agency's Board of Directors about program details and has decision-making authority in areas such as the Head Start curriculum, the members must know about and understand program effectiveness. As such, the PC receives and uses detailed monthly information about operations, expenses and child outcomes to make key decisions.

Active and graduated program participants serve on the Life Works Advisory Committee. This body has historically met twice a year to discuss customer needs and help determine how Life Works can better help families become self-sufficient. Beginning in FY 20-21, the Life Works Advisory Committee aimed to expand in order to serve as a way for Customers to build community, celebrate accomplishments and learn new skills. The Committee will continue to receive information about program successes and performance. Program achievement is included in the Annual Report and in the Life Works Connector, the program's quarterly newsletter. As a part of the Life Works Program Agreement, each Customer agrees to provide CAO with ongoing feedback of program and agency services. Life Works Coaches distribute customer surveys upon admission into the program, twice annual and after exiting the program. Survey results and feedback are catalogued, analyzed and

used to inform program changes for customers and coaching staff, as well as in the annual CSBG re-funding application.

d. Others:

Every three years, the Agency prepares a comprehensive community assessment. This assessment includes a “scan” of the service area to aggregate demographic and other relevant data about community conditions related to poverty. Sources include primary and secondary data, survey responses from current and previous customers, focus group discussion and informed opinions from key stakeholder interviews and surveys. The aggregated data becomes the foundation CAO uses to identify the causes of poverty and needs, identify each need as an Agency, Family or Community level condition, rank the needs and develop targeted strategies to help families become self-sufficient.

2. Describe the systematic approach for collecting, analyzing and reporting customer satisfaction data to the Board of Directors.

Program and agency-wide survey data is reviewed by program staff, department directors, the Executive Director and the CAO Board of Directors. CAO uses this information to note trends, evaluate program effectiveness and modify program activities to improve outcomes. Department directors also share success stories with the Board at board meetings.

Agency surveys include:

- Ease of access, location and reputation
- Overall quality of the product the customer received, delivery time, etc.
- Assessment of service courtesy, knowledge, reliability and resolution of the presenting issue

3. Describe how administrative policies and procedures are monitored by the Board of Directors.

The Executive Director, the Human Resources Manager, the Finance Director, the Department Directors and agency Leadership Team members regularly review the personnel, fiscal and administrative policies and procedures. They discuss and review the effectiveness of personnel and financial procedures, including internal controls, Information Technology practices and safeguards, and compare internal practices to grant requirements and industry-specific standards.

When the team identifies a policy area that is outdated or insufficient, members research options and reach a consensus about how to revise or add changes to address the problem. The Executive Director presents this information and recommendations to the appropriate Board committee or directly to the full Board. After thorough review and discussion of the issue and options, if the committee votes to support the recommendation, the committee chair presents the recommendation to the full Board for discussion and vote. If the issue is not presented first to a committee, the Executive Director may ask the full Board to discuss the matter before bringing them a policy change. In other instances, the Executive Director may present the recommendation for their discussion and vote.

The Board also receives and reviews independent audit and monitoring reports from multiple sources, (independent auditors, funding organization monitors/auditors, insurance auditors, etc.) about the relevant conditions of the organization.

The Finance Director prepares and presents monthly/quarterly/annual and ad-hoc reports to the Board's Finance and Audit Committee for their detailed review. This committee presents any relevant recommendations to the Board of Directors for action. If policy changes require approval by the Agency's Head Start Policy Council, the CFCP Director reports these conditions to that governing body at their next regular meeting

4. Describe how the Board acts on monitoring, assessment and evaluation reports.

The Board of Directors reviews all monitoring, assessment and evaluation reports at its bi-monthly meetings. If warranted, the Executive Director will discuss corrective action plan options before recommending policy-related actions.

These reports also include CAO's perception of what the community needs are and how the program should change to meet these needs. In addition, agency Leadership Team members actively participate on boards and committees of key local organizations to ascertain a variety of views on poverty-related problems. Based on outcome data provided to the Board by the Executive Director and staff and comments from Board and community representatives, the Board and staff determine if agency programs are effectively performing. If programs are unable to produce expected outcomes, the Board authorizes executive and senior staff to reprogram or redirect resources to other activities.

5. Describe the Board's procedure for conducting the agency self-evaluation.

While the Board does not conduct an agency self-evaluation, the governing body is briefed on programmatic activities that focus on program outcomes and administrative compliance with regulations. The Head Start program must complete an annual self-assessment, which is a comprehensive review of program and agency administrative functions. Senior staff members, Board Directors, Head Start Policy Council members and staff from other departments participate on this team. The team conducts the assessment, compiles the results, and develops action plans to correct identified needs and reports the results to the Head Start Policy Council and Board of Directors. The last Head Start self-assessment was completed in June 2019.

During the early stages of strategic planning, the board and staff use the information collected from the Self-Assessment, monitoring and audit reports, the community assessment and customer surveys to evaluate its Values, Mission and Vision and create the Plan.

6. Summarize the results of the Board's most recent self-evaluation. Describe how the information has been or will be used to develop the agency's next Strategy for Eliminating Poverty. Indicate the timeframe and planned activities for the next evaluation.

CAO recently completed the 2020 Community Needs Assessment. The information-gathering process began in August, 2019. Focus groups with the staff, board, customers and community were conducted in January 2020. Surveys and stakeholder interviews are in the process of being completed. Preliminary results were shared with CAO in March, 2020, the full draft results of this assessment were presented to the board in April, 2020 and final approval was June, 2020. This Community Needs Assessment underscored that poverty is sustained by a variety of complex issues and conditions, many of which have persisted through generations. To move out of poverty, low-income people need an assortment of supportive interventions and long-term supports that create access and opportunities to move out of poverty and into stable, sustaining conditions. CAO determined that to help families make these meaningful and sustainable changes and to measure that progress over time, CSBG programmatic activities must begin with a

comprehensive assessment of each customer's individual and family status, needs and strengths. The assessment results are used to form the basis of each customer's goals and action plans. Coaches supplement effective action plans with monetary and other support and use interim assessments to determine the type and degree of change over time. These results are the foundation of the Life Works Program.

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: 11.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
Waterline Extension Request	Cover Memo	1/13/2021



To: Polk County Commissioners
From: Jeremy W. Gregg – Fire Chief
CC: D. Marche Pittman – County Manager
Date: 12/14/2020
Re: Request for extension of water line

The Green Creek Volunteer Fire Rescue Department, Inc would like to make a formal request for the existing water line on Pea Ridge Road to be extended to the site of our planned station.

Green Creek Volunteer Fire Rescue Department, Inc has a long standing record of helping Polk County and its citizens. A County Radio Tower was placed at the fire station to improve coverage, a backup 911 center at the fire station to serve the entire county and we support EMS & Rescue with our ambulance when needed. Also with the new station there will be office space for a Sheriff's Substation and we have agreed to consider placing an EMS unit at the station when the County is ready to add additional ambulances. All of this is done with out us receiving any additional funding from the County.

We believe this water line would be a benefit to us as well as the citizens of the area. This would serve to bring fire hydrants to an area that currently doesn't have them.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: 12.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
Resolution	Cover Memo	1/13/2021

Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the resolution.

RESOLUTION TO ASSURE POLK COUNTY CITIZENS THEIR SAFETY IS OUR TOP PRIORITY AND TO SUPPORT THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

Whereas, the United States is going through troubling times of civil unrest at the National Level; and

Whereas, the Covid-19 situation seems to be accelerating with more infections and deaths on the horizon; and

Whereas, the Covid-19 response tactics are changing to a focus of vaccination from a focus on testing; and

Whereas, most of the Polk County Employees are deemed “essential” employees and have worked continuously throughout the entire Covid-19 event.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Polk County Board of Commissioners’ wants to assure all of the citizens of Polk County that they have and will continue to keep Polk County’s needs as their top priority through the difficult times that we are facing.

Further, the Polk County Board of Commissioners’ wants to thank all of the employees and elected officials in Polk County for the outstanding job they have done and will continue to do throughout this time of crisis to keep the citizens of Polk County safe and secure.

Further, while we support the right of all citizens to peacefully protest, we wholeheartedly condemn any action that is violent or criminal in nature and encourage our state and federal leaders to work together for the betterment of our nation.

Adopted this 19th day of January, 2021.

ATTEST:

**POLK COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS**

Ange’ High
Clerk to the Board

Tommy W. Melton
Chairman

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM

January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Agenda Item#: 13.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type	Upload Date
Proposed New Road Names	Cover Memo	1/13/2021

Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve new road names as presented.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that at 7:00 p.m., on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, in the R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building, 40 Courthouse Street, Columbus, NC 28722, the Polk County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing to receive citizen input on the following list of proposed road names to be adopted in Polk County:

Beauty Hill Ln-Private Road off SR1346

Township: Columbus

Foch Mountain Trail-Private road-off SR NC108

Township: Columbus

Morgan Run-Private Road off PVT Spicer Cove Rd

Begins in Henderson County. Township: Saluda

Dragonfly Trail-Private Road off SR1306

Township: Cooper Gap

Wildcat Way-Private road off Lake Adger Rd off

SR1161 Township: Cooper Gap

Friendly Hills Lane-Private Road off County Club Rd

SR1107 Township: Tryon- Outside

For additional information about this Public Hearing, contact the County Manager's office, at (828) 894-3301.

Ange' High

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners