



2025 Community Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

Rural Resources Community Action (Rural Resources) conducts a comprehensive community needs assessment (CNA) once every three years as required under Section 676(b)(11) of the Community Services Block Grant Act. This assessment is focused primarily on areas served with Community Services Block Grant funds.

In the summer of 2025, Rural Resources retained an independent consultant to conduct unbiased, neutral research to prepare this assessment. This report will be used to help Rural Resources determine how to invest its resources to meet community needs.

The three primary goals of the 2025 Community Needs Assessment were:

- To learn about community needs in Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties based on citizen and key stakeholder input
- Identify gaps that exist between community needs and existing services
- Support the organization's strategic planning process and help establish program priorities

Methodology

This report is a summary of input received directly from citizens that live and work within the Rural Resources primary service area.

A community perception survey was distributed to the public through social media, posted on the agency's website, and emailed to partner agencies and interested party contact lists. The survey was released on June 30, 2025, and closed on August 11, 2025. A total of **438** survey responses were received and are summarized in the [online survey section](#) of this report.

Eight public meetings were conducted in the towns of Davenport, Republic, Newport, and Colville during the last week of July and the first week of August 2025. A total of **41** individuals attended; including members of the public, community based organizations, educational institutions, elected officials, and program participants. A summary of the public meetings for each location is found in the [public meetings section](#) of this report.

Demographic data published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Washington State Office of Financial Management, Eastern Washington University's (EWU) Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis, and the Tri County Economic Development District have been used for the analysis. Other sources have been cited.

Key Findings

1. Residents and service providers in each of the four counties served consistently rank the highest needs in their communities to be housing, transportation, childcare, and access to resource information.
2. Despite the availability of employment training opportunities, living wage employment is still a high need in each community due to the rising cost of housing, food, and transportation.
3. Policy decisions made at the state level do not account for the higher cost of living in rural areas.
4. Public transportation in most rural areas is limited or nonexistent during certain hours. This has created access barriers to employment opportunities, medical care, and other social services.
5. Most residents can access food assistance programs in their communities. However, many are concerned about rising food prices, benefits changes, and the limited supply of food at distribution sites due to recent changes in Federal policies.
6. Marketing efforts should be expanded to better inform participants, staff, and stakeholders about resources that are available in each community.

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Poverty is a complex issue influenced by various economic, social, political, and environmental factors, including lack of education, unemployment, and economic inequality. Households living in poverty typically pay a higher proportion of their income for basic needs such as housing, food, education, transportation, and health care.

Service Area Geography & Demographics

The geographic distance between urban centers in Eastern Washington can create service gaps for many households in rural areas.

The Rural Resources primary service area encompasses 8,390 square miles of land in the northeast corner of Washington state comprised of Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties. U.S. Census data indicates that the area’s population density ranges from 3.26 persons per square mile in Ferry County to 18.75 persons per square miles in Stevens County. The Washington State Department of Health (using guidelines provided by the U.S. Census Bureau) has determined that 79.2% of Stevens County, 83.1% of Pend Oreille County, and 100% of Ferry and Lincoln Counties are considered rural.¹

According to data in the 2020 Decennial Census, Stevens County (which is included in the Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area) is the largest of the four counties with a population of 46,445. The smallest county by population is Ferry, with a total of 7,178 persons.

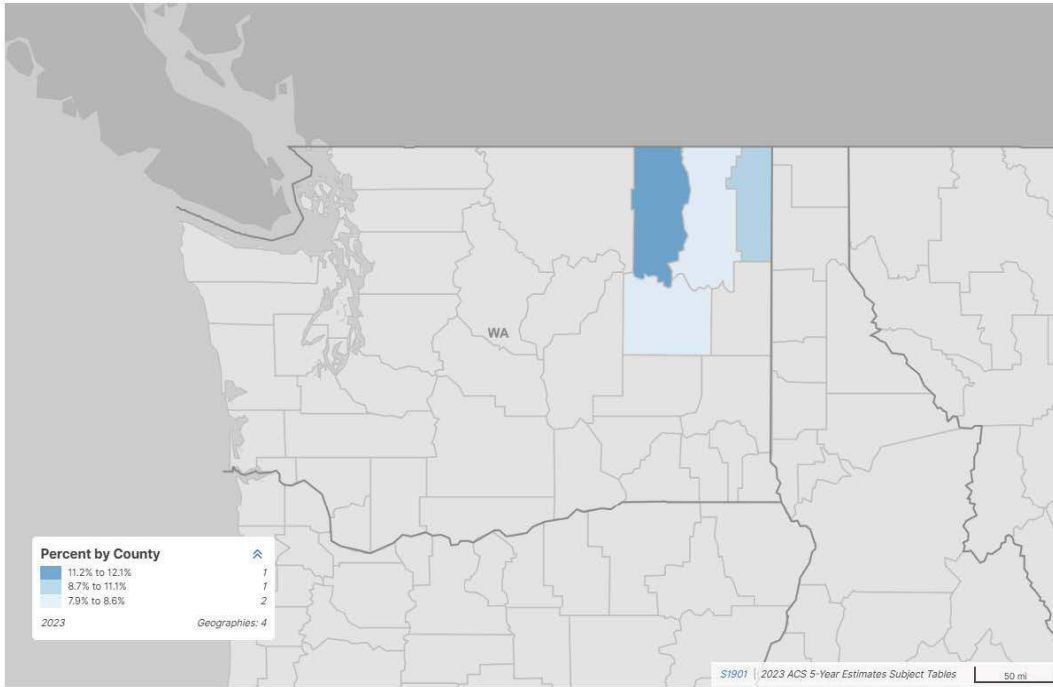
County/State	Total Population (2020 Decennial Census)	Median Age	Median Household Income (2023 Estimate)	Population Living in Poverty (2023 Estimate)
Ferry	7,178	52.8	54,650	15.6%
Lincoln	10,876	46.9	71,227	10.4%
Pend Oreille	13,401	50.0	63,750	13.6%
Stevens	46,445	46.8	67,405	12.9%
RR Service Area Average	77,900	49.1	64,258	13.1%
Washington State	7,705,281	38.6	94,605	10.3%

*US Census Bureau County Profiles: <https://data.census.gov/profile>

The poverty rate average in the service area is slightly higher than the U.S. rate for the same period but considerably higher than Washington State. The map below depicts the concentration of those households living in poverty according to the Department of Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines. In 2023, the FPL for a family of four was \$30,000.

¹ Washington State Department of Health, Office of Community Health Systems Series on Rural-Urban Disparities, Fact Sheet, DOH 346-090 (Revised February 2017).

\$25,000 to \$34,999 - Households | Total



Gender, Race & Ethnicity Demographics in the Service Area

County/State	Gender - Male & Female (2023 Estimate)		Race (2020 Decennial Census)	Ethnicity (2020 Decennial Census)
	Male	Female	White alone	Non-Hispanic
Ferry	3,713 (50.7%)	3,613 (49.3%)	5,118 (71.3%)	5,056 (70.4%)
Lincoln	5,731 (50.8%)	5,540 (49.2%)	9,704 (89.2%)	9,576 (88.0%)
Pend Oreille	7,149 (51.8%)	6,662 (48.2%)	11,811 (88.1%)	11,684 (87.1%)
Stevens	23,831 (50.2%)	23,639 (49.8%)	39,313 (84.6%)	38,722 (83.4%)
RR Service Area Average	40,424 - 50.6%	39,454 - 49.4%	65,946 - 83.3%	65,038 - 82.2%
Washington State	3,898,212 (50.4%)	3,842,772 (49.6%)	5,130,920 (66.5%)	4,918,820 (63.8%)

Population Growth

Population growth is an important consideration for resource providers because it influences the availability and management of services.

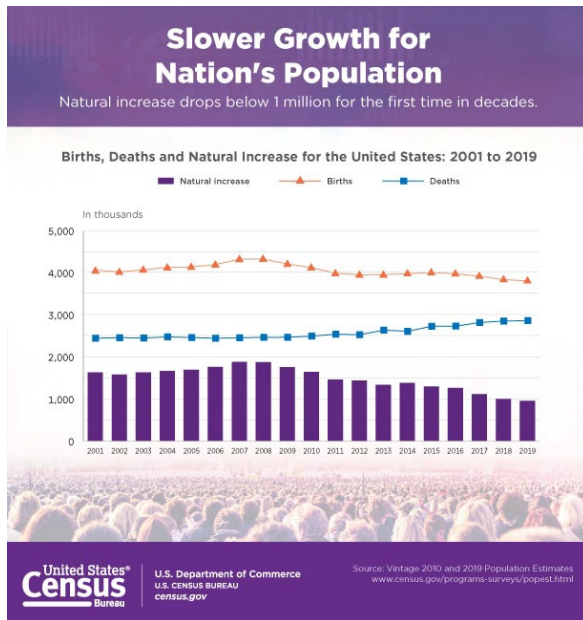
Projections show the population growth slowing down in the next twenty years throughout the region with total projected regional growth of 8.8% between 2020 and 2040. Ferry, Lincoln, and Pend Oreille Counties are projected to have significant decreases in growth. Meanwhile, Stevens County is projected to maintain the level of growth it has seen over the past decade, continuing to add population at a rate of about 5.5% per decade.²

As noted in the chart below, Lincoln County lost total population in 2024.

County/State	2024 Population Percentage Change	% of State Total Rank
Ferry	0.00	36
Lincoln	-0.44	35
Pend Oreille	0.72	33
Stevens	0.31	24
Washington State	0.99	

**Washington State Office of Financial Management, "Washington population growth slowing", June 27, 2025*

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that population growth nationwide has slowed due to a drop in the natural increase and net international migration between April 2010 through July 2019. However, population growth increased in some regions of the country, including the state of Washington.



² Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization, Regional Transportation Plan 2042.

Affordable Housing

Housing data from the U.S. Census Bureau/American Community Survey (ACS) shows that the overall rental vacancy rate in Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties was 1.9% for the period 2019-2023 compared to 4.3% for the state of Washington, and 5.5% for the United States. (The rental vacancy rate for Lincoln County was 3.6%). This is a statistically significant decrease from the prior reporting period. Also, the percentage of low-income households that own their home has decreased while the percentage of households that own their own home in the service area has remained consistent. This suggests that low-income households are finding it difficult to keep up with mortgage payments, property taxes, or can no longer afford to maintain their home.

The Housing Affordability Index (HAI) measures the ability of a middle-income family to make mortgage payments on a median price resale home. A HAI score of less than 100 indicates housing is not affordable.

According to data published by the Washington Center for Real Estate Research, many households in the Rural Resources service area do not have sufficient income to buy a home as noted in the table below.³

County	Median income buyer			HAI	First-time buyer		
	Median price	Household income	Monthly payment		Household income	Monthly payment	HAI
Ferry	\$185,000*	59,700	\$976	129.0	41,800	\$957	92.1
Lincoln	\$298,300	79,200	\$1,573	106.2	55,400	\$1,543	75.7
Pend Oreille	\$320,000	71,300	\$1,690	89.0	49,900	\$1,657	63.5
Stevens	\$320,400	72,500	\$1,690	90.5	50,800	\$1,657	64.6

**Note: The median price listed for Ferry County is the lowest median home price in the state of Washington.*

For example, a median income household in Ferry County with a household income of \$59,700 could afford to buy a home but a first-time buyer could not afford to do so. This is due to the lower median price of homes compared to other areas of the state.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity occurs when a household cannot access enough food due to a lack of income needed to pay for housing, medical care, and other essential services. People who are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity include low income households, persons with disabilities, single-parent households and people living in rural areas.

³ University of Washington, Washington Center for Real Estate Research, Washington State Housing Market Report, 2nd Quarter 2025.

Data published by Feeding America in the *2025 Map the Meal Gap Report*⁴ shows that 85% of counties with the highest food insecurity are rural. This is due to a “lack of transportation, low wages and underemployment, and racism and discrimination”.

Data provided for the four counties in the Rural Resources service area as compared to the state of Washington is listed below.

	2023 Food Insecurity Population	Food Insecurity Rate	Est. Program Eligibility Among Food Insecure People Below SNAP Threshold of 200%	Average Meal Cost	Annual Food Budget Shortfall
Ferry County	1,420	19.40%	81%	\$3.55	\$956,000
Lincoln	1,640	14.50%	63%	\$3.82	\$1,186,000
Pend Oreille	2,280	16.50%	79%	\$3.63	\$1,568,000
Stevens	7,300	15.40%	71%	\$3.55	\$4,915,000
Washington State	1,027,920	13.20%	55%	\$3.83	\$747,101,000

A recent brief published by the University of Washington’s School of Public Health noted that food insecurity among households that were sampled remains high since the COVID-19 pandemic. More than half of the respondents (55%) used at least one type of food assistance in January 2025. Further, “households experiencing food insecurity reported greater concern about price increases, as well as worse overall financial outlooks and more financial stress. To cope with price increases, nearly three quarters of food insecure respondents reported restricting the quality and quantity of food.”⁵

Transportation

Currently, there is no public transit agency in the CNA’s service area. 6 transportation providers offer a variety of services including commuter bus service and dial-a ride. Some services are only available on certain days and hours, and some have strict eligibility criteria. This makes it difficult for residents living in unincorporated rural areas to get to work or access services without having to rely on a personal vehicle.

For low income households, transportation costs can be significant. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, typical annual transportation costs in the state of Washington range from \$9,828 for an individual to \$16,486 for a household of two working adults and two children. In comparison, the typical annual transportation costs in this service area are 13% higher with \$11,116 for an individual to \$18,846 for a household of two working adults and two children.⁶

⁴ Feeding America, 2025 Hunger & Poverty in the United States, “*Map the Meal Gap*”, May 14, 2025.

⁵ University of Washington School of Public Health, “*WAFOOD Brief 16 – Food Security and Food Assistance in the Wake of COVID-19: A 5th Survey (2024) of Washington State Households*”, February 13, 2025.

⁶ Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Institute, Living Wage Calculator, February 10, 2025: <https://livingwage.mit.edu>

Childcare

A 2024 survey conducted by Rural Resources found that there is a childcare crisis in Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille counties. 71% of families in Stevens County reported inadequate access to childcare, 66% in Ferry County, and 55% in Pend Oreille County.

Data released for Lincoln County shows there were 3 licensed child care providers with a total capacity of 48 in 2024. During 2024, there were no reported vacancies. The median monthly rates for these child care centers ranged from \$1,582 for an infant to \$590 for a school age child. The majority of children under 6 in Lincoln County have parents who are working (52.5%).⁷

Employment

All 4 counties in the CNA service area are currently listed on the Washington State 2024 Distressed Areas List. Distressed areas are counties where the three-year unemployment rate is at least 20 percent higher than the statewide average.⁸

Unemployment rates in the service area fluctuate between 4 and 6% during the year due to seasonal employment patterns. The July (2025) unemployment rate in Ferry County was reported to be 6.7%; Lincoln County 5.3%; Pend Oreille County 5.4%, and Stevens County 5.3%. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the state was 4.5%.

Government is the largest industry sector and accounts for a much larger share of employment in the CNA service area than statewide. The primary private sector industries include agriculture, construction, timber, and tourism industries.

Online Perception Survey

A total of 438 online survey responses were received. 50% indicated that they had received or currently receive services from Rural Resources. The affiliations of survey respondents should be considered when reviewing question responses (see Q1 table below). Selected comments have been included in this section.

Q1 - Please select from the groups below the one that best describes your relationship with Rural Resources:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My household has received or receives services from Rural Resources	50.11%	219
Rural Resources employee/team member	9.61%	42
Rural Resources Board member	0.23%	1
Business Owner/Employer	6.86%	30
Employer	4.81%	21

⁷ Child Care Aware of Washington: <https://childcareawarewa.org/data-advocacy/child-care-data-statistics/>

⁸ Washington State ESD Distressed areas list: <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information>

Educator	4.12%	18
Landlord	1.83%	8
Other: <i>Community member/citizen; former employee, person(s) in need of help; moving to area; religious leader, in-home care giver, community partner</i>	22.43%	98
TOTAL		437 (1 skipped)

Demographic Responses

Q8 – Please select the geographic area from the list below that best describes where you live:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Small city or large town with a population of 1,000+ (e.g. Colville)	49.42%	213
Small town or community with a population of less than 1,000 (e.g. Springdale)	14.85%	64
Urban area (living within 5 miles of incorporated town/city but not within)	3.94%	17
Rural area (living more than 5 miles outside an incorporated town/city)	31.79%	137
TOTAL		431 (7 skipped)

Q9 – *What County do you live in?*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Ferry County	11.87%	52
Lincoln County	6.85%	30
Pend Oreille	13.93%	61
Stevens County	62.56%	274
Other: <i>Spokane County (8), Grant County (3), Okanogan, Asotin, Adams, mixed (7)</i>	4.79%	21
TOTAL		438

Q10 – *What is your age range?*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 25	0.69%	3
25-35	8.92%	39
36-50	28.38%	124
51-65	35.47%	155
66+	26.54%	116
TOTAL		437 (1 skipped)

Q11 – What languages are spoken in your home? (Check all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Arabic	0.00%	0
English	99.77%	435
Marshallese	0.00%	0
Russian	0.00%	0
Salish or other Native American language	0.92%	4
Spanish	1.83%	8
Ukrainian	0.23%	1
Vietnamese	0.00%	0

Other: <i>Swedish, Japanese, ESL, Tagalog</i>	2.06%	9
TOTAL		436 (2 skipped)

Q12 – How do you self-identify by race? (Check all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White or Caucasian	87.76%	380
Black or African American	0.69%	3
Asian or Asian American	0.69%	3
American Indian or Alaska Native	6.93%	30
Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander	0.46%	2
Middle Eastern or North African	0.00%	0
Two or more races	5.08%	22
Other: <i>European American, Ashkenazi, Croatian, prefers not to answer</i>	4.62%	20
TOTAL		433 (5 skipped)

Q13 – How do you self-identify by ethnicity?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Hispanic or Latino	2.93%	12
Non-Hispanic or Latino	97.07%	397
TOTAL		409 (29 skipped)

Q14 – How do you self-identify by gender?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	83.87%	364
Male	11.52%	50
Non-binary	1.15%	5
Prefer not to say	2.07%	9
Prefer to self-describe	1.38%	6
TOTAL		434 (4 skipped)

Q15 – What is your employment status?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed full-time (35 or more hours per week, paid)	33.18%	143
Employed part-time (less than 35 hours per week, paid)	9.05%	39
Self-employed	5.57%	24
Not employed and not looking for work (e.g. retired, stay at home parent, student)	22.74%	98
Unemployed and looking for work	5.57%	24
Unpaid volunteer or intern	1.62%	7
Employed, but not currently working (e.g. on leave)	1.86%	8
Disabled	20.42%	88
TOTAL		431 (7 skipped)

Q16 – *What is your housing status?*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Housed, own my home	64.83%	282
Housed, renting	26.67%	116
Living in transitional housing	.69%	3
Living with friends or relatives	7.13%	31
Living in a shelter	0.00%	0
Not housed	0.69%	3
TOTAL		431 (7 skipped)

Q17 – *Does anyone in your family have a disability or special need?*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	54.38%	236
No	45.62%	198
TOTAL		434 (4 skipped)

Q18 – *What type of health insurance does your family have?*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employment based	28.90%	126
Direct purchase	2.75%	12
Military health care	3.67%	16
Medicaid	15.83%	69
Medicare	27.06%	60
None	4.13%	18
Prefer not to answer	3.90%	17
TOTAL		436 (2 skipped)

Q19 – *Have you ever worked with Rural Resources in any capacity other than as an employee? (For example, as a volunteer or an employee of a partner organization)*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.20%	92
No	78.80%	342
TOTAL		434 (4 skipped)

Community Need Responses

Q2 – *Please briefly describe the challenges that you, or those you know, have had related to finding employment, having a home, or leading a fulfilling life (Causes of Poverty).*

High Cost of Living – Many surveys noted the high cost of living in rural areas. Basic needs such as housing, utilities, and food are more expensive. Many households rely on personal

transportation in order to access medical and dental services in larger urban communities which can add additional costs to the household budget.

Lack of Housing – The majority of responses received described challenges individuals have faced in finding housing, either to rent or buy. Housing inventories are low, which has resulted in rent increases and stricter criteria being imposed on renters and a lack of housing options for not just first-time homebuyers but homebuyers in general.

Many senior and low-income homeowners described challenges they are experiencing sustaining their housing due to strict eligibility requirements for housing programs they cannot access. Without this assistance, low-income homeowners are struggling to maintain their homes.

Employment Barriers – Job training opportunities have been limited or lost due to government funding cuts, creating a barrier for individuals who wish to be promoted or hired into a higher paying position. Access to the internet and Wi-Fi streaming services required for remote work can be limited or non-existent in certain rural areas.

Despite low unemployment rates, there are limited opportunities due to many employers requiring prior experience, even for entry-level positions. Some respondents stated they were not able to work due to a disability, lack of transportation and/or rehabilitation services. Seniors and persons with a disability or criminal history stated they experienced discrimination when applying for work.

Limited Access to Transportation & Childcare – Many survey responses received described challenges finding employment, getting an education, and meeting day-to-day household needs due to a lack of transportation and childcare options in the community.

Comments from surveys:

“Depressed. Lost license, really need an advocate but hands have fallen and it’s hard to get up. Desperately need affordable childcare.”

“The greatest challenge for my family is the reality of rural living....

....My 76 year old mother wants to live the rest of her days in her rural home. As she gets older her home gets harder to take care of on a very limited income from SSI. The greatest challenge is being able to make sure she gets the help she needs from so far away (I live in Spokane now). My bother lives closer and sees her more often, but we are working hard to raise the funds needed to repair her house in order to keep it livable as long as she is alive.”

“Health issues made having a home an impossibility for me. You (Rural Resources combined with food assistance & SSI) have allowed me and my son to have a home. I will never forget how much God has, and is, providing me through your service.”

Q3 – Please rate the availability of the services listed below in your community (with 1 being “not available in my community” and 5 being “many options available in my community”).

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Weighted Average					
Employment opportunities or training	21.0%	84	33.5%	134	28.5%	114	9.5%	38	7.5%	30	400	2.49
Job training and adult education opportunities	25.4%	103	33.6%	136	25.2%	102	9.4%	38	6.4%	26	405	2.38
Living wage jobs	28.1%	114	38.9%	158	25.4%	103	4.4%	18	3.2%	13	406	2.16
Housing and/or utility assistance	23.9%	101	32.5%	137	24.6%	104	9.5%	40	9.5%	40	422	2.48
Childcare and/or early childhood education	28.9%	112	34.5%	134	23.7%	92	6.2%	24	6.7%	26	388	2.27
Food or clothing banks	8.3%	35	28.5%	120	27.6%	116	19.5%	82	16.2%	68	421	3.07
Healthcare	11.4%	48	22.9%	96	30.5%	128	21.7%	91	13.6%	57	420	3.03
Legal services	35.5%	143	28.8%	116	23.3%	94	7.9%	32	4.5%	18	403	2.17
Mental health or substance abuse services	26.7%	109	30.6%	125	25.5%	104	10.3%	42	6.9%	28	408	2.4
Transportation	36.0%	153	31.5%	134	17.7%	75	7.8%	33	7.1%	30	425	2.18
Internet service	20.7%	86	25.7%	107	29.3%	122	13.5%	56	10.8%	45	416	2.68
Victim services	21.5%	85	25.3%	100	28.9%	114	13.9%	55	10.4%	41	395	2.66
Elderly living assistance	26.2%	109	32.0%	133	26.2%	109	8.9%	37	6.7%	28	416	2.38
Access to services listed above	19.5%	79	35.5%	144	30.1%	122	8.9%	36	6.2%	25	406	2.47
Other: Fuel, Weatherization											49	
											Answered	436
											Skipped	2

Q4 – What services do you, or those you know, access in the community?

357 responses were received to this question. The services that were most frequently mentioned were housing and utility assistance (including weatherization), medical care or health clinics, food banks and meal delivery, transportation, and elder care.

Surveys also indicated that clothing banks, employment training, mental health and substance abuse services, victim services, early childhood education (HeadStart), and emergency services (including fire prevention) can be accessed in the service area.

Q5 – What services (if any) do you, or those you know, use or have used at Rural Resources?

381 responses were received to this question, including 88 N/A (not applicable). Most survey respondents listed utility/energy assistance (51), housing/rental assistance (47), and food bank/meal assistance (39).

Q6 – Please list the top three needs that you would like to see met in your community in the next 3-5 years.

388 responses were received to this question. Housing and utility assistance (42%), transportation (20%), food (13%), childcare (10%), and employment opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities (8%) were needs most commonly mentioned. Other community needs that were mentioned include:

Medical and dental care providers
Mental health counseling
Victim services
Homeless Outreach
Wider broadband access
Emergency housing for families, youth and DV
Communication/Information regarding resources that are available

Other:

Culturally relevant community events
Housing for special needs/transitional housing
Public safety funding
Parenting support
In-home care for the elderly and respite care
Adult/Elderly literacy program
Legal Services

Q7 – What role should Rural Resources perform to help meet these needs in the community?

Comments received from the online perception survey were similar to the comments that were made in public meetings:

Resource Provider – Nearly all CNA participants see the primary role of Rural Resources to be a resource provider. Many would like to see the agency take a bigger role in providing transportation services for rural areas. Many participants also feel that the agency should take the lead in communicating what resources are available in its service area.

Community Partner and Advocate – Rural Resources is a trusted resource provider in rural communities. CNA participants are supportive of partnerships and advocacy efforts which will increase or enhance services that address community needs.

Specific recommendations included the following:

- Advocate for and/or partner with housing agencies to increase housing inventory, including (affordable) housing for seniors, persons with special needs and licensed professionals

- Create an “Information Hub” where citizens can find reliable information on resources in their community using a variety of communication tools by partnering with other nonprofit organizations such as the Fig Tree Resource Directory.
- Bring services to those in rural areas through community outreach (go to where people are)
- Facilitate and/or create more partnerships with other resource providers to address unmet needs
- Provide incentives or training programs that increase childcare options in communities
- Increase access to transportation services and improve transportation connectivity
- Create an equitable system for rural areas to distribute limited funds (e.g. utility assistance)

Comments from surveys:

“Make it happen”

“Establish a trusted network of communication and contacts who can help connect folks with services and to also share how local communities can volunteer and support (the agency’s) efforts and initiatives”

“Help me help myself so that I can serve my community better”

“I’m unsure other than continuing to be connected to the community, aware of the needs, and opportunistic about providing resources. Facilitating transportation conversations and educating our community about the resources they do have, providing education on managing finances, family efficiency, etc. along with connection to aid, being aware of senior resources and advocating for additional resources to come into the county”

“Rural resources is a great form of contact and resource for everything, having a group that pursues available options and advocates for the community is huge. Someone more familiar with legalities, options, and advice, and funding. Rural resources feels like the voice for those who aren't heard because of their circumstances. Having someone advocate and defend peoples worth is huge, I think people in need of some help are often misunderstood by the public, I like to think everyone is doing their best in their circumstance, when I became too overwhelmed to know what steps to take, my connection to rural resources became my voice of reason and hope. Rural resources is essential as the connection to help”

“Everything they can do. Be the leader and train or work with new non-profit organization”

“Continue to serve as the lead social service agency in rural eastern Washington”

Public Meetings

Public meetings were conducted in Davenport, Republic, Newport, and Colville. Two meetings were held at each location: one meeting for community members and program participants and one meeting for resource providers.

Each meeting began with an explanation of the Community Needs Assessment’s purpose. Participants were asked to complete a voluntary demographic survey. Questions were then distributed to help guide discussion (see below). However, participants were not required to answer the questions as written.

The meetings were structured to foster conversations between participants, rather than being a formal presentation by the facilitator.

Community Members & Participant Questions		Resource Provider Questions
<i>Q: Please discuss your experience, or the experience of others you know, with regard to accessing services in your community.</i>		<i>Q: Please discuss the human service needs that are not met in your community, based on your direct experience, or the experience of others you know (your staff, other agency representatives, etc.)</i>
<i>Q: What barriers have you, or other people you know, experienced trying to get services?</i>		<i>Q: What barriers make it difficult for people in your community to access the services they need?</i>
<i>Q: What kinds of programs or services are needed to help people in your community?</i>		<i>Q: What kinds of programs or services are needed to help people in your community?</i>
<i>Q: What can Rural Resources and other service providers (including local government) do to help close the gaps in your community?</i>		<i>Q: What can Rural Resources and other service providers (including local government) do to help close the gaps in your community?</i>
<i>Q: What are the signs that service providers support diversity and inclusivity?</i>		<i>Q: What are the signs that service providers support diversity and inclusivity?</i>
<i>Q: What are the three biggest needs facing this community?</i>		<i>Q: What are the three biggest needs facing this community?</i>

Location Highlights

Lincoln County

Seventeen (17) people attended the public meeting in Davenport. Four resource providers attended the resource provider meeting.

Those attending included a county commissioner, local business owners, representatives from the Lincoln County Health Department, Lincoln County Sheriff’s office, WorkSource, and a reporter from the Odessa Record newspaper.

Housing and transportation were the primary topics in these meetings. The available inventory of housing to rent or buy is very limited. The Department of Licensing office is temporarily closed due to staffing issues, and the school district does not offer a Driver’s Education program. This

limits the ability of youth and young adults, in particular, to access higher education and employment opportunities.

The lack of employment opportunities in the community was also a major issue. Many employers have pulled back on hiring due to the economy. This causes many households to commute to urban areas such as Airway Heights and Spokane to work if they can find childcare. The lack of internet access in rural areas is a barrier for remote employment.

Other community needs that were mentioned include better access to domestic violence advocates and services, in-home senior care and chore services, mobile food markets, childcare, and resource communication and coordination.

“Lack of childcare is forcing people into poverty because there are (currently) no childcare options for working families in rural areas.” – Resource Provider

Ferry County

Twelve (12) people attended the public meeting held in Republic which included small business owners and a large employer representative. Two people representing the community college and the NE Tri-County Health District attended the resource provider meeting.

Housing, transportation, as well as resource communication and coordination, were primary topics discussed in these meetings. Housing inventory is extremely low. This is a critical need for both medical facilities and local law enforcement that need to hire skilled professionals. Housing for seniors is also limited, and the waiting lists are long.

Bus schedules are limited, which creates a barrier for those residents who rely on public transportation to get to medical appointments.

Resource information is often outdated or poorly coordinated. This community would like to have one entity or source (referred to as a “Community Hub”) that will deliver timely and current community resource information.

“It’s hard to ask for help and then when you finally do it feels like you’re shut down and then you quit asking” – Community member

Pend Oreille County

Five people attended the public meeting and six people attended the resource provider meeting in Newport. The community members in attendance were primarily individuals living in subsidized housing units. Representatives from YES (teen support and drop-in center), Pend Oreille Counseling Services, the NE Tri-County Health District, and one county commissioner also attended.

Community members stated that most services in the community were easy to access with the exception of the utility assistance program administered by Rural Resources. Despite having a set time to apply by phone or online, these individuals could not connect to the system and apply before the resources were already committed. Internet and cell service in the northern part of the county can be unreliable, which is a barrier for those living in remote areas to access services.

More transportation services (more schedules, fewer eligibility requirements for public transportation, funding for gas vouchers and insurance) are needed in this county which will improve access to healthcare and counseling services.

“In our community, homeless youth/young adult do not have any options, so they are bused to Spokane. Coming from a rural area, this can be very scary. Many are reluctant to seek help.” – Resource Provider

Stevens County

Six people attended the public meeting and seven people attended the resource provider meeting in Colville. Public meeting participants included a person who was experiencing homelessness, and a senior citizen who was accompanied by her caregiver. Resource providers included representatives from New Alliance Behavioral Health, Employment Security, Spokane Community Colleges, NE Tri-County Health District, Catholic Charities, and a community church.

Public meeting participants described difficulties they were experiencing finding out what resources are available and what the eligibility criteria are. Many expressed a need for resource navigators or advocates to help seniors connect with services. The top community needs that were discussed included housing, transportation, childcare, and food assistance.

Resource providers would like to see financial support for a Community Resource Guide which can be distributed and/or posted online. These providers see a need to combine this with a community outreach program(s) that will go where people who are low-income or homeless are congregating.

“Providing just referral information is not the solution. We need the entry level assistance that provides more intensive case management for households that do not meet eligibility criteria” – Provider

Public Meeting Demographic Responses Compared to Online Survey

	Public Meeting Responses		Online Survey Responses
<i>Residency</i>			
Small City/Large Town	20	48.78%	49.42%
Small Town/Community	9	21.95%	14.85%
Urban Area	2	4.88%	3.94%
Rural Area	10	24.39%	31.79%
<i>County</i>			
Ferry County	12	29.27%	11.87%
Lincoln County	15	36.59%	6.85%
Pend Oreille	4	9.76%	13.93%
Stevens	7	17.07%	62.56%
Other: Adams (2) Spokane (1)	3	7.32%	4.79%
<i>Age Range</i>			
Under 25	1	2.44%	0.69%
25-35	2	4.88%	8.92%
36-50	11	26.83%	28.38%
51-65	14	34.15%	35.47%
66+	13	31.71%	26.54%
<i>Languages spoken in home</i>			
Arabic		-	-
English	41	100%	99.77%
Marshallese		-	-
Russian		-	-
Salish or Other Native American Language		-	0.92%
Spanish	2	4.88%	1.83%
Ukrainian		-	0.23%
Vietnamese		-	-
Other: French (2), ASL	3	7.32%	2.06%
<i>Race</i>			
White or Caucasian	37	90.24%	87.76%
Black or African American	-	-	0.69%
Asian or Asian American	2	4.88%	0.69%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	4.88%	6.93%
Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander	-	-	0.46%
Middle Eastern and North African (MENA)	-	-	-
Two or more races	1	2.44%	5.08%
Other: European American, Ashkenazi, Croatian, DNA	-	-	4.62%
<i>Ethnicity</i>			
Hispanic	2	4.88%	2.93%
Not Hispanic	33	80.49%	97.07%
Did not answer	6	14.63%	-
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	28	68.29%	83.87%
Male	8	19.51%	11.52%

Non-binary	-		1.15%
Prefer not to say	-		2.07%
Prefer to self-describe	-		1.38
Did not answer	5	12.20%	-
Employment Status			
Employed full-time	15	36.59%	33.18%
Employed part-time	4	9.76%	9.05%
Self-employed	4	9.76%	5.57%
Not employed, not looking for work	14	34.15%	22.74%
Unemployed and looking for work	-	-	5.57%
Unpaid volunteer or intern	1	2.44%	1.62%
Employed but not currently working	-	-	1.86%
Disabled	3	7.32%	20.42%
Housing Status			
Housed, own home	27	65.85%	64.83%
Housed, renting	5	12.20%	26.67%
Living in transitional housing	-	-	.69%
Living with friends or relatives	3	7.32%	7.13%
Living in a shelter	-	-	-
Not housed	1	2.44%	.69%
Did not answer	5	12.20%	-
Has previously worked with Rural Resources (not as an employee)			
Yes	17	41.46%	54.38%
No	19	46.34%	45.62%
Did not answer	5	12.20%	-