

UINTAH BASIN ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Organizations Mission

Agency Mission statement:

- *Our mission is, through a strong central organization, to unify the tri-county area for economic and social development by representing local governments and utilizing combined resources to enhance the quality of life for the citizenry.*

Vision Statement

Community Services Mission Statement:

- *The Uintah Basin Association of Governments Community Services Department focuses on moving low-income individuals and families out of poverty by providing access to human services programs. We provide services such as shelter, rental assistance, transitional housing, and food assistance. We seek to restore unhoused persons to independent living without discrimination or judgment.*

Prioritized Issues

ISSUES AREAS

Based on the 2025 needs assessment UBAOG will focus on the following strategies within the next 3 years:

1. Housing

The results of our surveys, forums, data collection and data analysis meetings found the number one need in our community is housing.

Family-level

- 69.49% of survey respondents stated that the high cost of home ownership (mortgage, property taxes, etc.) is a top issue for housing.
- The rising inflation, paired with the increased prices of everyday household goods, have made basic necessities out of reach for many households

Forum participants stated the top unmet need was the impact of inflation and how it has greatly affected housing availability.

Community-level

- The lack of low-income housing is a major issue in the area, but there is also a lack of market rate housing units as well. 67.28% of survey respondents also stated that there is a lack of affordable housing in the area such as subsidized low-income units and units that are below the fair market rent criteria.
- Property managers/owners in the community are continually raising their rental unit prices and eviction rates have risen to an ultimate high.

Agency-level

- The agency does not have available units, **making it hard for case managers to house individuals with RRH funding.**

2. Employment

Family-level

- 57.61% of survey participants stated that there are not enough jobs that pay well, while also providing benefits as the top issue for employment. Families are not employed in jobs that pay a living wage and offer benefits.
- 47.10% of the participant's stated wages are too low for them to be able to afford basic necessities such as housing, utilities, and food.
- Many families in the area need to rely on a two-income household, however, 33.70% of the survey participants stated their income does not cover the cost of childcare. This has led to one parent giving up their income and staying home to provide childcare while the other parent works. The loss of the other income results in lower income to afford household necessities. **The inability of families to afford children reduces the earning potential and economic security of families.**

Community-level

- 57.61% of survey participants stated that there are not enough jobs that pay well, while also providing benefits as the top issue for employment. There does not seem to be enough living wage jobs in the community for those not working in the oil field.

Agency-level

- Agency is at risk of losing funding that helps stabilize family incomes

3. Healthcare

Family-level

- 59.48% of survey participants stated that the cost of insurance is too high for people that are working at lower income jobs. It has become more beneficial to continue to work lower income jobs and receive mainstream benefits than to obtain better paying jobs and become over income for benefits. **Families are at risk of health issues due to not receiving preventative medical care.**
- 49.07% of survey respondents stated that the out-of-pocket costs are too expensive whether they have insurance or not. A single healthcare crisis can send a family into bankruptcy. **Families experiencing medical emergencies are at increased risk of experiencing bankruptcy.**
- **Individuals and families are unaware of mental health and substance abuse resources.** There is a strong need for addiction prevention and mental health services, and many people are unaware of the sliding scale mental health clinics in the area and that Medicaid will pay for mental health treatment. People are unaware of suicide prevention and mental health hotlines, and do not know where to go to get immediate services other than an emergency room

Community-level

- Stigma around mental illness continues to prevent treatment for mental health.
- The community needs a stronger campaign to help community members understand available mental health and substance abuse resources.

Agency-level

- Agency staff need additional capacity for community resource promotion (funding, additional staff, etc.)

4. Nutrition

Family-level

- Many participants stated when they receive income increases, they become ineligible for mainstream benefits leaving them with very little funds to help them purchase groceries throughout the month. Families facing benefit-cliff situation are unable to meet basic needs as a result of losing benefits.
- 86.13% of the survey respondents stated that the price of groceries is too high. 64.23% of survey respondents stated they do not make enough money to cover the costs of their basic food needs. Families struggle to afford food and are at risk of food insecurity.

Community-level

- There is a lack of diversity in shopping choices in the area, especially in the more remote places.
- With inflation on the rise, the all-food Food Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 23.6% between 2020-2024 in the United States; a higher increase than the all-items CPI which grew 21.2% over the same period. (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/chart-detail?chartId=58350>)

Agency-level

- Agency needs additional funding, staff, and food donations to meeting increasing food demand
- Agency needs more diversified pantry products, especially in areas where shopping choices are limited.

CHALLENGES TO EXITING POVERTY

1. Housing

There is a lack of available housing in all aspects of the community from low income to market rate rentals. This is making it extremely difficult for our unhoused population to obtain long-term housing. The existing programs such as Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher and other low-income housing projects have tenant selection guidelines that prevent individuals with greater barriers and felony backgrounds from getting housing. These guidelines make it increasingly difficult for our unhoused populations to obtain any housing at all. In addition to that, wait lists can be up to 5 years or completely closed, giving people no hope to become stably housed. While we do have subsidies available that can pay rent for a short time, our clients are having to look at market rate rentals that are over the amount allowed by the programs, therefore they are unable to pursue any of these rental units. Limited rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs leave many people to remain out on the streets. High rental rates push clients back on to the streets after the programs end. Landlords continue to be reluctant to accept our clients not only because of the time it takes to receive a check, but also because they have had bad experiences with previous clients. Due to the increased number of oilfield workers in the area, landlords have found that they can rent to those employees and receive the deposits and their rents immediately; there is no wait time.

In the next 3-year period, we are going to focus on:

- Continuing to maintain our current rental assistance and rapid rehousing programs and focus on advocacy with local elected officials.
- Building stronger relationships with the landlords in the community by holding meetings at least twice a year to update them on any changes with current programs and continue to build awareness among local landlords of our programs and how they can benefit from participating with us.
- Partner with upcoming warming/cooling center.
- Contact potential landlords who might want to be part of our list.

2. Employment

The average living wage in Uintah, Duchesne and Daggett counties is close to \$50. Wage disparity between women and minorities at higher paying jobs continues to be an issue. Employment intersects with homelessness; wages are not keeping up with rising rental rates, often leaving families and individuals with no other choice but to become homeless.

There is a lack of diversity in jobs that pay a livable wage. Many low-income households are working in the service sector and do not make anything close to a living wage. Most oilfield jobs are geared towards men and there isn't a lot of positions for women.

In the next 3-year period, we are going to focus on:

- Spreading awareness on the financial classes available through Utah State University. Through some training we are hoping individuals can better manage and budget the income they do have.
- Referring case managed clients to the classes as a part of their housing case plans.
- Continue to provide resource sheets with information on how to contact DWS to look for employment.
- Continue to provide case managed clients with assistance on accessing DWS and other job searching websites.
- Partner more with our local Vocational Rehabilitation Center to help individuals learn other skills that can improve their income.

3. Nutrition

In 2020, our pantries served a total of 2,548 individuals, whereas last year we served a total of 3,121 individuals, a 23% increase. Due to the high cost of inflation, people are having to rely more on pantry services to cover their basic food needs. For many households, it is a choice between purchasing food, paying rent, and keeping their utilities on. The coming reduction of SNAP benefits is expected to cause further increases in households that will need to utilize the food pantry. This is expected to put an even greater strain on the community. While nutrition was not identified as a gap in service, if our community were to lose this vital provision, many households would not have any resources and will end up going hungry.

In the next 3-year period, we are going to focus on:

- Building stronger connections with our USU extension to provide guidance on the healthy food choices that are available at our food pantries.
- Provide information on how clients can participate in classes that teach food preservation, such as canning, freezing and dehydrating.
- Continue to provide food pantry services in the Tri-County area.
- Expand partnerships with our local farmer's market.
- Continue to assist clients who do not receive food stamps with the DWS application process.
- Continue growing our pantry gardens to help provide healthy produce to all our pantry clients.

4. Healthcare

Many community members reported they cannot afford health insurance even if an employer offers it. Many premiums, co-pays and deductibles are often too high and out of reach. Because of this, many are choosing to go without health insurance and without proper healthcare. There is also a lack of knowledge on how to obtain care at sliding scale clinics, such as their location and how the pay scale works. In addition, Survey results, forum discussions and data analysis meetings show there has been a steady increase in substance abuse rates and overdoses in the area. There is a general lack of knowledge of suicide prevention and mental health hotlines and there is a lack of public information on how to access mental health services overall. There is a real stigma around obtaining mental health care.

In the next 3-year period, we are going to focus on:

- Providing all clients seeking services with a list of all available low cost, sliding scale healthcare resources in the area.
- Stay up to date on the mental health resource list.
- Build awareness of Medicaid programs.
- Build awareness of suicide hotlines and mental health hotlines-post on social media.

GAPS IN SERVICES

Housing:

Clients continue to report they are unable to secure a rental because there are very few available units. Low-income housing projects are full and have extensive waiting lists. Most high barrier clients are unable to meet the tenant criteria to be accepted into those programs.

Household status levels have remained fairly steady over the last few years. It is important to note that in FY24 our agency served more homeless households than homeowners, which reflects some of the housing insecurity challenges.

- We will work to better understand the parameters of the low-income housing units to prevent us from sending individuals that will not qualify.
- Continuing to facilitate LHC Affordable Housing Sub-Committees
- Continue to facilitate Rapid Rehousing, Homeless prevention, Emergency Shelter and DV transitional housing programs.
- Approach local low-income housing investors to build more low-income apartment communities and find out how we can help facilitate.
- Continue to advocate for more affordable housing

Employment:

Wages are stagnant for workers in the service sector. Wages do not keep up with the living wages in each county. Wage disparity for women and minorities continues to be an issue. Job diversity is a problem in our area as the economy is mostly driven by the gas and oil industry.

The largest share of those served since the last assessment by the agency are individuals between 25 years of age and 44 years of age. This is the age when families are most likely to have young children and begin careers. This illustrates the added burden young families face, the need for economic opportunity in the region, and the impact of inflation.

- We will promote Career Development classes that help to equip individuals with the knowledge they need to become successful in their career.
- Partner with Utah State University to promote their financial literacy courses to help individuals become successful in managing their financials.
- Continuing to partner with DWS employment counselors.
- Continuing to partner with Vocational Rehab on assisting individuals with more diverse skills

Healthcare:

There is a general lack of knowledge of suicide prevention and mental health hotlines and there is a lack of public information on how to access mental health services overall. Families and individuals are reporting that even though health insurance is offered through their employers, high premiums, deductibles and co-pay costs keep access to healthcare out of reach. Because of this, many are choosing to go without health insurance.

- We will provide up-to-date information on suicide and mental health hotlines.
- We will provide up-to-date information on sliding scale and free health clinic in the area
- Continue to partner with local mental health clinics as well as low-cost or free health clinics.

SERVICE NEEDS

UBAOG will work on the following issues:

Housing: In FY22, UBAOG saw a surge of new customers due to pandemic recovery programs such as the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program. As the program ended there was a decline in total numbers served. However, due to continued costs of housing, food, utilities and other expenses the agency saw an 11.66% increase from FY23 to FY24—All while the agency had reductions in funding and increased operating costs due to inflation.

Household status levels have remained fairly steady over the past few years. However, it is important to note that in FY24 the agency served more homeless households than homeowners – which is a reflection of the housing insecurity challenges in the area.

We will continue to provide our community with the following programs, and we will continue to apply for more rental assistance and emergency shelter grants as they become available.

- Continue to provide Emergency Shelter vouchers, Homeless Prevention, and Rapid Rehousing programs that can pay rent, deposits, mortgages and utility assistance.
- Continue to apply for Emergency Shelter grants to provide longer stay motel vouchers
- Continue to apply for Rapid Rehousing, Homeless Prevention and DV Transitional Housing funding to keep the programs we currently have.
- Apply for any new programs that become available.
- Partner with the upcoming warming center as much as possible.
- Provide grant information to the leadership of the upcoming warming center.
- Continue to participate in the LHC Affordable Housing sub-committee meetings.

Employment: The largest demographic that UBAOG serves has household incomes between 0-50% of the federal poverty level. Although this demographic continues to be the largest served, it has decreased each year over the last three years while there have been increases in households with larger income. This demonstrates that some of the new growth since the last assessment has come from households that work additional hours, but who are still unable to meet basic needs due to inflation.

We will continue to raise awareness of employment courses available through our partnering educational institutions and fellow government agencies.

- Raise awareness of Utah State University's Financial Literacy courses.
- Raise awareness of employment training that is offered through Vocational Rehab.
- Continuing to partner with DWS employment counselors.
- Continue to assist clients in navigating DWS and other job searching websites.

Nutrition: Even as the agency experiences growth, it continues to track outcomes, or positive changes, in its families. One of the most common outcomes was how the agency assisted families in becoming food secure through its pantry programs, community gardens,

and through partnerships with partners like the Tri County Health Department, Utah State University Extension, and the Vernal Rotary Club.

We will continue to operate the four food pantries located in Roosevelt, Duchesne, Vernal, and Manila. Due to the steady increase in pantry usage, we will continue to make our community aware of the need for food. We will continue to advocate for monetary donations and food drives as well as continue to cultivate our community gardens that are at three of our food pantries.

- Provide information on how clients can participate in classes that teach food preservation, such as canning, freezing and dehydrating.
- Continue to operate and provide food pantry services in the Tri-County area.
- Expand partnerships with USU and our local farmer's market.
- Continue to assist clients who do not receive food stamps with the DWS application process.
- Continue to partner and collaborate with the Utah Food Bank.
- Continue to provide community gardens at three of the area food pantries.

Healthcare: We will continue to raise awareness about our local health and mental healthcare facilities and the resources that they offer.

- Provide a list of all mental health providers in the area.
 - Lists of NA and AA meetings.
 - Build better relationships with the inpatient recovery services in the area.
 - Provide up to date information on suicide prevention and mental health hotlines
 - Create awareness of sliding scale and free local health care clinics
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- **Behavioral Health Services for Addiction:** Our community is still in desperate need for more services that can help those suffering from addiction. While our agency is not best equipped to take the lead on this issue, it can support its partners and ensure that its services are coordinated in the best way to support community coalitions.

ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY

While income and employment are generally the key factors to the causes of poverty. The fact remains that a living wage is entirely out of reach for anyone working at a minimum wage or even a moderate wage. Most households require that there are two or more individuals bringing in an income to just get by. Rental and homeowner rates continue to rise while the number of available units, whether they be low income or market rate continues to decrease. Mainstream benefits do provide a safety net for the lowest earning households. However, if a person better their situation, benefits are discontinued and households are no better off, or worse due to the current high cost of living. Workers cannot afford to keep their jobs or accept promotions/pay raises for fear of losing their vital benefits. This ensures that the cycle continues, and families are never able to get out of poverty.

Root Causes of Poverty for Prioritized issues:

Housing: In surveys, forums, focus groups and statistical analysis, we have found that homeless individuals have the hardest time obtaining housing. Many times, background issues and other barriers prevent them from obtaining low-income housing. Lack of income shuts them out for any kind of housing at all. Landlords are choosing to not renew leases for the lower income households while they are raising their rates to accommodate the higher paid populations. The unhoused population does not have access to basic human needs. They are unable to obtain jobs due to their homeless status. They have an ever-harder time accessing mainstream benefits that can help stabilize their housing situations.

Employment: While many areas have increased their minimum wage rates, most have not. This keeps financial stability out of reach for many individuals as their income does not cover their basic needs. While living wages continue to increase, actual wages do not keep up with the cost of living. This causes individuals and families to become unemployed, homeless and often hopeless.

Healthcare: The continuous rise in addiction and overall poor mental health continues to keep individuals and families from staying employed, housed and productive members of the community. The lack of awareness of suicide prevention hotlines and mental health hotlines is a barrier for individuals to receive help. The lack of low cost or free mental health services is a further barrier.

Nutrition: The cost of general groceries has increased greatly over the last few years, especially in rural areas where they have limited shopping choices. This increase is making food scarce for low-income families and individuals. Families are choosing to buy unhealthy processed foods that are higher in calories, carbohydrates, and sugars rather than healthy goods. Healthy foods are becoming less obtainable for lower income households.

LINKAGES/PARTNERSHIPS

We will continue to maintain the following links and partnerships by providing both collaboration and support to the following agencies:

Department of Workforce Services

Community Action Partnership of Utah

Local Housing Authorities

Utah Food Bank

Utah State University Extension

Local Rotary Clubs

Northeastern Counseling

Family Support Center

Utah Legal Services

Friends Against Family Violence

Duchesne and Uintah County Victims Advocates

We will strengthen the following linkages and partnerships by providing information and accessibility to department leadership to continue to collaborate and partner with the following entities:

Local landlords

Local Motels

COLLECTION/DATA REVIEW PROCESS

Data from our 2025 Needs Assessment was obtained through collection of 280 surveys, public forums, community partner resources, and different statistical data sources. We made sure to include key sectors of the community at our public forums, data analysis meetings and when prioritizing our community needs.

In addition, we utilized CAP60 and our State HMIS database, to compare usage and services provided from year to year. We then held two data analysis meetings to review the key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and assess the need of the community.

Those needs were then assessed and approved by the CSBG Tri-partite Board, the UBAOG Executive Director and then the UBAOG Governing Board. Our Community Services and Food Pantry Advisory Board meets on a quarterly basis. Board members consist of local elected officials, private/public representatives, and low-income representatives. We will utilize our ROMA skills to reassess our community needs and develop yearly strategic plans as needed.

