

2026/2027 Community Needs Assessment and Community Action Plan

Community Action Commission
of Santa Barbara County
DBA CommUnify



CommUnify
Empowering people. Transforming lives.



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Introduction

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has developed the 2026/2027 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and Community Action Plan (CAP) template for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Service Providers network. CSD requests agencies submit a completed CAP, including a CNA, to CSD on or before **June 30, 2025**. Changes from the previous template are detailed below in the “What’s New for 2026/2027?” section. Provide all narrative responses in 12-point Arial font with 1.15 spacing. A completed CAP template should not exceed 65 pages, excluding the appendices.

Purpose

Public Law 105-285 (the CSBG Act) and the California Government Code require that CSD secure a CAP, including a CNA from each agency. Section 676(b)(11) of the CSBG Act directs that receipt of a CAP is a condition to receive funding. Section 12747(a) of the California Government Code requires the CAP to assess poverty-related needs, available resources, feasible goals, and strategies that yield program priorities consistent with standards of effectiveness established for the program. Although CSD may prescribe statewide priorities or strategies that shall be considered and addressed at the local level, each agency is authorized to set its own program priorities in conformance to its determination of local needs. The CAP supported by the CNA is a two-year plan that shows how agencies will deliver CSBG services. CSBG funds are by their nature designed to be flexible. They shall be used to support activities that increase the capacity of low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient.

Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances and Certification

The Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances are found in Section 676(b) of the CSBG Act. These assurances are an integral part of the information included in the CSBG State Plan. A list of the assurances that are applicable to CSBG agencies has been provided in the Federal Programmatic Assurances section of this template. CSBG agencies should review these assurances and confirm that they are in compliance. Signature of the board chair and executive director on the Cover Page certify compliance with the Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances.

State Assurances and Certification

As required by the CSBG Act, states are required to submit a State Plan as a condition to receive funding. Information provided in agencies’ CAPs will be included in the CSBG State Plan. Alongside Organizational Standards, the state will be reporting on [State Accountability Measures](#) in order to ensure accountability and program performance improvement. A list of the applicable State Assurances is provided in this template. CSBG agencies should review these assurances and confirm that they are in compliance. Signature of the board chair and executive director on the Cover Page certify compliance with the State Assurances.

Compliance with CSBG Organizational Standards

As described in the Office of Community Services (OCS) [Information Memorandum \(IM\) #138](#) dated January 26, 2015, CSBG agencies will comply with the Organizational Standards. A list of Organizational Standards that are met by an accepted CAP, including a CNA, are found in the Organizational Standards section of this template. Agencies are encouraged to utilize this list as a resource when reporting on the Organizational Standards annually.

What's New for 2026/2027?

Due Date. The due date for your agency's 2026/2027 CAP is June 30, 2025. However, earlier submission of the CSBG Network's CAPs will allow CSD more time to review and incorporate agency information in the CSBG State Plan and Application. CSD, therefore, requests that agencies submit their CAPs on or before May 31, 2025.

ROMA Certification Requirement. CSD requires that agencies have the capacity to provide their own ROMA, or comparable system, certification for your agency's 2026/2027 CAP. Certification can be provided by agency staff who have the required training or in partnership with a consultant or another agency.

Federal CSBG Programmatic and State Assurances Certification. In previous templates, the federal and state assurances were certified by signature on the Cover Page and by checking the box(es) in both federal and state assurances sections. In the 2026/2027 template, CSD has clarified the language above the signature block on the Cover Page and done away with the check boxes. Board chairs and executive directors will certify compliance with the assurances by signature only. However, the Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances and the State Assurances language remain part of the 2026/2027 template.

Other Modifications. The title page of the template has been modified to include your agency's name and logo. Please use this space to brand your agency's CAP accordingly. CSD has also added references to the phases of the ROMA Cycle i.e. assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation throughout the 2026/2027 template. Additionally, there are a few new questions, minor changes to old questions, and a reordering of some questions.

Checklist

- ☒ Cover Page
- ☒ Public Hearing Report

Part I: Community Needs Assessment Summary

- ☒ Narrative
- ☒ Results

Part II: Community Action Plan

- ☒ Vision and Mission Statements
- ☒ Causes and Conditions of Poverty
- ☒ Tripartite Board of Directors
- ☒ Service Delivery System
- ☒ Linkages and Funding Coordination
- ☒ Monitoring
- ☒ ROMA Application
- ☒ Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances
- ☒ State Assurances
- ☒ Organizational Standards

Part III: Appendices

- ☒ Notice of Public Hearing
- ☒ Low-Income Testimony and Agency's Response
- ☒ Community Needs Assessment


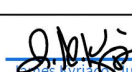
Cover Page

Agency Name:	CommUnify
Name of CAP Contact:	David Jimenez
Title:	Operations Manager
Phone:	805-964-8857 Ext #1142
Email:	djimenez@CommUnifySB.org

Date Most Recent CNA was Completed: (Organizational Standard 3.1)	May 1, 2025
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Board and Agency Certification

The undersigned hereby certifies that this agency will comply with the [Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances \(CSBG Act Section 676\(b\)\)](#) and [California State Assurances \(Government Code Sections 12747\(a\), 12760, and 12768\)](#) for services and programs provided under the 2026/2027 Community Needs Assessment and Community Action Plan. The undersigned governing body accepts the completed Community Needs Assessment. (Organizational Standard 3.5)

Name: Patricia Keelean 	Name: James Kyriaco 
Title: Chief Executive Officer	Title: Board Chair
Date: 6/24/25	Date: 6/25/25

ROMA Certification

The undersigned hereby certifies that this agency's Community Action Plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system or comparable system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation). (CSBG Act 676(b)(12), Organizational Standard 4.3)

Name:	David Jimenez 
ROMA Title:	NCRI
Date:	6/24/25

CSD Use Only

Dates CAP		Accepted By
Received	Accepted	

Public Hearing(s)

California Government Code Section 12747(b)-(d)

State Statute Requirements

As required by California Government Code Section 12747(b)-(d), agencies are required to conduct a public hearing for the purpose of reviewing the draft CAP. Testimony presented by low-income individuals and families during the public hearing shall be identified in the final CAP.

Guidelines

Notice of Public Hearing

1. Notice of the public hearing should be published at least 10 calendar days prior to the public hearing.
2. The notice may be published on the agency's website, social media channels, and/or in newspaper(s) of local distribution.
3. The notice should include information about the draft CAP; where members of the community may review, or how they may receive a copy of, the draft CAP; the dates of the comment period; where written comments may be sent; date, time, and location of the public hearing; and the agency contact information.
4. The comment period should be open for at least 10 calendar days prior to the public hearing. Agencies may opt to extend the comment period for a selected number of days after the hearing.
5. The draft CAP should be made available for public review and inspection approximately 30 days prior to the public hearing. The draft CAP may be posted on the agency's website, social media channels, and distributed electronically or in paper format.
6. Attach a copy of the Notice(s) of Public Hearing in Part III: Appendices as Appendix A.

Public Hearing

1. Agencies must conduct at least one public hearing on the draft CAP.
2. Public hearing(s) must be held in the designated CSBG service area(s).
3. Low-income testimony presented at the hearing or received during the comment period should be memorialized verbatim in the Low-Income Testimony and Agency's Response document and appended to the final CAP as Appendix B in Part III: Appendices.
4. The Low-Income Testimony and Agency's Response document should include the name of low-income individual, his/her testimony, an indication of whether or not the need was addressed in the draft CAP, and the agency's response to the testimony if the concern was not addressed in the draft CAP.

Additional Guidance

For the purposes of fulfilling the public hearing requirement on the draft CAP, agencies may conduct the public hearing in-person, remotely, or using a hybrid model based on community need at the time of the hearing.

Public Hearing Report

Date(s) the Notice(s) of Public Hearing(s) was/were published	5/21/2025
Date Public Comment Period opened	5/13/2025
Date Public Comment Period closed	6/17/2025
Date(s) of Public Hearing(s)	6/17/2025
Location(s) of Public Hearing(s)	Virtual via Zoom
Where was the Notice of Public Hearing published? (agency website, newspaper, social media channels)	Agency website, social media
Number of attendees at the Public Hearing(s)	0

Part I: Community Needs Assessment Summary

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(11)

California Government Code Section 12747(a)

Helpful Resources

A community needs assessment provides a comprehensive “picture” of the needs in your service area(s). Resources are available to guide agencies through this process.

- CSD-lead training – “Community Needs Assessment: Common Pitfalls and Best Practices” on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at 1:00 pm. [Registration is required](#). The training will be recorded and posted on the Local Agencies Portal after the event.
- Examples of CNAs, timelines, and other resources are on the [Local Agencies Portal](#).
- [Community Action Guide to Comprehensive Community Needs Assessments](#) published by the National Association for State Community Service Programs (NASCSPP).
- [Community Needs Assessment Tool](#) designed by the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP).
- National and state quantitative data sets. See links below.

Sample Data Sets		
U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Data	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic Data	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Data & Report
HUD Exchange PIT and HIC Data Since 2007	National Low-Income Housing Coalition Housing Needs by State	National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS
California Department of Education School Data via DataQuest	California Employment Development Department UI Data by County	California Department of Public Health Various Data Sets
California Department of Finance Demographics	California Attorney General Open Justice	California Health and Human Services Data Portal
CSD Census Tableau Data by County		Population Reference Bureau KidsData
Data USA National Public Data	National Equity Atlas Racial and Economic Data	Census Reporter Census Data

Sample Data Sets		
Urban Institute SNAP Benefit Gap	Race Counts California Racial Disparity Data	Rent Data Fair Market Rent by ZIP
UC Davis Center for Poverty & Inequality Poverty Statistics	University of Washington Center for Women's Welfare California Self-Sufficiency Standard	University of Wisconsin Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator	Nonprofit Leadership Center Volunteer Time Calculator	Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator

Narrative

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(9)

Organizational Standards 2.2, 3.3

ROMA – Assessment

Based on your agency's most recent CNA, please respond to the questions below.

1. Describe the geographic location(s) that your agency is funded to serve with CSBG. If applicable, include a description of the various pockets, high-need areas, or neighborhoods of poverty that are being served by your agency.

Santa Barbara County has a population of more than 440,000 residents across 2,700 square miles. The County is bordered by San Luis Obispo County to the north and Ventura County to the east and south. The County is geographically wide-spread and includes isolated rural communities and agricultural enterprises, small to mid-sized cities and suburbs, beach communities and ranches, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lompoc Federal Prison, and the Chumash Reservation. To effectively service the community, CommUnify addresses the county in three regions: 1) the North County region, including the cities of Santa Maria, Guadalupe, and Cuyama; 2) the Mid-County region including Lompoc, Vandenberg Village and the Santa Ynez Valley; 3) the South County region, including the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria. In years past, North and Mid-County have proven to be higher need areas when compared to South County.

2. Indicate from which sources your agency collected and analyzed quantitative data for its most recent CNA. (Check all that apply.) (Organizational Standard 3.3)

Federal Government/National Data Sets

- ☒ Census Bureau
- ☐ Bureau of Labor Statistics
- ☐ Department of Housing & Urban Development
- ☒ Department of Health & Human Services
- ☐ National Low-Income Housing Coalition
- ☐ National Equity Atlas
- ☐ National Center for Education Statistics
- ☒ Academic data resources
- ☒ Other online data resources
- ☐ Other

Local Data Sets

- ☐ Local crime statistics
- ☐ High school graduation rate
- ☐ School district school readiness
- ☐ Local employers
- ☐ Local labor market
- ☐ Childcare providers
- ☐ Public benefits usage
- ☒ County Public Health Department
- ☒ Other

California State Data Sets

- ☒ Employment Development Department
- ☐ Department of Education
- ☒ Department of Public Health
- ☐ Attorney General
- ☐ Department of Finance
- ☐ Other

Surveys

- ☒ Clients
- ☒ Partners and other service providers
- ☒ General public
- ☒ Staff
- ☒ Board members
- ☒ Private sector
- ☒ Public sector
- ☒ Educational Institutions
- ☐ Other

Agency Data Sets

- ☒ Client demographics
- ☐ Service data
- ☒ CSBG Annual Report
- ☐ Client satisfaction data
- ☐ Other

3. Indicate the approaches your agency took to gather qualitative data for its most recent CNA.
(Check all that apply.) (Organizational Standard 3.3)

Surveys

- ☒ Clients
- ☒ Partners and other service providers
- ☒ General public
- ☒ Staff
- ☒ Board members
- ☒ Private sector
- ☒ Public sector
- ☒ Educational institutions

Interviews

- ☒ Local leaders
- ☐ Elected officials
- ☐ Partner organizations' leadership
- ☐ Board members
- ☐ New and potential partners
- ☐ Clients

Focus Groups

- ☐ Local leaders
- ☐ Elected officials
- ☒ Partner organizations' leadership
- ☒ Board members
- ☒ New and potential partners
- ☒ Clients
- ☒ Staff

☒ **Community Forums**☒ **Asset Mapping**☐ **Other**

4. Confirm that your agency collected and analyzed information from each of the five community sectors below as part of the assessment of needs and resources in your service area(s). Your agency must demonstrate that all sectors were included in the needs assessment by checking each box below; a response for each sector is required. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(9), Organizational Standard 2.2)

Community Sectors

- ☒ Community-based organizations
- ☒ Faith-based organizations
- ☒ Private sector (local utility companies, charitable organizations, local food banks)
- ☒ Public sector (social services departments, state agencies)
- ☒ Educational institutions (local school districts, colleges)

Results

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(11)

California Government Code Section 12747(a)

Organizational Standards 4.2

State Plan Summary and Section 14.1a

ROMA – Planning

Based on your agency's most recent CNA, please complete Table 1: Needs Table and Table 2: Priority Ranking Table.

Table 1: Needs Table					
Needs Identified	Level (C/F)	Agency Mission (Y/N)	Currently Addressing (Y/N)	If not currently addressing, why?	Agency Priority (Y/N)
Families lack economic stability.	F	Y	Y	Choose an item.	Y
Families lack access to healthcare.	F	Y	Y	Choose an item.	Y
Families need affordable housing.	F	Y	Y	Choose an item.	Y
Families are facing food insecurity.	F	Y	Y	Choose an item.	Y
Families require access to child care.	F	Y	Y	Choose an item.	Y

Needs Identified: Enter each need identified in your agency's most recent CNA. Ideally, agencies should use ROMA needs statement language in Table 1. ROMA needs statements are complete sentences that identify the need. For example, "Individuals lack living wage jobs" or "Families lack access to affordable housing" are needs statements. Whereas "Employment" or "Housing" are not. Add row(s) if additional space is needed.

Level (C/F): Identify whether the need is a community level (C) or a family level (F) need. If the need is a community level need, the need impacts the geographical region directly. If the need is a family level need, it will impact individuals/families directly.

Agency Mission (Y/N): Indicate if the identified need aligns with your agency's mission.

Currently Addressing (Y/N): Indicate if your agency is addressing the identified need.

If not currently addressing, why?: If your agency is not addressing the identified need, please select a response from the dropdown menu.

Agency Priority: Indicate if the identified need is an agency priority.

Table 2: Priority Ranking Table

	Agency Priorities	Description of programs, services, activities	Indicator(s) or Service(s) Category
1.	Families lack economic stability.	<p>We will connect families and individuals to employment support services and financial literacy training to help boost their economic stability through the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1: Referrals and linkages • Economic Empowerment: Budgeting, credit and financial literacy training. • Workforce Development Program: We are in the process of developing this new program to launch late 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRV 7c: Number of individuals referred to healthcare services. • FNPI 3h. The number of individuals engaged with the Community Action Agency who report improved financial well-being. • SRV 1a. Vocational Training • SRV 1f. Job Readiness Training • SRV 1g. Workshops • SRV 1h. Coaching • SRV 1j. Resume Development • SRV 1k. Interview Skills Training • SRV 1l. Job Referrals • SRV 1m. Job Placements • SRV 1n. Pre employment physicals, background checks, etc.
2.	Families lack access to healthcare.	<p>We will connect families and children to healthcare services, increasing access, through the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1: Referrals and linkages • Adolescent Family Life Planning (AFLP): Expecting/parenting females receive positive development services including pre/post-natal care. • Children's Services: Comprehensive education and family support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRV 7c: Number of individuals referred to healthcare services. • FNPI 5b. Number of individuals who demonstrated improved physical health and well-being. • FNPI 2b. The number of children (0 to 5) who demonstrated skills for school readiness. • SRV 5dd. Child Dental Screenings/Exams • SRV 5c. Developmental Delay Screening • SRV 5a. Immunizations • SRV 5d. Vision Screening • SRV 5b. Physicals
3.	Families need affordable housing.	<p>We will connect families and individuals to housing support services through the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1: Referrals and linkages • Senior Safe At Home: repairs and safety upgrades to promote seniors remaining in their homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRV 7c. Number of individuals referred to housing services. • FNPI 4g. The number of individuals who experienced improved health and safety due to improvements within their home (e.g. reduction or elimination of lead, radon,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility Assistance: funding for utility bills and energy-saving education to divert funds back towards housing. • Weatherization Services: home repairs, energy efficiency upgrades to keep homes safe and efficient. 	<p>carbon monoxide and/or fire hazards or electrical issues, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FNPI 5f. The number of seniors (65+) who maintained an independent living situation. • FNPI 4h. Number of households with improved energy efficiency and/or energy burden reduction. • SRV4i. Utility Payments • SRV4k. Utility Arrears Payment • SRV 4t. Energy Efficiency Improvements (e.g. insulation, air sealing, furnace repair, etc.)
4.	Families are facing food insecurity.	<p>We will provide meals to head start children and refer families and individuals to nutritional services through the programs below and share our findings around this area with our partners working to address this need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1: Referrals and linkages • Children's Services: Comprehensive education and family support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRV 7c. Number of individuals referred to nutritional services. • SRV 5ii. Prepared Meals
5.	Families require access to child care.	<p>We will connect families to child care services, increasing access, through the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1: Referrals and linkages • Children's Services: Comprehensive education and family support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRV 7c: Number of individuals referred to family support services. • FNPI 2c.1. Early Childhood Education (ages 0-5) • FNPI 2d.1. Ages 0-5 in Early Childhood Education • SRV 2a. Early Head Start • SRV 2b. Head Start
<p>Agency Priorities: Rank the needs identified as a priority in Table 1: Needs Table according to your agency's planned priorities. Ideally, agencies should use ROMA needs statement language. Insert row(s) if additional space is needed.</p> <p>Description of programs, services, activities: Briefly describe the program, services, or activities that your agency will provide to address the need. Including the number of clients who are expected to achieve the indicator in a specified timeframe.</p> <p>Indicator/Service Category: List the indicator(s) (CNPI, FNPI) or service(s) (SRV) that will be reported on in Modules 3 and 4 of the CSBG Annual Report.</p>			

Part II: Community Action Plan

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(11)

California Government Code Sections 12745(e), 12747(a)

California Code of Regulations Sections 100651 and 100655

Vision and Mission Statements

ROMA – Planning

1. Provide your agency's Vision Statement.

People Living Sustainable and Independent Lives.

2. Provide your agency's Mission Statement.

We serve Santa Barbara County's vulnerable populations through education and coordinated services so they may achieve economic stability, improve overall well-being and thrive.

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Organizational Standards 1.1, 1.2, 3.2, 3.4

ROMA – Planning

1. Describe the key findings of your analysis of information collected directly from low-income individuals to better understand their needs. (Organizational Standards 1.1, 1.2)

1. Economic Stability is the Foundation

Family financial concerns, including access to job opportunities, are at the top of the list. This suggests that addressing economic instability is foundational to improving overall well-being. Without sufficient income or access to stable jobs, families face significant barriers to meeting other basic needs, such as housing, healthcare, and child care. Enhancing employment opportunities, improving wage equity, and addressing economic disparities should be prioritized.

2. Access to Healthcare is Critical

The need for **healthcare access**, particularly more providers and specialized care, underscores how vital healthcare is for families' long-term stability. This includes not only general health services but **also mental health services** as well as addressing gaps in specialized care. The shortage of providers (both for health and mental health services), especially in rural or underserved areas, exacerbates the challenges families face when seeking care. Expanding healthcare infrastructure and making it more accessible will be key to addressing this need.

3. Affordable Housing is a Major Concern

Affordable housing continues to be a pressing issue. Housing instability—whether due to high rent, overcrowding, or lack of availability—directly impacts family well-being. This concern highlights the need for policies and programs that expand affordable housing options, protect renters, and address the systemic causes of housing insecurity.

4. Food Security is Now a Priority

Food assistance and security emerges as a key priority. Even though food assistance programs exist, there's still a significant gap in access and availability. Increasing support for food programs and ensuring families can consistently access nutritious food is essential. **The connection between food security and overall health is clear**, and addressing this need can have positive ripple effects on other areas, like healthcare and education.

5. Child Care Access is Crucial for Family Stability

The need for **child care access** signals the critical role child care plays in supporting families, especially working parents. Affordable, safe, and high-quality child care is essential for families to balance work and caregiving responsibilities. Improving access to child care services, particularly in underserved areas, will not only help parents economically but also support early childhood development.

6. Interconnected Nature of Needs

The interconnectedness of these needs—financial stability, healthcare, housing, food security, and child care—suggests that addressing them in isolation will be less effective than a holistic approach. **These issues overlap and reinforce one another**, and **solutions must take a systems-thinking approach** to address the broader context in which families are living.

7. Immediate Action and Long-Term Solutions

While immediate relief is necessary in areas like food security and housing assistance, the long-term resolution lies in **addressing the root causes of financial instability, lack of healthcare access, and affordable housing**. Policies that improve wages, expand healthcare access, and reduce housing costs will have lasting benefits.

2. Describe your agency's assessment findings specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for your service area(s). (Organizational Standard 3.2)

CommUnify's Community Needs Assessment drew from a range of local, state, and national data sources to examine poverty in Santa Barbara County, with a focus on its correlation to gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Key sources included the U.S. Census Bureau and World Population Review, which provided a demographic overview of the county. This data was then compared to the demographics of individuals served by CommUnify, as reported in the CSBG Annual Report. To ensure the assessment reflected the experiences of low-income residents across the county, these findings were further analyzed alongside survey and focus group data collected from various geographic regions.

3. "Causes of poverty" are the negative factors that create or foster barriers to self-sufficiency and/or reduce access to resources in communities in which low-income individuals live. After review and analysis of your needs assessment data, describe the causes of poverty in your agency's service area(s). (Organizational Standard 3.4)

While Santa Barbara County is perceived affluent, and in many ways is, it is also a place of poverty and struggle. The following key inferences can be made about poverty, and needs in Santa Barbara County including:

1. **Affordable Housing Crisis:** The high housing costs are a primary driver of poverty, with many residents struggling to afford housing in a market where even median home prices are significantly higher than national averages.
2. **Young Adults and Ethnic Minorities Are Disproportionately Affected:** Young adults, especially females aged 18-24, and Hispanic populations are more likely to experience poverty, indicating systemic issues that need targeted policy interventions.
3. **Low-Wage Sectors:** The prevalence of low-paying jobs, particularly in agriculture and administrative sectors, is contributing to the high poverty rates. Increasing wages and job opportunities in higher-paying industries could reduce poverty levels.
4. **Geographic Inequities:** Areas like Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Guadalupe experience higher unemployment and poverty, indicating a need for more localized interventions.
5. **Digital and Economic Access:** The digital divide exacerbates the challenges faced by low-income

households in accessing education, jobs, and health services, further trapping individuals in poverty.

In conclusion, addressing the needs of low-income people in Santa Barbara County requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on affordable housing, job creation, racial and ethnic equality, education, and expanding access to technology for underserved populations

4. “Conditions of poverty” are the negative environmental, safety, health and/or economic conditions that may reduce investment or growth in communities where low-income individuals live. After review and analysis of your needs assessment data, describe the conditions of poverty in your agency’s service area(s). (Organizational Standard 3.4)

Regional economies and employment patterns differ significantly across Santa Barbara County. The South County region is characterized by a highly skilled and educated workforce, with employment concentrated in professional, scientific/technical, retail, and management sectors. In contrast, the North and Mid-County regions are primarily agricultural, employing a larger share of lower-wage workers. These disparities contribute to a complex and varied landscape of poverty throughout the county, resulting in a range of documented poverty-related conditions, including:

- Employed workers who are paid non-living wages
- Lack of education required to obtain necessary skills (hard/soft) to work in current economy
- Generational poverty (lack of intergenerational upward mobility)
- Lack of affordable childcare, especially for infants and toddlers
- Lack of affordable health insurance for undocumented workers
- Multiple families living in one household
- Homelessness
- Lack access to safety-net resources for “working poor” and immigrant/undocumented populations

5. Describe your agency’s data and findings obtained through the collecting, analyzing, and reporting of customer satisfaction data.

CommUnify collects feedback on program participant satisfaction through text campaigns, phone calls, online surveys, and paper surveys. Participants are asked five key questions:

- Do you feel welcomed and treated with respect when seeking or receiving services?
- Have you received quality services?
- Have we met your expectations?
- Are you informed about other services the agency offers?
- Do you have any additional comments or recommendations?

This year's survey results showed that 93% of respondents felt respected when seeking services, 92% reported receiving quality services, and 90% said their expectations were met. Additionally, 72% indicated they were informed about other available services. Utility Assistance, Early Childhood Education, and Energy Efficiency Programs were identified as the top areas of interest among participants.

Tripartite Board of Directors

CSBG Act Sections 676B(a) and (b), 676(b)(10)

Organizational Standards 1.1. 3.5

ROMA – Evaluation

1. Describe your agency's procedures under which a low-income individual, community organization, religious organization, or representative of low-income individuals that considers its organization or low-income individuals to be inadequately represented on your agency's board to petition for adequate representation. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(10), Organizational Standard 1.1)

Consistent with Sections 4.3 and 4.5 of CommUnify's Bylaws, low-income sector Board members will appoint the candidates who, by means of democratic selection procedures, are adequate to ensure that low-income individuals and families are represented from across the county. As specified, one of these Board seats will be held by the Head Start Policy Council Chair or designee. The remaining members need not be low-income themselves. Currently, CommUnify Board Members representing the low-income sector include:

- Ariel Miguel, Head Start Policy Council Chair
- Marina Owen, CEO CenCal Health
- Josephine Torres, Santa Barbara Resident and former Head Start participant
- Angela Miller-Bevan, CEO/Executive Director Unity Shoppe

Per Section 4.5.1 of CommUnify's Bylaws, all Directors shall be elected by the Board at annual or special meetings of the Board. In electing Directors, the Board shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, life-style, handicap, or socio-economic status. In the event of a vacancy, CommUnify will begin its democratic selection process ideally filling the vacancy within three months. A vacancy or vacancies in the Board may be filled by a majority of the Directors then in office, whether or not less than a quorum, or by a sole remaining Director per Section 4.6 of the bylaws. Each Director so elected shall hold office until the end of his or her term and until his or her successor is elected and qualified, or until he or she resigns or is removed from the Board. A Director may succeed himself or herself in office.

2. Describe your process for communicating with and receiving formal approval from your agency board of the Community Needs Assessment (Organizational Standard 3.5).

CommUnify's Board of Directors participates in a Community Needs Assessment focus group during each assessment cycle, providing valuable input and helping to identify board priorities. Their feedback is combined with that of other stakeholders to develop a list of top community needs. The full Community Needs Assessment report is then included in the board packet, with key findings presented for review and discussion at a board meeting. If a quorum is present, the

board is asked to approve the report during the meeting. This was completed in May 2025 for the 2026/2027 Community Action Plan.

Service Delivery System

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A)

State Plan 14.3a

ROMA - Implementation

1. Describe your agency's service delivery system. Include a description of your client intake process or system and specify whether services are delivered via direct services or subcontractors, or a combination of both. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(A), State Plan 14.3a)

CommUnify is in the process of launching a new universal intake system using the eLogic Genesis platform. While certain programs, such as Hancock and ChildPlus, must continue using their own front-end systems, we are developing APIs to consolidate all data into a unified agency platform. As part of this initiative, we also created a screening tool designed to assess client needs and recommend additional programs for which they may qualify.

We believe that providing comprehensive, wraparound services leads to improved client outcomes, supporting their journey toward self-sufficiency and resilience. Clients will be able to apply for services directly through our website and receive a full screening, or they can begin with a specific program and be evaluated for other available services during the intake process.

CommUnify primarily delivers direct services to clients. One exception is our Weatherization program, where we partner with subcontractors to perform energy-efficiency upgrades.

2. Describe how the poverty data related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity referenced in Part II: Causes and Conditions of Poverty, Question 2 will inform your service delivery and strategies in the coming two years?

Using data gathered from our needs assessment, we are able to identify the regions of Santa Barbara County and specific populations that require our immediate focus. We also analyze demographic and geographic data from our existing programs to inform planning for future service years. Our findings have highlighted a significant need for services in North and Mid-County, prompting us to seek additional grant funding to support expansion in these areas. In 2024, we took a key step toward meeting this demand by opening a new office in Mid-County called the CommUnify Connection Center to better serve the local community.

Linkages and Funding Coordination

CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(1)(B) and (C); 676(b)(3)(B), (C) and (D); 676(b)(4), (5), (6), and (9)

California Government Code Sections 12747(a), 12760

Organizational Standards 2.1

State Plan 9.3b, 9.4b, 9.5, 9.7, 14.1b, 14.1c, 14.3d, 14.4

1. Describe how your agency coordinates funding with other providers in your service area. If there is a formalized coalition of social service providers in your service area, list the coalition(s) by name and methods used to coordinate services/funding. (CSBG Act Sections 676(b)(1)(C), 676(b)(9); Organizational Standard 2.1; State Plan 14.1c)

CommUnify participates in a wide range of collaborative groups, coalitions, task forces and committees which strive to improve the coordination and quality of services including:

- Children's System of Care Cross-Agency Group (FYS Director)
- Child Abuse Prevention Council (FYS Director)
- Central Coast Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaborative (FYS Director/Direct Staff)
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention & Response (FYS Director)
- Lompoc Valley Partnership for Youth (FYS Director/Program Manager)
- School Readiness Task Force (Children's Services Director)
- Mental Health CBO Coalition (CEO)
- South Coast Youth Safety Partnership (CEO/FYS Director)
- Dental Access Resource Team – DART (Mental Health/Disabilities Direct Service Staff)
- Early Childhood Mental Health and Special Needs Collaborative (Clinical Services Director)
- Santa Barbara County Grants Consortium (Grant Writer)
- SB County Child Care Planning Council (Children's Services Director)
- Kids Network (Children's Service Director/FYS Director/Program Managers)
- Adult and Aging Network (CEO/Community Services Director/Program Manager)
- Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (FYS Director/Program Manager/Coordinator)

- Behavioral Health Linkages Team - YouthWell (Clinical Services Director)
- Santa Barbara Digital Equity Coalition (Community Services Director)
- HABC Program Coordination Committee (Community Services Director/Assistant Director)
- City of Santa Barbara Program Coordination Committee (Community Services Director/Assistant Director)
- VOAD-Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (211 Program Manager)
- Santa Barbara Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (CEO)
- Santa Barbara Digital Equity Coalition (Community Services Director)

2. Provide information on any memorandums of understanding and/or service agreements your agency has with other entities regarding coordination of services/funding. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(C), Organizational Standard 2.1, State Plan 9.7)

CommUnify has established MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) and professional service agreements with a host of other community-based organizations, County Departments, education, human services, businesses, faith-based and nonprofit organizations outlining cooperative working relationships, in-kind services and fee-based services. Copies of MOUs are available upon request.

3. Describe how your agency ensures delivery of services to low-income individuals while avoiding duplication of services in the service area(s). (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(5), California Government Code 12760)

CommUnify determines the primary needs of low-income individuals through findings from our Community Needs Assessment. This assessment also allows us to analyze and break down the data by the specific regions we serve. Based on these insights, we identify which needs can be addressed by our current programs and when it is necessary to collaborate with partners to fill service gaps beyond our scope.

As the operator of the county's 2-1-1 helpline, CommUnify maintains a comprehensive database of available community resources, helping us efficiently connect clients to services and avoid duplication. Our leadership and staff are actively involved in a wide range of collaborative groups, coalitions, task forces, and committees. These partnerships enhance our awareness of available resources, enable informed referrals, and strengthen service coordination. For a complete list of coalitions, see Question 1 in the Linkages section.

In the last five years, CommUnify also created an Outreach Coordinator role to expand our presence in low-income communities and increase public awareness of our services. Through participation in

community events, we not only reach more clients but also build new relationships with partner organizations.

Finally, our client management system, eLogic Genesis, will help us avoid duplication of services in two ways. First, it'll review all client files to ensure duplicate records are flagged and remedied. Once identified, we have the ability to merge records so they have the most up to date demographic and service information. Second, we are able to make referrals to outside partners via the system and we can track referral services to avoid duplication.

4. Describe how your agency will leverage other funding sources and increase programmatic and/or organizational capacity. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(C))

CommUnify has established a diversified funding portfolio that includes a mix of federal, state, local, foundation, and private sources. We continue to broaden our efforts to identify new funding opportunities across all levels as well as through national foundations, with the goal of enhancing and expanding our existing services. Most recently, we began pursuing CalAIM funding opportunities through our local Medicare provider, CenCal Health. This will allow us to bill for our case management services and create a revenue stream that the agency has not had before.

5. Describe your agency's contingency plan for potential funding reductions. (California Government Code Section 12747(a))

CommUnify has established a policy of maintaining greater than 30-days operating funds on hand at any given time, our short-term contingency plan. Additionally, we currently have 1.5x cash available in reserve funds and lines of credit and expect to maintain this level over the planning horizon. We are also applying to become a CalAIM service provider to generate revenue to support our programs and services. In the event of reduced federal funding, CommUnify may also need to consider less favorable alternatives, such as lowering administrative costs, scaling back program offerings, or serving fewer clients.

6. Describe how your agency will address the needs of youth in low-income communities through youth development programs and promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(1)(B), State Plan 14.1b)

CommUnify's Family and Youth Services department provides a range of youth development programs.

Our Adolescent Family Life Planning (AFLP) program delivers intensive case management, behavioral health services, and referrals to community partners for parenting or expectant young mothers. The Los Compadres program offers case management to at-risk youth—mainly males—in collaboration with the county's Probation Department and local schools.

The Familias Seguras (Secure Families) Program supports vulnerable youth and families in Santa Maria with case management, therapy, wraparound services, and referrals, partnering with the

Santa Maria-Bonita School District, Fighting Back Santa Maria, and Family Service Agency.

Additionally, CommUnify leads the South Coast Youth Safety Partnership (SCYSP), which unites community leaders across several committees focused on addressing gang-related issues.

All programs within this department emphasize strong partnerships to provide early intervention for youth in the low-income communities we serve.

We were also just awarded a grant to bring back our Health & Prevention program aimed at ensuring youth have healthy relationships and understand the realities of teenage pregnancy.

7. Describe how your agency will promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community-based youth development programs such as the establishment of violence-free zones, youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, entrepreneurship programs, after after-school childcare. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(1)(B), State Plan 14.1b)

CommUnify operates 2-1-1 Santa Barbara, offering resource information and referrals for youth services countywide. We also lead the South Coast Youth Safety Partnership (SCYSP), which brings together leaders across multiple sectors to support youth violence prevention strategies. Additionally, CommUnify manages the Secure Families program, funded by a CalVIP grant, aimed at preventing family violence in Santa Maria. This family-focused initiative targets early intervention with fifth- and sixth-grade students in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District, providing ongoing support through eighth grade. In collaboration with partners such as the Santa Maria-Bonita School District, Fighting Back Santa Maria, and Family Service Agency, we deliver coordinated wraparound services to vulnerable youth and families. We believe this approach fosters healthier, more stable futures and contributes to reducing violence in the community.

8. Describe your agency's coordination of employment and training activities as defined in Section 3 of the Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act [29 U.S.C. 3102]. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(5); State Plan 9.4b)

CommUnify is in the process of launching a new workforce development program in partnership with our County's Workforce Development Board called "Empower U." This project will serve 153 youth aged 15-18 who are either currently justice-involved and/or have been expelled from school. Eligible youth will also be identified as currently residing in or will return post-incarceration to two target areas (Lompoc & Santa Maria) located in norther Santa Barbara County. Program goals include:

- Helping youth to increase their conflict resolution skills and develop strategies to prevent and avoid violence
- Introducing and preparing youth for the world of work

- Helping youth identify career interests, attain relevant skills and gain work experience
- Providing income to youth, to start them on the path of earning living wages and obtaining quality jobs and careers

9. Describe how your agency will provide emergency supplies and services, nutritious foods, and related services, as may be necessary, to counteract conditions of starvation and malnutrition among low-income individuals. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(4), State Plan 14.4)

During the pandemic, CommUnify provided clients and staff with emergency supplies and equipment, and regularly supplied lunches and snacks to children in our Head Start programs. While emergency supplies and nutritious food are not typically part of our standard services, we collaborate with community partners, including county agencies, faith-based groups, and nonprofit coalitions, to address these needs. As the operator of Santa Barbara County's 2-1-1 helpline, we work closely with the Public Health department to share timely information during emergencies. Through 2-1-1, we offer low-income residents access to essential information and referrals and are recognized as a primary resource during evacuations and crises. These services are free and available 24/7

10. Is your agency a dual (CSBG and LIHEAP) service provider?

☒ Yes

☐ No

11. For dual agencies:

Describe how your agency coordinates with other antipoverty programs in your area, including the emergency energy crisis intervention programs under Title XXVI, relating to low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP) that are conducted in the community. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(6), State Plan 9.5)

For all other agencies:

Describe how your agency coordinates services with your local LIHEAP service provider?

CommUnify serves as Santa Barbara County's designated LIHEAP provider, offering utility bill assistance and home weatherization services to low-income residents. In addition to running digital outreach campaigns and participating in community events, we actively partner with Family Resource Centers, the County and City Housing Authorities, and the City of Lompoc's Utility Division to promote awareness and accessibility of LIHEAP services.

To ensure regional coordination, CommUnify collaborates with Community Action Agencies in Kern, Kings, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura counties. We also engage in Local Service Provider (LSP) meetings to remain informed about energy-related policies and service updates throughout California.

As the operator of the 2-1-1 Santa Barbara County helpline, CommUnify plays a critical role during

emergency events, working closely with the County's Emergency Operations Center and the Public Health Department to provide timely information and connect residents to essential resources.

12. Describe how your agency will use funds to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives, which may include fatherhood and other initiatives, with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(D), State Plan 14.3d)

In accordance with Public Law 105-285, CommUnify utilizes funds to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives with the goals of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting. We have several programs that aim at increasing parenting skills including our Adolescent Family Life Planning (AFLP) program, Economic Empowerment program and Secure Families program. Our AFLP program provides case management and referrals to expectant and parenting teens with the overarching goal of eliminating barriers to self-sufficiency that often impact young mothers. The Secure Families program is a family-centered violence prevention collaboration to address the root causes of violence in the northern part of Santa Barbara County. Lastly, our Economic Empowerment program aims to reduce parent's stress related to financial hardships by increasing their skills and knowledge around budgeting and money management. Additionally, parenting classes are offered to the families whose children are enrolled in our Head Start programs.

13. Describe how your agency will develop linkages to fill identified gaps in the services, through the provision of information, referrals, case management, and follow-up consultations. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(3)(B), State Plan 9.3b)

CommUnify operates 2-1-1 Santa Barbara County, a 24/7 multilingual helpline that connects residents to vital services, including during emergencies and evacuations. By providing real-time information and referrals, 2-1-1 helps identify and address service gaps across the county.

To ensure comprehensive support, CommUnify coordinates with local partners to offer case management and follow-up when needed. These efforts, combined with strong community partnerships, enable us to connect clients to appropriate resources and fill unmet needs efficiently.

Learn more at www.211santabarbaracounty.org

Monitoring

ROMA – Planning, Evaluation

1. If your agency utilizes subcontractors, please describe your process for monitoring the subcontractors. Include the frequency, type of monitoring, i.e., onsite, desk review, or both, follow-up on corrective action, issuance of formal monitoring reports, and emergency monitoring procedures.

CommUnify's monitoring process for subcontractors includes both onsite monitoring visits and desk review.

- Desk Review
 - Typically performed in advance of a scheduled onsite visit
 - Conducted on regular or as-needed basis: quality control checks; compliance and comparison of financial reports with Finance Department expenditure reports
 - Review of reimbursement requests, progress reports and other program-specific documentation to ensure timeliness of submission and progress in meeting expected outcomes
 - Status of insurance, licenses and registration on SAM.gov
- Onsite Visit
 - Completed at minimum once per contract year
 - Typically conducted by Director, finance staff (as needed) and/or program staff (as required)
 - Weatherization Services require 100% of work to be inspected by a CommUnify Field Supervisor. In addition, the Field Supervisor conducts random inspections of 10% of the contractor's work.

Per CommUnify's Energy Services Quality Control Policy, failed monitoring tests can be cleared by one of the following methods:

- Failed item is corrected by sub-contractor and re-inspected by agency Inspector for compliance
- Corrective action plans are developed, approved and executed by Energy Services Director

These items are discussed during quarterly preparatory meetings. If patterns are detected, the Field Supervisor will coordinate additional training.

We do not have any established Emergency Monitoring Procedures that differ from our standard practice. In the event of an emergency, we will expedite and prioritize the existing process.

ROMA Application

CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12)

Organizational Standards 4.2, 4.3

ROMA – Planning, Evaluation



1. Describe how your agency will evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and services. Include information about the types of measurement tools, the data sources and collection procedures, and the frequency of data collection and reporting. (Organizational Standard 4.3)

In 2018, CommUnify's Board approved the implementation of the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) model. Following ROMA training for leadership and staff, each department developed Logic Models outlining program goals, activities, outcomes, data collection methods, and reporting schedules.

Since our programs are very diverse, we use various measurement tools and data sources to populate results in our Logic Models. Our most common measurement tools include pre- and post-tests to track client movement while others use documentation such as payment stubs or work orders for LIHEAP programs. Data sources include case files and case notes which are stored in various databases and in physical file cabinets.

CommUnify's Logic Model Reporting Policy outlines the following:

All program Logic Models are to be submitted to the agency's Operations Team on a monthly basis. Logic Models are due on the 5th day following the end of the month. If the 5th day after the close of a month falls on a holiday and/or weekend, please submit by the next regular business day.

Each Program Director is expected to have reviewed and approved the data within the Logic Models ahead of submission to the Operations Team.

At the end of each quarter, the Quality Assurance Specialist will review and analyze the data accumulated over the period. Subsequently, they will present their findings and insights to the program manager and director for thorough review and discussion. This collaborative effort ensures that any successes are celebrated, and any challenges are identified promptly, allowing for strategic adjustments to be made as necessary. By fostering open communication and a data-driven approach, this process facilitates continuous improvement and enhances the overall

effectiveness and efficiency of our programs.

The Quality Assurance Specialist, or Operations Support Staff, will address any questions or concerns before delivering a final report to the Chief Operating Officer (COO). The COO will share the reports with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or Board of Directors (BOD), as applicable.

If Logic Models aren't submitted on schedule or if program targets are not met, the Operations Team will schedule a meeting with the Program Director to identify and address any barriers.

2. Select one need from Table 2: Priority Ranking Table and describe how your agency plans to implement, monitor progress, and evaluate the program designed to address the need. (Organizational Standard 4.2)

Need Area: Families lack economic stability.

We plan to address this need through our Economic Empowerment training. Economic Empowerment will be offered to case managed clients across departments with the goal of improving financial well-being (FNPI 3h). We will administer a pre- and post-test to assess movement from program start to program end. While enrolled in the program, we will monitor progress by tracking attendance and participation. Depending on the success rate of FNPI 3h, we will deem the program effective or not. If changes need to be made, we will leverage the ROMA cycle and rapid cycle learning to test our new strategies.

Optional

3. Select one community level need from Table 2: Priority Ranking Table or your agency's most recent Community Needs Assessment and describe how your agency plans to implement, monitor progress, and evaluate the program designed to address the need. (CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12), Organizational Standard 4.2)

N/A

Federal CSBG Programmatic Assurances

CSBG Act Section 676(b)

Use of CSBG Funds Supporting Local Activities

676(b)(1)(A): The state will assure “that funds made available through grant or allotment will be used – (A) to support activities that are designed to assist low-income families and individuals, including families and individuals receiving assistance under title IV of the Social Security Act, homeless families and individuals, migrant or seasonal farmworkers, and elderly low-income individuals and families, and a description of how such activities will enable the families and individuals--

- a. to remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self- sufficiency (particularly for families and individuals who are attempting to transition off a State program carried out underpart A of title IV of the Social Security Act);
- b. to secure and retain meaningful employment;
- c. to attain an adequate education with particular attention toward improving literacy skills of the low-income families in the community, which may include family literacy initiatives;
- d. to make better use of available income;
- e. to obtain and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment;
- f. to obtain emergency assistance through loans, grants, or other means to meet immediate and urgent individual and family needs;
- g. to achieve greater participation in the affairs of the communities involved, including the development of public and private grassroots
- h. partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, local housing authorities, private foundations, and other public and private partners to
-
- i. document best practices based on successful grassroots intervention in urban areas, to develop methodologies for wide-spread replication; and
- ii. strengthen and improve relationships with local law enforcement agencies, which may include participation in activities such as neighborhood or community policing efforts;

Needs of Youth

676(b)(1)(B) The state will assure “that funds made available through grant or allotment will be used – (B) to address the needs of youth in low-income communities through youth development programs that support the primary role of the family, give priority to the prevention of youth problems and crime, and promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community-based youth development programs that have demonstrated success in preventing or reducing youth crime, such as--

- I. programs for the establishment of violence-free zones that would involve youth development and intervention models (such as models involving youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, and entrepreneurship programs); and
- II. after-school childcare programs.

Coordination of Other Programs

676(b)(1)(C) The state will assure “that funds made available through grant or allotment will be used – (C) to make more effective use of, and to coordinate with, other programs related to the purposes of this subtitle (including state welfare reform efforts)

Eligible Entity Service Delivery System

676(b)(3)(A) Eligible entities will describe “the service delivery system, for services provided or coordinated with funds made available through grants made under 675C(a), targeted to low-income individuals and families in communities within the state;

Eligible Entity Linkages – Approach to Filling Service Gaps

676(b)(3)(B) Eligible entities will describe “how linkages will be developed to fill identified gaps in the services, through the provision of information, referrals, case management, and follow-up consultations.”

Coordination of Eligible Entity Allocation 90 Percent Funds with Public/Private Resources

676(b)(3)(C) Eligible entities will describe how funds made available through grants made under 675C(a) will be coordinated with other public and private resources.”

Eligible Entity Innovative Community and Neighborhood Initiatives, Including Fatherhood/Parental Responsibility

676(b)(3)(D) Eligible entities will describe “how the local entity will use the funds [made available under 675C(a)] to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives related to the purposes of this subtitle, which may include fatherhood initiatives and other initiatives with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging parenting.”

Eligible Entity Emergency Food and Nutrition Services

676(b)(4) An assurance “that eligible entities in the state will provide, 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.”

State and Eligible Entity Coordination/linkages and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Employment and Training Activities

676(b)(5) An assurance “that the State and eligible entities in the State will coordinate, and establish linkages between, governmental and other social services programs to assure the effective delivery of such services, and [describe] how the State and the eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities, as defined in section 3 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, in the State and in communities with entities providing activities through statewide and local workforce development systems under such Act.”

State Coordination/Linkages and Low-income Home Energy Assistance

676(b)(6) “[A]n assurance that the State will ensure coordination between antipoverty programs in each community in the State, and ensure, where appropriate, that emergency energy crisis intervention programs under title XXVI (relating to low-income home energy assistance) are conducted in such community.”

Community Organizations

676(b)(9) An assurance “that the State and eligible entities in the state will, to the maximum extent possible, coordinate programs with and form partnerships with other organizations serving low-income residents of the communities and members of the groups served by the State, including religious organizations, charitable groups, and community organizations.”

Eligible Entity Tripartite Board Representation

676(b)(10) “[T]he State will require each eligible entity in the State to establish procedures under which a low-income individual, community organization, or religious organization, or representative of low-income individuals that considers its organization, or low-income individuals, to be inadequately represented on the board (or other mechanism) of the eligible entity to petition for adequate representation.”

Eligible Entity Community Action Plans and Community Needs Assessments

676(b)(11) “[A]n assurance that the State will secure from each eligible entity in the State, as a condition to receipt of funding by the entity through a community service block grant made under this subtitle for a program, a community action plan (which shall be submitted to the Secretary, at the request of the Secretary, with the State Plan) that includes a community needs assessment for the community serviced, which may be coordinated with the community needs assessment conducted for other programs.”

State and Eligible Entity Performance Measurement: ROMA or Alternate System

676(b)(12) “[A]n assurance that the State and all eligible entities in the State will, not later than fiscal year 2001, participate in the Results Oriented Management and Accountability System, another performance measure system for which the Secretary facilitated development pursuant to section 678E(b), or an alternative system for measuring performance and results that meets the requirements of that section, and [describe] outcome measures to be used to measure eligible entity performance in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability, and community revitalization.”

Fiscal Controls, Audits, and Withholding

678D(a)(1)(B) An assurance that cost and accounting standards of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are maintained.

State Assurances

California Government Code Sections 12747(a), 12760, 12768

For CAA, MSFW, NAI, and LPA Agencies

[California Government Code § 12747\(a\)](#): Community action plans shall provide for the contingency of reduced federal funding.

[California Government Code § 12760](#): CSBG agencies funded under this article shall coordinate their plans and activities with other agencies funded under Articles 7 (commencing with Section 12765) and 8 (commencing with Section 12770) that serve any part of their communities, so that funds are not used to duplicate particular services to the same beneficiaries and plans and policies affecting all grantees under this chapter are shaped, to the extent possible, so as to be equitable and beneficial to all community agencies and the populations they serve.

For MSFW Agencies Only

[California Government Code § 12768](#): Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) entities funded by the department shall coordinate their plans and activities with other agencies funded by the department to avoid duplication of services and to maximize services for all eligible beneficiaries.

Organizational Standards

Category One: Consumer Input and Involvement

Standard 1.1 The organization/department demonstrates low-income individuals' participation in its activities.

Standard 1.2 The organization/department analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.

Category Two: Community Engagement

Standard 2.1 The organization/department has documented or demonstrated partnerships across the community, for specifically identified purposes; partnerships include other anti-poverty organizations in the area.

Standard 2.2 The organization/department utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions.

Category Three: Community Assessment

Standard 3.1 (Private) Organization conducted a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years.

Standard 3.1 (Public) The department conducted or was engaged in a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3-year period, if no other report exists.

Standard 3.2 As part of the community assessment, the organization/department collects and includes current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for their service area(s).

Standard 3.3 The organization/department collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic service area(s) in the community assessment.

Standard 3.4 The community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of the communities assessed.

Standard 3.5 The governing board or tripartite board/advisory body formally accepts the completed community assessment.

Category Four: Organizational Leadership

Standard 4.2 The organization's/department's Community Action Plan is outcome-based, anti-poverty focused, and ties directly to the community assessment.

Standard 4.3 The organization's/department's Community Action Plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the full Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle or comparable system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation). In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA-certified trainer (or equivalent) to assist in implementation.

Part III: Appendices

Please complete the table below by entering the title of the document and its assigned appendix letter. Agencies must provide a copy of the Notice(s) of Public Hearing, the Low-Income Testimony and the Agency's Response document, and a copy of the most recent community needs assessment as appendices A, B, and C, respectively. Other appendices as necessary are encouraged. All appendices should be labeled as an appendix (e.g., Appendix A: Notice of Public Hearing) or separated by divider sheets and submitted with the CAP.

Document Title	Appendix Location
Notice of Public Hearing	A
Low-Income Testimony and Agency's Response	B
Community Needs Assessment	C

Part III: Appendices

A. Notice of Public Hearing

Agency website: www.CommUnifySB.org

The screenshot shows the CommUnify website's "Public Hearings" page. The header includes the CommUnify logo, a phone number (800) 655-0617, and navigation links for Public Info, Careers, Enrollment Application, and a search icon. A secondary navigation bar contains links for Services, Locations, About Us, Give, Academy, Events & Info, and Contact Us. The main heading is "Public Hearings". Below it, a paragraph states: "Below is a list of upcoming Public Hearings from CommUnify, in compliance with The Brown Act." The first listing is for the "2026-2027 Community Action Plan Public Hearing" on June 17, 2025, at 2:00 PM. It invites the public to review the agency's 2026-2027 Community Action Plan (CAP) and presents its goals and strategies for serving income-eligible individuals and families throughout Santa Barbara County. A registration link is provided: <https://us06web.zoom.us/join/08yG89dgROKIM5cJZj8spQ>.

Social Media: www.instagram.com/CommUnifySB

The screenshot shows an Instagram post from the account @communifysb. The post features a graphic with the text "NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT" at the top. Below this is a logo for "CSD" (Community Service District) featuring a blue bear silhouette with a yellow sun and rainbow above it. The main text of the graphic reads: "Our DRAFT 2026-2027 Community Action Plan is available for review and public comment on our website now. Please submit your comments to info@CommUnifySB.org". At the bottom of the graphic is the CommUnify logo and tagline "Empowering people. Transforming lives." The Instagram interface shows the post was made 4 weeks ago, has 8 likes, and was posted on May 13. The caption text reads: "NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT REQUEST: A DRAFT of CommUnify's 2026-2027 Community Action Plan (CAP) is now available for review on our website: <https://www.communifysb.org/public-information/public-documents>. Please submit comments or questions to info@CommUnifySB.org. More information on how you can participate in our Public Hearing coming soon. **No comments yet.** Start the conversation". The post includes buttons for "View insights" and "Boost post", and a comment input field at the bottom.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING



CommUnify

Empowering people. Transforming lives.

CommUnify invites you to attend a Public Hearing to review the agency's **2026-2027 Community Action Plan (CAP)**

DATE: June 17, 2025
TIME: 2:00 - 3:00 PM
LOCATION: Virtual via Zoom
(email info@CommUnifySB.org for registration link)

CommUnify will be presenting its goals and strategies for serving income-eligible individuals and families throughout Santa Barbara County. The public's input is invited and encouraged! To review the draft Community Action Plan, please visit www.CommUnifySB.org.

For more information, to request a copy of the CAP or to submit comments, please contact us at:
info@CommUnifySB.org or 805-964-8857 Ext. #1142



communifysb

Santa Barbara County



communifysb

3w

CommUnify invites you to attend a Public Hearing to review the agency's 2026-2027 Community Action Plan (CAP)

DATE: June 17, 2025
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CommUnify will be presenting its goals and strategies for serving income-eligible individuals and families throughout Santa Barbara County. The public's input is invited and

[View insights](#)

[Boost post](#)





10 likes

May 21



Add a comment...



B. Low-Income Testimony and Agency's Response

Not applicable.

C. Community Needs Assessment

See next page.



CommUnify

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Santa Barbara County Community Needs Assessment 2025

Conducted by

Aspire Innovators, LLC



ASPIRE INNOVATORS, LLC

Prepared by

Lucy Hernandez, MBA, CCAP & NCRT

Christine Zoppi, MPA

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ABOUT COMMUNIFY

Vision Statement

People Living Sustainable and Independent Lives.

Mission Statement

We serve Santa Barbara County's vulnerable populations through education and coordinated services so they may achieve economic stability, improve overall well-being and thrive.

CommUnify (formerly the Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County) is a nonprofit dedicated to partnering with the community to find innovative and sustainable solutions that enhance the health, resilience, and financial security of Santa Barbara County residents.

Founded in 1964 as a 15-member Community Action Committee appointed by the County Board of Supervisors, CommUnify continues to focus on **addressing the root causes of poverty**. In May 1967, it became a private nonprofit, launching Head Start early education services. Later that year, the organization expanded to include a senior support program and, in 1969, an adult job-training program.

CommUnify prides itself on **sound fiscal practices and a strong financial position**. At its core is a Tripartite Board of Directors, consisting of 15 members: one-third low-income community representatives, one-third elected officials, and one-third private or business representatives. This inclusive structure, particularly the involvement of low-income community members, is a unique and vital aspect of the organization.

Since its incorporation, **CommUnify has made a lasting impact on the lives of children, youth, families, and seniors throughout Santa Barbara County**, serving thousands annually. A “no wrong door” intake process ensures that each client's needs are comprehensively assessed, no matter their entry point into the system.

Methodology

CommUnify's Community Needs Assessment utilized a wide range of local, state, and national data sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), to analyze poverty in Santa Barbara County, with a particular focus on gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Key sections of the assessment were shaped by these sources, along with additional data from the CSBG Annual Report and the 2024 CommUnify Children's Services Program Community Assessment.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, **the assessment also integrated survey and focus group data from a variety of geographic regions, including feedback from low-income residents**. The primary goal was to gain a thorough understanding of the community's needs, which would inform the development of effective programs and strategic partnerships.

A multi-faceted methodology was employed, incorporating a community needs survey, interviews with partner organizations, including representatives from community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions and both virtual and in-person focus groups with board members, clients, and other stakeholders. Additionally, data from the agency's service delivery records was analyzed. **This rigorous, inclusive approach ensured an accurate and representative evaluation of the community's most pressing challenges.**

SECONDARY SOURCE DATA

Regional Profile

Santa Barbara County, California, spans 2,733.9 square miles, making it the twenty-first largest county in the state by total area. With a population of over 440,000, the county is bordered by San Luis Obispo County to the north and Ventura County to the east and south. Its diverse geography includes rural communities, agricultural enterprises, small to mid-sized cities, suburban areas, beachside towns, and expansive ranches. The county is also home to significant landmarks, such as Vandenberg Space Force Base, Lompoc Federal Prison, and the Chumash Reservation.

Known for its stunning beaches and lush hillsides, Santa Barbara County boasts a diverse economy. Key industries include healthcare, education, retail, hospitality, and agriculture. The county is also home to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), a prestigious institution that attracts students and faculty from across the nation and around the world.

For efficient service delivery, CommUnify divides the county into three distinct regions:

1. **North County** – Includes Santa Maria, Guadalupe, and Cuyama
2. **Mid-County** – Encompasses Lompoc, Vandenberg Village, and the Santa Ynez Valley
3. **South County** – Covers Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria

Historically, North and Mid-County regions have faced higher levels of need compared to South County, which has shaped the focus of CommUnify's targeted support and resource allocation.

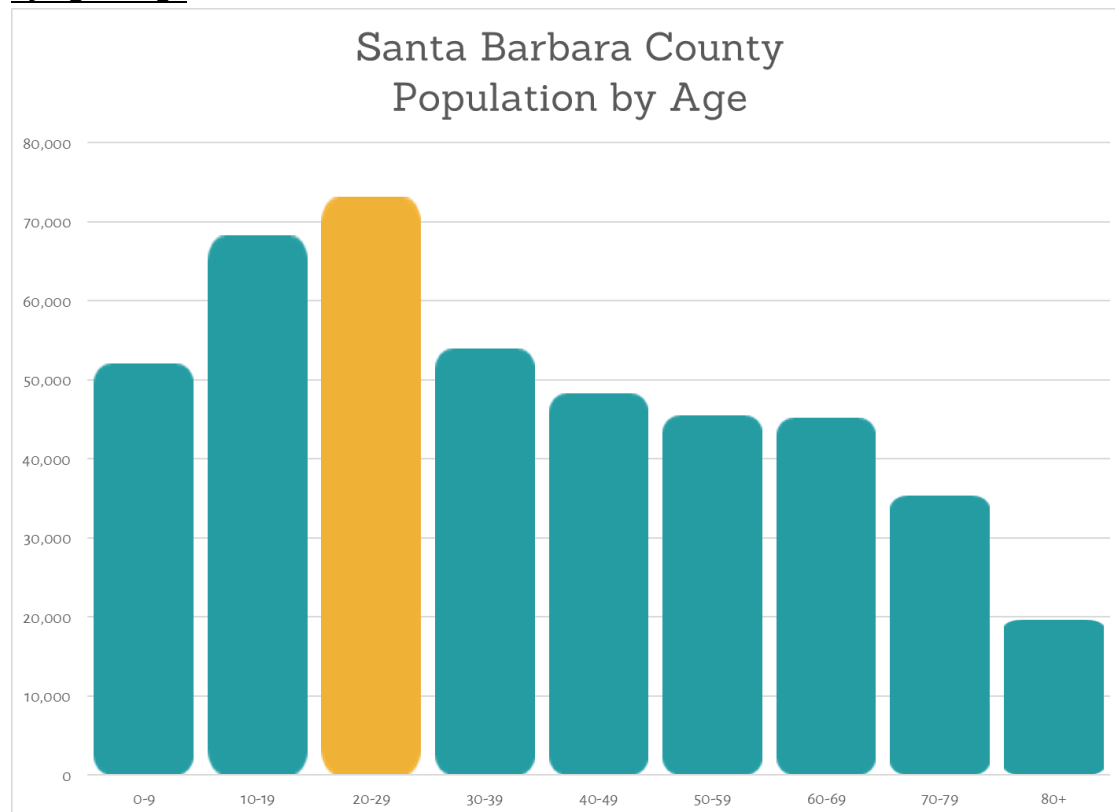
Demographics of County

Santa Barbara County Population

As of 2022, **Santa Barbara County's population was estimated at 443,837 residents**¹. Over the past year, the county saw a modest growth rate of 0.5%, reflecting a steady but gradual increase. Since 2010, the population has grown by 7.5%, indicating a longer-term trend of growth in the region². This population increase underscores the evolving needs of the county and highlights the growing demand for services to support its residents.

Population Statistics

By Age Range



Chart, Dataset source ³

Santa Barbara County's population includes 193,466 residents aged 0-29, highlighting a significant need for education, child care, family support, and employment programs. Within this age range,

¹ US Census, 2022

² [World Population Review](#), 2023

³ <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06083-santa-barbara-county-ca/>

people aged 20-29 represent the largest population band within the County. The 30-59 age group, totaling 203,980 individuals, represents the working-age population with demands for career development, healthcare, and family services. The 60+ population comprises 100,640 residents (22.7% of the total), requiring increased healthcare, social support, and age-friendly housing, with the 80+ group (19,636) facing unique accessibility challenges. **A decline in population aged 70-79 and older** suggests higher mortality rates or migration, potentially having an impact on elder care and healthcare planning.⁴ **Gender distribution is balanced across all age groups.**⁵

By Race

Nearly half (48%) of all residents are Hispanic or Latino, and 67% of children under five years old are Hispanic in Santa Barbara County. ⁶ US Census data differentiates between ethnicity (Hispanic or Latino and Non-Hispanic) as well as Race. The following charts illustrate the composition of the population in Santa Barbara County. ⁷

Percentage	Ethnicity
52%	Non-Hispanic
48%	Hispanic or Latino

Percentage	Race
55%	White
23%	Two or more races
2%	Black or African American
5%	Asian
2%	Indigenous/Native American
13%	Other Races

⁴ <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06083-santa-barbara-county-ca/>

⁵ ibid

⁶ AIR, (American Institute for Research) 2020

⁷ US Census Data, 2023

Indigenous Population Statistics

There are approximately **50,000 Indigenous people** residing in both **Santa Barbara** and **Ventura Counties** (Immigration Advocates Network). Many Indigenous families face a range of additional risk factors, including **poverty**, **lack of health insurance**, **substandard housing**, and elevated levels of **stress** and **anxiety**.

However, these communities often face significant barriers to accessing services. Language barriers and the absence of written language pose substantial challenges, and fears around **deportation** further discourage many from seeking help. These compounded obstacles highlight the need for targeted outreach and support services that are culturally sensitive, linguistically accessible, and focused on reducing fears of immigration-related repercussions.⁸

Language Statistics

In Santa Barbara County, more than a third (**40%**) of residents aged **5 and older** speak a language other than English at home.⁹ This linguistic diversity is reflected in the local education system as well, with **26%** of students classified as **English Learners (ELs)**.¹⁰ Among the school districts, **Santa Maria-Bonita** has the highest percentage of EL students, with **58%**, followed closely by **Guadalupe Union Elementary**, where **51%** of students are classified as ELs. These statistics underscore the importance of providing language support services to ensure that non-English speaking residents and students have equal access to resources and opportunities.

Education Statistics

Educational Attainment in Santa Barbara County

The percentage of adults (25 and older) in Santa Barbara County with a high school diploma or higher has increased from 80% in 2016 to 82%, while those with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 32% to 36%.¹¹ **The county's average high school graduation rate was 93% in 2021-2022, exceeding the state average of 90%**, though rates vary by district, with the highest in Carpinteria Unified and the lowest in Lompoc Unified.¹²

⁸ https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/embedded/iamerica/organization.720274-Mixteco_Indigena_Community_Organizing_Project_MICOP

⁹ US Census, 2018-2022

¹⁰ CA Department of education, 2022-2023

¹¹ U.S. Census, 2018-2022

¹² California Department of Education, 2021-2022

Nearly 69% of jobs in Santa Barbara County require only a high school education or less, with minimal job-specific training. Jobs that don't require advanced education or specialized training often pay lower wages. This can make it harder for workers to earn enough to cover basic living expenses, potentially leading to higher poverty rates in the area. This may also limit economic mobility for workers, because people may stay in low-paying positions with limited opportunities for advancement. Moreover, **in counties with a higher proportion of low-wage jobs there is often increased reliance on social services, including government assistance programs like food stamps, healthcare, and housing support,** placing a financial strain on local and state resources.¹³ In fiscal year 2023-2024, approximately 77,500 households received Medi-Cal assistance, and 32,600 households received food assistance through CalFresh.¹⁴

Only 15% of local jobs require a bachelor's degree or more. It is projected this trend will remain constant over the next 10 years with most new jobs requiring minimal education and training.¹⁵

Population by Highest Level of Education

Level of Education	Population
No Degree	51,770
High School	46,084
Some College	79,042
Bachelor's Degree	60,622
Post-Grad	39,378

Chart, Dataset source ¹⁶

In today's digital world, access to the internet and the skills required to navigate it are essential for participating in education, healthcare, employment, finance and social interactions. However, a significant portion of residents in **Santa Barbara County, California**, still face barriers to digital inclusion. The digital divide is clear among **low-income, disabled and older adults**, with nearly **8%** of the population lacking reliable internet access and the necessary digital literacy to fully engage with online resources.

¹³ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100513/the_intersection_of_low-wage_work_and_public_assistance_0.pdf

¹⁴ <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/cfd3335b-43f7-47b2-a295-155abe69ffa9>; Santa Barbara 2024-2025 Recommended budget packet

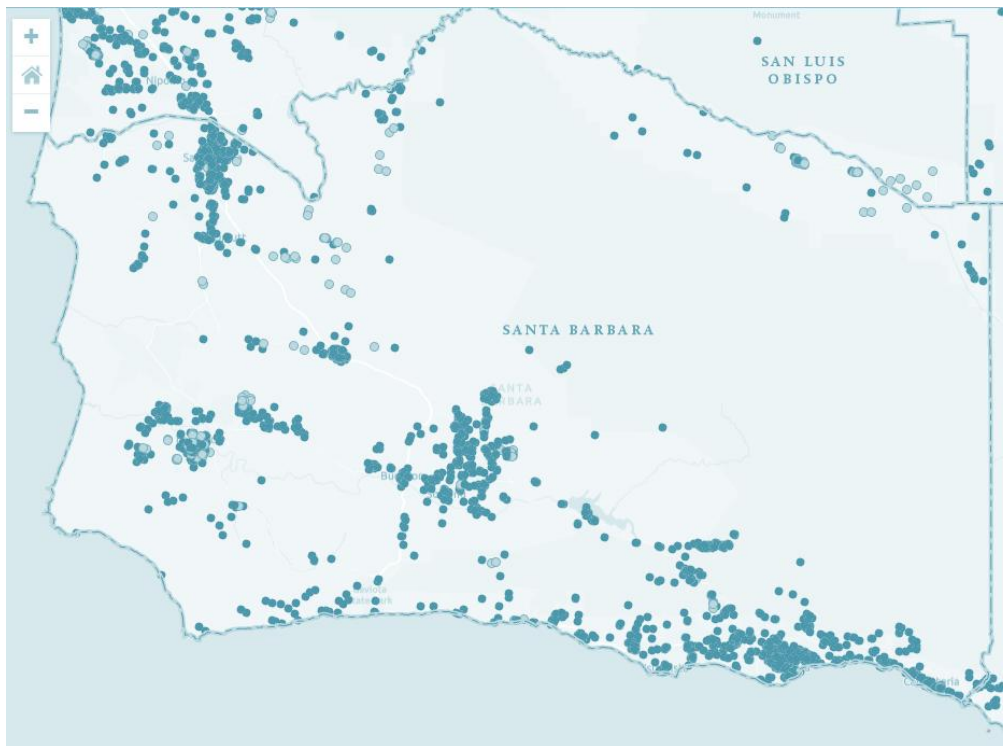
¹⁵ [Economic Forecast Project Economic Outlook Report](#), 2023

¹⁶ <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06083-santa-barbara-county-ca/>

The ability to use technology can enhance independence, improve health outcomes, and reduce isolation. For older adults, people with disabilities, and others who have been left behind in the digital age, digital access can provide a lifeline to education, economic opportunity, and entertainment.¹⁷

Santa Barbara Broadband Access Map

Most of the higher population areas within Santa Barbara County have access to broadband services. However, programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provided low-income households with discounts on broadband internet service, ended on June 1, 2024, due to funding cuts. Other programs, like Lifeline, may still help Santa Barbara families with internet costs. But loss of internet service would likely lead to reduced access to **education, healthcare, employment, and social services**, further isolating them from opportunities.



Chart, Dataset source ¹⁸

The end of the ACP also means that low-income students may no longer have affordable access to the tools they need to succeed in school. **This can further widen educational inequalities, especially in regions like Santa Maria and Lompoc**, where access to technology and internet resources is already limited. Lack of access may also reduce families' ability to seek medical care, take online courses, work remotely or look for jobs.

¹⁷ [ibid](#)

¹⁸ [Broadbandmap.ca.gov](https://broadbandmap.ca.gov)

Healthcare Access

Hospital Capacity

As of July 2020, the county's five hospitals collectively offered 720 hospital beds.¹⁹ Using the state and national averages of 2.3 beds per 1,000 residents, we can estimate the number of hospital beds needed to meet the demand in Santa Barbara County. $(443,837 \text{ residents} \times (2.3 \text{ beds per } 1,000 \text{ residents})) = 1,019 \text{ hospital beds}$.²⁰

Additional Medical Facilities

Beyond hospitals, Santa Barbara County hosts various medical facilities, including outpatient clinics, specialized care centers, and urgent care centers. For a comprehensive list and more detailed information, you can visit the Santa Barbara County official website.²¹

When combining all hospital beds, and additional medical facilities, Santa Barbara County has roughly 800 beds, **which is short by 219 beds compared to the ideal state and national standards.**

Housing

Santa Barbara County has a total of **161,890** housing units, with the **median value** of owner-occupied housing units standing at **\$780,700**. This figure is approximately **10% higher** than the **California** median of **\$725,800**, and more than **double** the national median of **\$340,200**. These numbers reflect the high cost of living in the county, contributing to housing affordability challenges for many residents.²²

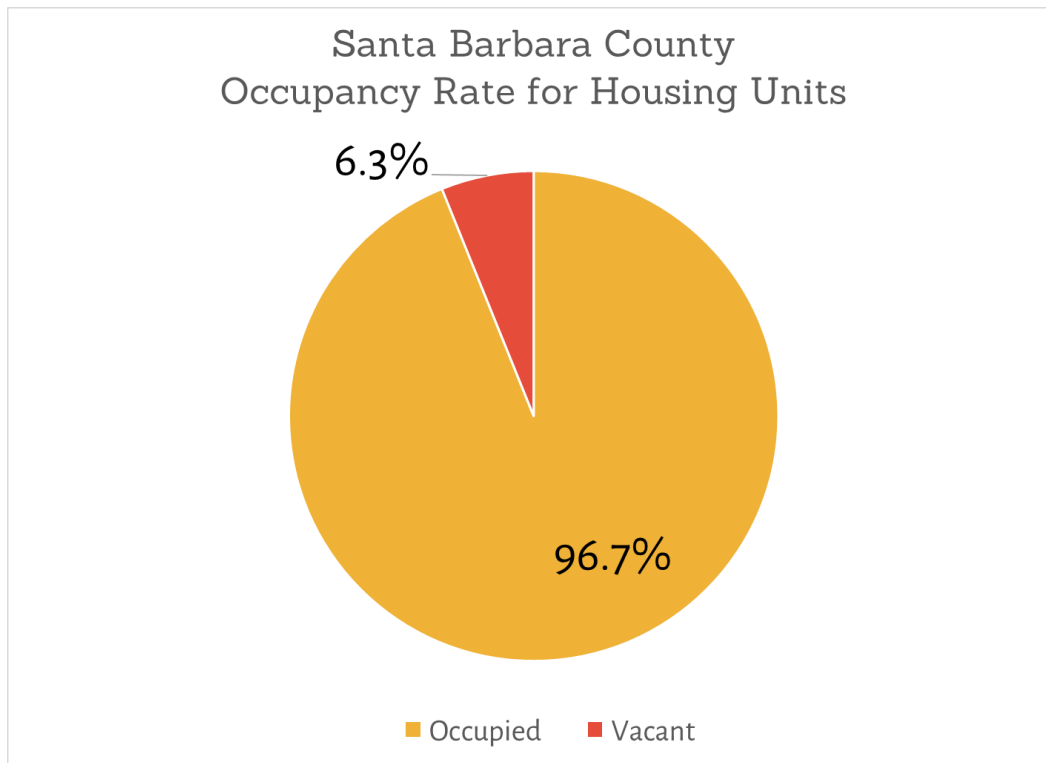
¹⁹ independent.com

²⁰ California Department of Public Health

²¹ countyofsb.org

²² <http://censusreporter.org>

Occupied vs. Vacant



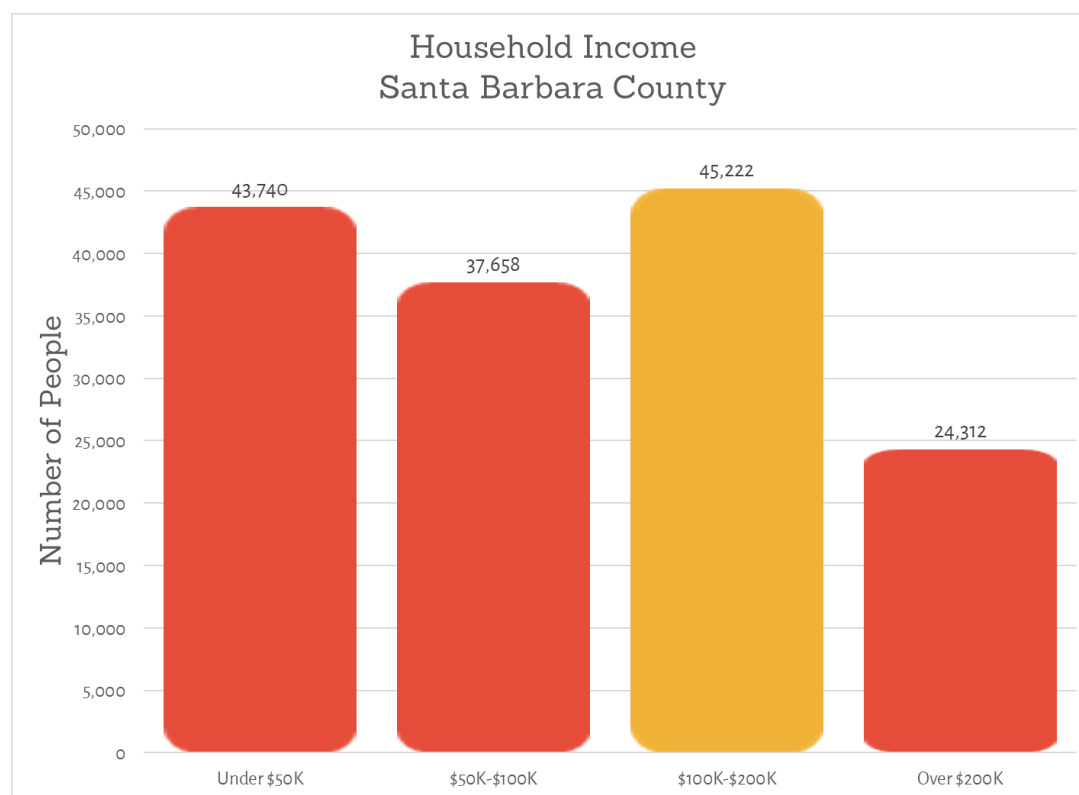
In Santa Barbara County, the housing market shows a significant demand for both rental and owner-occupied properties. With 51% of housing units being owner-occupied and 49% rented, nearly half of the population relies on rental housing, **indicating a strong need for affordable rental options**. This is **further emphasized by the county's relatively low 6.3% vacancy rate**, which signals that available housing units are scarce, creating a competitive market for both renters and homebuyers.²³

²³ <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/cfd3335b-43f7-47b2-a295-155abe69ffa9>; 2024-2025 Santa Barbara Recommended Budget Packet

Household Income

Santa Barbara County's **per capita income** is **\$43,604**, which is about **90%** of California's average income of **\$48,013** and is very close to the U.S. average of **\$43,313**. The **median household income** in the county is **\$91,197**, slightly lower than California's median of **\$95,521**, but about **20% higher** than the national median of **\$77,719**.

Looking at income distribution, **30%** of households earn between **\$100,000 and \$200,000**, which is slightly above the **29%** of California households and **10% higher** than the **27%** of U.S. households in the same range. Additionally, **29%** of households earn under **\$50,000**, **25%** earn between **\$50,000 and \$100,000**, and **16%** earn more than **\$200,000**.²⁴



Chart, Dataset source ²⁵

²⁴ <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06083-santa-barbara-county-ca/>

²⁵ *ibid*

Cost of Home Ownership in Santa Barbara County

Research indicates there are a range of benefits associated with home ownership for families and children.²⁶ Positive outcomes include enhanced psychological and physical health, lower exposure to crime, higher rates of civic involvement, and better school performance, including higher achievement scores, increased rates of high school graduation, and increased rates of postsecondary education.²⁷

Housing Prices

Housing prices are notoriously high in Santa Barbara County. Low wages and the high cost of living have created an affordable housing crisis for many local families. The median cost of a house in Santa Barbara County was \$1,600,000 in South County and \$565,000 in North County in May 2022 according to the Economic Forecast Project Monthly Update. A smaller percent of people can afford a median-priced home in Santa Barbara County compared to the percent who can afford a median-priced home in most other California counties, the entire state, and the U.S. Santa Barbara County ranks second lowest in the ability to purchase a home.²⁸ **Even though more than half of local residents currently own their home, that is not an indication of the percent who could afford to purchase a home in today's market.**

Experiences of Homelessness in Santa Barbara County

Santa Barbara's high cost of living forces many low-income families to share single-family homes or seek shelter in cars, motels, campgrounds, and garages. To help offset expenses, CommUnify and partner agencies provide utility subsidies through the Utility Assistance Program, as well as rental, mortgage and security deposit payments. CommUnify also provides temporary shelter through our Family Self-Sufficiency program.²⁹

The 2023 Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count reported **1,887 individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Barbara County, a 3.7% decrease from 2022.** Most (59%) are in South-County, while Mid and North-County account for 41%. However, homelessness has risen in cities like Carpinteria, Santa Maria, Santa Ynez Valley, and Guadalupe.³⁰

²⁶ Habitat for Humanity

²⁷ Rohe & Lindblad, 2013

²⁸ California Association of Realtors, 2023

²⁹ <https://www.communifysb.org/community-services/family-self-sufficiency>.

³⁰ https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_CA-603-2023_CA_2023.pdf

Poverty

Poverty rate estimates for Santa Barbara County range from 13.5% to 17%, with 13.5% of the population (57.5k out of 425k) living below the poverty line, higher than the national average of 12.5%. This suggests that the county faces a **poverty challenge** that is more pronounced compared to the national average, indicating a need for targeted interventions to reduce poverty in the region.

2024 Federal Poverty Level for the 48 Contiguous States (Monthly Income)							
Household/Family Size	100%	133%	138%	150%	200%	300%	400%
1	\$ 1,255	\$ 1,669	\$ 1,732	\$ 1,883	\$ 2,510	\$ 3,765	\$ 5,020
2	\$ 1,703	\$ 2,265	\$ 2,351	\$ 2,555	\$ 3,407	\$ 5,110	\$ 6,813
3	\$ 2,152	\$ 2,862	\$ 2,969	\$ 3,228	\$ 4,303	\$ 6,455	\$ 8,607
4	\$ 2,600	\$ 3,458	\$ 3,588	\$ 3,900	\$ 5,200	\$ 7,800	\$ 10,400
5	\$ 3,048	\$ 4,054	\$ 4,207	\$ 4,573	\$ 6,097	\$ 9,145	\$ 12,193
6	\$ 3,497	\$ 4,651	\$ 4,825	\$ 5,245	\$ 6,993	\$ 10,490	\$ 13,987
7	\$ 3,945	\$ 5,247	\$ 5,444	\$ 5,918	\$ 7,890	\$ 11,835	\$ 15,780
8	\$ 4,393	\$ 5,843	\$ 6,063	\$ 6,590	\$ 8,787	\$ 13,180	\$ 17,573
Each person over 8, add	\$ 448.33	\$ 596.28	\$ 618.70	\$ 672.50	\$ 896.67	\$ 1,345.00	\$ 1,793.33

The Census Bureau determines poverty status using income thresholds that vary by family size and composition.

The largest demographic groups affected are **Females 18-24**, followed by Males 18-24 and Females 25-34. **The most common racial or ethnic group in poverty is Hispanic**, followed by White and those identifying as being from two or more ethnic groups. This suggests that **Hispanic communities** may face unique economic challenges in the county, likely related to factors such as **systemic inequality, lower wages, and less access to education** and high-paying employment opportunities.

According to the California Poverty Measure (CPM), which accounts for the cost of living and social safety net resources, **Santa Barbara County has the second-highest poverty rate (17%) and child poverty rate (20%) in California as of early 2023.**³¹

This underscores the county's severe economic disparities, especially for children, suggesting that social and economic conditions, such as high housing costs and limited affordable resources, significantly impact families and children in the region.

Santa Barbara County has the
second-highest poverty rate
(17%) and child poverty rate
(20%) in California as of early
2023

– Stanford Center on Poverty and
Inequality

³¹ Census Bureau [ACS 5-year Estimate](#); and California Poverty Measure – Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality

Employment and Workforce

Santa Barbara County's employment saw steady growth from 207,158 jobs in 2021 to 215,891 jobs in 2022, marking a 4% increase with 8,733 additional jobs.³² This reflects a continued post-pandemic recovery. While employment in leisure and hospitality has stabilized, the retail sector has experienced a decline.

The most common occupation group is Office and Administrative Support, employing 20,810 workers, although this sector lost 520 jobs and offers a relatively low average wage of \$50,389.³³ The lowest-paying sector is Farmworkers and Laborers, with an average annual income of \$33,369.

Unemployment in the county has steadily decreased from 14.6% in 2020 to 4.2% in May 2024, which is lower than California's rate of 4.8%. However, unemployment remains higher in specific areas, including Santa Maria (6.6%), Lompoc (5.4%), and Guadalupe (5.2%).³⁴

Cost of Living

The median household income in Santa Barbara County was \$92,332 in 2022.³⁵ The annual household income needed to make ends meet for a family of four (two adults, one infant/toddler, one preschooler) is \$124,072.³⁶ This requires both adults to earn at least \$29.37/hour and work full time to earn \$10,339 per month total. The following chart illustrates the monthly cost of living for a family of four. The high cost of living in Santa Barbara County creates additional challenges for single parent households.

In Santa Barbara County

\$92,332 - MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME **&** **\$124,072 IS NEEDED AS HOUSEHOLD INCOME TO MAKE ENDS MEET FOR A FAMILY OF 4**

*Based on the monthly cost of living in Santa Barbara County for a family of four.³⁷

United Ways of California, in partnership with California's 29 local United Ways, released key findings and poverty analysis tools, including How Much it Costs to Struggle: The Real Cost Measure in California 2023, a new study on what it takes to make ends meet in California. Unlike the official

³² Economic Forecast Project Economic Outlook Report, 2023

³³ California Employment Development Department

³⁴ Economic Forecast Project Monthly Update, August 2023

³⁵ US Census Bureau, 2022

³⁶ Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, 2021

³⁷ * A family of four is two adults, one infant/toddler, one preschooler

poverty measure which primarily accounts for the cost of food, the Real Cost Measure factors the costs of housing, food, health care, child care, transportation and other basic needs to reveal what it really costs to live in California.

According to United Way analysis, more than 1 in 3 households in Santa Barbara County (36%) fall below the “Real Cost Measure.” ³⁸

Using some of the tools available on the United Way dashboard, we can calculate a household budget likely needed to make ends meet in Santa Barbara County. The budget below closely resembles the chart shown on the previous page, indicating that the annual cost to make ends meet ranges between \$122,136 and \$124,072 for a family of four with young children.

Household Budget:		
	Monthly	Annually
Housing	\$2,478	\$29,736
Child care:	\$2,004	\$24,048
Food:	\$1,041	\$12,492
Health care:	\$911	\$10,932
Transportation:	\$1,182	\$14,184
Miscellaneous:	\$762	\$9,144
Taxes:	\$1,800	\$21,600
	\$10,178	\$122,136

It takes, on average, \$122,136, for this household to make ends meet in Santa Barbara County.

Chart dataset source ³⁹

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ United Way of California, Real Cost Measure, Santa Barbara County

Key Take-Away's from this Data

Based on the secondary data provided in this report, several key inferences can be made about poverty, and needs in Santa Barbara County.

Key Conclusions:

1. **Affordable Housing Crisis:** The high housing costs are a primary driver of poverty, with many residents struggling to afford housing in a market where even median home prices are significantly higher than national averages.
2. **Young Adults and Ethnic Minorities Are Disproportionately Affected:** Young adults, especially females aged 18-24, and **Hispanic populations** are more likely to experience poverty, indicating systemic issues that need targeted policy interventions.
3. **Low-Wage Sectors:** The prevalence of low-paying jobs, particularly in agriculture and administrative sectors, is contributing to the high poverty rates. Increasing wages and job opportunities in higher-paying industries could reduce poverty levels.
4. **Geographic Inequities:** Areas like **Santa Maria, Lompoc,** and **Guadalupe** experience higher unemployment and poverty, indicating a need for more localized interventions.
5. **Digital and Economic Access:** The digital divide exacerbates the challenges faced by low-income households in accessing education, jobs, and health services, further trapping individuals in poverty.

In conclusion, addressing **the needs of low-income people in Santa Barbara County** requires a multi-faceted approach, focusing on **affordable housing, job creation, racial and ethnic equality, education,** and expanding access to **technology** for underserved populations

PRIMARY SOURCE DATA

Methods and Samples

Primary data was gathered for the Community Needs Assessment Report, including survey responses and focus group discussions: both virtual and in-person. The process involved designing, implementing, recording, and analyzing the data, which ultimately led to the creation of the report and presentation of the findings.

Surveys

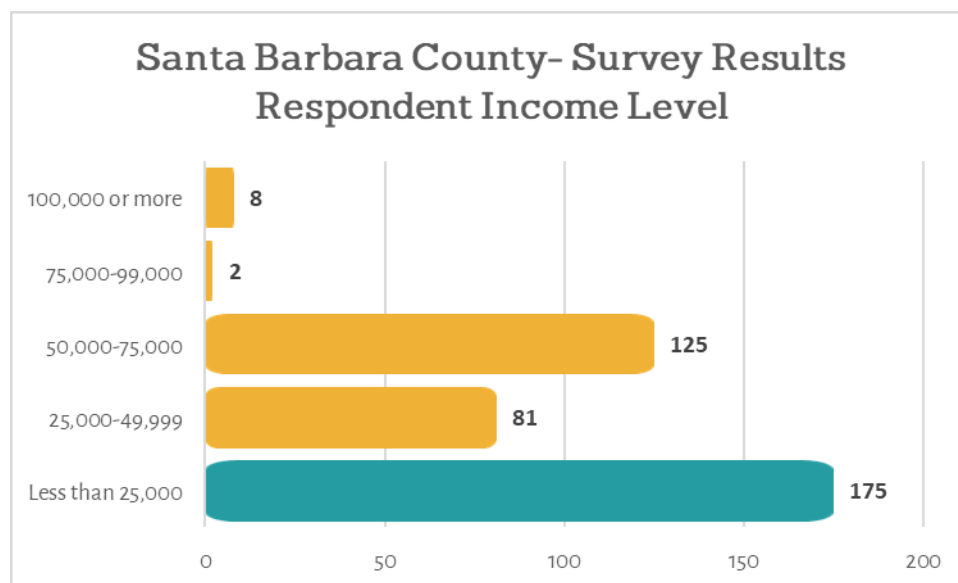
Collection and Response

Surveys were created and distributed throughout Santa Barbara County, **within the service area of CommUnify offering participants access online, on paper, and with assistance**. Respondents could choose to answer or skip questions. This survey had five levels of response options. This type of scale, commonly known as a "5-point Likert scale" was used in the design because it is commonly considered one of the most reliable ways to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. No incentives were provided for survey responses. Available in both **Spanish and English**, the surveys were conducted from February 24, 2025- March 26, 2025. A total of 288 surveys were completed with at least one response.

A total of 7 questions were asked describing respondent's priority needs for both the community and their families. A copy of the questions is provided in Appendix A of this report.

Demographic Data for Survey Respondents

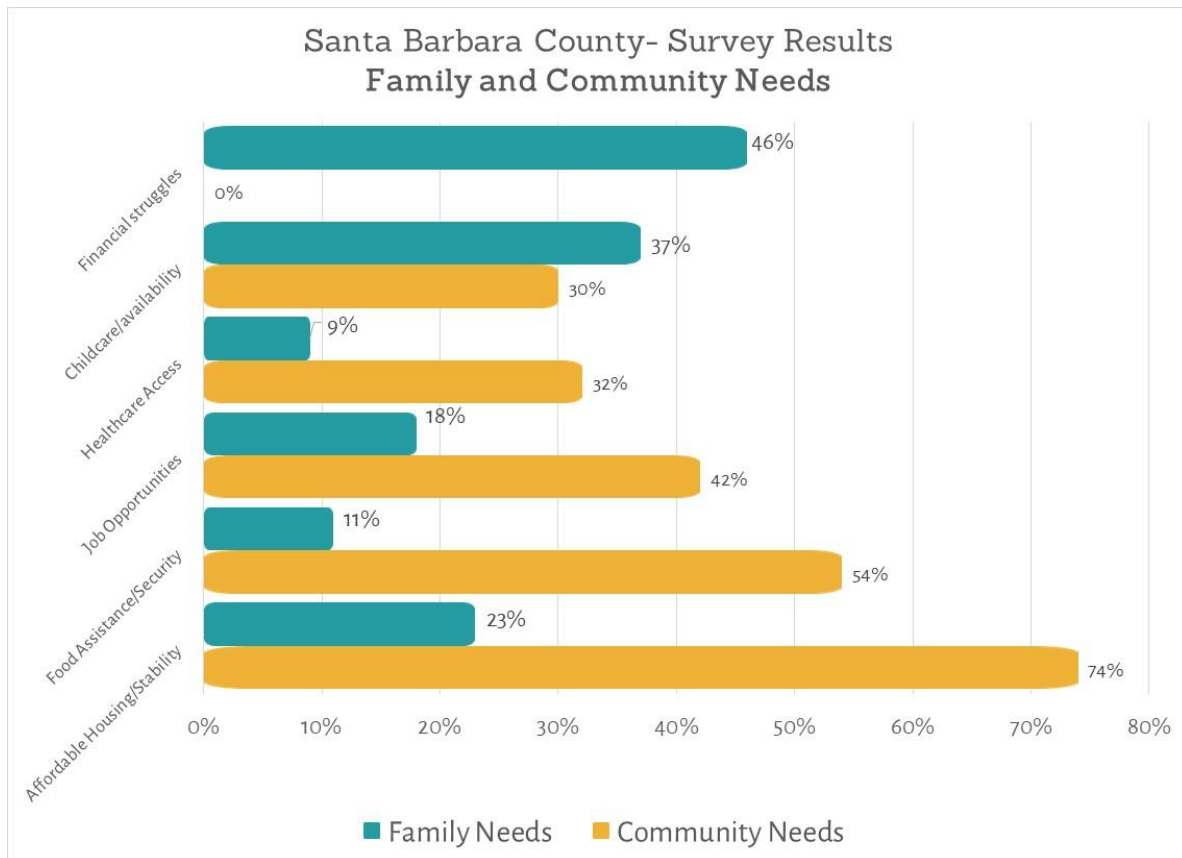
Family Size	
1	28%
2	17%
3	14%
4	14%
5	14%
6	2%
7	3%
8	3%
9	0%
10	4%



The **average family size for the survey respondents is 3.18 people**. The most common response to income earned being **less than \$25,000**. This places their average monthly income at \$2083.00 which for a family of 3 is below the 100% poverty level.

Detailed Quantitative Analysis

The analysis of survey data shows the top priority needs for Santa Barbara survey respondents. The combined survey responses highlight three key issues that respondents identified as most important: **food insecurity, access to healthcare, and housing assistance**.



Food Insecurity

Among those who provided a response, **70% reported accessing food assistance services** at least once in the past three years. However, only **35% of respondents considered food insecurity to be a significant problem for their families**. This discrepancy may suggest that some respondents did not fully understand the concept of food insecurity. It is also possible that those who accessed food assistance did not perceive themselves as food insecure, due to the availability of support services.

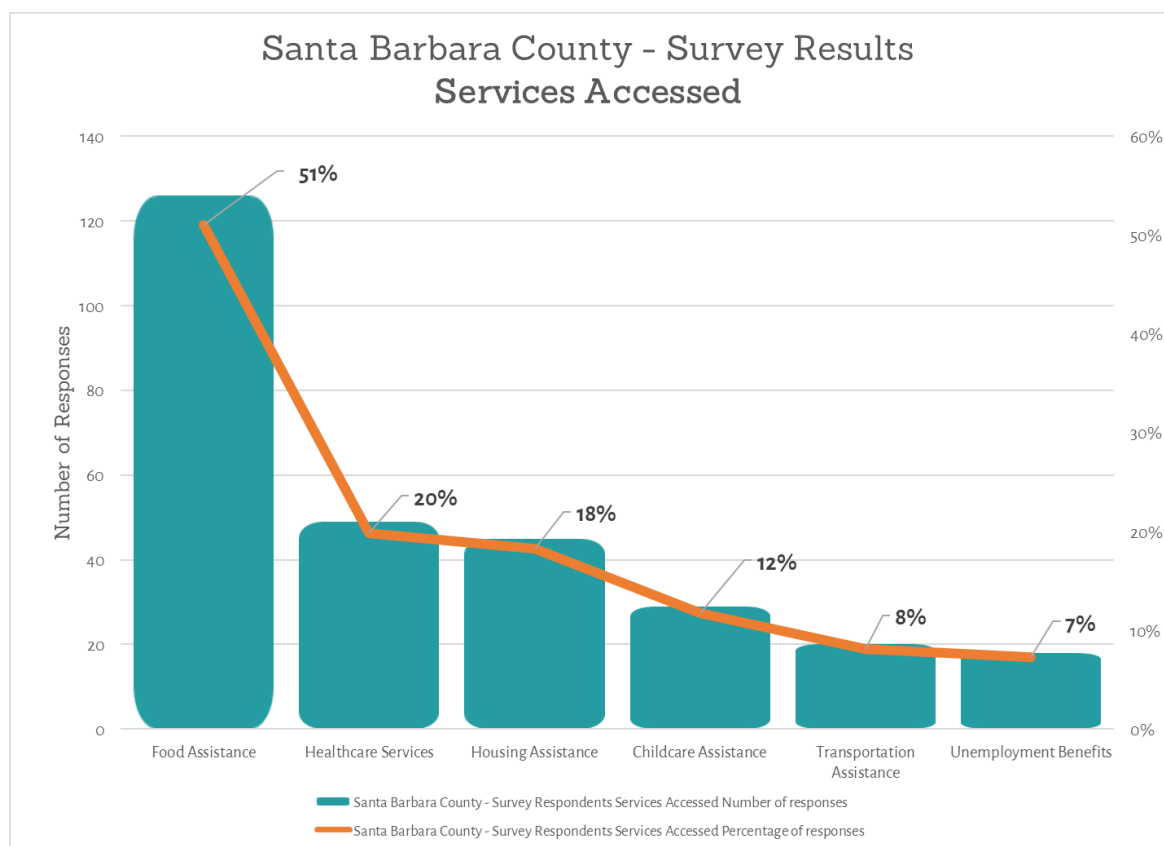
Healthcare Access

Sixty-two percent of respondents reported accessing healthcare services, such as Medicaid or community clinics, in the past three years. **Only 10% mentioned facing difficulties in accessing these services**. Although the survey did not explore the specifics of these challenges, it is likely that the difficulties reported could reflect common issues in healthcare, such as long wait times for appointments and financial barriers related to prescriptions, copays, and other out-of-pocket expenses.

Housing Assistance

Twenty-four percent of respondents reported accessing housing assistance services in the past three years. However, the survey did not capture specific details regarding the types of assistance received.

The survey also revealed a **notable contrast between the issues respondents perceive as most important for the community versus those they view as most pressing for their own families**. A clear example of this is housing: while 74% of respondents identified it as the top community need, only about 23% considered it a major issue for their family, ranking it third in importance.



The Future

When asked about their level of **concern regarding potential changes in laws and policies**, three-quarters (75%) of respondents expressed being "very concerned," the highest level of concern available in this survey. **This strong reaction likely reflects respondents' awareness of news surrounding significant policy changes**, including potential drastic cuts to social services funding being proposed by the federal government.

Focus Groups

Focus Group Sessions and Data Collection

Multiple focus group sessions were conducted throughout Santa Barbara County in person and virtually, within the service area of CommUnify. Participants included customers, partners, staff, leadership and Board members, ensuring a broad array of responses from multiple perspectives. Sessions were conducted in English and Spanish. More than 75 people participated in focus groups.

Each focus group session employed the same slide presentation, asking the same questions to the focus groups. The questions included:

- What are the most pressing needs in our community?
- Which services are currently in high demand?
- How can we improve our existing services?
- Are there any gaps in our current service offerings?

Demographic Data for Focus Group Participants

Focus groups were conducted throughout the county within the CommUnify service area. A wide variety of roles were represented among the participants.

Santa Barbara- Focus Groups Summary of Participant Characteristics			
Focus Groups			
Characteristic		Number	Percentage
By Venue	Santa Barbara	15	19%
	Buellton	9	12%
	Lompoc	2	3%
	Santa Maria	11	14%
	Zoom	40	52%
By Meeting Type			
	In-Person	46	53%
	Virtual	40	47%
By Role			
	Staff	21	40%
	Leadership	7	13%
	Partner/Community	15	29%
	Board	9	17%

Detailed Quantitative Analysis

The analysis of data collected from focus group participants reveals the community's priority needs. Five key issues emerged as the most important, based on combined responses: **food insecurity, access to child care, affordable and fair housing, cost of living, and access to medical services—particularly the shortage of providers and specialists.** These five issues, rather than the typical top three, are highlighted due to ties in the rankings for the second and third priority levels, indicating that these concerns are closely interrelated and hold equal importance in addressing the community's most pressing challenges.

Summary of Priority Needs	
Focus Groups	
Domain	Priority Percentage
Food Insecurity	16%
Child Care	13%
Housing/Affordable/Fair	9%
Cost of Living	9%
Healthcare	9%
Medical Providers/Specialists	6%

Facilitation techniques included dot-voting, which followed open discussions where participants identified and explored more than 30 distinct needs affecting both the community and individual families within the service area. Prioritization within each group led to the results outlined above. During this process, similar categories of need—referred to as domains—were combined and re-worded to reflect overlapping concerns and ensure clarity in the final prioritization.

Food Insecurity:

Participants emphasized the need for families to have enough **healthy food, consistent access to food, and a regular, stable food supply.** They also raised concerns about becoming ineligible for food assistance programs when even a slight increase in income pushes families above the qualifying threshold. Additionally, some discussions highlighted limited access to healthy food options, which may be viewed more broadly as a community-level issue.

'The food bank's funding has been cut, and they already struggle to help families with the limited food inventory in the local food bank. I recently visited the local food bank in Lompoc and their shelves are depleted and some of the food has expired. Food Insecurity will be a concern today more than ever.'

~Focus Group Participant

Child Care:

Responses reflected **concerns about the affordability of child care and the ability of families to access safe and reliable child care options**. Participants also noted the need for child care providers to receive additional specialized training to effectively support children with special needs. This latter concern may be considered a community-level or agency-level need, reflecting broader systemic challenges in child care service provision.

Housing/Affordable/Fair:

Discussions highlighted the community's **need for increased housing inventory**. Participants also raised concerns about the instability faced by families living in trailers or recreational vehicles, often limited by time restrictions at parking sites. This instability can result in the loss of utilities, internet access, or forced relocation, which in turn create challenges related to transportation to school or work. Additionally, the **shortage of affordable housing contributes to overcrowding**, as multiple families are often compelled to share a single house or apartment to manage high rental costs. Waiting lists for subsidized housing programs, such as Section-8, and a lack of housing subsidies, and programs were also described, as was the need for fair housing. If families are denied fair housing opportunities, they're more likely to experience **housing instability**, including frequent moves, evictions, or living in temporary or substandard conditions like RVs or overcrowded units. This domain does not include the topic of homelessness. In the data analysis performed, **homelessness was ranked in a tie for sixth in the priorities among all participants**.

Cost of Living:

A variety of related topics emerged in discussions about **the cost of living**. One focus group identified poverty as a central factor contributing to community needs. Other participants pointed to insufficient income, reductions in supportive services, or ineligibility for these services as key challenges. Additionally, **many highlighted the strain placed on families who must work long hours—often**

multiple jobs—just to cover basic monthly expenses, further impacting family stability and overall well-being. Participants also mentioned concepts, such as “security,” which may refer to financial security. Inflation and higher costs for everyday goods impact the cost of living. Costs often outpace wage growth, meaning even families who are working full-time (or multiple jobs) may fall behind. This makes it harder to cover basic needs, save for emergencies, or invest in long-term goals like education or housing. Additionally, if wages increase slightly to adjust for inflation, some families may find themselves disqualified from supportive services—even though their real financial situation hasn't improved. This creates a “benefits cliff,” where a modest raise can actually leave families worse off overall.

“The cost of living in Santa Barbara is above working families budget, many need to commute from outside the county or live in Northern County where housing is a bit cheaper, but lack of employment opportunities.”

~Focus Group Participant

Medical Providers/Specialists/Healthcare:

Focus groups expressed a range of concerns related to healthcare. **While access to healthcare and mental health services were ranked in a tie for sixth priority**—just outside the top priority domains—these topics were so closely interrelated with the need for medical providers and specialists that participant comments are included here. Discussions highlighted the challenges families face in securing timely and affordable care, as well as the limited availability of providers, particularly those offering specialized services. This overlap underscores how interconnected healthcare access is with broader community health needs.

Participants emphasized the need for more healthcare providers and better access to them, especially in rural areas.

Many participants described a strong **need for mental health services** as well. Some rural community members reported having access to clinics or providers only once a week. Without reliable transportation to more consistent care, families are left without necessary medical attention for both ongoing health issues and urgent needs. This lack of access puts them at high risk for life-threatening conditions or untreated health issues and forces families to take time off work to travel long distances to receive care, further straining their financial stability and well-being.

"In one of our farthest northern towns, we have one clinic that is only open one time a week and if you live in this neighborhood or community you will need to drive one-and-a-half hours away to the nearest hospital—people have no access to quality healthcare in our area."

~Focus Group Participant

Additional Comments

Participants from some virtual group sessions included more broad domains, such as security, stable power and water access, land use, and a need to embrace diversity. When framed as domains, they highlight the broader **systems** within which individuals and communities operate. These domains **interconnect and influence** each other, contributing to what we can call **systemic needs**—the foundational conditions required for a society to function equitably and sustainably.

Overall Findings

When combining the results of both the survey and focus group participants, the most prioritized needs, in order of frequency within the top five priorities, include:

- Family financial concerns including access to job opportunities
- Healthcare access, including the need for more/specialized providers
- Affordable housing
- Food assistance and security
- Child care access

Key Take-Away's from this Data

1. Economic Stability is the Foundation

Family financial concerns, including access to job opportunities, are at the top of the list. This suggests that addressing economic instability is foundational to improving overall well-being. Without sufficient income or access to stable jobs, families face significant barriers to meeting other basic needs, such as housing, healthcare, and child care. Enhancing employment opportunities, improving wage equity, and addressing economic disparities should be prioritized.

2. Access to Healthcare is Critical

The need for **healthcare access**, particularly more providers and specialized care, underscores how vital healthcare is for families' long-term stability. This includes not only general health services but **also mental health services** as well as addressing gaps in specialized care. The shortage of providers (both for health and mental health services), especially in rural or underserved areas, exacerbates the challenges families face when seeking care. Expanding healthcare infrastructure and making it more accessible will be key to addressing this need.

3. Affordable Housing is a Major Concern

Affordable housing continues to be a pressing issue. Housing instability—whether due to high rent, overcrowding, or lack of availability—directly impacts family well-being. This concern highlights the need for policies and programs that expand affordable housing options, protect renters, and address the systemic causes of housing insecurity.

4. Food Security is Now a Priority

Food assistance and security emerges as a key priority. Even though food assistance programs exist, there's still a significant gap in access and availability. Increasing support for food programs and ensuring families can consistently access nutritious food is essential. **The connection between food security and overall health is clear**, and addressing this need can have positive ripple effects on other areas, like healthcare and education.

5. Child Care Access is Crucial for Family Stability

The need for **child care access** signals the critical role child care plays in supporting families, especially working parents. Affordable, safe, and high-quality child care is essential for families to balance work and caregiving responsibilities. Improving access to child care services, particularly in underserved areas, will not only help parents economically but also support early childhood development.

6. Interconnected Nature of Needs

The interconnectedness of these needs—financial stability, healthcare, housing, food security, and child care—suggests that addressing them in isolation will be less effective than a holistic approach. **These issues overlap and reinforce one another**, and **solutions must take a systems-thinking approach** to address the broader context in which families are living.

7. Immediate Action and Long-Term Solutions

While immediate relief is necessary in areas like food security and housing assistance, the long-term resolution lies in **addressing the root causes of financial instability, lack of healthcare access, and affordable housing**. Policies that improve wages, expand healthcare access, and reduce housing costs will have lasting benefits.

APPENDIX



CommUnify Community Needs Assessment - 2025

At CommUnify, we value your experience. Your comments and suggestions will be used to help us evaluate our services to ensure alignment with the needs of the community. Please take time to complete this survey.

Para español: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CUCNA25s>

1. Which Public Services Have You Accessed in the Last 3 Years? (Check All That Apply)

- ☐ Food Assistance (SNAP, food banks, etc.)
- ☐ Housing Assistance (shelters, rental aid, etc.)
- ☐ Healthcare Services (Medicaid, free clinics, etc.)
- ☐ Unemployment Benefits
- ☐ Childcare Assistance
- ☐ Transportation Assistance
- ☐ Other:

2. Have You Experienced Food Insecurity in the Last 3 Years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Have You Had Difficulty Accessing Healthcare Services in the Last 3 Years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. What Are the Most Important Needs in Your Community? **(Select three)**

- ☐ Affordable Housing
- ☐ Healthcare Access
- ☐ Food Assistance
- ☐ Job Opportunities
- ☐ Childcare Services
- ☐ Public Transportation
- ☐ Education/Training Programs
- ☐ Other:

5. What Are the Most Significant Challenges Faced by Your Family? **(Select three)**

- ☐ Financial Struggles
- ☐ Housing Stability
- ☐ Access to Healthcare
- ☐ Food Security
- ☐ Employment Opportunities
- ☐ Childcare Availability
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Other:

6. How concerned are you about the potential changes in laws or policies that might impact your daily life, such as your job, healthcare, housing, and other basic needs?

- ☐ Very significantly ☐ Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Not much ☐ Not at all

7. Household Income

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 +

8. Number of People in Household

Thank you for your time. We value your input.



Evaluación de las necesidades de la comunidad - 2025

En CommUnify nos interesa saber cómo ha sido la experiencia. Los comentarios y sugerencias que usted comparta con nosotros se utilizarán para mejorar nuestros servicios y satisfacer sus necesidades de comunidad. Por favor tómese unos minutos para completar esta encuesta.

For English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CUCNA25e>

1. Los Servicios Públicos que ha usado en los últimos 3 años **(marque todos que aplique)**

- ☐ Asistencia de comida, (Estampillas de Comida, SNAP, Bancos de Alimentos etc.)
- ☐ Asistencia de Vivienda, (Refugio, Asistencia de Renta, etc)
- ☐ Servicios de Salud, (Medicaid, Clinicas Gratis, etc)
- ☐ Beneficios de Desempleo
- ☐ Asistencia de Cuidado de Niño
- ☐ Asistencia de Transporte
- ☐ Otro:

2. Usted ha tenido experiencia de inseguridad de alimentaria en los últimos 3 años?

- ☐ Si
- ☐ No

3. Usted ha tenido dificultades para acceder los servicios de salud en los últimos 3 años?

- ☐ Si
- ☐ No

4. ¿Que son las necesidades mas importantes en tu comunidad? **(seleccione tres)**

- ☐ Vivienda Asequible
- ☐ Acceso a servicios de salud
- ☐ Asistencia de Alimenteria
- ☐ Oportunidades de Trabajo
- ☐ Servicios de cuidado de niño
- ☐ Transporte Publico
- ☐ Programas de Educación y Entrenamiento
- ☐ Otro:

5. ¿Que son los dificultades mas significativos para su familia? **(seleccione tres)**

- ☐ Dificultades Financiera's
- ☐ Estabilidad de Vivienda
- ☐ Acceso a servicios de Salud
- ☐ Seguridad de Alimentacion
- ☐ Oportunidades de Empleo
- ☐ Disponibilidad de Cuidado de Niños
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Otro:

6. ¿Que tan preocupado/a estas sobre los cambios en los leyes o polizas que puede impactar to vida diaria como su trabajo, servicios de salud, vivienda, y otras necesidades básicas?

- ☐ Mucho ☐ Un poco ☐ Neutral ☐ No mucho ☐ Nada

7. Ingresos del hogar

- ☐ Menos de \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 +

8. Número de personas en el hogar

Gracias por tu tiempo. Valoramos su aporte.

TABLE OF SOURCES

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