



ECKAN

East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation

Community Needs Assessment

Draft Presented to the ECKAN Board of Trustees
on March 17, 2026

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Executive Summary

The East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation's (ECKAN) 2026 Community Needs Assessment evaluates the conditions affecting low-income individuals and families across ECKAN's 16-county service area in east-central Kansas. This assessment integrates quantitative data from federal and state sources, community survey responses, stakeholder feedback, and comparison to previous assessments. As the first step in the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework, this report establishes a data-informed foundation for strategic planning, program development, and resource allocation.

ECKAN's service area covers about 1.08 million residents across 9,827 square miles. 9.55% of those households are at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Line. While overall unemployment is low at 3.4 percent, economic stability varies significantly. Median household income ranges from \$103,085 in Johnson County to \$40,327 in Woodson County, and poverty rates differ from 5.3 percent in Johnson County to 17.1 percent in Wyandotte County. Rural areas face higher disability prevalence and food access challenges, while metropolitan regions deal with increased housing costs and rental instability.

Housing instability remains one of the most urgent challenges. Nearly 25 percent of households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and 10.8 percent experience severe cost burden. Douglas County reports the highest severe burden at 16 percent. ECKAN currently maintains 220 Housing Choice Vouchers and has 488 households on the waitlist, indicating that demand far exceeds available assistance.

Child and family vulnerability remains concentrated in specific counties. Forty percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, with rates reaching 73 percent in Wyandotte County. Food access challenges affect 22 percent of low-income residents overall and exceed 30 percent in several rural counties.

Despite strong employment numbers, wage disparities persist. Retail and arts wages range from \$28,000 to \$39,000 annually, while housing costs continue to rise. Many households are asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed but remain unable to meet basic needs without assistance.

ECKAN's mission to build connections and support stability, health, and engagement remains highly relevant in this environment. Based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, the following represent the highest priority needs:

- Affordable, available, quality housing
- Living wage employment and workforce mobility
- Affordable, accessible childcare
- Housing sustainability support
- Food security, particularly in rural counties
- Energy burden reduction and weatherization
- Health access and cost mitigation
- Transportation reliability in rural areas

Housing instability and wage disparity emerge as the two most pressing cross-county challenges.

Overview of ECKAN

Mission, Vision, and Values

Reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees 2/17/2026

Mission

ECKAN builds connections and provides program services in East Central Kansas to support the stability, health, and engagement of low-income individuals and families.

Vision

Taking intentional actions to show others we care.

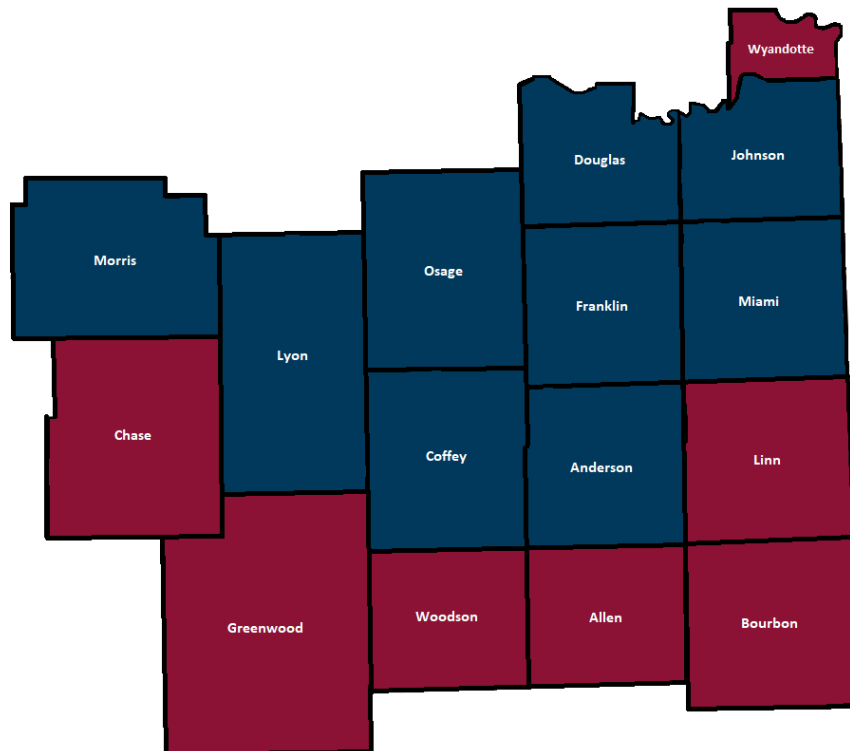
Values

Collaboration; Education; Empathy; Integrity; Respect

Counties Served

Allen*	Coffey	Johnson	Morris
Anderson	Douglas	Linn*	Osage
Bourbon*	Franklin	Lyon	Woodson*
Chase*	Greenwood*	Miami	Wyandotte*

*Weatherization Services Only



Programs, Services, and Impact

The East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation (ECKAN) is a private nonprofit Community Action Agency established in 1966. Governed by a tripartite Board of Trustees representing the private, public, and low-income sectors, ECKAN builds connections and provides program services that support the stability, health, and engagement of individuals and families across East Central Kansas.

ECKAN is one of approximately 1,000 Community Action Agencies nationwide and is a member of the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs. The Promise of Community Action states:

*Community Action changes people's lives,
embodies the spirit of hope,
improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live.*

*We care about the entire community,
and we are dedicated to helping people
help themselves and each other.*

ECKAN comprises four service departments organized by primary federal funding source, along with an administrative department that supports agency-wide operations.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

The Community Services Block Grant is federally funded through the Office of Community Services within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In Kansas, these funds are awarded to the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation and distributed to CSBG-eligible entities.

Households with incomes at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible for CSBG-funded services. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services updates the Federal Poverty Guidelines annually to reflect the minimum income needed for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter, using a formula developed in the 1960s. These guidelines are used nationally to determine eligibility for public assistance programs.

ECKAN community centers may provide limited services to households with income above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines when non-CSBG funding sources, such as donations or local grants, are available. However, because community center staff salaries are fully supported by CSBG funding, services delivered outside CSBG eligibility thresholds are constrained by both funding availability and allowable cost structures.

CSBG services are delivered through nine county community centers, one in each CSBG service county, as well as through ECKAN's Retail Recovery and Food Distribution warehouse. Services may include case management, emergency financial assistance for rent and utilities, food pantry services, transportation vouchers, assistance with health costs, and referrals to community resources. A comprehensive list of services is available in ECKAN's Resource Guide, located on the agency's website.

Head Start

ECKAN's Head Start department provides Head Start Preschool, Head Start Home-Based, Early Head Start Home-Based, and Early Head Start Childcare Partnership services. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Administration for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Children and Families, and the Kansas State Department of Education's Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Head Start primarily serves families at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Early Head Start eligibility is determined based on Department of Children and Families subsidy qualifications. All classrooms are licensed by the State of Kansas.

Services include developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum delivered through preschool classrooms, childcare partnerships, and home visits. Programs also provide health screenings, parent education, and family support services to strengthen family stability and child development outcomes.

Weatherization

The Weatherization Assistance Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy with the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation serving as the passthrough entity, and the Kansas Department of Children and Families through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

The statutory purpose of Weatherization is to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings owned or occupied by households with low incomes, reduce residential energy expenditures, and improve health and safety, particularly for households with older adults, individuals with disabilities, and children.

Households at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible for services. Weatherization is often misunderstood as a general home repair or remodeling program. Its primary purpose is to improve energy efficiency and reduce long-term utility costs, helping households maintain safe and sustainable housing.

Housing

ECKAN's Housing Department includes the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the Rentals Program, both designed to increase access to safe, stable, and affordable housing across East Central Kansas.

Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP, or Section-8) is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program assists low-income households in securing decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private rental market. Housing options may include single-family homes, townhomes, or apartments and are not limited to subsidized housing developments.

As a Public Housing Authority, ECKAN administers vouchers locally. Participating households are responsible for finding a suitable unit where the property owner agrees to participate in the program. A housing subsidy is paid directly to the property owner on the household's behalf. The household pays the difference between the approved rent and the subsidy amount.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development establishes Fair Market Rents annually and publishes Extremely Low-Income Limits that determine program eligibility thresholds. Current income limits for the counties served are detailed below.

County	One Person	Two Person	Three Person	Four Person	Five Person	Six Person	Seven Person	Eight Person
Anderson	\$17,900	\$21,150	\$26,650	\$32,150	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150
Coffey	\$19,500	\$22,250	\$26,650	\$32,150	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150
Franklin	\$20,200	\$23,100	\$26,650	\$32,150	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150
Lyon	\$17,700	\$21,150	\$26,650	\$32,150	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150
Miami	\$23,400	\$26,750	\$30,100	\$33,400	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150
Osage	\$20,050	\$22,900	\$26,650	\$32,150	\$37,650	\$43,150	\$48,650	\$54,150

Source: HUD's Fair Market Rents and Income Limits – Effective 4/1/2025 – <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#2025>

Rentals

ECKAN owns and operates 53 rental homes across four counties, located in Emporia, Ottawa, Osawatomie, Paola, Waverly, and LeRoy. These properties are supported through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation Community Housing Development Organization program and are intended to expand access to stable, affordable housing.

Applicants must meet low-income eligibility requirements to reside in these units. Household income and assets are verified and calculated to ensure compliance with program guidelines. Eligibility thresholds are determined based on property location, household size, applicable U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development income limits, Fair Market Rent standards, and the funding source used to acquire the property.

To support housing stability and responsible tenancy, applicants must provide two verified rental references. Background checks are conducted for all household members ages 18 and older, and all adult household members must be joint lessees on the lease agreement. Pets are not permitted, with the exception of service animals as required by law.

Administration

ECKAN's administrative structure provides oversight, accountability, and operational support across all programs and service areas.

The Fiscal Department ensures sound financial management, compliance with federal and state funding requirements, and responsible stewardship of public and private resources.

Human Resources supports recruitment, onboarding, employee development, policy compliance, and workforce stability across the agency.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provides strategic leadership and organizational direction, ensuring alignment with ECKAN's mission, vision, and Community Action framework. The Administrative Assistant to the CEO supports executive operations and coordination to maintain efficient agency governance and communication. Together, these administrative functions strengthen internal systems and ensure ECKAN can continue serving where the needs are with integrity and accountability.

Agency Impact

ECKAN employees demonstrate an ongoing commitment to strengthening individuals, families, and communities through direct services, resource coordination, and support. According to ECKAN's 2025 Annual Report covering January 1 through December 31, 2025, the following outcomes were achieved:

Head Start

- 211 children served, ages 0 to 3
- 335 children served, ages 3 to 5
- 90 percent of 228 families achieved parent-identified goals
- 21,857 breakfasts served
- 21,857 lunches served
- 4,846 snacks served
- \$66,257 in donations received

Weatherization

- 255 homes weatherized
- \$3,229,872.98 invested directly into homes
- \$12,711.61 average investment per home across funding sources

Human Resources

- 100 average employees
- 32 new hires
- 38.8 percent turnover rate

CSBG Community Services

- 2,782 unduplicated individuals served
- 1,024 unduplicated households served
- 522,318 pounds of food and retail recovered
- \$267,964.51 expended on direct services.

Housing

- 220 active vouchers
- \$1,151,378 in quarterly Housing Assistance Payments
- 488 households on the waitlist
- 82 active Housing Choice Voucher landlords
- 53 ECKAN-owned rental units

Fiscal

- \$3,420,513.70 total expenditures
- \$188,386.57 administrative expenses

Source: ECKAN 2025 Annual Report - <https://eckan.org/eckan-annual-report/>

Community Profile and Economic Conditions

ECKAN serves a geographically and economically varied region of East Central Kansas. The service area includes urban, suburban, and rural communities with significant variation in population growth, income levels, housing costs, and access to essential resources. These differences shape both the opportunities and challenges faced by households across the region.

Geography

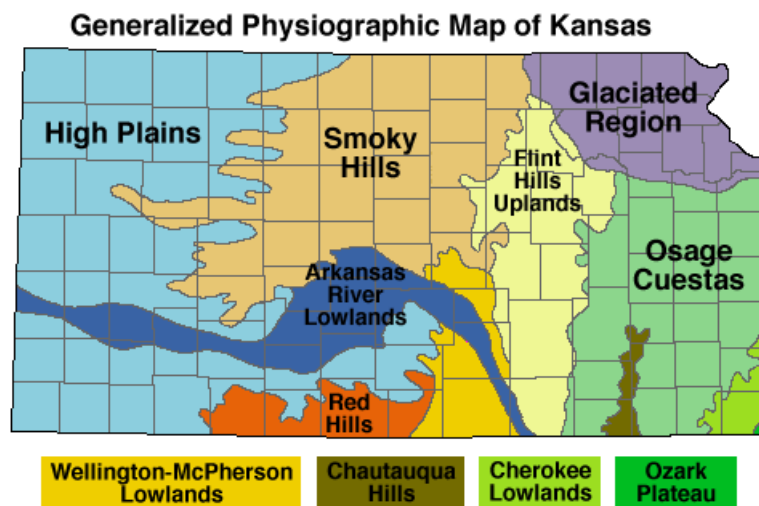
ECKAN provides services across 16 counties in East Central Kansas, with program coverage defined by funding and designation requirements.

Weatherization services are available in all 16 counties. CSBG services are delivered in Anderson, Coffey, Douglas, Franklin, Johnson, Lyon, Miami, Morris, and Osage counties. Head Start and Early Head Start are available in Anderson, Coffey, Douglas, Franklin, Lyon, Miami, and Osage counties.

ECKAN serves as the Housing Authority for Anderson, Coffey, Franklin, Lyon, Miami, and Osage counties. ECKAN also owns and manages rental housing in Coffey County, including LeRoy and Waverly; Franklin County, including Ottawa; Lyon County, including Emporia; and Miami County, including Paola and Osawatomie.

The service area spans 9,827 square miles, roughly the size of New Jersey. The region is located primarily within the upper Osage Cuestas, includes portions of the Flint Hills and Tallgrass Prairie, and extends east to the Missouri border. Compared to western Kansas, the region has higher rainfall, greater tree cover, and increased flood risk.

Energy infrastructure also shapes the region. Unlike the majority of the state, which is powered by wind and coal, much of East Central Kansas is supplied by the Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Coffey County, the state's only nuclear power plant.



Data Source: Kansas State Energy Profile – Updated: September 18, 2025 - <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=KS>

Data and Map Source: Kansas Geological Survey - Updated March 14, 1997 - <http://www.kgs.ku.edu/Physio/physio.html>

Population

Area	Total Population	Percent of National	Percent of State Population
United States	332,387,540	100%	-
Kansas	2,937,569	0.88%	100%
ECKAN Service Area	1,079,894	0.32%	36.76%
ECKAN CSBG Counties	864,366	0.26%	29.42%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23.

ECKAN’s service area is home to approximately 1.08 million residents, representing 37 percent of Kansas’ population. Population density averages 110 residents per square mile, slightly above the national average.

Population Trends, 2010 to 2020

The service area grew by 8.1 percent between 2010 and 2020, which exceeded the Kansas statewide growth rate of 2.97 percent. Growth was concentrated in Johnson County, where it increased by 12.1 percent, followed by Douglas County, which grew by 7.2 percent. Wyandotte County saw a 7.5 percent increase, and Miami County saw a 4.3 percent increase.

Most rural counties experienced population decline, including Greenwood, Morris, and Chase counties. This urban-rural divergence has implications for workforce availability, school enrollment, housing demand, and service delivery models.

Area	Total Population, 2010 Census	Total Population, 2020 Census	Population Change, 2010-2020	2010-2020, Percent
United States	312,471,161	334,735,155	22,263,994	7.13%
Kansas	2,853,117	2,937,880	84,763	2.97%
ECKAN Service Area	994,887	1,075,787	80,900	8.13%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)				
Allen*	13,371	12,526	-845	-6.32%
Anderson	8,102	7,836	-266	-3.28%
Bourbon*	15,173	14,360	-813	-5.36%
Chase*	2,790	2,572	-218	-7.81%
Coffey	8,601	8,360	-241	-2.80%
Douglas	110,825	118,785	7,960	7.18%
Franklin	25,992	25,996	4	0.02%
Greenwood*	6,689	6,016	-673	-10.06%
Johnson	544,179	609,863	65,684	12.07%
Linn*	9,656	9,591	-65	-0.67%
Lyon	33,690	32,179	-1,511	-4.49%
Miami	32,787	34,191	1,404	4.28%
Morris	5,923	5,386	-537	-9.07%
Osage	16,295	15,766	-529	-3.25%
Woodson*	3,309	3,115	-194	-5.86%
Wyandotte*	157,505	169,245	11,740	7.45%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/>. 2020. Source geography: Tract

Demographics

Age Distribution

The median age across the service area aligns with state and national trends, though variation is significant. Douglas, Lyon, and Wyandotte counties have higher proportions of residents ages 18 to 24 due to their proximity to universities. Woodson, Greenwood, Morris, and Chase counties have older populations, with more than 25 percent of residents age 65 or older.

An aging rural population increases demand for fixed-income assistance, health supports, and energy affordability services. Younger urban and semi-urban populations increase demand for early childhood services and workforce development.

Population by Age Groups, Percent

Area	Age 0-4	Age 5-17	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
United States	5.70%	16.46%	9.12%	13.69%	13.08%	12.29%	12.82%	16.84%
Kansas	6.11%	17.88%	10.19%	12.80%	12.79%	11.23%	12.42%	16.57%
ECKAN Service Area	5.95%	17.66%	10.03%	13.22%	13.58%	11.90%	12.16%	15.50%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)								
Allen*	5.79%	16.36%	9.39%	10.75%	11.41%	10.98%	14.55%	20.77%
Anderson	6.92%	19.47%	7.03%	9.58%	10.22%	12.44%	13.61%	20.73%
Bourbon*	6.16%	18.88%	9.36%	10.89%	11.80%	9.91%	13.58%	19.42%
Chase*	4.92%	16.05%	6.44%	11.98%	11.09%	11.94%	13.53%	24.04%
Coffey	4.41%	17.14%	7.12%	10.92%	12.07%	11.34%	15.02%	21.99%
Douglas	4.51%	13.31%	22.97%	13.84%	12.43%	9.67%	9.95%	13.32%
Franklin	5.38%	17.90%	8.84%	11.81%	12.23%	11.70%	14.60%	17.53%
Greenwood*	4.60%	16.86%	5.67%	8.93%	10.88%	11.10%	15.93%	26.02%
Johnson	5.97%	17.84%	7.96%	13.47%	14.42%	12.64%	12.19%	15.50%
Linn*	4.89%	17.16%	6.88%	8.76%	11.90%	12.00%	16.15%	22.27%
Lyon	5.88%	16.43%	17.18%	12.64%	11.01%	9.58%	11.50%	15.79%
Miami	5.35%	18.57%	7.84%	10.16%	12.82%	12.81%	14.96%	17.49%
Morris	5.12%	15.44%	5.31%	8.74%	11.90%	10.47%	16.91%	26.11%
Osage	5.18%	18.15%	6.93%	10.44%	11.54%	11.63%	15.54%	20.60%
Woodson*	4.43%	14.56%	5.39%	8.82%	13.41%	11.03%	15.78%	26.59%
Wyandotte*	7.39%	20.23%	8.99%	14.40%	13.21%	11.41%	11.34%	13.04%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23

Gender

The service area reflects a near-even gender distribution, consistent with state and national patterns.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2016-20.

Race and Ethnicity

The service area is predominantly White at 76 percent, similar to Kansas as a whole. However, demographic concentration varies significantly. Wyandotte County has the most varied population composition in the service area. Lyon County reports 17 percent identifying as two or more races. Hispanic or Latino residents comprise 12.3 percent of the service area population. Wyandotte County reports that 33 percent of its residents are Hispanic or Latino.

These demographic patterns inform language access, services responsive to community needs, and outreach strategies.

Area Population by Race

Area	White	Black	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Two or More Races
United States	63.44%	12.36%	5.82%	0.88%	0.19%	6.60%	10.71%
Kansas	77.92%	5.44%	2.93%	0.75%	0.09%	3.91%	8.95%
ECKAN Service Area	76.30%	6.41%	4.37%	0.59%	0.07%	3.83%	8.43%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)							
Allen*	91.06%	1.89%	0.74%	0.78%	0.86%	0.58%	4.07%
Anderson	92.08%	0.88%	0.00%	0.24%	0.00%	0.31%	6.48%
Bourbon*	90.47%	2.22%	0.63%	0.04%	0.00%	1.38%	5.26%
Chase*	89.03%	1.24%	0.62%	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	8.69%
Coffey	93.68%	0.51%	0.98%	0.16%	0.00%	0.54%	4.14%
Douglas	79.16%	4.21%	4.57%	1.34%	0.00%	1.23%	9.49%
Franklin	91.12%	0.89%	0.62%	0.43%	0.21%	1.12%	5.61%
Greenwood*	92.93%	0.59%	0.08%	1.78%	0.00%	0.71%	3.91%
Johnson	80.19%	4.88%	5.16%	0.27%	0.04%	2.05%	7.41%
Linn*	93.64%	0.76%	0.34%	0.20%	0.21%	0.72%	4.13%
Lyon	75.01%	1.58%	1.78%	0.35%	0.01%	3.98%	17.30%
Miami	91.97%	1.14%	0.56%	0.74%	0.00%	1.19%	4.40%
Morris	92.84%	0.22%	0.24%	0.00%	0.00%	1.32%	5.38%
Osage	93.65%	0.50%	0.13%	0.13%	0.01%	0.54%	5.04%
Woodson*	92.66%	0.10%	0.00%	0.99%	0.00%	0.10%	6.16%
Wyandotte*	46.49%	19.26%	5.22%	1.37%	0.17%	14.74%	12.75%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23

Area Population, Total and by Ethnicity

Area	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	Hispanic or Latino Population, Percent	Non-Hispanic Population	Non-Hispanic Population, Percent
United States	332,387,540	63,131,589	18.99%	269,255,951	81.01%
Kansas	2,937,569	389,514	13.26%	2,548,055	86.74%
ECKAN Service Area	1,079,894	132,856	12.30%	947,038	87.70%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)					
Allen*	12,491	512	4.10%	11,979	95.90%
Anderson	7,819	127	1.62%	7,692	98.38%
Bourbon*	14,384	432	3.00%	13,952	97.00%
Chase*	2,579	208	8.07%	2,371	91.93%
Coffey	8,304	279	3.36%	8,025	96.64%
Douglas	119,547	8,443	7.06%	111,104	92.94%
Franklin	25,994	1,215	4.67%	24,779	95.33%
Greenwood*	5,956	235	3.95%	5,721	96.05%
Johnson	614,764	55,724	9.06%	559,040	90.94%
Linn*	9,723	284	2.92%	9,439	97.08%
Lyon	32,145	7,526	23.41%	24,619	76.59%
Miami	34,625	1,334	3.85%	33,291	96.15%
Morris	5,388	237	4.40%	5,151	95.60%
Osage	15,780	512	3.24%	15,268	96.76%
Woodson*	3,118	23	0.74%	3,095	99.26%
Wyandotte*	167,277	55,765	33.34%	111,512	66.66%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23. Source geography: Tract

Jobs and Earnings by Sector

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2022), ECKAN's service area supports approximately 784,000 jobs and contributes \$56 billion in total earnings.

Farm Sector

Private Nonfarm Employment

Private nonfarm employment accounts for approximately 689,000 jobs, generating \$50.2 billion in total earnings, with an average wage of \$72,900 per job. This sector forms the core of the regional economy.

Farm Sector

Agriculture accounts for just over 10,400 jobs in the region. However, total farm earnings are modest relative to employment size, and several counties reported negative farm earnings in 2022, including:

- Greenwood County
- Lyon County
- Miami County
- Woodson County
- Wyandotte County

Negative earnings reflect market volatility, input costs, and fluctuations in commodity prices. While agriculture remains culturally and historically significant, it does not represent a stable earnings base in many counties.

Major Industry Sectors

Construction

- 38,740 jobs
- \$3.04 billion in earnings
- Average Earnings: \$78,578

Construction wages exceed the regional nonfarm average. Johnson County dominates this sector with nearly 23,000 construction jobs averaging \$87,708. Rural counties show lower construction wages and smaller employment bases.

Manufacturing

- 49,154 jobs
- \$4.48 billion in earnings
- Average Earnings: \$91,117

Manufacturing provides some of the strongest middle-income opportunities in the region. Johnson County leads with over 23,900 jobs averaging \$104,242. Wyandotte County also shows strong manufacturing employment and wages.

Wholesale, Retail, and Transportation

Wholesale Trade

- 25,625 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$115,508

Wholesale trade offers higher wages than most sectors. Johnson County accounts for the majority of these jobs.

Retail Trade

- 69,508 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$39,464

Retail employs a large portion of the workforce, but at wages significantly below the regional average.

Transportation and Warehousing

- 52,089 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$55,296

Transportation wages fall below construction and manufacturing but above retail and hospitality.

Information, Finance, and Real Estate

Information

- 11,685 jobs
- \$5.21 billion in earnings
- Average Earnings: \$446,065

This exceptionally high reported average is driven largely by concentration in Johnson County and likely reflects how corporate earnings are allocated rather than typical worker wages.

Finance and Insurance

- 56,560 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$76,726

Finance provides above-average wages and is concentrated in urban counties.

Real Estate and Rental and Leasing

- 40,080 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$36,199

Despite large employment numbers, wages are comparatively modest.

Professional and Corporate Sectors

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

- 64,295 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$92,538

This sector is heavily concentrated in Johnson County, which alone accounts for more than 52,000 jobs, averaging \$99,390 a year per job.

Management of Companies and Enterprises

- 14,421 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$145,314

This high-wage sector significantly elevates county-level averages in Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

Administrative, Education, and Health

Administrative and Waste Management Services

- 51,466 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$57,193

These positions often provide moderate wages and include contracted support services.

Educational Services

- 11,378 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$35,163

Education wages fall below the regional nonfarm average.

Health Care and Social Assistance

- 80,775 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$79,915
- \$6.46 billion in earnings

Health care represents one of the largest and most stable employment sectors in the region. Johnson and Wyandotte counties drive much of this employment.

Hospitality and Other Services

Accommodation and Food Services

- 46,923 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$32,140

This sector provides substantial employment but at wages insufficient to support many families independently.

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation

- 14,439 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$27,831

Wages are among the lowest across sectors.

Other Services, Except Public Administration

- 36,729 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$48,066

This category includes personal services and small business operations.

Government Employment

- 84,945 jobs
- Average Earnings: \$67,536
- \$5.74 billion in earnings

Government employment provides stable wages across counties. Johnson County accounts for over 34,600 government jobs, while Douglas and Wyandotte counties also show significant public employment bases.

Geographic Concentration

Johnson County alone accounts for:

- Nearly 499,000 nonfarm jobs
- \$80,042 average nonfarm wage
- \$39.9 billion in nonfarm earnings

This concentration significantly elevates regional averages and overshadows disparities in rural counties, where nonfarm wages frequently range from \$31,000 to \$58,000.

Implications

The U.S. Department of Commerce labor market data illustrate clear structural patterns across the ECKAN service area.

Wage Stratification

Wage stratification in the area is pronounced. Wage stratification is the structured and unequal distribution of earnings across industries, occupations, and geographic areas, resulting in distinct tiers of high- and low-wage employment within a labor market.

High-wage sectors, including management of companies, professional services, wholesale trade, utilities, and information, are concentrated primarily in Johnson County. These industries raise regional averages but are not evenly distributed across counties.

Large Low-Wage Employment Base

A substantial share of the workforce is employed in lower-wage sectors. Retail, hospitality, arts and recreation, and certain education positions employ tens of thousands of residents, with average annual wages ranging from approximately \$27,000 to \$39,000. While this employment base is sometimes referred to as “underemployed,” many individuals working full-time in these sectors remain financially vulnerable.

Rural Economic Volatility

Rural counties experience additional constraints. Employment bases are smaller, wages trend lower, and agriculture remains volatile. Several rural counties reported unstable or negative farm earnings, reinforcing income instability tied to pricing and costs.

Stability Anchors

Certain sectors function as economic stabilizers. Health care, manufacturing, construction, and government provide comparatively steady employment with moderate to higher wages. These industries support household income stability and local economic resilience.

These labor market conditions reinforce the need for comprehensive support services, including workforce development aligned with career advancement pathways, housing stabilization and rental assistance, energy and utility support, food access programs, and asset-building and financial capability initiatives.

ECKAN’s service area includes a wide range of industries and shows strong overall earnings, but income is unevenly distributed across counties and sectors. Employment does not always lead to financial stability, especially for households working in lower-wage service industries, who are more likely to face housing cost burdens, energy insecurity, and reliance on supplemental supports.

Sustained, coordinated strategies are essential to expand economic mobility and strengthen long-term household stability across East Central Kansas.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2022

Unemployment Rates

As of December 2025, the unemployment rate across the service area was 3.4 percent, consistent with the Kansas average and slightly below the national rate.

While unemployment is relatively low, employment alone does not eliminate financial instability, particularly where wages are insufficient to meet housing and energy costs.

Area Population/Employment	Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
United States	171,978,146	164,905,410	7,072,735	4.1%
Kansas	1,574,611	1,520,834	53,777	3.4%
ECKAN Service Area	613,416	592,313	21,103	3.4%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)				
Allen*	6,216	5,991	225	3.6%
Anderson	3,979	3,849	130	3.3%
Bourbon*	6,214	5,913	301	4.8%
Chase*	1,172	1,121	51	4.4%
Coffey	3,915	3,765	150	3.8%
Douglas	71,682	69,483	2,199	3.1%
Franklin	14,536	14,051	485	3.3%
Greenwood*	3,097	2,984	113	3.6%
Johnson	364,725	353,054	11,671	3.2%
Linn*	4,951	4,715	236	4.8%
Lyon	17,531	16,815	716	4.1%
Miami	19,133	18,498	635	3.3%
Morris	2,970	2,886	84	2.8%
Osage	8,169	7,866	303	3.7%
Woodson*	1,339	1,276	63	4.7%
Wyandotte*	83,787	80,046	3,741	4.5%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025 - December

Household Income and Poverty

Median Household Income

Median household income varies widely across counties. Urban counties show significantly higher income levels than rural counties. Median income differences reflect both job access and wage disparities.

Area	Estimated Population	Median Household Income
United States	326,104,344	\$77,719
Kansas	2,855,491	\$70,316
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)		
Allen*	11,988	\$54,761
Anderson	7,741	\$61,742
Bourbon*	13,981	\$54,428
Chase*	2,404	\$62,302
Coffey	8,122	\$67,933
Douglas	112,180	\$68,561
Franklin	25,577	\$67,883
Greenwood*	5,790	\$59,179
Johnson	621,547	\$103,085
Linn*	9,855	\$62,431
Lyon	30,927	\$55,659
Miami	34,929	\$85,620
Morris	5,222	\$65,283
Osage	15,630	\$69,666
Woodson*	3,058	\$40,327
Wyandotte*	163,105	\$61,088

Data Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. 2023

Poverty Rate Change

Between 2013 and 2023, the service area poverty rate declined from 11.9 percent to 8.95 percent.

Area	Persons in Poverty 2013	Poverty Rate 2013	Persons in Poverty 2023	Poverty Rate 2023	Change in Poverty Rate 2013-2023
United States	48,810,868	15.8%	40,763,043	12.5%	-3.3%
Kansas	391,718	13.9%	319,815	11.2%	-2.7%
ECKAN Service Area	119,144	11.86%	95,949	8.95%	-2.91%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)					
Allen*	2,214	17.5%	1,918	16.0%	-1.5%
Anderson	1,201	15.4%	898	11.6%	-3.8%
Bourbon*	2,788	19.4%	2,153	15.4%	-4.0%
Chase*	296	11.6%	274	11.4%	-0.2%
Coffey	890	10.8%	796	9.8%	-1.0%
Douglas	17,586	16.6%	14,920	13.3%	-3.3%
Franklin	3,561	14.1%	2,839	11.1%	-3.0%
Greenwood*	992	15.7%	828	14.3%	-1.4%
Johnson	34,429	6.1%	32,942	5.3%	-0.8%
Linn*	1,425	15.1%	1,084	11.0%	-4.1%
Lyon	6,790	21.2%	4,237	13.7%	-7.5%
Miami	3,032	9.4%	2,445	7.0%	-2.4%
Morris	733	13.0%	611	11.7%	-1.3%
Osage	2,021	12.7%	1,688	10.8%	-1.9%
Woodson*	550	17.4%	425	13.9%	-3.5%
Wyandotte*	40,636	25.6%	27,891	17.1%	-8.5%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. 2023.

Households by Household Income Levels, Percent

Household income distribution varies across the service area. Roughly 12% of households earn less than \$25,000 annually, while nearly 29% earn between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and about 14% earn \$200,000 or more. Johnson County shows the greatest concentration of high-income households, with over 19% earning above \$200,000, while Woodson, Allen, and Lyon counties have higher concentrations in lower-income brackets.

Area	Under \$25,000	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000+
United States	15.00%	17.28%	28.46%	26.70%	12.56%
Kansas	14.43%	19.31%	31.34%	26.15%	8.77%
ECKAN Service Area	11.55%	15.98%	28.97%	29.81%	13.69%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)					
Allen*	17.89%	26.98%	33.55%	19.11%	2.47%
Anderson	17.46%	23.27%	35.84%	19.96%	3.47%
Bourbon*	16.83%	24.70%	29.62%	24.68%	4.18%
Chase*	21.48%	20.35%	37.29%	19.21%	1.66%
Coffey	12.69%	24.13%	27.46%	29.55%	6.17%
Douglas	17.60%	18.90%	28.71%	25.15%	9.64%
Franklin	16.13%	18.96%	30.80%	30.46%	3.64%
Greenwood*	18.86%	26.15%	31.49%	19.28%	4.22%
Johnson	7.17%	12.17%	27.15%	34.08%	19.43%
Linn*	16.61%	20.87%	34.75%	22.82%	4.95%
Lyon	17.79%	24.13%	36.86%	17.05%	4.17%
Miami	11.08%	15.16%	29.03%	35.21%	9.52%
Morris	19.53%	24.61%	29.57%	21.21%	5.08%
Osage	13.74%	20.03%	37.82%	23.75%	4.67%
Woodson*	18.84%	32.54%	28.87%	14.76%	4.98%
Wyandotte*	19.17%	22.18%	32.11%	22.35%	4.19%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2016-20

Households in Poverty

In 2023, approximately 40,955 households, or 9.5% of households in area, were living in poverty. Counties such as Douglas, Greenwood, and Wyandotte report the highest poverty rates, exceeding 16%, while Johnson and Miami counties have the lowest rates, under 8%.

Area	Total Households	Households in Poverty	Percent Households in Poverty
United States	127,482,865	15,880,048	12.5%
Kansas	1,160,715	136,227	11.7%
ECKAN Service Area	428,853	40,955	9.55%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	5,014	620	12.4%
Anderson	3,287	374	11.4%
Bourbon*	5,770	737	12.8%
Chase*	1,145	125	10.9%
Coffey	3,547	327	9.2%
Douglas	49,939	8,079	16.2%
Franklin	10,289	1,071	10.4%
Greenwood*	2,604	428	16.4%
Johnson	244,777	14,094	5.8%
Linn*	4,299	559	13.0%
Lyon	13,322	1,914	14.4%
Miami	13,532	1,069	7.9%
Morris	2,499	329	13.2%
Osage	6,362	733	11.5%
Woodson*	1,226	148	12.1%
Wyandotte*	61,241	10,348	16.9%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-23

Health and Nutrition

Disability

Approximately 11 percent of service area residents live with a disability. Rural counties such as Woodson, Greenwood, Allen, and Bourbon report rates between 18 and 23 percent, while Johnson County reports under 9 percent. Higher disability prevalence correlates with aging populations and lower incomes, increasing demand for accessible health services, housing, transportation, and energy assistance.

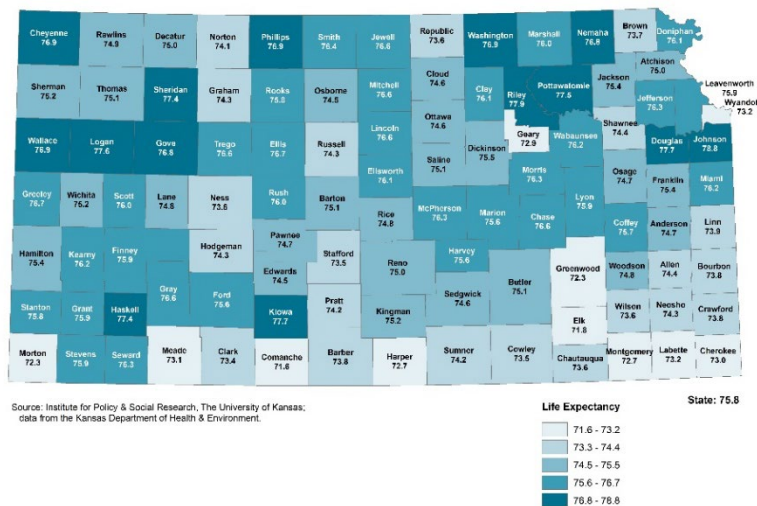
Population with Any Disability	Total Population (For Whom Disability Status Is Determined)	Population with a Disability	People with a Disability, Percent
United States	327,425,278	42,703,063	13.04%
Kansas	2,875,799	386,716	13.45%
ECKAN Service Area	1,070,620	117,945	11.02%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	12,331	2,174	17.63%
Anderson	7,700	1,266	16.44%
Bourbon*	14,203	2,661	18.74%
Chase*	2,458	291	11.84%
Coffey	8,174	1,364	16.69%
Douglas	118,873	13,258	11.15%
Franklin	25,800	4,261	16.52%
Greenwood*	5,884	1,108	18.83%
Johnson	609,881	54,292	8.90%
Linn*	9,674	1,621	16.76%
Lyon	31,742	4,268	13.45%
Miami	34,045	4,302	12.64%
Morris	5,286	850	16.08%
Osage	15,585	2,560	16.43%
Woodson*	3,086	664	21.52%
Wyandotte*	165,898	23,005	13.87%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-23

Birth Rates

Birth rates range from 8.6 to 15.5 births per 1,000 residents. Wyandotte and Bourbon counties report the highest rates, indicating a sustained need for early childhood services.

Life Expectancy at Birth in Kansas, by County, 2016-19



Data Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Children Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch

Forty percent of students in the service area qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. County-level variation is substantial. Wyandotte, Bourbon, and Greenwood counties report the highest eligibility rates, ranging from 62 percent to 73 percent, while Johnson and Miami counties report the lowest rates, near 28 percent.

In 2026, the Kansas Legislature is considering significant changes to school meal funding and eligibility verification. Senate Bill 387 would require school districts to verify household income for students receiving free meals who are identified as at-risk. The bill also limits local adoption of the federal Community Eligibility Provision by requiring legislative approval before districts may participate. The Community Eligibility Provision is a federal meal service option for schools with a high population of students with lower incomes. This provision allows schools to serve breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost, without requiring students or parents to submit applications. Use of the Community Eligibility Provision increases participation in school meal programs, improves nutrition, reduces stigma, and simplifies operations by removing paper applications.

If enacted, these changes could affect how students qualify for free meals and may alter reported eligibility rates across counties, particularly in districts currently using Community Eligibility models. Shifts in verification requirements may also affect the number of households formally identified as having low incomes for reporting and program-planning purposes.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education; Kansas Legislature, SB 387 (2025–2026 Session).

Area	Total Students	Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, Percent
United States	46,694,706	24,748,121	54.7%
Kansas	479,544	234,451	48.9%
ECKAN Service Area	168,862	67,465	40.0%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	2,450	1,220	49.8%
Anderson	1,212	658	54.3%
Bourbon*	2,226	1,409	63.3%
Chase*	388	151	38.9%
Coffey	1,477	682	46.2%
Douglas	14,011	5,321	38.0%
Franklin	4,244	2,108	49.7%
Greenwood*	879	545	62.0%
Johnson	94,056	25,499	27.1%
Linn*	1,859	994	53.5%
Lyon	5,301	3,017	56.9%
Miami	6,531	1,820	27.9%
Morris	881	480	54.5%
Osage	2,692	1,269	47.1%
Woodson*	443	238	53.7%
Wyandotte*	30,212	22,054	73.0%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) -

Common Core of Data, 2023-24

Food Insecure Households

Food access challenges affect a significant portion of low-income residents in the service area. Transportation and proximity to grocery stores significantly affect food security, particularly in rural areas.

Overall, 22% of low-income residents in the area have “low food access,” defined as living more than 1 mile from a grocery store in urban areas or more than 10 miles from a grocery store in rural areas. Some rural counties experience particularly high rates. Chase, Coffey, Franklin, Greenwood, and Miami counties all have more than 30% of low-income residents facing limited food access. Johnson and Lyon counties have lower rates of food insecurity, reflecting better access to grocery stores and food resources. These data emphasize the importance of food and transportation services, especially in rural communities.

Area	Total Population	Low-Income Population	Low-Income Population with Low Food Access	Percent Low-Income Population with Low Food Access
United States	308,745,538	97,055,825	18,834,033	19.41%
Kansas	2,853,118	875,516	240,798	27.50%
ECKAN Service Area	994,888	254,698	56,760	22.29%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)				
Allen*	13,371	5,075	559	11.01%
Anderson	8,102	3,043	456	14.99%
Bourbon*	15,173	7,010	1,696	24.19%
Chase*	2,790	1,039	884	85.08%
Coffey	8,601	2,601	1,424	54.75%
Douglas	110,826	39,307	5,969	15.19%
Franklin	25,992	8,712	4,570	52.46%
Greenwood*	6,689	2,784	1,191	42.78%
Johnson	544,179	82,608	12,285	14.87%
Linn*	9,656	3,642	468	12.85%
Lyon	33,690	13,410	1,952	14.56%
Miami	32,787	6,278	2,185	34.80%
Morris	5,923	1,817	589	32.42%
Osage	16,295	4,905	824	16.80%
Woodson*	3,309	1,438	326	22.67%
Wyandotte*	157,505	71,029	21,382	30.10%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) - Food Access Research Atlas. 2019. Source geography: Tract

Housing and Energy

Housing Costs - Understanding Cost Burden

Housing cost burden is a standard measure of affordability used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A household is considered cost-burdened when it spends 30 percent or more of its gross income on housing costs, including rent or mortgage payments, utilities, insurance, and taxes. A household is considered severely cost-burdened when housing costs consume 50 percent or more of income.

Cost burden often means difficult tradeoffs. When a large share of income is committed to housing, families have less flexibility to cover food, transportation, childcare, medical expenses, and other essential needs. Even small disruptions such as reduced work hours, a car repair, or a medical bill can create immediate financial instability. Cost burden is closely associated with increased risk of eviction, utility disconnection, deferred maintenance, and housing displacement.

Housing Costs - Cost Burden (30%)

Housing costs in the area vary widely, and a significant portion of households experience financial strain from housing expenses. Approximately 25% of households spend 30% or more of their income on housing, a common threshold for cost burden. This proportion is slightly above the Kansas average of 23%, but lower than the national average of 29%. Among counties, Douglas stands out with 32% of households cost burdened, reflecting higher housing costs in the region, while rural counties such as Chase, Coffey, and Woodson have lower rates, generally under 20%.

Area	Total Households	Cost-Burdened Households	Cost-Burdened Households, Percent
United States	127,482,865	37,330,839	29.28%
Kansas	1,160,715	271,407	23.38%
ECKAN Service Area	428,853	105,649	24.64%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	5,014	1,002	19.98%
Anderson	3,287	783	23.82%
Bourbon*	5,770	1,117	19.36%
Chase*	1,145	169	14.76%
Coffey	3,547	582	16.41%
Douglas	49,939	15,794	31.63%
Franklin	10,289	2,538	24.67%
Greenwood*	2,604	487	18.70%
Johnson	244,777	55,282	22.58%
Linn*	4,299	967	22.49%
Lyon	13,322	3,290	24.70%
Miami	13,532	3,224	23.83%
Morris	2,499	434	17.37%
Osage	6,362	1,483	23.31%
Woodson*	1,226	203	16.56%
Wyandotte*	61,241	18,294	29.87%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23

Housing Costs - Cost Burden, Severe (50%)

Severe housing cost burden, defined as spending 50% or more of income on housing, affects about 11% of households in the area, slightly above the state rate of 10% and below the national rate of 14%. Douglas County again has the highest proportion at 16%, indicating that

many households face significant housing affordability challenges. Counties like Allen, Chase, and Bourbon report the lowest rates of severe burden, generally under 9%.

Area	Total Households	Severely Burdened Households	Severely Burdened Households, Percent
United States	127,482,865	17,661,218	13.85%
Kansas	1,160,715	119,020	10.25%
ECKAN Service Area	428,853	46,431	10.83%
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	5,014	307	6.12%
Anderson	3,287	351	10.68%
Bourbon*	5,770	509	8.82%
Chase*	1,145	69	6.03%
Coffey	3,547	260	7.33%
Douglas	49,939	7,907	15.83%
Franklin	10,289	1,033	10.04%
Greenwood*	2,604	229	8.79%
Johnson	244,777	23,287	9.51%
Linn*	4,299	411	9.56%
Lyon	13,322	1,553	11.66%
Miami	13,532	1,538	11.37%
Morris	2,499	178	7.12%
Osage	6,362	483	7.59%
Woodson*	1,226	88	7.18%
Wyandotte*	61,241	8,228	13.44%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019-23.

Evictions

Eviction filings provide an additional lens on housing instability. In 2018, there were an estimated 5,174 formal eviction filings among the area's 144,000 renter households, yielding a filing rate of 3.6%. Most counties have relatively low eviction rates, generally under 3%, but Wyandotte County stands out with an estimated rate of 8.4%, highlighting acute housing stress. It is important to note that these figures do not capture informal evictions that occur outside the court system, and trends may have shifted since the 2018 data.

Area	Renter Occupied Households	Estimated Eviction Filings	Estimated Eviction Filing Rate
United States	140,706,143	10,969,285	7.8
Kansas	805,287	25,977	3.2
ECKAN Service Area	144,039	5,174	3.6
Service Area Counties (* indicates Weatherization services only)			
Allen*	1,641	28	1.7
Anderson	812	16	2.0
Bourbon*	1,906	45	2.4
Chase*	276	18	6.5
Coffey	905	15	1.7
Douglas	23,696	376	1.6
Franklin	3,160	75	2.4
Greenwood*	790	15	1.9
Johnson	73,165	2,106	2.9
Linn*	944	23	2.4
Lyon	5,322	120	2.3
Miami	2,930	101	3.4
Morris	612	19	3.1
Osage	1,549	19	1.2
Woodson*	358	13	3.6
Wyandotte*	25,973	2,185	8.4

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average. Data Source: Eviction Lab. 2018

While many households in the area manage housing costs within typical thresholds, pockets of significant financial pressure and housing instability exist. Urban centers like Douglas and Wyandotte counties show elevated cost burdens and eviction rates, while rural counties generally have lower documented housing instability. While housing may be more stable in rural communities, finding housing is often a challenge. These patterns can guide the development of targeted housing programs and support services to address affordability and stability needs across the area.

Energy Burden

Energy burden measures the share of a household’s annual income that is spent on energy costs, providing insight into the affordability of heating, cooling, and electricity. It is calculated by dividing the annual energy bill by the annual household income and expressing the result as a percentage.

Across ECKAN’s service area, energy burden varies by county, reflecting differences in income levels, housing stock, and energy costs. Johnson County experiences the lowest average burden at 2 percent, while Woodson County has the highest at 7 percent. Most other counties fall between 3 and 6 percent, with rural counties such as Greenwood, Allen, and Bourbon exhibiting slightly higher burdens than their urban counterparts. These variances highlight the particular energy affordability challenges faced by smaller or rural communities.

Understanding energy burden is critical for planning weatherization and energy assistance programs, as even modest differences in energy burden significantly affect low-income households, particularly older residents and those in substandard housing. These data underscore the continued need for Weatherization and energy assistance services.

Service Area Counties (*indicates Weatherization services only)	Avg. Energy Burden (% income)
Allen*	5%
Anderson	6%
Bourbon*	5%
Chase*	6%
Coffey	4%
Douglas	3%
Franklin	4%
Greenwood*	6%
Johnson	2%
Linn*	5%
Lyon	4%
Miami	3%
Morris	4%
Osage	5%
Woodson*	7%
Wyandotte*	4%

Low-income households typically spend **13.9%** of their total annual income on energy costs, compared to **3.0%** for other households.

Data Source: Ma, Ookie, Krystal Laymon, Megan Day, Ricardo Oliveira, Jon Weers, and Aaron Vimont. 2019. Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool Methodology. Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP-6A20-74249. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy19osti/74249.pdf>.

Image Source: Department of Energy’s Office of State and Community Energy Programs – About the Weatherization Program – <https://www.energy.gov/scep/wap/about-weatherization-assistance-program>

Strategic Implications of Community Profile and Economic Conditions Quantitative Data Review

The data presented throughout this assessment indicate several consistent patterns affecting households across the ECKAN service area. While economic conditions vary among counties, many communities face similar pressures related to housing costs, childcare availability, transportation access, healthcare affordability, and food security.

Housing costs continue to rise faster than household earnings in many areas. As a result, a growing number of households experience a housing cost burden, meaning a large share of income is committed to housing expenses. When housing costs increase, families often have fewer resources available for food, healthcare, childcare, transportation, and other essential needs.

Energy costs further compound these pressures. Older housing stock and limited energy efficiency contribute to high utility bills, particularly during extreme seasonal temperatures. In many cases, households struggling with housing affordability also face higher energy costs.

Access to childcare and reliable transportation also influences economic stability. Without affordable childcare or reliable transportation, many parents cannot maintain consistent employment or pursue training opportunities that would increase household income.

These overlapping pressures demonstrate that many families experience multiple challenges simultaneously. Addressing these needs requires coordinated services, strong partnerships, and programs that support both immediate stability and long-term economic mobility.

Focus Groups and Surveys

Methodology

To complement quantitative data, ECKAN gathered qualitative information through focus groups and surveys conducted across the service area. These tools provided insight into community experiences and perceptions that may not appear in statistical datasets.

Input was collected from three primary sources:

- Community residents through a community survey
- ECKAN staff through an internal staff survey and focus group
- Community stakeholders through focus groups

Together, these sources provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges households face and the types of support that may help improve stability and opportunity.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with community stakeholders, service providers, and individuals familiar with local conditions. Participants included representatives from nonprofit organizations, schools, ECKAN's Board of Trustees and Head Start Policy Council, and other community partners.

Discussions focused on community challenges, service gaps, and opportunities to improve support systems for households experiencing financial hardship.

Participants consistently identified housing affordability as the most significant challenge facing communities across the region. Rising rent, limited housing supply, and barriers related to credit or prior rental history make it difficult for many households to secure stable housing.

Transportation challenges were also widely discussed. In rural counties especially, limited public transportation options make it difficult for residents to access employment, healthcare, and social services.

Participants also emphasized the growing difficulty families face in securing affordable childcare. Limited provider availability and high childcare costs prevent many parents from maintaining full-time employment.

Healthcare affordability and food access were also recurring themes, particularly for households experiencing financial instability.

Urban areas, particularly Douglas County, face higher housing costs and increased demand for rental housing. Rural communities often experience different challenges, including limited grocery access, fewer healthcare providers, and aging housing stock. Rural residents also reported transportation challenges more frequently because public transit options are limited or nonexistent in many areas.

Despite these differences, participants noted that households across both urban and rural communities face similar pressures related to rising living costs.

Survey Findings

2025 Staff Survey

The 2025 Staff Survey gathered responses from 84 ECKAN staff members representing multiple programs and departments. ECKAN staff interact directly with customers and are members of the service community; their observations provide valuable insight into emerging community needs.

Staff consistently identified affordable housing, transportation barriers, food insecurity, rising utility costs, childcare access, and healthcare affordability as the most significant challenges affecting households.

Many staff also noted that demand for emergency assistance continues to increase. Households seeking help are often working families whose income does not keep pace with rising living costs.

Programs providing housing stabilization, utility assistance, food access, case management, benefit enrollment assistance, Weatherization services, and material support remain in high demand across the service area.

Staff also emphasized the importance of partnerships with nonprofit organizations, healthcare providers, schools, workforce programs, faith-based organizations, and local governments. These partnerships help connect households to resources and strengthen service coordination.

2025 Community Survey

The 2025 Community Survey collected responses from 87 individuals across the ECKAN service area. Respondents represented multiple counties, with the largest number from Franklin, Lyon, Coffey, Douglas, and Osage counties.

Survey responses reflected a wide range of household situations, including families with children, multigenerational households, and households with individuals living with disabling conditions. Reported incomes varied across a broad range, suggesting participation from individuals experiencing different economic circumstances.

Housing affordability emerged as a major concern among respondents. Many individuals indicated that assistance with home repairs, utility payments, or rent and mortgage costs would improve household stability.

Healthcare affordability was also frequently mentioned. Respondents identified health insurance costs, dental care, and mental health services as areas where access remains limited. Families also highlighted the importance of services that support children, including after-school programs, childcare, summer meal programs, school-year meal programs, and dental services.

Most respondents reported feeling safe in their communities most of the time, though some noted concerns related to substance use, homelessness, crime, and mental health challenges.

2022 Community Survey

A previous community survey conducted in 2022 collected 222 responses from residents across 11 counties. Findings from that survey closely align with results from the 2025 survey and focus group discussions.

Respondents identified several primary causes of financial hardship, including lack of affordable housing, limited access to living-wage employment, and high childcare costs.

Participants also reported difficulty accessing several services, including emergency shelter, childcare, mental health services, medical and dental care, transportation assistance, and financial management support.

Many respondents indicated that assistance with home repairs, utility costs, rent or mortgage payments, Weatherization services, and healthcare expenses would help improve household stability.

Employment barriers reported in the survey included limited living-wage job opportunities, lack of affordable childcare, transportation challenges, and limited access to training opportunities.

Housing challenges were also frequently mentioned. Respondents described difficulty finding affordable rental housing, limited housing availability, and barriers related to credit requirements or rental policies.

Combined Survey & Focus Group Qualitative Data Analysis

Findings from surveys and focus groups present a consistent picture of community conditions across the ECKAN service area. Across all data sources, several key challenges appear repeatedly.

Housing affordability remains the most significant concern across counties. Rising rent and mortgage costs, limited housing supply, and high utility bills create financial strain for many households.

Childcare access and affordability also continue to affect family stability and workforce participation. When reliable childcare is unavailable or unaffordable, parents may reduce work hours or leave employment.

Transportation challenges limit access to employment, healthcare services, grocery stores, and community resources. These challenges are particularly significant in rural communities.

Healthcare costs and food access also affect many households, particularly those already managing housing and energy expenses.

Together, these findings highlight the interconnected nature of community needs. Households experiencing one financial challenge often face several others simultaneously.

Key Findings and Analysis

Data collected through available state and federal quantitative data, focus groups, the community survey, the staff survey, and previous assessment efforts reveal consistent challenges across the ECKAN service area. While each county has unique characteristics, households across East Central Kansas face similar barriers related to housing affordability, employment stability, childcare availability, transportation access, healthcare costs, and food security.

These challenges frequently overlap. Households experiencing housing instability often face transportation barriers, limited childcare options, and rising utility costs. When these pressures occur simultaneously, they limit a household's ability to maintain employment, sustain stable housing, and meet basic needs.

The assessment confirms the continued importance of ECKAN programs that support housing stability, energy affordability, early childhood services, food access, and resource navigation. These services help households maintain stability while working toward long-term economic well-being.

Organizational Strengths

ECKAN maintains a strong organizational infrastructure, long-standing community relationships, and measurable program impact. The agency has served communities in East Central Kansas since 1966 and operates under a tripartite governance structure that supports accountability and local decision-making.

Staff are knowledgeable, dedicated, and closely connected to the communities they serve. Many staff members live in the service area and maintain trusted relationships with participants, community organizations, and local partners.

Recent program outcomes demonstrate meaningful impact across the service area. ECKAN has:

- Served over 500 children in Head Start and Early Head Start programs
- Weatherized 255 homes, investing more than \$3.2 million in housing improvements
- Served over 2,700 individuals through Community Services Block Grant programs
- Recovered and distributed more than 522,000 pounds of food
- Administered 220 Housing Choice Vouchers

These outcomes demonstrate ECKAN's capacity to address community needs through housing support, family services, and community partnerships.

Priority Areas

Housing Affordability and Stability

Housing affordability emerged as the most significant challenge. Data and participants consistently reported high rent and mortgage costs, limited affordable housing options, and difficulty securing housing with limited income or poor credit.

Residents also described limited housing that accommodates larger families or accessibility needs. In some cases, stigma toward households receiving housing assistance creates additional barriers to finding rental units.

Housing costs are often compounded by utility expenses. Many households reported difficulty managing fluctuating energy bills and water costs. Older housing stock and limited energy efficiency contribute to higher utility expenses and increased financial strain. Housing instability increases the risk of eviction, displacement, and financial hardship. Nearly 500 households remain on the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list, illustrating the continued demand for affordable housing across the region.

Programs that support rental assistance, housing stabilization, home repair, and Weatherization remain essential to helping households maintain safe and stable housing.

Utility Costs and Energy Burden

Energy costs represent a significant financial burden for many households. Participants reported high seasonal utility bills, unexpected fluctuations in monthly costs, and the need to rely on payment plans to maintain service.

Energy expenses are closely connected to housing conditions. Older homes with limited insulation or outdated heating and cooling systems often require higher energy use, increasing residents' costs.

High utility bills increase the risk of service disconnection and contribute to overall financial instability. Weatherization services can help reduce long-term costs while improving housing safety and comfort.

Childcare Availability and Affordability

Childcare access remains a major barrier to employment and economic stability. Survey respondents and focus group participants reported limited childcare providers, facility closures, high childcare costs, and operating hours that do not align with work schedules. Without reliable childcare, many parents cannot maintain full-time employment or pursue training opportunities that could increase household income. These barriers affect both short-term financial stability and long-term career advancement.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide critical early childhood education and family support, though enrollment capacity cannot meet the needs of all the eligible children and families in the service area.

Employment and Livable Wages

Employment opportunities vary across communities, but participants consistently reported challenges with wages and job stability. Many households seeking assistance are employed but continue to struggle to meet basic needs due to rising living costs. Limited availability of jobs with livable wages, combined with transportation and childcare barriers, reduces economic mobility for many households. These conditions contribute to the growing number of working households that continue to require assistance with housing, utilities, and food.

Workforce development partnerships and career pathway opportunities may help households increase earning potential and improve long-term financial stability.

Transportation Barriers

Transportation remains a challenge across many parts of the service area, particularly in rural communities. Participants reported limited public transportation routes, restricted operating hours, and difficulty accessing employment, healthcare services, grocery stores, and social services.

Transportation challenges also affect childcare access and participation in workforce training programs. Without reliable transportation, households may miss work opportunities, medical appointments, or educational programs.

Increasing awareness of transportation resources and strengthening partnerships with transportation providers may help reduce these barriers.

Healthcare Access and Cost

Healthcare affordability and access remain concerns for many households. Participants reported high medical costs, limited insurance coverage, long wait times for providers, and the need to travel outside local communities for specialized care.

Mental health concerns were also noted across multiple age groups. Access to counseling, behavioral health services, and substance use treatment remains limited in some areas.

Rural communities face additional barriers due to fewer healthcare providers and longer travel distances for services. Partnerships with healthcare providers and assistance in navigating health coverage programs may help improve access to care.

Food Access

Food insecurity continues to affect households across the service area. Rising food prices and limited access to affordable grocery stores, particularly in rural communities, contribute to this challenge.

Many families rely on food pantries and community food distribution programs to supplement their food supply. Participants also expressed interest in expanded food distribution opportunities and additional community food resources.

Food recovery efforts and partnerships with local food providers remain essential supports for households experiencing financial hardship.

Community Awareness of Services

Focus group participants frequently indicated that community members are not always aware of available services. Lack of information and stigma associated with asking for help can prevent households from accessing assistance. Low 2025 survey completion numbers highlight the need for improved outreach and engagement with the community.

Participants suggested increasing outreach through schools, churches, community organizations, social media, and local events. Strengthening communication strategies and community partnerships may help ensure residents know how to access available support.

Structural Challenges and Service Gaps

Several structural barriers limit the ability to fully address community needs. Affordable housing supply remains insufficient across the region, and small increases in housing units would not significantly reduce the existing shortage.

Emergency shelter capacity is limited, and ECKAN does not have the resources or capacity to operate shelters. Many homes require repairs outside the scope of Weatherization programs. Low-income homeowners also have limited access to property tax relief.

Rural communities face additional challenges, including older housing stock, limited transportation options, reduced access to grocery stores, higher disability rates, and fewer healthcare providers.

Federal program eligibility rules also prevent some households from receiving assistance when income exceeds eligibility thresholds, even though they continue to experience financial hardship.

Staff capacity is currently near operational limits. Expanding services would require additional funding, partnerships, or staffing resources.

Survey participation gaps in both the 2022 and 2025 surveys also highlight the need to strengthen community engagement to ensure broader representation in future assessments.

Opportunities for Impact

Despite these challenges, several opportunities exist to strengthen ECKAN's impact across the service area. Strategic outreach and grassroots engagement may improve awareness of services, particularly in rural communities. Increased visibility through community events, local media, and direct engagement can help connect households with available resources.

Diversifying funding streams may enable the agency to address needs beyond the constraints of current federal programs, such as home repairs and property tax relief.

Expanding partnerships with organizations focused on food access, healthcare, childcare, workforce development, and neighborhood initiatives may improve service coordination and expand available resources.

Focused engagement with English Language Learners and other community groups can strengthen participation and improve awareness of programs. Continued listening sessions and focus groups will also help ECKAN remain responsive to emerging community needs.

Key Themes Across All Data Sources

Information collected through focus groups, the 2025 community survey, the 2025 staff survey, and previous assessment efforts reveals several consistent conditions affecting households across the ECKAN service area. While communities differ in size, resources, and local conditions, the overall findings highlight several shared patterns related to housing stability, the rising cost of living, and access to essential services.

Across all data sources, the rising cost of basic household needs emerged as a central challenge. Housing expenses, utility costs, food prices, transportation costs, and healthcare expenses place increasing pressure on household budgets. Many households seeking assistance are employed but continue to struggle to meet basic needs as living costs increase faster than wages. These conditions contribute to ongoing financial instability and increase reliance on community support programs.

Housing stability remains a particularly significant concern. Limited affordable housing options, aging housing stock, and the high cost of repairs create barriers for both renters and homeowners. Housing challenges are often closely connected to utility costs, as older homes with limited energy efficiency contribute to higher monthly energy expenses.

Access to supportive services and essential infrastructure also affects household stability. Families identified childcare availability, transportation options, and healthcare access as key factors that influence their ability to maintain employment, access services, and meet family needs. In rural areas, these barriers can be compounded by longer travel distances and fewer service providers.

The findings also emphasize the importance of strong community partnerships and coordinated services. Collaboration among nonprofit organizations, healthcare providers, schools, workforce organizations, faith-based groups, and local governments plays an important role in connecting households to available resources and reducing service gaps.

Together, these themes illustrate the interconnected nature of the challenges facing households across the ECKAN service area. Housing, employment, childcare, transportation, healthcare, and food access are closely linked, and barriers in one area often affect stability in others. The combined findings from surveys, focus groups, and secondary data help inform the strategic priorities and program planning outlined in this assessment.

Top 5 Strategic Priorities

Findings from all data sources identify several consistent needs across the ECKAN service area. Housing affordability, childcare access, transportation barriers, healthcare costs, food insecurity, and rising energy expenses affect many households. These challenges frequently intersect and can limit a household's ability to maintain stability and pursue long-term economic mobility.

The priorities outlined below reflect the needs most consistently identified across all data sources. They align with ECKAN's existing programs and services and support the agency's strategic planning process. These priorities will guide program planning, partnership development, and performance measurement in the coming years.

The priorities also align with the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework used by Community Action Agencies nationwide. ROMA connects community needs assessments, strategic planning, program implementation, and outcome measurement to improve conditions for individuals with low incomes and the communities in which they live.

Source: National Association for State Community Services Programs, ROMA Next Generation

Strengthen Housing Stability & Affordable Housing Access

Housing affordability remains the most consistently identified challenge across the service area. Many households report difficulty locating safe and affordable housing due to rising rent, limited housing supply, credit barriers, and high utility costs.

Residents also report difficulty maintaining older homes due to repair costs. Limited housing options that meet accessibility needs were also mentioned.

Strategic efforts may include expanding housing stabilization and emergency assistance services, developing or strengthening existing partner home repair and housing preservation programs, increasing access to Weatherization services, and continuing partnerships with housing authorities, landlords, and housing developers.

Reduce Household Energy Burden

Energy costs were frequently identified as a significant financial pressure for households. Participants reported difficulty managing utility bills, particularly during periods of extreme temperatures.

Energy costs are closely connected to housing conditions. High utility bills can increase the risk of service disconnection and contribute to broader financial instability.

Strategic efforts may include expanding outreach related to energy assistance programs, increasing access to Weatherization services to reduce long-term energy costs, strengthening partnerships with utility providers, and improving early identification of households at risk of disconnection.

Improve Access to Childcare & Early Childhood Services

Childcare availability and affordability were frequently identified as barriers to employment and economic advancement. Many parents reported difficulty locating childcare that is affordable, available, and compatible with work schedules.

Limited childcare options can prevent parents from maintaining employment or participating in workforce training opportunities.

Strategic efforts may include expanding Head Start and Early Head Start services, supporting partnerships with childcare providers, increasing outreach to families regarding early childhood resources, and promoting family engagement and school readiness.

Address Transportation Barriers

Transportation challenges affect access to employment, healthcare, food, and social services across the ECKAN service area. These challenges are particularly significant in rural communities where public transit options are limited.

Participants reported difficulty accessing services due to limited transit routes and restricted operating hours.

Strategic efforts may include strengthening partnerships with transportation providers, increasing awareness of available transportation services, coordinating transportation supports for program participants, and participating in community discussions about regional transportation solutions.

Strengthen Community Resource Navigation & Outreach

Focus group participants and survey respondents indicated that many residents are not aware of available services. Lack of information and stigma associated with seeking assistance can prevent households from accessing help until challenges become severe.

Improving outreach and coordination among community organizations may help ensure households receive support earlier.

Strategic efforts may include expanding outreach through schools, community organizations, and local events; strengthening collaboration with partner agencies; improving communication about available programs; and supporting staff training in resource navigation and referrals.

Strategic Alignment with Planning & Program Development

The strategic priorities identified through this Community Needs Assessment will inform ECKAN's strategic planning process, annual work plans, and program development efforts.

These priorities will guide decisions related to program expansion, partnership development, and resource allocation. Program outcomes will continue to be monitored to measure progress

toward improved housing stability, economic security, child development, and overall family well-being.

By aligning strategic priorities with documented community conditions, ECKAN will continue to strengthen services that help individuals and families achieve stability and improved quality of life across East Central Kansas.

The strategic priorities identified through the Community Needs Assessment align with the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework used by Community Action Agencies nationwide. The table below illustrates how key findings from the assessment connect to ECKAN’s strategic priorities, program activities, and national outcome areas used in Community Services Block Grant performance reporting.

Key CNA Finding	Strategic Priority	Primary ECKAN Programs/Services	Outcome Domain
Lack of affordable and available housing; high cost burden for renters and homeowners	Increase housing stability and access to safe, affordable housing	Housing assistance, emergency rent support, housing case management, home repair referrals, Weatherization	Housing
High utility costs and energy burden for low-income households	Reduce household energy burden and improve home energy efficiency	Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) application assistance, Weatherization services, utility assistance programs	Housing
Limited access to affordable childcare and after-school programs	Support child well-being and family stability through childcare and youth services	Childcare support programs, early childhood services, youth development programs, family support services	Education
Transportation barriers that limit access to employment, services, and healthcare	Improve access to essential services and employment opportunities	Case management, resource navigation, partnership referrals, transportation coordination	Transportation
Food insecurity and limited grocery access in rural areas	Strengthen household food security and basic needs stability	Food pantries, commodity distribution, nutrition programs, community partnerships supporting food access	Health and Nutrition
Rising healthcare and mental health costs limiting access to care	Increase access to health and wellness resources	Healthcare referrals, community partnerships with clinics and behavioral health providers, supportive services	Health and Nutrition
Families struggling with rising living costs despite employment	Support economic mobility and financial stability	Financial capability services, employment supports, benefits access, case management	Employment; Income and Asset Building
Need for stronger coordination between community service providers	Strengthen community partnerships and resource coordination	Collaborative partnerships with nonprofits, schools, healthcare providers, workforce organizations, and local governments	Agency Capacity Building

This alignment ensures that ECKAN’s programs, partnerships, and strategic planning efforts are guided by identified community needs while supporting measurable outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.