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The State of Woodford County's Assistance Network

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The State of Woodford County's Assistance Network

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April 21st, 2021

Abstract: Woodford County, Kentucky is home to some of the wealthiest Kentuckians, but it is also home to some of the poorest. Woodford County's largest city, Versailles, has approximately 22.2 percent (City Data) of its residents living below the poverty line. With so many of Versailles residents facing the challenges of poverty, there is need for an assistance network to serve them. This study describes the assistance network serving Woodford County residents and examines whether there are any gaps in the networks and whether the existing online resource lists accurately show the assistance network. I use survey data and observations to examine the network. My findings show that there are gaps in service, particularly in public transportation options and in affordable housing. My work also demonstrates that the current online resource portals do not accurately portray the assistance network.

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Executive Summary

This study seeks to determine what the overall picture of assistance network serving the Woodford County region is. The goal was to determine if there are any observable gaps in the network and to have a clear understanding of what the assistance network is. Gaps were identified by studying the existing network, surveying network members, and examining publicly available resources. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to analysis the whole network. Assistance for this study refers to programs/organizations that provide cash or in-kind benefits/services to people (U.S. Census Bureau). The assistance network is all of the assistance programs/organizations that serve the Woodford County region. These programs/organizations do not have to be Woodford County but must be serving their residents. This project was funded by the City of Versailles and was completed in partnership with the Mayor of Versailles, Brian Traugott.

The principal findings of this study suggest that:

- The Versailles region should consider investing in public transportation options.
- The Versailles region should consider investing in more public housing options.
- Most assistance programs in the Versailles region can fulfill their demand.
- The United Way of the Bluegrass's 2-1-1 programs and the KYnect program both need to be updated to include the whole assistance network in the Versailles region.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that the assistance network of Versailles region does not cover all of the assistance needs for the people in this region. There are noticeable gaps in the network that could be potentially solved. The gaps in public transportation could be solved by creating a publicly run system that transported people from the assistance programs to their

home areas. Public housing problems could be solved by building and operating more affordable housing options. Lastly, the 2-1-1 program and the KYnect program could both be updated by providing the website operators with a list of the assistance network members. It is up to the City of Versailles and the surrounding region to determine if these gaps are worth the cost investment to correct them.

Introduction

Identification of the Problem

Woodford County, Kentucky is home to approximately 26,734 people. Of those approximately 9,318 people live in the city of Versailles, the largest city in Woodford County. In 2019, approximately 8.3 percent of Woodford residence live at or below the poverty line (Quick Facts Woodford County). For Versailles, 22.2 percent of residence are in poverty (City Data). For comparison, in the United States in 2019 10.5 percent of people lived at or below the poverty line. Many Woodford County residents live in poverty and need assistance to survive. The questions are what is the assistance network serving Woodford County residents and is there are any gaps in the networks and do the existing online resource lists accurately show the assistance network. To study this, I am conducting an in-depth analysis of the assistance system of Woodford County and Versailles. The analysis should serve as a template for other counties to look at their assistance networks. It should also inform Woodford County officials/policymakers about the state of their assistance network.

Assistance programs refer to organizations that provide cash or in-kind benefits/services to people (U.S. Census Bureau). For this project, I am looking at both public and private programs that provide assistance. The public programs include government run programs, such

as the Housing Authority of Versailles, the Woodford County Family Resource Center, and the Woodford County Public Schools. The private programs are run by private organizations. These include churches and non-profits. All organizations/programs aim to provide aid for individuals. For this project, I will not be looking at assistance programs that are not aimed at helping poor individuals. An example of this being the humane society, which provides shelter and care for animals.

Versailles and the surrounding county, Woodford County, have access to a variety of different assistance programs but the government leaders do not know if there are any remaining gaps in the assistance networks. Versailles government leaders have heard complaints about the need for more assistance programs. The leaders would like to do something about these complaints, but they do not have full knowledge of the assistance network of Woodford County. My capstone solves this with a comprehensive study of the assistance programs in Woodford County region. I identified the assistance available and examined if there are perceivable gaps in the assistance programs serving the city of Versailles and Woodford County. I also examined the existing resources to find assistance programs to see if they are correct. Through this report the citizens of Versailles/Woodford County and the city/county leadership will have a better understanding of status of the assistance network. My analysis should also be useful in that it will serve as a template for other counties to look at their assistance systems.

Literature Review

There has been little to no comparable research done on a county level like this. As part of my study, I examined the available assistance resources to Woodford County residents. I looked at both public and private resources. These assistance resources interact with people's

lives to allow them to function in poverty. This interaction is dependent on what type of assistance it is. Chi-Fang Wu and Mary Keegan Eamon examined how public and private assistance interact in people's lives. They found that the majority of low-income people rely on public assistance. They also found that people rarely rely private assistance. They hypothesis that this may be due to ease of use of publicly available resources (Wu and Eamon, 142-146) They did not though look at a county or state to see what sources are actually available to the people that live there.

Woodford County experiences the rural urban divide of availability of assistance resources. Most of the assistance programs are located in the urban centers with very few not. Craig Gundersen, Adam Dewey, Monica Hake, Emily Engelhard, and Amy S. Crumbaugh demonstrated the need for studies examined the potential effects of this rural divide. In their explorative study, they examined the divide between rural and urban counties in food assistance. They found that most food assistance programs are found in urban areas and this can cause negative effects on rural individuals. These effects are linked to lack of access to assistance. Rural individuals do not have equal access to food assistance (Gundersen and et. al., 217-237).

Initial examination of the results has pointed out the need for more transportation options in the Versailles region. The transportation barrier to accessing assistance or other resources has been studied by a variety of actors. Elizabeth Colby's study, "Barriers to receiving food assistance in rural North Dakota", discusses how transportation can be such a barrier to people in rural environments. Though the city of Versailles is an urban population the surrounding county of Woodford is more rural. Colby study indicates that when people do not have access to reliable transportation and have other barriers such as health and perceived embarrassment, they do not get the assistance that they need (Colby and et. al., 768). Gunderson, Dewey, Hake, Engelhard,

and Crumbaugh build upon this notion in their article, "Food Insecurity across the Rural-Urban Divide: Are Counties in Need Being Reached by Charitable Food Assistance." The Rural-Urban divide is a major factor in the ability to access resources. The further a person is from an urban center the less likely a person is to have access to the resources they need. Gunderson et al. argue that this is not only because of the lack of assistance programs in rural communities but also because of the lack of publicly available transportation (Gundersen and et. al., 217-237).

Long has there been the argument of the need for assistance programs to exist, but the assistance programs are worthless if people cannot access them. This is where mobility rights come in. People deserve to be able to access to resources, jobs, and other travel necessities regardless of their ability to pay or disabilities. Cass, Shove, and Urry argue that the government should provide transportation for its citizens because people have mobility rights. The existing networks of family transportation, ridesharing, and minimal public transportation are not enough to grant people their mobility rights according to the Cass, Shove, and Urry (Cass and et. al., 540-555).

Research Design

Goals, Empirical Strategy, and Data

The goal of this capstone was to gain an understanding of the assistance network of the city of Versailles Kentucky and the surrounding county, Woodford. To do this I created a list of active assistance programs/organizations serving the city and county residents. I then surveyed these programs/organizations to determine their thoughts on the state of the assistance network. Lastly, I examined the tools that are available to help people in need find and access the available assistance programs. To accomplish this, I looked at the current web-based resource lists.

To create a list of these programs/organizations, I used existing resources, contacted government officials, and I conducted online research. The existing resources include the City of Versailles website (Versailles Care / Woodford Care), the United Way of the Bluegrass's 2-1-1 program (2-1-1), and the KYnect program (KYnect). The government officials that I talked to were the Mayor of Versailles, Brian Traugott, and the City council members of Versailles. My online research was done by using google and google maps to search for different organizations. This was done by using code words like assistance, food, housing, etc. I also used Facebook to find different organizations/programs. Many of the programs/organizations in Woodford County only serve a small portion of the community. This could potentially lead to them being missed by government resources. This is why I reached out to a variety of sources to find these programs/organizations.

Not all resources outside of Woodford County were included in this study because of the focus on the study being for Woodford County. The only resources that were included outside Woodford County were when there was no other type of that assistance located in Woodford county. Resources were also included if the location was outside of Woodford, but the service is provided inside of Woodford County. An example of this is the Bluegrass Community Action Center which actively serves Woodford residents but is not located in Woodford County. Programs were identified as serving Woodford residents by looking at the Versailles websites and by contacting the organizations. I may have missed some of the programs/organizations that are located outside of the Woodford County region. This is because I mainly focused on organizations that were located within Woodford County and only included outside organizations if it was clear that they serve some Woodford County residents. The vast majority of the Woodford County assistance network resides in the City of Versailles.

A survey was then sent out to these programs/organizations, starting on March 9th, 2021. The survey was sent out in waves as I identified additional programs/organizations. The last survey was sent out on March 25th, 2021. The survey was sent via email. Email recipients were identified via the organization's website or social media platform. I did not collect any identifying information on respondents, but the surveys were sent to program managers/administers. Respondents were asked to click on a google link and to fill out the survey. The respondents were not asked any personal or identifying information. The survey was designed to only gather information about the program/organization in question. Each organization that did not respond was emailed a week after the original email. If I had their phone number, I called them two weeks after the original survey if they did not respond. I emailed organizations that had not responded one final time two and a half weeks after the original survey was sent out. I ran out of time to re-contact organizations after this point.

In total twenty-one different organizations were contacted to fill out the survey and thirteen answered the survey. Some organizations have more than one program and provided information about each of their different programs. In total thirty-eight programs were identified within the twenty-one organizations. These organizations with more than one program were still counted as one response. There was a wide range of respondents that included churches, resource centers, Woodford County Schools, and some non-profits. I did not get the any of the large governmental organizations to respond, such as the social services. My largest group of respondents were churches with five of the thirteen responded organizations being churches.

The survey aimed to capture the state of the assistance network by asking ten questions about their program/organization and the overall state of the Woodford County/City of Versailles assistance network. Appendix one has all of the questions that were asked to the

programs/organizations. These questions included questions about the organization, what the demand for the programs/organizations is, if there are any identifiable gaps with Woodford County assistance network (question nine), and if the programs/organizations have any partnerships (question seven). The survey provided for the understanding of what kind of services are already available in the Woodford County region and if there are any identifiable gaps in the assistance network.

Lastly, by examining the current resource lists that are available to the general public. There are a few new resources launched throughout the state to better help individuals find their local assistance programs. These resources include KYnect and 2-1-1. The United Way of the Bluegrass 2-1-1 and the KYnect are both online platforms that specialize in listing assistance programs/organizations by county. Individuals may also dial 2-1-1 on their phones to reach a representative about available resources. They both were launched in 2020. To examine them I looked at what resources are being presented on their website and compared them to my own resource list.

Expectations

The results of this study may be of great importance to a variety of different actors. This is because it not only will provide the Woodford County with a comprehensive understanding of their assistance network but will also provide a model for other governments. This will likely help the Woodford County determine where they need to invest money or time into their assistance network. My analysis provides them with an understanding of what programs are out there and what are not. My study is not only to help the Woodford County, but many other governments understand how an assistance network works and where potential problems arise.

Analysis

To analyze my data, I looked at the survey results and looked for similarities and differences in the responses of different organizations. These patterns will let me understand the greater Woodford county assistance network and not just one organization's problem. I used these results to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis (SWOT). A SWOT analysis allows for an examination into the assistance network as a whole. It allowed me to understand Woodford County's current assistance network.

To gain a basic understanding of how people are finding out about the programs/organizations, I looked at how the survey respondents responded and at whether the online platforms are comprehensive. The survey respondents provided insight on how people generally find their organization (question eight). For this project, I was unable to talk to individual assistance program participants. I had to rely on the program administrators' answers. For the online platforms, KYnect and 2-1-1, I compared each online platform and to the other assistance programs/organizations that I have found. I looked for similarities and differences on the platforms.

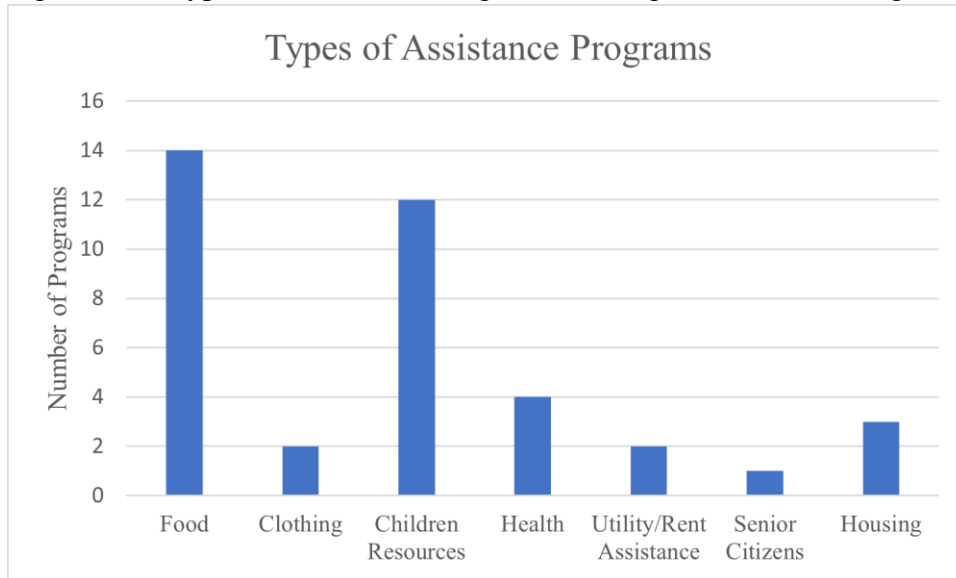
Findings

Examinations of Assistance Network Findings

Figure one below displays the different types of assistance programs/organizations that are actively serving the Versailles region. Appendix two, in the back of the paper, has all of the identified programs/organizations. Most assistance programs are focused on serving children or providing food. These include government run programs such as Special Supplemental Nutrition

Program for Women, Children, and Infants (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Figure One. Types of Assistance Programs Serving the Versailles Region



Of the fourteen programs that provide food assistance seven are only serving children. The remainder serve all those who need food assistance. Figure Two displays all of the different food-based assistance programs and the average number of people served. In 2016, it was estimated that 2,940 people are food insecure in Woodford County (Zimmerman, 4). If this number remains constant, then it is possible that every person who is food insecure could receive assistance once each month. This is because with the data I have it is possible for at least 4,482 different people to receive aid per month. My data though does not give me information about whether these are different people or if the same people are receiving aid from multiple programs. It is likely that people receive multiple types of aid because many of the programs are not offered every day. Nine of the food assistance programs are based out of churches. There is only one large food pantry located in Woodford County, the Woodford County Food Pantry. A large food pantry is one that serves more than fifty people. In Midway, the Midway Christian

Church and Midway Baptist both run small food pantries. Midway also had the Midway Community Garden that runs from April to October. The community garden provides fruits and vegetables to people free of charge. There are no churches in the City of Versailles that run food pantries but there are some that operate community dinners and backpack programs for children.

Figure Two: All Food-Based Assistance Programs and the Average Number of People Served per Month

Name	Location	Type of Food Assistance	Average Number of People per Month
Versailles Church of Christ	Versailles, KY	Community Dinner	Unknown
Midway Christian Church	Midway, KY	Community Dinner, Backpack Program	150
Journey Church	Versailles, KY	Backpack Program	Unknown
Woodford County Food Pantry	Versailles, KY	Food Pantry	115
Mentors & Meals	Versailles, KY	Tutoring and Meals for Children	93-115
First Christian Church of Versailles	Versailles, KY	Food Pantry	Unknown
Woodford Co Schools Food Service	Versailles, KY	Children Meals	1,667
WIC Woodford	Versailles, KY	Food for Women, Children, and Infants	344 Families ^I
SNAP Woodford	Versailles, KY	Food for Needy	1,875 ^{II}
TANF Woodford	Versailles, KY	Food Assistance for Needy Families	76 ^{III}
Midway Baptist	Midway, KY	Food Pantry and Backpack Program	50
Midway United Methodist Church	Midway, KY	Food Assistance	40-70
God's Pantry	Lexington, KY	Food Pantry	Unknown
Midway Community Garden	Midway, KY	Community Garden	50

Source: Unless otherwise specified the data is from my survey. I is 2017 data from the Woodford County Health Department 2019 Annual Report. II is 2018 from the St. Louis branch of the Federal Reserve. III is 2018 data from Kids Count.

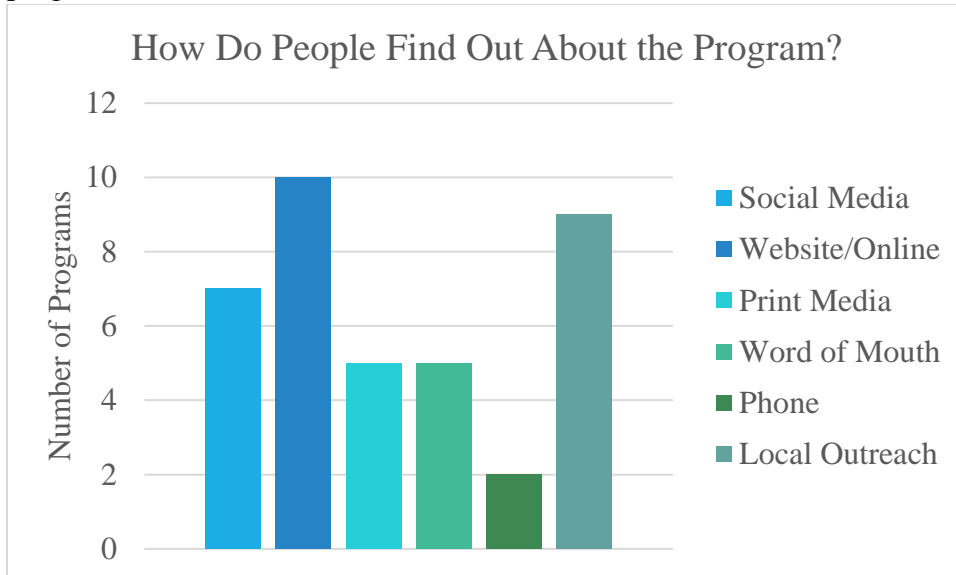
The children's resources range from food assistance to childcare assistance, including Head Start at United Way of the Bluegrass. The vast majority of children's assistance programs are centered around schools. An example of this is the backpack programs that provide free food for children over the weekend, four different organizations provide this. The health assistance programs include mental health assistance, drug and alcohol recovery, and providing resources to get healthcare. There are three organizations that provide housing assistance to people. Housing assistance includes emergency housing, shelters, and low-income housing. Two organizations also provide rent/utility assistance, both organizations are churches.

The United Way of the Bluegrass's 2-1-1 online portal does not display a single resource for Woodford county. Once the Woodford county filter is applied a person is not given a single assistance resource. This is despite the fact that it is marketed as a central hub for people to find local assistance programs. The closest assistance programs that it displays are in Frankfort and Lexington. The KYnect program also fails to cover all assistance programs in Woodford County (KYnect). It does though have a few of the assistance programs listed. These include the Versailles WIC office and the TANF office. It lacks any knowledge though of the smaller assistance programs. Having an online hub with all available resources is important because many people already use online hubs to find assistance.

Figure three displays how people find assistance. Ten out of the thirteen organizations indicated that people use the internet/ their website to find the organizations. Seven out of thirteen indicated that they the program administrators believe that people use social media to find them. The program administrators were allowed to indicate all the ways that people find their organization. Program administrators believe that people already use the internet to find information on assistance. It may be easier for people to find the assistance online if it was all in

one resource hub. Currently, both of the online resource hubs lack the ability to provide people with the information they need to have access to assistance.

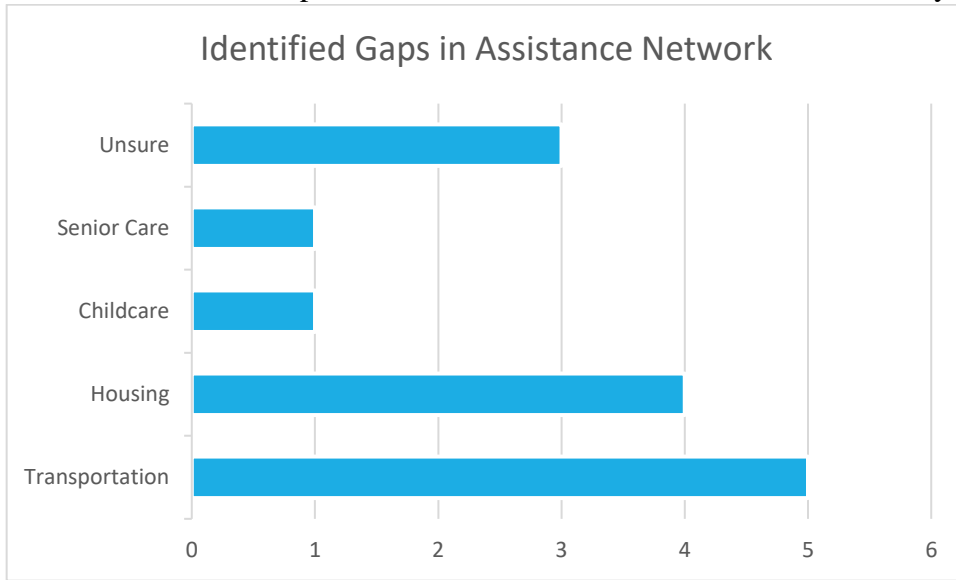
Figure Three: How Do People Find Out About the Program/Organization according to the program administrators?



Assistance Program Managers' Perceptions of Gaps in Assistance Network

Figure four displays the gaps in the assistance network that were identified in the survey. Question nine of the survey asked the programs/organizations to identify any gaps that they see in the assistance network of Woodford County. Participants were asked this because of their involvement in the assistance network. They were allowed to identify any gaps that they saw and were able to identify more than one gap. Figure four is a compilation of all the identified gaps.

Figure Four: The Identified Gaps in the Assistance Network of Woodford County

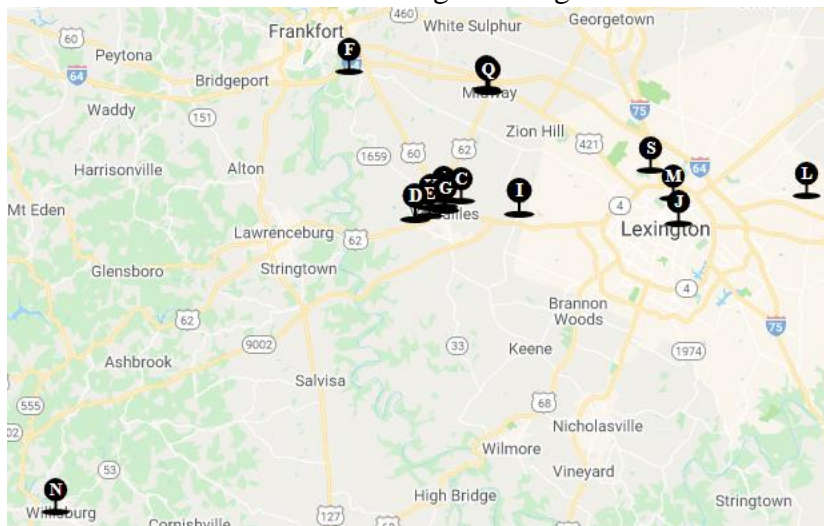


Five organizations indicated that there is need for more transportation options within Woodford County. The current transportation system consists of two non-profit run bus service that have limited stops. Both of these bus services charge a fee for riding (Versailles Cares). The Bluegrass Community Action Partnership (BGCAP) bus serves elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. It charges \$1.75 per mile with a five-dollar minimum fee (BGCAP). This service does not run regularly in Woodford County and residents must reach out to BGCAP to receive service. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the BGCAP bus had one regular stop in Versailles. The other option is the Independent Transportation Network, ITN-Bluegrass. ITN-Bluegrass is also a seniors only pickup service. It charges a minimum of \$7.20 per same-day ride and charges \$1.85 per mile with a pick-up charge of \$3.50 (Independent Transportation Network). There is no public transportation option for anyone who is not a senior or has a disability. This means that people have to either pay for services, such as uber, ride-share, walk, or beg for a ride to get to the assistance programs. This potentially limits people’s ability to use the available assistance programs. According to four program administrators, this makes it

difficult for residents without transportation to seek assistance programs. This problem was exacerbated by the pandemic because of the inherit risk of travelling in close proximation to people. Though there are a few transportation options, there is not nearly enough transportation options to help people get to the assistance programs.

This is especially true if a person lives outside of the City of Versailles because most of the assistance programs reside inside the city. Figure five displays the different locations of the assistance programs/organizations that serve Woodford County. There are a few different assistant programs/organizations that reside outside of the city of Versailles. These include those in Lexington, Frankfort, and Willisburg. Willisburg is the city where the Isaiah House Women's Center is located. This is the closest women's drug and alcohol treatment center. With some organizations being far away transportation is such an important problem. People need to travel to receive the assistance benefits but if they do not have access to transportation, they may not receive the assistance.

Figure Five. Locations of Assistance Programs/Organizations



Four of thirteen respondents indicated that there is great need for more housing assistance within the Versailles region. Currently, there are three organizations that provide housing assistance. There are also two programs that provide rent/utility assistance. The rent/utility assistance is provided through small church run programs and helps only a limited number of people, usually less than ten people a month. If they are turned away, then they can be put on a waitlist or apply for assistance from the Versailles Housing Authority. The housing assistance programs are run through bigger organizations, such as the Versailles Housing Authority. They tend to serve about fifteen families a month but is dependent on number who apply for housing every month. The Versailles Housing Authority and all of the other housing programs have indicated that they were not able to meet demand for their programs at some point over the last year. This indicates that there may be need for additional housing options in the Versailles region. In particular, it was pointed out there are very few options for housing assistance outside of the City of Versailles. This means that those who live in the surrounding county do not have many options for housing assistance.

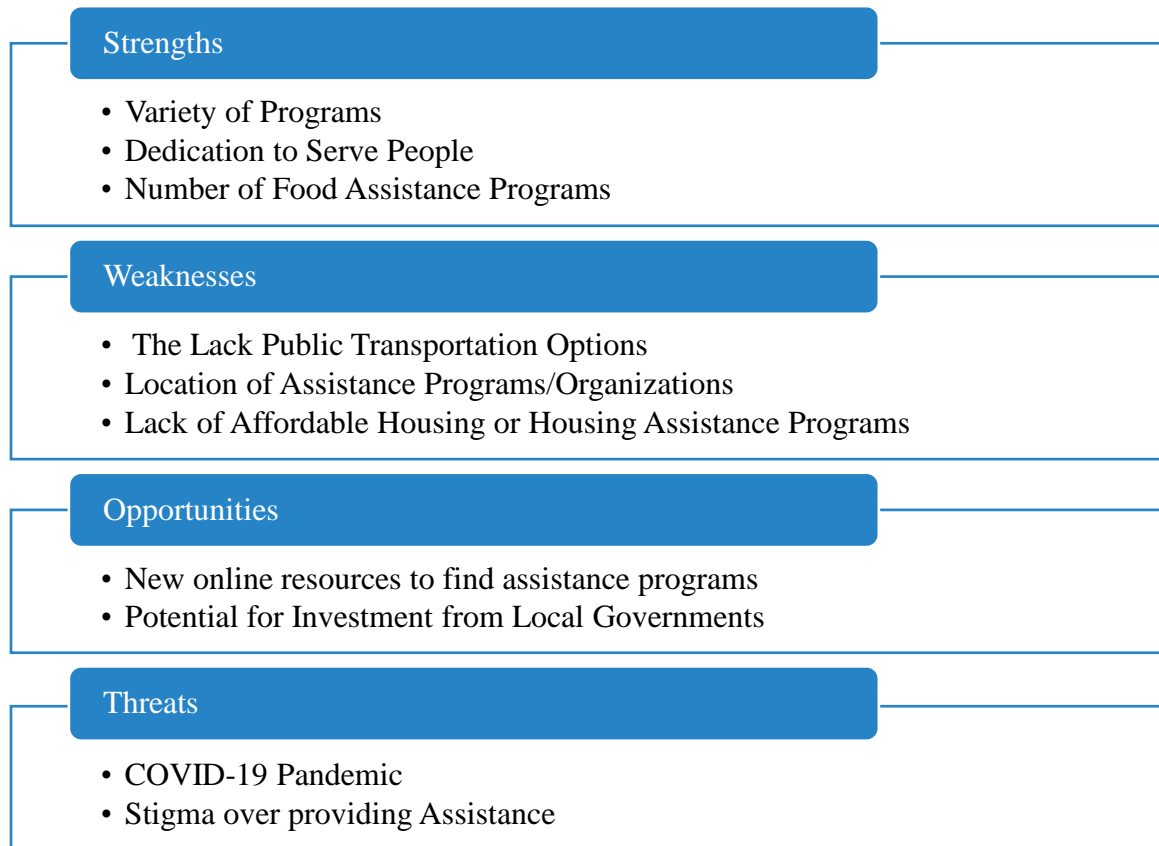
Four of the programs indicated that they are not always able to meet the demand for their program. These programs were Midway Community Garden, Mentors and Meals, Versailles Housing Authority, and Midway United Methodist Church. Three of the four programs provide food assistance. Midway Community Garden and Midway United Methodist Church indicated that they only occasionally are unable to meet demand for their services. Versailles Housing Authority and Mentors and Meals indicated that it they often or never can meet the demand for their services. Some organizations in Woodford County cannot meet the demand for their services. The majority of organizations indicated that they could meet demand.

Lastly, the survey indicated that there is need for more assistance programs to be located outside of the city of Versailles. Midway Christian Church mentioned the need directly for assistance outside the city of Versailles. The city of Versailles has most of the government assistance programs sites. It has the counties WIC program, TANF program, and SNAP program offices. It also has the regions only housing authority. This means that for those who live outside of the city of Versailles it can be hard to have access to these another assistance programs in Versailles. This problem is added to by the fact that there the survey indicated a lack of transportation options for people to travel around the county.

SWOT Analysis

To process the overall status of the assistance network, I conducted a strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats analysis (SWOT). The survey results and the examination of the network gave me the data to construct the analysis. I would have like to have more data on other organizations/programs in the survey, but I have to rely on what I found and the reported data. Figure Six displays the SWOT analysis.

Figure Six: SWOT Analysis of Woodford County Assistance Network



The strengths of the assistance network are the variety of programs/organizations, the dedication to serve people that many organizations indicated, and the number of food assistance programs. The Woodford County assistance network is made up of many different types of assistance programs. Most, but not all, types of assistance can be found within county borders. For drug/alcohol rehab and for emergency housing people have to leave the county. In my survey there was a clear indication of the assistance programs/organizations dedication to serve people. Eight of the thirteen surveyed organizations indicated that they have volunteers that help serve the population. The strong volunteerism in the region allows for the programs to operate and serve people. The last strength is the number of food assistance programs that our housed in Woodford county. There are fourteen different programs that offer food assistance. These programs are located throughout the county.

The weaknesses include a lack of public transportation options, the location of many of the assistance programs, and the lack of affordable housing. As stated above the lack of public transportation is an identified problem in the network. There are little to no options available for people to travel throughout the region if they do not have a car. This problem is exemplified by the location of the assistance organizations, with most located in the City of Versailles. If a person lives outside of the city and does not have a car, they may struggle to attain assistance.

Finally, the lack of affordable housing was pointed out by four different organizations. Woodford County is home to some of the wealthiest individuals in Kentucky and this creates a dichotomy when it comes to housing. The Versailles housing authority indicated that there is more demand for affordable housing in Woodford County but there may be a lack of supply. The organizations also indicated a need for emergency housing in the county. There is no emergency shelter within the county. Housing, transportation, and location of services are weaknesses of the assistance network.

Opportunities for the network include the new online resources to find the assistance programs/organizations (2-1-1 and KYnect) and the potential for investment from the local governments of Versailles and Woodford County. 2-1-1 and KYnect have the potential to be knowledge hubs that allow for people to find assistance. In their current state they are not doing this but there is potential for improvement. There is potential for investment into the assistance network from local government leaders. The City Council and the Mayor of Versailles have indicated that they would like to invest in the assistance network. The county officials may also want to invest in the network if the city is investing. The network does have opportunities for growth and betterment.

The threats to the network include the COVID-19 pandemic and the stigma over providing assistance. COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the assistance network by not allowing for many of the organizations/programs to operate fully. Five of the surveyed programs indicated that their program was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bluegrass Community Action Partnership indicated they have had to stop running some of their programs the same way, for example they stopped their bus for a while. The Midway Christian Church also had to miss a few weeks of dinners due to quarantining. They have also not been able to provide as many families with food because of the lack of resources and need to keep people out of the pantry. They have switched to a drive up only method. They also have limited ability to deliver food to people. If the pandemic continues then there may be further consequences.

Stigma with assistance programs exists in two ways. There is the stigma that individuals face by accepting assistance and there is stigma with providing aid. Some individuals are deterred from accepting assistance because of the stigma that is associated with it. This can create situations where people are eligible to receive aid but do not. On the national scale this has been demonstrated with people not signing up for TANF and Medicare assistance (Stuber, 520-525). Providing assistance has long been seen as a stigmatizing event. In 2001, 48 percent of 2,000 polled Americans said that the poor are poor because they are not doing enough for themselves (Population Reference Bureau). For some this belief deters donations to assistance programs/organizations. I have not found any evidence of this happening in Woodford County, but it may be a problem. Stigma over providing assistance and the COVID-19 pandemic threaten the assistance network.

Relevant Issues and Treats/limitations

This study had a few major limitations. The first being that it was conducted during a global pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic forced this study to be done entirely remotely. This meant that I was not able to go and directly talk to the different assistance programs. The effect of this is that I was not able to collect as much data from the different assistance programs/organizations. I had to solely rely on the responses that I received via the survey. I could also not go and directly talk to the people that are receiving these benefits. This is because many of the assistance programs are not operating in an in-person capacity. I was not able to get any data from individual constituents. If I were to do this study again, I would go to each of the assistance programs/organizations and talk to those who are receiving the assistance and who are distributing it. This would allow me to understand where the individual problems with the assistance network lie. Currently, I can only base my findings off of a few survey results.

On top of this because of the short timeline for this project, I was unable to receive institutional review board approval for my project. This meant that I was unable to collect individual data and had to depend on the organizational level. If I were to do this study again, I would set up focus groups that discuss the challenges in assistance that Versailles/Woodford county face. By doing this, I would be able to further my understanding of the assistance network in Versailles. Currently, I can only base my findings off of the eleven survey results and the data on the assistance participation that I found.

Discussion and Conclusion

Conclusion

For the 22.2% of Versailles people, poverty is a daily struggle. The assistance network of the Versailles region is designed to help mitigate some of these struggles. The network includes food assistance, housing assistance, healthcare assistance, childcare assistance, and other forms

of assistance. This research demonstrates some of the gaps to the assistance network and the effectiveness. These gaps include a lack of public transportation options, limited housing assistance, and the rural-urban divide of services. Poverty stricken people of Versailles region deserve to have access to the assistance network. Currently, the gaps in the network are not always allowing people to do this.

Recommendation

It is my recommendation that the Woodford County region should look into having more public transportation options. Through the survey and by examining available resources, there is an identifiable need for more transportation. They should focus on getting people to the available assistance programs/organizations. This program would need to extend outside of the City of Versailles. This could allow for all Woodford County residents could have access to the assistance network. Also, I recommend that they examine the possibility of creating more affordable housing options. Affordable housing was identified as a major need for the Woodford county region. In particular, there was emphasis put on the need for affordable housing outside of the City of Versailles.

The City of Versailles should also share the list of assistance programs with the United Bluegrass's 2-1-1 program and the KYnect program. Both of these resource hubs are missing information on Woodford County region assistance programs. If all programs were listed online than there may be a problem of the programs not having enough resources to serve more people. Three of the programs indicated that they are not always able to meet the demand for their program. For them increased exposure from an online portal may expand the demand issue. The rest of the programs indicated that can either always meet demand or can actually serve more than the current demand. Fixing the online portals of 2-1-1 and KYnect may cause some

programs to have problems fulfilling demand but it is probably still better for the community to know what assistance is available.

Lastly, I would recommend that the Woodford County region build on the research after the pandemic is over. The pandemic has negatively impacted my ability to conduct a thorough examination of the assistance network. In particular, it has not allowed me to collect individual data from the people that are receiving assistance. I would recommend that the region conduct a survey of these individuals. They could do this by giving people the survey at each of the assistance program locations. They could also email out the survey to those who request assistance. The only drawback to doing these methods is that the surveys would only go to people that know about the assistance programs and those that are already using the programs. This could potentially miss a portion of the population that does not know about or have access to the assistance network.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Name of Program/Organization
2. What kinds of services does your organization/program provide? Please provide though information about the organization/program including how services are provided and what the services are.
3. How many people does the organization/program serve in a given month?
4. Can the program/organization ever not fulfill the demand for the program/organization? If so on average how many people on average cannot be served per month?
5. If applicable, how does the organization/program collect resources?
6. What are the organization/program's monthly operational costs? Specifically, for providing this program.
7. Does the organization/program have any partners?
8. How do people find the organization/program? What outreach efforts does the organization do?
9. What are the identifiable gaps in available assistance in Woodford County?
10. Do I need to know anything else about the program/organization?

Appendix 2: Assistance Network of Woodford Region

	Location	Type of Assistance	Responded
Versailles Church of Christ	Versailles, KY	Community Dinner	No
Midway Christian Church	Midway, KY	Community Dinner, Backpack Program, AA-Meetings, Christmas Sponsorship, tutoring	Yes
Journey Church	Versailles, KY	Backpack Program, Non-Profit Thrift Store	Yes
Woodford County Food Pantry	Versailles, KY	Food Pantry	Yes
Woodford County Family Resource Center	Versailles, KY	School Supplies, Clothing, Rental/Utility Payment Assistance, Mental Health Referrals, Medical Appointments and Referrals, Job Seeking for Parents/Guardians	Yes
Cops for Kids	Versailles, KY	Gifts for Children and Resources Post Fires	No
Bluegrass Community Action Partnership	Frankfort, KY	Community Services, Transit Service (Bus), Head Start, Weatherization, Adult Day, and aging services.	Yes
Mentors & Meals	Versailles, KY	Tutoring and Meals for Children	Yes
First Christian Church of Versailles	Versailles, KY	Food Pantry	No
Woodford Co Schools Food Service	Versailles, KY	Children Meals	Yes
United Way of the Bluegrass	Lexington, KY	Basic needs, Financial stability, and Education programs	Yes
Versailles Housing Authority	Versailles, KY	Housing Assistance	Yes
Greenhouse 17	Lexington, KY	Emergency Housing	No
The Hope Center	Lexington, KY	Homeless Shelter	Yes
The Isaiah House Women's Center	Willisburg, KY	Drug Recovery for Women	No
WIC Woodford	Versailles, KY	Food for Women, Children, and Infants	No
TANF Woodford	Versailles, KY	Food Assistance for Needy Families	No
Midway Baptist	Midway, KY	Food Pantry and Backpack Program	Yes
Midway United Methodist Church	Midway, KY	Food Assistance, Utility/Rent assistance	Yes
God's Pantry	Lexington, KY	Food Pantry	No
International Transportation Network-Bluegrass (ITN-Bluegrass)	Lexington, KY	Senior Car Transportation Service	No
Midway Community Garden	Midway, KY	Community Garden	Yes