

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



COMMUNITY NEEDS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT | JUNE 2025

GARNERING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Gateway Region YMCA strives to make a significant impact on the lives of the people and communities we serve. In considering the expansion of services and a potential new branch to serve Lincoln County, Missouri, the Y is committed to understanding the issues and needs facing the County. An Exploratory Steering Committee was formed, led by Kelly Hardcastle and Terry Henderson, and included 15 members from across the County and representing multiple sectors including Education, Business, Nonprofit, and Government.

A series of meetings were held to determine the most effective strategies to survey support and interest.

The Gateway Region YMCA Leadership and the Lincoln County Steering Committee, together with Richard Clegg and Leighann Sibal from Donor by Design Group distributed a survey link to community residents and facilitated a community leader forum. The assessment process was designed to:

- Assess interest in bringing potential Y programs and services to Lincoln County through an online survey
- Identify top community needs and critical social issues
- Review existing data collected from other organizations
- Bring key community leaders together at a live forum event

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY

- The top interests identified included a Fitness Center, Pool, Group Exercise Classes, Youth Sports, Childcare and Swim Lessons.
- Cost, location, and availability will influence participation in programs.
- 85% of respondents indicated they were very likely/likely to join a YMCA.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FORUM

- Growth-related challenges are a significant critical social issue for the community, driving gaps in the ability to provide adequate services in childcare, health and wellness, youth programming, and seniors.
- Emerging issues include a rise in homelessness, an increasing need for both parents to work, and an aging community.
- Further exploration of partnerships and collaboration will be needed.

MESSAGE FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS & YMCA CEO

Dear Friends,

Thanks to all of you who participated in our Community Needs Assessment process. We appreciate your time, insights and willingness to help shape the future of a Y in Lincoln County, Missouri.

We are prepared to take the findings of the study and put them to work.

This report, prepared with the help of our consultants from DBD Group, offers a summary of the Community Needs Assessment findings.

As we move forward, we will keep you informed of our progress and look forward to continuing our conversation.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Lincoln County Steering Committee,

Kelly Hardcastle and Terry Henderson
Lincoln County Steering Committee
Co-Chairs

and

Tim Helm
President and CEO
Gateway Region YMCA

STRONG PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

There is an alignment between pressing social needs and community interests. The most promising opportunities appear to be in two areas: **activities for youth** that provide safety and structure, and **activities for adults** that support healthy lifestyles. In fact, when online survey respondents ranked their top four critical social needs, they mirrored what respondents also believe to be the issues that a YMCA in the community could help address. These included: **lack of activities for youth during non-school hours, lack of recreation and fitness programs for adults, affordable childcare, and addressing chronic disease and obesity.**

LEVERAGE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

The Y fosters connections through shared activities, promotes social responsibility via volunteerism, and provides essential support – encouraging individuals to thrive and contribute to a stronger and more connected community. Data suggests that **Lincoln County residents value its sense of community**, so promoting programs and services that **support community and support healthy families and adults** will resonate. Messaging that emphasizes **healthy families** and a **healthy community**, along with the Y's role in **providing safe spaces for youth**, will drive support and participation

ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY IS IMPORTANT

The YMCA is committed to ensuring that its **programs and services are accessible to everyone**. While over 80% of respondents to the online survey indicated an interest in purchasing a Y membership, affordability and accessibility were voiced through the open-ended comments.

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF PARTNERSHIPS NEEDED

Strategic partnerships with organizations like Mercy Health Systems, municipalities, and other nonprofit organizations will be critical to successfully bringing a YMCA to Lincoln County.

There is **strong alignment** between the **priorities identified** by the CHNA (Community Health Needs Assessment) and that of the **community interests** and the **YMCA's strengths**.

We'll also engage in proactive conversations with existing organizations and businesses that offer similar services. Our goal is to **build strong, collaborative partnerships** and ensure everyone understands how the Y's presence can **complement and enhance the community's offerings**, rather than create competition.

ABOUT THE GATEWAY REGION YMCA

The Gateway Region YMCA is a charitable association whose mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs, staff and facilities in an environment that builds healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

We serve in 13 counties served throughout Missouri and Illinois in 24 traditional YMCA locations.

More than 2,822 volunteers to help serve our communities.

More than 4,404 full- and part-time employees deliver high-quality programs and services across the region.

More than 165,000 lives impacted through membership.

More than 253,000 youth and adults enroll in Y programs annually.

The Y provides more than \$2.498M in direct financial assistance annually.

The Y is fortunate to be governed by **32 dedicated community leaders**. Their diverse perspectives and strong ties to the community are invaluable, enabling us to better serve the needs of our members and neighbors.



HELP US BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Are you interested in learning more and or getting involved? Contact:

Kelly Hardcastle at executive@lccoonline.org or Terry Henderson at tlhend13@gmail.com.



GATEWAY REGION YMCA

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