

## *Comparing individual county-level composite rankings on need and performance*

Having compiled county-level composite ranks in the areas of food insecurity and hunger need and program performance, a final and useful step is to compare how each county ranks in terms of the combination of their ranks on need *and* performance. In essence, we can ask whether counties that have high need are doing comparatively well or comparatively poorly in addressing those needs. Counties with high needs that have high performance rankings, for example, are likely more successful in serving the needs of their food insecure populations while counties with high needs but low performance are potential target locations for increased public and private sector attention.

We used several steps to perform this analysis. First, we labeled counties as “high need” if their composite need rank fell in the upper two quintiles (“very high” or “high”) of need. We designated counties as “low need” if their composite need rank fell in the lowest two quintiles (“low” or “very low”) of need. Similarly, we labeled counties as “high performance” if their composite performance ranks fell in the upper two quintiles (“very high” or “high”) of performance. We designated counties as “low performance” if their composite performance ranks fell in the lowest two quintiles (“low” or “very low”) of performance. We did not include counties that scored in the “average”, or middle, quintile in either of these composite ranks in this analysis.

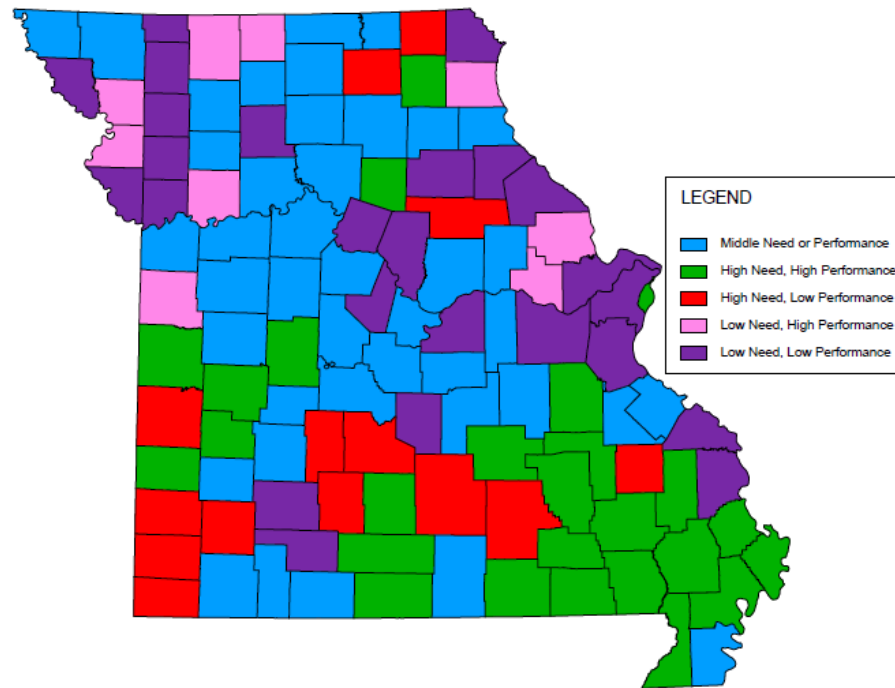
The designation of counties as either “high need” or “low need”, and as either “high performance” or “low performance” offers the possibility of counties falling into one of four categories:

- High need and high performance
- High need and low performance
- Low need and high performance
- Low need and low performance

As shown in the map and table on the following pages, this analysis yielded some interesting results. Twenty-five counties and St. Louis City have both high need and high performance. The fact that more than half of the counties with high need also rate high in performance suggests that services are well provided and used in places that have the highest need for them. We have no way of knowing whether public and private agencies specifically target resources to these counties, but this trend reveals positive outcomes for the food insecure in these regions.

More problematic are the fourteen counties identified as high need and low performance. Most of these counties are located south of the Missouri River and a cluster is dispersed throughout the southwest quarter of the state. We note that many of the high need, high performing counties are interspersed with these high need, low performing counties. This could suggest focusing more individual attention on service delivery in these particular counties.

## Need vs. Performance



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We found nine counties qualifying as low need and high performance. In these areas, the results suggest that service providers are adequately handling food insecurity and hunger needs in their regions.

At the other end of the spectrum are 25 counties that have comparatively low percents of populations with hunger needs but that also doing comparatively worse in meeting the requirements of these populations. Many of these counties are in relatively affluent regions near all of Missouri's major cities. Although the percent in need is relatively low in these areas, in many cases the low percents denote relatively large numbers of people because the base populations are often quite high. In fact, seven of the ten most populated counties in the state (St. Louis, St. Charles, Greene, Jefferson, Clay, Boone, and Franklin) fall into this category. While the Missouri Hunger Atlas cannot scientifically prove why these counties are subject to low performance, we can offer a couple of explanations that could be tested with more research. First, residents living in regions with high levels of need and visible public programs might experience less social shame or stigma as participants in public programs. If one lives in a region in which sizeable proportions of a population regularly participate in public programs, an individual or family's choice to similarly participate would be in line with others' decisions and be subject to less social angst or difference. On the other hand, residents of regions with high levels of

social and economic inequality and smaller percentages of program participation might face social discomfort or ostracism related to participation. A student who is one of a limited number of persons qualifying for free lunches or a shopper who is one of a small group that separates items at a supermarket for WIC participation would be required to demonstrate a lower economic status in a public context in which such status contrasts with that of the

majority. A second possible explanation is that public and private agencies have made logical decisions to focus scarce human, technical and financial resources in high-need areas. As a consequence, programs in low-need areas have a more difficult time conducting the type of outreach and education to attract high participation rates among eligible residents in their counties.

	<b>High need</b>	<b>Low need</b>
<b>High performance</b>	Barton, Bates, Benton, Bollinger, Butler, Carter, Cedar, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Iron, Knox, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Randolph, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, St. Clair, Stoddard, Washington, Wayne, Wright Counties, and St. Louis City	Andrew, Buchanan, Cass, Harrison, Lewis, Lincoln, Mercer, Ray, and Warren Counties
<b>Low performance</b>	Adair, Audrain, Dallas, Jasper, Laclede, Lawrence, Madison, McDonald, Newton, Scotland, Shannon, Texas, Vernon, and Webster Counties	Boone, Cape Girardeau, Christian, Clark, Clay, Clinton, DeKalb, Franklin, Gentry, Greene, Holt, Howard, Jefferson, Livingston, Moniteau, Monroe, Osage Perry, Pike, Platte, Pulaski, Ralls, St. Charles, St. Louis, and Worth Counties.