

2017 Community Needs Summary

Three Rivers Community Action, Inc. conducted a community needs assessment between May 2017 and August 2017. The needs assessment was designed to meet the agency's funding requirements and inform decisions about programs and services offered by Three Rivers in its service area. The needs assessment included three key activities: 1) Focus groups for clients, Head Start parents, and community partners (agency staff); 2) Surveys of clients and community partners; and 3) Review of publicly available data on needs and resources in the counties and communities served by the agency.

What we learned

Needs & priorities

Across the Three Rivers service area, residents and local partners (agency staff) surveys reflected common themes in the needs and priorities identified. The most critical needs listed align closely with recent data on trends in the region and fall roughly into three tiers. More details on reverse.

Decent & affordable housing

Health care
access

Reliable
transportation

Good food &
nutrition

Income & jobs

Education
opportunities

Caregiver &
family
support

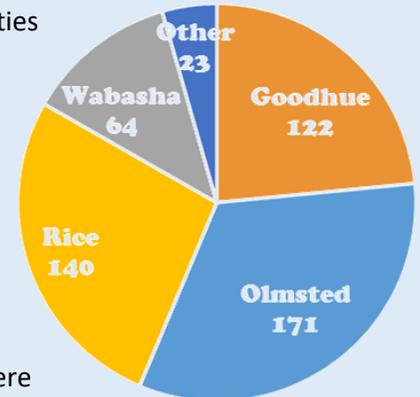
Resident vs. local partner perspectives

In general, residents prioritized options that maximize independence and aspire to middle class ideals. Local partners prioritized system/collective answers, resulting in different solutions to the same need. In housing, residents noted need for help to stay in their current housing while agency staff prioritized development of new affordable housing. And in transportation, residents highly ranked car repairs and help purchasing a reliable vehicle, and often tied these needs with access to employment. Local partners, instead prioritized access to transit. In these cases, Three Rivers and other agencies should work with residents to determine whether more information or adjustments in services can help to most effectively meet community needs and promote independence.

Who we learned from

520 Residents

from over 45 cities and townships across Goodhue, Olmsted, Rice, and Wabasha Counties. Compared to the region as a whole, respondents were more female, much more likely to rent their home, less likely to have college education, and slightly more likely to be a person of color.



243 Local Partners

representing over 20 types of services and programs including primary health care, homeless assistance, local government services, real estate, employment programs, senior services, and schools. Most respondents identified as white, female, and age 45 to 64.

6 Focus Groups

of residents and service providers in the Three Rivers service area.

#1 Need: Decent & affordable housing

Across all four counties, median rents exceed affordable levels for households making the median wage for renters. In Rice, Goodhue, and Olmsted County, rents are also rising, exacerbating the problem. Perhaps trying to stretch their housing dollars, many renters who prioritized housing needs also noted needs for help with medical bills, daycare, and good food. Homeowners, who include many older adults, noted significant need for home repairs along with help paying for housing costs.

Top 3 Housing Needs



#2 Needs:

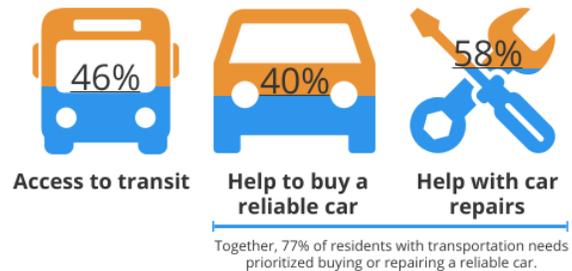


Healthcare access

Issues of cost and availability were prioritized by residents and local partners, and were supported by several recent County Health Needs Surveys and Assessments in the region. Reflecting rising health care costs nationwide, access to physical health care was primarily a cost concern. Access to mental health care was a problem of provider availability. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Goodhue and Wabasha counties have very few providers per capita.

Reliable transportation

Local partners prioritized access to transit above other transportation needs, but residents focused on having a reliable car, connecting it in comments to maintaining a job, finding a better job, or transporting children. One in four households – primarily seniors – prioritized access to volunteer drivers.



#3 Needs:

Good food & nutrition

Residents strongly prioritized access to good food. Local partners instead prioritized day care and placed food in the bottom half of their list. Top food & nutrition needs: Local access to healthy food, Access to a food shelf, and Home-delivered meals.

Income & jobs

Two-thirds of residents and local partners named having enough money to meet basic needs as a priority. Households with young children also prioritized local job opportunities and access to job skills training/education to get a better job.

Educational opportunities

Financial literacy education was prioritized by 1 in 3 households, and programs for youth (tutoring, mentoring, and community building) were ranked highly by families with school-age children. Early childhood and English Language Learner programs were not prioritized.

Caregiver & family supports

Many adults are caring for parents, spouses, or children in the region. Overall, 1 in 5 households noted need for senior caregiver supports while 1 in 3 households with children described need for family-child activities, school supports, or access to daycare. Local partners also prioritized day care, noting a 28% gap between provider capacity and local need.