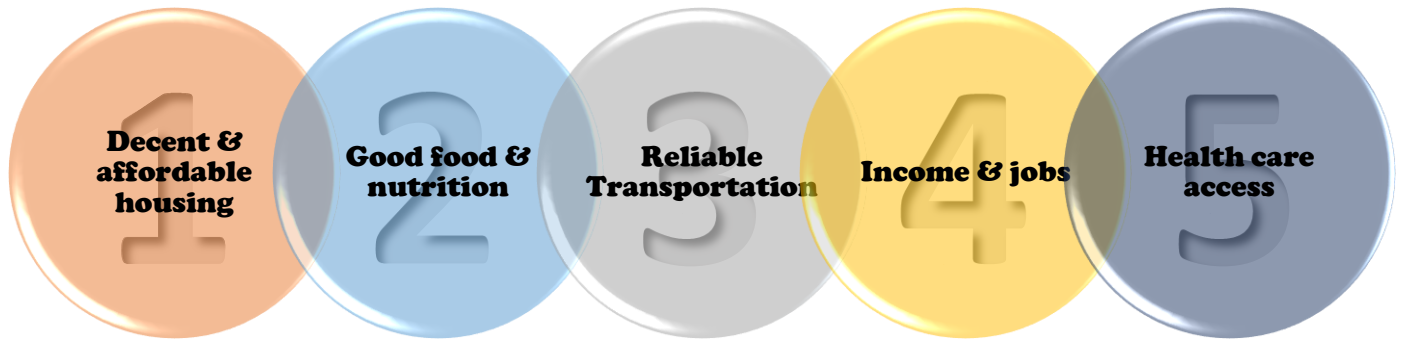


Rice County

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.

Needs and priorities

Analysis of survey responses and publicly available data on health, housing, education and other topics led to identifying five priority needs in Rice County. These are:



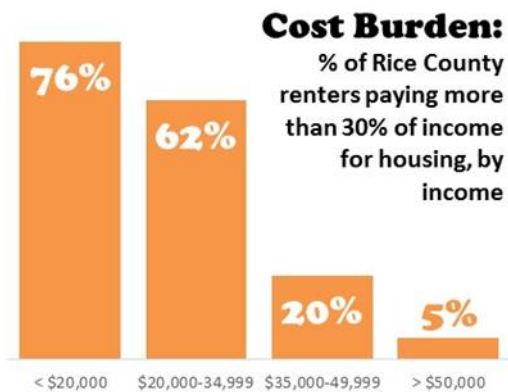
Decent & affordable housing

Housing costs have risen in Rice County since the end of the recession, with rents for one, two, and three bedroom apartments estimated at between \$1,700 and \$2,000 per month (American Community Survey). Almost 60% of housing in the county was built before 1980, and many older homes are occupied by older adults. In the needs survey, residents and service agency staff surveys agreed that access to affordable housing was a top priority, and that many households need help with housing

expenses like rent, utilities, or taxes to remain in their homes. Residents (primarily homeowners) also identified the need for home repairs as a priority in Rice County, ranking it #9 compared to an overall ranking of #28 across the Three Rivers service area.

Good food & nutrition

According to the University of Minnesota Extension, 23% of Rice County residents experience “low access to food stores”. In addition, 42% of students in Rice County qualify for free/reduced price lunches according to the Minnesota Department of Education. The 2013 Rice County Community Health Survey also found that 3.5% of residents use a community food shelf program. In the needs survey, residents highly prioritized access to good food, but partner agency staff did not rank any food or nutrition-related service as a critical need in the community, indicating a gap to evaluate. Specific needs residents prioritized were local access to healthy food, access to a food shelf, and home-delivered meals.



Reliable transportation

Survey respondents highly prioritized three transportation needs: affordable car repairs, assistance to purchase a reliable car, and access to transit to school, work, medical, etc. Residents prioritized vehicle repair and purchase, while community partner agencies placed access to transit as the highest ranked transportation need. This difference points to lack of knowledge of the efficacy of public transit in Rice County.

Income & jobs

Median household income in Rice County is \$61,683. However, 9.7% of residents (6,365 people) live in households with income below the poverty line. For a household of four, the poverty guideline is \$24,600. In the needs survey, residents and providers alike identified having enough money to meet basic

needs as a top priority. Providers also identified needs for job opportunities with higher wages and financial education such as budgeting and credit counseling. Residents connected their desire to work and access higher wage jobs to transportation choices as well.

1 in 10

Rice County residents live on income below the Federal poverty guideline

Health care access

Rice County is not a medically underserved area, but access to physical and mental health care was identified as a concern for residents and community providers. In the 2013 Rice County Community Health Survey, over one in five (22.9%) respondents reported they had received a mental health diagnosis for depression and/or anxiety. In addition, one in 10 adults reported delaying mental health care, with cost as the major barrier to seeking out care. According to the latest American Community Survey estimates, 8% of Rice County residents do not have health insurance.

Subpopulations: Needs to note



Renters

Highly prioritized healthy food and reliable transportation. Renters connected transportation to maintaining a job or getting a job with higher wages.



Households with Children

Described significant need for family/youth activities and healthy food. Surprisingly, daycare and preschool programs were not priorities.



Persons of Color

Indicated much greater health care needs than other subgroups. They were also the only subset to highly rank transit as an immediate need.



Seniors

Prioritized home-delivered meals and access to healthy food, compared to other subgroups. Home repairs were also a priority.

Who we learned from

in Rice County

140 Residents

from thirteen different Rice County cities and townships.

- 71% female
- 60% working-age adults
- 39% have children at home
- 30% are/have seniors in their home
- 17% persons of color
- 90% speak English at home
- 52% rent their homes
- 40% own homes

In comparison to Rice County as a whole, the respondents are older, more female, much more likely to rent their home, and slightly more likely to be a person of color.

84 Local Partners (agency staff)

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 and female between ages 45 and 64.

6 Focus Groups

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