

Community Foundation for SCNY Need Assessment Summary of Findings

In April 2015, the Community Foundation for South Central New York contracted with Lisa Horn of Horn Research to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the five counties in our service region: Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego and Tioga. The purpose of the needs assessment was to provide CFSCNY with information about the key needs and gaps in service and recommendations for prioritizing funding efforts. The results of the needs assessment process include detailed reports for each county and a regional summary. All of the reports are posted on our website: www.donorswhocare.org.

Methodology

“In order to accomplish the goals of the needs assessment project, Horn Research conducted an initial review of available reports and plans from county departments, non-profit service agencies, and planning organizations to identify relevant data points, community needs and organizational priorities. The information from these reports was organized within eight categories: demographics, health, housing, childcare/education, public safety, transportation, arts and recreation, and economic development. Secondary sources were identified to fill in gaps in information and to update old data. To ensure a broad understanding of the needs and priorities in each county, stakeholders in each topic area were identified and asked to complete a short qualitative survey to share what they considered the most current urgent needs and new and emerging needs in their area of expertise, the highest priority needs in their county and any relevant data sources that may support the process.”

Lisa Horn, Community Foundation for South Central New York Need Assessment, Horn Research, 2015

General Findings

While our region is diverse and has widely varied strengths and challenges, common need areas surfaced in several categories. Please refer to the individual county reports for more in-depth and specific findings by county.

Demographics

One of the most striking findings of the assessment was that there are several pockets of very high childhood poverty throughout the region rivaling some of the highest poverty rates in the country. Between the years 2000 and 2013, all 5-counties have experienced increases in the percentage of population in poverty and as our communities are aging, the number of seniors in poverty has also increased. Children in our region are the largest sub-population experiencing poverty. Childhood poverty rates in all counties in our region have increased since 2000 even as the New York State rate has decreased.

Health

There are many markers that measure the health of a community. In our region, each county has issues that are being successfully addressed and issues that remain challenging. Across the region, data suggests individuals and institutions are struggling with:

- Lack of mental health providers, especially for children/adolescents and those in poverty
- Lack of chemical dependency treatment and prevention services
- Need for more supportive home-based services for youth with emotional/behavioral health disabilities
- Need for more early identification of all types of health issues for children/youth
- Growing prescription drug/heroin problem

Housing

Overall, data suggests that housing is available for both renters and owners throughout the region with the exception of Tioga County. That being said, the percent of owners and renters with unaffordable housing costs (not to exceed 30% of household income) in all counties of the region is higher than the NYS

rate. There is also an issue of the quality of the housing stock that is available. Most of it is older and falling into disrepair.

Childcare/Education

This is a broad area of need and covers everything from early childhood education to high-school graduation rates. Childcare and education continues to be one of the most important areas that stakeholders cite when asked about the issues that they would most like to see addressed. Needs that were common to the counties in our region:

- Insufficient number of providers for the high demand for care
- Substantial numbers of children in informal, unregulated care
- The high cost of childcare is burdensome for most families
- Tuition charged by childcare centers is insufficient to cover their operating expenses

Transportation

There are two issues that make transportation a pressing need in our region. The first is the rural nature of the area making public transportation cost-prohibitive for communities. The second is the decreased funding from the state and county which has forced municipalities to cut the routes and hours of operation of “urban” public transportation or eliminate it altogether, as has been the case for example in Tioga County.

Public Safety

While data from the NYS Department of Justice show that overall crime rates across the region were flat between 2007 and 2013, the heroin epidemic appears to be causing a recent rise in property crimes. Stakeholders have identified an increased need for training among police officers that respond to mental health and chemical dependency issues, and support for those that are transitioning back to the community after incarceration.

Arts and Recreation

Our region is fortunate to be rich with opportunities to participate in the arts and recreation. Available data suggests that the arts and recreational offerings in our area have a significant, positive economic impact on the community. Access to the opportunities provided has been a challenge in our primarily rural areas and many arts organizations have been struggling as a result of the decrease of disposable income families have as a result of the economic downturn from several years ago.

Economic Development

Overall, our region has experienced slower economic growth than the rest of the state. The jobs that are currently, and projected to be, in demand are lower paying and require specific skills and/or certifications that are typically not eligible for financial assistance. In our rural counties, a lack of access to the internet and broadband services as well as transportation and childcare lead to significant barriers to finding and maintaining employment.

How Findings Will be Used:

The analysis and recommendations found in the report will be used to assist the staff and board of the Community Foundation to efficiently and effectively direct resources. The public is invited to use the findings to identify need in their respective communities, support their grant applications, and identify opportunities to partner with organizations and funders with the same areas of interest.