2025 Community Needs Assessment

CAP AGENCY

COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

SERVING SCOTT CARVER & DAKOTA COUNTIES

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INTRODUCTION

The Scott Carver Dakota CAP Agency (CAP Agency) is a private, locally managed nonprofit with offices in Shakopee, Rosemount and Chaska. CAP Agency's mission is to "assist and empower people to achieve social and economic well-being in partnership with our community." CAP Agency is a member of the Minnesota Community Action Partnership, as well as the National Community Action Partnership, providing local and national technical assistance, training, and other resources to Community Action Agencies across Minnesota and the United States.

CAP Agency works to provide basic needs support to individuals and families facing challenges around access to food, housing, finances, education, and other needs. The 20+ programs CAP Agency offers include Head Start, Early Head Start, Supportive Housing, Emergency Services, Energy Assistance, Food Shelf, Senior Nutrition, CHORE, and Community Programs, among others.

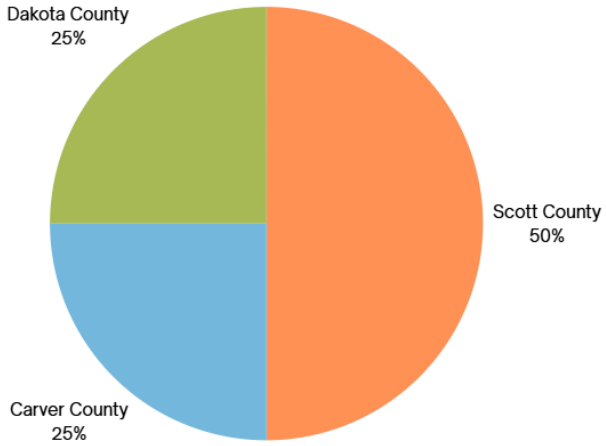
The Community Needs Assessment is a process conducted by all Community Action Agencies across the country every three years. The survey was sent to CAP Agency program participants and community partners to gauge the needs of the tri-county area and how well CAP Agency is meeting those needs.

Chore Volunteers at Chaska Christmas in May Project – completing new steps for a senior client.

Volunteers preparing for a homeless family to move from a hotel to a 3-bedroom rental.

STUDY METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

CAP Agency sent a survey via email and mail to program participants, receiving 508 total responses for the Community Needs Assessment. Of the survey respondents, 50% live in Scott County, 25% in Dakota County, and 25% in Carver County. In a separate survey, CAP heard from community organizations and government departments that provide services to people with barriers to basic needs in Scott, Carver, and Dakota Counties. The goal was to better understand the top needs of our community, as well as identifying assets and opportunities for potential partnerships with CAP Agency across the tri-county area.



The program participant survey consisted of 28 questions about the primary needs of adults and children in participants' households. Additionally, the survey asked about participants' current use of CAP Agency's social service programs, as well as challenges related to meeting their household's basic needs. We analyzed area demographics using available data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources to document the characteristics of, and areas of need for, the population of interest.

CAP Agency survey sample and respondents

Number of The CAP Agency participants using each service in last two years	**1080**	**100%**
Energy Assistance	255	24%
Food shelf	228	21%
Housing	132	12%
Chore	103	9%
Senior Meals on Wheels	100	9%
Holiday projects	93	9%
Other	85	8%
Energy conservation	27	3%
Head Start	26	2%
Early Head Start	23	2%
Crisis Nursery	8	1%

Race/Ethnicity	**540**	**100%**
Black / African American (including Somali, Oromo, and other African native)	72	13%
American Indian or Native American	19	4%
Asian American or Asian (including Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander	12	2%
Hispanic / Latino	76	14%
White	358	66%
Other	3	1%

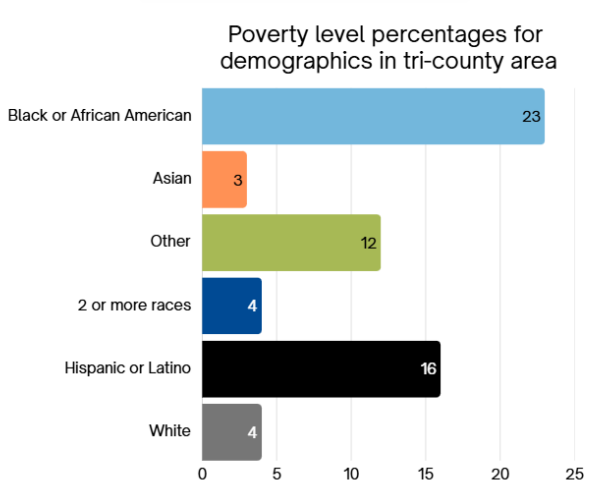
Home Language	**531**	**100%**
English	453	85%
Spanish	56	11%
Somali	7	1%
Other	15	3%

Household Type	**507**	**100%**
At least one child under 18	185	36%
No children	322	64%

Poverty Status	**491**	**100%**
$15,000 or less	159	32%
$15,000 to $30,000	181	37%
$30,000 to $50,000	103	21%
$50,000 to $75,000	29	6%
$75,000 or more	19	4%

Greatest needs of low-income population in Scott, Carver, and Dakota Counties

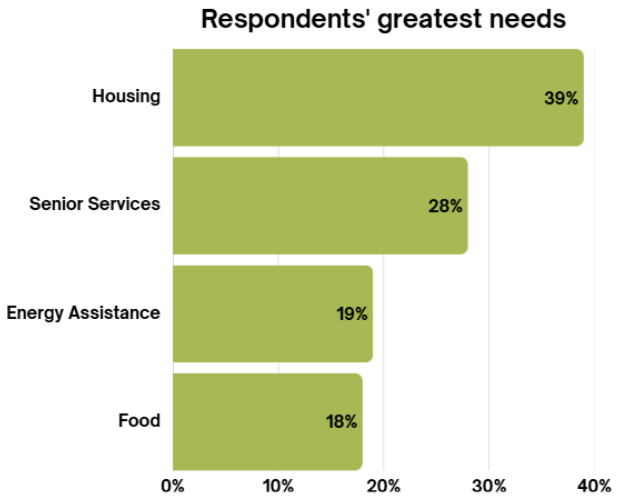
The data described in this summary report are key findings based on survey data. Demographic information is included in detail about the area residents that CAP Agency serves. Greatest needs are listed and discussed in this section. Information gathered shows the services provided by CAP Agency and which need areas are missing or underserved. Most respondents live in low-income households. In Scott County, 8,830 (5.7%) residents live below the poverty line, Carver 5,264 (4.8%) and Dakota 25,750 (5.8%)[1]. There's a disproportionate number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) below the federal poverty line compared to the white population in this area as shown in the Poverty Levels Between Demographics graph.



[1] U.S. Census Bureau. *2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate.* Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/

RESPONDENTS' GREATEST NEEDS

The needs listed below were obtained by asking respondents to identify which services would help fulfill the needs of the individuals in their household. This open-ended question resulted in responses that will help CAP Agency understand which needs are a priority for the community and where programming could be expanded. The following graph shows the frequency in which each need was mentioned in response to this question.



The needs are listed in order of most frequently mentioned type of need and then by specific subgroup within that type:

Housing

- Rent subsidy/Mortgage payments (20%)
- Tenant/landlord rights (10%)
- Eviction prevention (9%)

Senior Services

- Help with household chores and home repairs to age in place (12%)
- Senior meals on wheels (9%)
- Senior housing/services (7%)

Energy Assistance

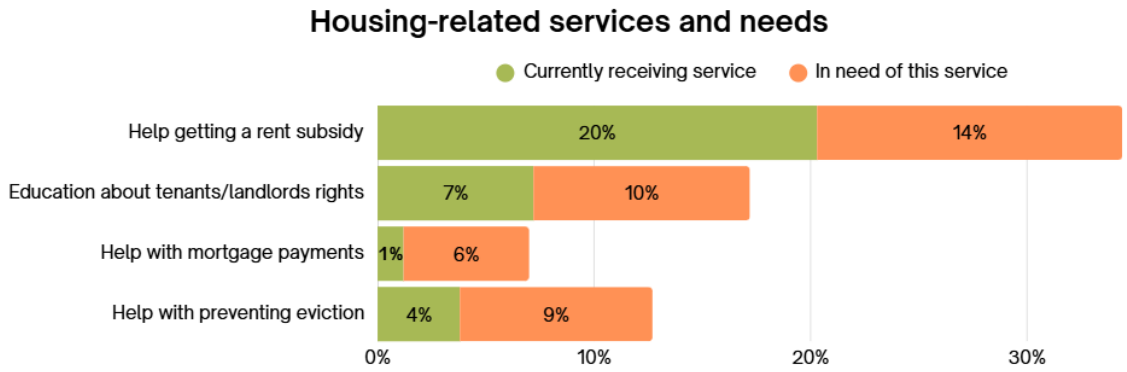
- Help paying utility bills (19%)

Food

- Access to healthy food to eat (18%)

Greatest Need #1: Housing

Most respondents (39%) listed housing assistance as their greatest need. In Scott, Carver, and Dakota Counties, between half and three-quarters of all low-income households are paying 30 percent or more of their income for housing (Scott 52%, Carver 60%, Dakota 76%)[2].



Difficulty paying housing costs

The ability to pay for food, utilities and medical care relies on the availability of affordable housing. Within the tri-county area, there are large gaps in the availability of affordable units and the number of low-income households in need of housing.

In Scott, Carver and Dakota Counties, extremely low-income households (ELI: households earning under $30,190 annually) are struggling to find affordable housing. For example, Dakota County has 9,805 ELI households, and only 2,930 available and affordable homes, which means 70% of households are unable to find affordable housing. The struggle is less, but not by much, in Carver and Scott Counties, with 53% and 60%, respectively, of households unable to find affordable housing.

In Dakota County, median rent has increased, on average 14% over 5 years, with a median rent increase of 13% for Carver County, and 5% for Scott County[2].

Greatest Need #2: Senior Services

Of the 262 senior (65+ years) respondents, 61 currently need chore services and are not receiving them, which include minor household repairs, cleaning, lawn mowing and snow removal. This was stated as a concern for the senior population especially who requested the help of someone who could aid in physically demanding work in their homes. For the past 20 years, we've been assisting seniors with aging in place, and 90 respondents indicated they are currently receiving this service. Seniors also indicated a need for meals on wheels (9%) and senior housing and services (7%).

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[2] Minnesota Housing Partnership. *2023 County Profiles*. Retrieved from http://mhponline.org.

[3] Maxfield Research & Consulting. *Updated Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis for Dakota County, Minnesota*. Retrieved from https://www.dakotacda.org/.

[4] Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. *Cost of Living in Minnesota.* Retrieved from https://mn.gov.

With the rise in the senior population across all 3 counties, the need for various senior services will continue to grow. Over the next 10 years, Scott county's senior population (65+) is projected to increase by 10,394, which is 62% of the projected increase. Dakota county is expected to see an increase of 19,497 seniors, making up 45% of the increase, and Carver county is projected to increase by 8,657, which accounts for 57% of the increase.

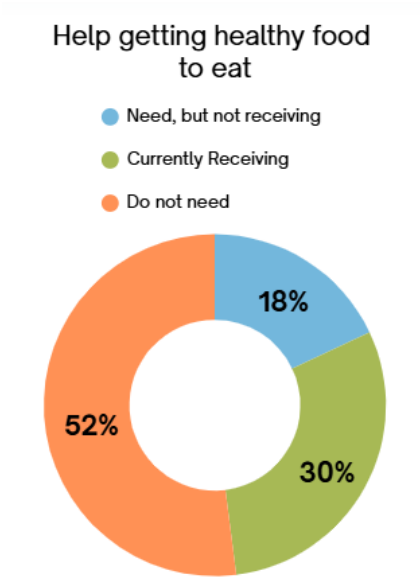
Greatest Need #3: Energy Assistance

Energy assistance was utilized by 27% of respondents in the past two years, which included help with energy, electricity and water bills, which shows it is a significant need in this community. 19% of respondents said they need assistance and are not currently receiving it.

Greatest Need #4: Food

According to 2024 MN DEED data which reviews and compares the cost of living for a family of three (average family size in MN) in the tri-county area, each household pays an average of $950 per month for groceries.[4] This is an increase of $135 per month compared to 2021 MN DEED data.

Food was listed as the fourth greatest need with 18% of respondents listing general food and healthy food, such as fruit and vegetables, as their top priority. 91 respondents said they were not receiving help getting healthy food to eat.



Food programs provided by CAP Agency

CAP Agency works to expand its programming to better provide food services to tri-county residents who are low-income, lack transportation access, or need assistance as they age. Services CAP Agency currently offers include:

- Senior Nutrition – meals at senior dining sites and Senior Meals on Wheels
- Food Shelf – providing nutritionally balanced, supplemental food for families through traditional food shopping and pickup, food distributions, and mobile food shelf locations

Of the 163 respondents utilizing the senior nutrition services, 93% of those seniors said they are satisfied or very satisfied with it. Several respondents listed Meals on Wheels as a service that greatly improved their ability to age in place.

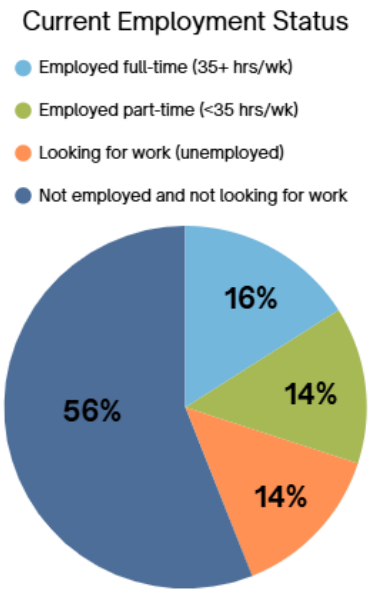
[4] Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. *Cost of Living in Minnesota.* Retrieved from https://mn.gov

Other Needs

Mental Healthcare: Of the 115 respondents who have mental health concerns, 25 stated they do not have access to the mental healthcare they need, with half stating they don't have any access to healthcare and/or health insurance.

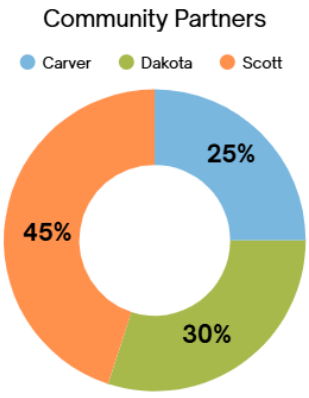
Budgeting: 15% of respondents stated they would like help budgeting money and 87% of those respondents have a gross household income of less than $40,000.

Clothing: 14% of respondents noted this as a need for their household that was not being met. CAP Agency runs a thrift store with gently used and affordable clothing items.



A Network of Providers and their Relationship to CAP Agency

In a separate survey, CAP Agency received feedback from 28 community partners who work with low-income residents in a variety of capacities, offering a unique perspective for the Community Needs Assessment. These partners provide access to needs including, but not limited to, financial benefit assistance, healthy food, housing, healthcare, and youth programming. CAP Agency values the respondents' input about what the needs of the community are and the effectiveness of CAP Agency in meeting those needs. Of the 28 respondents, 43% were government/public sector, 29% community-based, 21% faith-based, and 7% schools, and all indicated they've worked directly with CAP Agency in the past 12 months.



The respondents gave an average rating of 3.6 out of 5 for CAP's effectiveness at meeting the needs of tri-county residents. Compared to their 3.8 rating of all organizations' and agencies meeting the needs of this community.

Housing, food and transportation were listed as the most pressing needs for low-income residents of the tri-county area, followed by childcare, employment, livable wages, and mental healthcare. Other needs listed were financial literacy, health insurance/healthcare, court help, and chemical dependency.

Community partners were asked if they think the needs of the population will change in the next 5 years. Replies are listed below:

- "Yes – changing demographics, more income disparities, less options for affordable housing."
- "I think the biggest impact on services will be for older adults as the fast-growing population and the needs that come with it."
- "Yes, I believe the need for housing services/eviction prevention and food support will

continue to increase as the cost-of-living increases and there are cuts to financial assistance for housing."

- "I feel we will have the same needs, but there will be more need."

Community partners were asked an open-ended question about what their organization and CAP Agency could do together to better serve those in poverty in Scott, Carver, and Dakota Counties. Replies are listed below:

- "Just continue to have those conversations about how to collaborate to serve the communities best."
- "Continue to work collaboratively on programs and events. Also explore potential collaborative for social service workforce to help reduce stress and secondary trauma often experienced in social services."
- "Given the risk of government funding loss, I think we need to diversify our grant funds, so we aren't so reliant on government funding. We could do more collaborative grants with foundations or potentially partnerships with businesses."

Partners were also asked how CAP Agency and other community organizations could better coordinate their efforts to serve the community. Replies are listed below:

- "Provide more ways to find resources that are available – resource fairs, social workers in schools, social media, etc."
- "To be communicative about the services they are offering, or to update information. We would like to have a pool of information about all the organizations and services for the community."
- "We need to continue to partner to make the best use of limited resources, especially with expected cuts at state and federal levels. There are great staff who know how to support people, but the financial resources are so limited."
- "Collaborative models where local organizations are more interdependent and able to partner, hearing from low-income people about what they see as their greatest need."

Moving Forward

This survey shows four ongoing needs of Scott, Carver, and Dakota Counties which CAP Agency serves: housing, senior services, energy assistance, and food. CAP Agency continues to reach out for support of programming needs and develop action plans to help residents of the tri-county area.

We look forward to improving our relationships with community partners and improving our internal practices that make it possible to connect our neighbors to the services that provide much needed support, empowerment, and ultimately long-term stability.

Chaska Office Ribbon Cutting, March 2025