

*A Community Need Assessment of
Broome County:*

Summary Report of Process and Findings

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Acknowledgements:

The Community Foundation for South Central New York (CFSCNY) would like to extend sincere thanks to the Stewart W. and Willma C. Hoyt Foundation for providing the funding that made *A Community Need Assessment: Broome County* possible.

We would also like to thank the many individuals and organizations who took the time to participate in the focus groups and need assessment survey. Their input was crucial to the process and will help make Broome County a healthier community.

Introduction:

A Community Need Assessment: Broome County was developed to provide local foundations with information regarding community needs. It was designed to be utilized when allocating resources and making funding decisions in Broome County. While every attempt has been made to capture information from multiple sources, the final report and findings do not represent a comprehensive study. The final report and findings are meant to provide a snapshot of current community need and is reflective of information that is currently available.

The local area foundations have been meeting regularly since the floods of 2006 and have become interested in discussing a more collaborative approach to meeting community needs. It is felt that a well-researched and documented need assessment will assist foundations, individually and collectively, in making better funding decisions and will aid in the assessment of their overall impact in the community. The need assessment will also be used as a platform for several other projects including the development of an evaluation strategy, exploring a common application, and the research and documentation of grant-making best practices.

As foundations do not provide direct services in the community but rather fund organizations that do, it becomes necessary to assess the utilization of the grant-application process. To this end, the community's perception of the role of local foundations and their input regarding the grant-application process has also been assessed.

The stated-goals of the need assessment were:

- To obtain a greater understanding of community needs
- To better understand the challenges and needs facing not-for-profits (NFP's), community residents and public institutions
- To explore a better coordinated foundation response to community need
- To increase the capacity of local foundations in making grants to NFP's
- To provide a spring-board for a discussion regarding the measurement of community impact that foundations are making through their grant-making

The findings that follow are based on the information and point-of-view of participants in the process. The issues identified by the focus groups and surveys are not all inclusive. There were several issues that did not come up as a priority to either group that, according to quantitative data available, are pressing needs for Broome County. These need areas are included in the full report.

Process:

The purpose of a community assessment is to focus on local assets, resources and activities as well as gaps, barriers and emerging needs. The process that is developed to meet the stated purpose must take a broad look across agencies, systems, and community members to gain an understanding of the unique strengths and challenges that the community faces. This assessment has been envisioned as the first-step of an on-going process. The assessment has been designed to elicit views from multiple perspectives.

A series of interventions were developed to ascertain the breadth and depth of un- and under-met community needs in Broome County. A request was sent to stakeholders to provide input regarding measurable community health indicators. A comprehensive list was then developed that includes data and statistics that reflect the health of the community in the following areas: physical health, mental health, economic indicators, public safety, education, maternal/child health, and population demographics. A review of existing information has been completed to collect the “hard data” that corresponds to the list of indicators developed by the stakeholders. Many sources were mined for this information including the United States Census, State, County and City agency annual reports, United Way 2-1-1 statistics, and a wide-variety of other materials.

In order to gather information from those “closest to the ground”, eight focus groups were convened. Focus groups are structured, moderated discussions that bring together small groups of people in a neutral setting to talk about a specific issue. The groups reflect the areas of interest that foundations fund and were organized as follows: Broome County Integrated Community Planning (ICP), Health and Human Services, Arts and Culture, Education, Recreation/Sports, Aging, Rural, and Community Resident. The same questions were asked of each group with minor variations. A total of 55 organizations were represented.

Because not every organization/individual could be represented at the focus groups, a tool that would reach a wider audience was developed. Based on the information gathered at the focus groups, a need assessment survey was designed and distributed to a sample of 124 organizations/individuals that had not attended a focus group session. The questions were designed to measure the extent to which the needs expressed in the focus groups were seen as needs in the larger community. The responses provided give foundations an idea of what the most pressing needs are in the community as well as the strengths Broome County possesses that can be drawn on to meet those needs. A flaw in the original design of the survey led to the modification of questions 9-11 to remove the “n/a” response choice after the first 9 responses were received. Thirty eight responses were received which is equal to a 30% response rate. The findings from the need assessment survey were consistent with the findings from the focus group sessions.

Focus Group Schedule:

Integrated County Planning (ICP): January 13, 2011 from 9:30-11:45AM

Health and Human Services: February 10, 2011 from 9:30-11:45AM

Arts and Culture: February 17, 2011 from 9:30-11:45AM

Education: March 3, 2011 from 9:30-noon

Recreation and Community: March 10, 2011 from 9:30-11:30AM

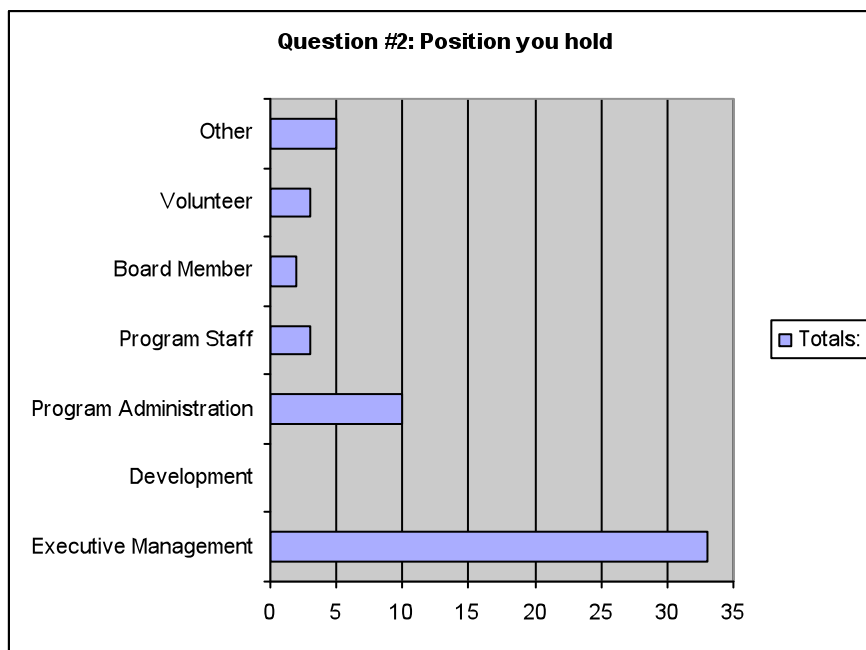
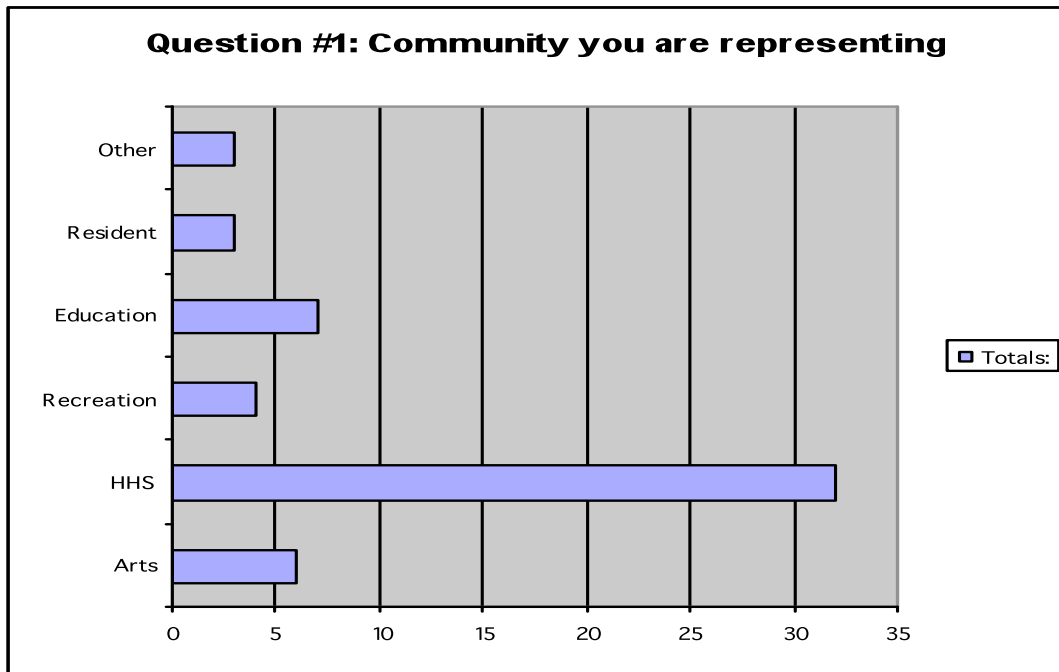
Aging: March 22, 2011 from 1:30-3:30PM

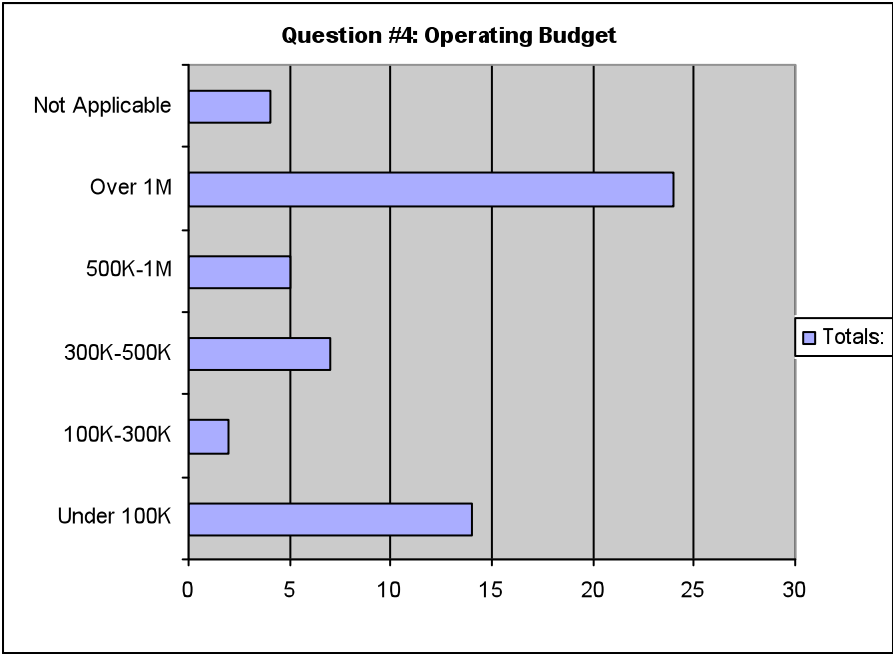
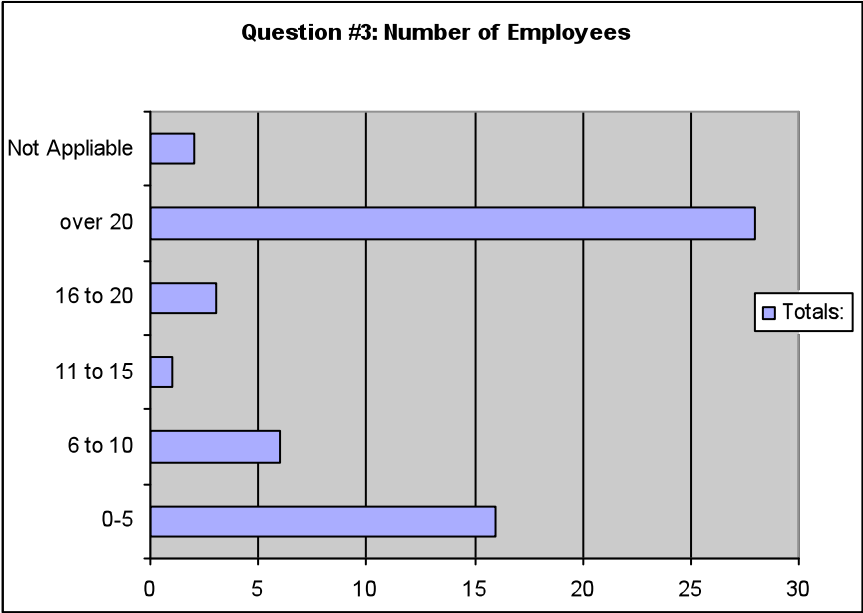
Rural: April 7, 2011 from 10:00-noon

City of Binghamton Residents: June 28, 2011 from 6-7:45PM

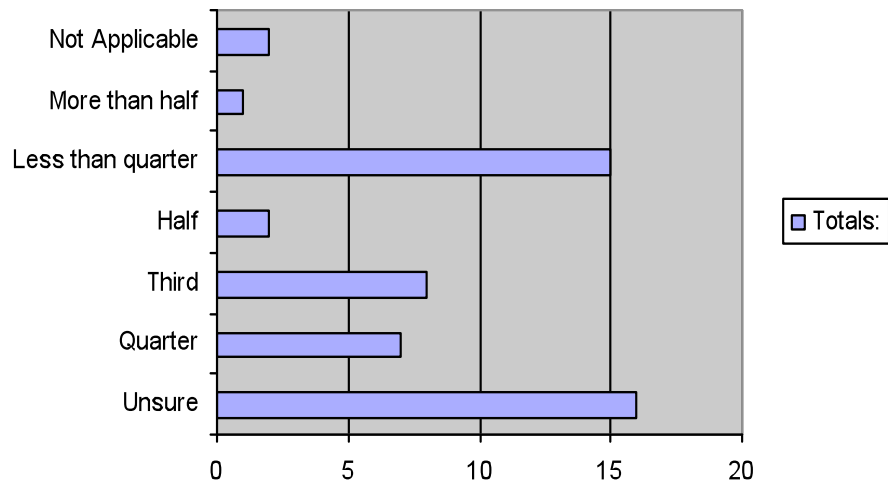
Focus Group Participant Demographics

(results do not include "City of Binghamton Resident" focus group)

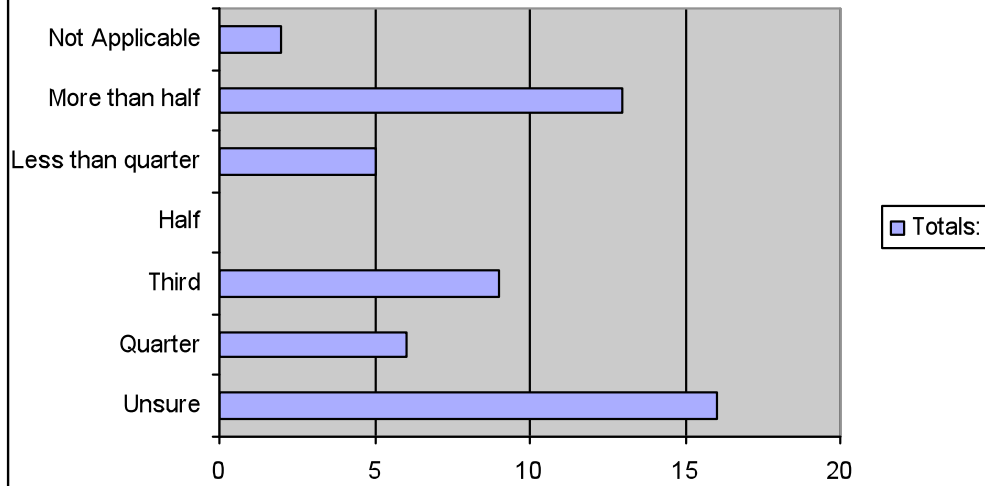




Question #5: % of Individuals Served that are Ethnic/Racial Minorities



Question #6: % of Individuals Served Living Below the Poverty Line



Common Trends From Focus Groups and Survey:

- Because of the timing of the project (on-going NYS fiscal crisis), operating issues came up far more often than program issues
- Participating organizations have almost universally experienced significant funding cuts and expect more
- Organizations are aggressively pursuing grants from sources they have not considered in the recent past...especially from foundations
- Almost none of the participating NFP's have professional grant-writers and are attempting to write grants as an adjunct to what they already do
- Most report having experienced significant negative consequences from unfunded mandates
- Providers of issues that had an attached "coalition" were much more likely to comprehensively define the need and scope of an issue.
- The perception of most non-profits is that they (the NFP's themselves) have "cut off all of the low-hanging fruit" and the next round of cuts will have more dire consequences
- Organizations are much more interested in/willing to consider solutions that include collaboration and/or consolidation. However, it is often the case that they do not feel the services they provide are duplicative even if NFP's have a similar mission and scope
- Organizations that have a "fee-for-service" component are in much better shape and reported less hardship with one exception. Those that rely on Medicaid funds expect large losses.
- A broad spectrum of programs/organizations outside of education will be negatively affected by school budget cuts.
- The extent to which non-profits conduct their own need assessments or measure outcomes is unclear.
- Rural service providers expressed concern about the economic, environmental, public safety and sociological impact that natural gas drilling will have on their communities. "Urban" providers did not bring the issue up.

Issues Most Often Cited As Needs:

- **Mental Health Services (Therapeutic) for the following populations:**
 - Children
 - Families
 - Elderly
 - Chronically Mentally Ill

- **Leadership Development**
 - in rural areas
 - with African-American and Latino residents of Binghamton

- **Housing**
 - Availability of safe and affordable housing
 - Assistance to families to avoid eviction/foreclosure
 - Maintenance of existing housing stock

- **Family Supportive Services That:**
 - Increase Family Engagement in Schools
 - Wrap-Around Services for Troubled Families

- **Community Health Issues:**
 - Access to Prescription Assistance Programs for Seniors
 - Access to and Current/Future Availability of Medical Specialists
 - Dental Services for Low-Income Families
 - Comprehensive Spectrum of Clinical Substance Abuse Treatment for Adolescents

- **Increasing Points of Access to Existing Service Delivery System:**
 - One of the strengths most often identified was that Broome County had a wide-variety of existing programs and services. It was commonly felt that utilization of existing programs would increase significantly if points of access to services were identified, expanded and the appropriate staff trained. (Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage, Positive Parenting Program)

Issues Related to Role of Foundations:

- NFP's perceive foundations to be their "benevolent benefactors", they would like foundations to be partners with them
- Related to the above, there is also a perception that foundation executives and board members are not well-versed regarding community need
- There is a perception that the same handful of board members serve multiple foundations
- There is a perception that there is no plan regarding how foundations prioritize their allocations.
- There is a perception that there is a dearth of those with non-profit experience on boards, grant panels and committees at the foundations
- Foundations are perceived to be interested in funding "it" (most visible/current) issues rather than maintaining older, effective programs
- There is a perception that foundations "bail out" agencies in fiscal trouble to the detriment of agencies that are sound fiscal stewards
- Organizations would like the opportunity to submit a common application as many of them do not have a dedicated grant-writer
- Organizations would like "right-sized" grant applications
- Almost universally participants stated a preference for larger, multi-year grants rather than smaller one or two year awards even if it means that foundations make fewer grants
- Organizations would like to see foundations pool their resources around a pressing issue as they did with the 2006 floods and ACA tragedy
- All groups asked that more funds be allocated for operating grants

Next Steps:

The assessment has been distributed to local foundations for their review and consideration. Each foundation will decide how and to what extent the findings will be utilized. Conversations among foundations regarding coordinated responses will continue.

The summary report on the need assessment findings is being provided to all participants in the focus group process and to the general public. As such it will be posted on our website. Please note that this report represents a summary of the complete findings and as such is meant to be a distillation of the most common thematic elements that arose during the process.

Please direct any questions regarding content of this report to:

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