

**2010 BI-COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION  
NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT  
[EXECUTIVE SUMMARY]**

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**The 2010 Report:** The 2010 Needs Assessment Report covers a brief background to BiCAP, the counties and residents the Agency serves, and describes the survey employed in the Needs Assessment. The 10-page Report also includes some of the important demographics of area residents, and details the findings that were obtained through the use of SPSS, a data analysis program.

**The Data:** The questionnaires were distributed and collected in June, although some questionnaires were not returned until mid-July. Distribution of the questionnaire was either through the U.S. mail or hand distributed to both a BiCAP client sample as well as other low-income residents through other social service providers. A total of 179 questionnaires were returned, with 173 being usable. A unique feature of this survey was that 20 \$25 food gift certificates were used to encourage participation and be an incentive to return the completed questionnaires promptly. In addition to distributing the questionnaire (the needs assessment tool) to low-income residents, a similar questionnaire covering the same topics was mailed to 100 area community organizations. Members of the BiCAP Board and BiCAP staff were also asked to complete this questionnaire. There were responses from 43 community partners, 15 BiCAP Board members, and 67 BiCAP staff, for a total of 125 responses.

**The Findings:** Two-thirds of the 156 low-income respondents resided in Beltrami County, and nearly two-thirds (63%) of all respondents reported that they were BiCAP clients. A total of 31 percent of the low-income respondents asked for help locating work. About 20 percent of those needing work were Native Americans. Education was a need—particularly getting a college degree, and increasing computer skills—but help with resume writing, clothes to wear for interviewing, and help to obtain financial aid to attend school were also identified needs. Among those with young children (under 12) help was requested for childcare costs, and in finding the right kind of childcare. Financial help to buy a car, help with repairs for a car they already own, and help with transportation costs—such as gas and insurance—were expressed major needs. Respondents indicated a need for help to start a savings plan, as well as help to take care of bad debt. In the housing area, finding a large enough home, as well as obtaining the security deposit were needs. For those respondents with youth at home (ages 12-21) summer and after-school activities, as well as employment were the dominant youth needs. Affordable insurance and finding a Dentist who accepted Medical Assistance / Minnesota Care were major healthcare issues. Seniors needed help at their homes, sometimes so they could continue to live independently. Stretching food dollars and finding affordable family recreation were also areas of need for many BiCAP area residents.

The results of the Community Partner questionnaire sometimes reflected variation in the percentages of response to perceived low-income resident needs, which in some cases resulted in the community organization respondents having one view of a dominant need of low-income respondents, BiCAP Board members having another view, while BiCAP staff might have yet another view.

**BiCAP:** Recent news stories have focused on health needs of the two BiCAP counties, and the prospect of a slow and prolonged recession recovery. The downturn in the economy has put more families in a position of need—sometimes through foreclosure. Existing BiCAP programs appear to be effective in meeting the needs of low-income area residents. However, efforts in economic development and job training activities would benefit from multiple agency attention. Coordination of employment preparation and increasing employment options may be a needed cross-agency cooperative effort where BiCAP could take a leading role. That coordination task could assist BiCAP to achieve their mission of helping low-income residents attain self-sufficiency.