

2016 Couleecap Needs Assessment

2016

*prepared by
Starfish Consulting, Inc.*

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Many people assisted with the collection and compilation of the 2016 Couleecap Needs Assessment data to create this summary report. Success can be credited to many individuals including, Grace Jones, Couleecap Executive Director; Shelly Teadt, Couleecap Director of Planning; and Kay Mueller, Couleecap Planner, who helped with the coordination and administration of this needs assessment; Couleecap staff and other Key Agency staff who assisted with data collection; Starfish Consulting staff for compiling the needs assessment data; and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Community Services Block Grant for financial support.

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2016 Couleecap, Inc. Needs Assessment

Introduction

A. Background

Couleecap, Inc. serves people and communities in the Coulee Region of Wisconsin that includes Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties. **Couleecap** is a private, nonprofit agency established in 1966 during the War on Poverty, when hundreds of Community Action Agencies were established throughout the United States. **Couleecap** is one of these locally-based, nonprofit agencies founded by a caring group of local citizens dedicated to *continuing* the fight to end poverty in the Coulee Region.

Each year, **Couleecap** helps more than 16,000 families, including more than 30,000 people, in the four-county region achieve self-sufficiency by providing: the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing; the tools for living healthy, safe, independent lives; and the foundation for building a future.

Drawing on the strengths of its diverse programs, the main purpose of **Couleecap, Inc.** is to provide the tools and resources that empower low-income people to meet their needs, develop self-confidence, and reach self-sufficiency. **Couleecap** strengthens communities by identifying resources, developing opportunities, and advocating for local adults, youth, and families. **Couleecap** continues to educate and advocate for local adults, youth, and families.

The basic principle of a community action agency is to work at a grassroots level and build upon local leadership, local planning, and local operations. **Couleecap** was created to make a difference in the lives of local people – individual by individual, family by family, and community by community.

The 2016 Couleecap Needs Assessment summarizes the needs and concerns in the Coulee Region as experienced and described by low-income individuals and families. Every three years, **Couleecap** conducts a needs assessment of their four-county service area as part of a Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). This assessment gathers relevant information to help the agency design programs that address the issues of poverty and promote self-sufficiency for low-income families in the Coulee Region.

Couleecap, Inc. Mission

To fight poverty and promote self-sufficiency, economic development, and social justice for people and communities in the Coulee Region.

Couleecap, Inc. Vision

To make a difference in the lives of people in the Coulee Region by:

- *Empowering people to achieve their full potential;*
- *Promoting social and economic justice;*
- *Serving as a catalyst for change;*
- *Strengthening families and communities.*

B. Purpose

The purpose of the 2016 Couleecap Needs Assessment was to determine the needs of low-income individuals and families in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties. Specific areas of need include: transportation, education and training, employment and job training, housing, health-related issues, child and family development / parenting, emergency assistance, and business development. Information was gathered from a diverse cross-section of low-income individuals and families.

The information gathered via the 2016 Needs Assessment will be valuable for Couleecap to:

- Identify community needs and concerns
- Set multi-year goals and identify appropriate strategies that may include:
 - Services
 - Coordination of services and / or case management
 - Advocacy
 - System change
 - Coalition building
 - Resource mobilization
 - Community development

C. Guiding Questions

Low-Income Household Survey. Low-income household survey respondents were asked to report the “need” for their household on a variety of issues. Respondents rated responses on a scale from one to five. The question was “*How much of a NEED is this issue for your household?*” Possible responses were: 1 – not at all; 2 – slight; 3 – moderate; 4 – high; and 5 – very high. In addition, survey respondents could indicate if each specific issue “did not apply” to their household. A space was provided for survey respondents to list “other issues” that their household could use help with.

Community Partners, Board, and Staff Survey. Couleecap’s community partners, Board members, and staff survey respondents were asked to report how much of a “need” various issues are for low-income households in their community. Respondents rated responses on a scale from one to five. The question was “*How much of a NEED is this issue for low-income households in your community?*” Possible responses were: 1 – not at all; 2 – slight; 3 – moderate; 4 – high; and 5 – very high. In addition, survey respondents could indicate if each specific issue “did not apply”. A space was provided for survey respondents to describe changes that could be made to improve the quality of services provided for issues in their area.

D. Limitations

The 2016 Needs Assessment collected data via two specific survey instruments. All responses reflect the status/opinions of the respondents at the time the information was collected. This 2016 “snapshot” will be used to document current needs of low-income individuals and families, as well as for comparison with other local reports, surveys, and/or assessments when applicable. (A copy of the Low-income Household Survey and Community Partners, Board, and Staff Survey are included in Section V of this report.)

2016 Couleecap, Inc. Needs Assessment

Methodology

A. Theoretical Framework

The 2016 Needs Assessment was developed to assess the needs and concerns of low-income individuals and families. Information was gathered from low-income households (via household survey) and other community members (via community partners, Board, and staff survey). Other local reports, surveys, and/or assessments were reviewed and included for comparison.

To identify the needs of low-income individuals and families in the Coulee Region, the 2016 Needs Assessment focused on the following issues for low-income households:

- Transportation
- Education and Training
- Employment and Job Training
- Housing
- Health-Related Issues
- Child and Family Development
- Emergency Assistance
- Business Development

B. Type of Design

The 2016 Needs Assessment was similar to previous assessments (1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, and 2013). Self-report surveys were utilized to gather data. In 2007, format changes were made to provide consistency between survey instruments. The 2016 survey instrument adhered to the previously established survey format. The major areas of concern / need for low-income individuals and families continues to be the emphasis for all data collection.

C. Selection and Description of Survey Respondents

The 2016 Needs Assessment Survey was distributed to 1,230 low-income households through the following agencies and Couleecap programs: Essential Health Clinic; Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers and Lugar de Reunion; WAFER; Warming Center in La Crosse; YWCA; The Salvation Army; Families First; Head Start in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties; Neighborhood City Church; La Crosse Collaborative Initiative; African American Mutual Assistance Network, Inc.; food pantries in Gays Mills, Prairie du Chien, Sparta, Tomah, Viroqua, Westby, and De Soto; Couleecap Homeless Programs; Bargain Boutique in Prairie du Chien; Couleecap Homebuyer Program; Couleecap Home Rehabilitation Program; Couleecap Housing Counseling Program; Couleecap Affordable Rental Housing Programs; Work-N-Wheels Program; Skills Enhancement Program; FoodShare Outreach Project; and Weatherization Program. Every effort was made to guarantee the confidentiality of all respondents.

D. Data Collection Strategies / Description of the Sample

Information was gathered from low-income households (via household survey) and other community members (via community partners, Board, and staff survey). To guarantee a representative cross-section of the low-income population and other community members, surveys were distributed through a variety of agencies and programs throughout the four-county Coulee Region. A list of the specific agencies and programs are listed in Section C on the previous page. A total of 1,230 low-income household surveys were distributed and 901 surveys were returned for a response rate of 73%; and a total of 113 community partners, Board, and staff surveys were distributed and 42 surveys were returned for a response rate of 37%. With such a high response rate for both surveys, especially the household survey, sampling bias is reduced.

E. Data Analysis Strategy

Primary data reported in the 2016 Needs Assessment were gathered via the low-income household survey described previously. All survey data was entered into an SPSS database. Prior to analysis, all data was cleaned to guarantee a clean data-set. The data was compiled to produce the four-county Coulee Region report and disaggregated to produce the individual county detailed reports.

F. Interpretation of 2016 Couleecap, Inc. Needs Assessment Results

The 2016 Needs Assessment survey data provides a “snapshot” of the household needs for low-income individuals and families in the four-county Coulee Region. Survey answers are dependent on how accurate survey respondents reply. Survey questions were interpreted by individual respondents and based on the respondent’s definition and / or interpretation. Some survey respondents chose not to answer specific questions. This meant that all individuals are not represented in every answer. However, this occurred very infrequently, leaving a sample size that is a representative sample of the population surveyed.

G. Dissemination of Survey Results

All 2016 Needs Assessment results were compiled into this comprehensive research document entitled “2016 Couleecap Needs Assessment”. Results will be posted on Couleecap’s website (www.couleecap.org) and on Couleecap’s Facebook page in December, 2016. All Couleecap Board Members and Couleecap Staff will receive a copy of the 2016 Executive Summary and have access to the full report on Couleecap’s website in December, 2016. Results will be distributed to area service providers and to others as it is requested. Information from the 2016 Needs Assessment will also be presented as part of Couleecap’s Annual Report on the Face of Poverty in the Coulee Region in November, 2016. News releases sharing the results will be submitted to all local newspapers as well.