



Executive Summary

Research Goals and Approach

In 2015, Corona Insights was retained by the CSBG board of Albany County to conduct a comprehensive poverty needs assessment of the county population. In its final form, the assessment contained the following two distinct research components:

- ➔ **A community survey of Albany County residents on a wide variety of poverty and health related issues.** This survey was completed by 371 residents, which provides an adjusted margin of error of ± 5.3 percent (with a 95 percent confidence level in the results). Results are presented not only for the overall Albany County population but also separately for those households with low (below \$30,000 a year) incomes and higher household incomes. Additionally, wherever possible, survey results were compared with the previous community survey conducted in 2010 and 2013 to observe changes in perceptions among survey respondents across the two survey years.
- ➔ **Interviews of key community health and human service providers in Albany County.** In March of 2016, Corona completed 8 interviews with providers representing a wide range of human services. Interview questions covered a wide range of topics from the current state of human services in Albany County, to gaps in coverage, effective programs, and funding priorities.

The report is divided into two parts, each containing findings of one of the research methods described above. The methodologies for both the interviews and the surveys are provided in the [Methodology Appendix](#). The following pages of this introduction provide selected key findings of the project as a whole.

Overall County Situation Regarding Poverty and Related Issues

- ➔ About half of respondents believe that poverty is a major or moderate issue in the county
- ➔ More than half of respondents believe that access to health care for all residents is a major or moderate issues
- ➔ About two-thirds of respondents believe that employment is a major or moderate issue in Albany County
- ➔ Less than a fifth of respondents rated the public's ability to find quality affordable housing as good
- ➔ About half of lower income respondents have made use of county assistance services in the past year
- ➔ About half of respondents did not know enough about different topics to evaluate how well Albany County is helping lower income residents
 - > This did not really differ based on income
 - > Respondents knew the least about help for lower income people in managing their financial resources
 - > Respondents gave Albany County the highest ratings for providing help to lower income people in obtaining emergency food

Health Issues

- Most respondents had some type of health insurance, and the majority of them believed that their health insurance was adequate for their needs
 - > Lower income respondents were less likely to have health insurance and more likely to think that their health insurance was inadequate
- Among various procedures, respondents were most likely to have delayed receiving dental care
 - > Lower income respondents and their household members were more likely to delay receiving care of any type
- For the majority of respondents, either they or someone in their household had suffered from a common health condition in the past 12 months
 - > Lower income respondents were more likely to report diabetes, respiratory diseases, or a physical disability
 - > The most common among all income categories were mental health and high blood pressure
- Almost three-quarters of respondents received their health care in Albany County
 - > More than half of respondents who go outside of Albany County for health care go to Fort Collins or Northern Colorado
 - > Respondents are often going outside of Albany County for health care because they need to see a specialist or have difficulty seeing a doctor in the county
 - > Lower income respondents were more likely to go outside of the county for health care because of cost. Higher income respondents tended to do so because of perceived higher quality.

Health Issues

- ➔ Respondents thought that access to a specialty doctor in Albany County was poor
 - > Lower income respondents were less likely to know about the ease of access to a specialty doctor, which may imply that they use them less often
- ➔ Most respondents would go to a physician or nurse practitioner for routine health care
 - > Lower income respondents were more likely to not seek routine care
- ➔ Most respondents would go to an emergency room for emergency medical care
 - > Again, lower income respondents were more likely to put off seeking emergency medical care
- ➔ Most respondents believe that Ivinson Memorial Hospital is an important resource for the county
 - > They were less certain whether it leads the way in developing health programs in Albany County
- ➔ Regardless of income, respondents are not aware of the financial assistance program at Ivinson Memorial Hospital

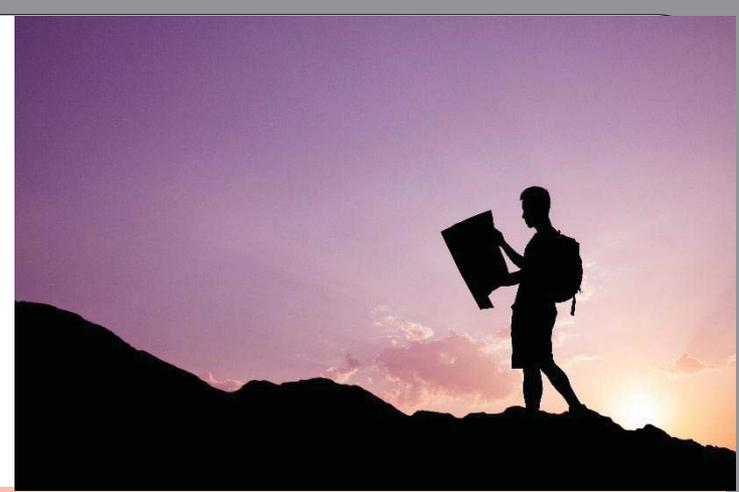
Work and Finances

- ➔ Lower income respondents were less likely to have worked a full year in the past 12 months
 - > For many this was due to being a student
 - > They were also less likely to currently have a job
- ➔ Lower income respondents were also less likely to have worked a full week in the past week
- ➔ Lower income respondents were not as positive about their current job
 - > They were less likely to have worked at their current job very long, less likely to receive benefits, and less likely to enjoy the work that they do
 - > They were also less likely to be actively pursuing their career goals because they needed more education or skill training
- ➔ Lower income respondents were more likely to have had financial problems in the past 6 months

Housing

- ➔ Lower income respondents were less secure in their current housing
 - > They were less likely to believe that their home was in a safe neighborhood, was convenient, was in good condition, and was affordable
- ➔ Respondents believed that better, more affordable housing would improve the lives of lower income residents
 - > Lower income respondents were more likely to mention public transportation
- ➔ Lower income respondents, however, were not significantly more likely to have been at risk of losing their home in the past 12 months

Suggested Priorities for Poverty Programs



Based on the results of the Community Needs Assessment, the following areas are identified by the Corona Insights research team as potential areas where funding can satisfy important needs, fill gaps in services, and most improve the lives of low-income individuals in Albany County.

Priorities will, where appropriate, separately discuss long-term and short-term goals with the objective of identifying more immediate “wins” as well as areas where progress may require more patience and/or resources.

It is recognized that the CSBG Board may interpret findings and priorities differently.

Major categories of priorities are listed in no particular order.

Priority Category A: Health care

- ➔ Long-term priority: Increase lower income households' access to health care
 - > Several community leaders and some of the survey respondents noted that the Medicaid expansion would have helped with access
 - > Routine care is an issue with lower income respondents four times more likely to not receive care than higher income respondents
 - > Access to specialty care is an issue. However, given the size of the market, it may not be realistic to pursue on-site specialists. However, other options, such as telemedicine or even arranging transportation to out-of-area specialists, could mitigate the challenge.
- ➔ Short-term priority: Increase ability to obtain mental health assistance
 - > Community leaders would like more programs to support those suffering from mental health issues
 - > About a quarter of survey respondents that either they or someone in their immediate family had suffered from a mental health issue in the past 12 months, which (along with high blood pressure) was the most oft-cited household health issue among those tested. This did not vary by income and is a true communitywide issue

Priority Category A: Health care

- ➔ Short-term priority: Increase access to dental services for low-income households
 - > Dental care is the most-deferred health service due to cost, with 5 in 8 lower income respondents reporting that they or someone in their household had delayed dental care due to cost

Priority Category B: Affordable Housing

- Long-term priority: Support measures to increase the raw supply of affordable housing.
 - > Affordable housing was the number one solution that survey respondents believed would help lower income residents
 - > Very few respondents felt that the public's ability to find quality affordable housing was good
 - > Community leaders also felt that the available housing was not very affordable, given the incomes of the community
- Short-term priority: Support measures to increase the quality of existing housing stock
 - > Although few respondents had been at risk of losing their home in the past 12 months, lower income respondents were not positive about their current housing

Priority Category C: Employment

- ➔ Long-term priority: Promote economic development and job creation
 - > The university presence in Albany County poses some interesting challenges for employment. The job applicant pool has both highly educated workers and a pool of transient students who may be more willing to work for less, competing with a traditional work force.
 - > Some survey respondents wished for a new industry to come to the county and offer a new type of job.
 - > Both community leaders and survey respondents felt that wages for many of the available jobs were low. This could be a function of current economic makeup and could be a function of having a large student labor force available
 - > Potentially leverage the university more to bring new employers (or grow entrepreneurs)

Priority Category C : Employment

- ➔ Short-term priority: Promote job training that allows for full-time year-round work with specialized skills
 - > Lower income survey respondents were less likely than higher earners to have worked the full year, less likely to currently have a job, and less likely to have worked a full work week
 - > Lower income survey respondents tended to feel like they needed more education or new skills before they would be able to work towards their career goals. However, this could be somewhat skewed by the student population that is already pursuing this strategy.

Priority Category D : Coordination and Publicizing of Services

- ➔ Long-term priority: Increase public and practitioner awareness of available services
 - > The public has relatively low understanding of how Albany County addresses poverty, which means that they cannot act effectively as a referral pipeline
 - > Practitioners in the field are somewhat “siloed” and have generally low awareness of programs in the county outside their own area of expertise
 - > Awareness of the existing financial assistance program at Ivinson is relatively low
- ➔ Short-term priority: Develop a catalogue of available services and service demand
 - > Set a goal of comparing existing programs against need measures developed in this document to identify gaps in services
 - > Consider the balance between investments in eliminating poverty versus investments in ameliorating the effects of poverty
 - > Assess the extent to which programs are needed and/or consumed by the student population, to better understand the impact of this population on poverty programs and services