

# Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County: Interim Community Strengths and Needs Assessment 2021



**Community Action**  
Partnership of Hennepin County

The **Improve** Group

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many people who generously provided their time, energy, and space to make this assessment possible amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing racial trauma that communities are experiencing. Thank you to the staff of Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County for pursuing this work to give voice to community members and organizations to share how the events of the last 18 months have impacted their lives and work. Additionally, thank you for your diligence, feedback, and time working on this project while doing your important direct service work to help Hennepin County residents.

Thank you to the community partners who led this work, connecting with community members from key communities of color in Hennepin County. You were key to the success of the engagement—thank you for your open and honest feedback, outreach efforts, and culturally responsive facilitation.

Thank you to the cultural and community organization staff who took time away from their critical work to provide insights about community strengths and challenges, as well as how the nonprofits adapted to the pandemic. Most importantly, thank you to the community members who participated in this study. Your voices are important, and your input has helped all of us better understand the needs and strengths of the Hennepin County community during this unprecedented time.

# Executive Summary

The Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County (CAP-HC) completed this interim assessment to understand how the strengths and needs of Hennepin County residents experiencing poverty have changed since 2020. The interim assessment is an update to the last triennial community strengths and needs assessment, published in early 2020 before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd. Recognizing the longstanding racial inequities intertwined in these upheavals, CAP-HC decided to update the previous needs assessment, engaging communities of color and cultural organizations that serve their communities. This interim assessment will help CAP-HC identify emergent needs, improve its programming, and strengthen relationships with the communities it serves, particularly communities of color.

The findings and results in this report are primarily based on workshops with community members from the Hmong, Somali, African American, Native, and Latino communities. Community partners who have strong ties and relationships in their communities recruited and engaged about 50 participants through the workshops. Additionally, interviews with staff members from five cultural organizations and one non-culturally specific social service nonprofit informed the assessment.

The findings and recommendations in this executive summary are based on common themes across the focus communities. Community-specific descriptions of strengths, challenges, and input shared by community members and service provider staff are included in the full report.

## Themes from Community Workshops and Interviews

Community member and cultural and community organization staff responses shared the following themes:

- Community members were largely able to access services, resources, and government assistance through their community network and local organizations.
- Communities have a strong sense of connection and community empowerment, and neighbors came together to help each other.
- Community members and cultural and community organizations shared the need to continue improving and expanding access to affordable and healthy foods, stable and affordable housing, and training and high-wage work.
- Community members and organization staff identified public safety as a key challenge, highlighting fear for safety in the community, distrust of police, and lengthy emergency response times.
- Community members are experiencing anxiety, stress, and fear from COVID-19 and the uncertainties that it has caused. Mental health and chemical health services are priorities for some communities and organizations.
- Community members want more transparency in service processes and eligibility. They also want a greater emphasis on trusted community partners who live in the community they serve and support the community's best interests.

- Community members and organizations want programs, services, and supports to be more accessible, particularly when it comes to technology, eligibility requirements, or outreach.
- Technology improved some community members' access to services during the pandemic as providers shifted to virtual delivery. Unfortunately, the change also added barriers for people who did not have technology access or experience, causing some organizations to maintain in-person options.
- Organizations adapted their services to meet emerging community needs, starting new programs like rent assistance, emergency assistance, food delivery, hotlines, vaccination efforts, and health clinics.

## Key Recommendations

Community member and cultural and community organization staff input prompted the following recommendations:

1. Continue to help community members access CAP-HC services and government assistance by ensuring eligibility requirements are transparent and streamlined and using a variety of outlets to inform the community about resources.
2. Review and develop a clear referral process with community organizations. This includes developing a formal process for community organizations to communicate and track referrals and mutually arrange for translation as needed.
3. Establish, strengthen, and leverage relationships with community organizations that work outside CAP-HC's focus areas to connect community members to needed services.
4. Partner with trusted community leaders and organizations to better serve communities that are marginalized. Community members want the opportunity for their communities to lead and be included in problem solving.
5. Work with organizations serving communities directly to integrate trauma-informed practices into their work, attending to communities' historical trauma and trauma from the past 18 months.
6. Mitigate technology access barriers by providing a safe space where community members can use computers to apply for services. This is particularly important as organizations have transitioned services online.
7. Partner with cultural organizations that serve specific communities to translate program descriptions and application forms in different languages or develop a system to refer clients to those organizations.
8. Take steps to explain CAP-HC's status as a nonprofit—not a government agency—to improve clarity for the community.

# About the Interim Assessment

## Purpose

Recognizing the radical shift in our world since early 2020, the Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County (CAP-HC) undertook this interim community strengths and needs assessment to get guidance directly from the Hennepin County community. This input will help CAP-HC plan and revise its programming to ensure that its services more fully align with community needs and complement the work of other nonprofit service providers.

CAP-HC completes a community strengths and needs assessment and strategic plan every three years to ensure organizational planning reflects a clear understanding of current community strengths and needs. The last regularly scheduled assessment came out in early 2020. Just as CAP-HC started realigning its programming, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a seismic shift in service needs and how they could be delivered. The pandemic's disproportionate impacts on communities of color, George Floyd's murder by police, and the subsequent uprising highlighted the longstanding racial inequities in our society and created new energy and commitments to address them.

CAP-HC decided it must update the previous needs assessment and fulfill its commitment to more frequently engage communities that are underserved in inclusive and culturally responsive ways. The organization gathered input from communities of color and cultural and community organizations through this interim assessment to ensure services complement community members' strengths and address their needs in this new reality.

## About Hennepin County

Hennepin County is comprised of 45 cities, including Minneapolis and surrounding cities and suburbs. The county has an estimated population of 1,281,565 and covers 554 square miles.<sup>1</sup> The population density in Hennepin County is variable across its geography, with most densely populated areas in the eastern part of the county (Minneapolis and inner-ring suburbs), moving to less densely populated areas to the west and north.

### Population Characteristics

An estimated **1,281,565** people live in Hennepin County.

**851,611** in the Suburbs | **429,954** in Minneapolis



Among Hennepin's **517,091** households, the average family size is **3.13** people.

Table 1: Client Demographics – Comparison of Hennepin County Residents Under the Federal Poverty Level and CAP-HC Clients

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US27053>

	Hennepin County, All Under Federal Poverty Level <sup>2</sup>	CAP-HC <sup>3</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	54%	58%
Male	46%	41%
Non-Binary	N/A	1%
<b>Age</b>		
Under 18	28%	43%
18-64	62%	45%
65+	15%	12%
<b>Education Attainment (Ages 25+)</b>		
Less than HS Diploma/Equivalent	24%	50%
HS Diploma/Equivalent	26%	32%
Post-Secondary <sup>4</sup>	50%	18%
<b>Race</b>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	3%
Asian	7%	7%
Black or African American	37%	60%
White	43%	26%
Multiracial	5%	4%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic or Latino	12%	7%
Not Hispanic or Latino	88%	93%

## Methodology

CAP-HC is committed to gathering input in authentic and inclusive ways from communities of color harmed by the inequities built into our society and systems. The organization does this to learn directly from members of these communities how to be a better and more culturally responsive partner. Because of this, The Improve Group took an equity approach to this work, centering our engagement on five key communities of color whom CAP-HC serves and who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and uprising after George Floyd's murder.

Our engagement approach recognizes the complexities of each community while using methods that respect community members and aim to incorporate voices from a wide variety of stakeholders. Most importantly, we worked with trusted community partners who have strong ties and relationships in their communities to recruit and engage community members in their preferred languages.

## Data Collection

CAP-HC contracted with The Improve Group to gather input from two sources:

**Workshops**, three in person and two virtual, with community members experiencing poverty or living with low income. Before attending the workshops, community members filled out a brief

<sup>2</sup> Source: Census.gov Poverty Status, 5-Year Estimates

<sup>3</sup> Source: CAP-HC demographic data for Federal Fiscal Year 2020 (10/1/2019 - 9/30/2020)

<sup>4</sup> Note: Hennepin County = "Some college, associate's degree" or higher; CAP-HC = "12 grade + Some Post-Secondary" or higher

survey to help guide the conversation. About 50 people total from the following communities in Hennepin County attended the workshops:

- Hmong community
- Somali community
- African American community
- Native community
- Latino community

The Improve Group worked with five community partners who provided feedback on protocols and workshop design, conducted outreach, and organized and facilitated the workshops in participants’ preferred language. In the workshops, community members made meaning of the discussions—summarizing in their own words their community’s key strengths and challenges and making recommendations to CAP-HC.

**Telephone interviews** with employees from six community-based organizations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations. This includes five cultural organizations that focus on serving their specific community and one non-culturally specific social service organization.

**Table 2: Interim Community Strengths and Needs Assessment Data Sources**

Data Source	Number of Participants
Workshops	Hmong community: 9 participants
	Somali community: 10 participants
	African American community: 10 participants
	Native community: 8 participants
	Latino community: 10 participants
Interviews	6 organizations