| Community Challenges and Assets– |
| An Overview |

Introduction

The ten sections that follow describe the most prevalent and urgent areas of need identified by the participants of SCAN. Data was collected from households, service agency clients, and community leadership from all three sectors – nonprofit, government and business. Five of the identified needs areas -- low educational attainment, under and unemployment, lack of affordable housing, chronic physical and mental health problems and the situations of vulnerable populations -- are key underlying contributors to low income, poverty and related challenges which are faced by nearly a quarter of the households in Monroe County. Addressing these needs areas is critical to achieving a higher quality of life for our community and will require an intentional, respectful and coordinated effort on the part of all sectors – business (for-profit), government, and nonprofit, including faith-based organizations.

The discussion of all ten areas further identifies gaps and barriers in existing services and examines issues of service coordination and delivery and community capacity. Naturally, not every aspect of human service delivery emerged as an unmet need in this study. For example, the last comprehensive community needs and capacity assessment, SPAN/MC (1998), revealed a severe shortage of child care capacity for both infant care and for parents working in the downtown and near west regions of Bloomington. In response, several providers added new services and locations, and this is no longer as critical a need. In many areas, human services are being delivered at a sufficient level to satisfy the most pressing need. This is not to suggest that funding and other resources should be shifted from these functioning areas to areas that are presently underserved. This could have severe consequences for programs that are working effectively. On the other hand, current assets can only be stretched so far. In the face of declining resources from traditional funding sources, greater ingenuity, fresh resources and a long-term coordinated vision and community-wide plan will be required.

Introductory summaries, bullet-point highlights and recommendations can be used to gain a quick overview of each of the ten sections. For those seeking more detailed information, each section contains:
- A description of the challenge or issue.
- Fast Facts and other references to pertinent statistics and secondary sources of information in the Statistical Supplement.
- Details about the scope and nature of the population(s) being affected, impact on the community, trends, and an analysis of the data from the various SCAN instruments, and from secondary sources.
- Examples to illustrate existing community efforts.
- Places to start for further investigation, direction, action, and policy.

Sources of Data

Information on each of the ten community challenges was derived from these primary sources:

- Telephone interviews with 307 randomly-selected residents of Monroe County conducted by the Indiana University Public Opinion Laboratory [Household Survey]
- Interviews and surveys given by trained volunteers with over 125 community and organization leaders representing a variety of sectors [Key Informant Interviews]
- Interviews conducted with 42 clients of several provider agencies, including residents of Monroe County without telephones or homes [Client Interviews]
- Service information from provider agencies, [Provider Profiles]
- Secondary data from other comprehensive studies like the Census

The Household Survey and Client Interviews were designed specifically to assess Monroe County residents' experiences in several distinct areas of community need, including:

- ➢ Housing
- ➢ Education
- ➢ Economic Needs
- ➢ Health Care
- ➢ Child Care
- ➢ Youth Activities
- ➢ Care for Disabled and Elderly Persons
- ➢ Family Services
- ➢ Environmental Quality
- ➢ Social Concerns
- ➢ Community Strengths
- ➢ Awareness of Services

Some of these categories have been combined in the analysis to present a more cohesive and focused account.

Representative Sampling

The Household Survey was designed to ensure the selection of an accurate proportion of males (49%) to females (51%) to match the 2000 United State Census data for Monroe County. Ninety-one percent of the respondents identified themselves as Caucasian; 2% as African American; 2% as Hispanic or Latino/a; 3% as Asian or Pacific Islander; and 3% gave some other response. (All Spanish speakers were able to complete the survey.) Age distribution ranged from 18 to 65 and over.

A decision was made to include full-time students as respondents in the telephone survey for several reasons: (1) The Census is designed to include students, and (2)

students are increasingly present year-round, and (3) students often require community based human services.

Of the households responding to the telephone survey, 41% reported a total income of $25,000 or less during the 12 months prior to the survey; 23% reported an income of less than $15,000. Of those who are not full-time students, 26% reported an income of $25,000 or less during the past year. The following chart shows a comparison of income distribution for non-student households and full-time students.

Distribution of Income for Student versus Non-Student Households
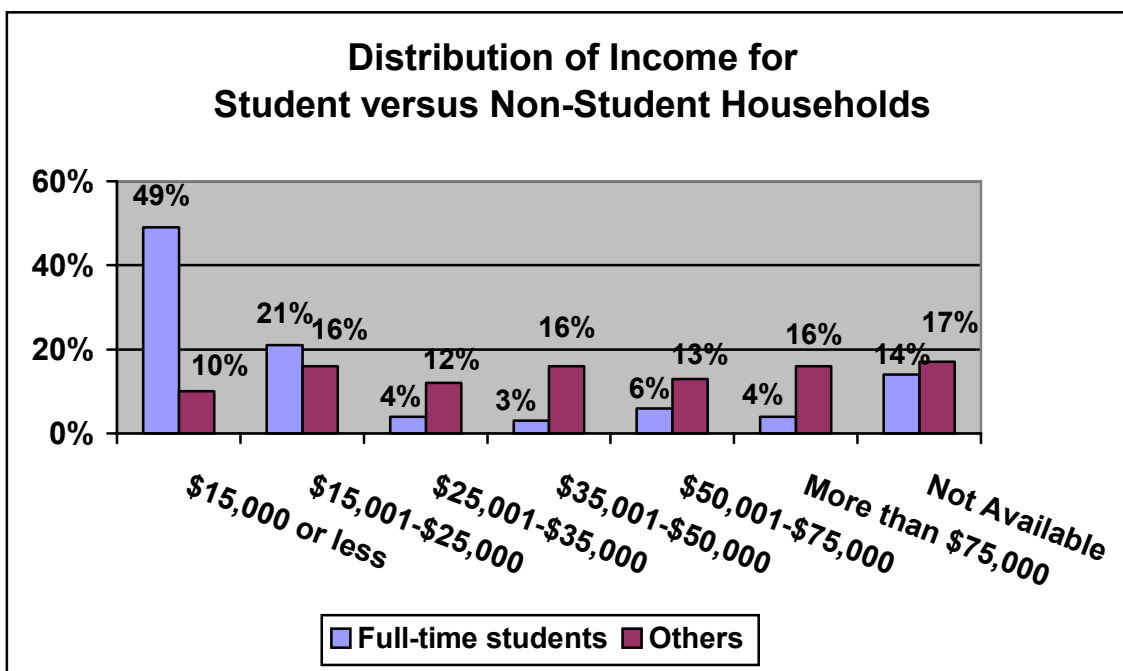
Most of the SCAN data analyses in each of the ten topical challenge areas include comparisons of survey households on the basis of non-student and full-time student status, and income level. Data collected from the service agency client households is often listed as well.

Similarly, key community informants and service providers represent the full spectrum of service activities, including human service organizations, arts, education, environment, health, social service, public safety, youth development, community planning, faith-based, civil rights, information and advocacy, and more. The data they provided was incorporated in the Description, Key Findings, Community Examples and Places to Start sections.

The SCAN Steering Committee anticipates that the information in the sections that follow will be useful to program developers, service providers, policy makers, community leaders, grant writers, researchers, funders, and the general public.