



United Way of the Ocoee Region Community Needs Identification Committee Report

2022 Executive Summary

Background:

The Community Needs Identification Committee (CNIC) develops and implements a process for analyzing data and identifying needs for the United Way of the Ocoee Region. The Committee meets regularly with the goal of reviewing data on an on-going basis in order to understand where the community has the greatest needs, and to aid in providing information that can better inform data driven decision-making.

CNIC, in partnership with United Way of the Ocoee Region staff, reviews data from a variety of sources on an on-going basis. Most recent data sources include: The 2022 ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) in Focus Report, the 2022 Caring Place Client Needs Survey, 2022 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Report, 2021 TN Kids Count State of the Child Report, the Cleveland Metropolitan Planning Organization Regional Transportation Plan, United Way of the Ocoee Region Ocoee Connect and Project Round Up data, United Way of the Ocoee Region Community Partner Impact data, local Housing Coalition and childcare data, as well as other relevant local government, workforce and Census data to provide a thorough and well-rounded understanding of all of the issues present within the community.

Methodology:

CNIC reviewed and analyzed collected data with the purpose of determining the most immediate concerns for the communities of the UWOR service area. From the data, themes were identified and each theme was developed into a category, which was then analyzed to understand all of the potential issues that UWOR might be able to address. During this analysis, CNIC considered the impact of current community programs funded by UWOR as well as non-funded non-profit agencies, city and county government, and local corporations in developing recommendations. Though there are many needs within the community, some are being addressed by already existing programs with reasonable adequacy. The committee then looked for potential gaps in service and a list of recommendations was made for each category. Each list of recommendations was prioritized according to what areas were not being addressed at an adequate level.

2022 Community Needs Identification Committee members include Brittany Cannon, Lisa Fain, Chris Newton, Doug Moore, Jim Nowack and Dr. Matthew W. Tolbert; as well as involvement from United Way Staff members Stephanie Linkous, Shawna Staup, Jaynese Waddell, and Hailey Wood.

NEW TO THIS REPORT

Based upon the variety of data sources available, important changes have been made to this report. Below are some of the notable changes you will see:

- **Priority Name Changes:** The priority previously named “Affordable Housing” has been changed to *Stable Housing*, the priority previously named “Affordable Healthcare” has been changed to *Access to Health Care*, and the priority previously named “Childcare” has been changed to *Access to Quality Childcare*. Additionally, the wording for the Access to Health Care priority was modified to include a focus on Mental Health Services.
- **Changes to Recommendations:** A number of changes to recommendations have been made in the following areas:
 - Stable Housing:
 - Prevention of eviction and rapid rehousing have been combined into one recommendation;
 - A new recommendation for available housing has been added.
 - Access to Healthcare:
 - A new recommendation was added focusing on access to mental health services.
 - Access to Quality Childcare:
 - A new recommendation for awareness of available childcare has been added;
 - A focus on childcare subsidies has been removed;
 - A new recommendation for the development of a childcare advocacy program has been added.
 - Transportation:
 - A recommendation for developing preferred drivers has been removed;
 - A new recommendation for developing partnerships across sectors has been added.
- **Wording Changes:** Various word changes have been made throughout the report reflecting new understanding of the nature of service within the non-profit community. For instance, the word “affordable” sometimes carries with it a connotation among those within the non-profit community that whatever services are “affordable” are less valuable and, therefore, of less quality than other services. This would be a misrepresentation of the quality of services our community provides and this word has been changed whenever possible. Other similar changes have been made to the wording where deemed appropriate.
- **Emerging Needs:** Previously, the section on emerging needs consisted of two issues: food deserts and access to broadband technology and the devices needed to access it, especially during the pandemic. Due to new data and understanding of these issues, they have been replaced with two new emerging needs: substance abuse and domestic violence.

2022 Community Need Priorities & Recommendations

Funding Cycle 2023-2024

This report recognizes an umbrella issue of great need in the community: workforce development, specifically, due to wage stagnation, income disparity, and rising inflation. The overall goal of UWOR is to meet this need. There are two broad ways to address the issue: 1) increase wages for workers, or 2) reduce the cost of living for those with low incomes. UWOR has limited influence to increase wages for obvious reasons, however, it can fund programs aimed at reducing the cost of living expenses or providing assistance to individuals and families so they are better able to afford the cost of living. This is where the following list of recommendations is focused.

Though the role UWOR plays is more than a funding entity, working with community partners to meet needs is vital if we are to have a major impact. For this reason, the following recommendations are written to guide funding decisions. It is expected that, with the help of UWOR staff, local organizations will be able to create the programs that are best suited to meet each need.



Stable Housing: There is a gap in services for individuals who find themselves without shelter due to an emergency or other life-changing circumstances. Additionally, there is a need for services to transition individuals to permanent housing. We recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- **Recommendation 1: Increase capacity to facilitate the prevention of eviction and the ability for rapid rehousing.**

- Eviction contributes to credit history issues that can inhibit the acquisition of new rental agreements and home ownership.
- There is a continuing gap in the service of identifying cases early, coordinating services between agencies, and managing those cases until suitable housing is found.
- *Rapid Rehousing* is designed to help households quickly exit homelessness, return to housing in the community, and not become homeless again in the near term. The core components of *Rapid Rehousing* are: housing identification, move-in and rent assistance, and case management services.¹

- **Recommendation 2: Increase availability of new housing.**

- There is a need for increased available housing for low to moderate income families and first-time homebuyers.²
- An increase of 250 low-income housing units are needed based on the most recent data.³

- **Recommendation 3: Increase capacity for focused and coordinated emergency housing.**

- Homelessness has continued to rise in Bradley County, increasing by 114% from 2021 to 2022.⁴

¹ *What is Rapid Rehousing?* Retrieved from <https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/rapid-re-housing/>

² Bradley County Housing Coalition Community Recommendations, August 2022.

³ Bradley County Housing Coalition Community Recommendations, August 2022.

⁴ Bradley County Point-in-Time Homeless Count conducted January 2022, where homelessness is defined as "people who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided."

✖ Access to Quality Childcare: After school care is prevalent in the service area with a number of options for individuals who are income constrained, however, there is very little childcare available during typical work hours. According to the most recent ALICE Report, over 70% of single mothers fall into this asset-limited, income-constrained population. This reduces the potential workforce and limits economic mobility. Additionally, a majority of parents report difficulty in finding childcare that is high-quality, fits within their budget, and accommodates work schedules.⁵ We recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- **Recommendation 1: Increase capacity for affordable childcare facilities.**
 - Engage and involve local businesses and industries to identify possible ideas to increase capacity.
 - Childcare providers in Bradley County found that staffing issues for childcare providers have been a significant challenge in providing consistent high-quality childcare locally.⁶
- **Recommendation 2: Increase the awareness of available childcare facilities.**
 - Inform local business and industries, as well as the overall public, of available childcare facilities as some are underused.
 - Employers in Bradley County found that tardiness, absences, and shift change requests directly related to childcare issues have impacted their available workforce.⁷
- **Recommendation 3: Develop a childcare advocacy program.**
 - Model childcare advocacy programs have been successful in other communities, explore the development of an advocacy program to connect families in need to available childcare assistance in our community.

⊕ Access to Healthcare: Healthcare, for both physical and mental health, continues to be an area of deep need in our community. Unfortunately, there is a limit of healthcare options for individuals with little to no insurance. Additionally, there is a lack of service providers for the mental health needs of the community. For this reason, we recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- **Recommendation 1: Increase the affordability of quality primary healthcare services.**
 - Many of those from the ALICE population are unable to pay for health services.
- **Recommendation 2: Increase access to healthcare services for Polk County residents.**
 - Individuals from Polk County have very few options and often must travel to Bradley County for most medical services.
- **Recommendation 3: Increase access and affordability of mental health services.**
 - While we do have service providers in the area, there are gaps that exist around affordability and community awareness of mental health services.
- **Recommendation 4: Increase mental health education opportunities for families, parents, children, teachers, and counselors.**
 - Data gathered from the school systems in our area show a need for more mental health education among teachers and counselors.

⁵ *The Economic Consequences of Insufficient Childcare on Working Families Across Tennessee*, http://www.tqee.org/TennesseeChildcareCrisis_TechnicalReport

⁶ United Way of the Ocoee Region Childcare Center Survey conducted June 2022.

⁷ United Way of the Ocoee Region Workforce Survey conducted July 2022.



Transportation: Any public transportation options have shown to be wholly inadequate for meeting the needs of workers in our community. Lack of service to major employers as well as the need for longer hours to account for second shift workers are two areas that have been highlighted.⁸ We recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- ***Recommendation 1: Increase transportation access for employees getting to work in Bradley County.***
 - Individuals with low-incomes often suffer from vehicle problems and lack of any transportation that prevents them to get to and from their work.
- ***Recommendation 2: Facilitate coordination between industries, government, and nonprofit agencies.***
 - Because industries are located outside of the downtown area where transportation is unavailable, industries may be able to collaborate on solutions.
 - More data is needed on the impact that transportation has on businesses and industries regarding employee absences.

Emerging Needs

The following indicate areas of emerging needs that have been identified in the community. These needs do not currently include specific recommendations, but highlight the need for additional data to gain a better understanding of each issue. It is recommended that, whenever possible, resources be made available to better understand the issues raised here. Previous needs identified in this section have been removed due to a new understanding showing no need for prioritization, the ability to incorporate the need within the above priorities, or new data showing the need is no longer rising to priority status. New areas of emerging need include:

- **Substance Abuse**

Alcohol and drug related substance abuse is on the rise in Bradley County. Drug related overdose deaths increased by over 25% from 2020 to 2021 in Bradley County, with opioid and fentanyl related deaths making up the majority of those overdoses.⁹ We are working to collect additional data around this issue, as well as a better understanding of the continuum of resources that are available for substance abuse needs locally, spanning from initial detoxification to long-term treatment and recovery programs.

- **Domestic Violence**

Reported cases of domestic violence have increased in Bradley and Polk Counties¹⁰, and agencies serving this population locally have reported not being able to meet all requests for shelter due to the shelter being at maximum capacity. Organizations serving this population also reported that transportation was a primary need of their clients, as well as transitional housing. We are working to collect additional data around domestic violence locally, to better understand the issue and needs of those that are impacted.

⁸ Cleveland Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Regional Transportation Plan, May 2021.

⁹ <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/pdo/pdo/data-dashboard.html>

¹⁰ <https://crimeinsight.tbi.tn.gov/tops/report/domestic-violence/polk-county-sheriffs-office/2020>, <https://crimeinsight.tbi.tn.gov/tops/report/domestic-violence/bradley-county-sheriffs-office/2020>