



United Way of the Ocoee Region Community Needs Identification Committee Executive Summary: March 2020

Background:

The Community Needs Identification Committee (CNIC) was created out of the desire for a more formal needs identification and data analysis process. It began meeting in early 2019 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.

Though the United Way of the Ocoee Region (UWOR) has utilized a variety of sources in the past for gathering data on the needs in the community, the recent state-wide and county level Asset Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed report (ALICE) provided data not previously known about the cost of living. The committee used the ALICE report along with other instruments and processes such as the UWOR Ocoee Connect & Project Round Up data, UWOR Community Partner Impact Reports, The Bradley County Housing Coalition data, and other relevant public local government, workforce, Census, and American Community Survey data to provide a thorough and well-rounded understanding of all 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 the UWOR might be able to address. During this analysis, CNIC considered the impact of current community programs funded by the 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.

2019-2020 Community Needs Identification Committee members include: Dr. Matthew W. Tolbert, Jim Nowack, Chris Newton, Dr. Jared Wielfaert, Lonnie Patton, John Fischer, and Brittany Cannon.

2020 Community Need Priorities & Recommendations

Through this process, CNIC recognized an umbrella issue of great need in the community: workforce development, specifically, due to wage stagnation and wealth disparity. The overall goal of the 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. The UWOR has limited influence to increase wages for obvious reasons, however, it can fund programs aimed at reducing 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 each list of recommendations is focused.

CNIC also recognizes that though the role the 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, recommendations are written to guide funding decision makers rather than program developers. We expect that, with the help of UWOR staff, local organizations will be able to create the programs that are best suited to meet each need. That said, there are times when CNIC was aware of a program idea that, if established, would be effective at meeting an identified need. In these cases, more specificity was used in the recommendation to guide decision makers.

The Community Needs Identification Committee has identified the following four priority areas with recommendations for making decisions during the 2020 funding cycle:



Affordable Housing-Though stable housing is also a consideration within the service area, there is a gap in services for individuals who find themselves without shelter due to an emergency or other life-changing circumstances. We recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- *Recommendation 1:* Build capacity for the prevention of eviction.
 - Eviction contributes to credit history issues that can inhibit the acquisition of new rental agreements or home ownership.
- *Recommendation 2:* Build capacity for rapid rehousing.
 - There is a gap in the service of finding suitable housing solutions.
 - Currently, there is no organization in this community making this a priority.
- *Recommendation 3:* Increase capacity for focused & coordinated emergency housing.
 - There is a gap in the service of identifying cases early, coordinating services between agencies, and managing those cases until suitable housing is found.
- *Recommendation 4:* Build capacity for transitional housing specifically for families.
 - Though emergency (short-term) housing exists, there is a gap in service for longer term transitional housing for families until a more stable situation is found.
 - Currently, there is no organization in this community making this a priority.



Childcare: After school care is prevalent in the service area with a number of affordable options for individuals who are income constrained, however, there is very little childcare available during typical work hours. This reduces the potential workforce and limits economic mobility. We recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- *Recommendation 1:* Increase capacity for affordable childcare facilities/locations during working hours.
 - Much of what is available is high cost and difficult to find space.
 - This also limits women in the workforce because their wages often are not large enough to justify full-time work.
- *Recommendation 2:* Increase options for and availability of childcare subsidies.
 - Subsidies have been shown to be effective at reducing the cost of childcare. Though our community has some, an expansion of these services would have a great impact on this issue.



Affordable Healthcare: Healthcare 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. For this reason, we recommend prioritizing funding decisions in the following areas:

- *Recommendation 1:* Increase the affordability of quality primary healthcare services.
 - The local hospital emergency room serves the uninsured population, but typically only in catastrophic circumstances.
- *Recommendation 2:* Increase access to healthcare services for Polk County residents.
 - Individuals from Polk County have limited options and often must travel to Bradley County for most medical services.



Transportation: Any public transportation options have shown to be wholly inadequate for meeting the needs of workers in our community. 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 that prevent them from maintaining work due to attendance issues.
- *Recommendation 2:* Creating a Preferred Driver List of available drivers that would work with corporations to help employees get to work shifts (especially swing shifts).
 - We believe that an organization can be found that could develop a program, funded wholly or in part by the UWOR, to create this new service.