

Community Needs Assessment Report



**United Way
of Orange County**

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Table of Contents

Executive Overview.....	1
History and Programming.....	3
Community Data	4
Education.....	7
Financial Stability.....	10
Health	15
Comprehensive Analysis of Personal Interviews and Online Survey Participants	18
Focus Groups.....	29
Additional Questions Asked in the Online Survey	30
Executive Summary.....	33

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Observations and Recommendations	38
Appendix B: Interview Participants.....	48
Appendix C: Relevant Survey Quotes.....	50

Executive Overview

Overview

This Community Needs Assessment grows out of the need to address the effect of the state of the United Way of Orange County on current and future programs and services. The administration and board of directors determined that DickersonBakker and Associates should conduct a Community Needs Assessment to focus on the most significant needs in the community. The assessment aimed to provide United Way of Orange County (UWOC) with current information about community needs, demographic trends and projections, and other information needed to determine its future service and program initiatives in Orange County, Texas, over the next five to seven years. A comprehensive overview of all existing programs, financial resources, and staff for United Way of Orange County was included in the study process.

A Community Needs Assessment is an evaluation that allows United Way of Orange County to take an objective look at itself, its missional objectives and partnerships, and the community it serves and thoughtfully anticipate future challenges and opportunities. This assessment provides a process for developing plans and a vision for the work of United Way of Orange County. It enables United Way of Orange County to anticipate and manage future changes rather than be forced to react to them and hope to survive through them. United Way of Orange County must make sure that the effort needed to realize such a vision does not become overwhelming and tax the organization's current ability to sustain the programs and services provided to the community.

DickersonBakker's Jason Caniglia served as the study's managing consultant. Jeff Cathey also helped facilitate the gathering of valuable information in the research process. The entire United Way of Orange County program was scrutinized in light of its purpose and mission, and various community needs in the Orange County area were assessed. Observations, strategies, and corrections will flow out of this broad, in-depth study.

Report Summary

The Community Needs Assessment for Orange County, TX, aimed to identify unmet needs in the community. For all phases of the study, individuals responded to questions concerning United Way of Orange County's programs and services, facilities and locations, awareness levels, collaboration and missional partnerships, the operating environment, and anticipated future needs. The questions asked were designed to discover critical issues for the strategic planning of United Way of Orange County's current and future needs. Percentages throughout the document are rounded to the nearest whole number. Every effort is made to be consistent throughout the report with these amounts.

Please note that Executive Summaries relating to key funding categories can be found starting on page 33.

Priorities

The study measured six (6) key issues to be addressed by United Way of Orange County:

- ▶ Unmet and underserved community needs
- ▶ Significant community trends and projections
- ▶ Community support for United Way of Orange County
- ▶ United Way of Orange County’s image in the community
- ▶ United Way of Orange County’s role as a service provider
- ▶ Program effectiveness

Individuals Personally Interviewed

Forty-eight personal interviews focused primarily on individuals whose input is crucial to a meaningful and productive study.

Focus Groups

Two key focus groups were conducted: one comprised of Agency representatives funded by United Way and one comprised of Corporate Partners. An additional focus group was conducted with members of the Orange Church of God—Embassy of Love, which focused on the church's literacy and food insecurity work.

Online Survey

One hundred ten participated in the online survey.

Relationship to United Way of Orange County

Interview and survey participants in the study indicated their relationship with United Way of Orange County was described as:

UWOC funding recipient organization	16	Social service provider	12
Municipal leader	10	Former client of services	2
Non-profit organization leader	26	Community friend	53
United Way supporting member	14	Current donor	40
Church leader	2	Former donor	19
Board member	15	Potential donor	9
Former board member	8	Regular volunteer	7
Current staff	3	Occasional volunteer	20

History and Programming

History of United Way of Orange County

United Way of Orange County was established in January 1926. It has worked with various nonprofits to fund and support health, education, and financial stability programs. United Way of Orange County also steps up in times of disaster to respond and connect resources to those in need.

Statements of Purpose

Mission Statement

We unite people and resources to improve the quality of life and build a stronger Orange County.

Vision Statement

We will serve as a champion of our community to empower individuals with knowledge and resources to create lasting, positive change.

Core Values

- Collaboration - partnering with nonprofits, businesses, and local government
- Community - supporting the places we live and work
- Resourceful - making connections and meeting needs
- Transparency - maintaining open and honest communication
- Sustainability - ensuring the organization's longevity

Our Work

Orange County Statistics 2023 (United Way of Orange County)

- 2,097 Orange County residents were provided with emergency food, rent, and utility assistance
- 223 women with their children were provided refuge and shelter from domestic violence
- 235 residents received treatment and counseling for drug, alcohol, and other substance abuse
- 205 residents received counseling for mental health issues
- 57 children taken from their homes were provided with a CASA (court-appointed special advocate) to guide them through the judicial process of finding a place to call home
- 291 children completed programs to build skills in the areas of character development, leadership, and ethics

- 192 children received after-school and summer care with structured educational components
- 42 mentally challenged residents received occupational therapy
- More than 100 clients received equine-assisted therapy
- 14 Orange County wait-listed children received Autism testing
- Over 85,000 hot meals were delivered to 416 individuals

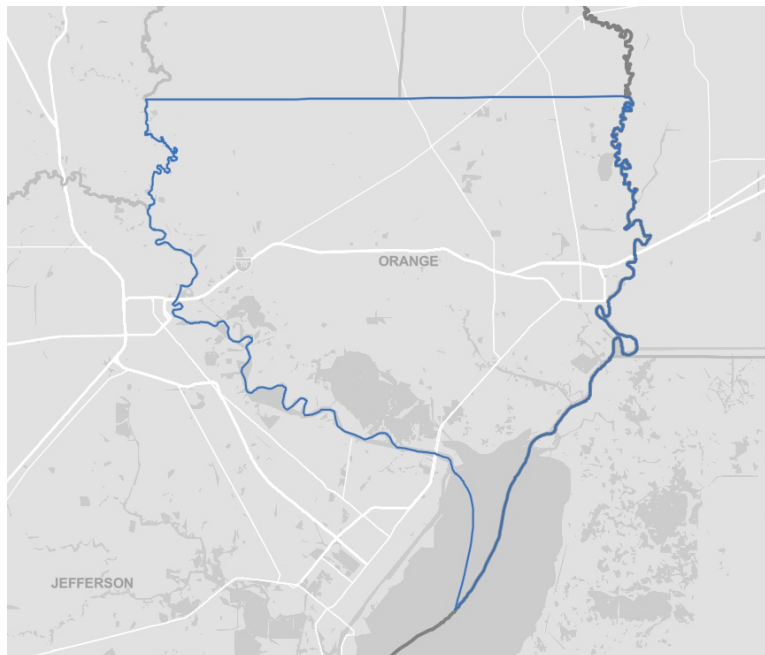
Together, we accomplish what no one organization or individual can achieve alone. We provide an umbrella of services to help our friends, family members, co-workers, and neighbors in need. We can meet our area's ever-increasing health and human service needs.

Community Data

Overview

Orange County, Texas, is located in the southeastern corner of the State, within the Golden Triangle. As of the 2020 census, its population was 84,761. The county seat is the city of Orange, which falls within the Beaumont – Port Arthur metropolitan area.

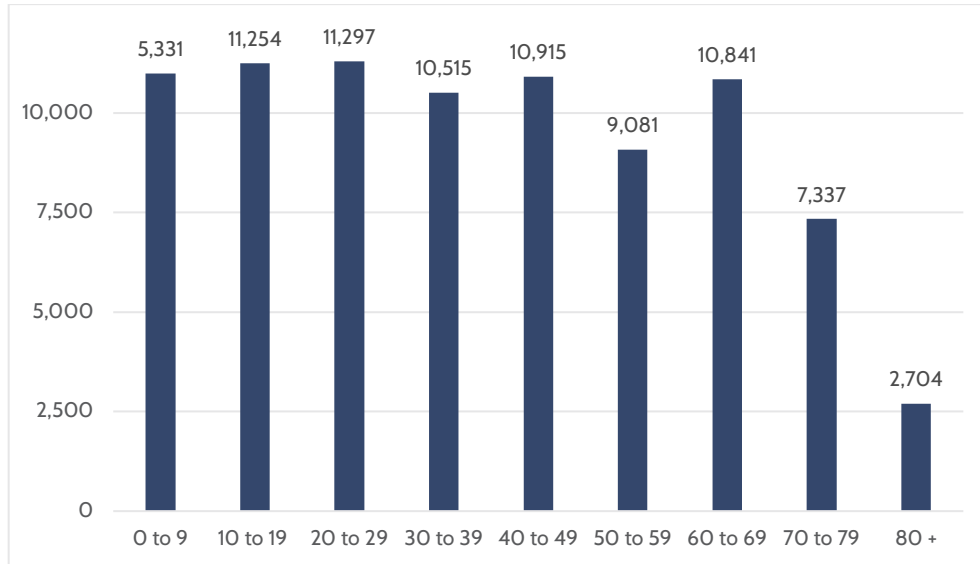
Orange County has 333.8 square miles of land area and is the 245th largest county in Texas by total area. It is bordered by Newton, Jefferson, Hardin, and Jasper Counties in Texas and Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes in Louisiana.



Orange County Population (US Census Bureau 2020)

Population	84,761
Female	42,497
Male	42,264

Age Groups (USA FACTS 2022)



Language (World Population Review 2023)

Language	County
Only English	92.34%
Spanish	5.41%
Other Indo-European	1.6%
Asian / Pacific Islander	.56%
Other	.09%

Race and Ethnicity (World Population Review 2023)

Race / Origin	Population	Percentage
White	69,767	82.31%
Black or African American	7,423	8.76%
Two or more races	5,739	6.77%
Other	1,832	2.16%

Marital Status (2023 World Population Review)

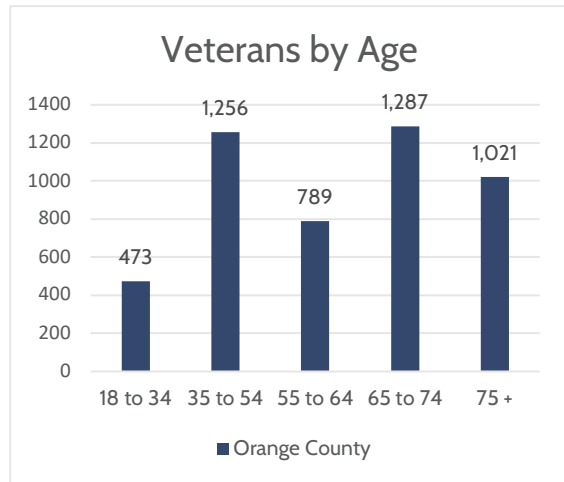
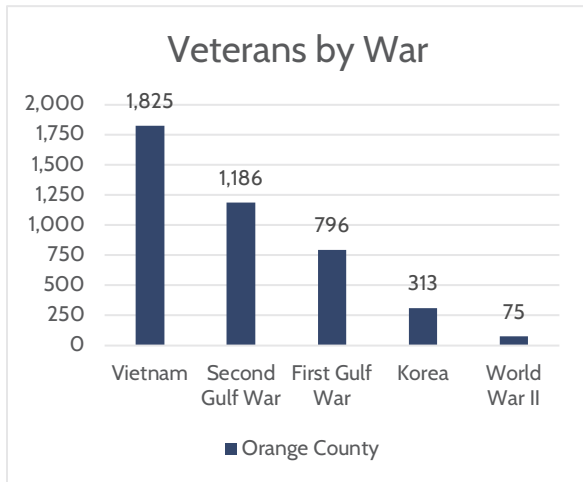
	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Never Married
Overall	52.9%	5.9%	12.9%	1.7%	26.6%
Males	54.1%	2.6%	11.5%	1.5%	30.3%
Females	51.7%	9.2%	14.2%	1.8%	23.1%

Diversity (DATA USA 2023)

The five largest ethnic groups in Orange County are White (non-Hispanic) (79.3%), Black or African American (non-Hispanic) (8.64%), White (Hispanic) (4.43%), Two+ (Hispanic) (3.02%), and Two+ (non-Hispanic) (2.41%).

None of the households in Orange County reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multi-lingual nature of households; it only considers the primary self-reported language spoken by all household members.

Veterans (2023 World Population Review)



Education

Education is the cornerstone of individual and community success; however, the current high school dropout rate results from lost wages, taxes, and productivity. UWOC can reverse this by helping children enter school ready to succeed, improve their reading proficiency, graduate from high school, and be prepared for success in college, work, and life.

UWOC works to help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential.

- GED preparation
- ESL (English as a second language) classes
- After school programs
- Summer day camps
- Leadership and mentoring
- Character and skill-building
- Special needs vocational training
- Adult basic training
- Tutoring services
- Youth literacy program

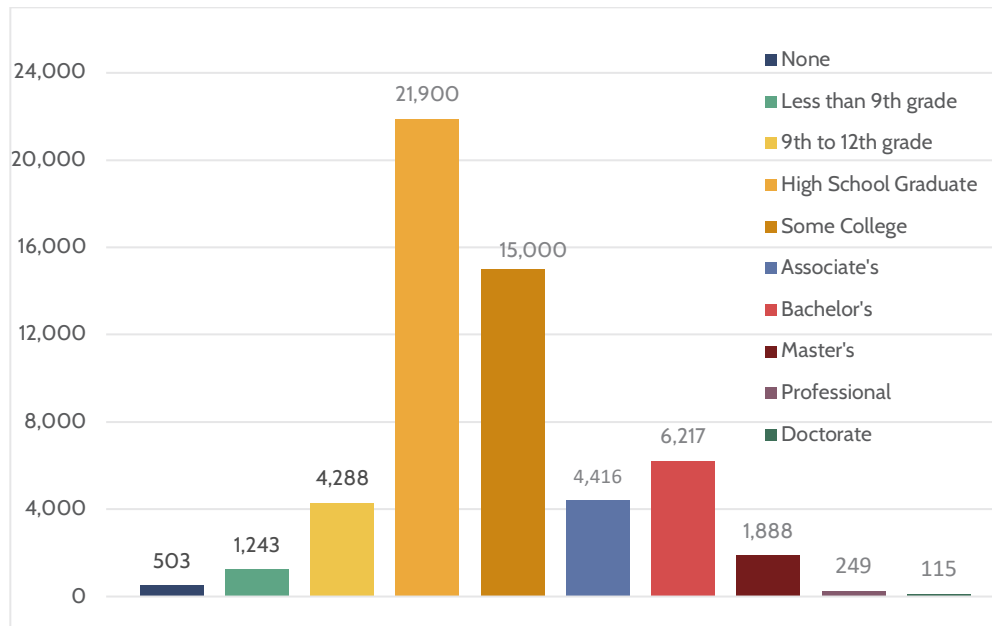
The subsequent statistical data includes students enrolled in grades K-12 in the following school districts:

- Bridge City Independent School District
- Little Cypress Mauriceville Independent School District
- Orangefield Independent School District
- Vidor Independent School District
- West Orange – Cove Consolidated School District

Enrollments by Race

Race	Enrollments
White	1,662
Black	375
Hispanic	261
Asian	30
Unknown	14
Native American	10

Education by Attainment



Educational Attainment by Race

Race	High School	Bachelors
White	42,141	7,980
Black	4,028	442
Hispanic	3,000	695
Two or More Races	2,003	434
Other Race	458	91
Asian	407	219
Native American	117	55
Islander	41	41

Employment Rate by Education (World Population Review)

Education Level	Employed	Unemployed
Less than high school	57%	4%
High school graduate	63%	7%
Some college	75%	4%
Bachelor's or greater	84%	2%

High School Performances (Texas Academic Performance Reports 2022 - 2023)

2023 School Year	Attendance Rate	Graduation Rate	Reading at grade level or above	Mathematics at grade level or above
Bridge City HS	92.9%	97.4%	59%	37%
Little Cypress-Mauriceville HS	91.4%	95.9%	49%	29%
Orangefield HS	93.9%	97.1%	69%	51%
Vidor HS	93.9%	90.2%	51%	53%
West Orange-Stark HS	87.5%	83.5%	29%	18%

Grade 3 Reading and Math

2023 School Year	District	Black	Hispanic	White
Reading	47%	36% *	50%	50%
Math	39%	27% *	37%	40%

School Lunch Program Participation For Free or Reduced Price (Data Center)

School Year	Students
2019-2020	7,507
2020-2021	5,619
2021-2022	1,902

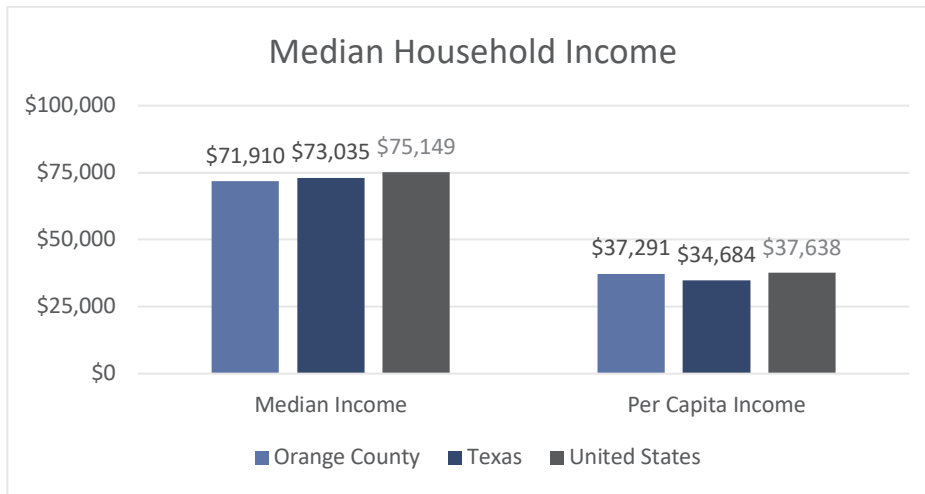
Financial Stability

Household Income (US Census 2022)

Median household income gauges the region's overall economic health and residents' financial resources.

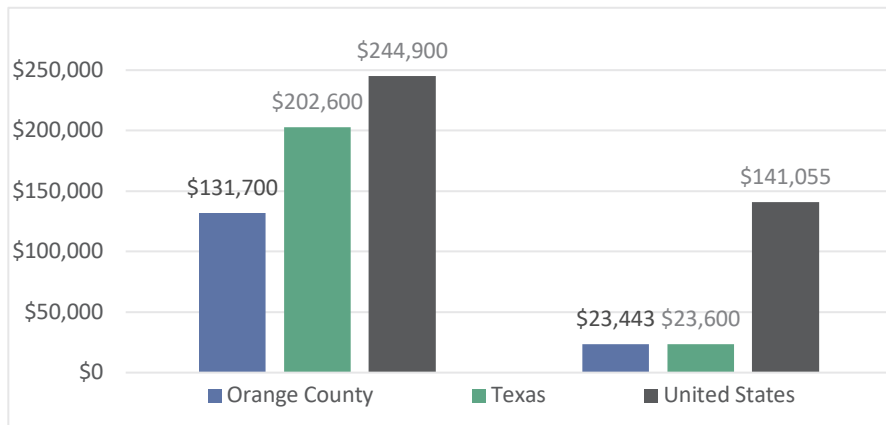
Per capita income measures the money earned per person in a geographic region. It is used to determine an area's average per-person income and evaluate the population's standard of living and quality of life.

Income by Household Type (US Census 2022)



Median Property Values (DATA USA 2023)

The median property value in Orange County was \$131,700 in 2021, 0.538 times smaller than the national average of \$244,900. Between 2020 and 2021, the median property value increased from \$116,100 to \$131,700, a 13.4% increase. The homeownership rate in Orange County is 76.5%, higher than the national average of 64.6%.



Businesses Data (U. S. Census Bureau 2022)

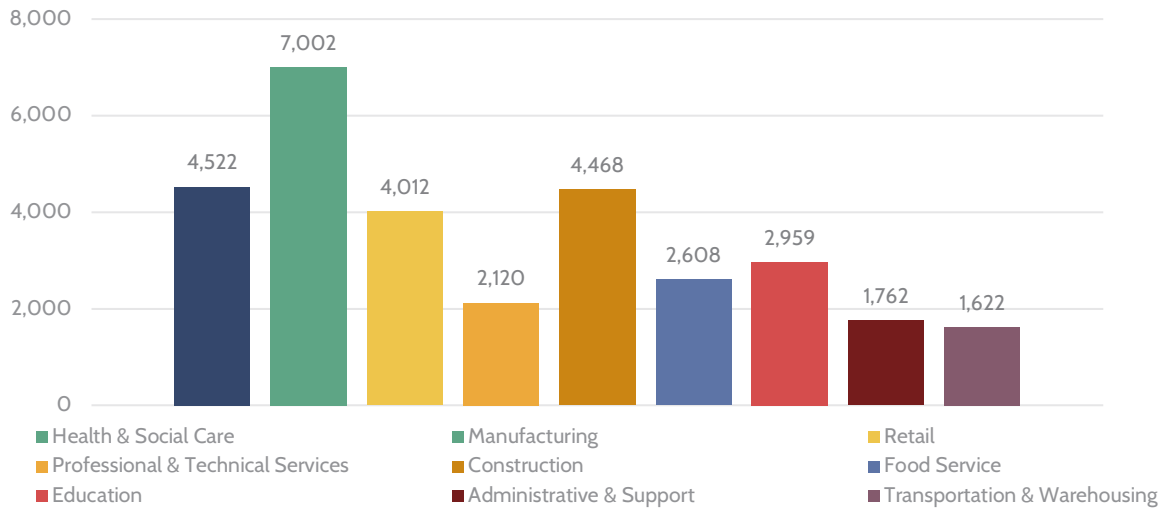
Employer establishments	1,321
Total employment	18,012
Total annual payroll	\$1,011,918
Total non-employer establishments	5,213
Men-owned firms	579
Women-owned firms	Not Available
Minority-owned firms	Not Available
Veteran-owned firms	85

Employment Statistics (DATA USA 2023)

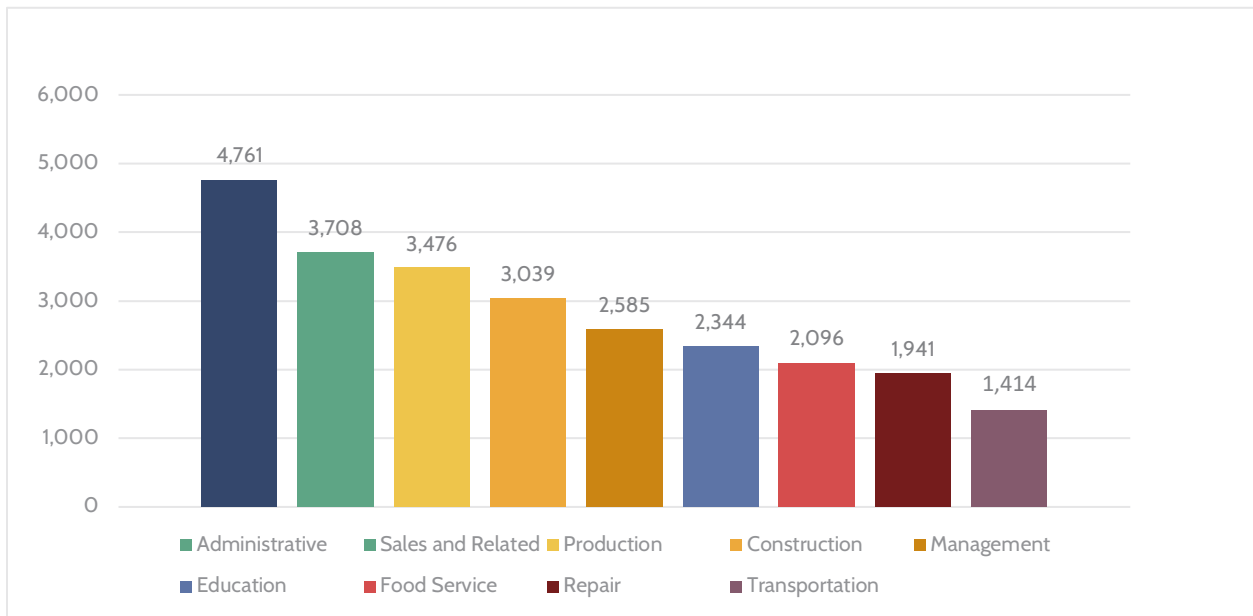
From 2020 to 2021, employment in Orange County grew at a rate of 0.89%, from 37,700 to 38,100 employees. The most common job groups, by the number of people living in Orange County, are Office and Administrative Support Occupations (4,269 people), Production Occupations (4,024 people), and Sales and Related Occupations (3,839 people). The table illustrates the number of people in the workforce who have primary jobs held by residents of Orange County.

Office & Administration	4,269
Production	4,024
Sales	3,839
Construction & Extraction	3,414
Management	3,295
Education & Library	2,137
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	2,131
Food Prep & Serving	1,593
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	1,435
Transportation	1,379
Building & Grounds Maintenance	1,287
Health Diagnosing & Treating	1,178
Architecture & Engineering	1,069
Other	5,777

Employment by Industries (DATA USA 2023)



Occupations (Statistical Atlas 2023)



Crime Grades (CrimeGrade.org)

The tables below show which crimes are used to calculate the Crime Grades above. All crime rates are shown as the number of crimes per 1,000 Orange residents in a standard year based on an A – F scale.

Violent Crime Rates

Crime Type	Crime Rate
Assault	2.140
Robbery	0.5797
Rape	0.5131
Murder	0.0343
Total Violent Crime	3.267 (C+)

Property Crime Rates

Crime Type	Crime Rate
Theft	6.437
Vehicle Theft	0.3904
Burglary	6.064
Arson	0.0554
Total Property Crime	12.95 (C+)

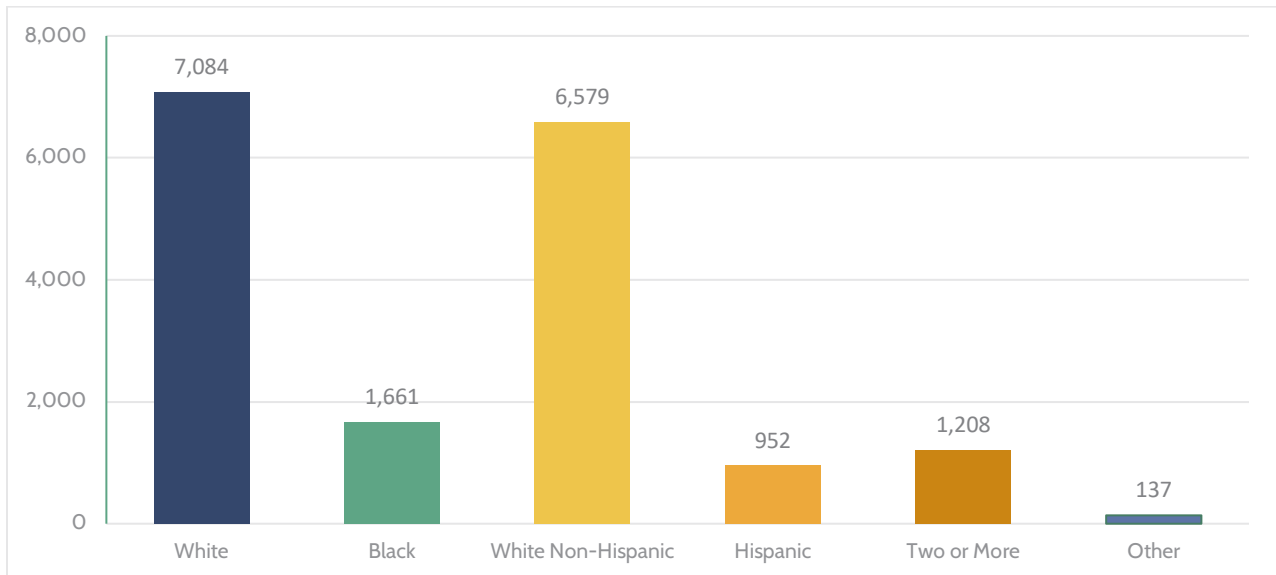
Other Crime Rates

Crime Type	Crime Rate
Kidnapping	0.0523
Drug Crimes	4.123
Vandalism	6.476
Identity Theft	0.6396
Animal Cruelty	0.0221
Total "Other" Rate	11.31 (C+)

Poverty by Race and Ethnicity (DATA USA 2023)

The most common racial or ethnic group living below the poverty line in Orange County is white, followed by black and two or more races.

The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who classifies as impoverished. If a family's total income is less than its threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered to live in poverty.



Poverty by Age and Sex (DATA USA 2023)

12% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Orange County, TX (10,100 out of 84,100 people) live below the poverty line. This number is lower than the national average of 12.6%. The most significant impoverished demographic is females 25-34, followed by males < 5 and females 6-11.

Food Insecurities (Feeding America 2022)

Food Insecurities	Orange County	Texas
Overall food insecurity rate	15.8%	13.7%
Insecure population	13,460	4,057,910
Cost per meal	\$3.27	\$3.11
Annual food budget shortfall	\$7,670,000	\$2,230,427,000
SNAP benefits	\$973	\$973

Homelessness in Southeast Texas - Jefferson, Hardin, Orange Counties

(HUD Point in Time Report 2023)

Age	Number	Age	Number
Ages 0-17	6	Ages 55-64	55
Ages 18-24	12	Ages 65 or older	18
Ages 25-34	59	Chronically homeless *	63
Ages 35-44	77	Veterans	18
Ages 45-54	63		
Total		371	

* Chronic homelessness is used to describe people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year — or repeatedly — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Where are you sleeping tonight?	Number
Abandoned building, structure	22
Bus, train station, airport	3
Outdoor encampment	104
Park	15
Street or sidewalk	25
Under bridge / overpass	6
Vehicle	13
Other	15
Total	203

Health (DATA USA 2023)

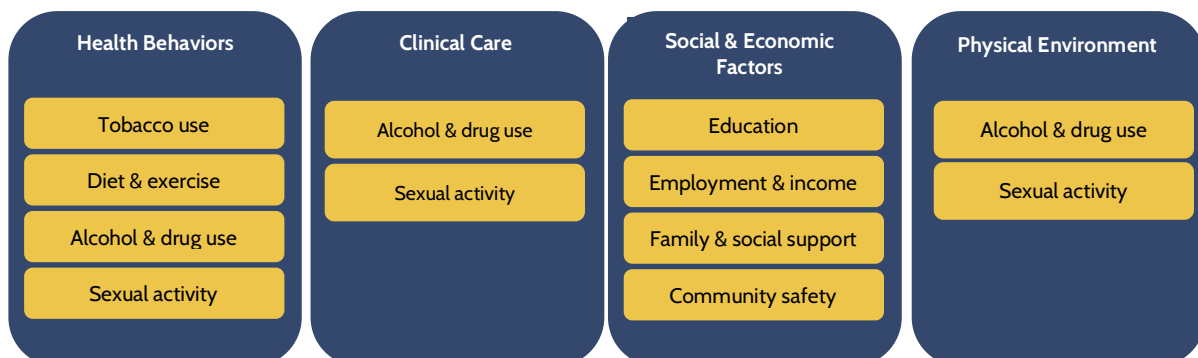
What are the County Health Rankings?

The Rankings help us understand what influences how long and how well we live. They provide measures of the current overall health (health outcomes) of each county in Texas. Rankings data include a variety of measures, such as high school graduation rates, access to nutritious foods, and the percentage of children living in poverty, all of which impact the future health of communities.

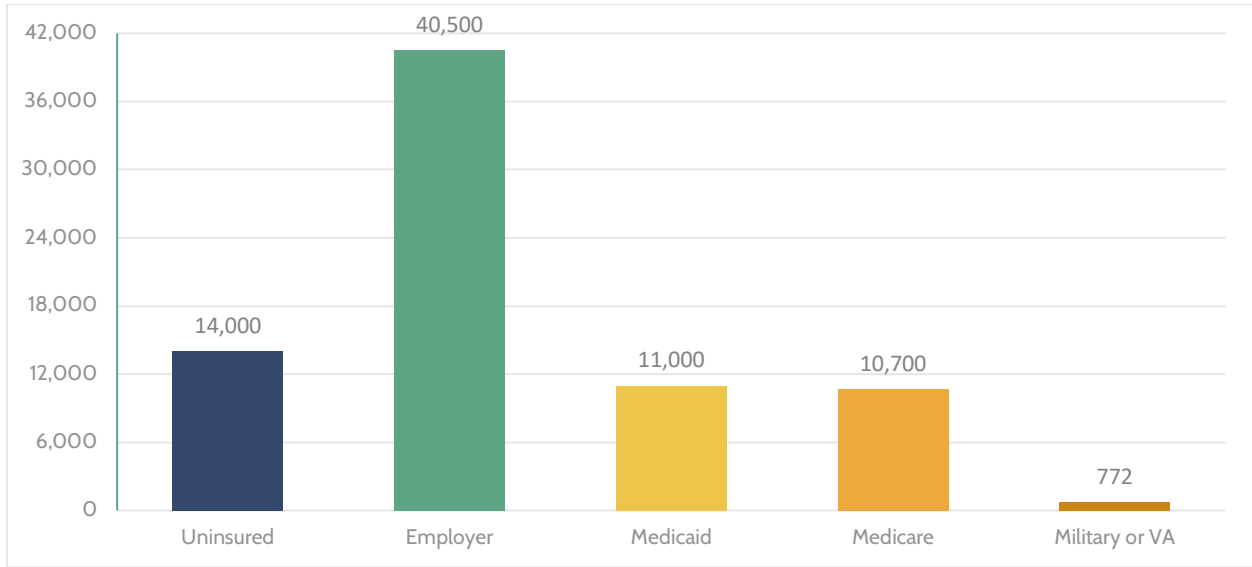
Communities use the Rankings to build support for local health improvement initiatives by engaging many sectors, including public health, health care, business, policymakers, and residents.

What are Health Factors?

Health factors represent community conditions we can change to improve health and opportunity, such as access to quality education, living wage jobs, and quality clinical care. Nutritious foods, green spaces, and secure and affordable housing. Orange County ranks 191 out of 254. Health factors for Orange County include:



Health Insurance



Access to Care

Primary care physicians in Orange County see an average of 5,560 patients per year, a 6% increase from the previous year (5,223 patients). This compares to dentists, who see 3,188 patients yearly, and mental health providers, who see 3,603 patients yearly.

Adult Obesity

In 2022, 39.7% of Orange County's adult population (age 18 and older) reported a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30 kg / m² (age-adjusted).

Year	Percent
2019	34%
2020	40.8%
2021	45.5%
2022	39.7%

Food Insecurity

In 2022, 16.5% of Orange County, TX's population lacked adequate access to food.

Year	Percent
2019	19.8%
2020	19%
2021	16.8%
2022	16.5%

Excessive Drinking

In 2022, the percentage of the population who drank excessively was 16.5% in Orange County, TX.

Year	Percent
2019	21%
2020	18%
2021	21%
2022	20%

Adult Smoking

In 2022, the percentage of adults who are current smokers (age-adjusted) was 21.4% in Orange County, TX.

Year	Percent
2019	18%
2020	16%
2021	21%
2022	21%

Comprehensive Analysis of Participants

While additional interviews were conducted and stakeholders engaged, 40 individual survey responses were completed in full.

1. Are you, your business, or your organization located in Orange County, TX?

	Interviews	Online Survey
Yes	40 (100%)	110 (100%)
No	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

2. Did you answer questions on your behalf or on behalf of others you are associated with?

	Interviews	Online Survey
Myself	22 (58%)	82 (70%)
Spouse and I	0 (0%)	14 (12%)
Church or church organization	2 (5%)	0 (0%)
Business or corporation	5 (13%)	17 (15%)
Foundation	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Another non-profit or ministry	8 (21%)	4 (3%)

Organization / Business

- 13Ten Business Solutions, LLC
- Acadian Ambulance Service
- Alpha Delta Kappa- Alpha Upsilon Teacher Organization
- ARLANXEO
- Assistant District Attorney
- Bridge City Chamber
- Bridge City First Church
- Bridge City ISD (10)
- Bridge City Mayor
- CASA of the Sabine Neches Region
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
- Chevron Phillips Co.
- City of Orange (3)
- City of Orange Mayor
- City of Orange Police Department
- County Commissioner
- Dal Sasso Realty
- Dow (5)
- Entergy Texas Inc
- Faith Methodist Church
- First Presbyterian Church
- First State Bank of Texas
- Friends Helping Friends / City of Orange
- Golden Triangle Emergency Center
- Greater Orange Area Literacy Services (GOALS) (2)
- International Paper
- Jackson Community Center
- Justice Claims

- Justice of the Peace
- KOGT.com
- Lamar State College Orange (2)
- Mann Insurance Agency, Inc.
- Nelda C & H. J. Lutcher Stark Foundation (2)
- North Early Learning Center (2)
- OCAA / Meals On Wheels Orange Texas
- OCARC INC. (2)
- Orange Christian Services Executive Director
- Orange Church of God Pastor
- Orange County Disaster Rebuild (2)
- Orange County Economic Development Corporation
- Orange County Texas Exes
- Orange Lions club
- Orange Service League
- Orangefield ISD (12)
- Pinehurst City Council Representative
- Rape & Suicide Crisis Of Southeast Texas, Inc.
- River Trust Capital Management, LLC
- Sabine Federal Credit Union (2)
- Samaritan Counseling Center of SETX
- Service League of Orange (3)
- Southeast Texas Food Bank
- Southeast Texas Hospice and City Council Member
- Spindletop Center
- Stable-Spirit (4)
- Stellar Bank
- Syensqo
- TAN Healthcare
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- The Orange Stationer
- Three Rivers Council, BSA
- Turner Industries
- United Christian Care Center of Vidor, Texas, Inc.
- United Way of Orange County
- United Way of Orange County Board (2)
- VFW Aux, & Salvation Army
- Vidor ISD (11)
- Wells Fargo Bank
- West Orange-Cove CSD (12)
- Service League of Orange
- YMCA of Southeast Texas

3. **Ninety-five percent (38) of those interviewed and eighty-seven percent (64) of survey participants rate the importance of United Way of Orange County investing in the community as extremely important.**

	Interviews	Online Survey
Extremely important	38 (95%)	64 (87%)
Somewhat important	1 (2.5%)	6 (8%)
Indifferent	0 (0%)	3 (4%)
Not important at all	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Does not know	1 (2.5%)	1 (1%)

4. Fifty-five percent (22) of those interviewed and eighty-one percent (58) of survey participants rate United Way of Orange County’s program funding in supporting EDUCATION as extremely needed.

	Interviews	Online Survey
Extremely needed	22 (55%)	58 (81%)
Somewhat needed	16 (40%)	5 (7%)
Needed a little	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Not needed at all	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Does not know	5 (5%)	8 (11%)

5. Participants indicated the following issues still need to be addressed or are most important to the community in supporting EDUCATION:

- (23) Expand access to vocational courses for high school students and unemployed
- (21) Programs for youth to keep them engaged and involved in the community
- (12) Clothing / school supplies needs for students
- (11) Literacy
- (10) After-school care / programs
- (5) Mental health
- (4) Parenting education
- (4) Funding for non-profits who collaborate to provide needed social services in Orange
- (4) Tutoring
- (4) Pay teachers better
- (3) Crime and drugs in the schools or among school-age students
- (3) Family and parental support is the biggest issue
- (3) Accountability and behavior issues
- (2) Gap between wealthy and lower-income schools
- (2) Our school system is over-regulated (STAR) and underserved by the state
- (2) Promoting trades - HVAC, electrical, plumbing
- (2) Closing the information gap - digital access and devices
- Bullying / mental health
- Education in managing personal finances
- English as a second language

6. Fifty-five percent (22) of those interviewed and seventy-seven percent (56) of survey participants rate United Way of Orange County’s program funding to support FINANCIAL STABILITY as extremely needed.

	Interviews	Online Survey
Extremely needed	22 (55%)	56 (77%)
Somewhat needed	16 (40%)	10 (14%)
Needed a little	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Not needed at all	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Does not know	2 (5%)	6 (8%)

7. Participants indicated the following issues still need to be addressed or are most important to the community supporting FINANCIAL STABILITY:

- (24) Household financing and debt management
- (18) Job application assistance and help those with a job move up through skill training and certification programs
- (13) Financial Education
- (12) Requiring financial literacy in schools is essential to break the cycle of poverty
- (6) Affordable daycare / after-school activities for
- (6) Create an educational module that can be sent to the home or students could bring home that fosters financial literacy
- (4) Food insecurities
- (4) Education
- (3) Drug and substance abuse
- (3) Eldercare / senior housing
- (3) Expand access of junior high and high schools to the vocational school programs at the University
- (3) Homeless families
- (3) Well-trained workforce - perpetually under-qualified
- (2) Domestic violence
- Rent and utility assistance
- Healthcare costs / options

8. Eighty-seven percent (35) of those interviewed and eighty-one percent (58) of survey participants rate United Way of Orange County’s program funding in improving people’s HEALTH as extremely needed.

	Interviews	Online Survey
Extremely needed	35 (87%)	58 (81%)
Somewhat needed	3 (8%)	5 (7%)
Needed a little	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Not needed at all	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Does not know	2 (5%)	8 (11%)

9. Participants indicated the following issues still need to be addressed or are most important to the community in improving people’s HEALTH:

- (34) Access to mental health care
- (29) Access to preventive health care specialists
- (16) Access to affordable healthcare
- (16) Uninsured / under-insured population in the county
- (14) Access to addiction services
- (12) Transportation to health providers / services
- (10) Access to health insurance
- (10) Food insecurities
- (8) Health education
- (7) Assistance with acute diseases
- (6) Healthcare for the elderly
- (6) Lifestyle issues / health
- (6) More doctors in this area
- (4) Homelessness
- (3) Health awareness and fairs
- (3) Special needs services
- Elderly needs
- End-of-life Care
- Residual from Harvey - trauma and financial impact
- Shelter for those in need

10. Participants indicated these additional issues must be addressed or are most important to the community.

- (125) Job loss and impact on local economy and need for job creation
- (33) Addiction is so rampant in our community that a big part of our society is either incarcerated or consumed by addiction and, as a result, aren't parenting their children
- (32) Literacy is a significant issue in Orange County, which means our schools have historically failed and continue to fall short in this essential educational area
- (32) Mental Health is a significant issue in our community, and we do not have services that address that here

- (32) Segregation, both voluntary and institutionally reinforced, means there is a lack of diversity interaction
- (32) Cost of living is high (affordable housing, food, and medical expenses)
- (32) Generational poverty

11. Sixty-five percent (26) of those interviewed and thirty-eight percent (25) of survey participants are extremely familiar with United Way of Orange County’s services.

	Interviews	Online Survey
Extremely familiar	26 (65%)	25 (38%)
Very familiar	5 (12%)	20 (31%)
Somewhat familiar	9 (23%)	15 (23%)
Not so familiar	0 (0%)	4 (6%)
Not at all familiar	0 (0%)	1 (2%)

12. Participants indicated how United Way of Orange County most effectively serves the area. (Respondents checked all that applied)

	Interviews	Online Survey
Education	4	22
Financial stability	7	24
Health	5	21
Uniting people & resources to improve quality of life & build a stronger Orange County	39	58
Other	12	8

Other

- (3) They do a fantastic job communicating the mission and goal of United Way, raising funds that are intentionally dispersed, and holding those groups accountable
- (2) Community activities that unite and bring us together help to build our resilience, our sense of identity, and community pride
- (2) Disaster assistance / recovery
- Our families, pride, self-worth, and dignity reflect faith in the future. UWOC helps show us that we can do better, be better, and can serve as a facilitating force that brings together resources and needs
- UWOC's strength is uniting donors and service providers, but they could take that further to help facilitate dialogues designed to tackle specific issues. This would join those who can

do something about the problem with those who have a way to address or solve it, making the UNITED WAY A BETTER WAY!

- UWOC lives up to the "Uniting" title and should foster ongoing dialogues showing "Ways" we can help each other, help ourselves, and help our community
- Education workshops to help organizations and volunteers. Help to unite organizations to accomplish more
- Fortunately, We have a respected United Way that can coordinate and unite supporters and service providers in our community. The needs are urgent, but the eagerness to address them among leaders in the community is as well
- Substance abuse
- By uniting people and resources, United Way continually builds its capacity to provide services and resources to address all areas of need in Orange County
- Hunger
- Staff does a good job of being engaged in activities throughout the county and accessible services
- United Way is the connector and collaborator. Good at creating more out of less

13. Participants indicated the following as the greatest needs of the community:

- (20) Access to affordable and adequate healthcare
- (15) Access to mental health services
- (14) Education
- (13) Food insecurities
- (7) Access to addiction services
- (6) Financial assistance and stability
- (6) Affordable childcare
- (5) Job / job training
- (4) Adequate housing
- (3) Emergency relief services
- (2) GED and ESL for adults.
- (2) Kids are essential; we need to work with them to keep them off drugs, in school, and honestly, better than those mentoring them

14. Participants indicated the following as the greatest challenges for United Way of Orange County to help meet these needs:

- (26) Funding
- (20) UWOC is understaffed
- (9) Lack of volunteers
- (8) The economy
- (8) Community Awareness
- (6) Financial - enough resources

- (4) Partner institutions and organizations aligning with top priorities in the community
- (3) City officials and corporations working together to help recruit and fund medical specialists and preventive healthcare services
- (3) UWOC could create a series of summits to focus on critical challenges in our community, hosting both the potential resource providers and service providers
- (3) Training nonprofits on how to treat those on the margin / vulnerable with dignity and respect
- (3) Local small business participation
- (3) UWOC is positioned to bring the big issues to the table, along with content experts from the field who know the right solutions and funders or community leaders who can make the change happen, but UWOC needs to step confidently into this leadership role
- (2) Donor commitments
- (2) Getting organizations to work together for a common goal
- (2) Government agencies tend to be siloed but need them to partner with nonprofits to solve systemic issues
- Bring together the right players and the suitable topics, and find the right solutions
- Communicate an inspiring message that says we are worth investing in and that we can be a "Brighter Orange"
- Transportation
- Handouts versus hand-ups keep us in survival mode versus excelling as a community, but we must act differently to get different, and UWOC can help us do that
- Organize dialogues or symposiums focused on critical issues in our community, bringing together government officials, funders, and service providers to meet those needs
- Parents are not mentoring or helping the kids often; grandparents or relatives are raising them because parents are addicts
- The doctors and hospitals neglect people without insurance, and then they get much sicker than necessary
- Rigorous evaluation and improvement of existing programs
- Structural biases and racial tension in the community
- The barriers - especially East Orange and Orangefield. They need to know you genuinely want to help and are not seen as a charity case. Instill more self-value
- There needs to be a more significant connection between the donor and the client; this will bring intentional actions
- To break generational poverty, we must expose the next generation to "a better way" that includes staying out of debt, saving money, and taking care of self and community
- Uniting the resources with the needs in more efficient and effective ways

- UWOC works with the city managers to understand the challenges and problems of citizens better

15. Participants indicated the following trends (economic, demographic, social, political, etc.) they see developing in the area over the next five to seven years that may affect the work of United Way of Orange County

- (8) The new plant will help improve the economy. The plant will create new jobs, which will bring in new growth in the community via people, housing, restaurants, and businesses
- (4) The economic, social, and political atmosphere will affect how United Way corporate partners contribute to United Way
- (3) Demographics – a social, economic, and racial shift - increase in Hispanic students. The employment trend is positive, with the number of jobs available increasing in petrochemicals. More mental health services are needed, so resources will need to improve. Mental health issues have been exposed since COVID
- (3) Housing and rental rates are high when compared to income, so we need affordable housing
- (2) Higher influx of Hispanic population - need for bi-lingual communication, the need for essential services is increasing, and donations going lower
- (2) The breakdown of the family unit is breaking down our community. If UWOC can focus programming that encourages healthy family dynamics, interaction, and pride in a sense of place, it will help bring dignity to our homes and our community
- (2) The polymer plant coming to Orange County is a big deal, but we should have more companies like that wanting to be here. We are ideally positioned to the port, I-10 corridor, and major transportation routes
- As a non-profit organization, we see more people each year requesting assistance with basic needs such as food, medicine, health care, utilities, and rent. I think there will be a massive need for the services from United Way in the next several years
- Grandparents are raising kids in our community because the parents are incarcerated or addicted to drugs. Our community celebrates "being in the system" more than we do being self-reliant or independent of welfare
- Inflation without deflation. Rising cost without rising income. Businesses will suffer and possibly close down, especially the tiny homegrown businesses
- More single-family parents and they need flexibility in work environments to raise children
- Our port is underutilized and could be essential to job creation, transportation, and recreation. UWOC should meet with them to bring them in as a partner
- Political - the division of the haves and have-nots = highly polarized. The world is extraordinarily selfish and drives us to be individualistic instead of community focused. Self-preservation and self-absorption, so more responsibility will be placed on

agencies like United Way. Millennials don't trust organizations - so they will do it myself. Demographics – the younger generation is not staying here because of no opportunities, so they could have more clients (seniors) and fewer supporters

- The spiritual trend is upward but could be misdirected due to politics.
- There is a strong group of leaders across the county who want to make a difference, so the time is right to introduce a series of strategy discussions to address the most significant and most complex problems facing our community
- We must define who we are and what makes us unique. People are looking for their place in this society, and a better way is work that brings dignity, love for the community, and unity outside of disaster. If you contribute to something, you will be consumed by that something. We need people to be "All-in" when it comes to making this community great

16. Participants indicated the area's most urgent unmet and underserved human need.

Response	Interviews	Online Survey
Disaster services	0	5
Drug addiction	4	7
Educating youth	1	8
Emergency shelter	0	1
Feeding the hungry	0	10
Health services	3	3
Mental health	6	10
Social services	7	3
Other	19	2

Other

- (4) Job creation, vocational training, and education for those jobs
- (4) Mental health services, social services, and food
- (3) Uniting resources and needs in a coordinated way. UWOC could play this role; even if it goes outside the scope of what they fund directly, it doesn't go outside the scope of uniting the community and providing pathways forward for solving issues
- The creation of a "Solutions Summit" that helps address significant issues in our community and us coming together to define who we are as a community
- Breaking down institutional and community racism, segregation, and employment biases

- The breakdown of the family unit and the lack of healthy activities for families to participate in
- They coordinate efforts among public officials, nonprofit organizations, and funding agencies or individuals. UWOC can help us do better and be better!
- We do great in emergencies and disasters but terrible after the storms clear.
- Pride in self, pride in community, pride in serving others
- We say the family is breaking down in Orange County, but we don't focus on creating programming to help engage, heal, lift, or bring them together. Partner with churches more, especially in the African American and Hispanic / Latino communities, that highly regard pastors, preachers, and priests as influencers.
- Partner with radio KOGT, church announcements, and printed pieces that can be distributed within the community or by volunteers. Pay attention to the "Tiny House" community being created in Pinehurst, as it is just a critical step towards a significant issue in Orange County, which is affordable housing or rent

17. Participants prioritized the geographic areas most needing services and programs provided by United Way of Orange County. The following table lists the ranks and scores of each region by greatest needs (1-most important; 2-second in need, etc.)

Interviews			Online Survey		
Rank	Score	Area	Rank	Score	Area
1	4.88	Vidor	1	4.90	City of Orange
2	4.65	West Orange	2	4.42	Vidor
3	3.77	Mauriceville	3	4.33	West Orange
4	3.38	Orangefield	4	2.96	Mauriceville
5	3.20	City of Orange	5	2.36	Orangefield
6	1.13	Bridge City	6	2.17	Bridge City

Average Ranking (Weighted Average) of All Respondents

Rank	Score	Area
1	4.64	Vidor
2	4.48	West Orange
3	4.12	City of Orange
4	3.33	Mauriceville
5	2.80	Orangefield
6	1.69	Bridge City

Focus Groups

DickersonBakker’s scope of work included two key focus groups: one comprised of representatives from agencies funded by United Way and one comprised of corporate partners.

Responses from these groups are included throughout the report and are consistent and representative of other interviewees’ online responses. However, an additional focus group was added at the invitation of Senior Pastor Demetrius Moffett, MSM, BSCJ, of the Orange Church of God-Embassy of Grace. Parishioners were invited to participate in the focus group conversation on the church's work in literacy and food insecurity.

Additional Questions Asked in the Online Survey

1. Which programs and services need to be improved, expanded, or stayed the same?
(Respondents checked all that applied)

	Improved	Expanded	Stay the same
Health-improving people’s health	8	31	9
Education-helping children & youth achieve their potential	10	31	7
Financial stability-promoting financial stability & independence	9	32	7
Unite people & resources to improve the quality of life & build a stronger Orange County	10	30	9
Create long-lasting changes by addressing the underlying causes of the problems	15	28	5
Collaboration-collaborates & partners with nonprofits, businesses, & local government	7	33	8
Community-support the places we live & work	11	24	14
Resourceful-makes connections & meeting needs	6	26	17
Transparency-maintains open & honest communications	3	15	31
Sustainability-ensures the organization’s longevity	10	20	17

2. EDUCATION. Please rate the following programs and services by greatest value to the community.

	Not valuable	Low value	Neutral	Some value	Highest value	Don't know
GED preparation	0	1	1	18	26	1
(ESL) English as a Second Language classes	0	2	2	25	21	1
After school programs	0	1	1	13	35	1
Summer day camps	0	1	2	15	31	2
Leadership & mentoring	0	0	3	14	32	2
Character & skills building	0	0	2	18	30	1
Special needs vocational training	0	0	1	21	27	2
Adult basic training	0	0	4	22	22	2
Tutoring services	0	0	4	22	23	2
Youth literacy program	0	0	1	13	34	3

3. FINANCIAL STABILITY. Please rate the following programs and services by greatest value to the community.

	Not valuable	Low value	Neutral	Some value	Highest value	Don't know
Disaster & crisis assistance	0	0	1	10	40	0
Housing, rent, & utilities assistance	1	0	2	18	29	1
Food pantry	0	0	1	9	41	0
Childcare assistance	0	1	1	16	32	1
Clothing & household items voucher	1	0	0	24	24	2

4. **HEALTH.** Please rate the following programs and services by greatest value to the community.

	Not valuable	Low value	Neutral	Some value	Highest value	Don't know
Substance abuse treatment for adults & adolescents	0	0	4	11	32	4
Mental health counseling	0	1	1	16	31	2
Palliative care for end of life patients	0	1	8	22	15	5
Advocates for abused & neglected children	0	0	3	3	43	2
Medical hospitality house	0	1	7	22	17	4
Youth vegetable garden	0	8	14	20	6	3
Trauma services for victims of sexual abuse	0	0	2	11	36	2
Suicide intervention	0	0	4	16	29	2
Shelter for women & children from domestic violence	0	0	0	13	35	3
Meals delivered to elderly & disabled	0	0	0	16	33	2
Men's residential treatment facility	0	1	7	20	22	1
Physical, occupational, & speech therapies	0	2	7	19	20	3
ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis treatment)	1	1	10	18	12	9
Equine Assisted Growth & Learning Association Services	0	4	13	18	13	3
Equine therapy	0	4	13	18	13	3
Nutritional food for food pantries	0	1	1	9	37	3

Executive Summary

Education

“How goes the educational systems, goes the community” was paraphrased throughout the interviews in various ways, acknowledging that a robust educational system is seen as a pathway for the community to move from “surviving to thriving.”

The state of education in Orange County highlights the strengths and challenges of poverty. Interviewees who work in leadership positions in education in Orange County, shared that an estimated 93% of students are on the assisted lunch program, and reports of illiteracy issues are high among older populations within the community, reflecting the relationship between socio-economic challenges and education.

Several interviewees noted that Orange County is fortunate to have Lamar State College-Orange not only for traditional academic programs but also for vocational programming and certification. The call for expanding vocational offerings in the High School and perhaps to Junior High was echoed repeatedly by interviewees. In addition, several suggested that the UWOC could help work with educational institutions to bring some of these training opportunities to communities that do not have transportation to Orange. It also presents a partnership opportunity with current and emerging corporations to help train the workforce they need while helping to employ citizens in Orange County.

The second pillar or theme identified by interviewees and focus groups is the need for teenagers to engage in extracurricular and outside-of-school activities. Currently, there are few activities or places where teenagers can have fun in Orange County. Ideas from bowling to movie theaters showcase how few venues are available to draw teenagers' interest in the County. Suggestions ranged from recruiting businesses focusing on such activities to sponsoring or funding opportunities that draw families together while providing teenagers with exciting and engaging activities.

While there were comments about certain schools having funding and others that do not, the general feeling about the education offered in Orange County was positive, however, the activities that engage youth at a crucial age outside the classroom needed improvement.

Like most school districts, COVID adversely affected students' education and enrollment, but it wasn't considered the primary concern among participants. The breakdown of the family unit and its relationship to education was a reoccurring theme and pressing concern of interviewees, suggesting there is an opportunity for nonprofits and Summit or Forum discussions to focus on solutions to this community challenge.

Financial Stability

Pursuing the American Dream relies on hope, hard work, and investing in the future. Seeing a pathway out of debt and toward a future of prosperity takes work when trying to survive daily. Further compounding this challenge is generational poverty, where discussions about finances or determining the best use of resources you have are not mentioned, let alone mentored for

the next generation. Yet, the most common requests coming into UWOC are assistance paying for essential utilities, groceries, or rent assistance.

There were so many powerful quotes about family finances and financial literacy shared, but none were more powerful than those of the Mayor of the City of Orange.

“Self-worth and pride come through the grounding of who we are and why we are here. Generational poverty takes self-worth away, and when we think a free turkey is a win, we have already lost because that is the difference between surviving and thriving.”

“To get people to think beyond surviving means taking the concern over food and bills and keeping their home off the plate to discuss a bigger picture, the future of their families and, thus, our community. We must go in their door and help them see that entitlements and vouchers are not accomplishments and that poverty is not freedom.”

“Not having to rely on handouts is freedom. Being able to decide about your future and finances versus living under the rule of debt is freedom. The majority of our community is not free in this way.”

Financial literacy has been a priority of UWOC, and the community has seen an impact from these efforts. However, the recent loss of industry in the county has again brought the concern to the surface. While additional or new sectors are planning to open businesses and hire staff in Orange County, the toll of generational poverty tends to take center stage. However, several suggestions and solutions were offered that can impact financial literacy.

Like many of the issues raised in this community study, challenges and solutions cross over from one area to the other. Mental health affects the ability to work or care for the family. Addiction breaks down the family unit or health costs and takes away precious resources needed for essential utility or living expenses. Repeatedly, interviewees noted that these conversations about financial literacy must start earlier in the education process, and a mechanism for bringing the conversation back to the home must be generated.

Health

In addition to in-person, online, and focus group survey participants, two critical local hospital studies were provided by healthcare institutions as part of the discovery process with permission to share information widely because preventive care starts with knowledge of critical issues.

Like many community issues, multiple factors contribute to a community's health, including, but not limited to, poverty, the availability of healthy food, preventive care, and access to medical services. The lack of health professionals, mental health providers, and addiction centers significantly impacts health incomes. It is a significant issue expressed by nearly all the Orange County community study participants.

Even with the introduction of a hospital in 2024, the limited number of beds, health care professionals, and the absence of preventive services means the county is still woefully underserved. Residents must travel outside the county for some preventive care or serious

treatment, and transportation to such services is challenging for low-income residents who may need a car or can pay for private transport. As a result of neglecting preventive care, ambulance services are often contacted when the lack of preventive care escalates into severe medical health risks, costing both the residents and hospitals more in care.

Participants reported the need for more preventive services and limited transportation options since they must travel at minimum to the next county and as far as Houston for any specialized services. Overall, the residents of Orange County are uninsured or underinsured, which taxes the county in terms of finances and resources. This also taxes the school systems, as kids may be covered without insurance. Still, since parents are not participating in preventive care, many school representatives reported that kids receive essential healthcare treatment from the school's Health Office. While preventive services may be available in the community, many perceive that they are not offered, providing an opportunity for the UWOC to educate, raise awareness, or promote the available services.

The lack of addiction services or mental health providers further contributes to the health challenges in the community. Interviewees, public officials, and medical service providers reported these issues as growing and some of the top health issues facing Orange County. As United Way Orange County is working to be even more intentional in projects funded and partnerships established, there seem to be areas involving health in the county that can be opportunities for collaboration and areas of focus for proposed "Summit Discussions," designed to engage key stakeholders and those in a position to solve or address issues identified through this community engagement study.

This showcases an opportunity or need in the community to offer mental health, preventive health services, addiction services, and dental services in a mobile clinic that goes into the community to address these unmet needs. While the United Way of Orange County does not provide these services directly, they could help recruit, promote, or fund nonprofit agencies that work directly in these areas.

Leadership – The Voice of the Community

Leadership at United Way is seen as collaborative and connected in Orange County. Interviewees reported consistently that leadership is active, engaged, and respected in the communities that make up Orange County.

Further, our study showed that United Way of Orange County is seen as the primary leader and organizer in the county. While government leaders and city managers were heralded for their work during storms or times of crisis, many reported that the same leaders needed to be more consistently engaged or leading the way in coordinating efforts to make the county stronger between the storms.

Two critical points were highlighted by interviewees and related to the staffing and areas supported by United Way Orange County. The small number of staff in the office was highlighted consistently as an area that needs improvement. Essentially, "too few staff trying to tackle too much work" or, as often noted, "more needs and work than current staff can handle." Remarks were not critical of current staff but just the opposite, praising the work

being done and progress made for the small number of employees. Specifically, interviewees identified a need for UWOC to increase staff because the county has more significant needs than current staff can handle.

The second point was to watch for potential “blind spots” in the community that may not receive attention. Generally, the perception is that specific neighborhoods are perceived to be “covered” or cared for by particular churches or nonprofits that currently don’t receive funding from UWOC. However, those communities may still need support, funding, or coordination.

The most significant example came from the focus group conducted at the invitation of Pastor Demetrius Moffett with Orange Church of God-Embassy of Grace. The West Orange and the area “East of the tracks” in Orange are areas the church covers for feeding the hungry, teaching reading comprehension, and transporting people to needed medical appointments. Participants in the focus group reported that no ill will is assumed by those in the church who serve those on the margin but don’t want UWOC or other nonprofits to “assume we got it.”

The community respects, listens to, relies upon, and trusts United Way of Orange County. Further, the community calls upon this organization and its leadership to unite the county and address system and ongoing issues in the community. Several interviewees suggested and asked that the UWOC take a leadership role in bringing together critical governmental, corporate, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders to create an ongoing forum that helps identify and solve these issues.

Priorities ranked by survey responses

The following categories reflect all survey respondents including online to capture additional needs and priorities that may have not been previously known by the community.



Health

1. Advocates for abused & neglected children
2. Nutritional food for food pantries
3. Trauma services for victims of sexual abuse
4. Shelter for women and children from domestic violence
5. Meals delivered to elderly and disabled




Financial Stability

1. Food pantry
2. Disaster and crisis assistance
3. Childcare assistance
4. Housing, rent, and utilities assistance
5. Clothing and household items voucher



Education

1. After school programs
2. Youth literacy programs
3. Leadership and mentoring
4. (Tie) Character and skills building
(Tie) Summer day camps



Geographic Area by Need

1. Vidor
2. West Orange
3. City of Orange
4. Mauriceville
5. Orangefield
6. Bridge City

Appendix A. Observations and Recommendations

Recommendations from Participants

We need to involve charity recipients in serving others so they can feel the pride and dignity of helping others.

To break this cycle, we ask UWOC to serve as a bridge to this office, helping them to understand who is on the margin or vulnerable in our community and why.

The breakdown of the family unit is destroying our community. If UWOC can focus on programming that encourages healthy family dynamics, interaction, and pride in a sense of place, it will help restore dignity to our homes and communities.

A "Regenerative Community" must believe they are worthy of quality: health, education, prosperity, and reinvestment. We must value people, culture, and our environment as much as we do business revenue. We must make the family nucleus the heart of what sets us apart as a community to attract more of the same.

I strongly encourage UWOC to lead the way by launching key summit task forces to address issues in our community that result from this study. UWOC is the right player at the right table to improve the community now.

UWOC has a window and an opportunity to be more relevant to our community than ever before. We have leaders who want change and service agencies that can deliver if given a shared plan or pathway, but ultimately, our community must want to be better. UWOC can flash a mirror so we can see who we are and talk about who we want to be. This is a growth opportunity for our county and the next generation.

Start a campaign focused on pride and ownership of our community: * Our Orange County * My Orange County * Grow our Orange County * Brighter Orange County - Investing in this study is the right thing as we all want a "Brighter Orange County."

UWOC helps bring talented and gifted people from our community together to make Orange County a better place. They are uniquely positioned to cross over silos and boundaries between church, state government, schools, and nonprofits to address real-world issues. This puts UWOC in a unique position to host a series of dialogues or summits on significant topics, bringing the right players to the table to make lasting changes.

Knowing how to serve others while allowing them the grace to feel dignity, pride, and hope is a challenging task, and it is a crucial training opportunity UWOC could bring to other social service organizations. Capacity building is another essential function United Way of Orange County could serve us further.

We need a "Brighter Orange County" campaign that focuses our community on critical issues and unites funding agencies and service providers to achieve tangible benchmark goals within 3-5 years. UWOC can lead this process by having a series of "Summits" that bring the right

people together to discuss health, education, financial literacy, or key issues identified in this community study.

One key area in which UWOC can expand its impact is by partnering with the Community College and High Schools to develop vocational, financial literacy, and civic responsibility classes or training seminars. This will help our community understand that everyone must be productive citizens for our entire community to thrive.

Between the storms, we need an organization like the UWOC to help us focus on the capacity-building activities that will make us more resilient, attractive to new businesses, and healthy.

Treating people with respect, even those less fortunate and on the margin, takes empathy and understanding of historical wounds, institutional biases, and self-awareness. UWOC has an opportunity to flash this mirror without judgment but toward understanding and with the intent of true partnership to strengthen the weakest among us so that we all become stronger together. Investing in this community study is a fitting gesture. It must be followed up with dialogues inviting community leaders to the table and reaching out to the communities on the margin.

Community activities that unite and unite us help build our resilience, sense of identity, and community pride.

To break generational poverty, we must expose the next generation to "a better way" that includes staying out of debt, saving money, and caring for ourselves and our community.

UWOC is positioned to address the big issues, along with content experts who know the right solutions and funders or community leaders who can make the change happen. Still, UWOC needs to step confidently into this leadership role.

Uniting donors and service providers is a strength of UWOC. Still, they could take that further to help facilitate dialogues designed to tackle specific issues, uniting those who can do something about the problem with those who have a way to address or solve it.

Challenges / Obstacles Identified by Participants

Organizations that seek constant improvement tend to thrive over those that stay stagnant or complacent. United Way Orange County embraces the concept of continual improvement, and its investment in this community study is no exception.

Interviewees have identified UWOC as a leader among community leaders and the ideal organization to help the community come together to solve challenges and continually improve. Orange County deserves the hard work and focus needed to address the issues outlined in this community study, but it, too, will encounter challenges.

The United Way of Orange County needs more staff to coordinate community dialogues and solutions on a scalable level. The staff has the knowledge and passion but lacks the resources to address the county's issues or programming needs.

Resource sharing and tracking must occur between service providers and those needing the services in real-time.

UWOC must bring talented and gifted people together with community stakeholders to determine our future together. To that end, create a "Solutions Summit" based on this community study.

UWOC works with the City Managers to better understand citizens' challenges and problems.

We are reaching across communities or, in some cases, across the tracks to engage diverse populations.

UWOC could create a series of summits to focus on critical challenges in our community, hosting both the potential resources and service providers.

UWOC helps communicate what is unique or special about Orange County.

Silos between government agencies and nonprofits.

We must move from a risk-averse community to one open to trying new things because what we are doing currently is not working to break the cycle of poverty.

They are convincing people in the community that we must do something different to have different results.

We need confidence to fix things and not just say, "It is what it is."

Need transformational investment to go to the next level.

More major gift donations to address underlying community issues or create programming.

City officials and corporations work together to help recruit and fund medical specialists and preventive healthcare services.

UWOC must ask nonprofits, donors, corporations, government, and citizens, "What do you bring to the table, and what are you willing to do for a Brighter Orange County?"

Barriers - primarily East Orange and Orangefield. They need to know you genuinely want to help and are not seen as a charity case. Instill more self-value

Host dialogues or panel discussions focused on solving real community problems by bringing together resources, decision-makers, and service agencies that can execute plans.

UWOC is positioned to address the big issues, along with content experts who know the right solutions and funders or community leaders who can make the change happen. Still, UWOC needs to step confidently into this leadership role.

Suggestions and Key Recommendations from DickersonBakker

A Kairos Moment

A Kairos Moment is "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved." Kairos means that one must find the best situation, considering timing, to act.

"UWOC has a window, an opportunity, to be more relevant to our community than ever. We have leaders who want change and service agencies that can deliver if given a shared plan or pathway, but ultimately, our community must want to be better. UWOC can flash a mirror so we can see who we are and talk about who we want to be. This is a growth opportunity for our county and the next generation."

The community study was initiated by United Way of Orange County to inform its decision-making process and move toward more "intentional" funding and engagement that will help lift the county to the next level. The study also helps to bring awareness to other organizations and leaders in the community about the challenges of those who are on the margin or maybe traditionally marginalized from consideration in decision-making models.

Priorities for Funding Allocation to Achieve Intentionality

- ▶ **Family First.** Participants in the study shared a growing concern that the family breakdown in Orange County contributes to the issues facing Orange County. From incarceration to addiction issues to general neglect of the next generation, all were reoccurring concerns expressed. Many asked if there were events, activities, or meaningful ways UWOC could help foster family connection or bonding. Suggestions ranged from concerts or picnics rotating among parks throughout the county to encouraging funders or other nonprofits to host family fun days.

"Breakdown of the family unit is breaking down our community. If UWOC can focus programming that encourages healthy family dynamics, interaction, and pride in a sense of place, it will help bring dignity to our homes and community."

- ▶ **Vocational Training.** Every crisis is an opportunity, and the gap in preventive care or general medical care in the county is an opportunity to court key medical providers to the area and offer a package deal of training and employee partnerships through local entities and those seeking employment in the county. The same can be said about banking, finance, or factory employment needed by corporations considering where to move business.
 - **Host Training Clinics for the Medical Industry, Banking, Factory, or Facility Work.** Training can be offered as an incentive for corporations who want skilled labor tailored to their employment needs. UWOC can help coordinate, sponsor, or partner with community leaders on developing these vocational training clinics and where others would benefit from the certification and training process.

- **Going In Their Door, Bringing Them Out Yours.** Designing vocational training opportunities that rotate or go into the neighborhoods strategically helps ensure those on the margins have every chance to better themselves and their families. Thinking creatively about how to do this or bringing unique partnerships such as corporations, educational institutions, and churches together to create learning solutions that raise all could improve the community.
- **Vocational Education Earlier and Wider.** Several interviewees suggested bringing vocational education into the schools earlier or offering more vocational credits for the local community college with the school systems. Increase awareness of the fact that there are many corporate sponsored/funded options available.
- ▶ **Amnesty Days.** Grace and support sometimes go hand in hand. Those experiencing generational poverty and those lacking insurance or transportation could benefit from “Amnesty Days.” These days, utilize available spaces where community members can go to one location to get legal advice, preventive care, dental, eye care, mental health counseling, etc. Sponsoring or coordinating these services were suggested ways United Way could help allow those on the margin to get desperately needed help.
- ▶ **UWOC Educational Materials.** Taking education to the homes and community might be how United Way can take awareness and education to the next level. A series of brochures or materials that kids can bring home to their parents, outlining services available, or information that can be mailed directly to the households of Orange County residents may help to further advance knowledge about Financial Literacy, Preventive Healthcare, Health Insurance Explained, Educational or Vocational Training Opportunities. Making information accessible and mobile could help to further awareness, learning, and action toward a better Orange County.
- ▶ **Outside the Classroom.** Engaging teenagers and keeping them in Orange County is a challenge the participants raised. The lack of things for teenagers to do outside of school leads many to go to the next county, where parental guidance and supervision aren’t unavailable. The lack of bowling alleys, movie theaters, or fun parks were all noted as gaps in the county. Introduction to drugs or alcohol, bad behavior, or truancy are all concerns that prompted interviewees to ask if UWOC can work with city leaders, schools, and other nonprofits to establish opportunities or programming for teenagers outside the classroom in Orange County.
- ▶ **Modeling Service to Others.** Interviewees encourage UWOC to engage more recipients in volunteer work and service to others and to help train other nonprofits, engaging those on the margin in ways that allow them self-worth and dignity. One cannot help but feel better about themselves when helping others, so finding ways to engage recipients who are capable and willing to serve others is meaningful. Offering training programs for nonprofits, you work with designing services and processes to make recipients retain dignity, confidence, and trust that agencies are there to help them in their time of need, not just as a source for handouts.

“We need to involve recipients of charity in the service of others to feel the pride and dignity that comes from helping others.”

“Treating people with respect, even those less fortunate and marginalized, takes empathy and understanding of historical wounds, institutional biases, and self-awareness. UWOC has an opportunity to flash this mirror without judgment but toward understanding and with the intent of true partnership to strengthen the weakest among us so that we all become stronger together. Investing in this community study is the right gesture towards that and must be followed up with dialogues that invite community leaders to the table and that reach out into the communities on the margin.”

► **Partnerships That Matter.** Uniting agencies with community needs is a recognized strength of United Way Orange County. Community study participants strongly encouraged taking these partnerships to the next level, highlighting some of the following stakeholders to establish deeper partnerships with Orange County to take it to the next level.

- Educational Institutions
- Banks
- Medical Industry
- Port Authority
- Corporate Partners
- Private Foundations
- Private Donors or Philanthropists
- Mayors, City Councils, and City Managers
- State Agencies
- Federal Agencies

Between the Storms

From individual interviews to focus groups, participants described how amazing the community is when disaster strikes. In the past ten years alone, the Federal Government has declared a “State of Emergency” in Orange County no less than twelve times. From flooding to hurricanes, Orange County has seen its share of disasters and stood tall through each one.

While the community’s resilience and coordination during times of disaster are remarkable, the community study revealed that “between the storms,” the community has not been as coordinated, partnered, or effective in building a stronger community. United Way of Orange County is in a unique position to bring the “Big Issues” to the table, along with the content experts from the field who are knowledgeable about solutions and funders or community leaders who can make change happen. Participants strongly encouraged UWOC to step confidently into this leadership role as the most respected agency in Orange County.

Solutions Summits

Bringing the most talented and gifted people together with key community stakeholders to determine Orange County's future is a shared vision articulated by the participants of this vital community study and a key role of United Way of Orange County.

Hosting “Summit Solutions” or panel discussions focused on real community problems and solving them by bringing together resources, decision-makers, and service agencies alike that can execute plans developed jointly is the most critical ongoing service UWOC can play. Having the right players at the table, engaged in honest dialogues, can change the community for the better, and the time has never been more fitting for that to happen, especially coming out of the community study they had the foresight to invest in. The perception of the community is that UWOC is uniquely positioned to crossover silos and boundaries between; churches, state government agencies, schools, and nonprofits to address real-world issues.

“Uniting donors and service providers is a strength of UWOC, but they could take that further to help facilitate Summit Solutions or dialogues designed to tackle specific issues, uniting those who can do something about the issue with those who have the way to address or solve it making UNITED WAY A BETTER WAY!”

Best Practices in Summit Design

- ▶ **Cadence.** To keep the Summit forum from fading away soon after it appears, it can help to interact frequently and on a regular cadence. In addition, you can promote members to particular positions, hold community-wide events, and send weekly or monthly update messages back to the community. You can have a solid and active summit forum running quickly with some work.
- **Community Study to Summit.** UWOC needs to own the Summit forum and format. The first Summit Solutions forum should focus on a joint or shared element that everyone in the county cares deeply about. This could be the very identity or pride of Orange County and how this effort is to level up the County, lift all, and improve for all. Pride campaigns focus on a theme or title and usually encompass strategic planning that further defines your county brand, who you are, and, more importantly, who you “aspire” to be.
- **United Way Community Study.** We can all see some key challenges or shared problems that must be addressed. These realities can be complex, but focusing on how to move from the current state to where you want to be as a community and county keeps the emphasis on the opportunities and motivates the next generation to “find a better way” so they don’t face the same issues.
- **Defining Who You Are and Aspire to Be.** This helps you focus on the current challenges while raising your sights on where you want to be. Developing a theme for the summits drives them toward an aspirant goal, such as Our County, My Orange County, Grow Our Orange County and Brighter Orange County. Investing in this community study was an essential step to wanting a “Brighter Orange County,” and Summit Solutions can help define plans that, when executed, make this goal a reality.

- **Transparency.** We would encourage you to not only develop plans from the Summit dialogues but also to keep “Progress Logs” on how the plans are being implemented and established benchmarks or KPIs for the activity that can be reported on a weekly or monthly basis to the publish shows both momentum and encourages more participation in the activity.
- **Leadership Matters.** UWOC coordinates the Solutions Summit but does not necessarily carry out the solutions. Promoting members of your community to “Special Positions” will help spread the responsibility and put content experts in a position to act on plans developed from the Summit dialogues.
- They may be knowledgeable about the challenge being addressed or able to leverage or direct the resources needed to enact the solution. Still, by doing this, you invite these members to take ownership of the forum strategy. They are urged to help create the discussion content and interact with the stakeholder members. In this way, you can build a self-sustaining community that no longer depends on your constant interaction and is more likely to be viable over the long term.
- You can also consider giving unique cards to your most active members that they can hand out and ask for feedback online or through direct contact. Additionally, you may assign monitoring responsibilities to members trusted by the community. Having a group of individuals with a vested, personal interest in the community is a current strength of Orange County.
- **Hold Community-Wide Events and Contests.** Another way to strengthen and bring your community together is with scheduled events. An event could be a week-long challenge, a contest, or unique content presented at a specific time.
 - These occasions give your community something to look forward to, especially if they align well with the request to engage or bring families together. People may be talking about them before they happen, discussing their challenges or how they would feel if they won the contest. Interactions such as these can be a massive boost to the overall engagement and morale of the community.
 - Try giving a prize to the person or family that does something relevant to your community’s goal or strategy. Hold a Q&A with special guests at a set time. Organize a long-term community challenge. For example, on a fitness and preventive care forum, you might challenge families to try to lose a specific amount of weight or use new exercise equipment donated to local parks.
- **Regular Updates.** Regularly updating the community on the shared goal and progress is essential. You can include excerpts of crucial conversations, release segments of the community study and related Summit Solution, or feature ways that experts suggested the community come together to address a common problem with a real-world solution.

- **Regular messages or reports.** Based on the theme, such as “Brighter Orange County Summit Solutions,” helps remind the community of your existence, common goals, and shared solutions to challenges. They are also an excellent way to let members know they are essential. In addition, they may inspire your community to comment on something they found interesting in the latest message or to start a new thread if you use social media or online forums.
- ▶ **Accountability.** It is essential to set up summits so that the responsibility is shared or assigned to those who can solve the issue. Still, it is also vital to get the right stakeholders in the room to join the summit discussions. Asking who is impacted by the problem or benefits from the solution is as important as who has the solutions or resources to implement them.
 - **Strategy.** Your community goals legitimately determine how you structure your community and the kind of commitment and resources it will need. It is important to consider what you want to achieve and who you want to attract to the Summit discussion.
 - **Responsibility.** Every community can only succeed with someone there to ensure it remains productive and report on progress. This key leadership role is appropriate for UWOC or a partnership with a body related to the goals and objectives. In this sense, UWOC serves as a dialogue facilitator and project manager to encourage participation, drive solutions, and measure outcomes aligned with the strategy.
 - This significant role may require the UWOC to hire an FTE or shared FTE who can foster facilitation, measurements, and reporting. Different roles can have a rotating assignment, or this could be a permanent role, but it would be ideal if this position could convert into an FTE fundraising position for UWOC.
 - The RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) matrix model works for some communities, but Orange County may want to find a project-tracking platform that keeps everyone informed and accountable.
 - **Communications.** Explaining the purpose of building the Solutions Summit is essential so stakeholders can expand the effort's connections into their communities. Thriving communities require ongoing marketing to stay that way. Share, pitch, and promote the goals with and for the community you serve. This type of constant reinvestment and the valuing of economic forces, environmental strengths, and uniqueness of culture is what a “Regenerative Community” looks like.

- **Moderation / Guideposts.** Solutions must be creative, and support must be enabled to accomplish goals. However, providing a critical guidepost for completing the work is essential, and stakeholder groups must be well-defined so the right people are included.

“UWOC has a window, an opportunity, to be more relevant to our community than ever. We have leaders who want change and service agencies that can deliver if given a shared plan or pathway, but ultimately, our community must want to be better. UWOC can flash a mirror so we can see who we are and talk about who we want to be. This is a growth opportunity for our county and the next generation.”

“A ‘Regenerative Community’ must believe they are worthy of quality: health, education, prosperity, and reinvestment. We must value people, culture, and our environment as much as we do business revenue. We must make the family nucleus the heart of what sets us apart as a community to attract more of the same.”

Conclusion

Community challenges are often intertwined, and we applaud UWOC for engaging in this study process and for the continued focus and funding they have brought to Health, Education, and Financial Stability. Breaking generational poverty, curbing drug addiction, or attracting new businesses to the community requires honest dialogues between those who have the resources and knowledge to make long-lasting change and those who want a better way and a better life.

We hope this study's data serves as a catalyst and resource for these critical dialogues. Awareness is a responsibility, and we, too, share in the care and welfare of Orange County. Please let DickersonBakker know how we may assist with any ongoing dialogues, strategic planning, recruiting, or training needs you might have.

“UWOC is positioned to bring the big issues to the table, along with content experts from the field who know the right solutions and funders or community leaders who can make the change happen, but UWOC needs to step confidently into this leadership role.”

Appendix B. Interview Participants

Those Interviewed	Organization
Robert Crane	Acadian Ambulance Service
Regius Guillory	ARLANXEO
Krispen Walker	Assistant District Attorney
Gina Mannino	Assistant Superintendent Bridge City ISD
Mandy Lyda	Bridge City Chamber - Chair
Allen Chapin	Bridge City First Church
Mike Kelly & Tim Woolley	Bridge City ISD
David Rutledge	Bridge City Mayor
Melissa Issacs	Bridge City / Orangefield Ministerial Alliance
Carol Fernandez	Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
Emily Mellen	Chevron Phillips Chemical
Erin Nichols	Chevron Phillips Chemical
Daniel Ford	CHRISTUS Health
Lanie Brown	City Council Member
Larry Spears, Jr.	City of Orange Mayor
Keith Longlois	City of Orange Police Department
Brad Frye	Constable
Johnny Trahan	County Commissioner
Courtney Arkeen	District Judge
Chrissy Babcock	Dow
Kari Busch	Golden Triangle Emergency Center
Charro Gaulden	International Paper
Chad Jenkins	Justice of the Peace
Gary Stelly	KOGT.com
Tad McKee	Nelda C. & H. J. Lutcher Stark Foundation
Brianna Campos	Nelda C. & H. J. Lutcher Stark Foundation

Vickie Ocegüera	North Early Learning Center Principal
Judy Jensen	Orange Christian Services Executive Director
Demetrius Moffett	Orange Church of God Pastor
James Scales	Orange County
Michelle Tubbeville	Orange County Disaster Rebuild
Lori Ardoín	Orange County Human Resources
John Gothia	Orange County Judge
Chris Kovatch	Orange Lions club
Shaun McAlpin	Orangefield ISD
Cynthia Adams	Pinehurst City Council
Robin McCutcheon	Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas
Tricia Stroud	Service League of Orange
Rita Ballard	Service League of Orange
Vineen Giordano	Service League of Orange / Salvation Army Advisory Board
Benitris Edwards	Stars of Gate City Guild
Dena Hughes	TAN Healthcare
Jamey MacFarlane	Top Deck
Gayle Nagei	United Christian Care Center of Vidor
Jay Kilgo	Vidor ISD
Tracy Peveto	UTMB
Ometra Simpson	West Orange Teacher
Rickie Harris	West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD

Appendix C. Relevant Survey Quotes

Education

“Vocational training is our community's biggest and most urgent need.”

“Capture kids' hearts by getting the schools more directly involved in the Day of Caring and beyond.”

“COVID magnified the literacy issue we have in our community and, even worse, fostered a shift in valuing education as the key to breaking social and economic stratification. Parents began homeschooling without investing in the process or considering how it would impact their children later. Homeschooling continues since COVID as our children's scores and literacy continue to drop.”

Financial Stability

“When being in the system becomes more important than becoming a better you, we have already lost the battle.”

“It is hard talking about money and finances in our community because it speaks to fundamental choices that we don't have a good track record in making. We must put the value proposition forward that speaks to what they care about most, welfare and future of their children, freedom from reliance on others to live, etc.”

“Self-worth and pride come through the grounding of who we are and why we are here. Generational poverty takes self-worth away, and when we think a free turkey is a win, we have already lost because that is the difference between surviving and thriving. To get people to think beyond surviving means taking the concern over food and bills and keeping their home off the plate to discuss a bigger picture: the future of their families and, thus, our community. We must go in their door and help them see that entitlements and vouchers are not accomplishments and that poverty is not freedom. Not having to rely on handouts is freedom. Being able to decide about your future and finances versus living under the rule of debt is freedom. The majority of our community is not free in this way.”

Health

“We need to ask ourselves if the new hospital is enough to improve or meet the health needs of our community when so many are underinsured, uninsured, or under-served. Over 50% of the county is over 50, so we are an aging population with a lack of preventive or sustained health care options in the county.”

“Poverty inhibits access to preventive services. Even getting to a doctor or picking up medicine is extremely challenging for those on the margin. Even resourceless citizens must travel outside the county for real treatments or specialists. It is even hard getting dental services in Orange County, so to say we have a health problem is an understatement.”

“It is hard talking about money and finances in our community because it speaks to fundamental choices that we don't have a good track record in making. We must put the value proposition forward

that speaks to what they care about most, welfare and future of their children, freedom from reliance on others to live, etc.”

Leadership

“We have community leaders who want to make a difference, but we don't have anyone coordinating them to work together for solutions.”

“Without a doubt, UWOC makes an impact, and much credit goes to the CEO for turning the organization around.”

“The CEO does a good job engaging in activities throughout the county and accessible services.”

“It had a big impact when the current CEO came on board, and this community study is a great example of UWOC leading the way.”

United Way of Orange County

“There is no other organization connected enough or respected enough to handle the capacity building needs of our community between the disaster than UWOC.”

“Just keeping an ongoing inventory of front-line services is tough, but UWOC must also push that information out regularly to make it seen and easily accessible by those on the margin.”

“United Way Orange does an outstanding job with connectivity and collaboration. Good leadership. Gaining knowledge through a community needs assessment shows good leadership. What you do with the knowledge can show great leadership.”

“We need to represent the community in full as an organization. There is a good ole-boy network we need to break out of. It's not purposeful, but do we want to go there? UW needs to be willing to be open-minded and challenge its pre-existing beliefs and practices. We had to fight for technological improvements. Desire to move to the impact funding model has some implications.”

“The CEO and staff do a fabulous job in meeting the needs of this community. They are exceptional in times of disaster services.”

“UWOC is necessary for our community to move forward. The Stark Foundation is eager to partner with UWOC to tackle some top priorities as they align with our Foundation priorities.”

“UWOC is a great facilitator of process and connection. This facilitation of providers and supporters is a strength of UWOC but also must help the community make the transition to be more intentional in addressing issues in our community.”

“UWOC is helping and making a meaningful difference. While UWOC is doing a good job addressing things they are aware of, some of our county and community are not touched by the programs or services provided, and we want to work with them to extend into these communities as well. Getting past historical wounds, especially among the African American community of Orange County, does not mean you compensate by giving free things without the expectation or benefit of this community "buying in" to help lift the community as well. Dignity comes from caring about and serving others; those on the margin should also be granted that dignity. The design of current programs is a

"handout" rather than a "hand-up" invitation to join in the service of our community. UWOC has an opportunity to engage the African American clergy as we get together every Saturday in the county and would welcome their presence."

"They are key for our nonprofits and as our community voice. This community study is a perfect example of how they always look to take our community to the next level."

"We give to UWOC because "this is where our money can do the most good for our community."

"New development is needed and will create more job opportunities, but our culture and leaders must attract new businesses to Orange County. The CEO and UWOC are doing a great job; we need them to help us go to the next level by championing the tough conversations we need to have in our community. This is the only way we will make fundamental change happen."

"Orange County needs to rise, and UWOC is the key to making it happen."

Community Observations / Descriptions

"Poverty is pervasive. We must develop skills among our citizens that connect with the needs of employers."

"When the waters recede, and the clouds break, we go back to our silos and interests within the community, but for Orange County to go from surviving to thriving, we must be intentional in focusing on these community problems between the storms."

"When the storm clouds are gathering, and the water rises, Orange County stands tall and is at its best. Between the storms, we must be vigilant about protecting, building, and caring for our community because resilience during disasters is just survival. Still, resilience between the storms is thriving!"

"Orange County is not an active lifestyle or place to live. We have no walking, bike paths, or farmer's markets for fresh food."

"Loss of businesses is hard, but loss of empathy for others in our community would be devastating!"

"Generational poverty in Orange County is real and socially reinforced sometimes, but if we could help people understand that "Free" isn't "Freedom." True freedom comes from not having to stand in lines to get things but rather having a job, staying out of debt, and saving to improve the quality of life. That's freedom and the next generation being better off than the one before; that's the American dream."

"We must believe we are worthy of investment and improvement and have the will to do it. UWOC can help us achieve this!"

"Our community has a dire need for the services provided by UWOC. We are great at disaster response but not at ongoing improvements to our community. In a crisis, we act as one, but after the crisis, we tend to go back to our silos or personal interests. We must learn a new way...a better way...a UNITED WAY!"

While resilience to disaster is our superpower, our commitment to continual improvement is not. We must build our capacity for constant improvement, so I applaud this community study as a grand investment.

Community Trends

“We must define who we are and what makes us special. People are looking for their place in this society, and a better way is work that brings dignity, love for the community, and unity outside of disaster. If you contribute to something, you will be consumed by that something. We need people to be “All-in” when it comes to making this community great.”

“We say the family is breaking down in Orange County, but we don't focus on creating programming to help engage, heal, lift, or bring them together as a community. Let's focus on establishing more programming that models how healthy families come together for fun, during times of crisis, and in service to each other. Partner with churches more, especially in the African American and Hispanic / Latino communities, that highly regard pastors, preachers, and priests as influencers. Work with and through these leaders as partners for the change we seek! Information on how to get help in all the areas discussed should be made readily available beyond social media, especially for seniors and the older generation, as they don't know what is going on beyond porch conversations or from family members. Perhaps partnering with radio, KOGT, church announcements, and printed pieces that can be distributed within the community or by volunteers. Pay attention to the “Tiny House” community being created in Pinehurst as it is just one important step towards a major issue in Orange County: Affordable Housing or Rent.”

“We look forward to supporting this community study's next steps and outcomes. Orange County is ready to move to the next level!”

Suggestions and Recommendations

“We need a “Brighter Orange County” campaign that focuses our community on key issues and unites funding agencies and service providers to achieve tangible benchmark goals within 3-5 years. UWOC can lead this process by having a series of “Summits” that bring the right people together to discuss things like health, education, financial literacy, or key issues identified out of this community study.”

“To break this cycle, we ask UWOC to serve as a bridge to this office, helping them to understand who is on the margin or vulnerable in our community and why.”

“Knowing how to serve others while allowing them the grace to feel dignity, pride, and hope is not easy. It is a key training opportunity UWOC could bring to other social service organizations. Capacity building is a key function United Way of Orange County could serve us further.”

“UWOC and Government Officials should reach out to and work with the EPA on environmental cleanup sites, as well as mitigation to ongoing exposure to cancer-causing agents in the county.”

“One key area UWOC can expand its impact is partnering with the Community College and High Schools to expand the vocational, financial literacy, and civic responsibility classes or training seminars. Help our community understand that everyone must be productive citizens for our entire community to thrive.”

“Between the storms, we need an organization like the UWOC to help us focus on the capacity-building activities that will make us more resilient, attractive to new businesses, and healthy.”

“Community activities that unite and unite us help build our resilience, sense of identity, and community pride.”

“To break generational poverty, we must expose the next generation to "a better way" that includes staying out of debt, saving money, and taking care of self and community.”

Other Area and Community Needs

“Job loss and impact on local economy and need for job creation.”

“Voluntary and institutionally reinforced segregation means a lack of diversity interaction.”

“We don't talk about or partner with the port, but there is potential to partner with UWOC and businesses.”

“UWOC helps show us that we can do better, be better, and serve as a facilitating force that brings together resources and needs.”

“The mental health of the community as a whole. Orange County suffers from PTSD due to disasters, but we don't talk about it and don't prepare our community enough between the storms to become stronger for the next one.”

“Mental health, both individually and as a community suffering from PTSD caused by disaster after disaster.”