

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



LIVE HERE.
GIVE HERE.
HELP HERE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2022, United Way of the Lowcountry launched a new Community Needs Assessment to identify issues affecting residents of Beaufort and Jasper counties.

United Way partnered with the Community Research Group of Greenville, SC to review data of our two counties based on local, state and federal sources. To complement the quantitative data, United Way surveyed and conducted conversations with hundreds of residents, leaders, service providers, consumers as well as representatives of special populations. Recognizing that the needs of individual communities in our area are distinctly different, we held these conversations throughout the Lowcountry in order to make sure everyone was represented.

A community where no one gets left behind. A community where each of our neighbors has a strong start, a good education, a job and a place to call home.

What we heard across the community was a number of key concerns and aspirations:



Economic Mobility

Residents expressed concerns over low wages and high cost of living — especially housing affordability and lack of employment opportunities.

Many felt that these problems were the most challenging issues facing both Beaufort and Jasper counties.



Basic Needs

In conversations, **there was a sense that many in our community are unaware of ways to get the support they need, suggesting an enhanced need for navigation to resources.**

When basic needs are met, people can thrive and access opportunities.



Education

Participants stressed the importance of **expanding opportunities to prepare our children and young adults with the skills they need to be successful in life.** Our community is better when children and youth become productive, successful adults.



Community Advocacy

Many residents wanted United Way to leverage its position to advocate for solutions to our biggest problems, taking a leadership role, organizing decision-makers and promoting community voice.

THERE WAS STRONG ALIGNMENT IN BOTH COUNTIES IN FOUR KEY AREAS:

- ✓ need for affordable housing solutions
- ✓ prepare people for good paying jobs with benefits
- ✓ improve educational supports for children and families
- ✓ need for job stability and advancement

“ It all comes down to a living wage.

– LOWCOUNTRY RESIDENT

“ Educational access for all – from cradle to career – is an essential priority.

– LOWCOUNTRY RESIDENT

COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION

United Way of the Lowcountry can't address these findings alone. **Everyone in the Lowcountry – including private, public and nonprofit sectors –** has a part to play in building a complete and thriving community. Emerging from a pandemic, we must reconnect with each other to make collective change and create new solutions to long-standing issues.

From our review of data and community conversations, we offer the following call to action:

- 1 Ensure** an accessible safety net of services to **address the emergency needs** of Beaufort and Jasper county residents so they have a stronger foundation on which to build success.
- 2 Expand** developmental opportunities so that our **children enter school ready to learn and our young adults gain the knowledge, skills and credentials to transition to the next stage of life** – whether it be higher education, military or workforce.
- 3 Help** adults and families **become self-sufficient and financially stable** by providing skills and support, including mentorship, job training, financial literacy and child/dependent care.
- 4 Support deeper collaboration** across public, private and nonprofit sectors in order to have a greater impact on our community's most pressing needs.
- 5 Identify and work collectively** to **remove barriers** that stand in the way of success.

We hope you'll support our work by being an advocate, volunteer and donor. We also hope each of you will find a personal call to action to **(re)connect**, engage and build toward a community where we can all thrive.

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?

To join us, visit www.uwlowcountry.org