

Executive Summary

Summary

This chapter provides a compilation of Prismatic’s work through the Listening Project to achieve the following project goals:

- ◆ *Ensure that the Trust’s various stakeholders have meaningful input into the Trust’s strategic planning.*
- ◆ *Reveal findings that will allow the Trust to develop priorities and strategies to address the identified needs and gaps while utilizing and mobilizing existing community strengths and resources.*
- ◆ *Maximize the impact of Trust resources in addressing the needs of Alachua County children.*

As with all projects the consulting team undertakes, a number of areas were reviewed extensively. Including only the highest priorities for improvement, as determined by the feedback provided by project participants, results in a report of manageable length, and a



scope that helps Trust leaders focus on what was most heard. Thus, while all areas within this extensive project were reviewed, specific recommendations were not made in all areas. In addition, this summary provides a compilation of Prismatic’s conclusions and recommendations for the efforts of the Trust to support all children in Alachua County and where to invest the Children’s Trust resources to achieve collective community impact.

Who We Heard

Alachua County is home to a diverse population of approximately 279k people. As of 2021, the Census estimated that 70% of residents are White, 21% are African American, and 6% are Asian. Gainesville is the hub of Alachua County, housing 75% of county residents, and 61% of residents between 0-17 years old. There are also several towns and rural communities outside Gainesville.

During this project, Prismatic worked to provide in-person input opportunities throughout the county, as well as opportunities to participate virtually in focus groups, surveys, and interviews. Exhibit 1 displays the number of survey respondents and focus group participants of parents/caregivers, and youth/teens by zip code.

Exhibit 1
Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants by Zip Code

Zip Code	# Parent/Caregiver Respondents	# Youth/Teen Respondents	% of Respondents by Zip Code
32615	112	10	11%
32607	86	31	11%
32608	68	18	8%
32601	58	27	8%
32605	66	9	7%
32609	57	16	7%
32641	50	17	6%
32669	54	9	6%
32618	42	11	5%
32606	29	18	4%
32694	40	2	4%
32667	30	9	4%
32643	28	6	3%
32653	23	11	3%
32640	14	19	3%
32602	8	15	2%
32612	13	8	2%
32614	12	1	1%
32604	9	3	1%
32603	9	2	1%
32627	7	1	1%
32631	6	1	1%

Zip Code	# Parent/Caregiver Respondents	# Youth/Teen Respondents	% of Respondents by Zip Code
32655	7	0	1%
32611	4	2	1%
32658	6	0	1%
32662	4	1	<1%
32610	3	1	<1%
32622	3	1	<1%
32654	3	1	<1%
32666	1	2	<1%
32633	3	0	<1%
Total	855	252	100%
<i>Not Reported</i>	72	44	9%

Prismatic was provided a list of key informants, providers, partners, and Trust staff members to contact to request interviews. The list was intended to cover partners, providers, and local persons of interest who could offer unique and special perspectives on the needs, challenges, and potential solutions for children and families in Alachua County. In total, 17 Key Informants, Partners, and Providers, and nine Trust staff members were interviewed. Exhibit 2 provides the focus areas for the key informant, partner, and provider interviewees.

Exhibit 2 Focus Areas of Interviewees

Focus Area	Key Informant	Partner	Provider
Ages 0-5 Supports	1		1
Childcare	2	2	
Child Advocacy	1		1
Community Foundation	1	1	
Education	3	2	
Faith-Based	1	1	
Family Resource Supports	4	2	1
Juvenile Justice	1	1	
Teen Services	2	2	1
Town Government	1		1
Total	17	11	5

Seeking to hear from those not reached via survey or focus group, Prismatic worked with Trust staff to develop a community meeting format. Each community meeting included multiple stations where participants could meet the new Trust CEO, provide input into Trust budgeting priorities, share positives about the community, and vocalize what is needed to improve the lives of children in Alachua County. Exhibit 3 provides the demographics of those who participated in Community Meetings.

Exhibit 3
Community Meeting Participant Demographics

Demographic	# of Participants
Length of Residence in County	
0-2 years	6
3-5 years	13
6-10 years	3
10-20 years	9
Over 20 years	11
Participant Type	
Parent with children 0-18	15
Youth in grades 6-12	18
Youth in grades K-5	6
Zip Code	
32601	5
32603	1
32605	3
32606	5
32607	5
32608	3
32609	7
32615	1
32641	7
32653	1
32669	4

Project Limitations

The Listening Project was designed to gather feedback and input from the stakeholders of Alachua County and was not intended to be an exhaustive research project. As such, there were some project limitations. Prismatic was only able to hear from stakeholders who were willing to participate in project activities. Also, Prismatic did not seek the explicit participation of children below 6th grade, either through surveys or focus groups; it is typically difficult to gather accurate feedback from that age group. Instead, parents/caregivers and providers/partners were asked to voice feedback on their behalf. Finally, although surveys and focus group guides encouraged participants to provide feedback and input across a wide spectrum of areas of interest to the Trust, not every participant was equally interested in all areas. Prismatic recognizes that some Trust areas were obviously of strong concern to some stakeholders and has worked to include those concerns in this work, even though they were concerns raised by only a small percentage of the Listening Project participant population.

Conclusions

Alachua County, as a community, demonstrates a willingness to come together to make sure children have equal opportunities in life. There are many organizations designed to support education, health, overall well-being, and opportunities for children. The community supports in place have made positive impacts on children for many years.

The Trust has a staff with backgrounds in the “right areas” to help provide guidance to providers and help organizations become sustainable. The providers in the county have a strong desire to collaborate and align efforts to meet the needs of children. Many have adapted their services over the years as needs have changed. Their adaptability and advocacy for children is what made the Trust possible.

What the county lacked at the time of this study could largely be provided if the community, partners, providers, and the Trust collaborate to identify needs, align services, and address service gaps together. Services and resources needed, as identified by Listening Project participants are cited in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4 Services and Resources Needed

<p>Afterschool & Summer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional opportunities • Homework help • Recreation • Free or scholarships • More programs • Summer camps 	<p>Children & Youth Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor program • Program for teen parents • Employment opportunities • Support groups • Counseling & Behavioral support
<p>Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County-wide literacy plan • Vocational training • Tutoring • Scholarships • Apprenticeships • Career Exploration • Career Center • Affordable/accessible PreK 	<p>Schools - General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community elementary schools • Revised disciplinary approach • Safety patrol • Mental health counselors • All treated with respect • More clubs • Students select classes • Relevant coursework • Improve school meals
<p>Schools - Transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate elementary and high school students • Address bullying 	<p>Schools - Facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean/Upgraded bathrooms • Fix air conditioning • Better desks • Facility upgrades so all

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer bus stops • Provide late buses 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools have same quality • More playgrounds
Recreation & Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More public sports facilities • Greater variety of sports options • Free/subsidized sports • Larger recreational facility, open daily • Field trips • Playgrounds, Trails, Parks, Pool, Arts, Crafts, Cooking, Dance 	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital/healthcare accessible in rural areas • Dental screenings • Health insurance • 24-hour EMS • Address childhood obesity • More programs Prenatal-5 • Behavioral support training • Mental health counseling
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add police substation • More police patrols in communities • Violence prevention • Gun safety/awareness • More lights • Safer roads, better road maintenance 	Public Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase services • Keep it free for children • Expand to rural areas • Larger buses • Add sidewalks • Safer and closer bus stops • Shelter and bench at bus stops
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of services • Larger library • Technology access • Communications about resources 	Parent Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting classes • Family life center • Family counseling

As the Trust moves forward in supporting the children of Alachua County, it should focus on the development and embedding of processes that will outlive the tenure of current staff, steering committee members, and board members and become part of the fabric of the organization and county.

Other Conclusions

Prismatic found additional areas worth noting for Alachua County and/or the Trust:

- ◆ Many parents/caregivers and youth indicated that Alachua County is a good place to raise children, a good place to grow up, and that the best thing about their neighborhood is their friendly neighbors and a sense of community.

- ◆ The Trust has a considerable amount of like-minded partnerships available in the county. The Trust is not the only sincere, committed organization with goals related to improving the lives of youth and families in the county.
- ◆ Parents/caregivers are able to select a school for their children from a variety of public and private/charter school options.
- ◆ Alachua County is home to both Santa Fe College and the University of Florida. Both educational entities offer key resources, services, and potential to residents.
- ◆ With nearly 51k children/youth in the county, the Trust’s estimated \$8 million in annual funding to allocate among programs and services amounts to just \$157 per child. Poorly allocated, this limited amount of funding would have minimal impact in achieving the first part of the Trust vision to “facilitate equitable access and opportunities for all children and families” in the county.

Recommendations

Prismatic made 11 recommendations. These recommendations are centered around the areas identified as most in need of Trust support. As the Trust finalizes its new strategic plan, Prismatic recommends that it consider implementing these recommendations. Further details on these recommendations are provided in Chapter 5.

#	Recommendation
Priority Issues	
1	Adopt explicit dollar spend goals for each age group rather than for each goal.
2	Address the transportation divide.
3	Incubate new programs.
4	Support community centers and sports.
5	Become the marketplace for interns and community supporters/organizers.
6	Become the county fulcrum for information.
Strategic Planning	
7	Listen continually.
8	Communicate regularly.
9	Leverage community.
10	Revise Trust principles, then set measurable annual goals.
11	Adopt better metrics of output and impact.

Implementation Notes

As the Trust voluntarily sought to engage in this Listening Project, it is under no obligation to implement any of the Prismatic recommendations. Moreover, in examining the data presented, the analyses provided, and the conclusions drawn, Trust leadership may find different or better methods for addressing the challenges that Prismatic found. What matters most is addressing the root causes of the challenges and deficits found through this project.