

Executive Summary

Every two years, the City of Bellevue conducts a human services needs update to gather community perspectives on the current state of human services and unmet human services needs for Bellevue residents. This update has traditionally incorporated the perspectives of both providers and community members and is intended to guide human services strategy and investment in the City of Bellevue.

For the 2023-2024 update, the City of Bellevue engaged Health Management Associates (HMA), a research and consulting firm focused on health and human services, to conduct the needs update in collaboration with the City and its partners. HMA collected data for this update over the course of a three-month period in the summer and fall of 2023. This assessment included community engagement through surveys, focus groups, interviews, service provider network/coalition meetings, and panel presentations to the City of Bellevue Human Services Commission. **More than 1000 community members provided input as part of the 2023-2024 Needs Update; their expertise and experience served as the foundation upon which the report was built.** Additionally, information gathered was considered in the context of publicly available quantitative data on demographic trends within the city and region, along with other relevant city and regional assessments, presentations, and planning documents. Community engagement for this needs update centered the voices of those with lived experience accessing the human services system, along with intersectional identities, including race, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.





Photo provided by Indian American Community Services.

The full report is divided into two key sections:

- **Community Engagement:** this includes an overview of the methodology and the efforts that led to the development of the report and the key themes that emerged from these efforts.
- **Service Area Considerations:** this includes a synthesis of the key themes complemented by quantitative data to illustrate areas that City leaders may consider for investment.



Several themes emerged in the data:

Changing Demographics and Meeting Needs in a Culturally Specific Way

Bellevue is growing and changing, reflecting ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, gender and sexual diversity. Community member and provider feedback highlighted the ways that the human services system infrastructure has struggled to adapt to the changing needs of the community. Throughout the assessment, the need for increased access to culturally and linguistically specific services was emphasized.

Disproportionate Impact by Race and Language

Needs update data highlighted the different experiences of residents based on their race and language, which impacts well-being in the City of Bellevue and access to human services. Quantitative data on human services needs highlighted growing challenges, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on communities of color and, while the impact of the pandemic lingers for all residents, particularly those of low- and moderate-incomes, disparities by race and ethnicity are significant across housing, health and well-being, food security, and other human services needs.

Knowledge of Available Resources

Information gathered through community engagement highlighted a lack of knowledge of available resources and the need for continuing and expanded efforts to help residents understand and connect to resources and support.



Communication, Collaboration, and Convening

Both community members and providers noted communication, collaboration, and convening as a key theme. In particular, residents emphasized the desire to partner with the City in the co-design of human services models that meet the needs of their communities, and highlighted the unique role that the City plays in bringing diverse stakeholders together in the service of collaborative efforts to increase the well-being of Bellevue residents. Community perspectives emphasized that representation at decision-making tables is necessary to ensure community voices are heard and individuals highlighted the value of including community members with diverse lived experience and consumers of human services in decision-making.

Growing Challenges for Human Services Providers

The challenges facing human services providers were also evident in the assessment. Community needs are escalating, and agencies are struggling to sustainably meet the demand, due to the decline in COVID-19 related funding, workforce challenges, the need for physical space to provide services and other strains on their provision of services. Workforce challenges include difficulty hiring and retaining staff, particularly in a high-cost region like East King County. These challenges are being echoed throughout the state and country, along with the significant pay gap between human services/non-profit care fields and employees in other industries.

Cost of Living, Availability of Housing, and Availability of Services

Community members and providers identified service gaps across the human services continuum and related areas. Affordable housing and cost of living were cited as the most common concerns across community focus groups, contributing to human services needs. Approximately half (49%) of community survey respondents reported being able to access a human services provider when a need was identified. Only 43% reported that they were able to access



services with an organization that supported their language and cultural needs. Some community members noted frustration about only being able to access services that meet their needs outside of the City of Bellevue.

Collectively the assessment presents a picture of a human services infrastructure with significant need, both strengths and challenges, and significant opportunity. Each of these themes is described in greater detail in the sections that follow. We hope that these efforts offer City leaders and community members a comprehensive picture of the human services needs that are faced by our most marginalized residents and drive investments that focus on addressing these needs.

