

Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City, Inc.

THE PPORTUNITY AGENDA

Bridging the Gap



Established in 1946, the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City is an affiliate of the National Urban League and a United Way agency partner, serving over 15,000 clients annually. Our mission is to assist African Americans, other minorities and the poor to achieve social and economic equality. We work to accomplish this mission through advocacy, bridge-building, research and program services.

Rev 11/09

What is The Opportunity Agenda?

The Opportunity Agenda is a set of strategic program services undertaken by the Urban League to eliminate social and economic disparities in central Oklahoma. It is intended to educate our city and state on the challenges facing our region. It is also intended to empower individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency; and to help shape a social and economic climate that values diversity and racial inclusion.

This agenda serves as a blueprint to bring all Oklahomans into the social and economic majority.

We have identified five empowerment opportunities that reflect the needs of the underserved in the Oklahoma City metro area: 1) Children and Families; 2) Employment and Training; 3) Entrepreneurship; 4) Urban Health and 5) Affordable Housing.

The Demographics

According to the US Census American Community Survey, the Oklahoma City minority population is comprised as follows: African Americans – 10 percent, Hispanic or Latino - 9 percent, Native American - three percent, Asian – three percent and individuals who identified with two or more races - four percent.

Total population	1,189,529	
White	838,807	71%
Black or African American	117,209	10%
Hispanic or Latino	110,533	9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	35,130	3%
Asian	32,970	3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	913	0%
Some other race	1,477	0%
Two or more races	52,490	4%

When comparing major factors that contribute to the quality of life, i.e., employment, income, poverty rates, home ownership, etc., there continues to be a huge disparity between African Americans, other minorities, and the average Oklahoma City citizen.

Oklahoma City Metropolitan Statistical Area

	Total OKC MSA Population	African American	Native American	Hispanic
	1,189,529	117,209	35,130	110,533
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Population 16 years & over	922,165	86,182	26,889	69,970
In labor force	66.90%	66.80%	66.60%	70.80%
Employed	62.80%	59.70%	60.60%	66.30%
Unemployed	3.40%	6.60%	5.40%	3.80%
INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2008 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)				
Households	460,994	44,141	12,137	30,054
Median household income (dollars)	46,587	29,522	46,491	33,159
Families	301,050	27,344	8,617	23,003
Median family income (dollars)	58,301	35,257	55,972	34,211
Individuals	1,189,529	117,209	35,130	110,533
Per capita income (dollars)	25,372	16,115	19,916	12,944
POVERTY RATES				
All families	10.10%	22.60%	13.70%	26.40%
With related children under 18 years	15.70%	30.90%	20.70%	33.60%
HOUSING TENURE				
Owner-occupied housing units	66.40%	42.70%	60.40%	51.10%
Renter-occupied housing units	33.60%	57.30%	39.60%	48.90%
OWNER CHARACTERISTICS				
Median value (dollars)	118,000	90,900	107,800	77,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

The Opportunity Agenda

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Disparity: Many of school children lack direction from positive educators and role models and become at-risk to alienation, low self-esteem, low academic and literacy performance and high school drop out. African-Americans and Hispanics represent 67 percent of dropouts within the Oklahoma City Public School district¹. In the 2007-08 school year, nearly 1,200 ninth grade students had 21 or more absences².

Poverty is also a contributing factor to low academic performance. Eighty-six percent of all students enrolled in the Oklahoma City Public School District are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The poverty rate for African American families in Oklahoma City is more than double (22.5 percent) that of the metro area rate (10.1 percent). African-American students and other minorities represent 78 percent of the district enrollment .

Bridging the Gap: Through the Urban League's children and families department, progress is being made in impacting the quality of life for children and families. Priorities include:

Improving Academic Performance – supplemental education in reading, math, science, English and chemistry is provided to students grades K-12 in high poverty, low performing schools. Students are pre-tested in order to develop a customized learning to fully realize individual potential and advancement.

Building Character – youth leadership development program is offered to youths that are academically advanced, but live in at risk areas. Youth participate in leadership and character building, educational seminars, and community service. Youth are given the responsibility of annually defining individual and group goals and activities, with adult supervision.

Emergency Services – meeting emergency needs through utility assistance, food vouchers, transportation assistance, and meal baskets. Emergency services are provided primarily to clients already enrolled in other agency programs, i.e., job training, homebuyer education, financial literacy, etc., in order to provide incentives and support as they work toward fully achieving economic self sufficiency.

¹Source: OK State Department of Education - State Dropout Report FY 2008

²Source: Oklahoma City Public Schools Statistical Profile 2007-08

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

The Disparity: The unemployment rate for the Oklahoma City area is 3.4 percent, but for African Americans, the rate jumps to 6.6 percent.

Bridging the Gap: The Urban League workforce development department specializes in locating employment for individuals who are the hardest to employ or are underemployed. The department provides career development resources aid in the process of workforce development..

Job Readiness and Placement Assistance – employment information sessions are held bi-weekly which train clients in resume preparation, interviewing techniques and job search activities. The workforce department actively works with businesses and industries to identify placement opportunities, develop customized training, and pursue internship opportunities for clients needing hands on training.

After Prison Work Initiative – decreases recidivism in the African American community by providing employment supportive services and training to clients that have previously been incarcerated. The APWI program focuses on assisting ex-offenders as they strive to be productive members of society.

Workplace Diversity – employer seminars and workshops are offered that focus on diversity recruitment, assessing cultural based skills gaps and needs, and developing strategies for a diverse skilled workforce

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Disparity: There is a huge disparity between the numbers of black and white owned businesses. In Oklahoma City, minorities make up 29 percent of the population, but own 12 percent of the businesses¹.

Bridging the Gap: The entrepreneurship department works to enhance economic development and growth of minority owned businesses and revitalize distressed commercial areas.

Seminars and Workshops – through the Urban League’s entrepreneurship department, small business start up workshop series are offered free of charge to the community. Series topics include basic steps to starting a business, how to write a business plan, getting out of debt, and how to find money for your business.

Business Counseling - one on one counseling is provided to minority entrepreneurs in areas such as business registration, acquiring tax identification, establishment of business structure, business and marketing plan development and loan packaging assistance.

¹Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002 Survey of Business Owners

URBAN HEALTH

The Disparity: Statistics from the Oklahoma Department of Health show that African-Americans have the highest mortality rate in Oklahoma and lead in the categories of heart disease, diabetes and stroke. African-Americans have the state’s second highest rate of cancer incidence. Many factors lead to this health disparity, including lack of health insurance; limited financial resources to pay for preventative health care, i.e. physicals, screenings, gym memberships, etc.; and mistrust of public services.

Leading Causes of Death by Race/Ethnicity
(All rates are deaths per 100,000 population)

Cause of Death	Oklahoma	African American	White	Native American	Hispanic
Heart Disease	250.4	301.1	250.2	235.3	103.2
Cancer	492.6	499.6	484.2	567	416.8
Stroke	53.2	78.6	52.2	38.2	36.1
Diabetes	30.3	60.5	26.5	58.5	22.3
Total Death Rate	918.7	1101	911.7	908.5	472.8

Source: Oklahoma Department of Health

Bridging the Gap: The Urban League’s works to change negative behavior and engage African-Americans in preventative health activities that will increase life expectancy and increase early detection and treatment for leading causes of death in the African-American community.

Education and Outreach – educational seminars and screenings are regularly offered to the African American community. Particular emphasis is placed on diseases where African Americans are at high risk or have a high mortality rate, including diabetes, heart disease, and breast cancer. Through partnerships with the health care industry, health advocates, and cultural media outlets, the Urban League is working to encourage a mindset that adopts healthy lifestyle choices and fitness activities.

Fitness Activities – The Urban League specifically targets low income areas, ie, in public housing locations, senior citizens center, etc., to provide free weight loss / fitness activities. Families in low income areas can rarely afford gym memberships or have time to seek out fitness activities. Activities are low impact physically and are presented to citizens in a way that is easily adopted into everyday life.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Disparity: In Oklahoma City, home ownership rates for African Americans is 24 percent below the city's average. The same is true when comparing the median home value (118,000 vs 91,800). Barriers to increasing African American homeownership in Oklahoma City include a lack of affordable housing, especially in distressed neighborhoods and citizens who are not mortgage ready. Lack of readiness is due largely to poor credit, limited income, and no savings.

Bridging the Gap: The Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City approach to this disparity is two pronged: home buyer education and counseling; and increasing the affordable housing supply in northeast Oklahoma City.

Home Buyer Education – educational seminars, taught by real estate and mortgage professionals, are provided to low to moderate income families (particularly African Americans), to prepare for home ownership. The curriculum covers money management, credit issues, mortgages, budgeting, home maintenance, loan processes, closing procedures, and avoiding foreclosure.

Affordable Housing Construction - in the early 2000's, the Urban League began new home construction and rehabilitation to bring more affordable, quality housing to northeast Oklahoma City. Our efforts have resulted in construction of 11 new single-family homes and four rehabilitated homes. All homes have been sold to low-income families. In 2009, construction was completed on 36 multi-family, town-home duplexes located on northeast 26th and Laird, and a 60-unit senior residence at northeast 30th and Kelley in partnership with the Greater Mt. Olive Baptist Church. Both developments are expected to generate an annual economic impact of more than \$2.5 million for the northeast Oklahoma City area.

CONCLUSION

Bridging the gap to achieve social and economic equality has a role for everyone. By working together, we can empower communities, change lives, and truly transform Oklahoma City.

Moving forward into the 21st century, we must recognize that there still remains a gap between the haves and have nots – even in Oklahoma City. To be a world class city, recruit highly technical industries and provide world class industries with a talented, skilled and diverse workforce, then we must work together to bridge the gaps, eliminate disparities, and empower ALL citizens to achieve social equality and economic self sufficiency.



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