

## **United Way of Hancock County – Financial Stability Initiative Framework**

### **Overarching Goal: Residents of Hancock County will increase financial stability.**

#### **The Issues:**

1. According to local unemployment statistics, the average number of individuals receiving unemployment benefits in Hancock County over the past 10 years has remained consistent at 1,400 annually. In conjunction with that number, another 1,000 individuals receive other types of financial assistance and are currently unemployable due to multiple factors. Both categories of individuals face similar barriers to gaining employment that promotes self-sufficiency and financial stability.
2. A recent Ohio Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) study, identified 14 percent of the 31,389 households in Hancock County as employed, working and earning more than the Federal Poverty Level but less than the basic cost of living. Another 11 percent that are employed are living below the Federal Poverty Level. This places them precariously along the benefits cliff, the place where one marginal increase in earnings will result in a loss of a very important benefit and/or one incident will cause them to fall into deep poverty.
3. A household that struggles with financial stability is often vulnerable to adverse conditions such as food insecurity, homelessness, harmful substance use, poor family function, abuse, neglect, lower literacy rates and more. Many children begin school having already experienced one or more of these conditions referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). ACE students are often not as equipped or prepared as their peers to begin learning on their first day of school. Habits and behaviors leading to good character and academic success, whether in Kindergarten or 12<sup>th</sup> grade, are not often modeled when a household

is in crisis. Opportunities to participate in youth activities that would identify and develop a student's skills and abilities are out of reach.

### **United Way of Hancock County's strategic response and objectives:**

Working within the parameters of collective impact, United Way of Hancock County (UWHC) is aligning its resources to support cross-sector collaboration, (public, private, faith-based, nonprofit or others) that will:

1. Increase the financial stability of 480 individuals in the unemployed, underemployed, unemployable categories and up to 1,500 households in the ALICE population over the next five years.
2. Ensure youth graduating from Hancock County schools acquire soft skills and financial management tools and are prepared for college and the workforce.

### **STRATEGIES:**

#### **Strategy 1: Workforce Readiness**

UWHC will be working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to reach the targeted individuals or families. In order for the identified target population to obtain sustainable employment that leads to self-sufficiency, the barriers to employment need to be identified and eliminated. Barriers may include lack of: transportation, soft skills, affordable housing or access to quality health care as well as literacy, mental and physical health issues, harmful substance use, past felony convictions and more. Once barriers are identified, we must ensure the new or returning workplace entrant is equipped to enter the workforce with the requisite knowledge, skills or abilities required to succeed in the workplace. Activities can include: identifying the unemployed, underemployed, unemployable or ALICE individual; assessing their barriers and needs; addressing and eliminating the identified barriers and/or provide the necessary training; connect the individual to employment and more.

#### **Strategy 2: Financial Empowerment**

Households residing in poverty, living on the benefits cliff or who are one incident away from being trapped in a cycle of poverty often live under the "tyranny of the moment". This is a reactive state due to the households' inability to plan for or gather the resources for the unexpected. When crisis does occur, the cycle of debt and poverty are perpetuated. These households often rely on high-cost alternatives to mainstream banking. Without resources to manage, financial acumen is neither understood nor exercised. By engaging the target population with financial literacy opportunities, coaching, education, financial tools and the recognition of community resources that can provide

leverage toward financial competency, the individual can achieve financial well-being and stability.

### **Strategy 3: Youth Investment**

Working with our public, private and parochial school systems, as well as our league of child care providers, UWHC and community partners from multiple sectors will assist in a grassroots effort to address the long-term education, soft skill development, critical thinking and family function of our area youth.

### **UNITED WAY OF HANCOCK COUNTY INITIATIVE FUNDING**

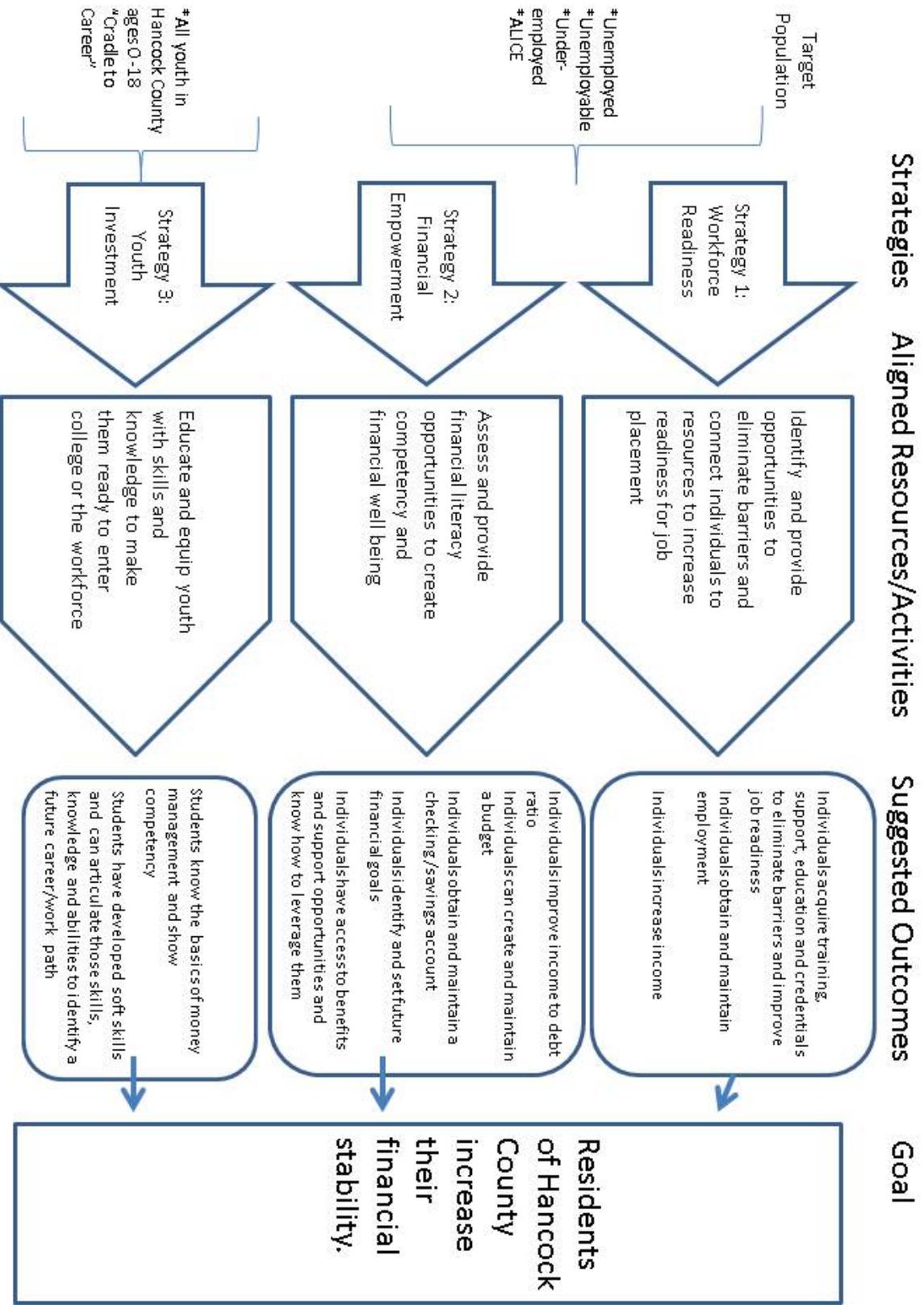
Through initiative funding, the practice of collective impact will be applied to the area of financial stability. Cross-sector collaborations must be able to identify a backbone organization to lead the effort, their common agenda, shared measurements, mutually reinforcing activities and ability to maintain constructive continuous communication throughout the life of the grant award.

To ensure the best use of resources, outcomes and activities must clearly align with the objectives. UWHC will develop a scope of work (SOW) for each strategy outlining specific activities to be contracted through our request for proposal (RFP) process. These will be available on our website in the near future. Those applying for initiative funding will be expected to respond to the SOW under which their program best aligns.

Current community partner agencies whose programs are not in the scope of work for our current funded initiatives, financial stability and food security, will continue with the standard program funding process.

UWHC recognizes that there are a number of funders and collaborative partners working on similar financial stability strategies in our community. UWHC desires to leverage these efforts to create needle moving outcomes for the financial stability of individuals in our community. *Therefore, applicants are advised to clearly illustrate how their proposed request will maximize other resources available in the community, avoid duplication of efforts, and coordinate with related partnerships and coalitions in the community.*

UWHC is interested in working with community partners across sectors who share commitments to understand the complex issues impacting financial stability and to engage in best practice program design, strategies and advocacy that effectively help those individuals who are striving to become self-sufficient.



Strategies

Aligned Resources/Activities

Suggested Outcomes

Goal

Target Population

Strategy 1:  
Workforce  
Readiness

Identify and provide opportunities to eliminate barriers and connect individuals to resources to increase readiness for job placement

Individuals acquire training, support, education and credentials to eliminate barriers and improve job readiness  
Individuals obtain and maintain employment  
Individuals increase income

Strategy 2:  
Financial  
Empowerment

Assess and provide financial literacy opportunities to create competency and financial well being

Individuals improve income to debt ratio  
Individuals can create and maintain a budget  
Individuals obtain and maintain a checking/savings account  
Individuals identify and set future financial goals  
Individuals have access to benefits and support opportunities and know how to leverage them

Strategy 3:  
Youth  
Investment

Educate and equip youth with skills and knowledge to make them ready to enter college or the workforce

Students know the basics of money management and show competency  
Students have developed soft skills and can articulate those skills, knowledge and abilities to identify a future career/work path

Residents of Hancock County increase their financial stability.

\*All youth in Hancock County ages 0-18  
\*“Cradle to Career”