



Affordability for All Work Group Meeting #5

(working title)

Children & Youth Community Plan
October 1, 2026





WELCOME

& Introductions



Introductions

Please share your name, role or organization, and answer:

Think of a person, connection, opportunity, resource, or lucky break that opened a door for you at some point in your life. What was it?
(i.e. teacher, job referral or reference, an internship, a scholarship, childcare, someone taking a chance on you...)



Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, & Purpose

15 min

What Works to Turn the Curve?

Use research and youth recommendations to brainstorm what we could do together

35-40 min

What Are We Going to Do?

Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction

10 min

Next steps, Announcements, & Close

15 min



Meeting Purpose

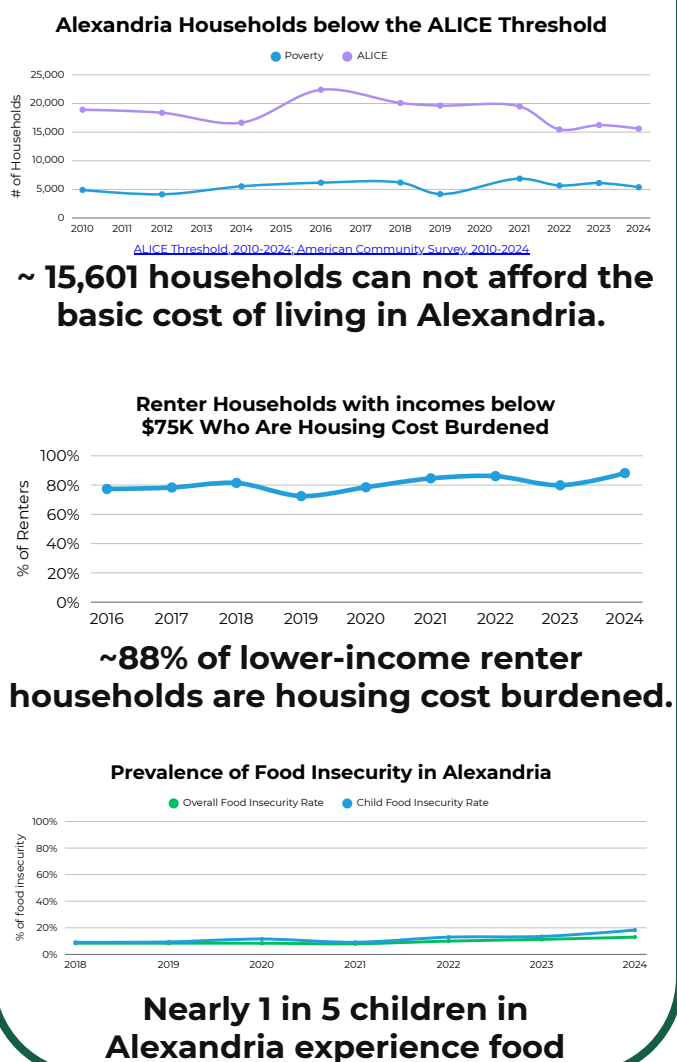
To use research and youth ideas to brainstorm what we could do together.



Results-Based Accountability: Turn the Curve Thinking



1. How are we doing?



2. What's the story behind these conditions?

- Wages Have Not Kept Pace with the Cost of Living
- Fragmented systems make financial instability harder to navigate
- Structural racism & inequitable access to wealth-building
- Rising Costs of Essentials Force Impossible Tradeoffs
- Income & Employment Shocks, & Lack of an Emergency Buffer
- Eligibility Gaps - families needing help before a crisis
- Benefits access, cliffs, & administrative burden
- Limited access to college & career pathways & good jobs

3. Who are the partners who have a role to play?

- Crisis Prevention & Financial Safety Net**
 - Office of Community Services;
 - Faith-based community;
 - ALIVE!;
 - ACT for Alexandria;
 - Salvation Army
- Financial Supports & Benefits**
 - Same partners as Crisis Prevention, plus;
 - DCHS Customer Relations Team & Benefits
- Income & Job Quality**
 - Workforce Development Center;
 - Private employment services;
 - Alexandria Economic Development Partnership;
 - Small Business Administration
- Education & Career Pathways**
 - ACHS Career & Technical Education/Academy;
 - ACT for Alexandria/internship efforts;
 - Workforce-development partners;
 - Financial literacy/management courses
- Wealth-Building Opportunities**
 - City homeownership programs;
 - Free Income Tax Preparation Program

4. What works to improve these conditions?

- Upward Mobility Predictors**
Source: [Urban Institute](#)
 - Financial security
 - Employment, Wages, Income
 - High-Quality Education
 - Wealth-Building Opportunities
- Experiences boost lifetime income**
Source: [Mobility Experiences](#)
 - Career Progression
 - Community Interactions
 - Education
 - Financial Wellbeing
 - Social & Familial Relationships
 - Physical & Mental Health
- Youth Recommendations**
Source: [City of Alexandria & ACPS](#)

TODAY



Economic Mobility for Whom?

Our result is for every family to have what they need to live with stability and thrive in Alexandria.
Our prevention focus is families experiencing or at risk of financial instability.

Alexandria households span a wide range of incomes and financial circumstances.

6%

4,652 households live on incomes below the federal poverty level in 2024.

~20%

15,601 households are ALICE - above poverty but not able to afford the basic cost of living in 2024.

8%

6,312 households make 101% - 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) in 2024.

31%

24,457 households make \$185,640+ (120%+ of AMI) in 2024.



Crisis

Experiencing acute hardship



Instability

Struggling to make ends meet



Survival

Meeting basic needs but with little cushion



Mobility

Making progress & moving forward



Stability

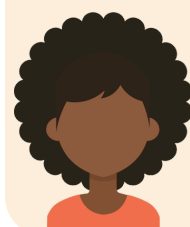
Financial security & greater opportunity

..... Many ALICE households experience financial stability somewhere in this range.

What this can feel like for families



"Life is hard. You wake up some days, and you're like, I don't know if I can even brush my teeth today...just get up, make sure my babies are clothed, and they're not feeling the heaviness of all of this..."
~ ARISE Participant



"Even though the \$500 didn't last the whole month, it gave me one week of breathing room."
~ ARISE Participant



"Still, even with work, there's never enough...There's always something missing at home."
~ ARISE Participant



"...to not have to work a second job so I can take a class that I need to get a certification to get a better job."
~ ARISE Participant

What works at this stage (evidence-based interventions)

Stop the Crisis

- Emergency cash assistance
- Rental/utility assistance
- Food/basic-needs assistance
- Crisis housing services
- Rapid benefits enrollment

Prevent future Crisis

- Early access to cash & tax credits
- Simpler, faster benefits access
- Flexible financial assistance
- Childcare & work supports
- Debt & Fee relief

Build financial resilience

- Emergency savings & matched savings
- Stable & sufficient income
- Job quality & predictable schedules
- Affordable childcare

Create pathways to advancement

- Education & credentials
- Skills training
- Quality jobs with opportunities for advancement
- Career coaching
- Entrepreneurship supports

Sustain security & build wealth

- Emergency cash assistance
- Rental/utility assistance
- Food/basic-needs assistance
- Crisis housing services
- Rapid benefits enrollment



What Works

What could help
improve conditions?





What Works to Improve Conditions?

Youth Recommendations

alexandriava.gov/child-and-family-services/children-and-youth-community-plan-report-cards#CommunityReportCardsmadebyYouth



Make assistance easier to access before families reach crisis

Simplify applications for rent, utilities, and other assistance; reduce eligibility and administrative barriers; expand support for ALICE households; increase awareness; and help families before eviction or another financial crisis occurs.

Help families cover essential expenses

Expand rental, utility, emergency cash, and other financial assistance that helps families afford basic needs and remain stable.

Make schools and community spaces hubs for support

Create accessible places where families can connect to food, clothing, hygiene products, school supplies, health services, housing assistance, and other resources in one place.

Make resources easier to find and navigate

Regularly promote food assistance, SNAP, tenant rights, financial supports, and other resources through schools, social media, flyers, hotlines, trusted messengers, and community outreach.

Mobilize community partners around basic needs

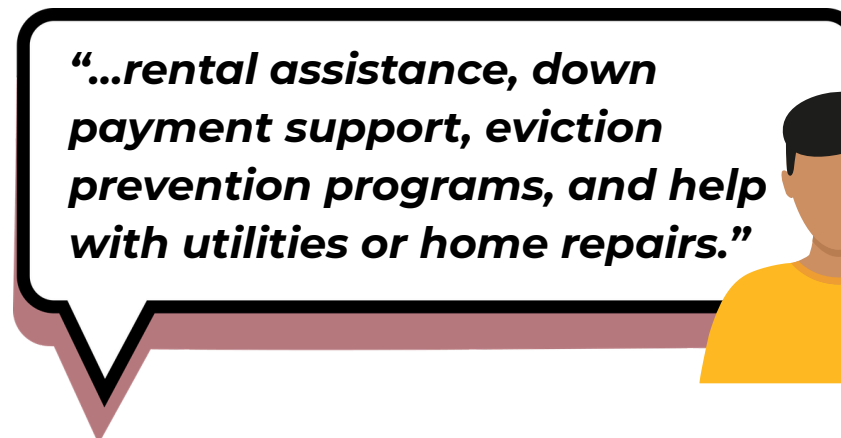
Coordinate schools, food providers, faith communities, businesses, farmers, volunteers, and community organizations to provide food and essential supplies through food drives, donation drives, distributions, and permanent resource centers.



"Seeking help through local organizations before it escalates."



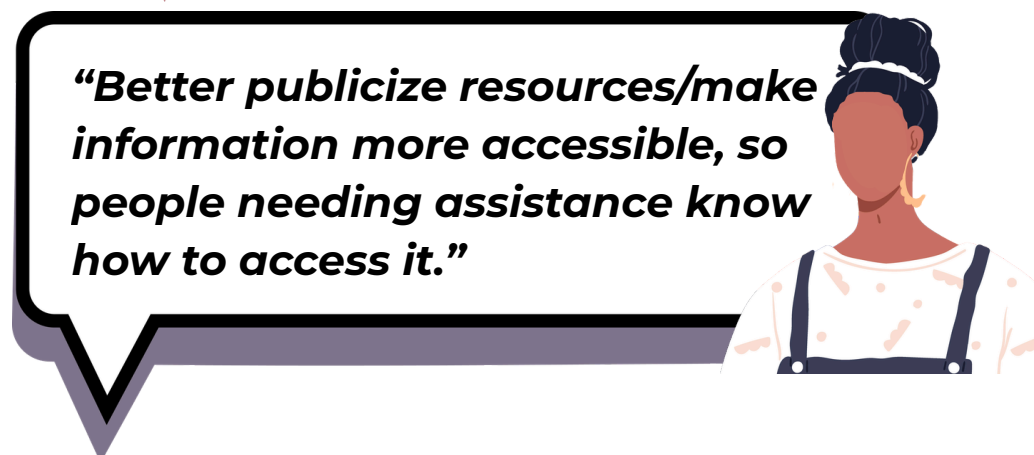
"Prevent families from receiving eviction notices."



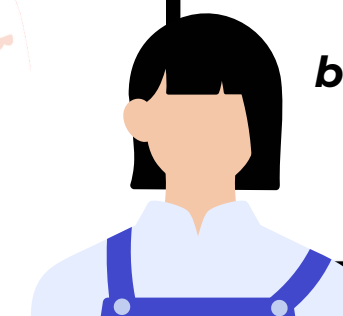
"...rental assistance, down payment support, eviction prevention programs, and help with utilities or home repairs."



"We recommend ACPS open in-school centers where students can collect donated shoes, clothes, supplies, and electronics for themselves and their families to ease financial burdens."



"Better publicize resources/make information more accessible, so people needing assistance know how to access it."



"Need more fundraising, food banks, donations, booster clubs, etc. What we have now is not enough for the demand."



What Works to Improve Conditions?

Youth Recommendations

alexandriava.gov/child-and-family-services/children-and-youth-community-plan-report-cards#CommunityReportCardsmadebyYouth



Provide direct financial support

Invest in cash assistance and guaranteed-income approaches like ARISE that give families flexibility to manage high living costs and financial emergencies.

Reduce the financial pressure on families

Work with City and state partners on tax, fee, and cost-reduction policies that leave families with more resources to meet everyday needs.

Increase wages and access to good jobs

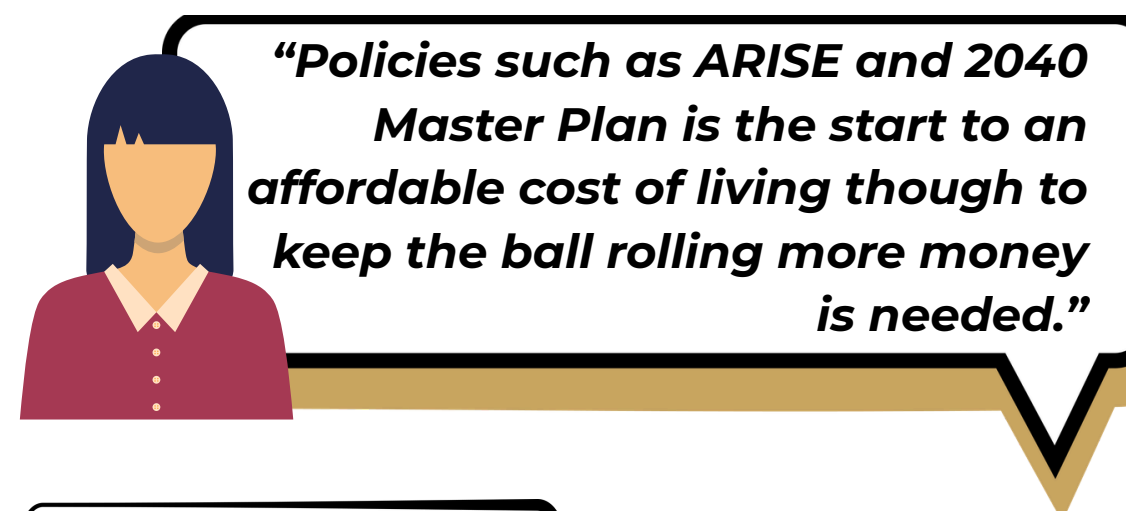
Advocate for living wages, worker protections, affordable employer healthcare, and family-supporting jobs; partner with employers to expand quality job opportunities.

Expand education and career pathways

Increase access to free college courses, vocational training, paid internships, job training, and pathways to living-wage careers, particularly for youth, caregivers, immigrants, and residents with limited English proficiency.

Build practical financial knowledge

Provide age-appropriate, multilingual education on budgeting, leases and tenant rights, utilities, grocery costs, emergency savings, and other everyday financial decisions from school age through adulthood.





What do you think would work? What could we do together in the first year?



What do you think would work to advance our strategy?

Round 1: Brainstorm Ideas (5 min.)

- Quietly on your own: Use the sticky notes to write down as many possible year-one actions that you can. Brainstorm actions we could do together over the next year to help families
- One idea per sticky note!



Round 2: Share & Group Ideas (15 min.)

- Share your ideas with the group
- Together we will group & combine similar ideas

Round 3: Prioritize (20 min.)

- Which 1-2 ideas should we pursue in year-one of implementation?
- Consider:
 - **Equity:** Which action would most improve outcomes for youth & families who currently face the greatest barriers?
 - **Feasibility:** Which action is most ready for coordinated action? what role could your organization play?
 - **Impact:** Which action could have the greatest impact on family financial stability?
 - **Systems Change:** Where could better coordination make the biggest difference?

Directions:

1. **Brainstorm Ideas (5 minutes)** On your own: Write down as many possible Year-One actions as you can. Brainstorm actions we could do together over the next year to advance our strategy. One idea/sticky note.
2. **Share & Categorize Ideas (10 minutes)** Share your ideas with the group. Together we will group & combine similar ideas.

Link to Whiteboard: canva.link/qpewj5i3fumwy2b



Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction





Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction



Result

Every family has what they need to live with stability and thrive in Alexandria.

Strategic Direction

Make living costs more manageable by helping families earn more, access direct financial support, and reduce everyday financial pressure.

Based on what we've learned so far, does this still capture where our work group could make a difference?

What's missing?

What's unclear or too broad?

What would you change?



Next Steps





Next Steps & Announcements



- **Next Meeting:** November 5
- Prioritize 1-2 ideas brainstormed today
- Build an action plan around those ideas

Announcements

- **November** - we'll have an opportunity to hear directly from youth about financial stability and affordability!
- What would you want to know? What do you wish we understood better about how financial instability affects young people and their families or what would actually help?