Affordability for All Work Group (*working title*) Meeting #6

A Children & Youth Community Plan Initiative
November 5, 2026





& Introductions



Introductions

Share your name & role & answer:

What's one thing you do now that your future self will thank you for?



Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, & Purpose	**10 min**
Review & Validate Brainstormed Actions	**15 min**
Identify & Prioritize Year-One Actions	**30 min**
Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction	**20 min**
Civic Action Kickoff	**10 min**
Next steps, Announcements, & Close	**5 min**



Meeting Purpose

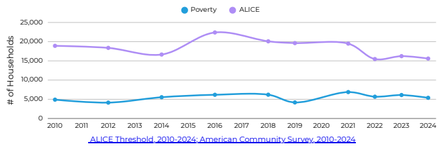
Identify our most promising Year-One priorities and refine the strategic direction that will guide our work over the next 5 years

Results-Based Accountability: Turn the Curve Thinking



1. How are we doing?

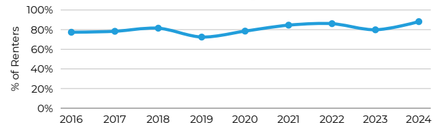
Alexandria Households below the ALICE Threshold



ALICE Threshold, 2010-2024; American Community Survey, 2010-2024

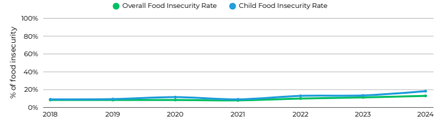
~ 20,253 households households can not afford the basic cost of living in Alexandria.

Renter Households with incomes below $75K Who Are Housing Cost Burdened



~88% of lower-income renter households are housing cost burdened.

Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Alexandria



Nearly 1 in 5 children in Alexandria experience food

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

- Make assistance easier to access before families reach crisis
- Help families cover essential expenses
- Make schools and community spaces hubs for support
- Make resources easier to find and navigate
- Mobilize community partners around basic needs
- Provide direct financial support
- Reduce the financial pressure on families
- Increase wages and access to good jobs
- Expand education and career pathways
- Build practical financial knowledge

5. What are we going to do?

TODAY

Brainstorm Session's Themes:

1. Helping Families Access Support Before Crisis
2. Making Existing Resources Easier to Find and Use
3. Improving Coordination Between Partners
4. Expanding Youth Economic Opportunities
5. Making Better Use of Resources to Meet Basic Needs
6. Equipping Youth with Financial Skills and Support

Review & Validate Brainstormed Actions



Review & Validate Brainstormed Actions

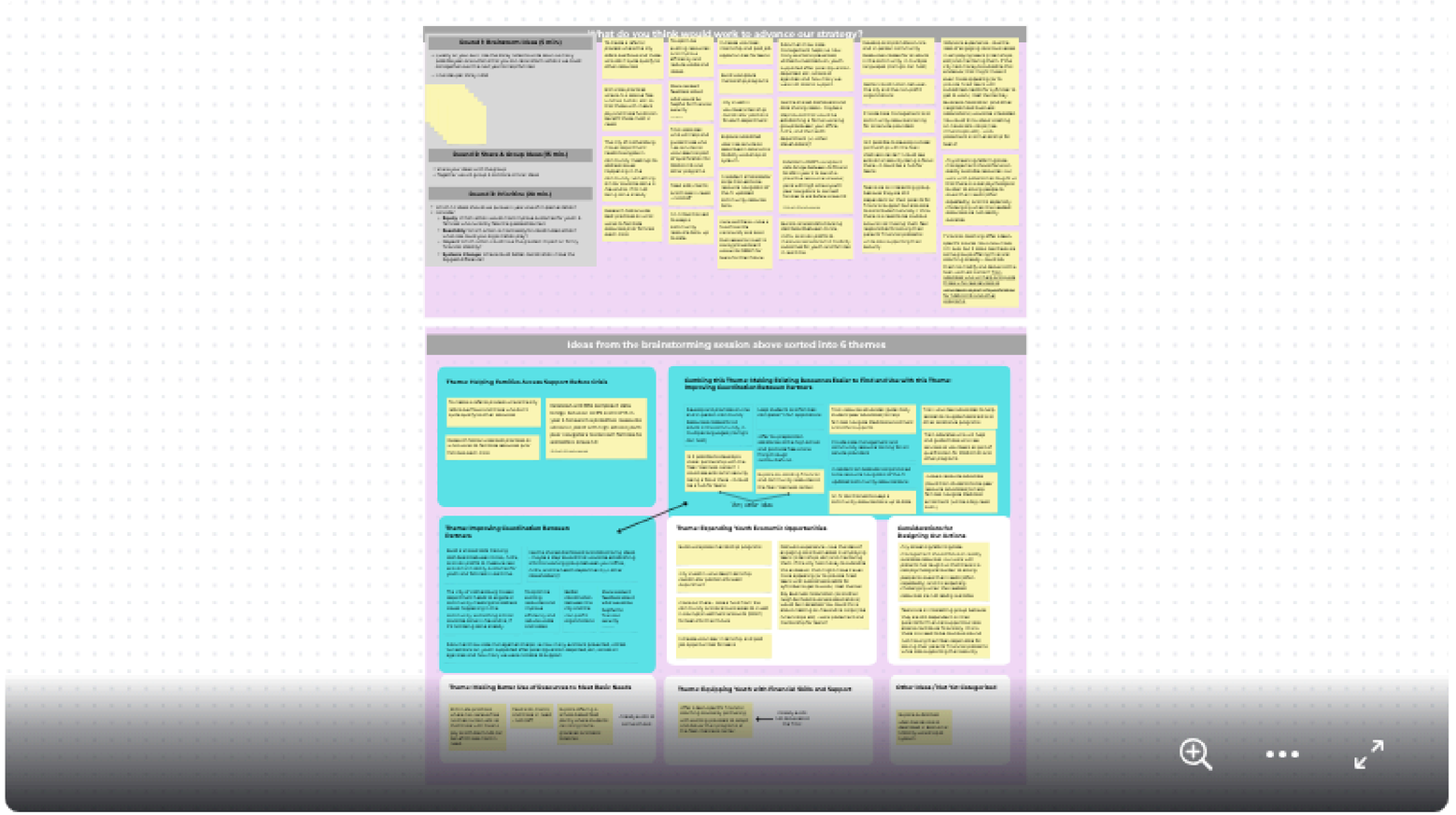


Theme	Example
Helping Families Access Support Before Crisis: Ideas related to connecting families to financial assistance earlier, including those who don't qualify for existing programs, through proactive outreach, screening, and referrals	“Create a referral process where the city refers overflows and those who don’t quite qualify to other resources”
Making Existing Resources Easier to Find and Use: Ideas related to helping families navigate existing supports through resource advocates, better information, community education, and assistance offered in trusted places like schools and the Teen Wellness Center	“Explore co-locating financial and community resources at the Teen Wellness Center.”
Improving Coordination Between Partners: Ideas related to strengthening collaboration between City agencies, schools, and community organizations through shared information, coordinated services, and better tracking of outcomes and unmet needs.	“Document how case management helps, i.e. how many evictions prevented, utilites turned back on, youth supported after parent/guardian deported, etc., across all agencies, and how many we were not able to support.”
Expanding Youth Economic Opportunities: Ideas related to creating more paid internships, jobs, and mentorship opportunities for teens through partnerships with local businesses, while helping young people build savings for their futures.	“City invest in volunteer/internship coordinator positions for each department”
Making Better Use of Resources to Meet Basic Needs: Ideas related to exploring ways to direct more resources toward families with the greatest needs, including school-based food pantries and reconsidering how existing assistance is allocated.	“Explore offering a school-based food pantry where students can bring home groceries and basic toiletries.”
Equipping Youth with Financial Skills and Support: Ideas related to partnering with existing providers to offer teen-focused financial coaching and practical money-management education, potentially through the Teen Wellness Center.	Offer a teen-specific financial coaching course by partnering with existing providers to adapt and deliver their programs at the Teen Wellness Center.

Review & Validate Brainstormed Actions

Take a few minutes to review the board and consider:

- **Were your ideas captured accurately?**
- **Is anything missing, misplaced, or unclear?**
- **Are there any ideas that should be combined?**



What are We Going to Do?



Financial Stability Spectrum

What would help ALICE households achieve greater financial stability, and what can we do together to make that possible? What could we do to prevent families from falling into 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

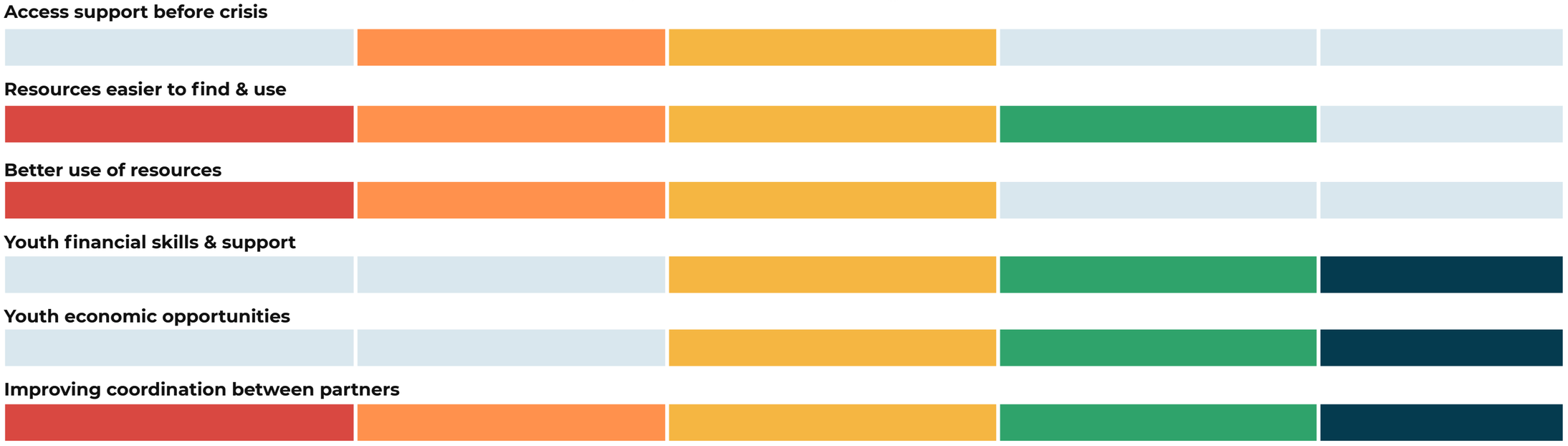
Survival
Meeting basic needs but with little cushion

Mobility
Making progress & moving forward

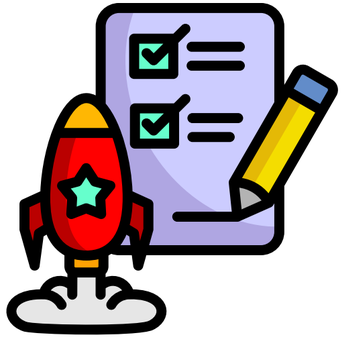
Stability
Financial security & greater opportunity

Many ALICE households experience financial instability somewhere in this range.

Themes from Brainstorm Session & where they could make a difference



Where Could We Make the Greatest Difference?



Round 1: Identify Promising Opportunities

Choose up to two themes where you believe this Work Group could make the greatest difference.

Consider:

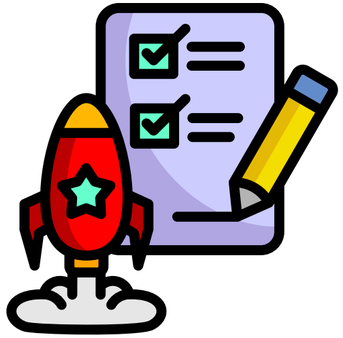
- Where are the biggest gaps or barriers?
- Where could collaboration help?
- What could we realistically advance together?

We'll focus our next discussion on the most promising areas.

Brainstorm Session's Themes:

1. **Helping Families Access Support Before Crisis**
2. **Making Existing Resources Easier to Find and Use**
3. **Improving Coordination Between Partners**
4. **Expanding Youth Economic Opportunities**
5. **Making Better Use of Resources to Meet Basic Needs**
6. **Equipping Youth with Financial Skills and Support**

What Should We Do in Year One?



Round 2: Identify & Prioritize Actions

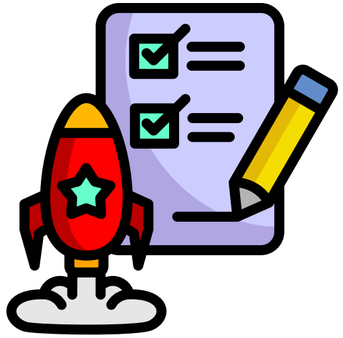
Review the ideas within our most promising themes. Which could we combine or develop into Year-One actions?

Goal: Identify 1–2 promising actions to develop further.

Use four considerations:

- **Equity**: Who benefits, especially families facing the greatest barriers?
- **Impact**: What could meaningfully improve financial stability?
- **Feasibility**: What could we accomplish or advance in one year?
- **Collective Action**: Where would working together add the most value?

Prioritized Actions



Help families get support before they reach a crisis

Notes from conversation:

- Build on existing training programs and resource guides to help people who work with youth and families:
  - Learn what assistance and opportunities are available.
  - Know where to send families for help and how to connect them directly.
  - Share information about resources before families reach a crisis.

Make it easier for families to find and use existing resources by improving how organizations work together

Notes from conversation:

- Test ways to connect youth and families with resources in places they already go.
- Partner with one or two community organizations to try approaches such as:
  - Training community members to help neighbors find support.
  - Having youth share resource information with their peers and connect them to trusted adults.
  - Helping families take the next step toward getting assistance, rather than simply giving them a list of services.

Possible partners or places to explore include Casa Chirilagua, the Teen Wellness Center, and existing youth leadership and peer ambassador programs

Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction



Revisit & Refine our Strategic Direction



Strategic Direction

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

What would help ALICE households achieve greater financial stability, and what can we do together to make that possible?

Strategy Mad Lib: Help ALICE households, move from [CURRENT CONDITION] toward [DESIRED CONDITION] by [BROAD APPROACH / LEVER FOR CHANGE]

1. What do the actions we've prioritized have in common?
2. What broader change are we trying to achieve for families over the next five years?
3. How should we refine our strategic direction to reflect that goal?

Start with the Result

The condition of wellbeing we want for children, youth, and families.





Result

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

Strategy DRAFT

Strengthen financial stability and family well-being for ALICE households by improving coordination among community partners and making it easier for families to find and access support before hardship becomes crisis.

Next Steps



Civic Action Kickoff - An Opportunity to Hear from Youth!

Event Details

December 3 & 4 | Both ACHS Campuses
Sign up for one or more classroom sessions:
9–10:30AM • 10:40AM–12PM • 2–3:30PM

We're recruiting facilitators to guide interactive classroom discussions focused on our proposed actions to hear what students think.

We'll provide discussion guides, materials, and a brief orientation.

Interested in facilitating?
Use this link to sign up!



Next Steps



November 5
Identify Year-One Priorities

- Select 1–2 promising actions
- Refine our five-year strategic direction
- Identify questions to investigate

December 3 & 4
Civic Action Kickoff

- Invite youth feedback on proposed CYCP actions
- Identify suggestions, concerns, and opportunities to strengthen our approach

In Between Meetings
Draft Action Plans

- Clarify actions, potential partners, and responsibilities
- Explore feasibility and existing efforts
- Identify possible performance measures

January 7
Finalize & Commit

- Review drafted plans together
- Refine and agree on proposed action plans
- Confirm roles and commitments

February
Prepare for Implementation

- Advance approvals and partner commitments as needed
- Begin implementation of actions ready to move forward

Mental Health & Wellness Fair

November 9, 2026 during Advisory (~11:57AM - 1:45PM) | ACHS King Street & Minnie Howard campuses

Students have repeatedly told us they don't know what mental health resources are available or how to access them. We're partnering with ACHS Student Leadership classes to help close that gap. The goal is for students to leave knowing where to go and how to take the next step.

We're seeking school, City, and community partners to:

- Introduce students to mental health and wellness supports.
- Offer an engaging activity that promotes their mental health
- Explain how students can connect to support.

The event combines a resource fair + experiential wellness activities (i.e. self-care kits, art therapy, mindfulness, or other wellness activities, games, movement, reflection/writing, etc.)

Interested in participating?
Sign up here: forms.cloud.microsoft/g/pxibpSi8Px



