

2027 United Way of Cass-Clay Notice of Funding Availability

Introduction

United Way of Cass-Clay (United Way) makes investments in measurable progress toward increasing access and reducing barriers for underserved, at-risk, and vulnerable individuals to achieve our Bold Goals:

- Prevent Hunger and Homelessness
- Prepare Children to Succeed
- Strengthen Families

Ultimately, these goals will collectively help to **lift families out of poverty**. These goals are rooted in community needs and the strategies and approaches we're prioritizing are proven to build pathways out of poverty.

United Way announces grant funding available for a one-year (2027) and three-year (2027-2029) grant cycle that is focused on the safety-net services that people need today and the strategic interventions that have the greatest long-term impact.

New this year, we've segmented our grant opportunities, not by Bold Goal, but instead by investment pathway; Community Essentials and Community Building. We will be investing in all three Bold Goals during each grant cycle and providing guidance to new applicants about the appropriate pathway following a Pre-Application Letter.

Community Essentials

These are **safety-net services** that ensure all families have access to the critical supports and resources they need today.

These are programmatic grants that are intended for programs that are meeting immediate needs. The length of the grant is 1 year.

Examples of programs that align with this investment pathway might include: basic needs and crisis response services, access to daily essentials, and immediate stabilization supports.

Community Building

These are **strategic, long-term partnerships** that strengthen systems and create lasting pathways out of poverty.

These are operational grants that are intended for programs that are collaborative, strategic, and building systems change. The length of the grant is 3 years.

Examples of programs that align with this investment pathway might include: housing stability and prevention, expansion of access/quality/capacity of early childhood education, workforce development and economic stability and collaborative community health and well-being efforts.



By focusing on the things people need today and building a system that transforms the way our community overcomes poverty and its consequences, we are committed to interrupting the cycle of poverty for families and children.

The following outlines our **Community Impact Agenda and Programmatic Threshold, Eligibility, Evaluation and Selection Process, Investment Timeline**, information on how to seek United Way support during the application process, **Reporting Requirements**, as well as the **Performance Measures** successful applicants will be demonstrating and reporting.

We call this our **Community Impact Investment Process**. It begins with understanding community needs, invites partners to commit to shared community goals to address those needs, and is deeply rooted in collaboration, cooperation, and accountability.

Community Impact Agenda

Our Community Impact Agenda is a strategic, collaborative plan for creating lasting positive change in Cass and Clay counties, focusing on our shared goals that build health, stability, opportunity, and well-being for families and children. During the 2027-2029 investment timeline, we're seeking to achieve the following collective impact. Targets will be co-created alongside the Verified Impact Partners that are selected and will use community data and trends to track progress and make adjustments as community needs evolve.

As you review the below sections please reference these definitions:

Outcome – the state that we hope to achieve through long term investment in this focus area.

Objectives – the program types and activities that will help us incrementally achieve the stated outcome. This is not comprehensive of all objectives, but provides guide posts to the types of programs we are seeking.

Approaches – the philosophies, models, or frameworks that our United Way has prioritized as data driven best practices.

Preliminary Target – based on the level of need in the community, we are working to invest in partnerships and programs that will help us reach this target. The target will be finalized once all partners have been selected.

Community Impact Agenda

Bold Goal 1 *Prevent Hunger and Homelessness*

Preventing hunger and homelessness for families and children ensures that basic needs are met today and that we're addressing food insecurity and housing instability systemically.

Outcome: All people have access to the food and housing solutions that meet their basic needs and ensure stability.

Objectives:

- Increase co-located pantries and food distribution in schools, healthcare facilities, and community-based settings
- Public benefit navigation and application assistance
- Homelessness prevention and diversion tactics
- Emergency shelter and supportive services
- Housing focused approaches providing rapid access to permanent housing and supportive services
- Legal support tenants in eviction proceedings
- Rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for targeted populations
- Street outreach
- Integration with mainstream resources for holistic support
- System coordination and cross-agency case management

Approaches: We prioritize low-barrier and Housing Focused interventions and other research validated approaches to crisis intervention. Coordinated entry and homelessness response system collaboration is required for partnership. As it relates to hunger-relief, we prioritize long term food security that emphasizes client choice, equity, nutrition and health, as well as client centered approaches to food distribution.

2027-2029 Community Building Preliminary Target:

- Decrease the inflow into homelessness by 10%
- Decrease food insecurity by 1%

2027 Community Essentials Preliminary Target:

- Distribute 3 million pounds of food with a focus on produce, medically and culturally appropriate foods and food programs supporting children
- Shorten emergency shelter stay (to appropriate levels based on guest demographics) and 75% of guests who exit are exiting into permanent housing solutions

Community Impact Agenda

Bold Goal 2 *Prepare Children to Succeed*

Children who grow up in poverty are 3x more likely to experience poverty as adults. We know that focusing investment in support of children cradle to career allows us to intensively build stability, improve educational outcomes, and long-term impact on a child's future economic outlook, health, and well-being.

Outcome: All children are set up for success throughout their school careers, with the ultimate goal of increasing their economic mobility through educational attainment, career exploration, and mentorship.

Objectives:

- Increase availability, accessibility, and affordability of high-quality programs
- Develop systems to identify children at risk of needing special education or additional supportive services through early interventions
- Support systems to deliver supplemental services for children and families needing additional support.
- Support programs that implement family engagement activities
- Ensure home environments support early development, families are able to identify barriers to childhood success, and families are connected with community-based resources
- Identify and deliver timely supports to students at risk of not meeting key benchmarks such as third-grade reading levels, chronic absenteeism, or on track to graduate on time
- Support quality rating and improvement system for all Out of School Time programs
- Career exploration opportunities and experiences (ie, apprenticeships, internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, service learning, mentoring, etc)
- Parent engagement in children's academic goals and progress
- Strengthen full-service community school models and service delivery

Approaches: We prioritize programs that are high quality rated and embed supportive services or have strong cooperative relationships with other service providers. We emphasize the values of effective community schools that transform schools and learning environments into hubs for learning and holistic development. As with all of our bold goals, we also emphasize a two generation approach in Bold Goal 2.

2027-2029 Community Building Preliminary Target:

- Increase availability of high-quality early learning spots for children by 500
- Sustain rate of 95% kindergarten readiness for all children exiting early learning programs into kindergarten
- 90% of students are meeting or exceeding academic benchmarks (literacy and math) and graduating choice ready

2027 Community Essentials Preliminary Target:

- Provide 400 program scholarships to low-income and underserved families

Community Impact Agenda

Bold Goal 3 *Strengthen Families*

Families can thrive when they have access to the tools, resources, and supports that help them improve their health, well-being, and economic stability. We focus on strengthening families through both economic pathways and by building upon the protective factors that help them stay well and reach their potential.

Outcome: Our community has systematically and incrementally decreased the rate of poverty and the social, emotional, and financial consequences of income instability while building family resilience.

Objectives:

- Crisis hotline and helplines
- Ensuring access to support services and preventative or protective factors that support long term mental well-being and social connectedness
- Ensuring access to counseling, therapeutic interventions, crisis management, and peer support
- Employment preparation and placement services
 - o Resume preparation, job search, and interview skill building
- Complementary social services to address external and personal barriers to employment
- Sector based workforce initiatives
- Industry specific training with basic skills development (reading, writing, math, soft skills, ESL)
- Occupation specific training for low-skilled individuals in high-growth industries with education and supports
- Work experience opportunities
- Social service integration (e.g. housing, disability, physical health, mental health, childcare, etc)

Approaches: We also emphasize the need for access to “good jobs” that help to provide family sustaining wages or employment that creates economic stability and mobility. We prioritize partnerships across agencies and collaboration with employers, educational and training institutions. We continue to prioritize partnerships that enable better coordination of high-quality and well-timed services and are person-centered and trauma-informed, with the focus of identifying gaps in services or problems that are blocking equitable access to essential resources and services families in our community need to thrive.

2027-2029 Community Building Preliminary Target:

- 1,000 individuals gain new or better employment in in-demand fields
- 90% of families able to navigate necessary resources and supportive services to maintain employment or household stability
- Collectively benchmark and scale community vulnerability assessment for family resiliency

2027 Community Essentials Preliminary Target:

- Increase access to immediate care for 1,500 individuals
- 60% of families served report reduced barriers (as a result of increased access to crisis services that support immediate needs and a connection to appropriate services)

These efforts require big change and we commit to community change through a process called Collective Impact. That means that our partners are contributing and committing to a shared goal that depends on cooperation and collaboration with the other partners. This unique framework ensures that, by working together, we're able to make greater change than we are alone. Because of this, we take partnership seriously. Programs that align with our investment process meet the following thresholds:

Programmatic Threshold

- Adheres to the core principles of low barriers to services, with the principles reflected in policy and procedure.
- Efforts leverage preventative, proactive, and upstream solutions.
- Clearly identify the population that will be targeted through the proposal. Please see Appendix A for demographic data provided by United Way that will inform our decision making.
 - Across all of our funding priorities, we invest in programs that support generational outcomes for families and children.
- Be willing to collaborate with other Community Partners to ensure appropriate coverage of our service area and no unnecessary duplication of services.
 - Exhibit a high-level of community cooperation through participation in broader community initiatives, regular coalition engagement, and commitment to shared community goals.
- All applications must clearly define need and ability to measure impact.

In addition to approaches outlined under each bold goal, priority will be given to applications that, if appropriate, adhere to the core principles of:

- Two Generation (2Gen) approach
- Trauma-informed care
- Client-centered care

United Way may request additional information to verify that proposal thresholds are being met; although, we encourage each applicant to provide detailed information to illustrate how it meets these requirements.

Eligibility

All applicants must meet and provide evidence of the following requirements:

- Use funding from this proposal to serve residents of Cass County, North Dakota, and/or Clay County, Minnesota. Applicants who serve a larger geographic area (i.e., statewide) may apply but must ensure that funding will support activities in these two counties.
- Maintain eligibility as a public agency, including Indian tribes and nonprofit private organizations, both secular and faith-based, which serve individuals in Cass County, North Dakota, and/or Clay County, Minnesota. This requires that private nonprofit organizations obtain and maintain a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.
 - We will accept fiscally sponsored applicants with a letter of support from their sponsoring organization.
- We accept applications from organizations that have been in operation for at least 2 years with their 501(c)(3) status or fiscally sponsored with strong financial documentation for at least 3 years.
- Be incorporated or chartered under appropriate local, state, or federal statutes.
- Abide by all applicable federal and state laws including anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, affirmative action, and anti-terrorism.
- Have an active, locally based board of directors that meets regularly, makes policy decisions, and holds election of officers.
- Have an administrative structure with defined lines of responsibility, a mission statement, and bylaws.
- Be financially stable and able to ensure appropriate stewardship of the funds entrusted, perform a regular budgeting process, and be able to submit IRS Form 990 and/or audited financial statements.
- Have current license, certification, and permits if applicable.
- Be able to demonstrate effectiveness of programs and services through measurable outcomes.

Per our guidelines, United Way does not fund the following agencies or activities:

- Fraternal organizations, merchant associations, chamber memberships or programs, or 501(c)(4) or (6) organizations
- Section 509(a)(3) – Type III supporting organizations
- Private foundations
- Endowments or memorial campaigns
- Capital campaigns
- Fundraising events or sponsorships
- Programs operated by religious organizations for religious purposes
- Political organizations or organizations designed primarily to lobby
- Individuals, including those seeking scholarships or fellowship assistance
- Travel and related expenses including student trips and tours
- Deficit reduction
- Sporting events, organizations, or teams

Evaluation, Selection, and Timeline

United Way utilizes a multi-tiered, volunteer led vetting process with a multi-stage application. Beginning in 2027, all programs move through one unified investment cycle with two pathways. Our investment pathways help us evaluate programs based on what they are designed to do, invest strategically across short term needs and long term solutions, and stay agile as community needs change.

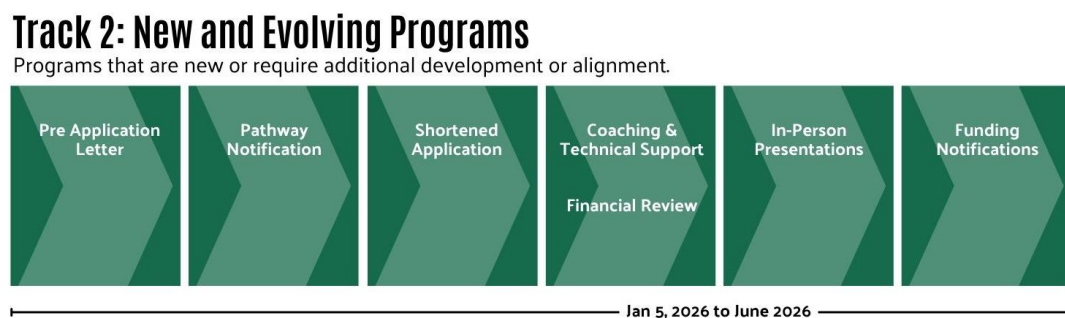
- Community Essentials supports immediate needs and stability.
- Community Building supports long term opportunity and systems change.

We also use application tracks to recognize strong performance from current partners. This reduces unnecessary workload while maintaining high expectations for impact and accountability.

DEC 2025	JAN 2026	FEB 2026	MAR 2026	APR 2026	MAY 2026	JUNE 2026
<p>December 8 NOFA released to current VIPs and pathway notices sent</p> <p>December 9 Public NOFA released</p> <p>December 16 Information Webinars</p>	<p>January 5 Community Investment opens for New Program Track</p> <p>New programs begin with a Pre Application Letter due</p> <p>January 25</p> <p>Select applicants invited to submit a full Application on</p> <p>January 30</p> <p><i>Current VIPs skip this phase</i></p>	<p>February 2 Applications open for both new programs and current VIPs</p> <p>February 22 Applications due</p> <p>Sign up for coaching sessions with United Way's Community Impact Team.</p> <p>Sign up for a presentation date and time.</p>	<p>Feedback and coaching sessions with applicants</p> <p>Financial review period</p> <p>Volunteer review panel training</p>	<p>April 6 – 24 Applicants will provide presentation of their application to the review panel</p>	<p>The Community Impact Committee develops recommendations for the Board of Trustees.</p>	<p>Board of Trustees will make final decision about investment</p> <p>Organizations will be notified of their funding status</p>

- United Way announces the Notice of Funding Availability on December 9, 2026
 - The NOFA outlines eligibility, expectations, and the goals and strategies that guide investment decisions.
 - Current VIPS receive pathway assignment on December 8, 2025
- Organizations express interest
 - Prospective partners submit a Pre Application Letter for consideration.
 - Current Verified Impact Partners move directly into the next step.
- Pathway assignment on January 30, 2026
 - United Way assigns each new program to either Community Essentials or Community Building and communicates expectations for that pathway.
- Organizations complete the full Application (February 2 to 22, 2026)
 - Organizations submit the online Application for their assigned pathway.

- Organizations sign up for coaching sessions with United Way’s Community Impact Team.
- Organizations sign up for their in-person presentation date and time.
- Internal review and coaching
 - United Way’s Community Impact team reviews Applications for clarity and completeness and holds brief coaching sessions to prepare organizations for the volunteer process.
- External financial review
 - United Way’s Finance Committee and approved community finance professionals assess each organization’s financial health and stability.
- Volunteer training
 - United Way prepares Community Impact Committee (CIC) and Community Investment Review Panel (CIRP) volunteers with training on community data, investment strategies, desired impact, key requirements, and evaluation tools.
- Volunteer evaluation and presentations (April 6 to 24, 2026)
 - CIC and CIRP volunteers review Applications for alignment with United Way’s goals and strategies. Organizations then present their work to volunteers who help steward donor investments.
- Volunteer funding recommendations
 - The Community Investment Review Panel evaluates each program using United Way’s rubric.
 - The Community Impact Committee then reviews these findings against our goals and targets to recommend the programs that will make the greatest impact toward our Bold Goals.
 - These recommendations move forward to the Board of Trustees.
- Board review
 - United Way’s Board of Trustees reviews volunteer recommendations and finalizes all funding decisions.
- United Way communicates final decisions to all applicants by June 26, 2026



Reporting

In order to demonstrate progress toward these goals, all successful applicants funded through this process will be asked to provide data on program outcomes in three ways: demographic information, shared performance measures, and program-specific measures. Reporting will be required twice annually at midyear and end of year and is unique to each investment pathway.

Applicants must be able to reasonably and accurately describe how the population they seek to impact through services is in line with our target population (additional data provided in Appendix A).

1) Demographic Information:

Ultimately, our goal is to lift families out of poverty. Demographic information helps us understand to what extent we may be collectively creating pathways to opportunity and support for those most impacted by poverty in our community.

All applicants will be asked to provide the total number of unduplicated clients served in each of the following categories:

- a) Client Age
- b) Client Gender Identity
- c) Household Poverty Status
- d) Household Public Benefit Eligibility
- e) Client Race and/or Ethnicity
- f) Client Living Situation
- g) Client Location (or Current Address)

2) Shared Performance Measures:

Each Bold Goal has a set of outputs, outcomes, and impact we're tracking progress towards. Depending on the Investment Pathway (Community Essentials or Community Building), the depth and breadth of what we're asking applicants to track differs. Please see Appendix B for details about preliminary indicators that partners may be expected to report.

3) Impact Stories:

Annually, programs will be asked to provide a narrative description that may include a client or volunteer story, video, or other depiction of the impact of their program over the last year. Details are provided upon approval of investment.



Learn More About United Way and Our Application Process

Once you've had a chance to fully review this document, we invite you to learn more about our investment priorities and application process. Should you need support

Informational Webinars

United Way will hold two virtual training sessions providing an overview of the application process. This is a great opportunity to have any questions answered prior to submission. These sessions will be held virtually. Session recordings will be available after live training for partners who are unable to attend a live session. Interested parties can register for an informational webinar using the links below.

Register for Informational Session 1: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 11:30-12:15pm

Register for Informational Session 2: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 1:00-1:45pm

One on One Meetings

United Way will accommodate individual requests for one-on-one meetings to review the Notice of Funding Availability and the application process. With any questions, please contact the Community Impact team at United Way of Cass-Clay.

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Appendix A: Population of Focus and Community Data

As of 2023, according to the US Census Bureau's 5-year estimates, in Cass and Clay counties, 11.4% of the population live below the poverty level – this is more than 27,000 individuals in our community. In 2025, the poverty guideline was set as a family of four living on less than \$32,150 a year. Moreover, 12.8% of children under the age of 5 live in poverty and 17.9% of 18 to 34 year olds live in poverty. This illustrates that young families may struggle the most in our community.

Poverty and Wages

Furthermore, when we considered race and ethnicity, and nativity (if an individual was born inside or outside of the United States) of those living in poverty, we see people of color and those who are born outside of the nation struggle at an even higher rate in our community:

- 9.2% of individuals who identify as White alone lives in poverty
- 26.6% of individuals who identify as Black or African American alone lives in poverty
- 38.3% of individuals who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native alone lives in poverty
- 21.3% of individuals who identify as Asian alone lives in poverty
- 15.8% of individuals who identify as Hispanic lives in poverty

In total, 5.5% of households live below the poverty level in our community. This jumps to 8.5% of families with children under 5 and 11.4% of families with children under 5 and ages 5 to 17.

- 3.7% of households who identify as White alone, not Hispanic lives in poverty
- 21.2% of households who identify as Black or African American alone lives in poverty
- 27.1% of households who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native alone lives in poverty
- 25.1% of households who identify as Asian alone lives in poverty
- 9.8% of households who identify as Hispanic lives in poverty
- 26% of households who are Foreign-Born lives in poverty

According to this same data set, 74.8% of the total population over the age of 16 participates in our community's labor force with only a 3.2% unemployment rate. This varies slightly based on race and ethnicity, and nativity:

- 74.2% of individuals who identify as White alone over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 2.9% unemployment rate
- 80.2% of individuals who identify as Black or African American over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 8.2% unemployment rate
- 73.4% of individuals who identify as American Indian over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 12.5% unemployment rate
- 79% of individuals who identify as Asian alone over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 1.2% unemployment rate
- 83.1% of individuals who identify as Hispanic over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 1.2% unemployment rate
- 78% of individuals who are Foreign-Born over the age 16 participate in the labor force with a 5.8% unemployment rate

According to this same data set, the median household income for our community is \$75,523. This drastically varies based on race and ethnicity, and nativity:

- \$80,417 for households who identify as White alone
- \$38,434 for households who identify as Black or African American
- \$83,458 for households who identify as Asian alone
- \$61,062 for households who identify as Hispanic
- \$42,803 for households who identify Native American or Alaska Native
- \$41,105 for households who are Foreign-Born

Additionally, female head of households with no male spouse present with related children under 5 years and 5 to 17 years are 35.4% below the poverty level and have a median income of only \$43,198 (with children, \$36,642) compared to male head of households with no female spouse present at \$57,098 (with children, \$51,967).

Educational Attainment

We know one of the biggest predictors of poverty is the lack of educational attainment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of all Cass and Clay County residents over 25 years of age:

- 2.3% (3,804 individuals) have less than a high school diploma
- 18.2% (29,924) have graduated high school or have high school diploma equivalency
- 20.9% (34,357) have some college or associate's degree
- 29.1% (47,911) have earned a bachelor's degree or higher

Poverty rates are higher for those with lower educational attainment:

- 21.7% of those age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma live in poverty.
- 10% of those age 25 and older who are high school graduates or equivalency live in poverty.
- 11.2% of those age 25 and older with some college or an associate's degree live in poverty.
- 3.5% of those age 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher live in poverty.

This data reinforces that these families are often marginalized and may not have the same access to essential resources and support to thrive. By taking an equity informed approach to our investment strategy, we look to focus on families who have historically been underserved and do not have the means to develop their well-being and supports on their own.

Appendix B: Preliminary Indicators By Bold Goal

These are the qualities and program metrics that are helping us to track progress towards our Community Impact Agenda. They measure what our partners are doing, the reach or output of that program, how “well” we are doing, and whether people are better off as a result of the intervention or program. We often use the words outputs, outcomes, and impact to describe the total picture of how success will be measured. As we identify partners best able to contribute to our overall Community Impact Agenda, these indicators may evolve.

Bold Goal 1

Strategy 1 – Prevent hunger for families and children through system-wide collaborative initiatives.

- Number of unduplicated individuals served
- Number of unduplicated households served
- Usage rate per household annually
- Number of pounds of food distributed or served
- Number of clients who apply for SNAP
- Percentage of individuals who screen as food insecure who are connected to supportive/supplemental services

Strategy 2 – Prevent homelessness for families and children through system-wide collaborative initiatives.

- Number of unduplicated individuals served
- Number of unduplicated households served
- Number of households housed while in programming
 - o Percent of households who exit programming into permanent housing
 - o Percent of households who return to homelessness once housed
- Number of households who can maintain housing while in programming
- Changes in community connectedness and access to community resources
- Changes in vulnerability status

Bold Goal 2

Strategy 1 - Prepare children for kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically.

- Number of unduplicated children served
- Number of unduplicated households or families served
- Number of children enrolled in accredited/highly rated early education programs
- Percent of families receiving information or resources to support early learning and development at home and percent improvement in knowledge of parenting and child development
- Number of families receiving supportive services to support childhood success
- Percent of children meeting developmental milestones
- Children identified as at-risk through early intervention screening

Strategy 2 – Prepare students to graduate choice ready to continue their education or enter the workforce.

- Number of unduplicated children served
- Number of unduplicated households or families served
- Graduation rate of students served
- Decrease in absenteeism

- Rates of literacy, STEM, and other identified core readiness skills
- Number of students connected to a positive mentor
- Percent of students engaged in 21st century learning
- Percent of students participating in afterschool, weekend, and summer programs that support their academic success and development
- Percent of students receiving support services (e.g. mentoring, tutoring, mental health counseling)
- Percent of students connected to internships and/or service-learning opportunities
- Percent of families receiving information or resources to support student success (e.g. attendance, homework completion, supporting students at home)

Bold Goal 3

Strategy 1 – Increase employment and income to improve financial stability.

- Number of unduplicated individuals served
- Number of unduplicated households served
- Number of individuals who earn certificates/degrees/credentials needed to obtain employment
- Number of certificates/degrees/credentials obtained total
- Number of individuals who receive supportive services to assist in obtaining and maintaining employment
- Number of individuals who obtain employment
- Percent of individuals who maintain employment
- Percent increase in the households earning higher wages
- Number and type of barriers reduced to maintain employment

Strategy 2 - Increase family and social support to reduce barriers to access social, emotional, and mental health resources.

- Number of individuals referred to appropriate social, emotional, or mental health services
- Percent improvements in mental health status (patient reported)
- Number of households who access prevention and support services (and they type provided)
- Number of families enrolled in quality home visiting program, peer support, or other learning community that builds social connections and social capital
- Percent increase in mental health and well-being of target population