

Step Up Savannah Strategic Plan July 2015

<p>Vision: Savannah is a community where all people have hope and opportunity, where we challenge injustice, and where all community members Step Up to reduce poverty.</p>	
<p>Revised Mission: Step Up engages all sectors of the community to improve the economic mobility and financial stability of families in Savannah and Chatham County.</p>	
<p>Statement of Values: Step Up works to realize its vision through CONVENING organizations and acting as a catalyst among partners while holding each other mutually accountable; CREATING AND EXPANDING signature programs and activities to address gaps in services; and RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS about the needs of organizations serving families and individuals and ensuring issues related to low-income families are part of the community conversation.</p>	
<p>Goal: <u>Employment and training</u> Increase the number of job-ready individuals in Savannah, Chatham County by providing programming and working with community-based partners that connect low-income residents to jobs and career pathways that provide family-supporting wages.</p>	
<p>Action Steps: Support and expand workforce readiness and job skills training, vocational training and adult education through these programs and initiatives:</p>	<p>Performance Measurement:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chatham Apprentice Program (CAP) and other community-based training that increase earning power of participants. Identify geographic areas where generational poverty is entrenched and work to align resources in those areas. • Workforce Action Team, hosted at Savannah Economic Development Authority, this group of HR, post-secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a suitable, permanent location to hold CAP classes and invite partner organizations to provide financial education and counseling, a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, public benefits screening and application assistance, and other services • Add entrepreneurial training component to CAP curriculum • Base skills training on analysis of labor data and local industry growth • Train at least 100 individuals each year so they may gain employment at family sustaining wages • Regularly survey CAP participants regarding transportation needs • Identify target populations not currently reached or underserved; ensure programs designed to serve special needs

<p>education, and workforce development professionals meets bi-monthly. Addresses employability skills, bridges the gaps between employers and service providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savannah Graduates (partner) • Center for Working Families, network of community-based organizations that promotes a holistic service delivery model to meet the range of needs of low-income families, from workforce training to financial education and counseling, to access to public benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote use of Georgia BEST soft skills training curriculum among workforce training providers • Complete online workforce development directory and house on Step Up website • Identify successful workforce programs and ensure employers, training programs and job-seekers know about one another • Participate in core team, which guides the work of this initiative • Educate community based agencies in FAFSA completion; work to embed into financial education opportunities • Promote adult education, including workforce training and certificate completion as part of the initiative • Encourage the CWF network to employ a common database to track outcomes • Design intake process that CWF organizations can use to ensure ease of referrals among programs • Collaborate with CWF organizations to identify, research and write grant proposals to share resources across the network • Promote family sustaining wage levels
<p>Goal: <u>Wealth building/financial stability</u> Increase the numbers of low- and moderate-income families who are financially stable through financial literacy efforts and promoting policies, programs and products that maintain, build and protect financial assets including savings, home ownership and building credit.</p>	
<p>Action Steps Lead or support networks to understand, research and advocate for solutions, such as:</p>	<p>Performance Measures</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking Taskforce, which oversees Bank On Savannah initiative, and considers additional strategies to get the unbanked into the financial mainstream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 1,000 Bank On Savannah accounts opened annually • Bi-monthly Banking Taskforce meetings where Bank On account data is shared and marketing efforts are discussed • Track Bank On accounts that stay open 12 months later

- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Coalition, which provides free tax preparation assistance and promotes the Earned Income Tax Credit to thousands of families each year.
- Work Supports: Partner with local employers to connect low-wage employees to services so they may stretch their paychecks and reach financial goals. This includes providing on-site financial education workshops, free tax preparation services, offering employer-based Life Line Loan, and outreach regarding SNAP and child health coverage programs.
- Access to Benefits and income supports: Step Up and its partners help eligible families to understand and apply for benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid and PeachCare, and FAFSA
- Step Up's Policy Committee, a board-level committee that studies and finds meaningful approaches and responses to challenges and needs related to affordable housing, predatory lending, etc.
- Financial Education Network, a group of financial educators who meet quarterly to share their projects and progress, as well as best practices in the field related to teaching low-income earners in the areas of spending, budgeting, saving and borrowing.

- Provide tax prep services at worksites and Super Saturday events;
- Participate in VITA coalition; help guide efforts and prepare grant proposals
- Increase number of employers that offer financial literacy, VITA tax preparation services and Life Line Loans at work sites
- Number of Life Line Loans obtained through employers
- Individuals screened to determine eligibility for public benefits
- Number of individuals assisted in applying for and renewing benefits, including children's health coverage, SNAP, childcare
- Write successful grant proposal(s) to serve as area intermediary in providing outreach services for public benefits efforts
- Develop new financial empowerment services, including FAFSA promotion at work sites
- Bi-monthly meetings where research and reports are discussed; challenges with delivery systems are reviewed and solutions brainstormed
- Local and statewide policy issues identified, as well as effective advocacy groups and individuals to join voices with
- At least one new policy or procedural issue to be researched and presented to committee each year, with potential to bring to board for presentation and discussion
- Quarterly meetings of financial educators where at least one new practice is introduced
- Number of people who receive financial education and counseling services

Goal: Raising Awareness

Engage individuals and organizations to facilitate a deeper understanding and ability to articulate the causes of poverty. Work in partnership to research, communicate conditions, and identify resources and opportunities and to find and recommended solutions that will change people’s lives.

Action Steps

Engage diverse set of stakeholders in work teams, board and community activities. Communicate conditions and progress.

Performance Measures

- Convene Resident Team, Neighborhood Leadership Academy graduates and others to discuss and create pathways to success route.
- Organize and support “community conversations,” from Step Up board discussions to public forums that explore specific challenges and topics related to our mission.
- Articulate what it means to be a partner
- Critically evaluate and seek out the most effective language and messages used to communicate about low-income families, their needs and systems challenges. Regularly reach out to media and the public

- Produce a “roadmap out of poverty”
- Board engagement and participation; individual attendance at meetings, volunteer opportunities through committees
- Number of organizations and individuals participating in Step Up network and activities each engage in
- Organize and host annual meeting
- Host public poverty simulations; record commitments to act made by participants
- Organize and lead at least two public forums a year on topics related to poverty, workforce, financial literacy, regional economy, etc. Increase public awareness about the relationship between wage level, education, and poverty
- Define and memorialize a “partner agreement” to document basic commitments between parties
- Number of press releases, op eds, and earned media, reporting on Step Up-related activities

Goal: Financial sustainability

Build financial reserves and funding pool for the future. Explore strategic alliances that will maximize and align funding for programs that will reduce poverty. Ensure costs of evaluating programs and measuring outcomes are covered by funders.

Action Steps:

- Develop annual campaign
- With partner organizations, find and write grant proposals that support cooperative efforts and build collective impact of organizations that are effectively serving low-income residents
- Educate funders about costs of evaluation and need to consider these as part of basic operational expenses
- Explore social enterprise operations that hire and serve target populations
- Explore combining forces with a compatible organization to enhance capacity

Performance Measures:

- Create “warm” list of potential funders, individuals and companies, with current contact info
- Set realistic annual campaign financial goal and ensure board members identify funders and make specific “asks”
- Numbers of conversations with foundation staff; proposals submitted and successfully funded
- Tie annual financial goals to operating budget and amount of funds to be set aside to build reserves