

# Economic Mobility via Collaborative Action

The Riverside Upward Mobility Project is an interagency initiative of the County of Riverside, California, intended to boost mobility from poverty and ensure that prosperity is shared by all residents. The work is founded on the belief that creating a world where all families are stable, healthy, and thriving means that we must work to address systemic factors, such as systemic racism and geographic economic disparities, that impede economic mobility, power, and autonomy.

## A VISION FOR UPWARD MOBILITY

Riverside County, with the support of Lift to Rise, is working toward a future where all Coachella Valley families are healthy, stable, and thriving. Currently, 87,000 single-mother households reside in Riverside County; 49,000 of them have income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. By focusing on the people experiencing the most acute poverty, the county will advance system changes to benefit all low-income individuals and families. To that end, Lift to Rise, Riverside County, and other cross-sector partners have drafted mobility goal: **at least 10,000 single-mother households experiencing poverty in Riverside County will increase their income to above 200 percent of the federal poverty level by 2028.**

## WHO IS INVOLVED?

Because Riverside County operates across a vast suburban-urban-exurban-rural catchment, the Upward Mobility engagement is anchored with core organizational partners that have demonstrated

## BEHIND OUR TARGET RESULT

**There are currently 87,000 single-mother households** in Riverside County.

**22,000 single mothers have income between 100 and 200 percent** of the federal poverty level (between \$22,000 and \$44,000 for a family of three).

**27,000 single mothers earn less than 100 percent** of the federal poverty level (below \$22,000 for a family of three).

**The county aims to reduce the number of single mothers with income below 200 percent** of the federal poverty level (49,000) by at least 20 percent (with at least 5,000 moving from income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level and at least 5,000 moving from income between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level).

**The area median income for Riverside County is \$73,260.** To afford the average two-bedroom market-rate apartment in Riverside County, a family needs to earn \$55,598. So even with income at 200 percent of the federal poverty level, families will need help to make ends meet.

By focusing on the people experiencing the most acute poverty, the **county will advance system changes to benefit all low-income individuals and families.**

leadership capacity to forge pathways of change. The Upward Mobility work aligns as part of the county's collective impact structure championed by Lift to Rise. This partnership established robust resident networks to lean on, extensive community listening channels, and concrete feedback loops in communities across our region. Other partners include First 5 Riverside, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Catholic Charities, the Riverside County Department of Social Services, Goodwill Southern California, Riverside University Public Health, the Desert Healthcare District, and the Desert Aids Project. Together, these entities constitute the **Economic Mobility Collaborative Action Network, or Economic Mobility CAN.**

### UPWARD MOBILITY INSIGHTS

After reviewing data on poverty in the region and data from focus groups of low-income residents, the CAN identified five priority factors that will need to be addressed to move at least 10,000 single-mother households above 200 percent of the federal poverty level. For each factor, the County used ideas gathered from the CAN to outline potential pathways to build strategies around

- creating more jobs and higher wages in industries and jobs most often populated by single mothers;
- providing affordable and accessible child care, housing, and transportation;
- increasing support services, especially for mental health and wellness;
- providing job training, financial education, and entrepreneurship programs targeting single mothers; and
- building public will for change by overcoming biased or racist assumptions and stereotypes about single mothers and low-income workers

### KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

#### JOBS AND WAGES

1	Grow the number of jobs that pay above \$22 an hour (including by attracting jobs to the region), and build connections to our priority workforce (with skill building).
2	Grow both entrepreneurship and workforce (with pay subsidies) for the child care sector; subsidies are available for child care for 62,000 children age 5 and under, but no slots.
3	Support efforts to raise wages (including unions) in leisure and hospitality, food service, home health care, and warehousing and logistics sectors with connections to priority workforce.

## CHILD CARE, HOUSING, AND TRANSPORTATION

- 1 Continue to accelerate development of affordable housing, including housing tied to child care, and work to reduce evictions and foreclosures in the region through Lift to Rise's concurrent initiative, the Housing Stability CAN.
- 2 Consider new transportation options that connect workers to jobs, child care, and healthy amenities.
- 3 Support the development of the child care sector and subsidies.
- 4 Consider establishing an entity to support and build capacity for child care entrepreneurs in home or center-based settings.
- 5 Consider establishing a loan or funding pool for addressing individual barriers to success, (such as vehicle repairs, training fees, or a lack of professional clothing).

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- 1 Determine whether low-income single mothers face specific mental health challenges this group can address that would help them get better job outcomes.

## JOB TRAINING, FINANCIAL EDUCATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS

- 1 Inventory the services available linked to areas of job growth.
- 2 Link single mothers to training and education programs and integrative care (coordinated support across departments); track and support them as they complete the programs and help them connect to better jobs.

## OVERCOMING BIASED OR RACIST ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 Develop messaging to build public will and support among public officials for this population and for systems changes.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Economic Mobility CAN will continue to meet on a quarterly basis through the end of 2022 to develop detailed implementation strategies for the strategy path outlined here.