November 13, 2025

Building and Strengthening Local Coalitions to Advance Upward Mobility in Your Community

Upward Mobility Initiative

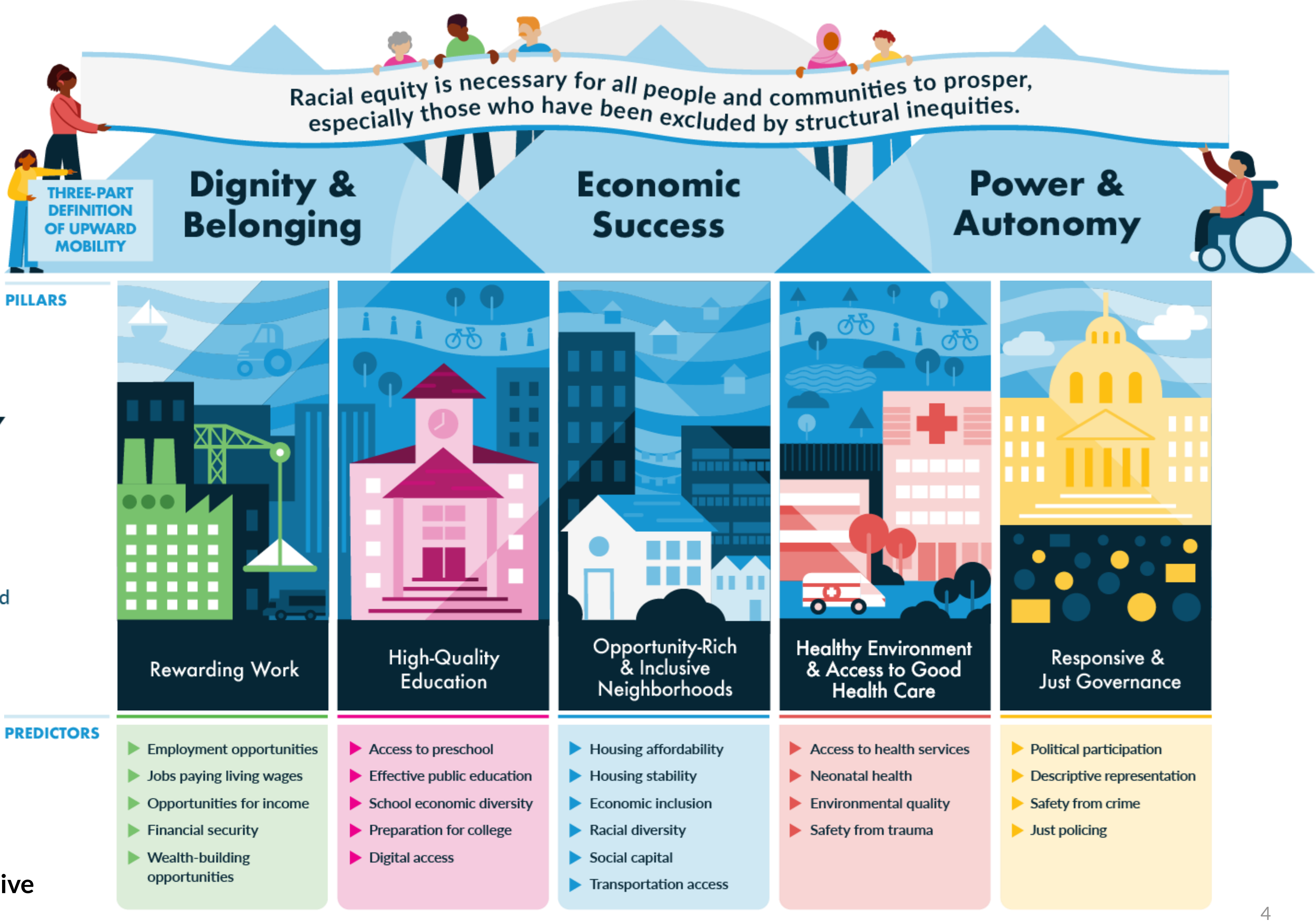
Agenda and Housekeeping

- Overview of the Upward Mobility Framework
  - Martha Fedorowicz, Training and Technical Assistance Manager, Urban Institute
- Building Cross Sector Coalitions
  - Joe Schilling, Senior Research Associate, Urban Institute
- Local Examples
  - Julie Weiner, Chief Development Officer, CommUnify, Santa Barbara, California
  - Julie Mullen, Economic Mobility Officer, City of Alexandria, Virginia
- Q&A
  - Please use the Q&A box as questions arise during the presentation

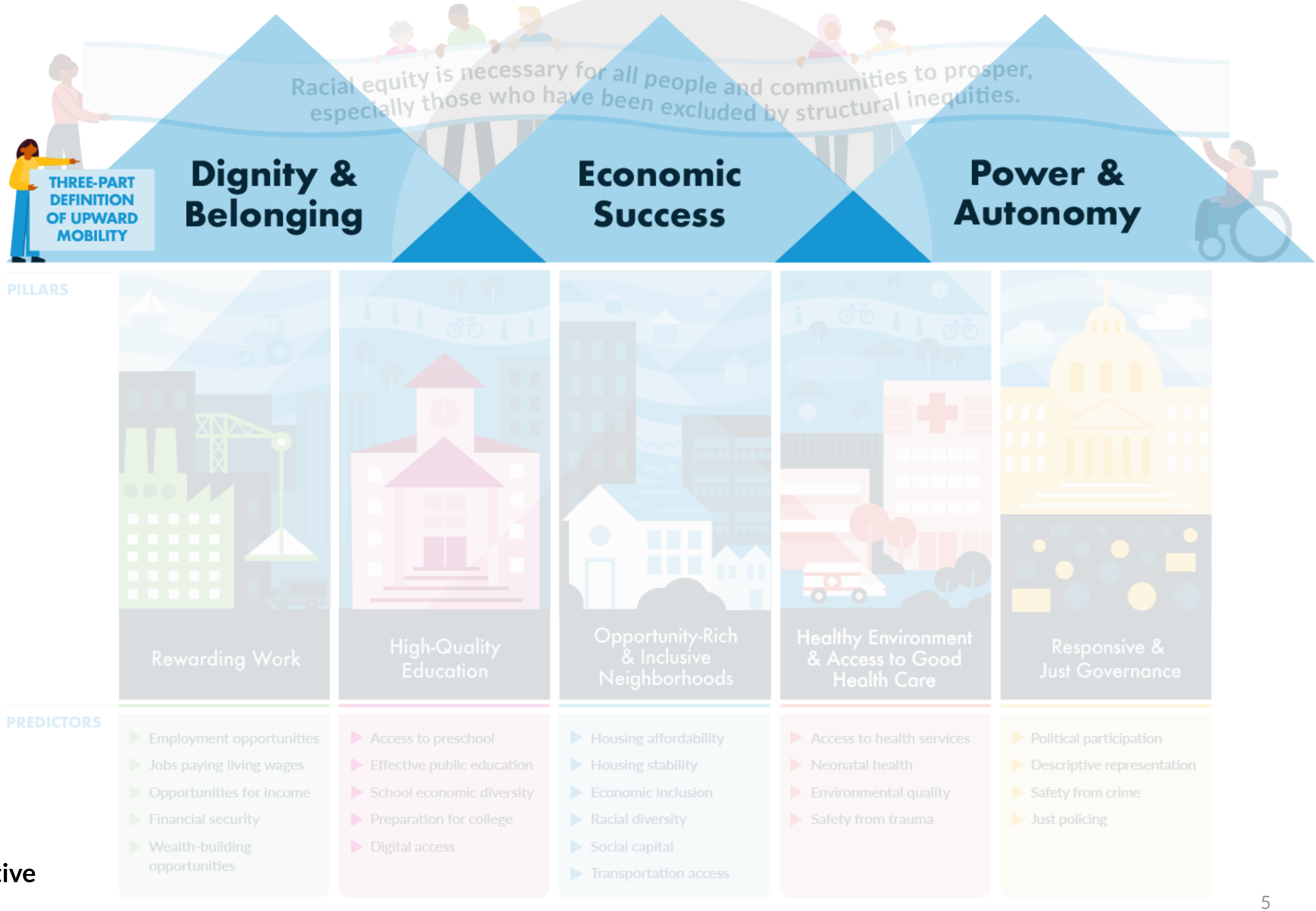
Overview of the Upward Mobility Framework

UPWARD MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

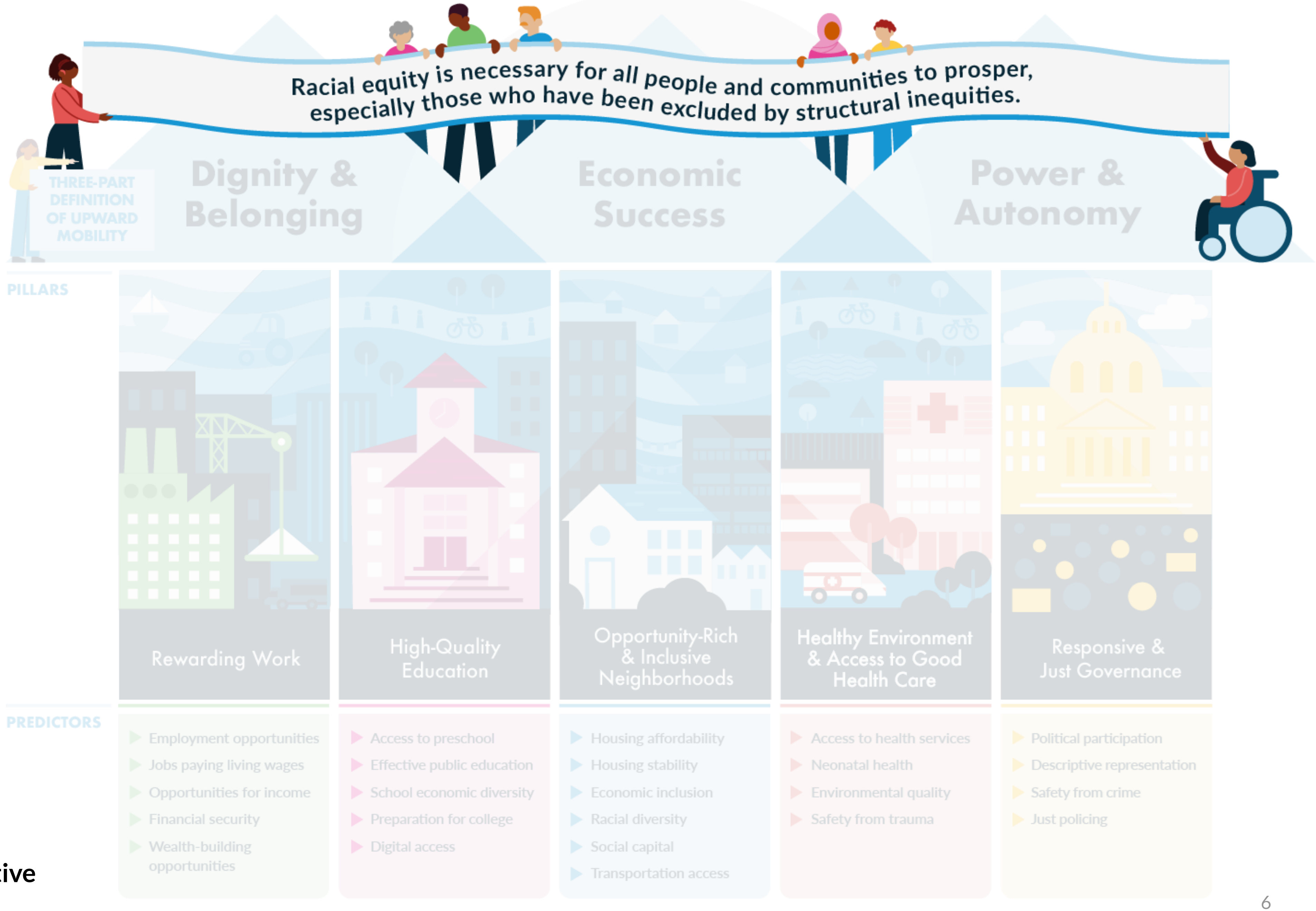
The Urban Institute's evidence-based foundation for community efforts to expand prosperity and narrow racial inequities.



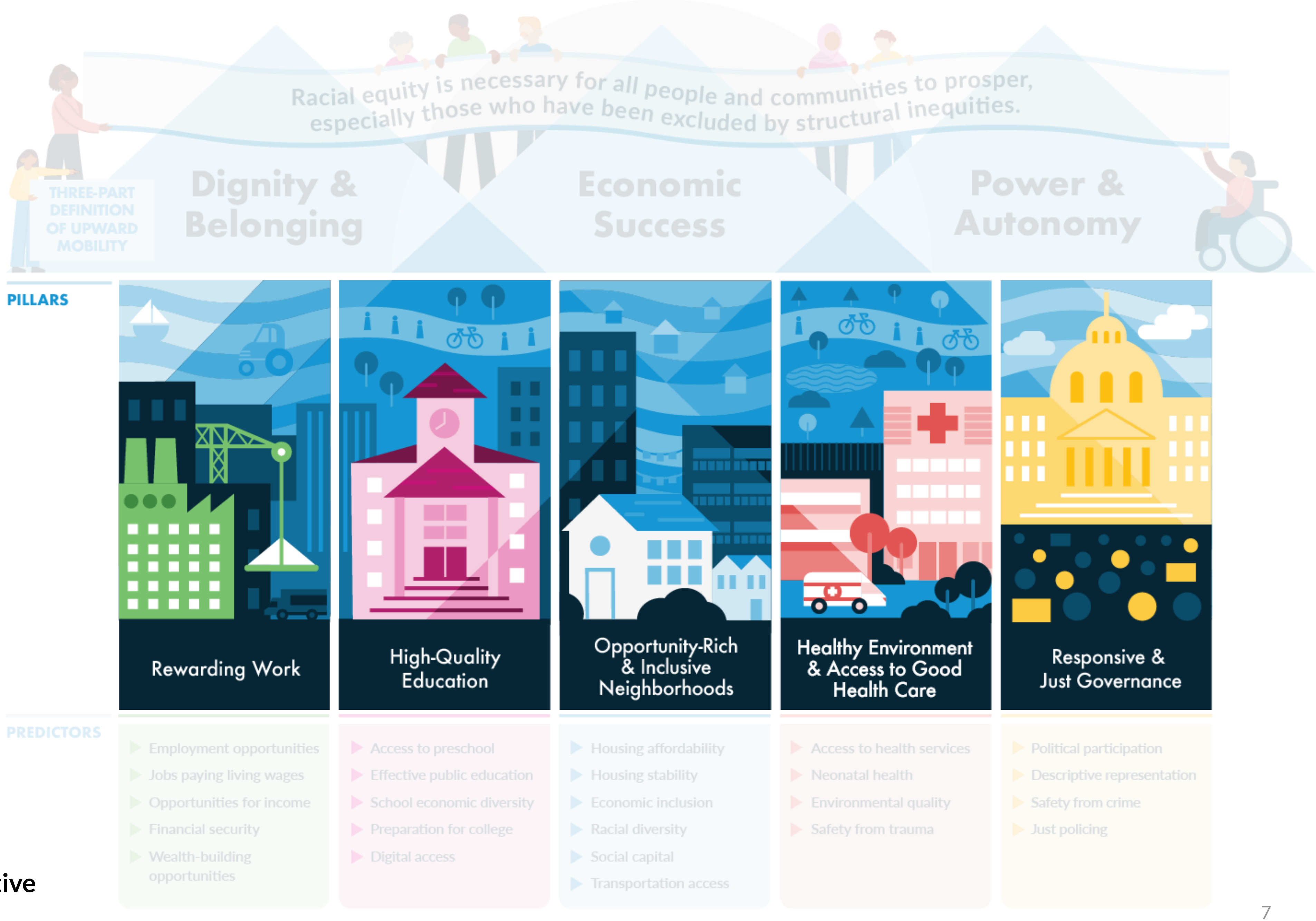
The Three-Part Definition



Focus on Racial Equity

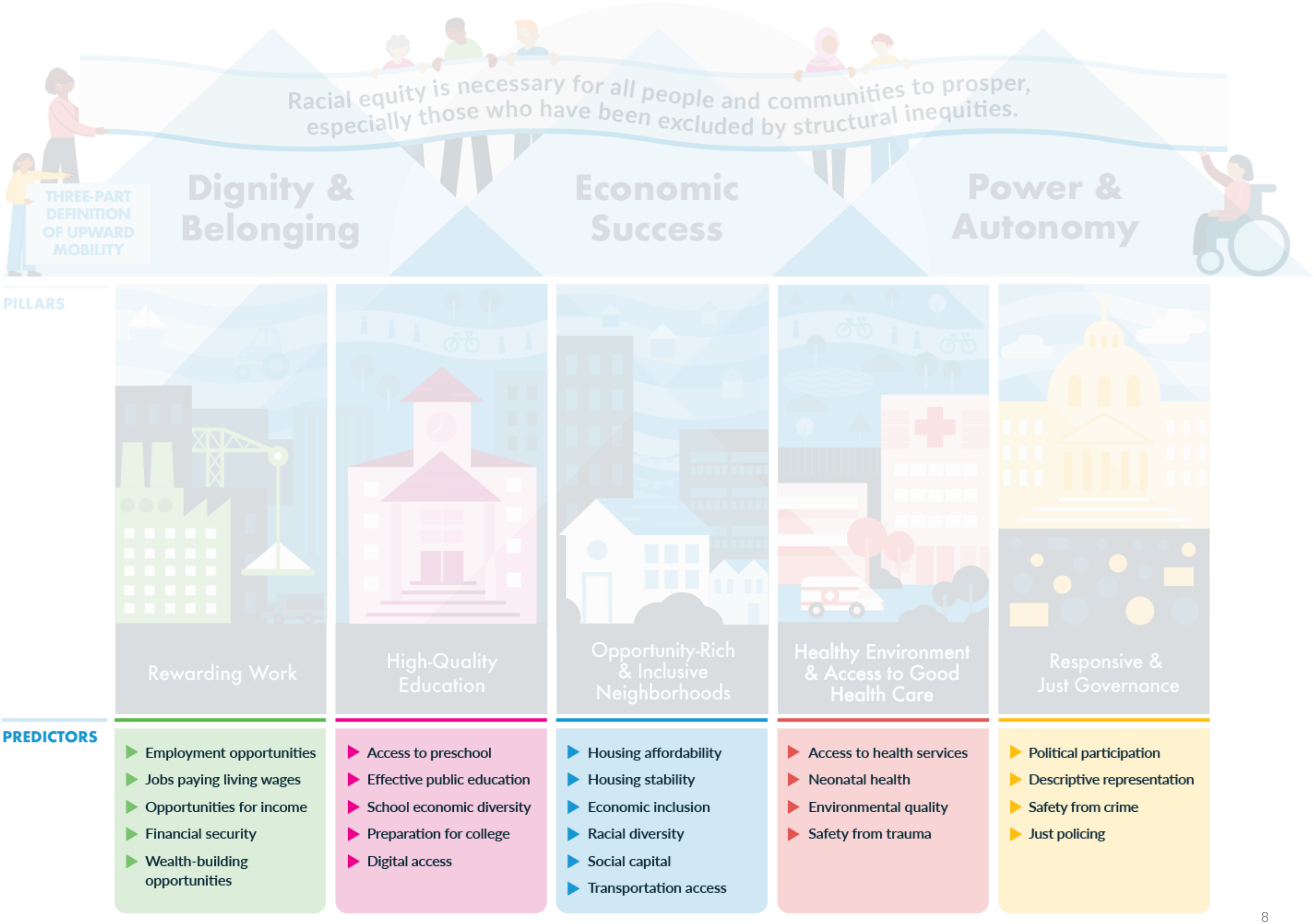


The Pillars



Racial equity is necessary for all people and communities to prosper, especially those who have been excluded by structural inequities.
THREE-PART DEFINITION OF UPWARD MOBILITY
Dignity & Belonging
Economic Success
Power & Autonomy
PILLARS
Rewarding Work
High-Quality Education
Opportunity-Rich & Inclusive Neighborhoods
Healthy Environment & Access to Good Health Care
Responsive & Just Governance
PREDICTORS
Employment opportunities
Jobs paying living wages
Opportunities for income
Financial security
Wealth-building opportunities
Access to preschool
Effective public education
School economic diversity
Preparation for college
Digital access
Housing affordability
Housing stability
Economic inclusion
Racial diversity
Social capital
Transportation access
Access to health services
Neonatal health
Environmental quality
Safety from trauma
Political participation
Descriptive representation
Safety from crime
Just policing

The Predictors

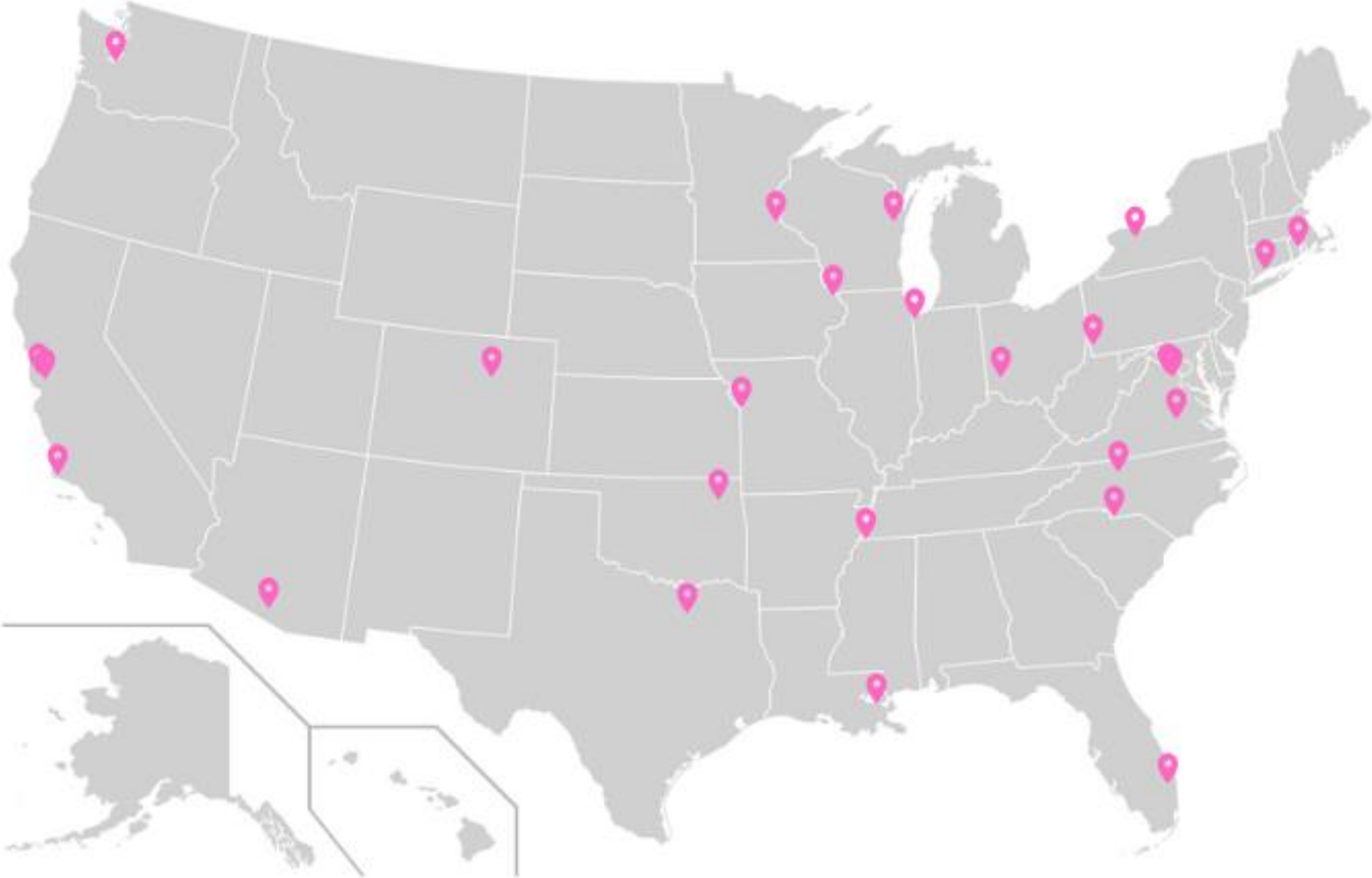


The Mobility Action Learning Network

The Mobility Action Learning Network

- A cohort of 26 teams of local leaders across the US creating and bolstering locally driven programs, policies, and actions that promote upward mobility from poverty and racial equity.
- Each mobility action team was comprised of representatives from at least one local government and one nonprofit organization.

Mobility Action Learning Network



Four Tracks for Skills-Based Training

- The Mobility Action Learning Network was divided into four tracks designed to provide members with concrete tools, strategies, and peer learning opportunities that match teams' identified learning needs.
- The four tracks were:
  - Using Data for Decisionmaking
  - Building Coalitions for Systems Change
  - Empowering Community Partners
  - Measuring Impact

Building Coalitions for Systems Change

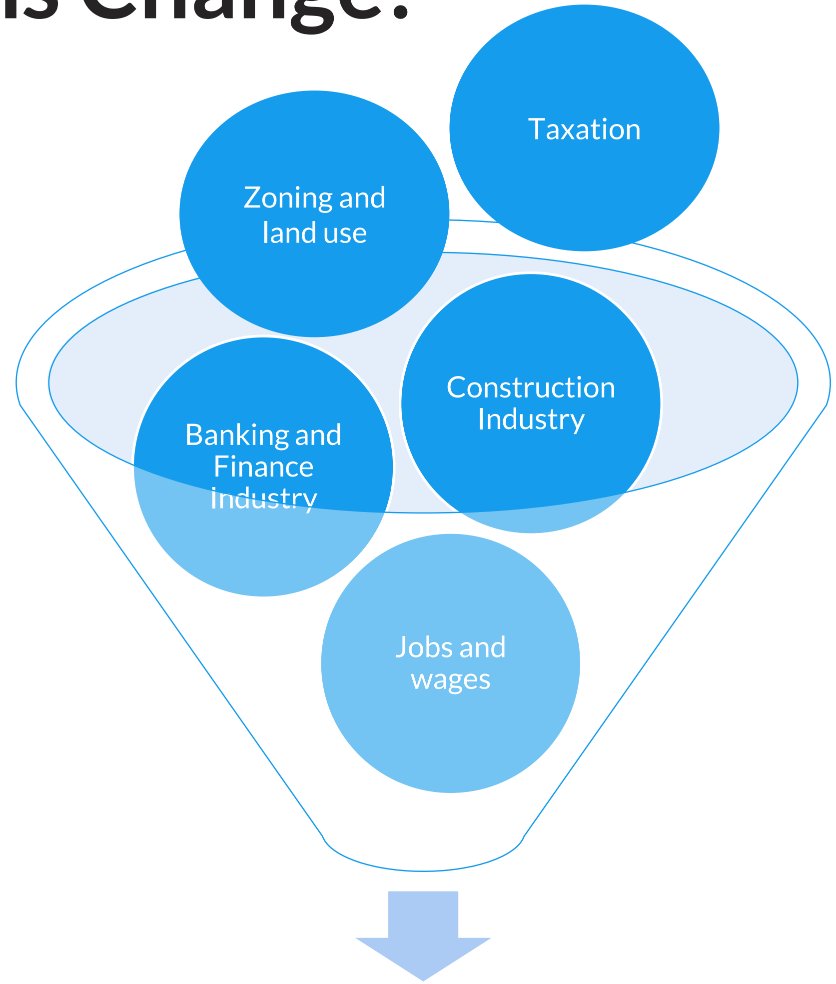
This track guided mobility action teams on how to identify and engage with key mobility stakeholders and champions central to advancing upward mobility. Teams built or expanded a cross-sector coalition capable of creating systems changes and promoting mobility from poverty and racial equity in their community. The localities in this track were:

- Alexandria, VA
- Dallas, TX
- Green Bay, WI
- Hammond, IN
- New Haven, CT
- New Orleans, LA
- Palm Beach County, FL
- Santa Barbara County, CA
- Washington, County, PA

Building Local Coalitions

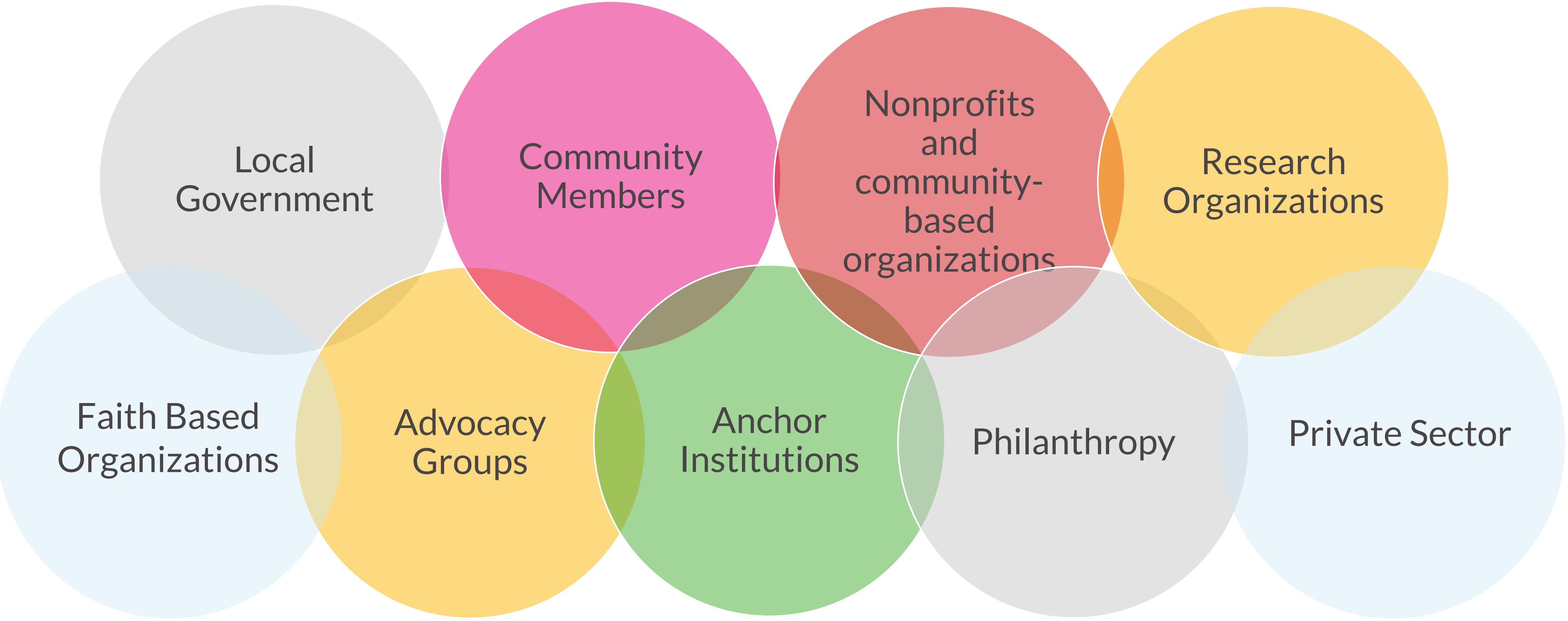
Why are Coalitions Essential to Upward Mobility Work?

The Answer: Systems Change!



Housing Affordability

Actors that Advance Systems Change

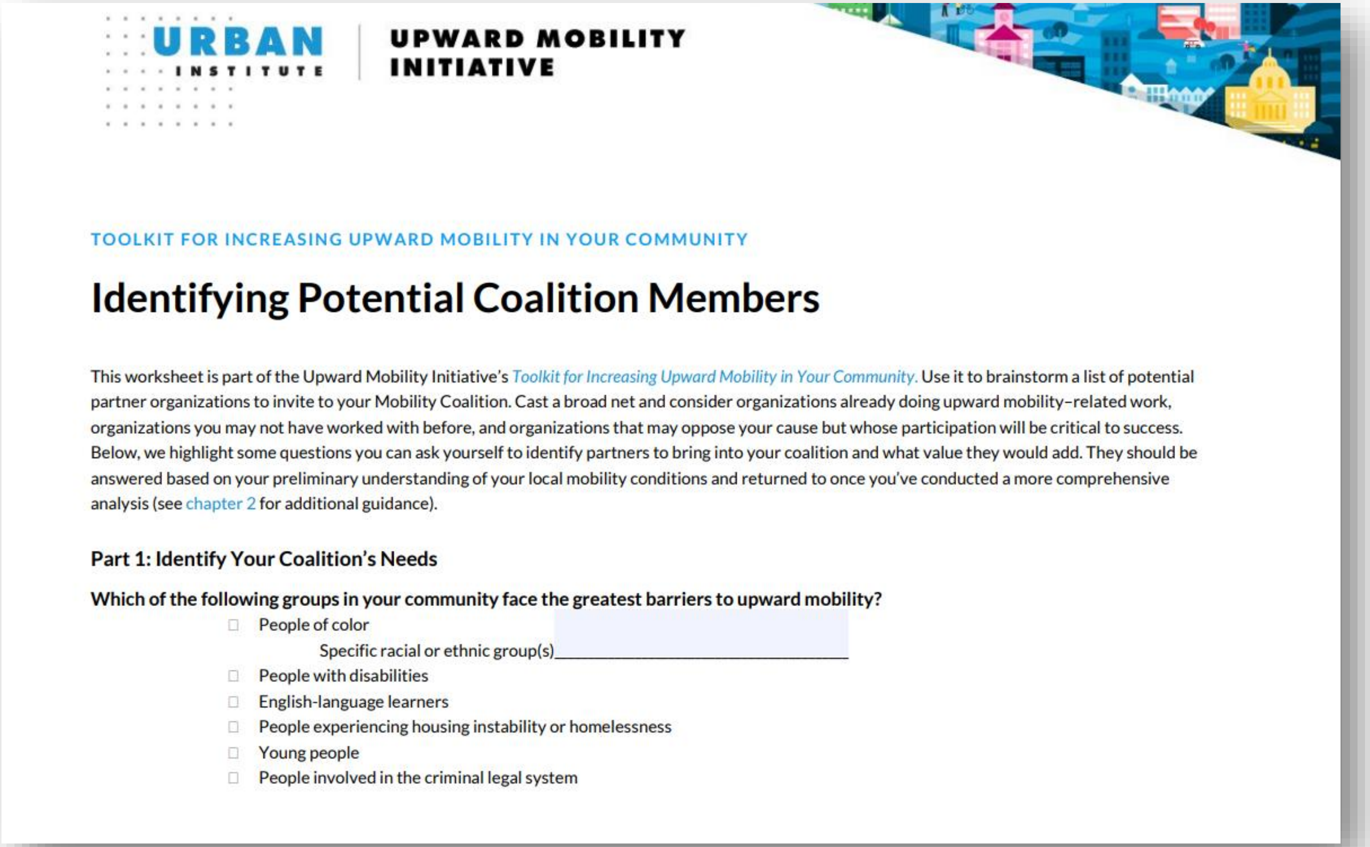


Key People to Include in Your Coalition

- Those most affected by the issue
  - Neighbors, recipients of services
- Those charged with carrying out key functions related to the issue
  - Government and community-based service providers
- Those who are directly or indirectly implicated by what the coalition might do/achieve
  - Landlords, local employers, etc.
- Champions from the community
  - Those who see a vision for change, can motivate others, or bring people to the table

Stakeholder Inventory

- **Multi-part tool to document** and reflect on existing partners and those needed for coalition success
- Understand **current relationships**
- Consider what **opportunities exist to leverage or build new connection** points to strengthen relationships
- Think about **key populations and domains** relevant to upward mobility
- Build and prioritize an **invitation list**



URBAN INSTITUTE | UPWARD MOBILITY INITIATIVE

TOOLKIT FOR INCREASING UPWARD MOBILITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Identifying Potential Coalition Members

This worksheet is part of the Upward Mobility Initiative's *Toolkit for Increasing Upward Mobility in Your Community*. Use it to brainstorm a list of potential partner organizations to invite to your Mobility Coalition. Cast a broad net and consider organizations already doing upward mobility–related work, organizations you may not have worked with before, and organizations that may oppose your cause but whose participation will be critical to success. Below, we highlight some questions you can ask yourself to identify partners to bring into your coalition and what value they would add. They should be answered based on your preliminary understanding of your local mobility conditions and returned to once you've conducted a more comprehensive analysis (see chapter 2 for additional guidance).

Part 1: Identify Your Coalition's Needs

Which of the following groups in your community face the greatest barriers to upward mobility?

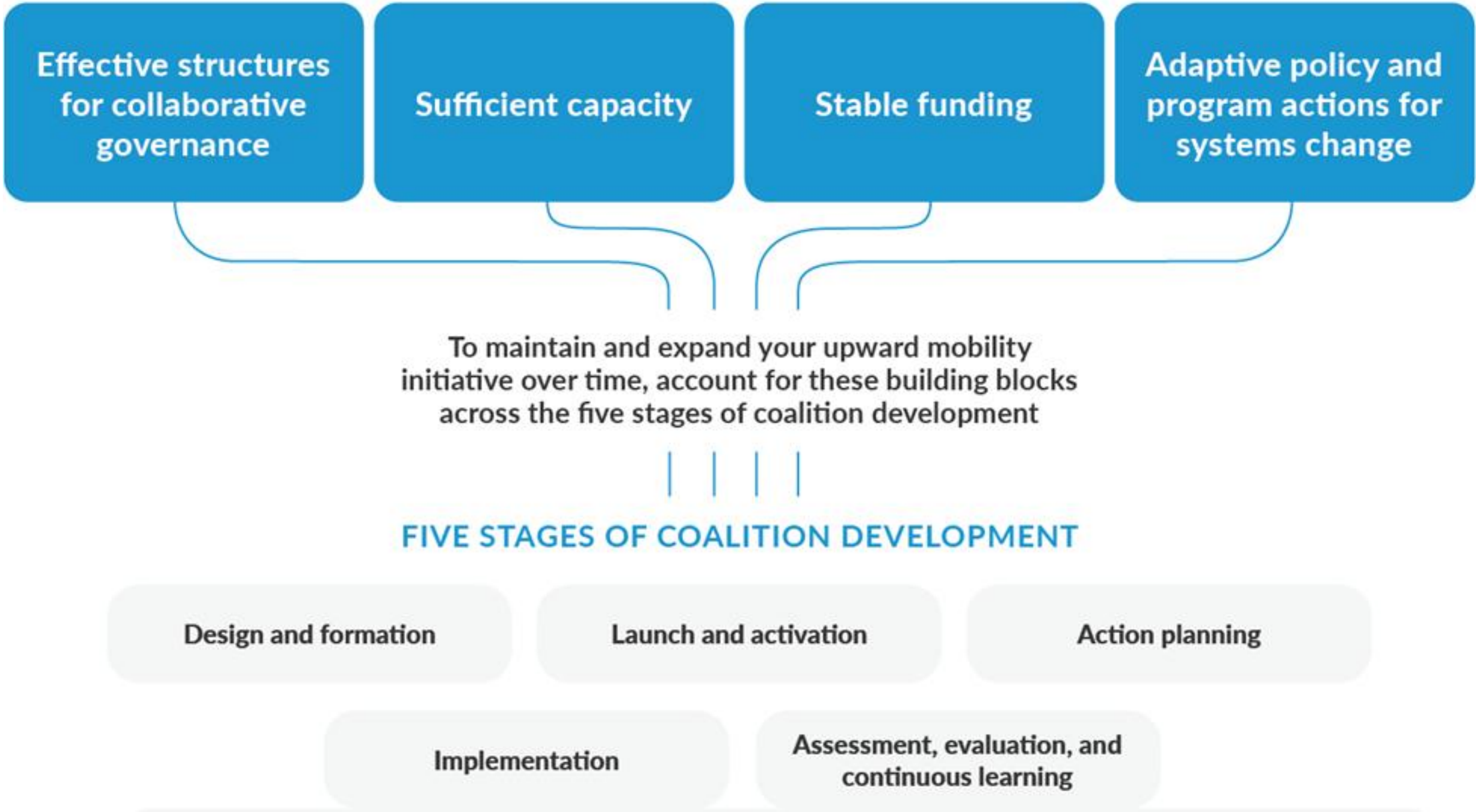
- ☐ People of color
  - Specific racial or ethnic group(s)____________________
- ☐ People with disabilities
- ☐ English-language learners
- ☐ People experiencing housing instability or homelessness
- ☐ Young people
- ☐ People involved in the criminal legal system

Strengthening and Sustaining Local Coalitions

Helpful Practices for Strengthening Coalitions

- Adopt a continuous learning approach
- Involve everyone in generating goals, making major decisions, and cocreating your theory of change
- When convening working groups, prioritize cross-sector partnerships
- Adapt your coalition’s membership based on evolving needs
- Document values and decisionmaking processes

Sustaining Coalitions in the Long Term



Examples from the Field

upward mobility initiative

Santa Barbara County, CA

Background

- Santa Barbara County – population @445,000
- Consistently high rate of poverty as percentage of population.
  - Been averaging 1 in 5 children and 1 in 6 adults (16% - 19% of population)
  - Translates to @70,000 people living at or below the "CPM", per Public Policy Institute of California's "Poverty, Just the Facts" report
  - PPIC's CPM is $42K for a family of 4 as compared to SPM is $32K for a family of four (two adults, two children)
  - PPIC created CPM to recognize overall higher cost of living in California
- Concerns about this high level of poverty is what inspired our Upward Mobility Coalition and involvement in the MALN. (Building Coalitions track)

MALN Project – Upward Mobility Summit

- 15 organizations led by CommUnify, a mix of CBOs, nonprofits, and local government organizations
- Scheduled 1 day conference for Friday, January 24, 2025
  - Split between two locations, connected virtually
  - 350 attendees
- Focused conference in these areas:
  - Keynote to inspire – Matthew Desmond
  - Need for a common framework: introduction of Upward Mobility Framework
  - Changing the narrative
  - Public Policy and Advocacy
  - Two local town halls
  - Final ask: Join a Mobility Action Plan (MAP) group

Post-Summit

- Great feedback from event, attendees VERY fired up
- MAP group sign up strong (70+ people across the 5 groups)
- Actions of new administration the following week created significant delays/uncertainty
- MAP groups launched in May
- Loss of momentum / participant attrition
- Currently revising strategy

Agenda

1 City At a Glance

2 Coalition Structure

3 Goals and Work

4 Take-Aways



City of Alexandria At a Glance

City Poverty Rate

United Way 2023 ALICE Report

8% or 12,418 people

Percentage of people who earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the basic cost of life essentials including housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care and a basic smartphone plan *United Way 2023 ALICE Report*

21% or 32,598 people

Percentage of kids at ACPS that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch in 2025

69%

Area Median Income (AMI) for a Household of Four

Department of Housing and Urban Development 2024 AMI

$154,700

Home Ownership Rate

Housing 2040 Needs Analysis

43%

Economic Stability Coalition and Structure

Advisory Group

Community leaders and workgroup leads come together to share ideas, navigate systems and identify resources to get the work done. Meets monthly in person.

Backbone

Operational lead, responsible for the workplan, coordinating between efforts, upholding economic mobility values, ensuring accountability, communicating progress and results. Meets weekly.

Workgroups

Subject matter experts, pursuing specific mobility related goals. Both time-limited and on-going. Meeting schedule determined by workgroup.

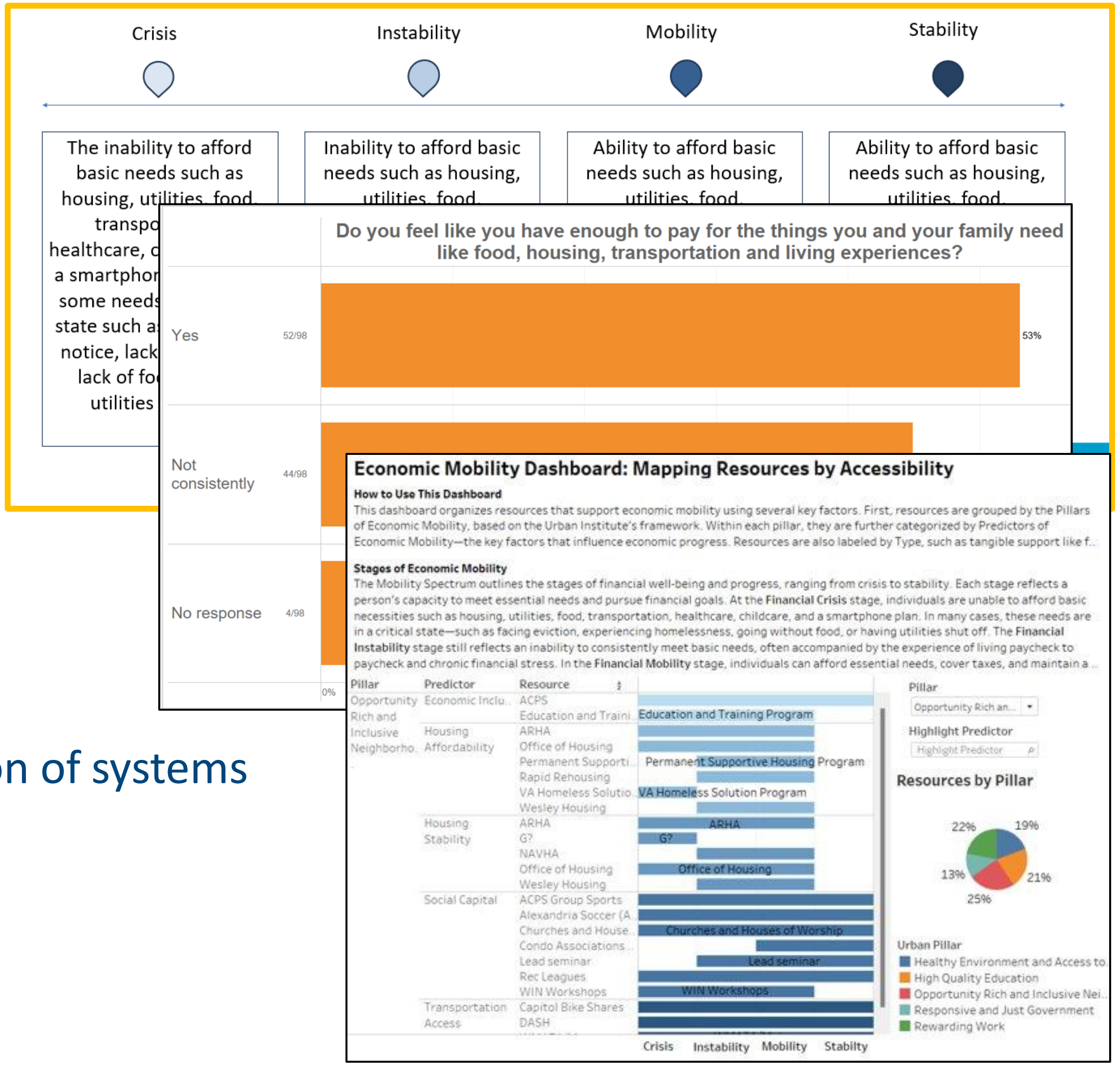
Economic Mobility Goals

A Pathway to Stability for All

- **Understand current conditions.** Identify barriers to upward mobility in partnership with community partners and residents experiencing financial instability.

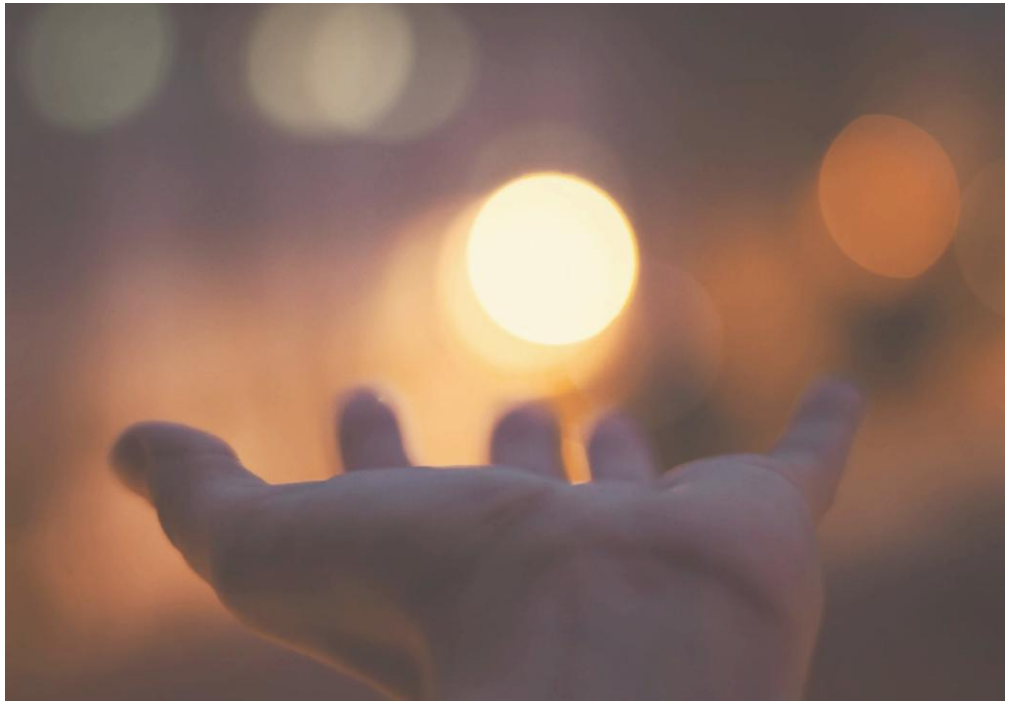
- **Narrative Change.** Shift harmful narratives of people experiencing poverty through storytelling and data.

- **Energized, mobilized, aligned coalition.** Strategic coordination of systems resources, policies, and initiatives to foster upward mobility.



Coalition Building Take Aways

- Resident voice is the ultimate clarifier, unifier, motivator.
- Important relationships require regular maintenance. No set it and forget it. Constantly reminding people why this work matters, what we're doing together and always sharing the wins.
- Start small, build momentum, consider a diversity of organization types with various strengths who all care about the issue. Everyone has an important role to play.



Q&A

Upward Mobility Initiative Resources & Upcoming Events

- Visit upward-mobility.urban.org
- Register for our Dec. 10 workshop: Using Data to Inform Strategic Priorities
- Subscribe to our newsletter

Contact us! Email upwardmobility@urban.org to reach our team.

Survey!

Scan me!