



# UNITED WAY OF GREATER NEWARK STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2027



## Introduction

In 2018, United Way of Greater Newark (UWGN) initiated a strategic plan to enhance its community impact, focusing on **education, health, and financial stability to break the cycle of poverty**. Our new plan will focus on creating thriving communities through advocacy, collaboration and volunteerism.

## About United Way of Greater Newark

Founded 100 years ago by William Ashby, New Jersey's first Black social worker, UWGN supports 14 municipalities serving over 700,000 residents. We are committed to investing in strategies to improve outcomes for all residents, especially children and families.

## Building Thriving Communities for ALICE

Our new strategic plan includes working directly to improve ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households. Representing **39% of Essex County's population**, ALICE families often fall through the cracks of traditional social safety nets. UWGN's mission is to address the unique challenges faced by ALICE households, emphasizing the need for systemic change.

## Understanding Systemic Causes of Poverty

UWGN's new vision envisions a future where every individual and family in our footprint can live with dignity, security, and opportunity, supported by a network of empowered leaders and organizations committed to building and sustaining thriving communities. Systemic issues such as low wages, discrimination, and historical exploitation lead to a cycle of poverty. Implementing the Thriving Communities Framework that emphasizes equity, access to resources, economic opportunity, social support, and sustainability will lead to marked improvement for our most vulnerable residents including ALICE families.

## Strategic Priorities

- **Understanding ALICE Across UWGN's Footprint:** Leveraging data to inform community investments.
- **Expanding Leadership:** Advocating for ALICE and enhancing UWGN's influence.
- **Building Skills and Capacity:** Supporting board, staff, and partners in fostering thriving communities.
- **Diversifying Revenue Streams:** Ensuring sustainability to support ALICE households.

## Goals and Objectives

### 1. Build Thriving Communities to Support ALICE:

- Increase the financial resilience of 157,000 ALICE households by 2028 through strategic partnerships.

### 2. Expand UWGN's Leadership and Influence:

- Develop policy leadership and advocacy skills among staff, board members, and community leaders.

### 3. Enhance Organizational Capacity:

- Strengthen expertise and skills among staff and board members, focusing on technological innovation.
- Foster collaboration and engagement within UWGN to support sustainability and growth.

### 4. Increase Revenue to Sustain UWGN and Support ALICE:

- Diversify funding sources and enhance donor engagement to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Expand the Young Professionals Network to drive volunteerism and philanthropy.
- Implement an ambassador program to expand into UWGN's footprint.

## Evaluation

UWGN will implement a robust evaluation plan to track progress and ensure continuous improvement. This includes data collection, performance measurement, outcomes assessment, and strategic adjustments based on findings.

## Conclusion

UWGN is dedicated to shaping a future where every person within its footprint can thrive. Over the next three years, we will focus on teamwork, transformative change, and ongoing assessment. UWGN strives to leave a profound imprint in the community, advocating for a future that is fair and equitable for everyone.



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## ABOUT UNITED WAY OF GREATER NEWARK

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United Way of Greater Newark is a 100-year-old non-profit organization serving 14 municipalities and over 700,000 residents in Belleville, Bloomfield, East Newark, East Orange, Harrison, Irvington, Kearny, Maplewood, Newark, North Arlington, Nutley, Orange, South Orange, and West Orange.

For the last 5 years, UWGN has operated a model that identifies community challenges, sources both expertise and funding, and invests in solutions towards those challenges.

As the organization continued to address the challenges, UWGN's board of trustees engaged in the strategic planning process to renew its mission to prioritize building equity throughout its footprint, not just Newark. It also recognized the need to modernize its fundraising strategies and align more closely with the new Thriving United Way model adopted by United Way Worldwide.

The board engaged with Davidoff Mission-Driven Strategy, LLC, to design and facilitate the strategic planning process.



# BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES FOR ALICE

Millions of Americans struggle to make ends meet, existing just above the federal poverty line. This hidden population, known as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), often goes unnoticed despite facing significant challenges. ALICE households have jobs, yet their income remains precariously close to poverty, making it difficult to afford basic necessities like housing, childcare, healthcare, in addition to transportation, technology, etc.

ALICE highlights a critical demographic often overshadowed in conversations about poverty. ALICE represents 39% of the total population within Essex County, which is the majority of UWGN’s footprint. The particular challenge they face is their ineligibility for many traditional social safety net programs.

Despite their employment, their income falls short of qualifying for many government supports and benefits, yet it remains insufficient to cover basic living expenses. Living paycheck to paycheck with minimal savings, even a minor setback like a car repair or medical emergency can push ALICE families into financial crisis.

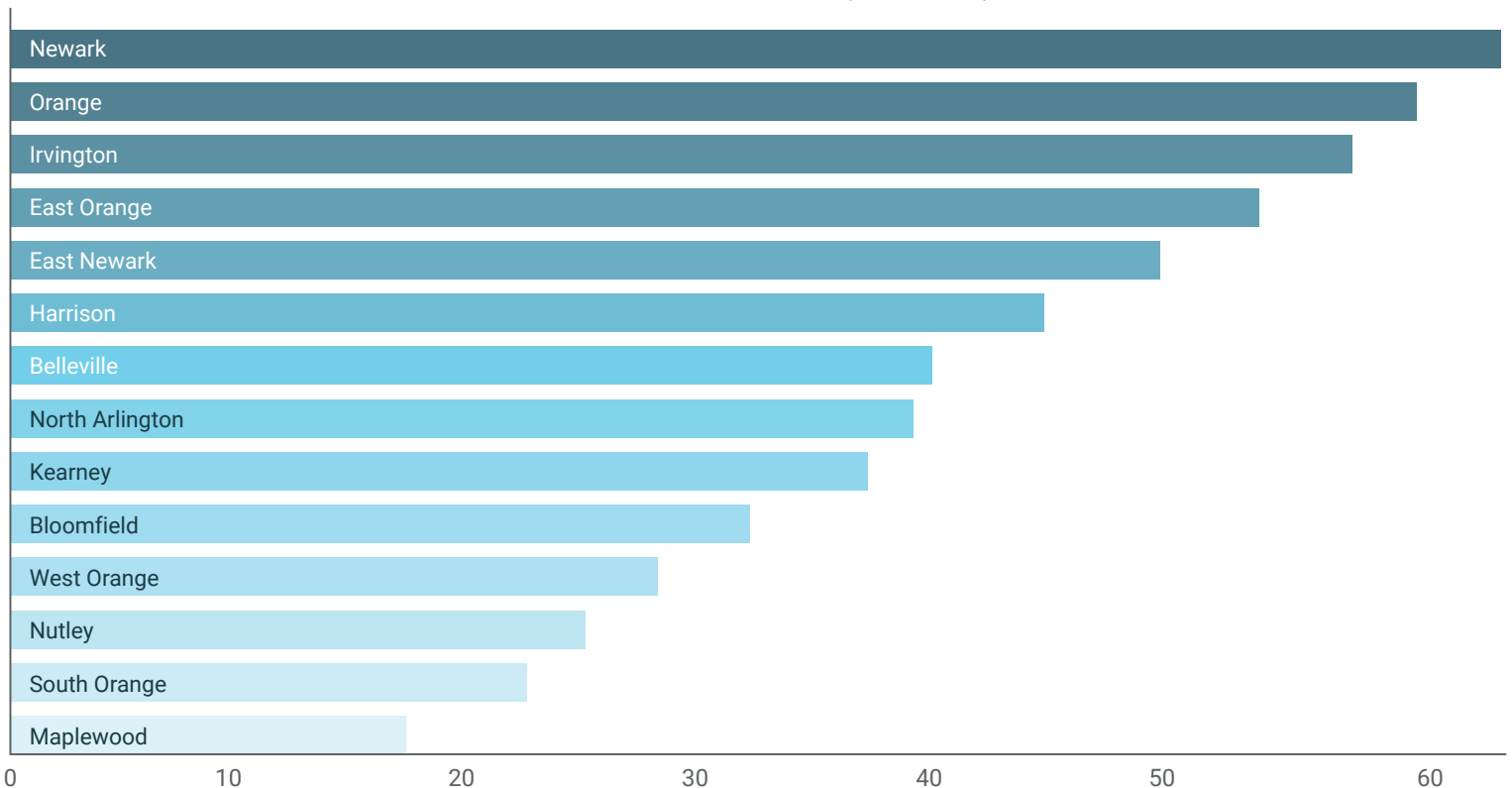
## Understanding the Systemic Causes of Poverty

A multitude of current works address the systemic issues that lead to poverty. Recently, Matthew Desmond’s “Poverty by America” and H. Luke Shaefer’s, “The Injustice of Place,” emphasize that poverty is not solely a product of individual choices. Systemic factors like low wages, discriminatory practices, geographic concentration of poverty, and historical exploitation all play a significant role. ALICE populations, despite holding jobs, often struggle financially due to these very systemic issues.

## Chronic Stress and the Impact on Health

Dr. Arline T. Geronimus’ book “Weathering,” adds another layer of understanding by highlighting how chronic stress caused by living in poverty has a detrimental impact on health. This “weathering” effect can manifest as biological changes that accelerate aging and increase the risk of chronic diseases. Poor health can then further limit opportunities and perpetuate the cycle of poverty for ALICE households.

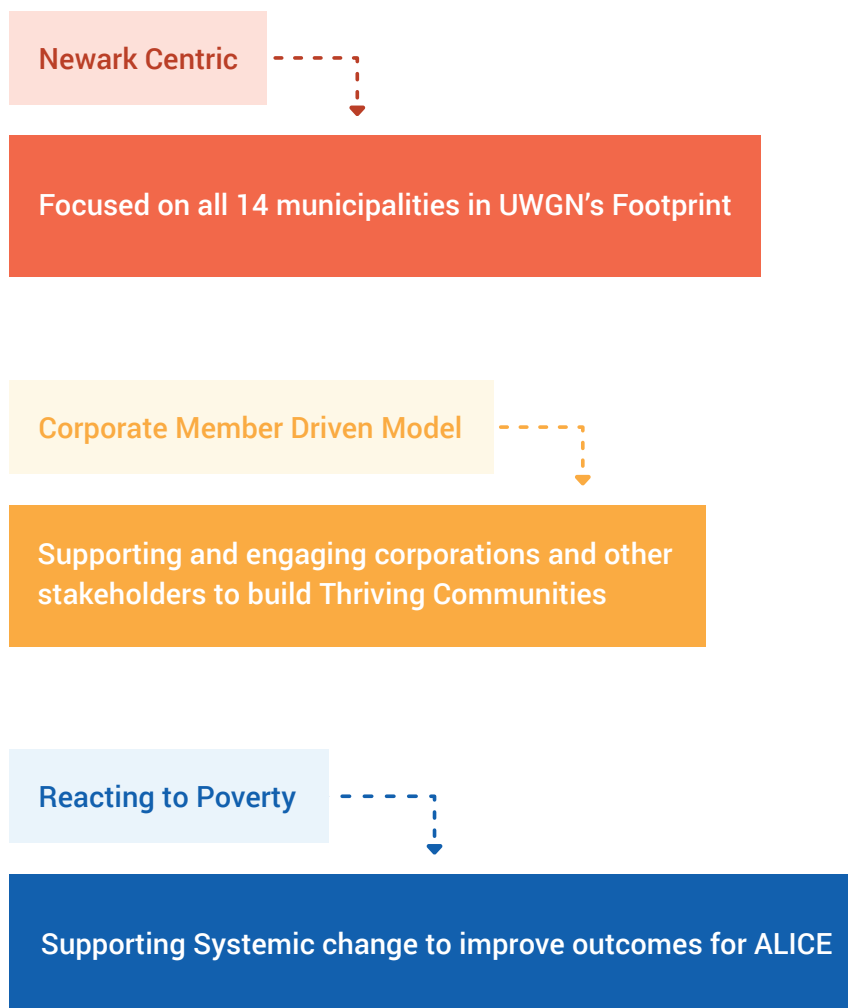
% At or Below Alice Threshold by Municipality



## Addressing Poverty Requires a Multifaceted Approach

Traditional approaches to both understanding and solving poverty may not fully address the unique circumstances of ALICE populations. To truly create thriving communities, a paradigm shift is necessary, one that moves beyond simply reacting to poverty and instead focuses on dismantling the systemic barriers that keep ALICE households from achieving stability and opportunity.

United Way of Greater Newark's board of trustees, executive leadership and staff embarked on a dynamic year-long planning process, resulting in a paradigm shift for the way UWGN approaches this work. Moving beyond a Newark-centric focus to encompass all 14 municipalities within UWGN's footprint and recognizing the limitations of the traditional corporate member model, the board envisions United Way of Greater Newark leading a more collaborative approach. This entails fostering long-term partnerships with corporations and other stakeholders, all working in unison to create thriving communities. It also includes partnering with and in communities to support ALICE. This shift empowers the organization to move beyond simply reacting to poverty, instead proactively supporting systemic changes that create lasting improvements for ALICE populations.





# OUR VISION AND APPROACH

## A New Theory of Change: Thriving Communities for ALICE

Emerging from this process is a new mission, vision and theory of change for United Way of Greater Newark. The new vision and mission bring clarity, direction, and motivation to UWGN's work. The theory of change outlines the pathway through which our strategic priorities will lead to meaningful impact in the communities we serve. By convening conversations, leveraging data, expanding leadership, and enhancing human capital, we aim to disrupt systemic inequities so ALICE can thrive.



### Vision

"We envision a future where every individual and family in our footprint can live with **dignity, security, and opportunity**, supported by a network of empowered leaders and organizations committed to building and sustaining thriving communities."



### Mission

"Build strong, inclusive communities where everyone has the chance to thrive."

The overarching outcomes of our efforts will be driven by the unique needs of ALICE and priorities identified through community conversations, ensuring that our strategies are responsive and impactful in achieving equity and resilience across our entire footprint.

## The Thriving Communities Framework and Strategic Priorities

The Thriving Communities Framework serves as the cornerstone of United Way of Greater Newark's (UWGN) strategic priorities, guiding our efforts to support ALICE across the 14 municipalities we serve. Our strategic priorities are directly aligned with the core principles of the Thriving Communities Framework, ensuring that our actions are rooted in promoting inclusivity, access to resources and fairness in policies and practices.

The Thriving Communities Framework is a set of guiding principles that will be used to promote holistic well-being and reduce disparities. The core elements include:

#### Equity and Inclusion:

Creating opportunities and making resources accessible to ALICE.

#### Access to Resources:

Ensuring ALICE has access to essential resources like quality housing, healthcare, education, transportation, and healthy food options.

#### Economic Opportunity:

Promoting and fostering pathways for financial stability for ALICE.

#### Social Connection and Support:

Recognizing the importance of strong social networks and community support systems for individual and collective well-being.

#### Sustainability and Resilience:

Ensure long-term community sustainability and the ability of ALICE to adapt and recover from challenges.

## Integration of the Strategic Priorities into the Thriving Communities Framework

- Understanding ALICE across UWGN's footprint
- Utilizing data to support community investment in ALICE
- Expanding UWGN's leadership to advocate for ALICE across its footprint
- Building skills and capacity to support board, staff and partners in Thriving Communities for ALICE
- Diversifying revenue streams to increase UWGN's sustainability and support for ALICE

## Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The goals and objectives in the plan include goals and objectives for both improving UWGN as an organization and its impact in the communities it serves. These are based on the strategic priorities and Thriving Communities theory of change.

## BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES FOR ALICE

Building thriving communities for ALICE populations is a long-term endeavor. To ensure our efforts are making a positive impact, UWGN will implement a robust evaluation plan with the following steps:

### Data Collection and Analysis:

We will regularly collect and analyze data to track progress towards our goals.

### Performance Measurement:

We will establish clear performance indicators aligned with our strategic priorities and the Thriving Communities Framework. These indicators will help us measure the effectiveness of our interventions.

### Outcomes Assessment:

We will conduct regular assessments to evaluate the overall impact of our work on building thriving communities. This may involve case studies, focus groups, and community forums.

### Continuous Improvement:

Based on the evaluation findings, we will continuously refine our strategies and adapt our approach as needed.

## GOAL 1: BUILD THRIVING COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT ALICE



### Objective 1: Build Thriving Communities to Support ALICE



**Smart Goal:** Increase the financial resilience of at least 157,000 ALICE households across the footprint through partnerships that provide financial stability and asset-building services by 2028.



### Objective 2: Enhance the Overall Well-being of ALICE Households



**Smart Goal:** Enhance the overall well-being of ALICE households by improving access to education, health and community support initiatives for at least 100,000 ALICE households by 2028.

## GOAL 2: EXPAND UWGN'S LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE TO SUPPORT ALICE



### Objective 1: Policy Leadership for ALICE Empowerment



**Smart Goal:** Develop staff, board members, and community leaders into effective advocates for ALICE households within two years.



### Objective 2 : Advocacy and Community Engagement for ALICE Empowerment



**Smart Goal:** Equip stakeholders with diverse advocacy skills and engagement tools to support ALICE households and advance UWGN's mission within two years.



### Objective 3: Promote Volunteerism and Community Engagement for ALICE



**Smart Goal:** Increase volunteer engagement and community involvement to support ALICE households and enhance UWGN's leadership and influence within communities within two years.

## GOAL 3: ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT



### Objective 1: Strengthen Staff and Board Expertise and Skills



**Smart Goal:** Enhance the skills and knowledge of staff and board members to effectively support organizational sustainability and growth, through technological innovation within two years.



### Objective 2: Foster Collaboration and Engagement within UWGN



**Smart Goal:** Promote a culture of collaboration and engagement among staff and board members to support organizational sustainability and growth within two years.



### Objective 3: Establish an Ambassador Program to Expand Reach and Capacity



**Smart Goal:** Develop and implement a structured ambassador program to enhance UWGN's reach and capacity across its footprint within two years.

## GOAL 4: INCREASE REVENUE TO SUSTAIN UWGN AND SUPPORT ALICE



### Objective 1: Diversify Funding Sources



**Smart Goal:** Expand revenue streams and diversify funding sources to support organizational sustainability and enhance support for ALICE households within three years.



### Objective 2: Enhance Donor Engagement and Stewardship



**Smart Goal:** Improve donor engagement and stewardship practices to cultivate long-term relationships and increase donor retention within three years.



### Objective 3: Engage Young Professionals Network for Volunteerism and Philanthropy



**Smart Goal:** Establish and cultivate a Young Professionals Network (YPN) to drive volunteerism, leadership development, and donor engagement among young professionals, thereby creating a sustainable pipeline of support for UWGN's work with ALICE households within three years.



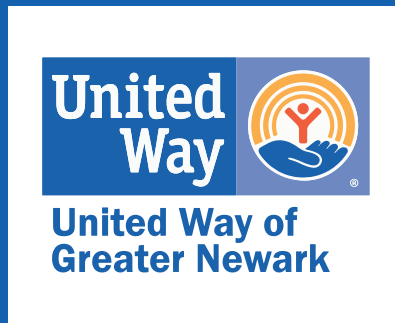
### Objective 4: Explore Collaborations with Local United Ways



**Smart Goal:** Investigate and pursue collaborations with other local United Ways to explore shared service models and potential mergers to better serve similar urban ALICE populations within three years.

## CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by ALICE populations are complex and deeply rooted in systemic inequities. However, UWGN is committed to building a future where every individual and family in our 14-municipality footprint has the opportunity to thrive. By embracing a paradigm shift, focusing on collaboration, and implementing a multi-faceted approach guided by the Thriving Communities Framework, UWGN can make a significant difference in the lives of ALICE households. Through ongoing evaluation and adaptation, we will continue to learn, grow, and work alongside our partners to create a more just and equitable future for all.



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