



# BOONE COUNTY'S UPWARD MOBILITY ACTION PLAN

2024 Community Update



**BOONE COUNTY**  
UPWARD MOBILITY



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2024

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Upward Mobility project supports actions that give all Boone County children, youth, and adults the power to improve their lives, to be valued and feel like they belong, and to strengthen their economic well-being.

## BACKGROUND

Upward Mobility champions the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to improve their lives and economic status, to feel valued and included, and to have control over their own decisions. Thriving communities are those that actively support upward mobility and work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities among individuals of all ages. Boone County was chosen as one of eight counties nationwide to join the Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Cohort at the start of 2021. This program provided financial support, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities to help develop a Mobility Action Plan (MAP) aimed at enhancing upward mobility and tackling racial inequities. Despite overall positive well-being metrics, Boone County's data reveals stark disparities: White families enjoy lower poverty rates, higher academic achievements, and better health outcomes, while families of color, especially Black families, face significant challenges including higher poverty rates and poorer educational and health outcomes.

To address these issues, Boone County created a comprehensive MAP with goals, strategies, and target outcomes focused on reducing poverty and improving upward mobility. Community members with lived experience played a crucial role in developing the plan, which led to the formation of three workgroups: Jobs and Workforce Development, Fair and Inclusive Housing, and Early Grade Literacy. These groups, guided by Stakeholder Facilitators, used Results-Based Accountability methods to create interconnected strategic action plans. This community report summarizes the progress made in implementing the Boone County MAP. For a detailed account, the full report is available at <https://www.showmeboone.com/community-services/upward-mobility.asp>. This update highlights the ongoing efforts to apply the plan's strategies and acknowledges the contributions of various organizations and individuals in addressing these complex community issues.

## JOBS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Result Statement:

Boone County is a flourishing community where everyone can live, learn, and grow.



### Stakeholder Facilitator

**Alvin Cobbins, Minority Men's Network**

"As a facilitator for Upward Mobility Jobs and Workforce Development, I have become a strong advocate for the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) process, which I have seen succeed through my extensive community volunteer work. This experience has inspired me to pursue RBA certification, so I can offer support to community leaders and others interested in implementing this effective process. The implementation of RBA has proven successful, but it will take time to achieve community-wide results.

The result statement and strategies may take time to implement, particularly among employers who may be hesitant to hire individuals with criminal records or those who struggle with employment behaviors and soft skills. While attitudinal changes are difficult to measure, they are crucial for progress. Engaging with companies to start conversations and identify pathways to employment opportunities for those meeting criteria through training and job performance is key. The stigma surrounding these individuals is deeply ingrained and politically charged, especially in Missouri, but legislative impact and community organizing can help break down these barriers. Positive changes are happening, but it requires ongoing collaboration and continuous improvement. It is essential to involve everyone who needs to be part of this effort, as there is always room for growth and refinement. In this process, we aim to highlight clearly defined upwardly mobile business practices that can drive meaningful change.

The workgroup has brought organizations out of their silos and into an arena for more community collaboration, which has resulted in the workgroup prioritizing strategies and creating a definition of upwardly mobile business practices: "Upwardly mobile business practices encompass holistic strategies, policies, and actions to create the conditions and pathways for advancement, skill acquisition, and livable wage employment opportunities for all-- especially for those who have been historically marginalized. Upwardly mobile business practices provide employees with a sense of power, autonomy, dignity, and belonging."

# FAIR & INCLUSIVE HOUSING

Result Statement:

All people in Boone County have safe, quality, and affordable housing.

Efforts under Fair and Inclusive Housing continue under two workgroups: Increase Second-Chance Leasing Opportunities and the Affordable Housing Coalition.

## Increase Second-Chance Leasing Opportunities

The Second Chance Leasing workgroup has seen the following successes since its inception:

- **Strengthened Relationships:** The workgroup has enhanced relationships between housing providers and tenant advocates, fostering a better understanding of the challenges faced by each group.
- **Positive Network:** A strong network of positive relationships has been created among service providers who work with tenants facing barriers to obtaining housing.
- **Love Columbia's RentWell Course:** This tenant-training initiative has been established in the community, achieving active participation and receiving positive responses from landlords.
- **Source of Income Ordinance:** The passage of the Source of Income Ordinance has been added to the City of Columbia discrimination code, increasing protection for tenants who use alternative forms of income, such as housing vouchers.
- **Access to State Rental Assistance:** Community partners have been able to access state rental assistance resources and will continue to do so as they become available.

## Affordable Housing Coalition



### Stakeholder Facilitator

Jane Williams, Love Columbia

“Workgroup members have researched and presented on a wide range of topics and strategies employed by other communities to promote affordable housing. This educational effort has helped prioritize local policy areas, such as accessory dwelling units and nonconforming lots, to create an initial impact and build momentum.

In 2024, the coalition established marketing and policy committees. These committees are responsible for developing a website to serve as a hub for affordable housing efforts and providing research to support city and county policy reform initiatives. The workgroup has also collaborated with Dr. Boston, owner of Amarach Planning Services, LLC, who is contracted with Boone County to provide a comprehensive housing study and recommendations.

As a result of this collaboration, the policy committee has begun researching several key topics: preservation of existing affordable housing stock, small lot development, R-1 zoning reform, inclusionary zoning and mixed-income development, building permit fee waivers for affordable housing, and shared living options and regulations.

Workgroup meetings are held monthly and are well attended. Through the sharing of new ideas and lived experiences, we have witnessed a broadening and unification of perspectives.”

# EARLY GRADE LITERACY

Result Statement:

All children in Boone County learn to read and write and see themselves as readers and writers.



### Stakeholder Facilitator

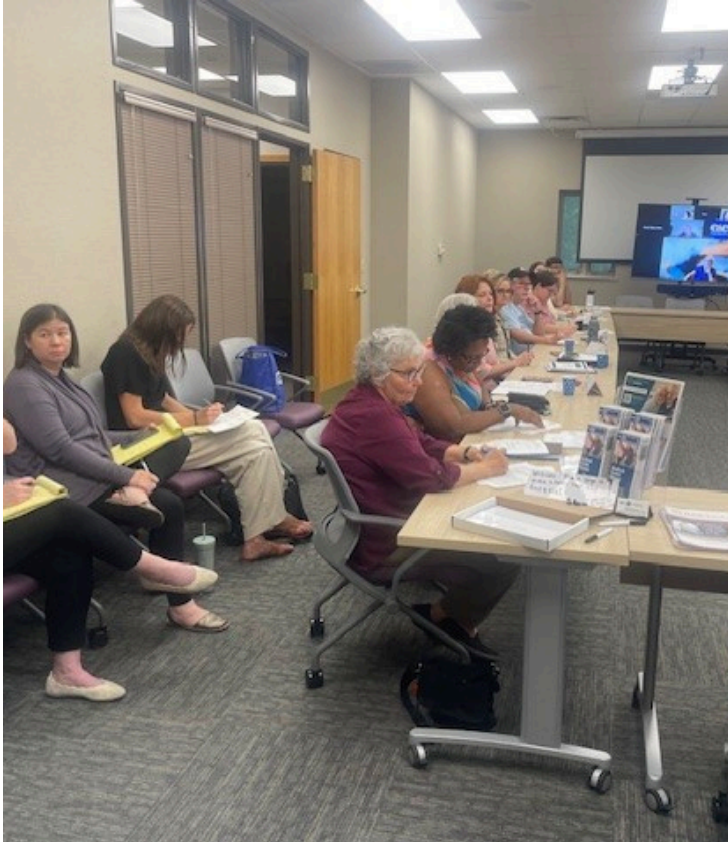
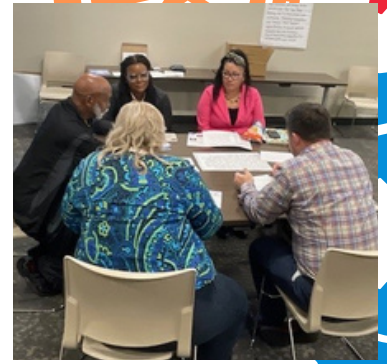
Alvin Plummer, Minority Men's Network

“After learning that there are numerous websites available with information targeted to early childhood literacy, the focus turned to establishing more connections and collaborations to promote available resources in the community. This has helped the workgroup further refine the focus and direction of our collective efforts.

The workgroup has decided to introduce ourselves to the different superintendents in Boone County in order to glean more information on how we can provide assistance to school districts. We want to build the relationship with others in the community and provide support to the many efforts happening in our community.

The dedicated members of the workgroup and Boone County Community Services staff will remain on course to discover more ways to improve Early Grade Literacy. I encourage anyone with an interest or direct involvement in early grade literacy to reach out to Boone County's Upward Mobility project.”





## UPWARD MOBILITY STAFF:

Funding support for Upward Mobility comes from the Boone County Children's Services Fund with project coordination from the Boone County Community Services Department staff:

- Verna Laboy, Program Manager
- Joanne Nelson, Director
- Gina Jenkins, Data & Performance Analyst
- Kerby Webb, Program Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Specialist

Scan for more information on the Upward Mobility project:

