

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY-BASED STRENGTHS, SUPPORTS, AND SOLUTIONS

A Report for the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative

Kalamazoo College

ANSO 310-Research for Social Change

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Most importantly, we would like to thank the voluntary consultants from the community groups of: The Goodwill Lifeguides, the members of the Emmanuel Foundation, the staff of Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency (KRESA), and the residents of the Interfaith Homes. This work could not have been generated or produced without their valuable time, knowledge, and efforts to work with our research group and SPK. We are truly grateful for their crucial input.

INTRODUCTION

Following the foundational goals of the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative, this research group focused on identifying original community strengths and supports to co-generate possible solutions and suggested supportive actions to help alleviate poverty in the City of Kalamazoo. The community-based research approach was used to gain experiential and accurate insight of assets and supports. We wanted to understand what was working in the community, what could be enhanced, and what is not available, but needed. Our initial focus was on the particulars of sustaining employment in Kalamazoo, but it was understood that we had to direct a holistic approach. Our research group has been able to produce a list of possible solutions that stem from individual and community strengths.

All of the research conducted would not be possible without the participation of the community members previously mentioned and we acknowledge that although this report takes a holistic approach it would be impossible to create a list in-depth enough to acknowledge all the factors that go into navigating each part of the participants' lives. This report should be used as a starting point. This research was conducted within a ten week period that involved meetings, interviews, and written participation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

We spoke to four different groups in the Kalamazoo area that were representative of the ALICE population, a focus group of the SPK initiative. We followed a community asset-based research approach when interviewing groups. Although the selection of groups was limited to the people in our combined networks, we were able to interact with a wide range of participants; meaning, the supports, assets, and systems these community members faced had many differences and commonalities. The Kalamazoo community groups that were a part of this research consisted of voluntary participants from: the residents of the Interfaith Homes, the LifeGuides of GoodWill, the staff of KRESA, and the community members of the Emmanuel Foundation in the ALICE population.

To gather collective, qualitative data and to personally engage with the community, our research group met with groups twice within a month period to have a facilitated dialogue to identify the assets, resources, and supports of participants. All Group meetings were conducted separately from each other so that consultants could feel more comfortable when expressing their expertise, thoughts, and experiences. After each meeting or interview, we handed out Meijer gift cards to all who attended— supported by the SPK Initiative— to show our gratitude for their critical input. The initial focus of our research group was on sustaining employment and overcoming the barriers towards this success. Eventually, we began speaking about some of the biggest common obstacles of the ALICE population - childcare and transportation.

The first round of meetings were recorded and transcribed— community speakers remained anonymous —to be coded through the ATLAS.ti program. The intentions of these discussions were to gather general data surrounding the topic of sustaining stable employment. Our research group members used a facilitation guide (found in Appendix A) to keep conversation flowing among consultants and at the end, gave out optional SPK objective worksheets to fill out (found in Appendix B). It was optional to introduce the principles and goals behind SPK, our research goals with the ALICE population, and allow community members to ruminate on the first meeting discussion so they can prime for the second meeting.

The second meetings were driven by the particulars and the specifics seen in the first round. As a research group, we generated an asset identifying worksheet (found in Appendix D) to have concrete data to effectively use for the research product. These meetings were not recorded, but we asked to keep group participants consistent with the first meeting. The groups varied by one or two members at most from the first meeting.

To further enhance our community engagement and strengthen our understandings of assets, supports, resources, barriers, and possible solution ideas—we personally contacted and conducted individual meetings with one or two consultants from each group after the first-round meetings. We chose people to interview based on their engagement throughout

the first conversation and to discuss personally successful and unsuccessful actions and supports for employment using a loose facilitation guide (found in Appendix C). These meetings were recorded, transcribed, and coded through the ATLAS.ti program.

Finally, the findings we pulled from the qualitative data from the first meetings, second meetings, and personal interviews were used to generate compiled worksheets (found in Appendix E and Appendix F) to complement our research goals and easily compare the different Kalamazoo ALICE populations. We used the compiled information to create a list of suggested actions driven by individual and community strengths and supports. Additionally, we designed a visual representation of our research.

ASSET BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to facilitate the process of co-generating potential program ideas and innovative decision-making with community consultants, qualitative data was collected in two ways. Initially, we facilitated group discussions centered around SPK's objectives in conjunction with the lived experiences of participants. The compilation of the data recorded is presented in an Asset Table and a Matrix of Supportive Actions.

Asset Table:

Using the inventive strategies, recommendations and individual services offered by consultants during the two rounds of meetings, we created an asset table of potential programs to be implemented in Kalamazoo. The potential programs target the service areas of transportation, childcare, housing, and miscellaneous. The Asset Based Actions are either based on recorded suggestions from the consultants or are scaled up models of strategies and supports utilized by some of the community consultants. See Figure 1.

Of the potential program ideas cogenerated through the meetings, consultants volunteered to provide some form of skill or labor under each of the aforementioned service areas. Specifically, several consultants offered themselves as drivers for a community based rideshare option. Unlike public transportation, this option would provide an Uber-like service to Kalamazoo residents for a significantly reduced price, possibly through subsidization or a voucher system, and would employ community members. Moreover, it is suggested that the requirements for eligible cars be more lenient than those of Uber or Lyft so as to open up the labor pool.

Additionally, many consultants offered to provide childcare while citing the importance of community daycare houses: daycare centers in nearby houses run by community members and offering more lax payment options and more convenient hours. Using this as a model, community members are empowered to take control of the community's day care needs, and others have easier, more affordable access to childcare.

Lastly, what was arguably the most notable output from the consultants was a need for some form of emotional support and general guidance. A good model for this would be the Life Guides program, wherein participants receive support and empathy, advice on budgeting and their career paths, and a variety of art programs and academic support for their children. To take it a step further, not only is there a need for some advisory program, but for a targeted form of advisory for members of specific communities (i.e. immigrants, formerly incarcerated persons, ESL learners, people with mental illnesses, neurodiverse people, etc.), ideally provided by members of the same community or at least people holding a thorough understanding of such.

(See Asset Table on page 8 and Supportive Actions Table on page 13)

ASSET TABLE

The Asset Table includes community-based action ideas collected from group meetings, individual interviews, and written feedback received from KRESA, Goodwill Lifeguides, Interfaith Homes, and the Emmanuel Foundation. The information displays what actions communities thought they could do, given the resources and what they already do to navigate through their everyday demands.

TRANSPORTATION				
Asset-Based Actions	Community Voices: What I Can Do	Community Voices: What We Do	Existing Community Programs/Supports	Issues Addressed
Offer community-based ride share option that will employ community members and include affordable 24/7 service, possibly subsidized	Assist people with car insurance so they can drive Uber Allow people with older model cars to be a rideshare option	Rely on each other for transportation such as coworkers give rides and carpool groups	Take an Uber, if the location is within distance and is affordable	Unable to access immediate & affordable transportation forms Cannot afford expense of owning a personal car Cannot afford expense of private rideshare options such as Uber/Lift
Update the bus app for phones to live-track buses, that show delays ahead of time and offer other options for transportation that displays price options and availability	Drive a carpool van to help community members get to their job	Check the bus app for the bus schedule and be proactive so leave their house early to make the bus, but have to arrive at work an hour early to avoid tardiness	Establish personal relationships/ communication with bus drivers that sometimes prevent lateness to work	Unable to rely on inconsistent bus system and its time constraint of Lack of immediate accountability for bus system

CHILDCARE

Asset-Based Actions	Community Voices: What I Can Do	Community Voices: What We Do	Existing Community Programs/Supports	Issues Addressed
Provide affordable childcare, possibly subsidized	Provide childcare for community members in neighborhood	Pay extended family to take care of children Secure a late shift cover due to strong coworker relationships	Use certain lenient daycare centers, if affordable	Unable to affordable, safe childcare Unable to adhere to inflexible daycare rules
Provide Community Daycare houses or after school daycare services Support free CPR classes	Provide a safe space for childcare services	Use after school tutoring programs Support from one parent will stay at home and watch their and other community members' children	Utilize a neighborhood daycare house that has flexible payment options Trust daycare that provide comfort, safety and education, if affordable	Limit to constricting range of daycare options: have to choose between either unaffordable, safe, and educational or cheap, less secure and unreliable
Create a college-partner program that provides education students with clinical hours to provide communities with educational childcare options	Provide assistance in upkeep of these childcare facilities as well helping provide childcare	Watch coworker's children	Kalamazoo is a college town, WMU may be willing to work to develop a program that benefits students and communities	College partnerships could benefit students and communities as students could earn clinical hours while working with paid community members to help enrich children's lives through childcare

FOOD

Asset-Based Actions	Community Voices: What I Can Do	Community Voices: What We Do	Existing Community Programs/Supports	Issues Addressed
Install new community/ individual gardens Support existing community/individual gardens	Make a wider range of food available to the community		Establish a community garden (Interfaith has one that is currently not in use) Grow a personal garden	Lack of accessibility to fresh produce
Produce more accessible food pantries to the people who use them such as extended hours and availability in more areas	Make food pantries accommodate more community members in the ALICE population		Go to free food pantries and churches	Have difficulties to access food pantries due to inflexible hours and locations

MISCELLANEOUS

Asset-Based Actions	Community Voices: What I Can Do	Community Voices: What We Do	Existing Community Programs/Supports	Issues Addressed
Support life coach/mentor programs, that is short and long term	Be a life mentor or life skills coach for other people who need support		The Goodwill Life Guides Program	Have difficulties due to lack of advisory supports and resources on employment, housing, and budgeting
Support financial literacy education programs, that teach how to budget, how to keep track of personal finances, and general bank account information	Help educate other adults, especially young adults, to budget and manage finances	Budget for the week/month around payday Know how much of to save, for personal use and in case of emergency	Goodwill Life Guides program financial assistance	Lack of knowledge of bank and financial systems Have weak budgeting and saving skills, especially around unforeseen events
Provide support for employees struggling with mental health issues through counseling and other resources Recognize neurodiversity among the labor force of the community and provide resources/supports to assist with sustainable employment for those whose mental health interferes with securing/keeping a job			KRESA Young Adult Program (up to a certain age)	Lack of support systems and resources for those struggling with mental health issues Lack of acknowledgment of mental health as a possible barrier for maintaining employment

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

The community consultants specifically pinpointed areas in which services and supports were either insufficient or unavailable and offered recommendations to improve the quality and accessibility of supports. This matrix covers areas where accessibility was limited and consultants had few favorable strategies to combat challenges. Here specific illustrations of ineffective or unavailable services are paired with potential supportive actions suggested during the meetings. See Figure 2.

Aside from the different perspective and set up of the Supportive Actions table, it additionally includes the service area for housing as well as transportation, childcare, food, and miscellaneous. The supportive actions generated included: a gas card program to ease the costs of owning one's own vehicle; subsidized childcare with 12- 24 hour service; staffing food pantries with community members to expand hours and provide services like shuttles or food delivery; english development programs for different proficiency classes; financial literacy classes, starting in Kalamazoo Public Schools; and greater social media and advertising for the services and agencies available in Kalamazoo.

Overall, the supportive actions presented on this table are centered on issues of accessibility, namely, in addressing issues where accessibility does not exist. For example, there are minimal day care centers with lenient hours, affordability, and credibility. Thus, consultants often cited having to pay more than they can afford for high quality daycare or leave children with family or neighbors who, while charging less, often cannot provide the same level of education or security. As well, there was demand for more educational services, specifically ESL and further english development classes as well as budgeting/financial literacy classes. In the case of the former, the key obstacle to prosperity cited by people for whom english is their second language was the language barrier; while the African immigrant community tied to the Emmanuel Foundation has developed ESL classes for their community, these are limited. Moreover, these classes could not only help community members combat language barriers, but, additionally, they could help combat illiteracy within the Kalamazoo community.

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS TABLE

The Supportive Actions Table includes community-based action ideas collected from group meetings, individual interviews, and written feedback received from KRESA, Goodwill Lifeguides, Interfaith Homes, and the Emmanuel Foundation. The information displays what actions communities thought could be improved upon, given the resources and what they already do to navigate through their everyday demands.

TRANSPORTATION		
Supportive Actions	Direct Evidence	Issue Addressed
Create gas card programs through employers or the city, for people who commute to work, based on number of hours worked	<p>"I have a car but I can't even afford the insurance, can't afford gas, I can't afford to get my kids to where they have to go."</p> <p>"If you have a car, you need gas, car insurance. You ain't going far."</p> <p>"So, I have a question, I don't know if you can make a program, to help the people with the gas, we have some agency when I was in Minnesota, an agency that helps people with some cards to buy gas. Here in Kalamazoo do you have that system?"</p>	Affording a car is expensive and gas is a weekly expense for those who commute to work, without money for gas, often people are left without a ride to work

CHILDCARE		
Supportive Actions	Direct Evidence	Issue Addressed
Create a subsidized childcare program or partner with employers that can offer affordable pay options and runs 24-hours or 12-hours by community members	<p>"Childcare. But it's too expensive, and it's hard to get in so you have to wait until they do like a background check. And based on your income, childcare is very expensive. And if you go through the department of social services, you have to wait until, you fill out an application, they process that application, but then if you got that spot in day care, you end up having to pay out your own pocket if you still want that spot. You pay out your own pocket until your daycare ends."</p> <p>"I think childcare needs to go way down, if I'm working forty hours a week to try and support my children, and I understand they have to get their money too but I think there should be some type of program"</p> <p>"What do I wish existed at that time? Um definitely more affordable childcare. Maybe I remember there was a lot of times um that I would get offered like a third shift job and it might pay more but the buses don't run third shift and child care doesn't work third-third shift."</p>	<p>Childcare is too expensive.</p> <p>Childcare is not offered during third-shift</p>
HOUSING & FOOD		
Supportive Actions	Direct Evidence	Issue Addressed
Create a program that helps people budget specifically to buy a house.	"We had a lot of debt from the business so, it just seems like with everything they went through by our income, and then we made too much. But, then when we tried to get a house, uh they only would, I couldn't use him because he had all the bad debt from the business so we could only use me and I didn't make enough to purchase a house. So, we were stuck."	Renting is more expensive and less beneficial in the long-run than buying, the longer communities are stuck in the high-rent, low-return situations, the harder it is to get out of poverty
Expand food pantry hours and services by staffing community members within pantries and as food delivery or shuttle drivers.	"I'm talking about just to be able to have a meal. Because, if you get to the places that offer food service like that to people who are less fortunate, they got certain hours. So, I guess it could even go back to that transportation, where if you can't get there, you out of luck. Period, point blank."	Lack of accessibility to pantries due to restrictive hours or challenges with transportation makes an asset for the community ineffective

MISCELLANEOUS

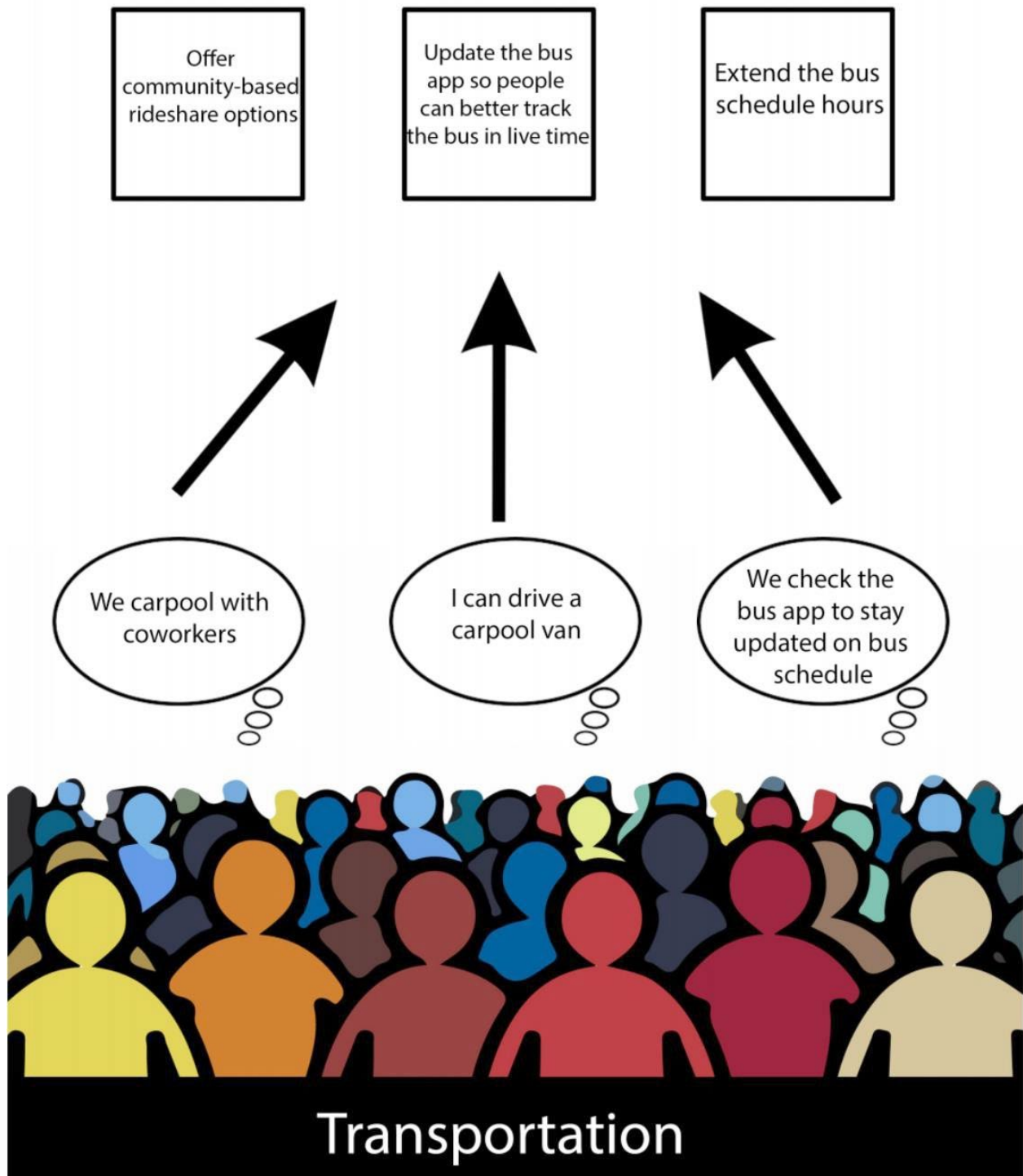
Supportive Actions	Direct Evidence	Issue Addressed
<p>Create an English Development program that works with different proficiency levels and is centered around accessing employment</p>	<p>" I lived fifty years without knowing how to read."</p> <p>"But on the other hand, you get a job, you don't know English well. They only have the job for a week, and they have no idea why. And they couldn't defend themselves. And I've seen that several times."</p> <p>"It's very tough for us I can say. Because we came to America to learn English and uh to manage how America is going, is very tough for us. That's a reason we should build a school to teach each other like English, computer, to understand very well to build that help."</p>	<p>Adapting to life in America is difficult for immigrant communities who are often taken advantage of due to language barriers</p> <p>Understanding a more technological job market is difficult, especially with little to no education</p>
<p>Develop a web and physical list of existing public programs that advertise their benefits along with their drawbacks derived from previous experience</p>	<p>"Housing resources [HRI]. Horrible, Horrible, when I say that, one of the worst experiences of my life. Horrible. I would never, never refer anyone to them or go back there ever again. And I'm not even like that, I'm usually a happy go lucky guy, you know, trying to be positive, and they're horrible."</p> <p>"Kerry Network, I think, and they would tell me that like I could wash clothes there for free but how am I gonna get there with like six loads of laundry. Um yeah I never really, I guess I hadn't been introduced to any other programs besides that one and it wasn't helpful to me."</p>	<p>Public programs have stipulations and time constraints that often are not revealed unless a negative experience has happened</p> <p>Lists of programs exist but they do not have "reviews," meaning more time and money is wasted within communities who need immediate support</p>
<p>Dedicate a team that runs social media for public programs and is responsible for program advertising/publicizing</p>	<p>"I don't really know any solutions, the marketing is a big, I think programs need to be advertised, I think social media is a great way to advertise, now a days, everybody sits at their dinner room you know on their phones."</p>	<p>Many public programs exist but are not advertised to the community well, rendering them unproductive</p>

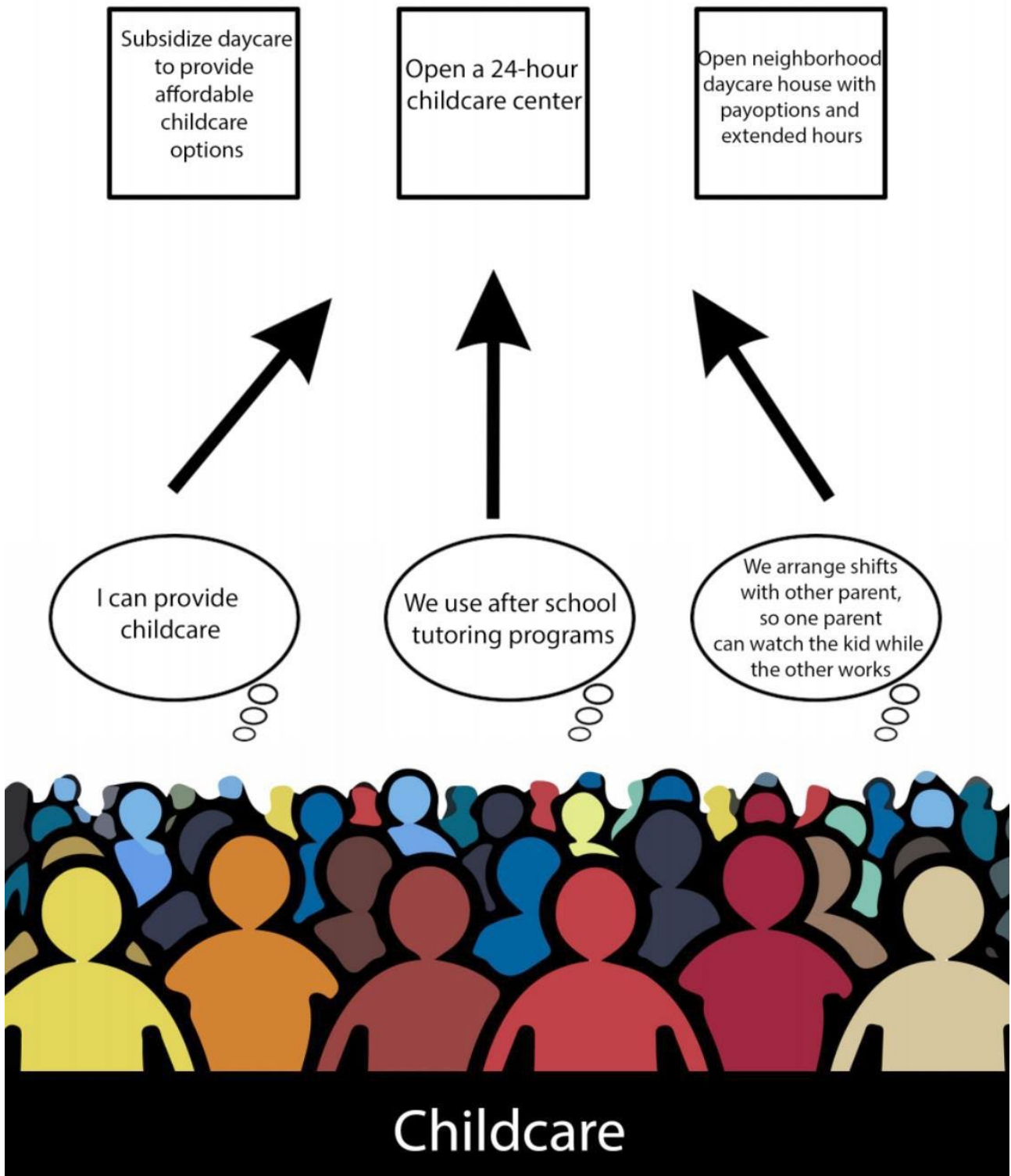
MISCELLANEOUS (continued)

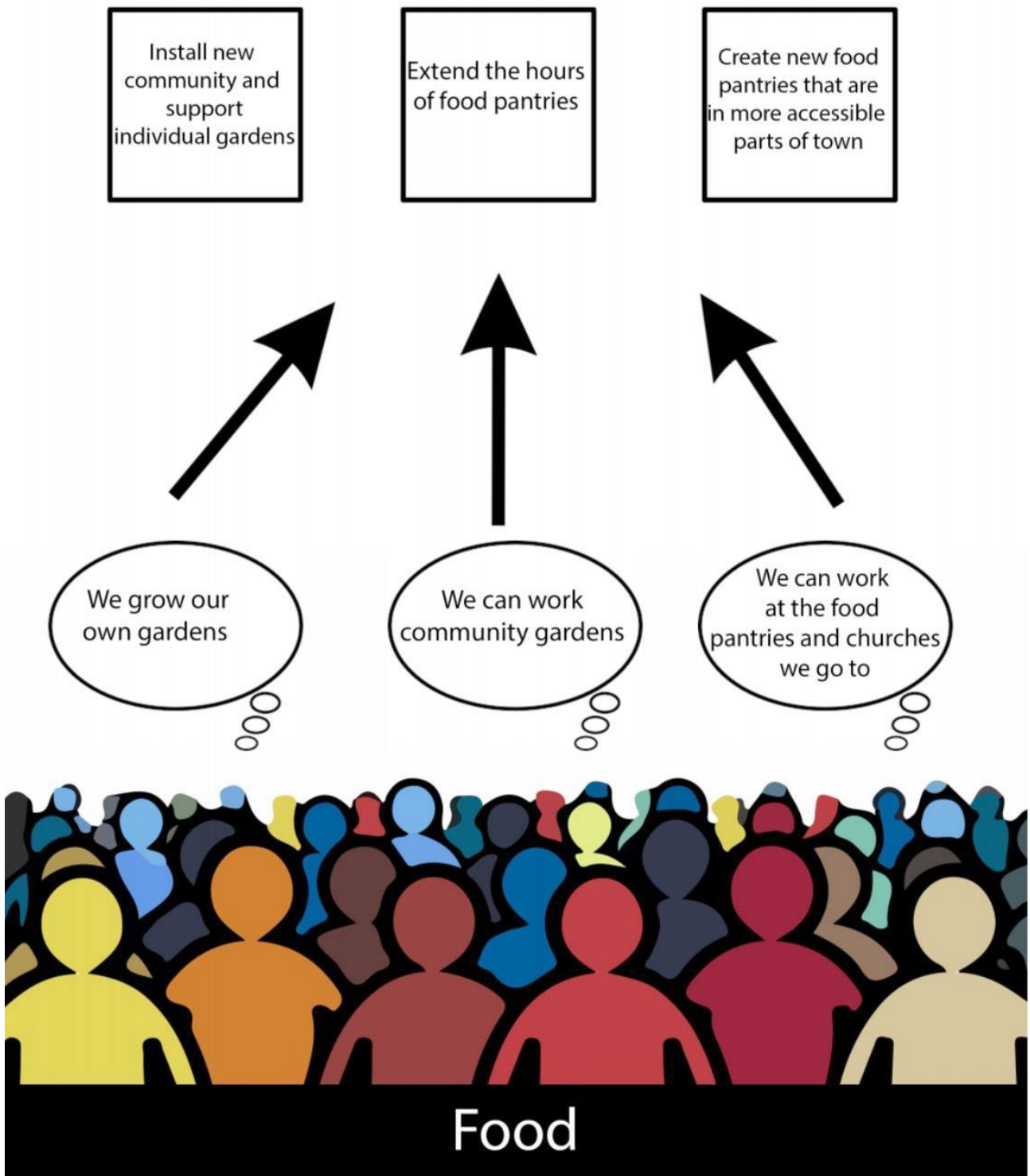
Supportive Actions	Direct Evidence	Issue Addressed
<p>Develop a life coach/cash incentivizing program that provides guidance and financial support for communities</p>	<p>"S: And you're like talking about your options, but you're not just like getting money, and you don't know what to do with it. You have individualized attention. So, we have more coaches and more individuality that way. You think that would be beneficial? X: It would make a difference, Absolutely."</p> <p>"In the support aspect, sometimes you just need encouragement. You know, you kind of feel bad cause you've been down in the dumps, so just somebody letting you know you can do it, you can get yourself back out helps, goes a long way. Long way."</p>	<p>Mentoring programs provide emotional support that is often lacking in impoverished areas</p> <p>Providing emotional support along with financial assistance benefits communities in ways that specific programs often cannot due to their restrictions</p>
<p>Introduce budgeting/financial literacy classes either in schools or separately through the city</p>	<p>"We struggle, nothing to do, we just struggle. When you pay you get your salary, you pay all the bills that you have and you manage with the nothing you have. You just manage to finish your ... start the new week with the new paycheck, that's what we do."</p> <p>"And took care of the household financially, took care of seven kids financially. My mother, watching her sit down and budget, for me, when I wanted to play football, that added extra expenses and where was that coming from. My mother's like you gotta get another paper route."</p>	<p>Financial literacy makes it easier to save and spend wisely, reducing immediate financial turmoil</p>
<p>Create a target job coaching program (for recent immigrants, formally incarcerated persons, and those with little to no education)</p>	<p>"I'm currently getting my felony expunged, but if you have a ten-year-old felony and I've never gotten any more trouble, and I have this big red letter on my head because I've made one stupid mistake I've never done anything else why will that follow me the rest of my life."</p> <p>"Yes, uh some advice is like uh some people you can go to work and uh we'll chase you, you don't know, and they'll tell you since today no more job, huh, without warning, without what, that is a problem we have. And uh sometimes we work for 40 hours and we pay you for 30 hours."</p>	<p>Often communities who are unaware of societal norms or standards, along with having training or experience within the job market are taken advantage of, or struggle to maintain employment</p>

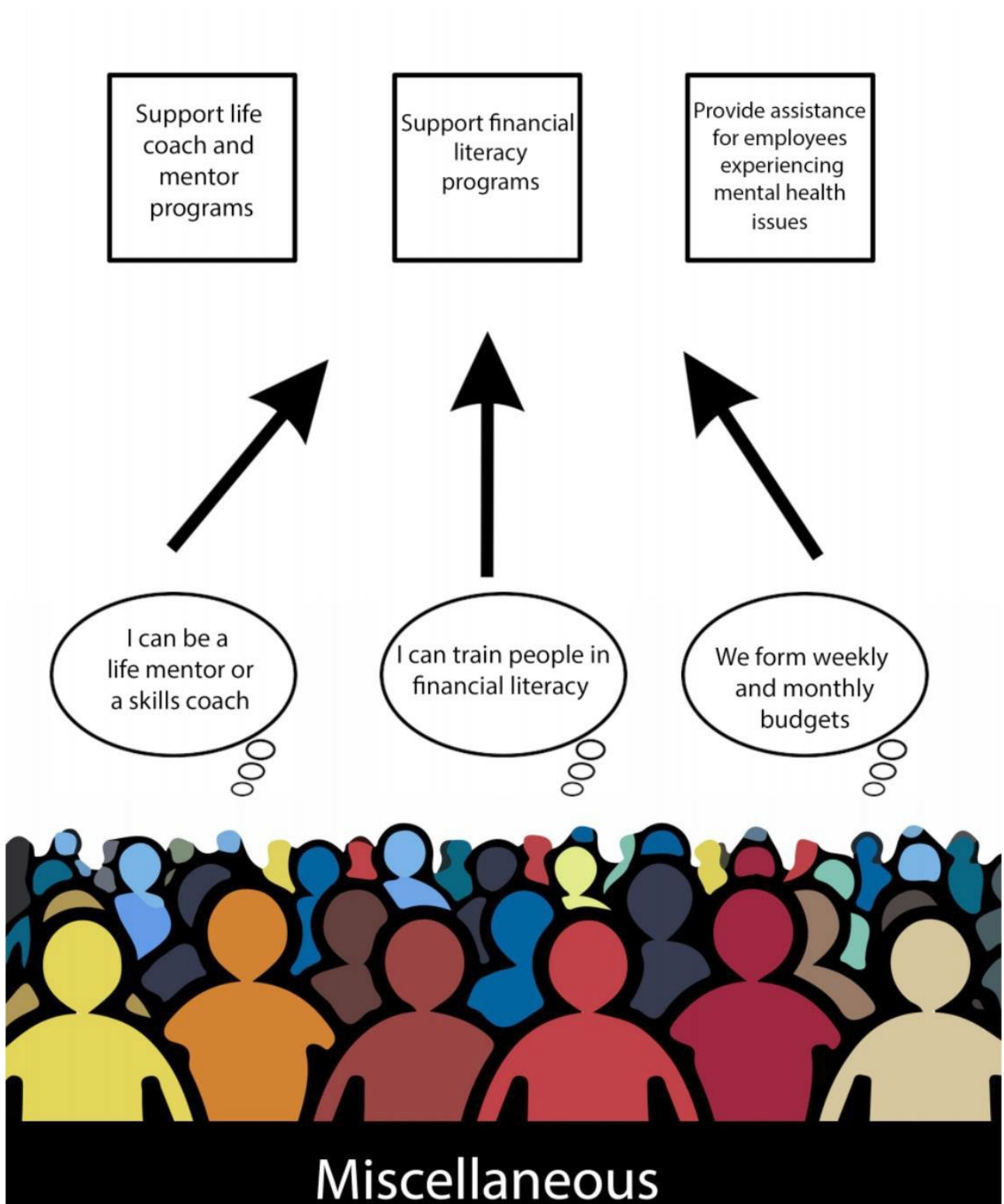
VISUALS

The following visuals break down the ideas discussed in both the Asset Table and Supportive Actions table to be used for the public, to easily explain the knowledge generated by the communities.









Below are copies of facilitation guides, interview guides, and worksheets that we used and gave to the participants. The bold heading indicates each individual document, even though the tables will generally be on the page following.

Appendix A: Meeting 1 Facilitation Guide

Group Facilitation: Introducing Asset-Based Engagement

This guide is for initial Group meetings and should be used to direct the conversation to align with SPK's objectives. It is important to use accessible language and explain the purpose behind the work being done. This guide is helpful to keep conversations from getting off track and keeping focuses aligned.

Introduction:

- **Get verbal consent for recording and why we need it. NO IDENTIFIERS. Importance of relying on their words and knowledge.*
- **Discuss the background of SPK**
 - [The Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative is working with the city of Kalamazoo to find ways to combat poverty in the city. Funding has been granted to implement new programs, but SPK needs insights as to what these programs should look like, or how to improve upon programs that already exist.]

Discussion Questions:

- You are experts in successfully moving along the path to prosperity. So, the next set of questions will focus on collecting and understanding the strategies and supports you have developed and use. SPK would like to build upon what already works and the methods you all have been using that keeps you afloat. The end goal is to combine your collective strengths and strategies to increase access to jobs and promote economically secure families in Kalamazoo.
 - There are a lot of people, despite their best attempts, who aren't able to manage daily demands. So, how do you prioritize your work day schedule? What are your first thoughts in the morning and what do you prioritize? (*Probe: networks, motivations, organizational tactics-thought process, scheduling a work day,*

prioritizing activities)

- For many people, keeping stable employment takes at least a few attempts. There are all sorts of reasons so if you can relate, then what finally clicked? (*Probe: the difficulties of not being able to keep them as well*)
- Which services do and do not work? (*Probe: Why do/don't they work?*)
- What supports do you draw on to help you keep employment, assist with your difficulties, and take advantage of opportunities? (*Probe: specifically that exist in your community*)
 - » Friends, neighbors, families?
 - » Programs, agencies?
- What advice would you give others who are trying to have the same success as you?

Conclusion:

- **Comment on a few specific points in the interview that were noteworthy**
- Between now and the next time we meet, we will be having similar discussions with other groups to identify common themes that came up about strengths.
- Next time we meet we will share what we found out and work with you to strategize and prioritize areas of focus/action for SPK. So it would be great if you could all continue to reflect on this meeting and continue considering personal and community assets.
- Thank everyone for their time and effort

Appendix B: Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Objective Guide

Cross-Cutting Objectives

This guide can be handed out at the end of the first meeting to give participants an idea of SPK's goals. It can also be helpful to keep participants engaged during the weeks there are no meetings and to provide meaningful information for the Asset Table and Supportive Actions Table.

The Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative is working with the city of Kalamazoo to find ways to combat poverty in the city. Funding has been granted to implement new programs, but SPK needs insights as to what these programs should look like, or how to improve upon programs that already exist.

Where you come in:

You are experts of your lived experiences. You have developed strategies/supports and we'd like your insight. SPK would like to build upon what already works and the methods you all have been using that keep you afloat. Also, you have explored the different programs the city has to offer, and seen first-hand, their benefits and drawbacks. Our goal is to take your concerns and insights to improve these programs so they benefit you to their fullest extent on your path to sustained prosperity. Your expertise will provide a holistic approach that covers a wide array of issues, rather than focusing on one or two aspects of people's lives. Please fill out the table below to share your personal experiences, how you prioritize, what works, what doesn't--and how things can be improved or changed so they do work. The end goal is to combine your collective strengths and strategies to increase access to jobs and promote economically secure families in Kalamazoo.

Feel free to fill out as much or as little of the table as you feel fits your experience. Thank you again for your expertise and time.

(See copy of blank table on page 24)

Objective	How?
Increase Access to Good Jobs	
Increase the number of people that want jobs getting and keeping jobs and advancing within their workplace.	
Reduce barriers to getting to jobs, keeping jobs, and maintaining productivity on the job.	
Promote the Healthy Growth, Development and Learning of Children	
Ensure children ages 0-5 are thriving and ready for kindergarten.	
Ensure school aged-children are proficient in language arts, science and math.	
Ensure middle and high school students understand career pathways	
Ensure high school students are on track to enter and complete college/credential/trade/ programs	
Promote Strong Families	
Families and individuals have the skills and resources to decrease debt and accumulate assets.	
Increase the number of individuals and families that purchase or rent safe, energy efficient housing.	
General	
Ensure children and families have access to equitable, comprehensive, coordinated services	
Collaborate with residents to ensure all 22 neighborhoods are safe, accessible, and meet resident needs.	

Appendix C: Individual Interview Guide

Individual Interviews: Building on Community Assets

One on one interviews:

These interviews are an extension of group-meetings with participants who were particularly enthusiastic about the SPK initiative. These participants demonstrate assets that can be used for the community on a larger scale, so an individual interview creates a space for more intimate discussion and detailed highlighting of assets and strategies used.

This guide should be used as a redirecting tool if conversations get off topic. Probes are points that can be subtly added if participants are not engaging with the questions effectively

- It would be really helpful to start off this conversation with you telling the story of your job history - beginning with the first time you looked for a job.
 - *(Probe: at turning points-how and why did you make that decision?, how did you know you were on the right path with that decision?, what were the supports drew on?, what strategies did you use?)*
- What have been the high points and low points in your job history? *(Probe: The experiences in Kalamazoo. How did you overcome the lows and take advantage of the high points?)*
- How do you find jobs? How do you get a job? *(Probe: How do they hear about jobs in Kalamazoo? What was the process of obtaining one? Did you feel prepared? Resources?)*
- How did you find the services you have drawn on?
- What services do you wish existed?
- What others services have you used? *(Probe: Strengths and Drawbacks)*
- In conversations we've had so far, childcare and transportation keep coming up as critical issues in getting and keeping jobs, how do you deal with these? What strategies have you used to deal with them?
- As you know, The Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative is working with the city of Kalamazoo to find ways to combat poverty in the city. Funding has been granted to implement new programs, but SPK needs insights as to what these programs should look like, or how to improve upon programs that already exist. If you could design a service that would be most beneficial to yourself and your community, what would it look like?

Appendix D: Meeting 2 Asset Identification Handout

Finding Community Assets

The Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) Initiative is working with the city of Kalamazoo to find ways to combat poverty in the city. Funding has been granted to implement new programs, but SPK needs insights as to what these programs should look like, or how to improve upon programs that already exist.

Where you come in:

You are experts of your lived experiences. You have developed strategies/supports and we'd like your insight. SPK would like to build upon what already works and the methods you all have been using that keep you afloat. Also, you have explored the different programs the city has to offer, and seen first-hand, their benefits and drawbacks. Our goal is to take your concerns and insights to improve these programs so they benefit you to their fullest extent on your path to sustained prosperity. Your expertise will provide a holistic approach that covers a wide array of issues, rather than focusing on one or two aspects of people's lives. Please fill out the table below to share your personal expertise and what you'd supports you'd be willing to provide your community if you were paid for it

Feel free to fill out as much or as little of the table as you feel fits your experience. Thank you again for your expertise and time.

(See copy of blank table on page 27)

	What types of services or programs could be developed that provide employment within the community?	If you could be paid for it, what types of services or programs would you be interested in providing?
Transportation		
Childcare		
Housing		
Food		
Miscellaneous		

Appendix E: Compilation of Community Voices: Identifying Assets

Using the worksheet found in Appendix D, we were able to co-create potential solutions to the barriers consultants regularly face as well as identify areas wherein consultants would be able to provide their own skills and labor. During the second round of Group meetings, consultants were tasked to fill out the "Finding Assets" worksheet, as aforementioned, and following the conclusion of those meetings, their answers were copied verbatim into the following charts, separated by service area and source group.

TRANSPORTATION		
Participant Groups	Potential Solutions	What Can I Do
Interfaith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable "uber" get a few people fully licensed to transport legally Need more transportation because when I get off I don't have a ride 24-hour bus service City bus Taxi cab Get a community car Buses need to run until midnight on Saturdays 24 hour bus service [housing] easier eligibility Longer or earlier Bus transportation Assist people with car insurance so that they can drive Uber & allow people w/ older model cars to be a rideshare or Uber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being an uber driver for the neighborhood (Car) A Van- to help the peoples in our community to get to their job Driving uber
KRESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Churches, donations/pantries and other agencies offering reliable transportation and food delivery services Weekly part time neighborhood rides by approved individuals Easier financing and payment plans for transportation programs and low income people Later bus schedule Providing bus tokens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life skill coaching Delivery services for food

Emmanuel Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMMAF bus (already have a bus, need help with insurance and gas money) 	
Goodwill		
HOUSING		
Participant Groups	Potential Solutions	What Can I Do
Interfaith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more low-income housing other apartments actually houses • Lower rent costs for families who don't qualify for low-income • More transitional housing • Affordable housing compatible to your income • Eviction • Provide rental assistance • Free housing programs 	
KRESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More subsidized housing (due to 2 year waitlist to get one) • Programs to help buying a home (rent is more expensive than buying) • Utility cost control 	
Emmanuel Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortgage help to purchase houses • Rent government housing • Government help with credit building so that they can take out a housing loan 	
Goodwill		

FOOD

Participant Groups	Potential Solutions	What Can I Do
Interfaith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more locations for food and offer more than once a month • L&Fishes is needed in Fox Ridge now • More food pantry programs • More grocery stores than the corner stores • Give out free food have snacks • Closer food pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day care, food services • Provide the food and drinks. Healthy foods. • Helping take people home
KRESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher quality lunch to ALICE students • Offering breakfast as well to kids who eat meals at school • School “backpack” programs to include food during the week so kids can eat at home 	
Emmanuel Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African food store • Food Stamps 	
Goodwill		

MISCELLANEOUS

Participant Groups	Potential Solutions	What Can I Do
Interfaith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with felony background for employment • Felonies new jobs, my brother needs a job now • Hard work • They need programs that will help you if you’re working for 20-30 hours • Help expunge felonies from records that are over 5 years old • Add more training facilities to train more workers • Health care for your children, cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a garden to provide fresh veggies and fruit to the community
KRESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills coaching • Access to bank loans and understanding bank accounts • Educating young adults about life after high school • More transitional programs between high schoolers to becoming young adults • Finance understanding programs • More attention to mental health programs 	

Emmanuel Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need loans • Support leader of the Emmanuel Foundation • Support Joshua's projects • Credit building program • "Facilitate our community" 	
Goodwill		

Appendix F: Compilation of Community Voices: Themes and Quotes

The first round of meetings with the community consultants from KRESA, the Interfaith Homes, Goodwill Life Guides, and the Emmanuel Foundation were recorded and transcribed so as to holistically capture the discussions, ideas, and knowledge cogenerated therein. From there, using Atlas.ti software, we organized and extracted key ideas from the first round of meetings and individual interviews. The following tables are organized into service areas for transportation, childcare, housing, food, miscellaneous, and a general matrix of the supports and services, available or not, utilized by the ALICE population.

TRANSPORTATION
Barriers
<p>Bus:</p> <p>"Where we work at, there's no way for a bus to go that way, I don't know if there's any bus going there, we don't have a bus. So that's why, some people they just wait for those who have cars give them ride. So to go like Walmart ... some people take the bus. But it's also kind of difficult cuz um the bus and this weather, waiting at the bus stop, it will take you 30 minutes, 1 hour before you get a bus" -Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting</p> <p>"And that's like really rough, when you're riding the bus to have to be there, to be on time if the bus runs, like if the bus schedule is running like an hour like every hour you have to be there an hour ahead of time just to be there on time. And that, you know, is just really stressful because you have to leave your house that much earlier." -Interfaith, Group meeting</p> <p>"And how you supposed to get your kid to school and yourself to work if the bus only comes every 15, 30, 45 minutes. So how many buses are you taking in the morning to get your kids to work and how many buses are you taking in the evening?" -Goodwill, Group meeting</p> <p>"I know it don't work in Portage, cause I have to catch the bus to work in Portage, so I know. But, when I go to Portage I know I'm at Portage for 8 hours then I'm back, I take three buses, and I'm back here for 8 hours, then back to Portage, so I don't know how it is shopping in Portage and having to go right back around, but I'm there for a couple hours then I'm back. But I have missed the bus on my way to work cause I missed my transfer or the other bus was running a little behind." -Interfaith, Group meeting</p> <p>"I go through all of that. I've taken the papers from there, I've gone online, I do everything. I know exactly what times the bus comes. It's just I have no control over it." -Goodwill, Group meeting</p>

"You got 20 minutes to do everything and catch them buses. You know exactly what you're doing when you get on that bus, you better and gotta go there get on that bus, and come back."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"We don't have a car, many people use the bus ...But if they work 3-11 they can't get home."

-Emmanuel Foundation

"But, some people's is just tall. My baby's 3 and she's already 3 ½ feet tall and they expect me to give them like a 75 cents every time I'm on the bus. And if I don't have the 75 cents I have to turn around. I could have stood ten minutes for the bus."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"The tracking app don't work all the time."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"So when I catch that bus, it depends on what time, because he has an extended route, depending on how early in the morning it is. So the problem that I run across is that even though I'm starting off early to give myself enough time to get to work, because I catch two buses to get to my job, so if that bus is running late, then I miss my connecting bus, and it takes another half an hour. So that can push me to where I'm potentially late. And that's the problem I run across. And, like I said, it's not all the time. It depends on how early I get on because that extended route is only at a certain time, like two or three times a day. But that's the problem I run into where if you miss that connecting bus, the only thing I could do to remedy that is to try to leave so early that when everything does work out, I get to the job an hour early, sitting there."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"[Interviewer: The app is supposed to tell you when it's late.] That's the thing. It doesn't tell you the time because what happens is by the time that I can see that it's late, it's too late."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

Car:

"I have a car but I can't even afford the insurance, can't afford gas, I can't afford to get my kids to where they have to go."

-Goodwill, individual

Rideshare:

"I feel like we tried to use uber one time, and it wouldn't come cause where we live."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"I can't afford uber. Yeah, me and my wife, we have one vehicle."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"You think it's cheap until you get them uber receipts. And that stuff adds up. Like I could have done this and this and this if I hadn't spent that uber money."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"Then like to catch a cab is like 20 bucks just for like 5 miles. And its like people pay extra they're like oh I'll give you a ride so much freakin money. It's hard."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

Strengths & Supports Used

"We help and that is not enough, um for the transportation, it's not everyone that has a car but because um they are all working in the same place, kind of helping if they have the same shift, they will just get out um and same car and go to work. And afterwards you have to wait each other and come back."

-Emmanuel Foundation

"So, sometimes I do get lucky, because the busdriver knows me. So, he may call ahead, depending on how late we are. If we are a minute or two late, then he can call ahead and try to halt those buses."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Okay, so her car breaks down and she's like I need to get to work. Okay, bus tokens I got, not a problem, buss pass, whatever. Get a schedule. You gotta learn how to read a schedule, learn where point A, B, C, and D at so you know how much time you got from the bus to your job."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

Potential Solutions

"I mean, if they could figure out some way to get dollars-like I don't even, I don't know how, but I mean, with all these ubers and stuff. What if they came up with a program where they had a couple vehicles and people to man them, and that's what they're used for... to transport people to and from work or to get kids, you know, just even to appointments. Or, but you know, it'll have to be those things. It's not just gonna be a ride for...to visit, it'd have to be used like that and then... maybe offer some kind of, you know, if there's dollars out there, you know, for childcare, but it's only IF they're working, you know?"

-KRESA, Individual interview

"So, to me, it seems like there needs to be some type of backup. I don't know if it's necessarily an extra route, per se, but it could be some type of service that they offer when it's their fault that I'm late."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

" So I have a question, I don't know if you can make a program, government, get some help, help the people with the gas, we have some some some agency when I was in Minnesota, an agency that helps people with some card to buy gas. Here in Kalamazoo do you have that system? [Interviewer: Like some type of system that buys cars?] No, gas. Cards for gas, gas cards."

-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

"They need to adjust those transfers."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

CHILDCARE

Barriers

"So if you want quality childcare, or you can send them to baby down the street, and you don't know what your kids are gonna, who knows? Either it's that peace of mind, and you're gonna be broke or save your money, and your kids aren't learning. They may not be in safe situations, so it's hard. And who wants to have to choose between my child's safety or my pockets."

- Goodwill

"That's what I was saying, even if it's babysitting, okay so it's \$2.50 an hour or whatever. \$2.50 an hour is what we're willing to pay somebody for the safety and education of our child? Because that's what's available. That makes me ill, right? It's too much to pay, and then on the other side, you think this is your most important thing in your whole life, right? But how cheap can we do it, cause I can't make it work. That's sad. Really sad."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Yeah, if you go to a real daycare they're gonna tell you, point blank period, Michigan works don't cover this, we're gonna need you to cover this, it's due every week, they don't play no games those daycares, so that's why I just send my kids to my momma. Just cause the simple fact is I'm not gonna give you guys 150 out of my pocket, DHS gives them other 300, I don't care what nobody says. I'll pay my momma before I pay them"

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"You see how now a lot people are like people are having to leave their kids home alone. You know, and some of them might be out of neglect and some might because they actually can't afford it. You know?"

-KRESA

"When I first started, I started at Goodwill temporary working half days, I was pregnant with my second child and I was only working four hours a day with no car. So, I would have to catch the bus to get my children to where they had to go and then catch the bus from there, and childcare was also an issue. So, I didn't have anybody consistent. I just kind of plan out by the day if, "Can you watch him for me tomorrow", family members and such. So, I take 'em on the bus to where they had to go. I would get on the bus to go to work. Then, I go only work for three and a half hours. Then I'd have to, which really wasn't enough to pay."

-Goodwill, individual interview

"Childcare. Childcare. But it's too expensive, and it's hard to get in so you have to wait til they do like a background check. And based on your income, childcare is very expensive. And if you go through the department of social services, you have to wait til, you fill out an application, they process that application, but then if you got that spot in day care, you end up having to pay out your own pocket if you still want that spot. You pay out your own pocket until your daycare ends."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"And, like, daycare you don't need all the time. I'm a single mom. I have three kids; they're in school. My schedule doesn't always tie up with theirs. Like, this friday, they have a half day (A few participants make noises or talk in agreement) Right? Where are they gonna go? Who's gonna pick them up from school? So it's hard for me to find a place that does that periodically, cause most places are like "no, you need to be here every week." (One participant whispers "The Y") They want money."

Strengths & Supports Used

" I have a last resort. It's my niece, cause she makes me pay money. And I just have to pay her, but you gotta do what you gotta do, if that means bounce some money til you get paid next time, that's what you gotta do."

-Goodwill

"Yeah if it wasn't for the fact that where my kids go to daycare that the lady works with me, that they've been there for almost seven years. I have six kids. So, I pay \$20 a week for one."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Uh you have time to spend with kids in different ways, but here we doesn't have time for even our own family. And what we do we just try to help each other because um most times we are working first shift, you're working second shift, and those who are not working at all we just try to help. If I can um keep some children while my brothers and sisters are working I try the maximum that I can do because there is no money to spend on daycare."

-Emmanuel Foundation

"There's one right across the street and she's excellent with the kids, she sit there, she's older, she teach them how to read, she teach em how to count, and it's literally across woodward. The whole house, I'm not for sure with what it's called, my nephew go there, and I know she she the type of person where it's not you picking your kid up, you write down your phone, your kid, you there, she the type of person where like say you pay for a certain amount and you at the point where you know it's hard for you to come up with the money, she might give you free days just because you're a faithful customer. Like my nephew he there right now and he on a free day. This is a day they aint even being charged for all because this how her business set up."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"Yeah, the little one... he's in head start. He doesn't um go to school on Fridays, anywhere. I normally take him to the Y. And um he just stay home with their with their dad right now."

-Goodwill, individual interview

"I mean, I've had family. His dad is always, I mean... we're still together. So, I mean it's... you know what I mean? I've always had that support and-and family, I mean, mainly I got very lucky. I didn't, you know have a, I know that childcare is... you know, expensive. And luckily, I didn't have to..."

-KRESA, Individual Interview

"We kind of help each other, like the site I work at, we help each other. Like we know, oh, I'm gonna be fifteen minutes late because my child's bus only comes at this time. So, and I can't put him in care, so can I be this late? Will you cover me? And we just do it that way."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"The daycare my kids go to is 24/7, but you have to ask. But then your child can only be left there a certain number of hours each day. They can't be there all day long, but, yeah, you just have to say I need care at this time, will someone be able to be here, and they'll let you know."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"But my child was a premie and I depended on KRESA for some early programs for him. And they were excellent and they--insurance covered most everything. At that point and time. But I don't know anymore, I'm just talking past. My son's ten now so that was a long time ago. But, um I know there are services out there for middle class that they can take advantage of. That it's not all income based."
-KRESA Group meeting

Potential Solutions

"Are there any businesses, and it just occurred to me, I never thought about this but I joined, I don't know you guys like, are there any daycares located in businesses here in town? Because that'd be a surefire answer to that problem."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

"What do I wish existed at that time? Um definitely more affordable childcare. Maybe I remember there was a lot of times um that I would get offered like a third shift job and it might pay more but the buses don't run third shift and child care doesn't work third shift. And that to me was the easiest because I wouldn't be away from my kids, they'd be sleeping."
-Goodwill, Individual interview

HOUSING & BILLS

Barriers

"I'm say it's very difficult, you know, um and also um compared to our places, where we came from, our countries, um, paying rent, paying all the bills from here in the United States first of all is very very difficult for us. Because um our rent over there wasn't that much like here. Even though we don't make like here too, but here it's so high."
-Emmanuel Foundation

"I think uh we make, all of us may be low-income, it depend on each other but I think even though we make \$15 a hour, which uh some of us are making that. But compared to our bills, only for rent, if you're making \$15 an hour maybe you get \$500 between, 500 a week, but the rent only is taking us to 1000. So that's already 2 paychecks. The 2 remaining you're paying your car, you have insurance, you have some bills and also I don't know know, the system you have in kalamazoo, you have \$15, like my case, say about my personal case, I work at JBS, they pay me \$15 an hour. My wife isn't working because of children the kids, and um I applied for food stamps. They give me \$55 a month. What am I going to do with that? They said you have \$15 just \$15 is for the kids, so imagine that is, small, small, small, so our."
-Emmanuel Foundation

"[Interviewer: How many shelters are there near Kalamazoo?] I only know of the one, the Kalamazoo gospel mission"
-Goodwill, Individual interview

"I remember one time I was in need of housing, and I had a friend and she was like--I think I was about to be evicted (for like the third or fourth time) and um she said well I called HRI and they were like "you have to be designated homeless you have to be staying at a shelter" and I thought how shitty is that that I'm in crisis right now and you're telling me that I have to go even lower to help me."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

"yeah, and they'll tell you that to this day. If you say "hey I found a place, I'm short two hundred bucks" and still you're not designated homeless and we need something from a shelter. Well I'm trying to get into a place... and I don't want to take my kids to a shelter. And I remember asking was that real thing and HRI they confirmed and they were like yeah they gave me a list of shelters and it was like well I have a place I just need help keeping it."

-Goodwill, Individual interview

"Um ours had to do a lot with they owned their own business. So, it looks like you make a lot more money than what you really make. And all his mom and dad and our family were trying to live; there wasn't enough money for us to be separated and live in our own homes. But on paper, it says that: yes, you do make that much. Where if we didn't live with them, then we would've had more issues like being able to afford daycare, being able to have transportation, I mean we wouldn't be able to afford anything had we not lived with his parents. But...and it's still an issue (laughs to self) Um trying to get out of debt from owning your own business like if we didn't have that, we would be doing pretty good for now. But because we have ALLLLL that backed up, we...we're put in different category way up here when we're not up there... So, I mean that was a issue with affording school with my kids and...."

-KRESA, Individual interview

"I can say with the money we have, I received a letter, uh that week to to come to take electricity off, because I was not able to pay for my electricity. I call them, I say uh that's, I'm sorry, I, uh with 6 kids without electricity I cannot afford. And uh they told me no you can pay \$20 and take this program. And I said oh I like that program, so I'm very... every month you know, and if you look at rent, it's very very tough for us and that's a reason we need, we need, if we can have some help to see how, how we can succeed in kalamazoo, because it's tough. Insurance is very expensive here, car insurance more than other states, but uh like you said to afford."

-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

"Housing resources. Horrible, Horrible, when I say that, one of the worst experiences of my life. Horrible. I would never, never refer anyone to them or go back there ever again. And I'm not even like that, I'm usually a happy go lucky guy, you know, trying to be positive, and they're horrible."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

Strengths & Supports Used

"We struggle, nothing to do, we just struggle. When you pay you get your salary, you pay all the bills that you have and you manage with the nothing you have. You just manage to finish your ... start the new week with the new paycheck, that's what we do."

-Emmanuel Foundation

"[Interviewer: Do you use any resources for housing?] We lived with his family."

-KRESA, Individual interview

Potential Solutions

"Well, I wish there had been a service for um us getting a house."

-KRESA, individual interview

FOOD

Barriers

"I'm talking about just to be able to have a meal. Because, if you get to the places that offer food service like that to people who are less fortunate, they got certain hours. So, I guess it could even go back to that transportation, where if you can't get there, you out of luck. Period, point blank."

- Goodwill, Group meeting

"With food, I got food assistance so that wasn't really an issue. Um I remember one time getting cut off because I was in this volatile relationship so I didn't want to put my kids' dad on child support because it was kind of an emotionally draining thing so I didn't follow through with that. And then they cut me off, so we had to starve a couple months then because that's how sick my mind was. That I don't wanna do anything to hurt him, you know what I mean?"

-Goodwill, Individual interview

"[Interviewer: Do any food pantries have evening hours?] Loaves and fishes, they're open til five."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

Strengths & Supports Used

And uhm we thank the lord because sometime our kid have free food at school yeah that's a big thing for us. Our kid received free food, so uh with that uh we can we can ask you to to speak on our behalf

-Emmanuel Foundation

"I go to Deacon's Conference to get little household stuff like little stuff. I go there. I get some cups, some little things, like table stands, anything."

-Emmanuel Foundation

Potential Solutions

"About uh food stamps, I've been Florida, I've been in Illinois, now I'm here, I see a big difference, why I've seen that? Because in like Florida they will call you before they give you food stamps, they will call you for an interview face-to-face, if, if you don't have time you tell them you don't have time, they will call your phone, if you have time, you get an appointment, you sit with your um case manager, he asks you some questions, like you answer, but here we never see any case manager. They tell you this is your case manager, call for money. They call you to ask for some document, when you want to call them, you call them back. They say you are getting low money, like no let me talk to them. Case manager, we want to see them, are they invisible or what?"

-Emmanuel Foundation

Barriers

"I don't really have any family support. I had nobody telling me or guiding me or was I was all on my own. Survival just became, it doesn't matter if I don't stay at a job I'm just providing for next week. That's really been my mindset. It's really hard to get out of that mindset, and even now, even here I lived here for a year and didn't unpack, I left all my stuff in garbage bags because I'm not used to being able to stay places and pay the rent."

-Goodwill

"It's sad that people with full time, stable jobs that we've been at forever, have to worry about getting prescriptions like do we have to? Are we going to pay the Consumer's bill or fill the prescription that we have to have to have...?"

-KRESA

"I had a felony so that hindered me also. So I never even apply to places that I would probably should traditionally just knew I had to get a check or it was something. I mean, I would shovel shit if it was gonna take care of my kids."

-Goodwill

"Any place I ever went to, I never got no help, I was on my own for pretty much everything. I aint never got no help... but they don't really give you too much anyways. You know when you like get an eviction or something and they give you like that list, a paper, they need to update that because um I had the list and I started going through there uh they don't know where like the evictions, like uh no we don't help with evictions, we only help with consumer bills or we only help with this or that. "

-Interfaith

"Because it's tough, it's very tough for us I can say. Because we came to ifegui to learn English before, and uh to manage how America is going, is very tough for us."

-Emmanuel Foundation

I don't think most of us consider ourselves to be that successful. Seriously, because of our pay. It's so low, seriously.

-KRESA, Group meeting

" I'm just saying that if my light bills late, we can go to a committee, but I'm gonna be like "oh really." My lights are still gonna be off, but I went to a committee meeting. I didn't get any help."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

Strengths & Supports Used

"That's what I feel, I mean that I'm learning...The difference between [Life Guides] and just giving is that this program is teaching you how to get that stuff on your own and how to be self sufficient and learning how that does something inside of you, and you want to do it more. But, when you're continuously giving stuff, you're getting stuff continuously, you're not getting anywhere, you're not learning anything. You're just gonna keep going back, and I feel like that's why it's growing, growing in the negative schemes. This program's growing, it's because they're teaching us "oh my goodness, you got that job? Look at you. You did that on your own. Look at how much more you're making than what you were a year ago. Look how much a little stress-freer you are right now than you were a year ago." And I feel like those free programs don't do that with you. They don't show you the progress that you're making within yourself."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

" I've got some very supportive friends. Most of my family are in Illinois or Indiana. But, I've got supportive friends, if I need them they're their. I can remember when I was working for the city I had to have surgery, and friends were there for me. When you've got people like that, that makes the difference. It helps keep your momentum going. Cause you know you've got that support going with you"
-KRESA, Group meeting

" I can say something about everyone here that I draw from. Cause there's times when I show up and I frustrated about something about the job, but the job itself keeps me coming, but those other things that people offer, those help."
-KRESA, Group meeting

"It's like help net, through KRESA, they have help net. Which is free to us. So, like we could go to free counseling. Just say like, for a lot of different things like if you have financial problems...or um...I mean, if something's going on personally. I mean, there's a list of stuff that if you have anything going, then you just call helpnet. And they set you up with, I mean they even go as far as I think there's substance abuse on there."
-KRESA, Individual interview

"For me, that's my job I'm looking for jobs for our community, for our people so I'm going everywhere I know every staff, I know every office of jobs because if I google it and I see an address I go, I ask them and uh yeah. Like I say in Kalamazoo jobs is not very far."
-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

"The internet, I mean there's also I think, like you know you can go to like I wanna say Bronson has a really good [job site]. Yes, I've I've looked at it. I can't think of what it is right now. I know that Bronson has a site and they list tons and tons of jobs. I would I would think Borgess does the same, but I don't know. I know I've looked at Bronson's in the past, just out of curiosity."
-KRESA, Individual interview

Potential Solutions

"I don't really know any solutions I know like you said the marketing is a big, when you get this great idea, I think it needs to be advertised, I think social media is a great way to advertise, now a days, everybody sits at their dinner room you know on their phones"
-Goodwill, Individual interview

"So I think what you may need to do, depending on what the program is, you may have to, I don't want to say have to, but you may want to kind of model whatever it is after what [life guides] do, but in that type of fashion, whatever the other program is. So like the national interviewees figure out their approach to it cause it works for all of us."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

"if you have, you know, young families or whatever trying...that's-it does a lot of stress on them. Maybe if they had a program where they could...or even have like uh I don't wanna say life coach and I don't, but somebody that could get all that stuff in line for 'em like a plan. Like you're gonna start working and then, what is the plan? You're need to get housing, you need to get a car, monthly budget, these are the bill you know mean? And start figuring out maybe before they get them the house and then they're just like...there and they have the job, they have the house, but they haven't quite figured out how everything's going to work."

"I mean, start [a life skills class in Kalamazoo Public Schools] as far as you could go back. I just don't see uh be a, you know what I mean? Because these are things, you know, you could pick home ec or whatever or gym or this or that. Everybody needs to work and everybody needs to budget. And everybody. So maybe, those need to be in this society and as many people in poverty that there are, and how many kids get free lunch and stuff. Maybe it is necessary to start in middle, you know. That these just are classes you have to take, you have to learn how to budget. You have to learn that a bank account and all that, you know? The basics."
-KRESA, Individual interview

"Okay yes, um the way they can build the community up is going to be through our pastor, like give the pastor some help that he needs so he can be able to uh give us the support."
- Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

ASSETS & SUPPORTS

Effective Supports

"I went to the people at Goodwill and I was like I think I'm going to quit my job because I'm not making enough to pay daycare. Um... and it's not really benefiting me just to work for somebody to watch my kids. And I, you know, that's important to me. They're developing so um I was in the Lifeguides program at this time so they actually stepped in. They they did all the calls for me cause at this point I was done. I was trying, but I'm not getting any results."
-Goodwill, Individual interview

"So, then the Lifeguides stepped in and they said, we'll pay your enrollment fee and um they honestly we set up a budget and I think I paid 100 dollars a week and they paid the rest for about a year. And it was really excellent. My kids, in the summertime, I didn't feel guilty. They went on field trips twice a week, so they were still getting out and doing stuff."
-Goodwill, Individual interview

"Then during this time I got promoted to team leaders so then I was making \$10 an hour. So I did that for six months. Then, I got promoted again to Lifeguides program assistant and then that was an additional 2 dollar raise so that's currently where I am."
-Goodwill, Individual interview

"Oh yeah, always. They would, I would come and say "alright I'm quitting my job, this is it" and at the time my life coach she'd say "okay" and I loved that, cause she would never tell me what to do, she'd say "well you can do that, but let's think this through, so rent's gonna be due in two weeks, what are you gonna do? Do you have someone you can stay with? Do you have?" And that just brought me back to where I was and I was like "oh hell no, I'm not I'll- I'll talk to you later, I'm going back to work."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

"[Goodwill] helped my kids with their arts. My girls are able to do ballet. So that's encouragement for them, also helping them academically, cause they say their able to do their disciplined dancing and apply that to school, as well."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

" So, I know for me, this is the first program where they actually backed up, what do they call it? Yeah, talk the talk and walk the walk and all that. This is the first one that actually did what they said they would do and helped us, and have helped us in many different aspects of life, like you said, not just here, get a job here you good, you know, they talk to us, talk to the kids, um, just different things, like I said, encouragement, and just, you know, what do you need? What do you need help with? So, we've come a long way, we've come a long way."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

I think they helped me in all aspects of my life, but I think the biggest one is just somebody like really believing in you, that they saw something in me before I seen it in myself. So for somebody to keep saying "you got it, just keep trying," and then you work to make them proud and you look back and you're like I'm making myself proud. I don't know, just the added support, that encouragement, that kick in your butt sometimes when you need it. I was telling her I used to want to quit every other week and it'd be like "you can quit," but I don't want to be on no girl's couch (Laughter). You know, so it's really nice and we don't come from that, and I never, I've always been intelligent, and I normally did good in school, but I never had anybody pushing me to be the best that I can be, so, to me that's the best and I see results from it, so it drives me, and now I'm making up for lost time. Now it's time to really get on the grind and see what I can do."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Part 1: So that's why earlier, I asked Kevin if they know what they do, because why sit here and bitch about this person, or this society, whatever you wanna call it, this group or this group that don't help. Why not just look at what is working? (Another participant Um, you take a mom and dad, and they wanna do right, they do. They wanna do right. They don't have the answers. They also wanna play their kid too, but you educate them to understand this needs to be done. "Oh you wanna quit your job?" like you said, We wanna quit our job every other day, but somebody behind you smack you in the head and say "you can quit your job. We're not going to stop you," it's actually making you think. What are you gonna do? You know having somebody to do that, that's not your dad cause who wants to listen to dad and who wants to listen to mom, you know it really gates. So I think, it's hard to say, why would I go anywhere else? I got a question about anything, about my kids, about what's going on in school, why don't I understand this math I keep trying to teach my kids, you know. A lot of times it's a big question, but, you know, I'm not alone. I'm not alone; I got, and then we grew to be a family, all of us, you know."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"I just wanna add one thing to what you said and what you said, too, before all of us, back in 2010, cause we weren't here, there were other people working when this program started it was really built on a commitment to the strength, the resilience of the people that were brought into the program, so the families that were here were nominated and were chosen because they have some, you all were recognized for having something inside, in here."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Another thing about this program, those individual meetings you have is a for you to, cause what we really push on is just help you forward think. Okay, you can quit your job. Well, how are you gonna pay your rent, right? So, we're gonna do this, what do you think the good and the bad that could happen, right? Cause when you live in poverty, you don't have the time to think about the day after tomorrow. So, I can't tell you how many people I've talked to over the years, where it's "oh I'm just gonna quit cause I gotta do this." "Well, how you gonna pay the rent?" "Oh, I'll just get another job." So I think when you sit with your life guide they allow you to think what if, right, and so if I could just take a few minutes to decide, I do have five ways I could choose to do this, and this one might be painful right now, but in the long run, I know I've already thought out that it's a better end game for me. Whereas, you haven't had time to explore that option cause you're right here, right now. I mean, am I wrong? (People murmur and make noises in agreement) Right? It's what's out there, what could I do? I could do anything, I just had to do what was right, here, so I could eat later. Pick up my kids."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"But, some of us, we don't have it. So We rely on folks like this to say, you know, hey Rick, you know, dude, you know, go call that person on your truck payment and make that truck payment. You know, here I was giving up thinking the world was over, you know, things like this, they have the common sense and they encourage you to go to school. They've encouraged so many people to go to school, to better themselves. This is an asset, this place. We need programs like this."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"That's a reason we build a school to teach each other like English, computer, to understand very well to build that help, uh other people here, some of us, you can take your car morning to help other people, almost 100 miles by day you are only helping other people, to go to market, to go to his job, to find if somebody has like an appointment to hospital, to clinic, you bring him. You spend all day you are helping other people because we are not able to afford with our salaries."

-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

"Yeah what can I say on that issue. Uh what we are doing is like uh that's a reason we build a community. To look how to help each other."

-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

"WIC program, is helpful for me... A social program with children."

-Emmanuel Foundation, Group meeting

Ineffective Supports

"Oh yeah, you have to know somebody. At life guides you have to have be referred. You have to have someone who sees something in you, cause you can't refer yourself. So you have to find someone who sees something in you."

-Goodwill, Individual interview

" I mean there's other programs that supposedly are good for you, are supposed to help, that really don't. And I hate to, I won't go into specifics, but there's one in mind that. We were homeless, and so we've come a long way, and there were a few programs along the way that, I mean, we weren't really pushed in the right direction until we got here."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"And I get DHS, but that's all I can afford. They do it for people on DHS, and it's a daycare center, and the lady she does it to help like single parent moms. She can't afford to really do it, but she does. But, like average for a regular, uh, like a baby would be almost, what, like three something a week probably."

-Interfaith, Group meeting

"And they have to know about the program [interviewer: yeah you have to have a network] just to refer you and how do you get that network."

-Goodwill, Individual interview

"I think with housing I think loaves and fishes is a great organization, but even then, you can only use it once a month."

-Goodwill, Individual interview

"yeah, before I started at Goodwill, I don't remember the program though, before I started goodwill I was referred to a program because I was pregnant um what was it? Through like Kerry Network, I think, and they would tell me that like I could wash clothes there for free but how am I gonna get there with like six loads of laundry. Um yeah I never really, I guess I hadn't been introduced to any other programs besides that one and it wasn't helpful to me."

-Goodwill, Individual interview

"And we'd call them back and say "well you said you'd be able to help with this. When would you be able to help?" "Oh, there's more paperwork you have to do," or "You have to reapply now because it's been so many days." (One participant laughs in agreement) So, it's not helping us."

-Goodwill, Group meeting

"Well. That's an issue because a lot of service providers, you know, white middle class people make the rules, so it's gonna be open during my work hours, right? I think that's something that I heard you guys say about ifeguides, just to interject. There's a certain consistent availability with your lifeguide, for the most part. You know, and I can say I was a lifeguide for five years. Everybody had my personal cell phone number. I didn't take every call at night or text, but I got em, and if I needed to respond, I did, and you know life happens to people at all hours of the day, you know, I got a text a couple weeks ago, "my mom just died" at 10:25 at night, you know, that person needed to reach out to somebody who cared about her. So, I don't know."
-Goodwill, Group meeting

"I was the same, you know. Because um, I have 4 kids but I try to apply for food stamps, they give me \$100 so my wife not working, I work by myself and pay all, all bills. No I just make 13 an hour... So I don't know if Iowa, Illinois, or the states, and you got 3 kids, 4 kids, you work by yourself, one of you not working, if you apply you can get but 500, 600 why it can't be the same? I don't know why."
-Emmanuel foundation

Areas Where Supports Don't Exist

"You know the other thing we talk about, if you don't mind, you have families, who have children and we do have services for them to get food stamps but like for a single person, as soon as they get a job, I don't care how low paying it is, everything is gone. They lose all of those benefits."
-Emmanuel Foundation

"I just wanted to really on many of the services that are offered by Michigan Works, single people do not, they don't qualify."
-Emmanuel Foundation

"We are coming without somebody to take care, to show you, what road to success you can take in life. You know that a reason you find many Africans, we are coming here, it is difficult to go to school. Like my my young brother says, he's in college because he has a family. He comes to school and needs some food at home, but if you don't have family you come home without something to eat and uh that's tough things, that's a reason for us, African immigrants from Africa we are struggling so much because we don't have really people to take us, to push us to go."
-Emmanuel Foundation

"You need to vent, for one thing. You need t-there are still, jobs are gonna have stress. You know, espec- you know? We work, I mean obviously, everybody has family stuff or whatever it may be on the side and then when you work, especially the job we work in, we work with young adults that have A LOT of stuff going on every minute of everyday. So, sometimes you just have to take, you know you just gotta take a deep breath, take your own stuff...(murmurs) I mean, I don't know...I don't know what else..."
-KRESA, Individual interview

Years ago, I thought that, you know, like really...and I heard this phrase somewhere, where it's like the right, not the right type of a employment. You're like you're in the wrong spot. You're not making enough to meet. And there's trainings for that. I forget what it's called, but I think it was—KRESA did part of them too. But we didn't qualify for them. And it's too bad that we couldn't do something like that! You know, like we have our jobs, we're working, we're not making enough money. We would like to be making more, is there training that we can do?"
-KRESA, Group meeting

"And then there's like community places you can go and get help. I think Salvation Army is one of them. Depending on how much you make. But you have to prove that you're like below poor for you to qualify. And you gotta miss work to go do it. And that's the weird thing, I think it may be true for all of us. We make a little bit too much to qualify for anything. We don't live like we look on paper."
-KRESA, Group meeting

This concludes our report on identifying community-based strengths, supports, and solutions. If you have any further questions on the content of this report or who was involved in creating it, please contact our professor, Dr. Kiran Cunningham, who supervised the whole process from the Kalamazoo College end.

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