A CASE FOR SUPPORT:
ASSOCIATED BLACK CHARITIES -- CHANGING THE FUTURE!

ABOUT ASSOCIATED BLACK CHARITIES

For more than 30 years, ABC has been growing, expanding, and evolving. After introducing a new mission six years ago, we are now clear that in order to achieve real change, we must both reinvent our organization and change how we conduct the business of change. While we retain the experience, expertise, and leadership developed over three decades, we have, in fact evolved; we are no longer who we used to be. Our role has changed from pooling and redistributing resources that serve African American communities to reinventing the process of how resources are distributed, and leveraging African Americans and other people of color as assets in that process.

In 2008, ABC started to document the long-term structural impacts that inhibit access to asset-building and wealth creation opportunities. Today, ABC is the champion for economic transformation for African Americans and other marginalized communities in areas related to its organizational mission – to advocate and facilitate the creation of measurably healthier and more prosperous communities through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment throughout the State of Maryland - and have begun to succeed in changing the dialogue about why race and economic inclusion matter.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Associated Black Charities is on an aggressive pursuit to Change the Future. We will strengthen significantly Maryland’s economy by focusing on the economic growth, the economic inclusion and economic influence of African Americans. Working with others who have a similar interest in Maryland’s economic future, we will dismantle the institutional barriers and biases that prevent people from realizing their full potential by addressing broken systems, not broken people. Informed by data and leading through innovative and research based approaches, ABC will ensure that economic opportunities are extended to, and seek to advance ALL people.

THEORY OF CHANGE

ABC is moving away from traditional models of economic change to strategies that are both transactional and transformative. Traditional models yield outcomes but rarely address
sustainable economic solutions. We unapologetically confront the issue of institutional and structural racism and use a racial equity lens in our theory of change. We take traditional models for change to the next level of **transformative actions** -- solutions that reframe issues by putting the focus on systems and structures and end with innovative **transactional practices** -- interventions that focus on people as assets to be leveraged; and induce institutions to commit and invest to do things differently.

Transformative and transactional activities work in reciprocity where each continuously informs the other. As we actively influence the economic environment to recognize that racialized institutional policies are barriers to success, we introduce new approaches to test, and that lead to a positive collective impact on people, processes, and systems.

**APPROACH**

ABC’s overarching approach, “**More in the Middle**” (MitM), is both a strategy and an aspirational goal that focuses on the relationship between a strong African American middle class and Maryland’s economic growth. Underlying MitM is the understanding that a thriving and vibrant middle class -- with positive health outcomes and increased economic prosperity -- is the linchpin of a rising economic tide across all segments of the community. MitM employs strategies centered on three principles:

- **Innovation** – ABC designs and incubates programs and services to foster increased economic prosperity. ABC has learned continuously from its research and program experience, and used that knowledge to inform program design and implementation going forward.
  - After years of providing **Customized and Occupational Training** programs, ABC learned that these programs are best implemented and work -- even with low skilled individuals -- when employer driven, but only with those citizens who are emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively ready for work.
  - ABC learned that those who are low skilled and behaviorally challenged require a different approach so, grounded in research, ABC created and implemented its **Career Coaching Program**.
  - ABC leaned that many low wage workers with significant potential lack mentors who could help them identify strengths, improve performance, and set career goals that could increase their wage growth potential, so ABC created and implemented the **Volunteer Career Mentoring Program**.
  - ABC learned that there is a dearth of professionals of color on the boards of non-profit organizations that serve overwhelmingly predominantly communities of color in the region, so it created and implemented the **Board Pipeline Program**.
o ABC learned that the executive leadership and management of non-profits in the region do not match the diversity of the population, so it created and implemented the **Talent Management Program**.

We will continue to research and test other innovative approaches for higher education and business development.

- **Collaboration** – ABC Leverages collective action through effective partnerships in the corporate and philanthropic communities. We have influenced significantly the work of multiple partners in the community who have the ability to impact economic outcomes.

  o The adoption of ABC’s philosophy is evident throughout the Workforce Barriers Report by the Opportunity Collaborative.

  o The Baltimore Integration Partnership now views its work through a racial equity lens as a result of its ongoing dialogue with ABC.

  o In conjunction with the Baltimore Community Foundation, since 2011 ABC has partnered with the Aspen Institute to bring together corporate and civic leaders to foster understanding of and effect change in racialized policies that limit economic outcomes for the region.

  o ABC’s office on the Eastern Shore for 11 years has served as the catalyst for community wide partnership, initially to reduce smoking and change behaviors, but now including other sources of health disparities. This effort involves all of the churches there, local government, civic organizations, and community based organizations.

  o Baltimore/Washington Racial Justice Collaborative (of which ABC is a leading voice) conducted research that identifies the limited number of people of color in management and board leadership in the nonprofit sector. (Urban Institute completed the baseline research). This regional collaborative designed the upward mobility career training (Talent Management) for persons of color in large nonprofits in Baltimore and Prince George’s County.

  o Johns Hopkins University recently requested that ABC implement this model in 2015 for employees in their Finance Department.

  o During the foreclosure crisis, ABC partnered with the faith community to provide financial counseling on site at the churches in the evening.
ABC convenes two public policy committees consisting of various stakeholders focusing on higher education and workforce development.

- **Metrics** – ABC collects and disseminates research, program data, and policy information toward the achievement of transformational change.
  
  - ABC has engaged partners like the University of Baltimore to analyze state wage data to measure outcomes.
  
  - The beginning of this strategy was grounded by metrics based on an economic analysis by the Sage Policy Group.

This unique approach is at once grounded in research, and outcome-driven. It uses research on the impacts of racialized policies to design positive economic impact strategies. It assumes a shared outcome value: increased economic vibrancy to the region, in the form of a skilled and growing 21st Century workforce, lower citizen dependency on costly social programs, and expanded economic capital for goods and services. Finally, it builds upon a region’s growth industries as change-engines, and incorporates a dual track of direct service and policy adjustments that lead to more prosperous and financially secure communities, not just for underserved populations, but for everyone. Indeed, an economic impact analysis conducted by the renowned economist, Anirban Basu, suggests that a collective effort focused on ABC’s agenda could yield an additional $3.3 billion in assets in Baltimore alone. (The Economic Impact of an African American Renaissance in Baltimore City, the Sage Policy Group, Inc., 2006, p. 5).

**IMPLEMENTATION FORMULA**

Our theory of change and the approach we use differentiate us from other institutions’ focus on economic self-sufficiency. Our implementation formula:

- Identify problems that are perpetuated at the institutional level;

- Commission research and collect data that we share with our partners and with other stakeholders to discuss innovative solutions;

- Engage our grantees and community-based partners to design and introduce new models and then test their efficacy;

- Evaluate the outcomes and refine the approach;

- Advocate for large-scale change by educating and influencing organizations and institutions to employ a racial equity lens and, ultimately, adopt more inclusive and sustainable models for economic change.
THE RESULTS: POSITIVE IMPACTS FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND

- From 2008-2014, ABC funded training opportunities that resulted in over 1,000 City residents employed;

- From 2009 -2011, ABC and its partners served more than 26,000 households and provided foreclosure prevention;

- From 2009-2011, ABC and its partners provided financial literacy services to 3,850 families and individuals in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Prince Georges County;

- In Dorchester County, ABC has provided education and information to over 27,000 individuals toward changing behavior to impact positively the health outcomes that limit economic sustainability for citizens;

- From 2011-2014, 170 professionals of color have completed extensive training to serve on nonprofit boards in the region. 79% of them have been placed on boards and, of those placed on boards, 77% of those who responded to a recent survey have contributed financially to the organizations they serve, totaling up to as much as $36,000.

- ABC has commissioned and/or completed a number of research studies to inform our work and advocate best practices, and focused strategies on behalf of African American businesses, college student retention, employment, and upward mobility for African Americans.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Building on its track record of decades of leadership and success, ABC now seeks to embark on an ambitious plan to broaden its reach and increase significantly its impact as a catalyst for transformative and transactional change, in the outcomes related to its More in the Middle agenda. To that end, ABC seeks to raise funds to support its efforts in three areas of priority:

1. **Enhance the More in the Middle Initiative**, focusing on the refinement of existing successful strategies and the introduction of new ones that are informed by research and data.

2. **Build Internal Capacity**, particularly in the area of research, and to meet the requirements of a broader reach, to enhance ABC’s ability to implement its unique and highly effective approach.
3. **Expand Strategically the ABC Footprint**, so as to build on current strengths and broaden the reach and, consequently, the collective impact of ABC’s efforts, where opportunities arise.

1. **Enhance the More in the Middle Initiative**

$1,580,000

Grounded in its research and experience in designing and implementing programmatic approaches that work, ABC will continue to add value in two different ways:

- New Directions
- Current Programs

**TALENT MANAGEMENT**

**New Programs**

**Sub-Bachelor Career Pathways in STEM**

$1,000,000

ABC, in partnership with the Greater Baltimore Committee, has embarked on an effort to identify a sector where we can design "career paths" based on employer needs but begins with wherever people are:

a. The motivated, cognitively ready, emotionally ready and behavior ready individual; and

b. The individual requiring more to get "on the ramp" to a job in this sector, which may include financial readiness, remedial math, and other bridging skills.

Career Pathway planning in **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math** (STEM) careers for newly to mid-skilled, entry level workers has some traction and success in Baltimore, found in programs hosted by the Bio-Technical Institute, Juxtapia, and the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare. The remaining STEM sub-sectors and STEM employers are positioned to leverage a new to mid-skilled members of the workforce using a career pathway and mapping process to recruit new workers in the field. Energy and utility suppliers, mass technology providers, and manufacturing corporations are experiencing significant demand, which is a clear indication that their employment numbers are stable and rising. This is a new opportunity for Baltimore and its mid-skilled workforce to have a full spectrum of STEM opportunities by introducing career pathways where sub-sector career gaps exist. Exploring these sectors could help make high paying STEM careers much more accessible to adults with a high school diploma.

ABC will initiate its effort to address the STEM career pathway gap in the Baltimore region by convening employers who are currently and actively hiring workers at the sub-Bachelor degree level of education and working with them to scope a career pathway. We will synthesize existing research done on other sub-sectors of STEM; complete 10 to 15 interviews with energy,
technology and manufacturing employers; and provide economic analysis for a new report focused on sub-Bachelor careers in the Baltimore region (the research and production of the report would cost $75,000). The research will then inform new career pathways along with new workforce training and development models that support training and placement into untapped STEM sub-sectors.

**Current Programs**

**Volunteer Career Mentoring**

The Volunteer Career Mentor Program is designed to meet the needs of low-wage workers who have a strong desire for career advancement but currently lack the career advancement skills and behavior competencies that would ensure their upward mobility. The program design includes 12 career development and mentoring sessions, structured over a six-month period. The program includes a Program Coordinator who is responsible for recruiting, screening, and training volunteers, recruiting low-wage workers and their employers, and overall coordination of the strategy. AARP and the United Way of Central Maryland are current ABC partners in the implementation of this program.

**The Compass Project – Tools to Effectively Navigate the Workforce**

The Compass Project focuses on African American men whose “negative behavior in response to the surrounding challenges” renders them “not ready,” even for employment training. They are also frequently without employment history prior to actual sector targeted training. ABC has employed the “Career Coach model” and the specially designed “GROW (Goal setting; understanding how Reality impacts that goal; identifying Options; and determining a Way forward) curriculum to provide strategies and support for changing those behaviors and self-beliefs, then -- focusing on code translation -- moving from the street to “legitimate employment.” This approach has enabled participants to be referred to multiple employer based workforce training partners once they have work-ready behavior competencies. This same tool can be used with low-wage workers where both the worker and their managers participate in the training process to increase retention and career growth.

**Board Pipeline Leadership Development Project**

This unique program is a means of engaging people of color to make a difference for nonprofit organizations that primarily serve low income persons of color. It identifies rising stars in the professional ranks and, through an intensive, five week training and development effort, prepares them to serve on nonprofit boards throughout the region. Upon completion of the program, participants are exposed to and matched with nonprofit organizations that are seeking to fill vacancies on their respective boards. The program thus creates a “pipeline” of professionals of color who are uniquely qualified for service on the boards of some of the most impactful nonprofit organizations in the region.
What started as a Baltimore project has now been expanded to Prince George’s County, where it is a joint effort involving ABC, the Prince George’s Chamber of Commerce, Prince George’s Innovative Fund, and Prince George’s Community Foundation. Recent evaluation of the program confirms its success with a 79% placement rate. Additionally, 77% of respondents to a recent survey indicated that they have made financial contributions totaling up to as much as $36,000, to the organizations on whose boards they sit. This highly popular program perennially has a waiting list of more than 40 professionals seeking membership on non-profit boards. Additional funding would enable ABC to increase the number of cohorts it can accommodate in both Baltimore and Prince George’s County.

**Talent Management Program**

$125,000

The Talent Management Program, which includes a specialized curriculum, peer mentoring and seven months of coaching post-training, is intended to increase leadership/management opportunities for people of color inside of large nonprofit corporations. It is an accelerated professional development strategy based upon the input of Human Resources professionals from the larger nonprofit organizations. The program provides five weeks of intensive, dynamic and highly interactive training designed to rapidly scale management/leadership talent. It also includes a peer mentoring model that encourages ongoing development beyond the five week structured program. Post-training programming includes intentional networking engagement and additional professional development. The program provides both a short term return on investment once the managers are trained, and an anticipated long term positive impact on the work environment, as well as upward mobility for people of color once the environment changes.

ABC implemented this program successfully with professionals of color from ten different large nonprofits in Baltimore and Prince Georges County. It was designed and implemented with input from the leadership of a racially and ethnically diverse group of Baltimore-Washington leaders – Baltimore-Washington Racial Diversity Collaborative (RDC). The RDC, of which ABC served as a lead entity, began with a study of the issue and commissioned a study by the Urban Institute. Additional funding would enable ABC to engage another cohort in the program and provide companion training for executives and managers, along with forums and networking events. Our research reveals that it is critical to ensure that future implementation of the strategy includes training of managers as well as professionals of color who work in large nonprofit organizations.

**EXPAND SOCIAL NETWORKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**New Programs**

**E-Mentoring**

$200,000

The E-mentoring Program offers an innovative resource that connects students and mentors in one-to-one and group exchanges categorized within a specific career track. Consistent with
national data, this current generation of college students is the most technologically advanced and most skilled at the use of social media as a primary communication tool. Ironically, African American students have persistent gaps in access to meaningful and productive relationships with professional mentors who have the capacity to guide and resource students with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

This initiative will be implemented over a two year time period. Year one will focus on recruiting, screening and matching students and mentors for the program from the IT/technology sector. Mentors will be recruited from the technology industry, connected to us by Juxtopia and other STEM industry employers. Using a team-building approach, the year one cohort will inform the design of a prototype for the E-mentoring tool guided by software consultants that will lead the overall development process. The result will be a user-friendly product that facilitates one-to-one and group exchanges in a secured, private environment ensuring all safeguards are in place. In year two, ABC will launch the software and recruit an additional 20 students and 20 mentors from additional career sectors. We will expand the services on the E-mentoring site to post information related to internship and work experience opportunities for participants. We will continue with the mentor/protégé convenings to facilitate one-to-one time and large group networking opportunities. ABC has already completed the development of a curriculum for this program and is poised for its implementation, given adequate funding.

**STRENGTHEN AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES**

**New Programs**

**Grow Relational Capital for Black Businesses**

Research reveals that a key barrier to the success of larger small businesses (with revenues between $100,000 and $1,000,000) is the limited access to influential and knowledgeable relationships that lead to real sales opportunities, enhance their ability to manage the fulfillment of contracts, and obtain financing. This program will foster access to and development of strategic business relationships for African American owned businesses, as a means of enhancing revenue growth. Working with statewide business groups, ABC will identify a group of African American businesses from the Information Technology industry – a growth industry in the state - and pair them with mentor firms from a statewide group. A local energy company president utilized a similar strategy of successfully expanding the access and opportunities for minority businesses. They brought a select group of minority businesses internal to the organization to give them access to the knowledge, relationships, organizational culture, mentors and the “hows” of doing business with the company. The direct beneficiaries of this pilot project are the participant companies, all of whom have a stake in an economically revitalized Maryland; low-income African American communities from which African American businesses are more likely to recruit workers, even when their firms are not located there; and all for whom a more economically robust Maryland factors into their retention in the state.
2. **Build Internal Capacity** $675,000  

**Reinforce ABC’s Research and Data Collection Capability** $500,000  
ABC prides itself on being “grounded in research and outcome-driven.” Yet it relies heavily on outside sources for research capabilities. This is of critical importance because of ABC’s unique ability to contextualize the data with a racial equity lens. The organization sees this as an opportunity and, therefore, intends to build internal capacity in the research area. Funds would be used to create a full-time research position, along with the requisite administrative and technology support. ABC would also increase its use of independent consultants for the conduct of program evaluation.

**Augment Staffing** $175,000  
As it continues to grow, ABC seeks to augment existing staff in critical areas, including program staff for the higher education portfolio, a staff strategist for advocacy/public, Finance, and Development.

3. **Expand Strategically the ABC Footprint** $400,000  

**Enhance the Dorchester County (Eastern Shore) Office** $100,000  
For the past eleven years, ABC has served as the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s MOTA (Minority Outreach & Technical Assistance) vendor for Dorchester County. With the Governor’s initiatives through the “Healthy Maryland” campaign, we are addressing infant mortality and childhood obesity, which are major risk factors for a number of chronic diseases, including diabetes and hypertension. Programs, including our "Healthy Kids” Program - a physical and health education program with the healthy eating and nutrition component for youth aged 2-6; the Annual Health Disparities Conference - which focuses on providing Health literacy training and additional Health Education to Health service agencies and professionals; and our Health Education - Awareness & Prevention programs - which are geared more towards providing a direct link between the Health service agencies and the communities they serve; all have been an intricate piece in reducing the Health Disparities (such as in the areas of Infant Mortality, Youth Diabetes rates, and incidences of tobacco related illnesses) as they relate to personal-care management, access to care and availability of quality care. Our Dorchester County Office is a partner with the State to impact racial health disparities through the Health Enterprise Zone strategy, which is intended to expand services and increase residents’ knowledge about these services. Additional funding would enable us to convert the current lead staff person from part-time to full-time status; provide requisite technology support; expand the workforce development lessons to the Eastern Shore, and provide employer outreach support for this important and highly successful effort.
ABC has already begun to provide services in Prince George’s County, and is being asked to increase its presence there. ABC, in partnership with organizations in Prince George’s, launched and completed the training and matching of professionals for nonprofit Boards. The model used in Prince George’s County at the request of County partners was to also train the nonprofit organizations on how to select board members. As in the Baltimore model, we currently have a waiting list of participants who desire this training. In addition, as already noted, in partnership with a host of organizations in Prince Georges County, ABC conducted training for mid-level professionals of color from the nonprofit sector. ABC is also working with healthcare entities to identify and improve skill sets and provide an on-ramp for less developed workers to fill critical and growing workforce needs in the county, in partnership with the community college and others. Funds would be used not only to defray the cost of current staff activity, but to staff an office with two employees, and for the conduct of outreach activities, as well as the formulation and implementation of a communications plan.

These initiatives represent a blueprint for sustaining the highly impactful More in the Middle initiative and increasing significantly the reach of Associated Black Charities throughout the State of Maryland. Given the organization’s positioning in the region, its track record of success, its unique and successful approach to critical but seemingly intractable issues, and the near universal respect for its visionary leadership, ABC is well deserving of support for these priorities. Such support would simply be an investment in the future of the region with expected yields. We are therefore pleased to invite members of the business and philanthropic communities who share our interest in Changing the Future to partner with us in the creation of measurably healthier and more prosperous communities through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment throughout the State of Maryland.