MORE IN THE MIDDLE INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK

Associated Black Charities’ Framework Report:
An Economic Equity Approach to Transformative Change

WHY THIS DOCUMENT IS FOR YOU...

Often times, I am asked why Associated Black Charities and its More in the Middle Initiative – an economic framework that examines structural barriers to economic growth – should be of concern to anyone who has already achieved economic security. The simple answer is our collective economic future is dependent upon our ability to move as many people as possible to tax base contributors, rather than tax base takers. In so doing, we also change the outcome for thousands of children in the region.

But unfortunately, the argument usually advanced is that we now live in a virtually “colorblind” society and that by continuing to raise the role of race as a causal factor in wealth and health disparities, we are continuing to perpetuate racial divisions while ignoring very real progress.

Progress has occurred and our agenda to increase our collective wealth is not about individual racial attitudes. It is not an indictment of white citizens.

In Maryland and all of America, as much progress as has been made, the past has left legacies of limiting access to opportunities inside of our systems and institutions. These legacies create racialized disparities and unless we point them out with factual data, they are all but invisible to everyone – except for those who directly feel their impact. And their impact erodes your children’s future and increases the economic burdens they will carry.
The More in the Middle Initiative is a roadmap for eliminating racialized disparities and strengthening the economic futures of our children. This initiative addresses six areas of racialized disparities: Higher Education (College Readiness, Access, and Completion); Workforce and Career Advancement; Business and Economic Development; Homeownership and Foreclosure Prevention; Financial Literacy and Wealth-Building; and Health. Of these six, ABC focuses upon four for deeper implementation – Higher Education (College Completion); Workforce Development and Career Advancement; Business and Economic Development (inclusion for high growth minority businesses); and Health. We have chosen these four on which to focus based on need, the potential for increased traction and partnership opportunities, and in acknowledgement that there are other partner-groups doing good work around the remaining two More in the Middle strategic intervention areas.

Through both focusing directly on our current four, as well as actively partnering with those organizations working on the other two, Associated Black Charities is intentional about using its More in the Middle Initiative as a catalyst for investment by others and for leveraging our relationships, understanding that this cannot be done by any single organization or institution.

If you care about our collective economic health or simply the shared economic costs that we all carry as a result of these legacies, I invite you to join us in this work. Short- and long-term solutions are possible, manageable, and waiting to be implemented.

This work is broad, with a long arc of change – both transactional (direct service) and transformative (education, advocacy, policy).

The first step: please read the enclosed More in the Middle Framework report and share your comments with us. I invite you to join me in this work; I look forward to hearing your thoughts, agree or disagree. We are in this together and must make the most of this moment for change.

Sincerely,

Diane Bell McKoy
President / CEO
**EX&EUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides an in-depth description of Associated Black Charities’ (ABC) More in the Middle (MitM) Initiative. Launched in 2008, MitM is an economic framework that examines the racial barriers to wealth creation, develops equitable channels for opportunity and access, and strengthens the economic presence of the state by increasing the African American middle class in Maryland. More specifically, MitM focuses on a three-pronged approach: retaining existing middle class residents; growing replicable “pathways out of poverty” as opportunities for low-income residents to achieve solid middle-class status; and attracting new middle and “emerging middle” class individuals from outside the state.

The MitM framework is for nonprofit organizations, government officials, foundations, community groups, and others who understand the importance of leveraging common resources and encouraging collaboration, and who are ready to explore a holistic framework that operates on a parallel track of transactional and transformative change to produce economic changes for people who live in fragile and neglected communities.

ABC, a state-wide public foundation dedicated to creating healthy and economically viable communities, explains in detail the background and goals for MitM as well as how economically-challenged regions and cities outside of Maryland can replicate MitM. As the region’s only African American philanthropic organization focused on policies that impact Maryland’s communities of color, ABC is uniquely positioned to establish and promote such an initiative.

**Theory**

ABC’s research indicates that an economic renaissance among the African American population would transform the economic landscape by saving local government millions of dollars in services and subsidies and rejuvenate poverty-stricken neighborhoods. MitM relies on data showing that there is a link between 1) increasing the assets of African American businesses; 2) increasing the assets and opportunities for low-income African Americans; 3) preserving and/or preventing the loss of assets among African American middle class citizens, and recharging communities across the racial and economic spectrum. While MitM in Maryland concentrates on population pockets with African Americans as a “linchpin” population, the hypothesis is the same no matter the area’s significant population: a stronger middle class within the region’s lynchpin population stabilizes communities and bolsters the overall competitiveness of the region and the state. Thus, MitM benefits everyone in the community in which it is implemented, not just the lynchpin (defined as populations of color and/or ethnic groups that have experienced generational racialized structural barriers; are significant in numbers in targeted catchment areas; and whose strengthened economic outcomes can be key to an area’s increased economic growth and viability) population. Most importantly, MitM can be replicated anywhere in the country by addressing the needs of a community’s particular lynchpin population.

**Implementation**

More in the Middle is implemented through six primary strategic intervention areas in which African Americans have been historically marginalized or excluded, thus directly impacting their financial status and the economic health of the surrounding geographic areas: Homeownership, Workforce, Higher Education, Business and Economic Development, Asset Building and Wealth Creation, and Health. Public policy is also a strong component which runs through each of the intervention areas. MitM also recognizes that a critical component of transactional and transformative change is citizen involvement. MitM can be used as a strategy for citizen involvement through educating, organizing and mobilizing. Education – through information dissemination, discussion, and connection of abstract policies that shape opportunities, access, and day-to-day outcomes to the personal lives of citizens – is essential to moving to organizing and mobilizing to support and advocate for transformative change.

**Expected Outcome**

A key tenet of MitM is the belief that the deeper the understanding of the economic benefits to all segments of society by investments in transformative change, the greater the opportunity for closing the wealth and health gaps for populations that have traditionally been prevented from pursuing opportunities for economic stability and advancement. In turn, the closing of these gaps will lead to more prospering and financially secure communities, thereby enhancing the surrounding region. MitM, once replicated throughout the nation’s metropolitan areas, will greatly improve not only the economic status of underserved populations but the U.S. as a whole.
America’s Quiet Storm
A quiet storm is brewing across the country. Two of its elements are race and economics.

Maryland and communities across the country – including older industrial, and rural areas crumbling under benign neglect or fighting for survival due to the loss of job-generating industries – are struggling with interlocking realities that will continue to impact its citizens and shape our social fabric and economic futures: the ongoing financial crisis and the changing racial face of America and the entire world.

Although the recession (in stressed communities, it counted as a “depression”) officially ended in June 2009, the number of unemployed persons as well as the unemployment rate remained disturbingly high as of the third quarter of 2011. Unemployment for African Americans exceeded 10% in 24 states and in 14 states for Latinos (unemployment for whites was 10% or above in only 2 states). Adult and teen-aged African American men have the highest rate of unemployment of any racial group, with unemployment rates for African American women closing that gender gap. As of January 2012, the gender unemployment gap was virtually eliminated. Male African American adults had an unemployment rate of 12.7%, compared to a rate of 12.6 percent among African American adult women.

The impact of this financial crisis and slow recovery continues to threaten opportunities for investments in communities and people, causing many economically fragile communities and families to tumble from the edge of stability into needing increasingly higher levels of economic intervention. The inability – or unwillingness – to invest in certain families and communities classified as on the edge, and our inclination to let them drop into an economic abyss, has undone decades of equity work to close disparities in education, homeownership, asset building, and entrepreneurship in African American and other communities of color (the Latino unemployment rate is currently 10.3%).

This racialized model of investing in some communities and families while neglecting others is no longer feasible if our goal is economic viability in the 21st century.

However, African American families are not the only ones impacted by the economy. Traditionally economically stable white families, as well as those who are economically stressed, are also feeling the impact: financially, through loss of jobs, investment capital, savings, and home equity, as well as empathetically, through the struggles of young adult offspring struggling to gain a firm economic foothold in a stressed economy.
In addition, many in the country are feeling a psychological stress born of a discomfort posed by racially gentrification and what that will mean for whites in an America that is increasingly Black and Brown and Yellow. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, in May 2012 America crossed a racial milestone: babies born to people racially classified as African American and ethnically classified as Latino (who can be of any race), accounted for 50.4% of U.S. births between July 2012 – July 2011.

These two critical, interlocking realities – the economy and the changing racial face of America – will facilitate and re-frame discussions about public policy to address historical economic inequities and unequal investments in the country's human capital. To more successfully compete and thrive in a global economy, especially in a post-recession/depression, high-debt climate, we will need to make greater investments in all citizens, irrespective of racial identity or economic status, to move our communities, cities, states, and country forward.

We will need to work on parallel tracks, both locally and nationally, in strategic areas which are indicators of economic health, supporting and advocating for both “on-the-ground” efforts and public policy initiatives.

Your Guide to a New Lens – This Framework is for You

The More in the Middle framework is for representatives of nonprofit organizations, government officials, businesses, foundations, community groups, and others who understand that transnational change (e.g., change that yields simple and predictable outcomes) and transitional change (the type of change where modifications are needed to the existing organizational structure and systems of policies and procedures), are not enough to significantly alter the economic outcomes for people of color or to increase the economic viability of the state and region.

This framework is for those who are looking for a way to address root issues that create, and impede economic growth in, “low opportunity communities”; who understand that we have to leverage resources, encourage collaborations, and creatively use current assets; and who are ready to explore a holistic framework that works on a parallel track of transnational and transformative change to achieve economic revitalization in fragile and neglected communities to enhance Maryland’s growth as an economic engine in the 21st Century.
INTRODUCTION: ASSOCIATED BLACK CHARITIES AND THE MORE IN THE MIDDLE INITIATIVE

The role of structural racism in both health and wealth outcomes informs the theory of change and intervention strategies of ABC’s MitM Initiative. Acknowledging the historic and continuing detrimental role of structural racism in American life, as well as its impact on our collective economic health, establishes a common agenda for all citizens regardless of race.

Through research-based and outcome-driven interventions and public policy advocacy which focuses on education, information, and recommendations regarding structural, racialized barriers impacting the ability to achieve positive outcomes (i.e., public policies that seed lasting social, health, and economic transformations), ABC will continue to provide problem-solving leadership on issues impacting Maryland’s communities to benefit all of its citizens.

Core Values

Throughout our evolution, ABC core values remain the same. Our values serve as pillars to our mission to create healthier and wealthier communities. Fundamental to our everyday approach to the work we do, the staff and board work to ensure that our treatment of each other, along with our partners and constituents, directly align to the values that we hold close to us. ABC’s values are:

Accountability: By taking responsibility we not only take ownership for our duties, we demonstrate our obligations to ourselves and the broader community through our attitude and doing the best of our ability to fulfill our mission.

Truth: Transparency and integrity guide us daily and our action show that we have the highest regard for that which is right.

Responsiveness: Proactively responding and reacting to our partners, donors and constituents so that everyone who interacts with us feels they are a priority and have our full attention and consideration.

Collaboration: We believe that the culmination of different ideas for the purpose of accomplishing goals or objectives gives the greatest value to work and the outcomes that we all seek.

Decisiveness: We are confident and concrete about our actions and positions as a result of using an open and equitable decision making process that is fundamental to the essence of our mission.

Integrity: We embrace high ethical standards in all we do to convey our credibility, character and conviction to the community.

Mission Statement

ABC is a public foundation that facilitates the creation of measurably healthier and wealthier communities throughout the state of Maryland through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment.

Since its founding in 1985, Associated Black Charities (ABC) has been dedicated to creating strong, healthy, and economically viable communities in order to create a better life, especially for African American children and families. ABC is the region’s only African American philanthropic organization providing coordinated leadership on issues impacting Maryland’s communities of color.

Our first 20 years as a human services and community development intermediary laid the groundwork for the work that we do today. In the beginning, ABC was widely recognized as an important catalyst that provided funding, technical assistance and service coordination to non-profit organizations who served the needs of Maryland’s African American communities. ABC grew to understand the value of investing in the growth and capacity of community and faith-based organizations that had their fingers on the pulse of the community. This was a critical role between 1985 and 1995, particularly as the need for nonprofit and human service agencies heightened in response to the disinvestment that was occurring in Baltimore communities. In early 2000, our geographic reach expanded into Prince George’s County and to Maryland’s Eastern Shore as we were tapped to partner with faith-based institutions in those areas. In both jurisdictions, the quality of life of Black families was diminishing due to economic and public health challenges that were so significant, it was necessary to leverage support beyond their boundary area. ABC willingly jumped in to provide resources and assistance.

As we evaluated the human service needs that penetrated communities 25 years ago, today our assessment of the current environment moves us from stabilizing families to sustaining them. In 2008, ABC launched an initiative called More in the Middle (MitM) that strategically examines the financial health of African American families within the economic and social climate. Our shift does not abandon our human service lens; instead it gives it focus by zooming in on the underlying causes that stand in the way of our progress.

One such historic cause is that of structural racism, an organized system (whether through conscious intention or unconscious, systemic, implicit bias that is interwoven into institutions and systems) of social structures that categorizes, ranks, and differentially allocates desirable societal resources to socially defined “races.” Key indicators of structural racism include inequalities in power, access, opportunities, wealth, health, and policy impacts and outcomes, whether intentional or not.

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Strategic Goals

ABC’s mission seeks to eliminate the health and wealth disparities that impair the economic well-being of households throughout the state of Maryland. To meet this challenge, our strategic goals are to:

Affect change through an outcome-driven strategic agenda that is deliberately focused on the execution of core activities focused on wealth creation. More in the Middle is executed through an outcome-based, collaborative model supported by philanthropic investment. The agenda draws a correlation between economic health and a higher quality of life that includes eradicating health disparities in Maryland communities.

Execute a grantmaking framework that is based on our strategic agenda and engages communities and partners in our collective efforts to economically strengthen individuals, families, and communities.

Educate and advocate for new public policy and reform efforts that are critical to the financial health of the region. Our goal is to lead a policy agenda that will address issues pertinent to the economic health of the African American community and engage legislative, public and philanthropic stakeholders to support the fulfillment of that agenda for the economic benefit of the state.

Expand partnerships, collaborations and community engagement opportunities with individuals, organizations, governmental agencies and other stakeholders to enlist their commitment, resources and efforts in our work.

Increase and expand strategic philanthropic engagement which includes strengthening our base of community support and involvement in every aspect of our work.

Through these goals the organization is able to reinforce its role as convener, advocate, partner and grantmaker, providing the foundation for the outcomes that are needed in our communities.

More in the Middle: BASICS

The A-B-C’s of More in the Middle

Associated Black Charities’ wealth creation work is encapsulated in its More in the Middle Initiative. More in the Middle is an economic framework aimed at expanding the economic vibrancy of the state by increasing the African American middle class in distinct jurisdictions in Maryland through innovative strategies that increase assets and human capital potential among African Americans. The initiative has three concentrations: retaining existing middle class residents; growing middle class residents from low-income residents by supporting and incubating existing and replicable “pathways out of poverty”, and attracting new middle and “emerging middle” class individuals and families from outside the city. More in the Middle concentrates on population pockets with African Americans as a “linchpin” population. In other states, the linchpin population may be different. Whatever the area’s significant population, the hypothesis is the same: that a stronger middle class within the region’s linchpin population stabilizes families and strengthens the competitiveness of the region and the state. More in the Middle “linchpin” populations historically have been left out of the access and opportunity pathways that white ethnic and other immigrant groups have successfully used for asset building, along with the multi-generational legal, public policy, social, and cultural supports afforded them. The impact of those legal, public policy, social, and cultural philosophies and choices resonate today, through disparities that were generational in making and that impact the quality of life of all citizens, regardless of race.

In Maryland, as in other areas of the country, middle income households are a critical part of a city’s fiscal base. Middle class households provide revenue that poorer households and individuals cannot. Middle class households also help suppress tax rates on wealthier households and individuals. Increasing the number of people and households with middle class incomes and assets increases the tax base of a city and state, thus enhancing the region’s economy.²

Efforts that focus upon expanding the size of the middle class and strengthening the fragile middle class of those in significant numbers who are racialized and in low-opportunity communities, including the poor, the working poor, and marginalized middle income families, will improve the fiscal and economic health of the cities and states in which they reside. More in the Middle relies heavily upon research and emerging trends to lay out the hypotheses that: there is a link between increasing the assets and opportunities for low-income African Americans; retaining and/or preventing the loss of assets among existing African American middle class citizens; and revitalizing communities across the racial and economic spectrum.

Concept

More in the Middle has the potential to be an effective, powerful and transformative effort. The theory for MitM is founded on:

Relevance

From a historical view the economic condition of African Americans has progressed on fragile legs. While it is true that African Americans have accumulated more income and assets over the decades, a lack of net wealth persists. Moreover, the wealth gap between African Americans and whites is widening. The current economic climate strengthens the importance of the initiative, given that recent evidence suggests that African Americans may fall behind the generation before them.
NECESSITY
There are six intervention strategies that are social indicators of economic health and that are relevant to the communities served by ABC. Each intervention is supported by data as evidence that a need exists. In each of the six areas ABC works in partnership with others, including community-based groups, large nonprofit intermediaries, the philanthropic sector, policy makers and government institutions. Most of these groups do not work exclusively with African American populations, but their work profoundly affects their economic condition.

SCALE AND IMPACT
Any results achieved from any of the six intervention areas have an impact at both the micro and macro levels. On a micro level, individuals and families benefit directly when efforts are geographically targeted – success spreads in neighborhoods and small communities. On a macro level, cities and regions can eventually re-direct social service resources to projects that sustain the success that neighborhoods and families are experiencing and do more to enhance the local economy as a result of intentionally targeting the “linchpin” population.

INNOVATION
More in the Middle successfully blends approaches to maximize impact. The initiative operates from a systemic framework focused on public policy change that augments the direct service work of our grantees, nonprofit and public sector partners and the philanthropic interests of our donors and foundation partners. Our ability to leverage the interest and impact of our partners increases the impact of MitM.

Principles
More in the Middle is built upon the following beliefs:

The detrimental legacy and continuing documented impact of structural racism threatens us all and promises to steal the future from our children if left unaddressed. If we continue to apply band-aid remedies instead of addressing it at its roots, the country’s competitive advantage in a global economy will suffer, as will the economic, health, and social fabric of our society. Addressing structural racism is in the self-interest of all those who care about the future of children and families across this country.

Dismantling structural racism is ultimately a “win-win” proposition for all. Dismantling structural racism affirms America’s sense of itself as a country where “all men are created equal” and creates equitable structural supports to ensure a “level playing field.”

Areas with ongoing, long-lasting economic weaknesses are now opportunities to implement strategies that can grow and sustain families and businesses.

Economically crippled areas can be transformed to support free market choices, opportunities, and pathways restricting the economic development of families and communities.

Through expanded access and opportunity, the strengthening of economically distressed groups can positively affect communities and the economic structures around them.

Change begins locally and expands through regional, state and national collaborative efforts.

Society can create borders to hide from economic ills and health disparities or we can create opportunities for families and economic asset development to flourish.

Implementation Goals: Retain, Grow and Attract
More in the Middle is not an effort that narrowly targets poverty. It is about creating, managing and sustaining net wealth for African Americans. Our implementation goals are broad in order to reach several subpopulations in the African American community such as the poor, the working poor, the fragile middle class, and families that show stability. Growth of employee-based African American-owned businesses is a basic tenet of the overall strategy.

The implementation goals to retain, grow, and attract a greater African American middle class support existing policies that will enhance the economic strength and competitiveness of the entire region. ABC’s early analysis indicates that an economic renaissance among the African American population would wholly transform the economic landscape by saving local government millions of dollars in services and subsidies; as well as preserve and strengthen neighborhoods that are weakened by persistent poverty. The focus of each goal is to:

Retain existing African American middle class families that contribute to the health and vitality of the communities in which they live. The fragility of the existing African American middle class has long been ignored, contributing to their loss of massive assets during the recent economic recession. We need to retain assets and build an economic foundation for future generations.

Change the assets of the poor and working poor by providing pathways from poverty to prosperity. Strategies to address this include broadening access points for poor individuals and collective households to earn greater wages and economic strength.

Attract African American middle class families whose economic capital can create a more viable economy in the City and state.

The three goals create a holistic yet focused approach to strengthening the African American middle class.

Overview of More in the Middle Strategic Interventions
More in the Middle is put into practice through six primary strategic intervention areas that directly impact the economic outcomes of African Americans (the sixth area, Health, is also a thread that runs through each of the other five, as does Asset Building and Wealth Creation – also
included as one of the primary six – and public policy. These areas were identified based on evidence that each contributes to long-term financial well-being and success.

**HOMEOWNERSHIP**
Homeownership is a significant reward or risk for African American families. ABC’s strategy focuses on increasing access and opportunities for potential and current homeowners by ensuring that practices geared toward African Americans and other racially or economically vulnerable populations are surfaced and eliminated. The strategy also tries to ensure that occurrence of foreclosures in these communities are significantly reduced through foreclosure prevention and other intervention tactics. ABC works with its nonprofits, banks, community counseling organizations, legislators, and others to meet this goal.

**EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT**
Earned income is essential to saving, self-sufficiency, and sustainability. ABC supports efforts for low-wage, under-employed, ex-offender, and other workers who need training in order to secure employment. We fund outcome-based services that connect people to the workforce and career paths as well as the advancement of existing middle-class professionals through our own efforts to retain and grow leadership diversity in the nonprofit arena and other sectors. We also recognize that because stereotyping is an often unspoken barrier for African Americans, training alone is not enough for some sub-populations, particularly those who develop maladaptive coping behaviors as a result of the chronic stress of living in a racialized society and with lower socio-economic status. We work to expose stereotypes that act as barriers; to educate on the intersections of structural racism, lack of opportunity, and depression masked as anger; and to provide recommendations for alternative models of support for those entering or advancing through the workforce as well as for the potential employers of that workforce. Our belief is that access and opportunities for building relationships and networks foster a professional advantage for career advancement – for both low-wage workers and for existing middle-class professionals.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**
ABC provides research, information, analysis, dialogue, and policy advocacy to help students enter and complete college. Our goal is to provide access to mentoring and leadership, as well as social networking opportunities that give budding African American leaders what they need to successfully graduate and enter the workforce. With our education partners, we will address college readiness and access for African American college-bound youth. Additionally, we want to retain college graduates in Baltimore and the region by extending opportunities after graduation, with the understanding that they are our future workforce, leaders, and fuel for the economic engines of this region.

**BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
ABC seeks to examine the hidden barriers preventing the growth of employee-based African American firms. This analysis must provide for an expanded group of champions to support this growth. We believe that success metrics for the growth of African American businesses will create consensus on the approach that Black and majority businesses should use to develop partnerships and/or acquisitions of existing businesses. This is of fundamental importance, since studies show that African American-owned businesses hire a greater number of African American workers, including low-skilled and hard-to-employ workers. The primary focus for ABC’s business development initiatives is career development and access for African American workers.

**ASSET BUILDING AND WEALTH CREATION**
The 2008 recession – identified as a depression for African American and other communities of color – severely compromised the financial stability of all citizens and in particular African Americans. ABC’s efforts support an asset-building culture in the African American community that can survive tumultuous economic times. We want to provide education on and access to information and opportunities for building and growing wealth that will influence behavior toward saving and investing.

**HEALTH**
Health inequities between African Americans and whites are also of a long-standing, structural nature. Health disparities follow a “class ladder” (the greater one’s wealth, the better the health) but those disparities still exist even after socioeconomic factors are considered. Studies comparing the health of immigrants of color to people of color who have been permanent residents of the United States show that within one generation the health outcomes of those immigrant families more closely mirror the disparities of native born people of color. Clearly, “social milieu” drives those negative outcomes, and that is the lived experience of structural racism.

Each of the strategic intervention areas requires specific outcome driven activities, public policy changes, and broad community support. Each of these interventions is related to policies where African Americans have been historically marginalized and institutionally excluded. It is our intent to use these intervention areas to create a more level playing field that has room for everyone.

Foundation for the More in the Middle Hypothesis

The Impact of Structural Racism on American Prosperity

Not only is there a history of institutional segregation stemming from structural racism that to this day affects health and wealth outcomes in communities of color, there are current policies that have the effect – even without the intent – of perpetuating continued negative outcomes.

Structural racism is a long-standing and well-entrenched system in American society, even with the strides the country has made. Unlike the public focus of interpersonal racism, structural racism operates in ways that are often invisible in American society. It is embedded in all areas of our social fabric, so much so that its continuation does not rely upon individuals, but rather upon systems continuing to operate as they always have without a deeper examination of the unintended and racialized outcomes of policies and practices. The impact of “business as usual” is seen in the continuation of racialized barriers and their resulting racialized outcomes that are often rooted within the public policy arena.

Even for policies that may change, the long-term effect of those unfair practices used in public and private institutions continue to contribute to the barriers that divide communities and produce racialized outcomes long after the policy has been changed. Many of these long-term effects can be seen in the racialized outcomes affecting all of the building blocks of life, including health, education, income, wealth, and “place” (communities).

In terms of health and life expectancy, the racial and ethnic gaps have changed little. In higher education, access and opportunity is still racialized. African Americans and other people of color are more likely than whites to be economically insecure; African Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed; and the starkest racial disparities are around wealth.

Through the years, this societal stance has succeeded in broadening the health and wealth gap, leaving the privileged at one end and the marginalized at another. Though complex and broad, the fight for social and economic justice continues and ABC takes a leadership role to achieve progress in the areas of economic and health equity.

For 25 years, ABC’s institutional existence has been based on the pursuit of equal access to information, equal opportunities for advancement, and advocacy for the increase of more “high opportunity” communities to improve life’s chances for those currently residing in economically disadvantaged areas. When ABC launched its More in the Middle Initiative, the focus was to examine the racial barriers that exists in wealth creation and to create equitable pathways for opportunity and access. Economic success cannot be achieved if we don’t honestly acknowl-
edge and address the continuing barrier of institutional racism and its generational impact on access and opportunity for citizens of color, as this history has and continues to perpetuate the economic divide.

In 2008, ABC started to document the long-term structural impacts that inhibit wealth and access to asset-building and wealth creation. Our goal is to eliminate the legacy of economic instability and inequity among African Americans. The consequences of not addressing race and economic inequity are severe. Census data shows that our demographics are constantly evolving, as society is not just multi-cultural but also “browner”. By 2023, the majority of U.S. citizens under the age of 18 years old will be of color. By 2042, people of color are estimated to be the majority of America’s citizens and emerging workforce. To proactively respond to what the future has in store, it is imperative that we work toward equal wealth access – not just as a benefit to African Americans, but as a benefit to all.

**Research and Data that Connects Wealth Creation to Racial Equity**

ABC relies on data indicating that equity of access and opportunity are critical to prosperity. Past racial inequities continue to impact racial groups who have historically been without access. In addition to our work, more organizations are focused on system change – contextualized by race – rather than seeking policy reform alone. Partners such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W.F. Kellogg Foundation, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and the Brookings Institute recognize the impact of racism and historical race-based privilege in relationship to systemic, generational poverty.

We are also guided by research from organizations such as the Pew Charitable Trust, Demos, and Brandeis University Institute on Assets and Social Policy. In fact, a study conducted by the Brandeis University Institute on Assets and Social Policy reported that between 1984 and 2007 the wealth gap quadrupled between African Americans and white families. The report also states that even when African Americans obtain greater educational outcomes and work at well-paying jobs, it is still insufficient to close the wealth gap between them and their white counterparts. The Pew Charitable Trust produced *Economic Mobility of Black and White Families*, which shows the changing trends in median family income for Black and white families. According to the report, “median family income for both Black and white families has increased over the last 30 years, but income gaps still exist”. The report exposes the frightening fact that Black children of existing middle class families are at risk of losing their middle-class status as they approach adulthood. Another Institute on Assets and Social Policy report published jointly with Demos reveals the vulnerable condition of African American wealth: only 26% of African American middle-class families have the combination of assets, education, sufficient income and health insurance to ensure middle-class financial security.

The research is supported by data that creates a quantitative depiction of economic inequity classified by race. Our information is derived from national resources and information that is local to the Baltimore Metropolitan area, our local site for *More in the Middle*. We know from research that the income of African American households fell significantly in the last decade. In 2008 ABC published the *More in the Middle Dashboard Report: An Analysis of Baltimore’s African American Middle Class*. The report confirms race-based wealth disparities and discusses strategies that will best address the limitations on wealth access. Demographically, we know that of the 59% of African American households in Baltimore, only 29% are middle class households. One percent of African Americans earn more than $75,000 a year, compared with 62% that earn less than $35,000, with 27% living in poverty.

There are wealth metrics that show wide disparities in assets, particularly in light of the foreclosure crisis that wiped away most of the wealth previously held by African American families. This has been an area of significant concern since data shows that homeownership is a priority investment for African Americans, representing 80% of their assets. During the past eight years, according to the report “Foreclosed: State of the Dream 2008”, the total loss of wealth for African American borrowers through foreclosures on sub-prime (disproportionately targeted to African Americans and Latinos) is between $71 billion – $92 billion.

**Targeting Key Populations**

ABC’s target population historically has been African Americans. But the essential connection for *More in the Middle* is that African Americans reside in significant numbers in ABC’s targeted catchment areas, such that they are the linchpin for economic viability – or economic despair. With ABC’s focus on the fiscal health of Maryland, working with this key population is crucial. (In other areas of the country, the linchpin population for economic viability of an area may be of a different racial or ethnic group.)

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12. Theodore M. Shaw, former director-counsel and president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF); Professor of Professional Practice, Columbia Law School.


More in the Middle: A Framework for Economic Success

Four Core Tools for Economic Success

ABC’s efforts are based on our capacity to obtain data, leverage partners, and quantify short- and long-term outcomes that we can directly influence. From ABC’s experience, the best framework to support access and opportunity for wealth creation include a set of strategic interventions; strategies using evidence-based practices and approaches within the intervention areas that facilitate the work; education and advocacy on new public policies that are economically inclusive and support long term asset building for African Americans; and finally, community participation which is instrumental to advocacy efforts. Building a base of constituents made of private institutions and individual citizens can collectively yield measurable outcomes.

The framework outlined in this document is intended to be a resource for stakeholders, partners and donors to demonstrate what is necessary to achieve economic success. Ultimately, our goal is to replicate this approach in economically-challenged communities with a linchpin population that, if their circumstances were reversed, would contribute to the overall success of their region.

A Framework For Action

Translating Strategic Interventions into Action

More in the Middle becomes a practical application by breaking down the six strategic intervention areas into actions. The actions result in sustainable outcomes that are necessary to tip the economic scale to the benefit of African American families and other geographic “linchpin” populations as well as those communities in which they reside.

The six intervention areas of More in the Middle are important because they are the channels through which the research, data, and goals of the initiative are executed. A dozen different interventions could have been selected for More in the Middle. These six encompass not only the most critical areas of fragility among African Americans; they align with the challenges with which most Americans are confronted. These intervention areas also yield a significant, direct, long-term gain for African Americans and others within their communities.

For the past three years, ABC has focused on executing strategies within the six intervention areas both directly and indirectly. Our direct efforts are focused on public policy formation where we work to raise awareness of the economic challenges of African Americans. Parallel to our policy efforts, we take the lead in initiating new ideas and convening community partners to discuss approaches
to launching new activities or improving existing systems that respond to one of the six areas. Indirect efforts take the form of our grant-making activity to nonprofits and community-based organizations that focus on one of the six areas. Our grantmaking activity is an essential component of the work and we regard our grantees as partners who deliver essential direct services or other activities that serve the needs of poor, working poor and fragile middle-class families in the region.

**Evidence-Based Practices and Innovative Approaches**

Our approach to identifying actions for the strategies was to look at best practices that provide clear evidence that the outcomes we expect will be achieved. Evidence-based is a term often used in clinical environments, but is also appropriate for addressing social policy related to economic development. We have had a great deal of success using strategies that have proven to be effective and demonstrated in research and data. Our approaches are illustrated in Table 1 (next page).

It is also important to think outside the box, and to try new ideas and approaches, especially those that incorporate the relevance and impact of structural and institutional racism. ABC has created fresh, innovative approaches that are currently in implementation stages. For example, our board development pipeline identifies and trains mid-level African Americans and other professionals of color to serve the nonprofit sector as board members, thereby extending their social networks and opportunities, resulting in a long-term benefit for their career advancement. Similarly, we are one of the core architects of the Baltimore-Washington Racial Diversity Collaborative, a regional effort to increase the career advancement potential of African Americans and other professionals of color that work in the nonprofit sector. The collaborative also works to ready nonprofit organizations to create the inclusive environment needed to successfully retain a racially diverse workforce. Lastly, we are implementing e-mentoring, an initiative that will connect college students to professionals in their field of interest through the use of social technology formats that are commonplace among college students and convenient for professional mentors.

**Information and Education**

Public policy is central to all of our efforts to achieve transformative change. Providing accurate and relevant information and education is the beginning of that strategy. Realizing transformative change is beyond the ability and resources of any single organization in Maryland – as in any state – especially because the challenges are related to structural and systemic issues, including race. A core value we hold is that a successful public policy campaign is going to require continued partnership with organizations and individuals with similar agendas. ABC has aligned itself with a number of organizations who are also seeking systemic and transformative change, including advocacy organizations, collaborative partnerships working on related issues, and transportation agencies. Our partnership expectation is that each collaboration addresses as part of the strategy an analysis regarding the impact of structural race-based barriers.

To ensure that our contribution to a larger strategic public policy campaign is well-informed by influential leaders, experts and citizens, ABC is launching two public policy advisory groups: one that addresses issues of workforce/opportunity for low wealth African Americans; and another that focuses on higher education completion/low-wealth African Americans. Associated with this campaign is the supportive work of identifying focused policies, associated legislative leadership targets, and membership and leadership of each advisory group.

ABC’s public policy efforts add an important value of educating influencers, community members and others on the ways in which seemingly “race neutral” policies, once implemented, can derail access and opportunity for people of color. The universal lens through which public policy is vetted is intended to be “race neutral.” However, the “universal” lens that most see as “normal” reflects a white, middle-class reality corresponding to the majority of our legislators and/or the legislative culture. Those looking outside of that reality who try to expand that narrow “universal” lens are called “special interest groups.”

All of us have a “special interest” in the increased economic viability of our cities, and to reach this goal we must expand the ‘normal’ policy-making perspective to include the realities of public policy outcomes for all groups.

An expanded lens – one that incorporates the impact of policies on individuals whose day-to-day realities and experiences are outside of the norm of most policy influencers and makers – is crucial to transformative change. Education, advocacy, and community engagement are essential for expanding that lens.
### Table 1: More in the Middle Strategic Interventions and Examples of Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION GOALS:</th>
<th>RETAIN</th>
<th>GROW</th>
<th>ATTRACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOMEOWNERSHIP</td>
<td>Prevention: Ensure that communities with high incidents of foreclosures receive expert counseling and guidance</td>
<td>Educate and Inform: Provide first-time homeowners with financial management and budget planning tools</td>
<td>Market: Promote neighborhoods that have amenities that culturally relevant to African American homeowners</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT</td>
<td>Expand Professional Networks: Broker leadership opportunities on nonprofit boards to foster relationship building for African American professionals</td>
<td>Train: Fund new occupational and customized training opportunities targeted at low skilled workers</td>
<td>Incubate: Talent pipelines across several different sectors for mid-career and executive level professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGHER EDUCATION</td>
<td>Mentor: Support college students by matching them with professionals in specific fields of interest</td>
<td>Research and Inform: Commission and distribute information regarding college preparation, access, and completion</td>
<td>Promote: Support and promote a college-going culture among youth, especially those who are first generation college-bound</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Advocate: Support for new policies that support a conducive atmosphere for African American business growth in order to create more entry level and professional jobs</td>
<td>Broker Relationships: Create formal networks for minority supplier partnerships with majority businesses with a goal to expand hiring</td>
<td>Partnership: Support the outreach of businesses that intentionally seek to culturally diverse its talent pool of employees at all levels</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSET BUILDING AND WEALTH CREATION</td>
<td>Expand Access: Support financial education, counseling and advice to individuals and families</td>
<td>Expand Opportunity: Market Earned Income Tax Credit and efforts to expand tax credit programs to low wage workers</td>
<td>Expand Potential: During the years they work, the average college graduate will earn approximately 73% more than the average high school graduate, increasing their potential for building a legacy of economic health for future generations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Participation

The type of impact that More in the Middle strives for requires effort and strength far beyond what one single organization can offer. Since the beginning of the initiative, our outreach efforts have leveraged more than 100 relationships, ranging from community-based organizations to legislative bodies that are uniquely positioned to advance the goals of MitM to strengthen the economic outcomes of the state. A broad base strengthens our information and education efforts by providing us with public support on specific policies that disproportionately impact people of color and undermine the economic viability of the state. Legislators are accountable to their constituents and are influenced by the power of multiple voices that target a particular issue. However, we believe that the MitM agenda is relatable to a broad base of citizens who are (and should be) participants in their own futures. We believe that MitM offers that opportunity to all Marylanders, not just African Americans.

Through research and the lived experiences of our core constituency, ABC continues to make the connections between the disproportionately negative economic outcomes for African Americans and other people of color as a result of structural racism and decreased economic opportunities for and viability of the state. We have used our position within communities and with institutional partners to create and facilitate forums and relationships with the purpose of linking public policy to the race-based economic choices and outcomes resulting from it. However, much more is required in order to realize the potential of MitM as a transformative change agenda: we have to involve more citizens as participants in the process of building and implementing MitM instead of only representing their voices. Citizen involvement is a critical component of transactional and transformative change. MitM can be used as a strategy for citizen involvement through educating, organizing and mobilizing. Education – through information dissemination, discussion, and connection of abstract policies that shape opportunities, access, and day-to-day outcomes to the personal lives of citizens – is essential to moving to organizing and mobilizing to support and advocate for transformative change. The deeper we engage the community across race and class lines, the stronger More in the Middle is. Citizen involvement is key in sustaining civic collaborations committed to creating a better economic future for the region.

Building Reform: A Theoretical Framework for Transformative Change

In accepting the role of structural and institutional racism as a core barrier limiting access and opportunities for people of color and for the increased economic viability of the state, seeking to achieve equality must be at the center of our relationship-building and education efforts. Our work through More in the Middle facilitates equity in access, opportunities, and inclusion. We believe that an equitable society is one in which systems and markets afford everyone an equal opportunity to participate and prosper. We also believe that the goal of equity must be to create the conditions that allow all to reach their full potential.

We have evolved this framework over the years. At the beginning of this initiative, we did not vocalize the impact of structural racism “front and center” in our work, believing that if we focused solely on the negative economic impact of our state of conditions facing the key population of African Americans, this effort would sidestep the avoidance and lack of support that so often occurs whenever the realities and impacts of racial inequities are exposed in conversations of cause, effect, and outcomes. However, conversations stalled because everyone recognized that the underlying issue was the impact of structural racism.

Therefore, we decided to acknowledge structural racism’s central place in this work, developing a Theory of Change that incorporates the role of structural racism in impeding the full development of citizens and the economic viability and health parity of the state. We accept that the success of MitM requires a deeper understanding about structural racism and thus, a change in viewpoints by “change agents” in the larger community. Therefore, MitM must intentionally identify and engage the regional “change agents” (e.g., those who are influencers in the civic fabric) in understanding structural racism and its role in limiting access and opportunities for people of color and its detrimental impact on our state. The ultimate goal is to enlist these change agents to become active in their own spheres of influence to lift the lens of institutional racism.

The deeper the knowledge and engagement at all levels of the regional civic leadership and Maryland communities, the greater the opportunity for closing the wealth and health gaps for people of color, thus boosting the region’s economic health.
The More in the Middle Initiative: An Equity Framework

**Figure 1.** Inequity in Opportunities and Access Lead to Inequitable Outcomes that Harm the State

**Figure 2.** “Place-based” Environmental and Racial Inequities Lead to Health Disparities that Harm the State

**Figure 3.** Equity in Access and Opportunities Lead to Equitable Outcomes that Benefit the State

For a more detailed view of Associated Black Charities’ theoretical framework and Theory of Change, please see the Appendix.
Figure 2.

**ABC: A Health Equity Framework**

Our environments cultivate our, communities and our communities nurture our health.

When inequities are low and community assets are high, health outcomes are best.

Substance Abuse  Smoking  HIV/AIDS  Infant Mortality  Malnutrition  Obesity  Depression  Heart Disease

Violence  Stress

Adverse Living Conditions  Segregation  Poor Quality Schools  Occupational Hazards  Institutional Racism  Unemployment  Environmental Toxins  Discrimination

Quality Schools  Access to Healthy Foods  Access to Healthcare  Transportation Resources

Figure adapted from Anderson et al, 2003; Marmot et al, 1999; and Wilkinson et al, 2003.

Figure 3.

**ABC: An Equity Framework**

EQUITY

- Economic
- Social
- Environmental

- Housing
- Employment/Workforce
- Financial Literacy
- Business Devmt
- Higher Education
- Healthy People & Healthy Communities

- Affordable Housing/Homeownership
- Job Opportunities
- Financial Literacy/Asset Bldg
- Job Creation
- College-Ready Students, College Financially Accessible
- People reach their full health potential

ABC Wealth/Asset Building Initiatives & Policies

College Grads
Baltimore, Maryland is an ideal area to test the theory of and implement More in the Middle. In addition to serving as the geographic incubator where MitM was first established, Baltimore has significant factors that make it an optimal site for inclusive economic development. The Baltimore metropolitan region is often referenced in urban policy research pertaining to its industrial history and historical segregation practices that continue to challenge its economic potential. This history continues to impact the economic, educational, social, and professional life chances of its citizens.

Baltimore’s history reveals two major failures that impact the economic and social condition of the African American population: post-industrialization and racial segregation. Baltimore City was part of the surrounding county but soon emerged as its own jurisdiction as shipping and manufacturing became the core economy for the area. In fact, the city thrived as an industrial hub and the population grew rapidly in response to the creation of blue collar jobs in steel, railroad development and factory manufacturing. As the city boomed, the largest population growth was among African Americans who relocated to Baltimore for shipping and manufacturing jobs. Within a 20-year span, the Black population grew from 23% to 46% between 1950 and 1970 and represented the city’s majority population at 64% in 2009. Like many other cities that thrived during industrialization, Baltimore flourished initially but faltered as a post-industrial city when steel and manufacturing were replaced by newer industries such as technology, finance and health care. The transition from blue collar to corporate cufflink left many residents, particularly African American workers, unemployed and marginalized; the observable effects are still felt today. The scale of lost manufacturing jobs mirrored the population of Baltimore. Within a few years the unemployment rate for African Americans grew significantly, with the effects spanning generations.

According to Alan Berube of the Brookings Institute, Baltimore is currently 1 of 65 older industrial cities that continue to underperform economically. The indicators of under-performance include higher than average unemployment rates, labor force participation and poverty. The racial demographics also offer distinctions from other cities since the majority population (African American) has a significant lead in these indicators. The fact that this data trends away from national averages of economic performance relates to race. Baltimore suffered significantly from racial segregation practices in housing, employment and education, resulting in devastated neighborhoods and economically vulnerable families.

**Outcomes for Baltimore’s Success**

Success for Baltimore is important for Maryland’s economy and for its actualization as a model for innovative economic development. Success for Baltimore means that More in the Middle has measurable indicators. In 2010 ABC commissioned
the Sage Policy Group to identify outcome metrics that would help ABC and its partners to focus on a specific set of deliverables that will lead to economic success.

The performance metrics were developed based on an economic analysis of the five of the six strategic intervention areas: Homeownership and Foreclosure Prevention; Employment and Career Advancement; Higher Education; Business and Economic Development; and Asset Building and Wealth Creation. Performance metrics are based on the scale and scope of the activities of five of the six intervention areas along with how achievable and realistic their outcomes could be. See Table 2 in the attachment as an illustration of how the metrics are framed within the goal of each intervention area and social objectives that have macro and micro results (next page).

The Numbers are High … but so are the Stakes

Using these metrics, our intention is to initiate and leverage the investments of a myriad of government, private sector, foundation, and citizen participation to reach the goals of More in the Middle. We are beginning to see progressive signs of success. Yet even with the promise of success is the difficulty in bringing the results of our efforts to scale, especially given the initiative’s long arc. These metrics CAN tip the economic scale toward a more even balance but a look at the numbers shows several significant challenges. For example, within the next decade in Baltimore we must: Train, develop and employ a minimum of 31,773 African Americans who are currently in lower skill jobs to move into higher skill jobs in the region; Ensure that 33,827 African Americans obtain a bachelor’s degree; Increase the number of African American firms with employees from 713 to at least 2,627, thereby increasing the number of employees at these firms from 7,573 to 27,897; Upgrade financial literacy and knowledge to a minimum of 25,188 existing African American households; and Stabilize the loss of homeownership from foreclosure and increase African American homeownership by 41,573.

The investment of time and capital required to achieve these numbers is intimidating. However, Baltimore has a history of success in some of these areas, and with an acceptance that the economic growth of African Americans benefits all citizens – regardless of race – and a concerted, intentional focus, we can make progress.

Replication in other post-industrial cities

This framework is not only to share the design, delivery and practices of More in the Middle, but to be a model for other metropolitan areas that mirror Baltimore. Our goal is to develop a flexible model that can be used in metropolitan areas with attributes similar to the Baltimore region. Such regions will resemble Baltimore in:

1. Size and scale, which would include a city that is closely connected to a strong region;
2. An identifiable “linchpin” population representing the majority or a critical mass of residents;
3. A history of prosperous industrialization, followed by long-term distress when blue-collar jobs were lost to service sectors; and
4. A long history of racially oppressive practices that profoundly affected the linchpin population.

As previously cited, Baltimore shares similar economic attributes with other cities such as Detroit, Cleveland and Philadelphia. More in the Middle will not only translate well in these areas, but may be a key initiative in other cities that are seeking their own economic renaissance.

A successful reproduction of More in the Middle has five main ingredients: strong leadership, engaged citizens and civic partners, corporate champions, a solid public policy agenda and transactional efforts that produce outcome-based results. From the leadership point of view, replications must include bold and innovative leadership that is willing to initiate and coordinate the work of all partners.

Engaged citizens and civic partners not only endorse the agenda, but actively contribute to its success. A cadre of civic leaders, partners and everyday citizens is needed in order to achieve the outcomes at the scale necessary to make a real impact. Included in the civic engagement agenda is to leverage a business partner to serve as a corporate champion. Corporations symbolize economic power, a trait essential to any economic development agenda. Corporations’ endorsement of an agenda like More in the Middle, including their understanding of the underlying inequitable conditions that created the need for the initiative, is critical for success.

Finally, public policy MUST be the foundation in a replicated agenda. Activities and programs that support More in the Middle are not enough to sustain true economic change. The public policy agenda is framed by the strategic intervention areas while informing what strategies should be executed.

Getting Started in your Area

In Maryland, More in the Middle is in its fifth year of implementation. We have continued to build partnerships and collaborations and continue to be one of the largest workforce grants providers (an example of transactional change); one of only a few organizations that inform and educate policy influencers and makers regarding the direct and indirect economic impact of policies on communities of color; and one of the recognized innovators of strategic change.”

Because the underlying barriers are structural and institutional racism, this work has a long arc for change. However, there are policy and metric benchmarks that guide our way.

For more information about More in the Middle and for assessing its replication potential in your city, contact mitminfo@abc-md.org.

Additional publications on More in the Middle can be downloaded at www.abc-md.org.


18. Growing and Sustaining Older Industrial Cities, a presentation by Alan Berube, the Brookings Institute, 2008.
### Table 2: More in the Middle Performance Metrics

#### STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: HOMEOWNERSHIP

**Goal:** Reduce the incidence of foreclosures among African Americans by ensuring greater opportunities for homeownership counseling and support, providing access to foreclosure prevention and keeping current African American homeowners as homeowners and increase new African American homeowners throughout the City and metropolitan region.

**Objective:** Within a 10 year time frame, at least 25% of African American homeowners and 33% of renters are spending less than 30% of income on housing cost.

**Macro-Measure:** Create public policies that support and promote housing affordability and limit financial distress.

**Micro-Measure:**
1. Hours of Advocacy in support of housing affordability;
2. The number of successful job placements that allow people to reduce their exposure to residential expenses to below 30% of income;
3. The number of people seeking foreclosure counseling who were able to remain in their current residence in satisfaction of all debts attached to the home.

#### STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

**Goal:** Provide Employment and Career Advancement for African-Americans to increase the ranks of the African American middle class and retain and grow leadership diversity in non-profits and other sectors.

**Objective:** Within a 10 year time frame, increase the numbers of leaders of color in the nonprofit sectors by 25% and the number of low-skilled workers in the labor force by 14%.

**Macro-Measure:**
1. Networking & accessing opportunities available to & for a talent pool of racially diverse candidates for board, executive, & management positions in the Baltimore-Washington region;
2. Opportunities for high level career networking;
3. Opportunities for & access to customized training & employment placement for low-wage workers;
4. Public policies that support livable wage career pathways & growth industry sectors that support career pathways;
5. Public policies that remove indirect & unintended barriers to employment opportunities & career growth.

**Micro-Measure:**
1. The number of leaders of color in board, executive, & management positions in the Baltimore-Washington region (comparable to the population);
2. The number of successful job placements in livable wage jobs with career pathways;
3. The number of African Americans in the workforce;
4. A decreased African American unemployment rate in Baltimore City and region.
**STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: HIGHER EDUCATION**

**GOAL:** Provide college readiness and increase access to opportunities to Baltimore City African American college-bound youth.

**OBJECTIVE:** Raise Baltimore’s African-American 6-year graduation rate to 50% within 10 years and increase the proportion of local African Americans with a college degree to 25%.

**MACRO-MEASURE:** Monitor the percentage of African-Americans holding bachelor’s degree and increase the number of African Americans actively pursuing a bachelor’s degree.

**MICRO-MEASURE:** 1. The rate of matriculation among those students with each passing year; 2. the proportion of students assisted who graduate within six years; 3. the number of students supported.

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**STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**GOAL:** Support the formation and success of African-American owned businesses that are associated with expanding workforces.

**OBJECTIVE:** Boost the number of African-American owned businesses by 100% over 10 years, translating to an annual growth rate of 7%.

**MACRO-MEASURE:** Examine the growth in total payroll of employees at African American owned businesses.

**MICRO-MEASURE:** 1. Increase the number of African-American owned businesses formed; 2. Increase the survival rate of African-American owned businesses supported through consultative support and assistance.

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**STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: ASSET BUILDING AND WEALTH CREATION**

**GOAL:** Broaden financial literacy to promote wealth creation through better decision-making at the household level.

**OBJECTIVE:** Reduce the proportion of African-American households in the lowest three deciles from 68% to 30% over the course of the next 10 years.

**MACRO-MEASURE:** Analyze the percent and rate of positive change of credit scores.

**MICRO-MEASURE:** 1. Increase the number of people supplied with credit counseling; 2. Increase the number of people in financial literacy programs and coursework; 3. Broadly monitor through generalized data credit score increases among African-Americans who are provided specific assistance.
Appendix: Associated Black Charities’ More in the Middle Theory of Change—Economic Parity

The More in the Middle Initiative is an economic framework to increase human capital and economic assets of key populations, specifically African Americans, in order to strengthen the economic viability of the state. The MitM Framework focuses upon transactional and transformative change.

Vision: A more economically vibrant Maryland through an equity investment of access, opportunity, and inclusion of all citizens.

Goals: RETAIN, GROW, and ATTRACT a key population – African American Middle Class – to increase the economic viability of Maryland.

More in the Middle assumes the following strategic interventions:

Homeownership and Foreclosure Prevention

Employment and Career Advancement

Higher Education
College Readiness, Access, and Completion

Business and Economic Development

Asset Building and Wealth Creation

Health (this component is also incorporated in the five economic strategies)

Will ensure an expanded African American middle class status (income of $35,000 to $75,000)

More in the Middle: A Strategy for Transactional and Transformative Change

Transactional Change: Service interventions that focus on obtaining different outcomes as a result of improving the tools, skills, and knowledge of individuals and families to positively change their specific situations

Transformative Change: Solutions that re-frame issues from a focus on “problem individuals” or “problem groups of people” to acknowledgement of how people are historically “differently placed”; a solutions-oriented focus on making systems and structures equitable. Provides for greater impact

Preconditions

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR PRECONDITIONS
Recognize and invest in asset-building strategies, including homeownership

Understand the connection between specialized training; career advancement; and increased wages

Self-investment and advancement through using access and opportunities

Re-investment through viewing volunteerism, civic participation, and advocacy as positive activities

Willingness to learn about and apply the principles of financial planning and asset creation for the next generation

ENVIRONMENTAL PRECONDITIONS
Public policies that acknowledge and eliminate unintentional structural, racialized barriers that impact economic outcomes for African Americans

Lending institutions and the business community have a readiness to help African Americans by removing institutional barriers for lending and borrowing

Employers reduce discrimination in selecting candidates or hiring; training programs; and career advancement

There is a willingness to increase racial diversity and inclusion in leadership of non-profits

Partnerships across academic institutions (middle, high and college) to promote college preparation (readiness), access, and completion

Business community is willing to share economic and business networking opportunities with African American business owners

Financial and business communities are willing to remove institutional barriers to that limit outreach to and servicing of African Americans
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHORT TERM / TRANSACTIONAL CHANGE</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE / TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE</th>
<th>LONG TERM / GOALS AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Americans are financially literate and understand the home buying process</td>
<td>African Americans will have access to affordable housing and equitable home loans</td>
<td>HOMEOWNERSHIP AND FORECLOSURE PREVENTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans will complete foreclosure counseling</td>
<td>African Americans will have access to affordable housing and equitable home loans</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Americans have increased opportunity access for professional positions through a talent pipeline and increased training opportunities for jobs in sectors with higher wage and career options</td>
<td>African American professionals will have expanded opportunities for career growth and advancement in diverse industries</td>
<td>EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans encounter fewer structural, institutional, cultural and informational barriers to career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>The percentage of existing African American residents who acquire professional and workforce ready skills and jobs with livable wages and career options will increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans access information, mentoring, leadership, and social networking opportunities</td>
<td>The percentage of African American youth completing college and post-graduate education will increase</td>
<td>HIGHER EDUCATION: COLLEGE READINESS, ACCESS, AND COMPLETION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans business owners with employees have increased access to economic and social networking opportunities for business development and capital acquisitions</td>
<td>African Americans business owners will have an access pathway to developing economic and social networking opportunities and relationships for business development</td>
<td>BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans are more financially literate and have more understanding of opportunities for growing and leveraging assets</td>
<td>African Americans practice intentional financial planning to build assets and wealth</td>
<td>ASSET BUILDING AND WEALTH CREATION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Associated Black Charities is a public foundation that facilitates the creation of measurably healthier and wealthier communities throughout the State of Maryland through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment.

With Appreciation and Thanks

Associated Black Charities extends its thanks and appreciation to:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
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