

North Star Workgroup (NSWG)
December 10, 2021

Attendees:

- Andrea Dencklau
- Greg Bellville
- Ana Clymer
- Kelli Soyer
- Kristie Oliver
- Marlo Nash

Meeting Purpose: Select a target goal/statement for the Vision Councils focus on ensuring financial stability.

Meeting Context

- The NSWG was charged, by the Vision Council, to give focused attention to the root causes that can lead to child maltreatment.
- The NSWG:
 - Determined those root causes to be housing instability and financial security.
 - Has set a “calling card” target for housing.
 - Needs to set a target for financial insecurity.

Meeting Results:

- Population-level target statement is selected for financial security.
- Progress indicator(s) is chosen for financial security.
- Action Commitments made

System Population Focus: All families and children at risk of or involved with the Iowa Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice Systems.

- Once targets are established, we believe by working with the two program populations we have identified that is going to be essential to getting us to our targets. Changing things for the two populations we have identified will help us hit the targets identified.
- If we want to work on financial security for the two program populations:
 1. Families and youth of color, ages 10 and older
 2. Families living with SUDs who have children ages birth to 10One of the activities could be for example, advocating for the federal child tax credit. This is a whole population activity to undertake but we also know that this will also help financial security of families and kids/youth in the two program populations.
 - One of the ways to do that is a population level strategy of a federal policy change. Sometimes the activities are going to be whole population because policies are often whole population or a large part of the population.
 - Sometimes we will do things very specific two families and youth of color, ages 10 and older and families living with SUDs who have children ages birth to 10. The activities are going to include both, but it is all because we are trying to make life better for those program populations.

Question: When we choose the target, should that be focused on one of the sub-populations? If you don't, don't you run the risk of then not targeting some of your strategies

or do you just make sure you are intentional about your strategies. History has been that a group states that they have an equity lens – but don't keep equity in the center. If the Vision Council is saying that we are keeping equity in the center should the target reflect that by saying we want to increase the financial security for black and brown families, for example. Rather than it being a blanket that we want to increase everyone's financial security. If we focus on a specific community than we will know that our strategies have to be specific for that community.

- Like the idea of a focus of the program populations. If we do well by a group than that lifts up everyone else.

Recommendation/Proposal: Some of the strategies will be targeted to the two program populations, but some may be more universal for everyone. To ensure equity through the Vision Council Plan, the target for financial security/stability should be focused on at least one of the sub populations that we are discussing.

- For example, increase the financial security/stability of black and brown families.
 - The intent is to get very specific because than the strategies under that will then be focused on the wealth gap and other things that impact black and brown families that don't always necessarily impact white families as much.

Housing Target Statement: By 2026, 94% of Iowa families with children are living in safe, affordable housing (race, economically disadvantaged, rural/urban)

...as measured by the Severe Housing Programs indicator. ([County Health Rankings](#))

The bullet points were behind the decision made:

- 2026 selected due to influx of American Rescue Plan funds for housing.
- Six Iowa counties have the lowest percentage of severe housing problems in the state at 6%.
- The target of "94%" was selected to set a goal of elevating every other county to the lowest occurrence of severe housing problems.
- The NSWG chose this as a "calling card" to engage a group of housing leaders and stakeholders for this work.
 - The conversation at the time – we got as far as we could get on housing without starting to confer with people in the housing space. We will have something to begin the conversation and the housing folks can tell us their thoughts such as it is impossible to do, or they have a better and target statement, and the Vision Council can decide if we want to adopt their target statement. This begins the conversation and in one sentence we can tell other people what we are trying to accomplish. It is imperfect but gets us started in the housing space.
- The target may be adjusted or changed after the NSWG becomes more informed in the housing arena.
- Most likely, several indicators will need to be tracked to have an appropriate knowledge base about what is going on with housing for families in the state.
- Part of the work of the Vision Council will be to determine the distinct housing challenges for the Program Populations:
 - Families and youth of color ages 10 & older
 - Families living with SUDs and their children, ages birth to 10

Thoughts around Housing Target Statement:

- **Recommendation:** Revise the statement so we have a starting point and a starting measure. What is 94% compared to where we are at today? How far do we have to grow and what does that mean?
 - Semantics around understanding it and the housing target statement itself does not tell us a lot.
 - How are we defining safe, affordable housing? Does it have to be drilled down? Does everyone understand what safe, affordable housing is?
 - The Severe Housing Problems indicator in the County Health Rankings database defines severe housing problems which could then define what we mean by safe, affordable housing. There are a other definitions which is why there may be multiple indicators to track.
 - In terms of having a baseline - if we use sever housing problems as an indicator, we know we can get a county baseline, so that information is available.
- If we drill down - who is most impacted by housing instability? Who is the most disadvantaged or marginalized when it comes to housing instability? There is a guess that it is black and brown communities. If we are going to look at more of the population based, then we need a different target or do we want to keep it universal. We would need to look at the data. Historically black and brown communities are extremely pushed out of housing in an alarming rate.
 - **Proposal:** We should utilize race in the Housing Target Statement.
 - The way that the Housing Target is set up now is to have a full population level target and then there would be specific work done and represented for each of the program populations. We could hold on to the whole population statement and then a section of the plan and work would be around families and youth of color. Similar for the families with SUD. Are there structural inequities there that we are going to have to address? The only hope of getting to the whole population target is if we get to the changes for the target populations. It could be a both and or the target itself could be straight on for the populations.
 - Are black and brown families disproportionately represented in child welfare and juvenile justice in substance use?
 - Not known, the last data is disproportionate data as it relates to incarceration and inversely rated to treatment access.
 - Iowa is at the top of the list of disproportionately for almost everything. It is the common denominator when it comes to outcomes. What the Vision Council could do different is make sure that race is written into the target. The barriers have to be removed for black and brown families. If race is the interwoven common denominator should this be the population to target.
 - We won't be able to hit the 94% target without specifically addressing black and brown populations because of how they are disproportionally affected. How do we set the target for the specific population and how does that get communicated with external stakeholders?
 - When we think about mental health and substance use for children and youth - the housing stability component is

important. It is a county issue. How do you build housing stock to keep up with what is necessary for affordable, safe, and stable housing for children and families when they cannot build enough homes for people that have mortgages? The property ownership for black families versus renters and all of those data points that we need to look at and are central to this conversation. There are concentrated efforts on this specific piece. There are other coalitions so where are the pieces that the Vision Council is connecting with? What can we influence in the work that we are doing with children and families? If we don't center equity in the conversation than we are focusing on everyone and everything instead of being targeted.

- Are we talking about just race equity?
 - The data is so clear about race inequity in Iowa for black and brown communities in just about everything that when we shift focus to others than it does not get addressed. It is the intersectionality of others and race. If you address racism you are going to open barriers for everyone.
 - We have disproportionately and disparately, we know what access to data we have in regard to race and ethnicity and how limited that is and then we partner that in looking at equity, including and diversity in around immigrant and refugee communities. As we are thinking about the immigrants and refugees coming to Iowa, there is not enough housing for the people that are here. There are concentrated resources and services for refugee families. There is a cultural disconnect that the agencies cannot serve the English speaking abled bodied black and brown communities. Figuring out what the target focus is will help us share what resources are available for communities, but we don't want to forget the communities that have been disproportionately impacted in our state and continue to be. Who are we talking about and what can we influence? What efforts and strategies have been put in place - every time there is a shift there are communities left behind. Housing is an issue for everyone in the community whether they are able bodied, LBGTO, black, brown, low-income, how do you continue to concentrate that, and the work continues forward. What is our lane when we know there are other systems responding to other communities' needs'? What can we influence? Can we borrow language and borrow focus, so we do not have to start from scratch? We are building

around the data that they have access to. If it is not tracked here - who is tracking on it, who is working on it and how do we connect the dots. We need to focus an equity lens on the communities we are trying to most impact and align with.

- We have had a couple of initial conversations with housing leaders. The housing community in the state is largely focused on veterans and the elderly. They noted that there is not a voice for families and there is a huge gap for housing for families, but there is not a strong voice for families according to the two housing folks that we have talked to. The Vision Council is important for lifting up families.
 - It also resonates with local strategies and efforts that have tried to figure out if issues around child wellbeing and housing stability who is working on housing them and prioritize families. Housing First: If the housing need is met do all the other things fall in line with school attendance, child well-being, etc. Programs that have been in place with a five-year waiting list of prioritizing families with children that are at risk of being involved in child welfare and juvenile court. Some of the programs have gone on the wayside because of the scarcity of housing. The gap does exist so how can we be strategically focused on children and families in a neighborhood-based home ownership model.

Financial Stability Targets offered for consideration:

- *By 2026, 96% of Iowa's families with children have income and supports for a moderate, adequate level of income.*
 - Note: This is 300% of the federal poverty level in most places. Data is available for 250% of poverty.*
 - ...as measured by Children eligible for free or reduced priced lunch (130%/185% of federal poverty level).*
 - This measures something different than child poverty.

Question: Where did the 96% come from?

- *96% selected as the inverse to the lowest percentage of children in poverty in the state by county (Dallas County is at 4%. [Dallas County Family Budget Calculator](#)); "Iowa's families with children" is selected due to the ability to collect data using the "Children in Poverty" indicator. Useful resource from Economic Policy Institute: [Family Budget Calculator](#).)*

Recommendation: Revise so there is a baseline - so we cannot measure and determine where we are starting at to know where we have to go. Using the inverse is confusing in trying to figure out a baseline.

- *By 2026, Iowa will cut child poverty by 50%.*
...as measured by Children in poverty (or child poverty)
- *By 2026, X% of families and children have a combination of income, benefits, and supports that cover their needs.*
- *By 2026, families with children have sufficient income and opportunities to build wealth (would align with United Way of Central Iowa's goal).*

Why 2026?

- American Rescue Plan funds for the child tax credit, and it also creates a set of urgency.

Recommendation: 11.9% of Children in Iowa live in poverty under 18 in related families have incomes below the poverty line¹. So, the recommendation is that 11.9% decrease by 50%.

- In 2021 - 2026, children living in poverty will decrease from 11.9% to 5%.
 - 32.3% of African American Children are in Poverty.² Highest percentage followed by Native Americans at 24.1% and Latino at 18%.
 - **Proposal:** We add race as part of the target.
 - How do we adjust it?
 - We reduce African American Child Poverty from 32.3% to X%. We would have to figure out what would be the appropriate percentage. We could start by cutting it by 50%.
- **Proposal:** Population Level, System Level, Program Level:
 - Overall goal is to reduce child poverty by 50% of baseline
 - Subgoal: Black and Brown communities: 32.3% to X%.
 - We want a bigger reduction black and brown than the overall reduction.

Question: In a state like Iowa - if you make a whole initiative about people of color do you end up with unintended consequences? Is there a way to center equity and not have it feel like it is in name only and not have people who are racist feel like they do not have to have anything to do with the project?

- We have a goal (reducing poverty for all) and then we have strategies (specifically focused on the black and brown families). The strategies are what we are going to measure and influence.
 - Because of the two program populations - SUD has not done as much around families of color in that population -
- This has been the operating idea, but if it needs to be shifted at this point - it can because the plan is not done.

Question: Do you put the black and brown communities in the target and be explicit or do you put it in the strategies and make sure you are measuring it?

- 1 member wants to be explicit because people are not. This is why it does not get addressed and why we have all the disproportionalities. However, the messaging is important, and we have to get people around of what we are saying. If we could start with targets that include race and explain the rationale that would be ideal. It depends on other Vision Council members and are partners - the other people we are inviting to the table that we are actually asking to do the work.
 - In the CAMHI4Kids and Iowa ACEs 360 research - it is advised not to say it is all of our responsibility to take care of these kids because that can be skewed to

¹ <https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/iowa-2018-report/>

² <https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/iowa-2018-report/>

socialism. A person could lose 50% of legislators on how information is presented.

- It feels like an all lives matters vs Black Lives Matter conversation. Do we lose people if our main goal is that specific? We have to focus on the inequities. If we are not focusing on it, we are not doing it. If our main goal is to reduce by 50% and our subgoals are reduce black and brown communities by 90% and Caucasian by 5% and that gets us to our 50%.
- The way that we say it has to be effective. We have to be certain about our language. We want all kids to do better but black and brown kids have the highest hill to climb. Eliminating the barriers for there kids will help all kids.
- If the goal statement gets the door slammed in our face 50% of the time, we are not going to be effective.
- Nothing is moving the needle right now. We have to lead with solutions. People get overwhelmed with all the bad things that have happened.

Consensus: Cut child poverty as the indicator for financial stability.

Proposal: Present something that has race equity at the center and let the broader Vision Council have the conversation.

- By 2026, Iowa will cut African American (black children) child poverty reduced by 50%.

The other highest disproportionate group is our indigenous kids. Are we missing something by leaving them out and just focusing on the African American Community? In addition, some data shows that Hispanic kids are off the charts in Iowa compared to other race groups.

- This is why we have to be clear why we choose the African American cohort. As long as the strategies themselves are targeted than one member will not drop off. If we do not do that one member noted that we just fold it in.

Next Steps: Doodle Poll for North Star Outcome Workgroup