

# ESPRI

FEBRUARY 2018

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

BUFFALO EMPIRE STATE  
POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVE

## Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI)

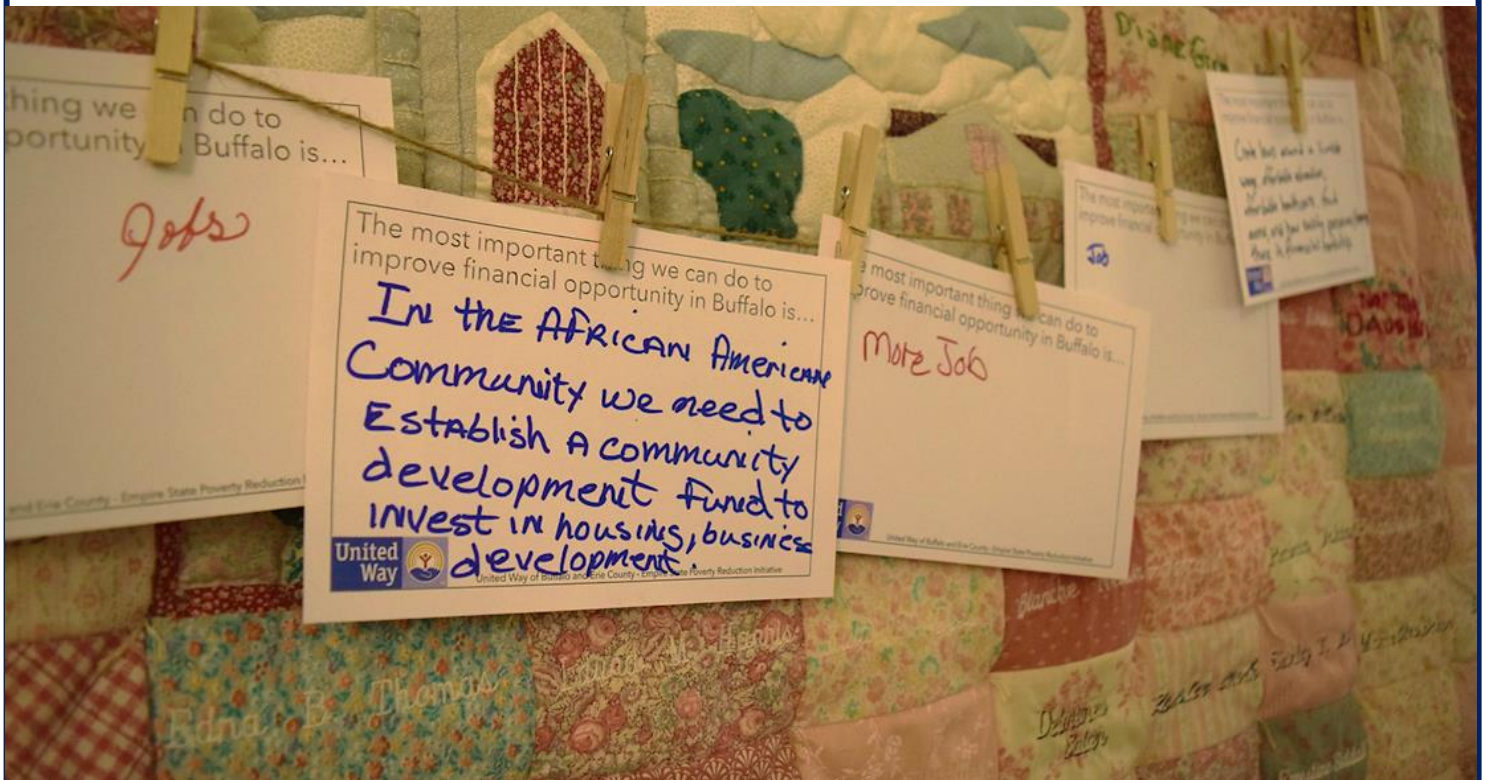
### The Community Speaks

Over 900 people took our survey this summer and reported overwhelmingly that financial hardship, jobs & employment, housing, education, and training were the most pressing challenges for individuals and families living in poverty. The community also mentioned transportation, health & wellness, and childcare as prevalent issues to overcome for those who struggle to meet the needs of their families.

The Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative is committed to connecting individuals to better paying jobs through education, training, and ensuring success at all stages of a job search, including providing supportive services to reduce barriers to employment for families living in financial hardship.

In addition to connecting stakeholders and consumers to an integrated workforce system in our region, the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative will continue to support the work of the Racial Equity Roundtable by advocating for policy and legislative changes to improve the lives of City of Buffalo residents.

Together with our partners from private industry, the faith community, government, and the not for profit sector, we pledge to work together to showcase the talent of our workforce and to help improve the collective condition of our community for a better, more prosperous tomorrow for generations to come.



# 2017 a Year in Review

Quarter 1  
Jan, Feb,  
March

- The City of Buffalo is one of 16 communities to receive funds for the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI); Mayor Byron Brown designates WNY elected officials to be part of the ESPRI Steering Committee
- The United Way of Buffalo and Erie County is selected as the Convener for the grant and The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo is named Co-Convener
- ESPRI Task Force is assembled to represent community leaders from all sectors, including city residents living in financial hardship

Quarter 2  
April, May,  
June

- ESPRI Taskforce meets monthly to assess community needs and develop a plan to address financial hardship in the City of Buffalo
- The ESPRI Task Force is focused on research and evidence based practice
- A community awareness campaign begins to inform partners and stakeholders of the ESPRI mission
- "Community Conversations on Poverty" launches to get direct feedback from residents living in poverty and financial hardship
- Pop-up events, community forums, and surveys are conducted to better understand the needs and concerns of city residents

Quarter 3  
July, Aug,  
Sept

- Community Outreach and Engagement Report is published
- Racial Equity Training for Taskforce and Steering Committee members takes place
- The Taskforce begins evaluation of major themes raised in the community assessment
- AmeriCorps VISTA Member Joins the ESPRI initiative

Quarter 4  
Oct, Nov, Dec

- Taskforce forms workgroups to review evidence based models for proposed Phase Two Implementation Plan
- The ALICE population is identified as the main focus for the ESPRI initiative
- Grant writing team is formed to develop the Phase II plan to reduce financial hardship
- ESPRI Phase II Implementation Plan is submitted to the state for approval

## The Queen City in Action

### *Community Outreach Events*

In the summer of 2017, ESPRI conducted pop-up events and community forums across Buffalo requesting community members to report their most pressing needs and seeking recommendations for changes. Over 900 Surveys were collected during the research and data gathering process. All of the work ESPRI has done so far is based on responses gathered during these events.



# Community Outreach and Engagement Report

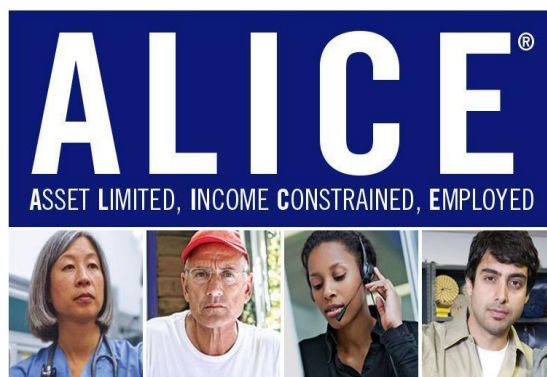
## Community Outreach Findings

- More than 40% of respondents listed financial hardship (45%) and/or jobs and employment (43%) as the two most pressing challenges for people in their community; the next most common responses were housing (27%) and education/training (20%).
- When asked to identify root causes of financial hardship, respondents named training & education, jobs & employment, and money & financial issues as the top three root causes.
- In naming barriers to work, 26% of respondents in households with incomes of \$0 - \$14,999 and 33% of responses earning \$15,000-\$24,999 ranked transportation as a barrier to work more frequently than any other factor.
- 17% of households with the lowest incomes reported the highest challenges of balancing work and children.
- More than 1 in 6 respondents from households earning less than \$15,000 per year reported turning down, quitting, or being fired from a job because they were unable to afford childcare, or they lacked regular childcare. Respondents earning between, \$15,000 - \$50,000, reported similar challenges.

## United Way ALICE Report

### 60% of City of Buffalo Residents live in Financial Hardship

- Financial hardship affects those who live above the Federal poverty line but below a livable wage
- Financial hardship affects families disproportionately in Erie County: 66% of Hispanics, 64% of African Americans, 46% of Asian Americans, and 35% of Whites



- The United Way ALICE Report classifies those living in financial hardship as Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed people

# Upcoming Community Events

Free Tax preparation from January - March 2018



**The only certainties are death and free taxes.**

Get tips on filing for free.



- If you earn below \$66,000 annually you can file your taxes for FREE @ <https://www.myfreetaxes.com/>
- Please contact 887-2775 for additional information on free tax prep.



## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Baby Shower

April 2nd to May 10th, 2018

- United Way is helping Buffalo & Erie County's mothers and babies get a healthy start to their new chapter in life by providing them with vital baby supplies. For the cost of an average baby shower gift, we can shower these mothers with diapers, wipes, sleep sacks, digital thermometers and more!
- For more information on the Community Baby Shower check out the link <https://www.uwbec.org/babyshower>

## The ESPRI Team

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