

EAST TENNESSEE COLLABORATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



United Way
Greater Knoxville



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

United Way of Greater Knoxville's (UWGK) East Tennessee Collaborative (ETC) program was created to help families overcome hurdles to reach financial independence. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, most people born into poverty live their entire life stuck in poverty. This is not because they lack motivation or work ethic but due to a system that does not support achievement of self-sufficiency. ETC is pairing the power of relationship with financial support so families have what they need to make a positive and lasting change.

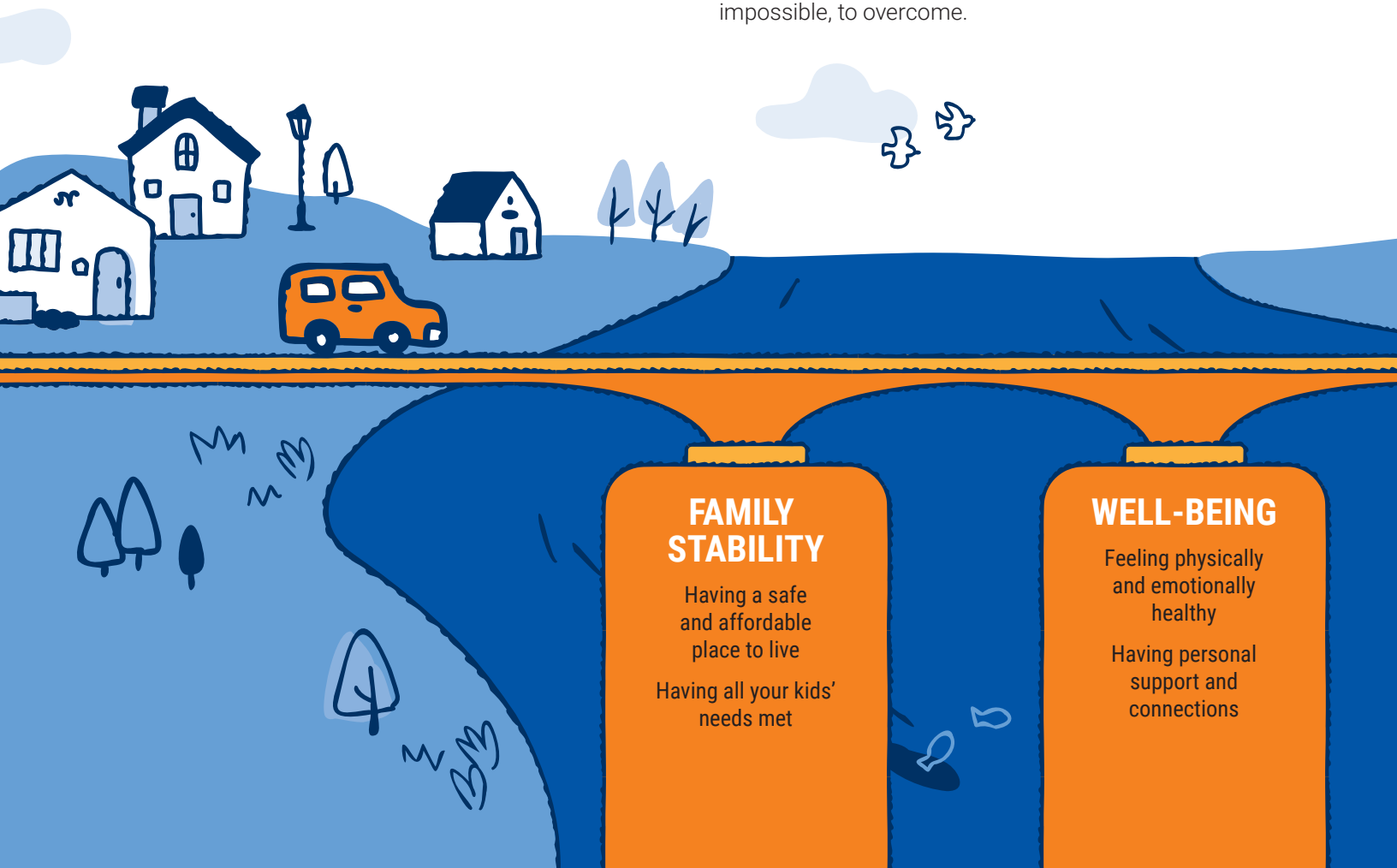
RELATIONSHIP-BASED MENTORSHIP

Each ETC participant is paired with a Mobility Mentor who helps them create a personalized pathway to success. Each plan is participant-led and focused on their unique situation and goals.

ETC utilizes EMPATH's **Bridge to Self-Sufficiency**[®], a comprehensive approach to upward economic mobility focusing on family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, employment and career development. This trauma-informed framework supports families holistically to overcome the physical and emotional hardships of poverty.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

People striving to build a brighter future for themselves and their family often struggle to surpass what is called the *benefits cliff*. This is the point of income at which people are no longer eligible for government assistance to help them make ends meet. Often when families reach this point, even though they are earning more money than they have been, the sudden lack of assistance creates financial strain that is difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.



FAMILY STABILITY

Having a safe and affordable place to live

Having all your kids' needs met

WELL-BEING

Feeling physically and emotionally healthy

Having personal support and connections

ETC offers various kinds of financial supports to assist people on their journey to success. When participants are facing the benefits cliff, ETC is there to help. When participants need financial support to enhance their life circumstances and help take their success to the next level, ETC is there. Participants can receive financial support for transportation, housing, legal fees, food, education, childcare and more.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

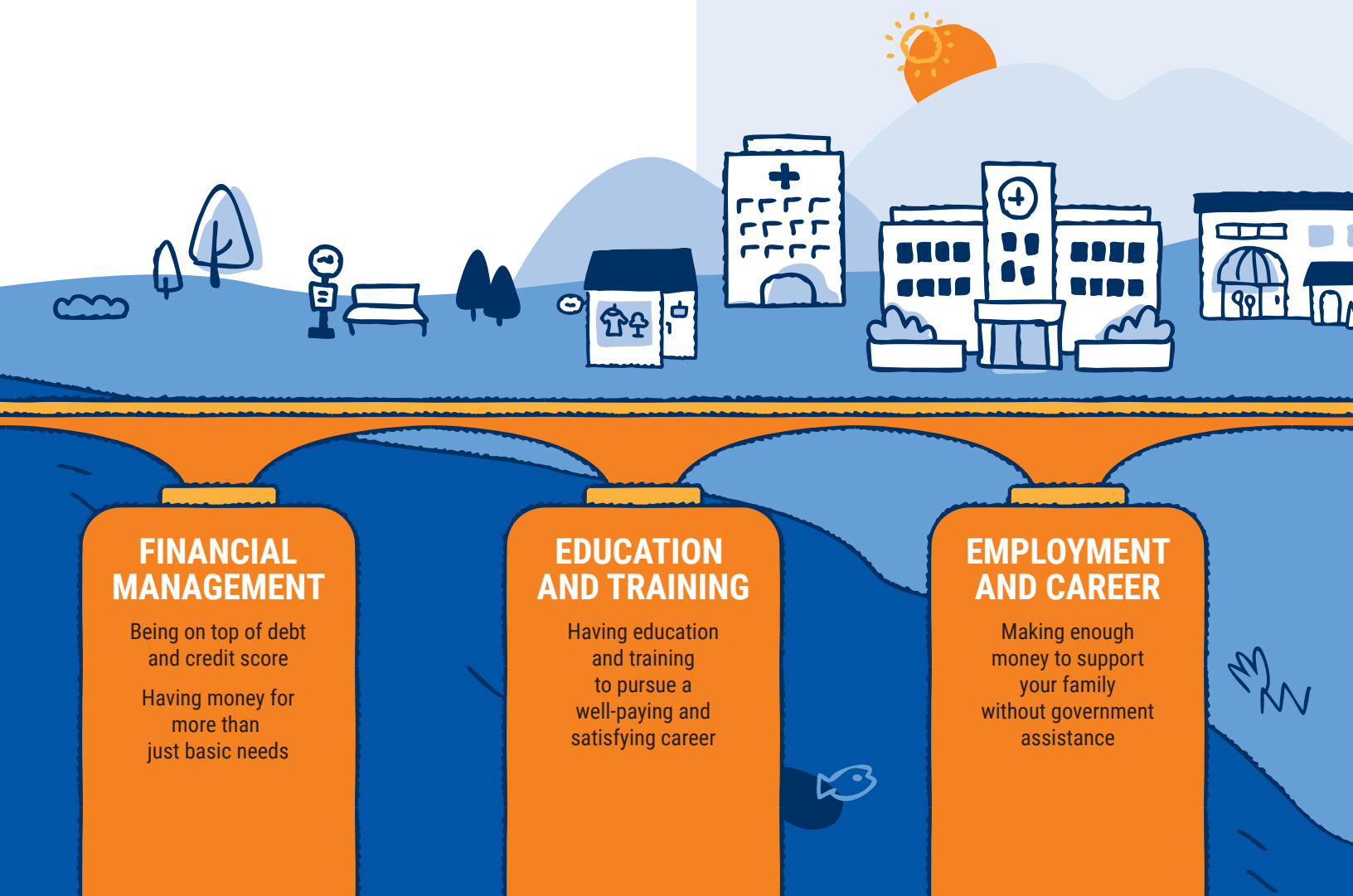
UWGK is dedicated to integrating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) principles into every facet of our work. With ETC, our objective is to establish equity in processes, access and benefits. This is guided by the implementation of a comprehensive DEI Framework. To ensure inclusivity, ETC has incorporated a feedback loop in programming. We are actively listening to participant voices and addressing discrepancies in services. By leveraging both qualitative and quantitative data, our team will work to continuously learn, adapt and evolve over time.

HAVE YOU MET ALICE?

ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. This represents the growing number of families that are living above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but are still unable to afford the basics of housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare and technology.

In Knox County, **13 percent** of people earn below the FPL while another **26 percent** are considered ALICE.

That means 39 percent of our Knox County neighbors cannot make ends meet on their income alone.



MEET OUR PARTNERS

It takes a village to make a difference. Partnerships are the key to all of United Way of Greater Knoxville's (UWGK) work. Each of our East Tennessee Collaborative (ETC) partner organizations hosts one or more Mobility Mentors on their staff to work with families. By spreading the work across organizations, families are able to find the individualized support that fits their needs. Together, we are building a network of resources to lift up our community.

YMCA OF EAST TENNESSEE

The YMCA works to put Christian principles into practice to build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all. The YMCA joined ETC because of the new opportunities for growth it would bring the people they serve. Through partnership with ETC, the YMCA has added new ways to support families and the community as a whole.



UNITED WAY OF GREATER KNOXVILLE

UWGK is part of United Way Worldwide, the largest charitable organization in the world. Our mission is to create an equitable community through partnerships, impact and commitment to transformation. As the backbone organization of ETC, this work aligns with our role as supporters, funders, conveners, innovators and advocates. With over 100 years of impacting our community, we are proud to be the problem-solvers actively working to create a community where all our Knoxville neighbors can thrive.

CENTRO HISPANO DE EAST TENNESSEE

Centro Hispano services Latinx people in East Tennessee to promote empowerment and civic participation through education, workforce development, youth and family engagement and community-strengthening initiatives. By partnering with ETC, Centro Hispano has improved their capacity to work directly with clients and collaborate with other local organizations.





ywca

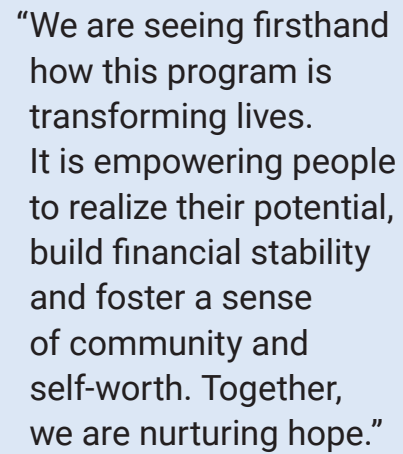
YWCA KNOXVILLE & THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. As an ETC partner, the YWCA has been able to provide more individuals in need of holistic support with economic and workforce development resources to help them overcome barriers to success.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Boys & Girls Clubs enable young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Being part of ETC has enabled the Boys & Girls Clubs to equip families with the skills and resources necessary to help them reach lasting economic success. By supporting parents, more children receive opportunities for long-term success.



“We are seeing firsthand how this program is transforming lives. It is empowering people to realize their potential, build financial stability and foster a sense of community and self-worth. Together, we are nurturing hope.”

Charles F. Lomax Jr.,
President & CEO of KAUL



KNOXVILLE AREA URBAN LEAGUE

Knoxville Area Urban League (KAUL) is committed to enabling African Americans, other minority groups and the underserved to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights. Joining ETC has allowed KAUL to provide additional resources to their new and existing programs and increase their capacity to empower the community and change lives.

MEET OUR

FAMILIES & MENTORS



ETC participants, Dylan and Savanna with their two children

ETC

AT A GLANCE



SPRING 2022

United Way of Greater Knoxville was awarded \$25M for the ETC program.



FALL 2022

ETC formed initial partnerships.



WINTER 2022

Families began enrolling in ETC.

In the first year of the grant, East Tennessee Collaborative (ETC) enrolled **218 families** across Knox, Blount and Anderson counties. This equated to **294 adults** and **498 children** benefiting from the program. An overwhelming majority of these families have been women (**97 percent**) and single-parent households (**86 percent**).

Each family has been paired with a Mobility Mentor from a partner organization that aligns with their needs and objectives. Together, they are dedicated to pursuing their goals.

MEET ETC PARTICIPANTS, DYLAN & SAVANNA

Over the past few years, Dylan and Savanna have turned their life around. They were homeless and their two kids were in foster care. They worked hard to find jobs and get their kids back, but without an adequate safety net, they were living in a state of constant fear that one small setback would ruin everything. Since joining ETC, they have found new hope and possibilities. Their mentor has helped them create a budget to pay off debt, secure better paying jobs, advocate for their kids' healthcare needs and plan for a brighter future.

Read the full story at uwgk.org/dylan-and-savanna

MEET ETC PARTICIPANT, RONNISHA

Ronnisha has been resilient through life's challenges. As a single mom, she has worked diligently to care for her family and has pushed through hard circumstances to achieve many milestones for herself and her children. Ronnisha joined ETC to get help finding housing. After getting settled in her new home, she now works with her mentor on long-term goals. Alongside her mentor, Ronnisha is pursuing her master's degree, working through chronic health issues and learning to celebrate small wins along the way.

Read the full story at uwgk.org/ronnisha

MEET MOBILITY MENTOR, DONNA

Donna has dedicated her life to helping others. With a background in social work and psychology, she has spent her career advocating for health, education and financial stability. As a Mobility Mentor, Donna works with 26 families, creating personalized pathways for each of them on their journey to success. She helps families feel empowered and ready to take charge of their lives. Donna helps families find success by setting up small action steps that make the big goal feel less daunting. She believes that, with ETC, anyone can change their trajectory.

Read the full story at uwgk.org/donna



SPRING 2023

100 families had enrolled in ETC.



SUMMER 2023

ETC voted to add new partnerships for 2024.



FALL 2023

ETC hosted EMPATH's regional summit on collaboration.



WINTER 2023

Over 200 families enrolled and \$330K of specific aid was deployed to ETC families.

YEAR ONE

OUTCOMES

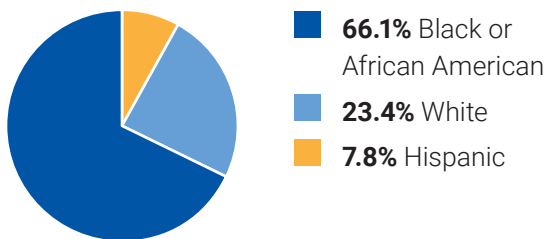
Alongside their mentor, each East Tennessee Collaborative (ETC) participant develops unique, individualized SMART goals using EMPATH's **Goal Action Plans**. These goals align with their desired program outcomes. In Year One, ETC participants created **544 Goal Action Plans** that led to improvements in employment rates, educational advancement, housing and more.

DEMOGRAPHICS

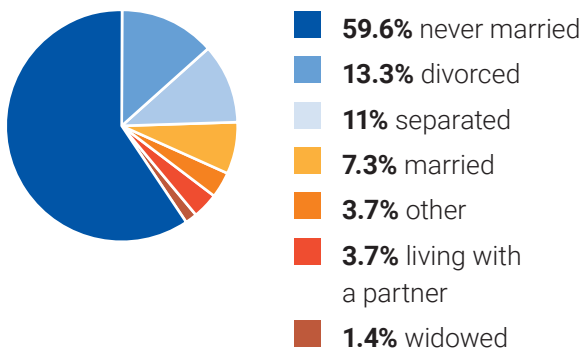
With **218 families** enrolled in Year One, ETC has an impressive retention rate of **85 percent**. By approaching the work with DEI in mind, ETC has been able to reach historically underserved communities.

As ETC expands partnerships with new organizations in additional counties, we are excited to reach a more expansive population.

RACIAL MAKEUP OF PARTICIPANTS

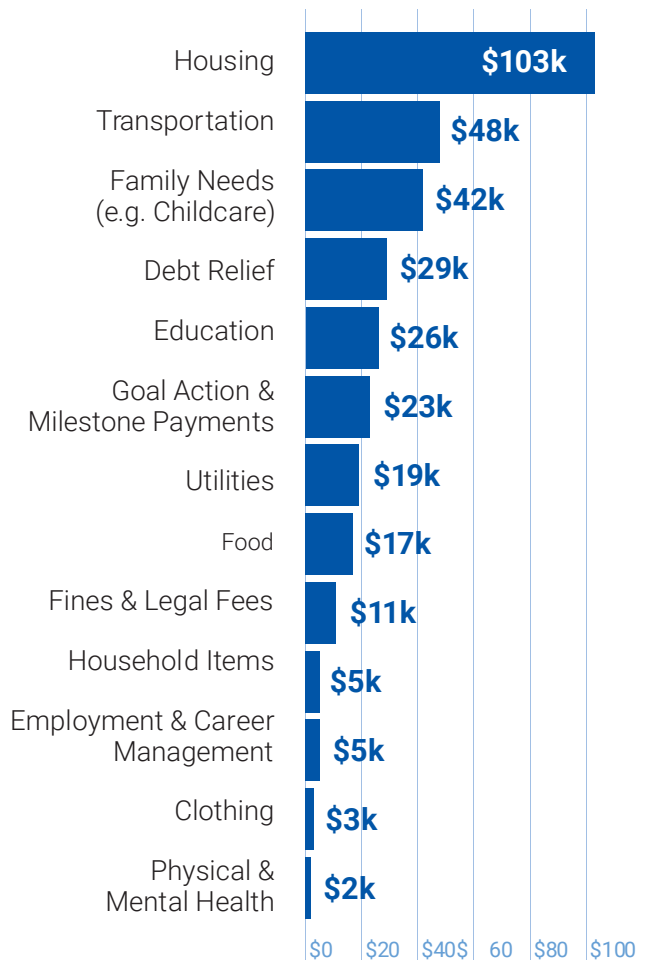


MARITAL STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS



OUTCOMES RELATED TO DOLLARS (AID)

In Year One, ETC distributed **\$332,279** in aid to participants based on their specific needs and goals. These dollars went toward resources such as housing, transportation, debt relief, education, utilities, food and more.



According to a satisfaction survey, **95.5 percent** of participants reported that the financial support was very helpful in reaching their goals.

91%

According to a satisfaction survey, **91 percent** of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel hopeful about their future, they have more skills to advocate for themselves, they have a better understanding of where to access support and they have learned about new community resources that they can utilize.

BRIDGE TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY® RESULTS

Integral to EMPATH's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® is tracking progress across the model's pillars: family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, employment and career development.

ETC families complete the Bridge assessment as part of the intake process. Every 90 days, the assessment is readministered to participating families to measure progress. The data demonstrates improvement in total Bridge scores for more than two out of every three participants (**69 percent**). Overall, Bridge scores increased by an average of **5.2 percent** with the greatest improvement in well-being. This finding indicates that ETC is successfully helping families develop a system of support and improved physical and mental health.

Another remarkable result is the decline in unemployment. At the time of admission into the ETC program, **24.5 percent** of individuals were unemployed. For ETC participants who have been in the program for six months or longer, the unemployment rate has dropped to **12.8 percent**.



FAMILY STABILITY

Score Increase:

+1.1

WELL-BEING

Score Increase:

+1.7

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Score Increase:

+0.9

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Score Increase:

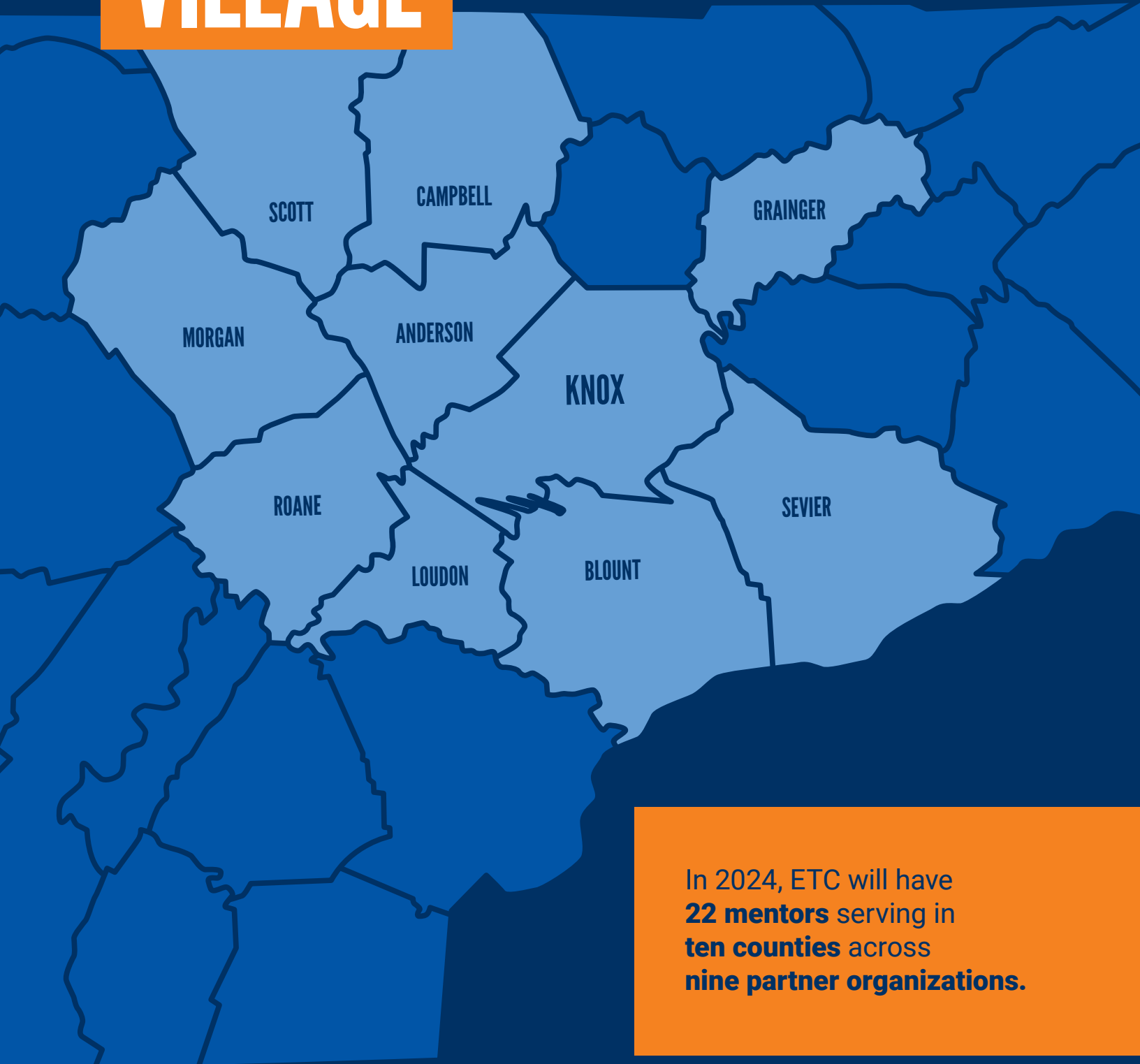
+0.7

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER

Score Increase:

+0.9

GROWING OUR VILLAGE



In 2024, ETC will have **22 mentors** serving in **ten counties** across **nine partner organizations**.

United Way of Greater Knoxville (UWGK) has big goals for East Tennessee Collaborative (ETC) in 2024. We will continue supporting families, growing partnerships and creating new and engaging opportunities for program participants. We will also work towards expanding further into East Tennessee to reach more eligible community members.



HELPING MORE FAMILIES

ETC enrolled **218 families** in our first year. Our goal is to reach 600 families by June 2024. UWGK's marketing team is compiling testimonials, creating new marketing materials and developing a communications toolkit for our partners. These new tools will allow us to create consistent messaging and use our partners' networks and platforms to expand our reach.



FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

ETC will continue developing new partnerships and adding Mobility Mentors. As we work to get more families involved and increase our reach in the community, we will prioritize expansion into more marginalized communities. As of January 2024, four additional partners have been onboarded for the upcoming fiscal year, including: United Way of Anderson County, Catholic Charities of East Tennessee, Good Neighbors of Blount County and Girls Inc. of Tennessee Valley.



SEEKING LEGISLATIVE EXTENSION

Due to delays in rollout across the state, ETC is working with the other six Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative grantees to seek a no-cost fourth year extension. If approved, this extension will provide each grantee with more time to allocate funds effectively, maximizing impact on participants and improving the return on investment for taxpayer dollars.



DEVELOPING A WORKFORCE PLACEMENT NETWORK

True self-sufficiency relies on sustainable-wage careers. This enables families to maintain financial independence free from government benefits.

In 2024, ETC aims to involve business partners in building a supportive community for people striving for self-sufficiency. By leveraging existing partnerships and strategically collaborating with corporate entities, ETC intends to create a pathway connecting participants with local employers offering stable, well-paying job opportunities. Companies collaborating with ETC will enjoy improved access to highly skilled applicants dedicated to personal and professional advancement, actively seeking long-term career prospects.

Real change happens when we Unite for Change.

Join our growing network of organizations, businesses, government advocates and community members working to create a supportive community where everyone can thrive.

Visit uwgk.org/etc to see how you can join the village and be part of the solution today!





MANY THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



of Tennessee Valley



Knoxville Area
Urban League



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East Tennessee Collaborative is a part of a study funded by the Tennessee Department of Human Services which is being conducted to determine how these pilot programs help people improve their economic well-being. During the study, all new eligible applicants will be randomly selected into one of two/three groups that receive a different mix of program services.