

Upward Momentum

Economic Mobility for All

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Upward Momentum launches to increase economic mobility in Missouri

Philanthropists aim to work together with communities throughout the state to address the root causes of generational economic decline.

ST. LOUIS (August 29, 2024) – Today, Upward Momentum announces both its launch as an initiative and its initial philanthropic investments. The initiative was created to bring philanthropic dollars together with community-led organizations to address the often-neglected critical causes of generational poverty. The initiative is dedicated to increasing economic mobility for all people through ensuring access to economic success, self-determination, and belonging regardless of race, gender, geography, or background.

Upward Momentum is rooted in the statistic that a child born in the United States today has a less than 50% chance of earning more than their parents by adulthood. This is especially true in Missouri where the median income is already \$8,000 below the national average, and our job growth between now and 2030 is projected to be less than 1%. Across our state, the barriers to economic mobility are increasing in rural and urban communities. This initiative seeks solutions to poverty that can work everywhere, from the small towns and unincorporated areas across the state to big cities like St. Louis and Kansas City.

Upward Momentum is funded at its inception by foundational investments from the Clever Little Girl Foundation, the James S. McDonnell Foundation, and Missouri Foundation for Health totaling \$30 million in Missouri-based commitments. Additional investors are expected. Together, these founding philanthropists believe that we all have much more to gain by working together to forge solutions to some of the toughest challenges Missouri communities face.

Upward Momentum connects philanthropists, experts, and community leaders to build consensus and then invest in organizations that are demonstrating a transformative impact in their communities on a small scale and helping these organizations expand their reach and impact. The initiative operates in three strategic pillars designed to drive economic mobility: caring for our families, navigating work, and bridging divides.

The first investments are:

- Caring for our families: A \$1,075,811 investment over two years in [Kids Win Missouri](#) to extend critical work being done in Kansas City, St. Louis, and other communities to counties throughout the state to help get more childcare seats so parents can go to work and kids can have a safe environment in which to learn and grow.

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- Navigating work: A \$839,647 investment over two years in the [Missouri Women's Business Center](#), a program of Central Missouri Community Action, to expand its microlending project for small entrepreneurs and help people in struggling places get businesses off the ground and start creating good jobs in their communities.
- Bridging divides: An open call that will be announced later this fall to invite community-led and community-driven organizations throughout the state to propose ways that they can work collectively to build sustainable impact for economic mobility.

Visit www.UpwardMo.org to learn more and to sign up for email updates to stay informed about the open call.

In a joint statement, the founders said, “This collaboration will drive transformation in economic mobility – the freedom to achieve economic success, power and autonomy, and belonging regardless of race, gender, geography, or background – now and for continued generations.”

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Upward Momentum is a Missouri-based philanthropic fund and collaborative for philanthropists and community members who are investing in bold, transformative interventions and partnerships that aim to address systemic inequities and improve opportunity for greater economic mobility for all.