



PROJECT SUMMIT

MARCH 25, 2022



**Working together to lift
children and families out
of generational poverty.**

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A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a white top, is speaking at a dark wooden podium. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background is a light blue gradient.

OUR MISSION

Inspiring and equipping families, individuals, and communities to prosper.

WELCOME TO THE
TANF COLLABORATION
KICK-OFF

OUR VISION

Prosperity for all.

Map of Regional Service Hubs



Prosperity Coaches will be assigned to hubs throughout the region to serve the families of the Upper Cumberland. These coaches will have flexible hours and be completely mobile to meet families where they are on their pathway to prosperity.

EACH COLOR
REPRESENTS A
REGIONAL SERVICE
HUB WITHIN THE
UPPER CUMBERLAND.




WHAT HAPPENS FROM A \$25M INVESTMENT?

- Prosperity Pathways & Prosperity Coaching
- Circles Support
- Two-Generations/Whole Family Approach
- Prosperity System
- Multi-Sector Collaborative
- Connecting Human Services & Economic Development
- Benefit Cliff Mitigation
- Accountability for Moving Families Out of Poverty
- Changing the Narrative & Increasing Community Engagement
- Research & Development

Who We Are

Forged from the collective, region-wide mission to lift children and families out of generational poverty, Empower Upper Cumberland – also known as Empower UC – is comprised of key community and regional partners including Highlands Economic Partnership (HEP), Upper Cumberland Labor and Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB), Tennessee Tech University (TTU), Cookeville Regional Charitable Foundation (CRCF), and Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD) as well as community members.

Led by Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA), the designated backbone organization, Empower UC is tasked with serving the most vulnerable populations of the 14-county Upper Cumberland region which includes the counties of Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White with a core objective of lifting 1,600 children and their families out of generational poverty by 2025.



**“THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS
FRAGMENTED. THERE ARE
LOTS OF PROGRAMS, BUT
THEY DON'T TALK OR
COORDINATE SERVICES.”**

- Family Advisory Board Member

Partnerships & Core Partners

Our partnerships are vital to achieving our goal of increasing the prosperity of the Upper Cumberland region. Leaders from higher education, state departments, the justice system, regional employers, and families with lived experience of poverty have been invited to/participate in the Empower UC Initiative. The Planning Team has established six committees, each focusing on core areas of the planning grant collaboration's structure.

The partners for the Planning Team and the established workgroups to include input from Family Advisory Board members and Empower Partners, plus members from Cookeville Regional Charitable Foundation, Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Board and American Job Centers, Tennessee Technological University, Highlands Economic Partnership, Upper Cumberland Development District, Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, ETransx, Circles USA, CE Lab, Envine Solutions, WCTE - PBS, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Small Business Development Center at UCDD, and The Biz Foundry.



This collaboration focuses heavily on developing interagency coordination so that not only families of our region have more aligned services, but the staff administering the programs have a clear understanding of the services available as well, including universal onboarding that will provide new members of the collaborative with information about the services provided and the structure of the continuum of care and poverty alleviation system.

Tennessee Tech University Research Team

The Empower UC Collaboration would like to extend special thanks to the Tennessee Tech University Research Team for their assistance with data collection and compilation for Empower Upper Cumberland: Vincent Okot, Gideon Eduah, Luke Anderson, Bobbi Severt, Daniel Sukowski (undergraduate), and Kinsey Simone (Ph.D. student).

Target Number of Research Subjects by Sector

	Community	Human Services	Education	Industry	LI Families	Total
Meeting Attendees	30		15	20	15	80
Surveys	100		50	50	100	300
Focus Group Attendees	15		15	15	30	75
One on One Interviews	10		5	10	10	35
Total	0		85	95	165	500

Actual Number of Research Subjects by Sector

	Community	Human Services	Education	Industry	LI Families	Total
Meeting Attendees	30		17	22	19	88
Surveys	63		87	46	104	300
Focus Group Attendees	50		24	29	35	138
One on One Interviews	2		4	7	4	17
Total	0		132	104	166	547

Core Partner Leadership



Scott Miller
Founder
Circles USA



Philip Oldham
President
Tennessee Tech
University



John Bell
Executive Director
Cookeville Regional
Medical Center
Charitable Foundation



Mark Farley
Executive Director
Upper Cumberland
Development District &
Upper Cumberland
Human Resource
Agency



Amy New
President & CEO
Highlands Economic
Partnership



Becky Hull
Executive Director
Upper Cumberland
Local Workforce
Development Board

Planning Teams & Leadership

The Empower UC Collaboration Planning Team established workgroups to develop the TANF Opportunity Act Pilot Proposal. These workgroups met more than 65 times for a combined total of more than 350 hours during the 90-day planning grant period. Without the hard work, dedication, and leadership of these workgroups, the submission of this proposal would not be possible.



Empower UC Collaboration Director | Megan Spurgeon



Cost Benefit Analysis | Heather Thomas, *Team Lead*

Team members: Richard Taylor, Megan Spurgeon, Jeannie Chaffin, Sean Monday, John Bell, and Scott Miller.



Grant Writing | Janet Carl, *Team Lead*

Team members: Jeannie Chaffin, Stephanie Myers, Sarah Crichlow, Amy Mayberry, and Kamatara Johnson.



Logic Model | Jeannie Chaffin, *Team Lead*

Team members: Megan Spurgeon, Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Balinda Westmoreland, Mark Farley, Richard Taylor, Stephanie Myers, and Ginger Stout.

Needs & Gaps (Research & Analysis) | Tony Whiteaker, *Team Lead*

Team members: Evan Smith, Ryan Barnhart, Michael Aikens, Becky Hull, and Sarah Crichlow.



Presentation | Lehra Trobaugh, *Team Lead*

Team members: Megan Spurgeon, Mark Farley, Michael Aikens, Jeff Brown, Tyler Asher, and Sarah Crichlow.



Social Marketing & Strategic Communication |

Amye Anderson, *Team Lead*

Team members: Macey Korth, Rebecca Smith, John Bell, Jeremiah Miller, Amy New, and Janet Carl.



Empower UC Collaboration Staff

**Family Engagement
Specialist**
Balinda Westmoreland



Data Specialist
Evan Smith


Family Advisory Board & Focus Groups

The Empower Upper Cumberland Family Advisory Board was established as the driving force behind the services and strategies of Empower Upper Cumberland. The Family Advisory Board meets weekly on Thursday nights at the Imagine Foundry in Cookeville, TN, where childcare is provided for the families participating in the meetings. The families serving on this board are currently receiving/eligible for services or have recently journeyed out of poverty.

The board has approved several key components of the project so far, including the collaboration's name, mission, and vision. The naming convention for families being served and those that are serving families. The system structure for service delivery.

Additionally, the Family Advisory Board has reviewed the results of the research conducted by the Needs and Gaps workgroup and has provided additional insight on system barriers and developing processes to overcome those barriers. The insight that the Empower Upper Cumberland Family Advisory Board has provided has been instrumental in the development of our new system of services for the region.





**I DROPPED OUT IN THE 10TH
GRADE. IF THERE WOULD HAVE
BEEN A PROGRAM THAT
FOCUSED ON MY FAMILY, I
MAY HAVE NEVER DONE THAT.**

Understanding the Issues

Empower UC, alongside the Putnam County School System, held a Bridges out of Poverty and Simulation Day on Feb. 23. An estimated 80 staff and individuals representing a variety of Upper Cumberland community partners were present for the training and simulation event.

These informative sessions are designed to immerse participants in the challenges individuals with lived experience face daily while providing tools and resources on how to bridge existing gaps in services and support.

All staff in the Empower UC Collaboration will receive regular training on ACEs, understanding poverty, cultural sensitivity, serving individuals with disabilities, and other necessary areas that will benefit the services delivered through this continuum of care.

Empower UC wishes to thank Cindy Putman and Jackie Reynolds for facilitating the event and providing resources and tools to help our team and community partners better understand and address the issues at hand.





Cindy Putman

Cynthia (Cindy) Putman is a nationally recognized educational specialist and storyteller with 30 years of experience connecting stakeholders in communities. Putman is a certified Bridges Out of Poverty and (ACES) Adverse Childhood Experiences trainer.

Jackie Reynolds

Jackie Reynolds is the Family Engagement Coordinator for the Putnam County School System, ensuring the provision of full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators, and community partners to promote children's learning and development.



“ONE SINGLE OPPORTUNITY GAVE MY FAMILY THE CHANCE TO CHANGE OUR LIFE. WE'VE BEEN WORKING HARD TO KEEP CLIMBING AND HELP OTHERS SINCE THEN. PEOPLE IN POVERTY NEED HOPE AND THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT THOSE HELPING THEM UNDERSTAND THEM.”

Projected Project Impacts

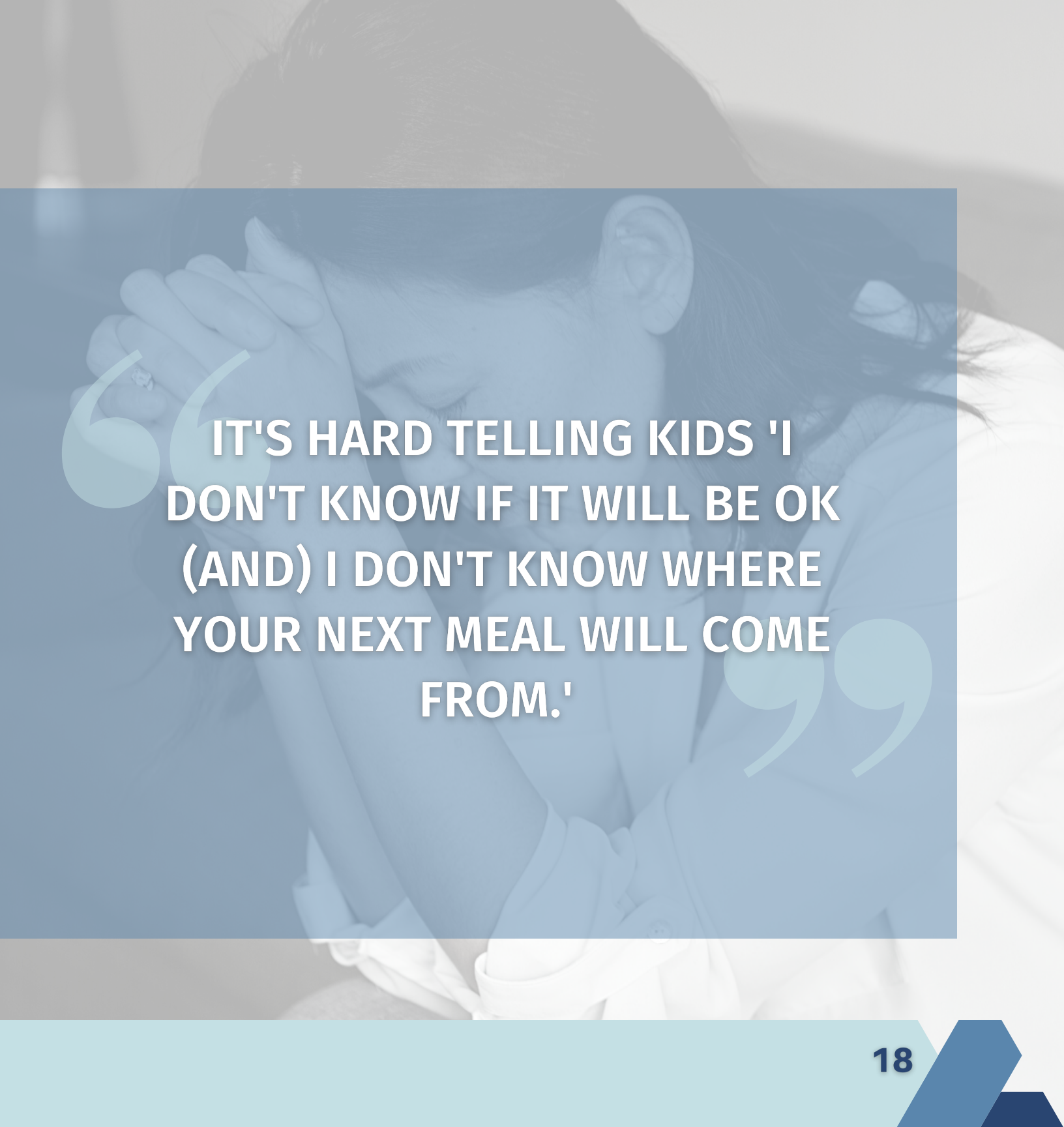
The Upper Cumberland region is rich with resources for the families who live here. These resources, however, are fragmented, unaligned, and only available at set times and days that do not always meet the needs of the families we are serving.

During the most recent Family Advisory Board meeting, a single mother of two shared with us that she has often had to go without services she is eligible for because she couldn't afford to take time off of work to bring in the necessary paperwork to prove that she is eligible.

These are the exact types of transactional issues that are currently present in our region that we intend to change. A solution posed by the Empower UC Family Advisory Board was to have office hours outside of the typical 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. hours.

Based on their suggestion, the Prosperity Coaches that are being written into this new system will have alternate work hours on a 9:80 schedule that allows them to work outside of typical office hours. This approach will allow Prosperity Coaches to interface with staff from other agencies as well as the clients in a schedule that meets everyone's needs.





**“IT'S HARD TELLING KIDS 'I
DON'T KNOW IF IT WILL BE OK
(AND) I DON'T KNOW WHERE
YOUR NEXT MEAL WILL COME
FROM.'”**

This is just one example of interagency coordination that will occur in the newly established Poverty Alleviation System of the region.

Additional coordination will occur through shared system agreements so that we are able to interface with one another's case management platforms. Currently, the social services system in the Upper Cumberland utilizes more than nine different platforms that do not "speak" to one another. In order for a new system to work, we must first ensure that all partners are able to adequately communicate, and responsible sharing of information will be key to that success.

By the Numbers



16%

of people in the Upper
Cumberland live below
the poverty line



22.7%

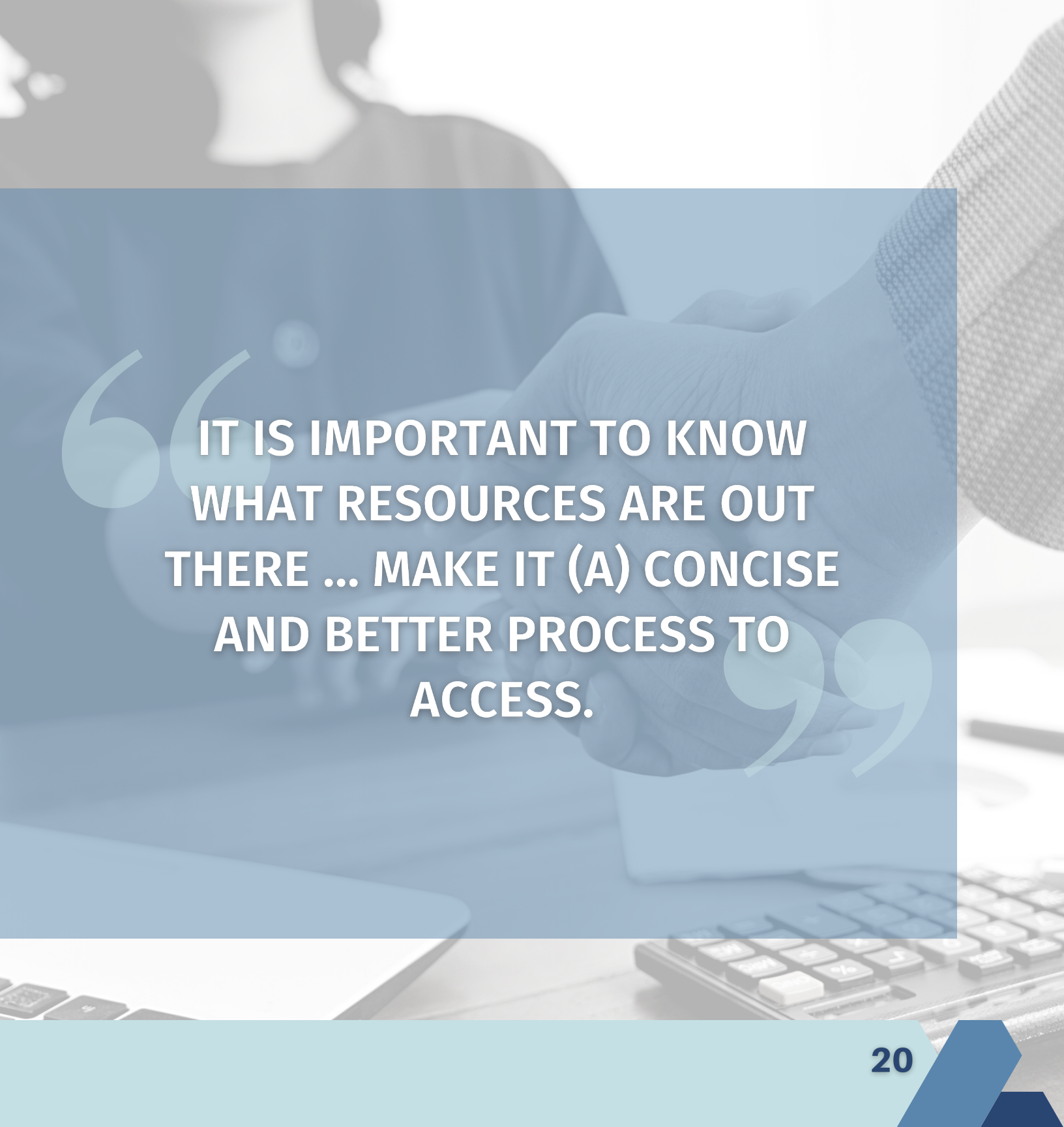
of children in the Upper
Cumberland live below
the poverty line



13.6%

of Upper Cumberland
families with children
under 18 live below the
poverty line

To view by-county data for the Upper Cumberland, visit www.empoweruppercumberland.org/dashboard/.



**“IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW
WHAT RESOURCES ARE OUT
THERE ... MAKE IT (A) CONCISE
AND BETTER PROCESS TO
ACCESS.”**

How You Can Help

This collaboration focuses heavily on developing interagency coordination. We invite your organization to be a part of this initiative. Contact our team today to learn how you and your organization can get involved with Empower UC.

Contact Us

For more information about Empower UC or to find out how to get involved, please contact us using one of the channels below:

Phone: 833-EMPWRUC

Address: 580 S. Jefferson Ave., Ste. B; Cookeville, TN 38501

Website: www.empoweruppercumberland.org

Email: connect@empoweruppercumberland.org



Special thanks to all who have participated in and assisted with the development of this proposal including WCTE, members of the faith-based community, nonprofit organizations, employers, educators and higher learning institutions, and the individuals and families that provided invaluable insight.

EMPOWER UC: WE'RE READY!

