Communities are stronger when there is a higher average earned income, created by self-sustaining individuals and families.

Higher economic income as a community leads to improvements for all—in housing, amenities, infrastructure, education systems, and health systems. Thus, the individuals in a community have higher standards and expectations, support the community through more taxes, children gain higher education levels and people live longer.

Economic sustainability means people can choose where to live—whether to rent or own a home. We manage our finances, pay our bills on time and have savings accounts. With more money in the community, we move from subsisting and looking only at basic needs to investing in people and systems around us. An increase in free time and/or expendable income leads to an awareness and heightened care for one's surroundings, and a more optimistic focus on—and investment in—the future. In addition, children’s educational gains increase with increased earnings. Higher average earned income across a community is characterized by successful outcomes.

**STRATEGIES**

Knowledge is the key to higher economic averages. What people know and can do improves both a person’s employability as well as general economic growth. To improve their knowledge base, people need to participate in training, higher education, read books, talk to those with expertise and share knowledge across networks.

Individuals with stronger literacy skills will have the opportunity to gain more knowledge to:

- Acquire credentials for a desired job or career;
- Understand and take out home loans;
- Interact in a team on the job;
- Engage in financial planning for the future.

**FURTHER READING:**


“...I have more opportunity in the job in this country. I feel good about learning English, and I like to go to the school. It is hard to learn English. In my country, we speak Spanish and I did not go to high school. English is important... I have my own business. I speak to my customers. When I saw somebody I say they have to speak English in the US.”

— Juana, Casa de Maryland