



**2024 CERTIFIED COMMUNITY ACTION PROFESSIONAL  
INDEPENDENT WRITING ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION**

*by*

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## Essay #1

Guaranteed Income (GI) directly correlates with the visions and values of the Community Action Movement as it empowers families and individuals to gain self-sufficiency and economic stability through opportunities. This is often the direct result of financial stability achieved through cash payments received from guaranteed income initiatives. Because of these opportunities, families and individuals have the means of addressing their most pressing concerns and, by doing so, removing themselves from the cycle of poverty.

When reviewing the Community Action Body of Knowledge (BoK), specifically section B, *Vision and Values of the Community Action Movement*, there were three statements that I feel support the claim that guaranteed income aligns with the values and vision of Community Action. These statements are that “*Community Action’s success is dependent upon the collective efforts of the entire community and its institutions*” (BoK, B1e), “*empowerment of the poor for economic and social self-sufficiency through a variety of means*” (BoK, B2b1), and that “*impoverished individuals, families and communities can be enabled and assisted in obtaining self-sufficiency and independence*” (BoK, B2d).

Regarding the statement that “Community Action’s Success is dependent upon the collective efforts of the entire community and its institutions” (BoK, B1e), the implementation of guaranteed income policies truly embodies this. As mentioned previously, the goal of guaranteed income helps with the achievement of Community Action’s overarching goal of eliminating poverty. As stated in the *Guaranteed Income Blueprint*, the movement is meant to create a new, modern social contract providing the economic stability we all deserve. To do so, however, it has been acknowledged that efforts must come not only from funders but also from the community itself.

For example, In the Narrative, *A Window of Opportunity to Frame the Guaranteed Income Narrative*, guidance is provided regarding how to defend guaranteed income within the community. One such suggestion in doing so focuses on a need to offer narratives to demonstrate how guaranteed income impacts the community as a whole; this is often done through communication via messengers. Messengers in this context are not just individuals who have directly received cash payments but also include skeptics who have moved to support the benefit of guaranteed income. Through the messengers, it is imperative that the success of the pilots is relayed through qualitative and quantitative data, showing how, through collective effort, economic stability can be reached, as demonstrated through participants. Therefore, one's ability to escape poverty can be realized.

As stated within the Body of Knowledge, “*empowerment of the poor for economic and social self-sufficiency through a variety of means*” (BoK, B2b1) can be achieved through Community Action intervention. In this instance, the means can refer to guaranteed income itself. When reading about guaranteed income, it is apparent that providing regular cash payments is meant to foster independence and empower community members to have autonomy over their decisions to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

For example, THRIVE East of the River, an initiative out of D.C., provided 500 households with emergency cash payments. Through these payments, they sought to connect families to the full range of government resources they qualified for and foster mobility by assisting families to secure a more resilient future. Based upon the data received from the demonstration, many participants did, in fact, achieve this level of mobility as many utilized the funds for debt reduction, achieving professional goals, as well as investing in small businesses (Patel, *A Case for Cash*, pgs.173-174).

When thinking of the intention of guaranteed income, to create an income floor below which no one can fall, the idea that “*impoverished individuals, families and communities can be enabled and assisted to obtain self-sufficiency and independence*” (BoK, B2d), it is easy to see how guaranteed income relates to this value. Guaranteed income inherently promotes self-reliance due to the unrestrictive nature of the payments distributed.

For instance, based upon data received from such programs like Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED), through receiving these cash payments, participants found themselves to experience more stability regarding income fluctuations, were more likely to maintain their full-time positions, some obtaining part-time employment, improved well-being, as well as becoming more likely to take risk and work on professional goals (Guaranteed Income: A Primer for Funders, pg. 12). This was primarily due to the decisions they made, particularly regarding how to utilize the funds, enabling them to obtain self-sufficiency.

## Essay #2

It is clear from the outcomes achieved by participants in Guaranteed Income pilot demonstrations that guaranteed income could be easily incorporated into the individual/family-level work community action agencies offer. For instance, in the narrative, *Guaranteed Income Blueprint*, the author states that the GI movement is “ready to move beyond local demonstrations, to create a new, modern social contract that provides the economic stability we all deserve,” which feeds directly into the Community Action Theory of Change. When looking at the theory, the first goal of achievement is that “individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.” (NASCS, National Community Action Theory of Change).

We see this example by looking at the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration, also known as SEED, the nation’s first mayor-led Guaranteed Income Initiative. Through the demonstration, 125 random residents from low-income neighborhoods in Stockton, California, received a cash payment of \$500 per month for 24 months (Guaranteed Income: A Primer for Funders, pg. 12). These funds came with no stipulations, allowing for the residents to use them as they saw fit. Data from this demonstration showcased the potential long-term differences these types of initiatives can have, as the overwhelming majority of participants saw improvement in all avenues.

For example, fewer participants experienced fluctuations in their monthly income than non-participants. Data showed that full-time employment almost doubled in comparison to non-participants. Improvements in both health and well-being were also documented as participants were more likely to seek mental and health services due to the extra income received. Most importantly, through the increase in income, participants became more self-determined, engaging

in goal setting, pursuing further education, and taking risk related to job opportunities (Guaranteed Income: A Primer for Funders, pg. 12). Participants also had a means to address debt concerns, often paying towards current accumulated debts, and becoming better able to handle unexpected expenses (Patel, A Case for Cash, pg. 173).

All outcomes achieved through the demonstration, again, correlate directly with the Community Action Theory of Change as through this service, participants were more likely to become self-sufficient due to the stability of income, see positive changes in their employment through the retention of or obtainment of full-time jobs, begin their educational pursuits, do asset building through their ability to address debts, as well as begin seeking physical and mental health services.

If working in tandem with other programs with ROMA goals in mind, moving a person from poverty becomes a viable possibility. By doing so, a natural progression of achieving the goals outlined within the Community Action Theory of Change will be created, assisting in fulfilling the mission of community action.

Regarding how a Community Action Agency might use community-level, structural systems change work to advance the provision of guaranteed income, I feel this can be achieved through advocacy to support the guaranteed income movement further. To do so, we can utilize narratives related to the successful outcomes of guaranteed income initiatives to showcase how powerful an impact can be made and, by doing so, support efforts to bring systematic changes to advance guaranteed income policies.

As outlined within our Code of Ethics, we are to “Be Outspoken Advocates and Educators.” One way to advocate is through the sharing of information. By doing so, we can

demonstrate how guaranteed income initiatives would benefit the population at large, as economic stability could be a realistic foreseeable outcome.

In fact, on page 6 of *the Guaranteed Income Blueprint*, a blueprint is provided on how to work towards a national guaranteed income. The blueprint outlines three principles that need to be met to achieve national-level changes related to guaranteed income initiatives, with the first principle outlined being to “create a convention wisdom and shared values around guaranteed income.” For this principle, it is suggested that local narratives be created to showcase “the effectiveness of guaranteed income and how it empowers individuals, families, and communities...” (Guaranteed Income Blueprint, pg. 7).

Regarding the narratives utilized, as stated within *A Window of Opportunity to Frame the Guaranteed Income Narrative* on page 4, when crafting narratives, it is essential to remember that we do not only want to focus on the words of those participating, but we also want to showcase how skepticism can be turned into support; this furthers the validity of guaranteed income efforts and gives probable cause for policymakers to support the change from local demonstrations to federal public policy.