

Arkansas



Arkansas Narrative Committee ALICE “Can You See Me Now?” Overview

Due in large part to the COVID crisis and our current economic, political, and racial climate, workers making lower-wages, often hourly wages, are more visible and deemed in many cases “essential” than ever before because of the pandemic. Initiated by the Arkansas Asset Funders Network, the Arkansas Narrative Committee (ANC), through the Voices for Economic Opportunity grant, views this as an opportunity to grow grassroots champions for ALICE (asset limited income constrained employed) individuals who are willing to see ALICE, hear from ALICE, and act on behalf of ALICE leveraging their power and influence to create a better society for ALICE to thrive.

As part of this work, the ANC will work to shift current narratives and images about ALICE as “a low skill, low wage worker” with one of ALICE as “high value residents who face systemic barriers that must be addressed”. Working from this perspective, the ANC must explore what the current, dominant frames applied towards ALICE in public discourse are:

Prevailing Narrative	Descriptive
“ALICE is a drain.” “ALICE doesn’t contribute to the economy.” “ALICE is not hard working or working hard enough.” “ALICE doesn’t impact me or my community.”	Non-Essential Poor BIPOC Lazy Social services (WIC, SNAP, TANF, etc.) Othering (“They”)

Other current, prevailing narratives include:

- The belief that ALICE has been afforded the opportunities to “achieve” wellbeing and people who experience hardships have failed to seize those opportunities.
- Attributing success or failure solely to individual agency—whether they have tried or not.
- Assigning moral failings to low- and moderate-income individuals – Someone is poor because they have made bad choices or have “chosen to be poor” and are unworthy of help.

ANC will work to build champions who embrace the following messages:

New Narrative	Descriptive
“Everyone, including ALICE, needs support.” “ALICE actually works too hard and deserves the same level of services and respect as any other worker.” “ALICE is a member of my everyday community.” “How do we remove barriers that keep ALICE from prospering on their time frame.”	Essential Inclusive Deserving Respect

Arkansas

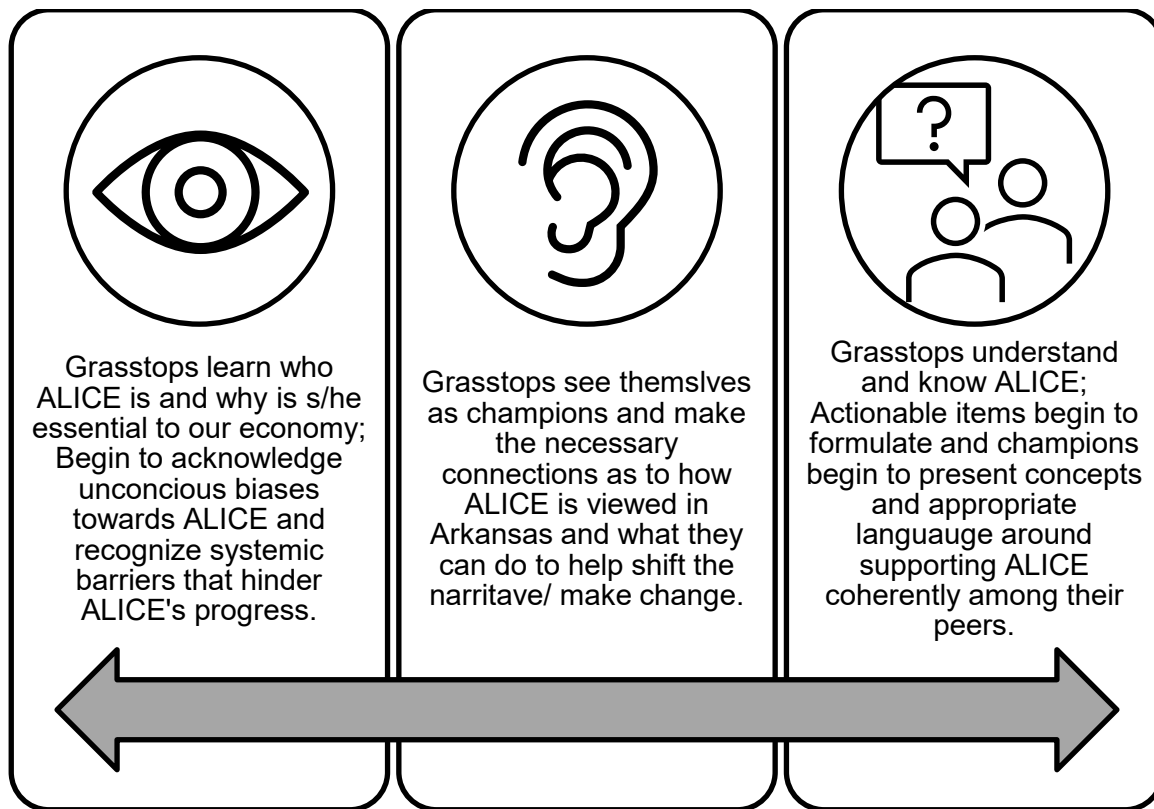


Arkansas Narrative Committee ALICE "Can You See Me Now?" Overview

Additionally, the ANC will create champions who have the ability to remove/influence barriers towards ALICE by framing a broad North Star vision that allows grasstops leaders to:

1. **SEE** ALICE as an essential asset to our economy and community.
2. **HEAR** ALICE and understand what he/she really needs.
3. **ACT** for ALICE in new ways that address systemic barriers that hinder ALICE.

The ANC will provide a framework for a learning arc that challenges grasstops champions to begin to think more deeply about ALICE.



ANC recognizes that there is benefit to providing varying options of engagement for grassroots champions allowing them to be visible champions of ALICE leveraging their spheres of influence. ANC will ask champions to answer *How Can I Act for ALICE?* in the following ways:

What can I do to support ALICE that's actionable?

- Organize amongst my networks to talk about the systemic underpinnings of poverty as it relates to ALICE and suggest system-wide changes needed to address it.

What can my organization do to support ALICE?

Arkansas



Arkansas Narrative Committee ALICE “Can You See Me Now?” Overview

- Promote internal policy changes that impact ALICE workers, such as wage increases, increased quality childcare options for working parents, and/or addressing the system of inequity.

What are long term solutions I can advocate for to help support an ALICE policy agenda?

- Support the removal of government regulated barriers that keep ALICE behind and proactively support policies that help ALICE thrive and succeed, such as Asset Limit Reform, adoption of a statewide Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and Universal Basic/Guaranteed Income (UBI) in Arkansas.

Roadmapping Activity

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Continue Planning	Organize ANC Advisory Committee and host ongoing/regular meetings		Draft and evaluate RFP that solicits at least 3 bids for communications support		Organize ANC Advisory Committee and host ongoing/regular meetings			Organize ANC Advisory Committee and host ongoing/regular meetings				
				Convene focus groups/message testing strategies with support from the communications firm	Determine overall communication strategy based on testing/feedback and audience needs Integrate narrative shift work into WRF/AR AFN member programming				Refine and test overall communication strategy based on testing/feedback and audience needs			
							Lead communications firm creation, development, and budgeting for collateral needed to execute the communications strategy including print, online, television, etc. Identify 2-3 opportunities for engagement that connects select grassroots influencers directly with grassroots organizations for a discussion surrounding ALICE					
											Finalize and implement communications strategy	Identify reporting, evaluation and next steps

Voices Incubator: Audience Survey Test Results

BLS Research & Consulting

December 2020



Av. read time

45 - 60 mins

Arkansas Asset Funders Network



Everyone needs support sometimes. Ever since COVID-19, my mom has been working harder than ever as a cashier at the local grocery store. She says her job is “essential” and she takes pride in helping to keep people’s daily lives running. Yet despite all of her hard work, sometimes her bi-weekly paycheck isn’t enough to cover basic expenses or to save. I often overhear her and my dad discussing which bill to pay before the lights or gas are shut off or paying back rent so that we don’t get evicted. At my mom’s company, there have been discussions around helping essential workers during a time where everyone needs additional support, such as offering pay increases to those who are on the frontline. Let’s encourage our local leaders, such as company CEOs and state legislators who have the power and influence to increase the minimum wage, to make changes today to help our working families become more financially secure during the pandemic and beyond.

This message significantly shifted U.S. adults on the following measures:

- Poverty is one of the most important issues facing the country
- With the right efforts and solutions, poverty is something we as a country can solve
- Help raise awareness by sharing content on social media or talking to family and friends about the issue
- Vote for candidates who will prioritize the issue
- Educate myself and learn more about the issue
- Volunteer in my community

Measure (% Strong 9-10)	Total	Tough Cookies	Don’t Tread On Me	People Power	If You Say So
How much did the story capture your attention?	46	45	38	62	45
How convincing is this story that poverty is a very important issue facing the country today?	47	44	35	63	52
How likely would you be to share the story on social media?	31	34	22	37	31

Respondents rated the message on each measure using a 0-10 scale. The % shown represents the proportion who rated the message a 9 or a 10.

Arkansas Asset Funders Network



Strengths	
The context of the pandemic makes this story relatable and increases empathy for the protagonist's family.	<p><i>"The story unfortunately is common. So many families and people were already struggling pre-Covid and and now it's even worse."</i> –Don't Tread On Me</p> <p><i>"It's extremely relatable and does a good job of painting a dire, not uncommon situation that so many families find themselves in."</i> –If You Say So</p>
The idea of raising the minimum wage so that wages more closely reflect the cost of living is something that many people agree with.	<p><i>"This insane gap between the cost of living and wages is criminal, inhuman and insane. This is a system that cannot continue!! Working Americans need a raise NOT CEOs of corporations."</i> –Tough Cookie</p> <p><i>"I'm facing the same challenges as the author of this story and I do very much agree that we all should do much more to influence and push for a fair increase on minimum wage , because often not even working full time can support a family , that is not at all right."</i> –People Power</p>
The story's family comes across as hardworking, a quality that encourages empathy and support.	<p><i>"Like the fact that the parents do everything that they can to take care of there family."</i> –People Power</p> <p><i>"It isn't fair that someone should work that hard, put themselves at risk, and still can't afford their bills."</i> –Don't Tread On Me</p>
Weaknesses	
Calling on the government to legislate changes to wage laws is alienating to some conservative respondents.	<p><i>"I dislike that the first thing that jumps into mind is getting the government into it by raising minimum wages etc. That just raises inflation & we are back in the same boat."</i> –Don't Tread On Me</p> <p><i>"The solution is the same as always more government, that is the reason that pay scale keeps dropping because government has put to much tax and regulations on business they can't pay staff."</i> –Don't Tread On Me</p>
Some respondents wanted more details about other ways the family was trying to help themselves, such as whether or not the husband was working.	<p><i>"I felt like they didn't go into too much about her children or her husband's job and how he could be doing more to help out."</i> –Tough Cookie</p> <p><i>"They only showed the mom working did the dad work also?"</i> –If You Say So</p>