As a distinct area of emphasis within its strategic framework, family economic security builds on the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s decades of workforce economic development experience. And recognition of the importance of stable, economically secure families in protecting children was fundamental to Will Keith Kellogg long before 1931.

Like Henry Ford and his creation of the $5-a-day wage, Mr. Kellogg is often credited with enlightened employee policies. As jobs evaporated during the Depression, he instituted a six-hour workday, which allowed the company to hire a fourth shift of workers from among Battle Creek, Michigan's unemployed. He implemented a range of innovative practices, including childcare for employees and programs for employees’ physical exams and health care. And the Kellogg Company was known at the time for one of the best pay rates in the state of Michigan.

Mr. Kellogg’s action reflected his belief in the value of “invest(ing) my money in people,” one of several convictions that guided him as chairman of the Kellogg Foundation during its first decade, and that has continued to guide the foundation since.

Another was the belief that the most effective and durable way to benefit children was to enable their families and communities to better help themselves.

As the foundation trustees wrote in their report, *The First Eleven Years*, "The health and welfare of the children in the area in which the foundation was interested were the responsibilities of the men and women in that area. The foundation's mission was to help them, not to substitute for them."
In the depths of the Depression, that conviction manifested itself in large part through grants that created construction jobs in south central Michigan communities.

From 1931 to 1940, the Michigan Community Health Project (MCHP) itself funded 16 separate grants for construction or expansion of school facilities, and five more for construction or expansion of hospitals. Apart from MCHP, in Battle Creek alone during that time, foundation grants fueled five more construction projects for schools and recreational facilities, plus a ten-acre park on Kellogg Company property.

The postwar period brought prosperity and a growing economy to the nation, and several key changes to the foundation.

For one, the foundation elected to function strictly as a grant-making foundation, rather than as an "operating" foundation that manages the programs it funds.

In response to war-related food shortages in Europe and elsewhere, it identified agriculture as an important arena for its grant-making.

And beginning in 1950, the foundation's interest in what would (much later) become a program focus—"Family Economic Security"—turned to leveraging adult education, pioneering the junior college movement in the process.

Junior colleges in the early 1950s were inundated by returning servicemen and women and by growing demand for higher education as a path toward better employment. Yet, prior to 1960, many American cities had no junior college. Moreover, the field lacked leadership equipped to foresee and plan for the future.
The foundation launched its involvement with sponsorship of the national Cooperative Program in Educational Administration (CPEA), which focused on training for public school administrators.

By 1959, that involvement had expanded to include a four year grant to the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AAJC), supporting creation of a training program specifically for junior college leaders, and strengthening the staff of the AAJC in Washington.

And the foundation's involvement continued to grow. The Junior College Leadership Program (JCLP) that eventually emerged from seeds planted by the foundation transformed junior colleges. Increasingly, the JCLP embraced a comprehensive educational outlook, in lieu of the traditional college preparatory perspective. It supported an "open door" concept, based on the recognition that there were millions of potential students who hadn't yet been exposed to the idea of post-secondary education. And it sought to promote the vision of junior colleges as instruments of community, meeting community needs, leveraging community input, and providing community resources.

Since that time, the foundation has continued to support innovative efforts, helping to initiate career and academic programs – like the Associate Degree Nursing Program – that are now commonplace and expected. It has underwritten similar efforts in the health field including, recently, training for dental therapists. It has supported two-year occupational programs in fields such as forestry, data processing, hotel and restaurant operations.
More recently, as research has illuminated the negative impacts on children of insufficient financial resources, the foundation has moved beyond a focus on adult education to implement a full spectrum of related initiatives.

Today, the foundation's “Family Economic Security” goal is building "... economic security for vulnerable children and their families through sustained income and asset accumulation." Its approach is integrated and nuanced, encompassing education and job training, entrepreneurship, current employment and future career ladders, sophistication in family financial management, and childcare and career-building assistance for single mothers.

For example, in its 2001-2002 support of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet), the foundation contributed to increased security for families in rural Appalachia through implementation of entrepreneurship strategies; support for starting-up and expanding community-based enterprises; a brokering system to help small food processors distribute their products nationally; even a plan to help rural communities and people use information systems and technology to build networks and access and manage information in developing the economies in their communities.

In its ongoing support of Hope Enterprises, formerly the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, the foundation is contributing to a long term, multi-faceted economic, community and leadership development initiative in 55 contiguous counties and parishes along the Mississippi River in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Through its New Options Project, announced in 2011, the foundation has committed $28 million to a multi-year philanthropic and entrepreneurial venture that creates
multiple career pathways for disconnected young adults. If successful, it promises one possible path toward breaking the cycle of economic insecurity which limits opportunities for generations of vulnerable children and their families.

The foundation's approach to building secure families extends beyond the United States. In South Africa, for example, foundation grants to the Women's Development Bank have helped strengthen the bank's ability to provide credit, savings and business training services to rural entrepreneurial women in that country.

More recently in Mexico, the foundation's mission-driven investing strategy has also been brought to bear on the economic security of families, with investment in New Ventures Mexico. The investment is based on the fact that small and medium sized companies in emerging economies play a pivotal role in economic growth and job creation. As one of Mexico's most successful small business incubators, and its primary green business accelerator, New Ventures Mexico offers significant job-creation potential and, therefore, significant family economic security potential.

W.K. Kellogg's mandate to his new foundation was deliberately open-ended: “Use the money as you please, so long as it promotes the health, happiness, and well-being of children.” That latitude has allowed the foundation's approach to family economic security to evolve and adapt over the years – from an unarticulated but clear emphasis on employment – to an explicit emphasis on adult education – to efforts in active support of entrepreneurialism, networking, and community economic development. In each of these approaches, the foundation has remained and remains unerringly true to its ultimate mission: to strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success.