IDA FO Meeting

July 21, 2022

Location: PCC Rock Creek

In attendance:

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| --- | --- |
| Name | Organization |
| Osvaldo Guzman | Mercy Corps Northwest |
| Laura Bower | Portland Housing Center |
| Kimberly Swopes | Portland Housing Center |
| Marharyta Nedashkivska | Mercy Corps NW |
| Olivia Rasmussen | Mercy Corps Northwest |
| Cecelia E. Lente | NAYA |
| Jeff Belzer | NeighborImpact |
| Jeremy Doucette-Hardy | DevNW |
| Modesta Ongweso | Mercy Corps Northwest |
| Amy Hamilton | DevNW |
| Frank Boothby | Project Youth+ |
| Mystina McCormack | WSCAT |
| Leah Guliasi | WSCAT |
| Stephany Guzman | DevNW |
| Tonya McIrvin | Project Youth+ |
| Jennifer Leveque | NeighborWorks Umpqua |
| Daniela Macias | NAYA |
| Sami Francis | Neighborworks Umpqua |
| Gina Valencia | Habitat for Humanity Oregon |
| Luke Bonham | NP |
| Holly McGuire | NP |
| Derrick Taruc | NP |

IDA Vision/Mission Exploration Worksheet

Exploration Questions:

* Identify a few Harmful assumptions/ideas that we may perpetuate through narratives
* Identify a few helpful assumptions/ideas that we may perpetuate through narratives
* Who holds the agency—the power—in the story? What’s the theory of change?
* Is individual responsibility balanced by structural elements—boosts and blocks?
* What is the promise?

NP Current Descriptions:

Website: Individual Development Accounts, or IDAs, are matched savings accounts that build the financial management skills of qualifying Oregonians with lower incomes while they save towards a defined goal. IDAs build pathways of opportunity and create models of economic success in Oregon communities.

“What are IDAs” flyer: Individual Development Accounts, or IDAs, are matched savings accounts that change the financial futures of qualifying Oregonians with lower incomes. Participants build financial skills such as budgeting and saving while they save towards a defined goal, and for every dollar they save the Initiative typically matches three dollars.

Sample Provider Descriptions

Provider A

Provider A offers matched-savings Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to help our residents plan and save to ensure stability and self-sufficiency.

Provider B

The Individual Development Account (IDA) is a special savings account to help individuals of modest finances save money to invest in post-secondary education or a business. […] In addition to saving money, participants learn about financial management and planning through free, required classes facilitated by Provider B. Business owners will learn important skills such as cash flow, financial management, and marketing. Education participants will prepare information on their course of study/training and how it relates to their future goals. The objective of the IDA program is to encourage a habit of saving money in order to increase future earning potential.

Provider C

We offer employment focused IDA options for education, transportation and [assistive tech]. This is a matched savings program designed to help individuals learn to build assets and become financially empowered.

Provider D

Matched savings accounts help eligible consumers build financial resources. Funds can be used for higher education, small business start-up or expansion, or purchasing a home. These no-fee savings account (IDA’s) help lower income families save money and improve lives.

Breakout questions:

* Identify a few Harmful assumptions/ideas that we may perpetuate through narratives
* Identify a few helpful assumptions/ideas that we may perpetuate through narratives
* Who holds the agency—the power—in the story? What’s the theory of change?
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**Notes from breakouts and mission brainstorm**

* **Unintended implications about residency>citizenship**
* **Low-income—is this presenting barriers because while policy makers may resonate that we are “serving” this community, people with low incomes may not identify that way and therefore may not access the opportunity.**
* **False idea that you can budget yourself into wealth**
* **Can we shift the agency more completely. IDA Participants use their savings and match in order to:**
* **Community shift. Can people invest their IDAs into community resources. Think about the policy against non-profits. Can this shift? Other forms that would allow that investment**
* **People show up with knowledge. How to talk about education without implying that we are the sole source.**
* **When we say “help” it is implying that participants can’t or don’t know how to do things like manage their money and takes away their ownership**
* **We over-promise when we say that IDAs will ensure stability or improve lives or change someone’s financial future**
* **Avoid savior language**
* **Put the participant at the front**
* **Be honest about what we do**

IDA Mission workshopping

**CCC Racial Wealth Gap Report Framework:**

Economic stability refers to the conditions needed to access and build financial wealth. Securing economic stability means access to living wages/income, equitable access to banks, credit and financial planning, progressive tax codes, and policies that ensure affordable means to promote well-being (e.g., education, health care, child care, tax credits, etc.).

Wealth building refers to the accumulation of assets—something deemed to have economic value. In the U.S., assets that have the potential to appreciate and compound in monetary value include real estate, capital gains from stock market investments, private businesses, pensions and retirement, and other savings.

Wealth stripping refers to the many ways that communities of color are disproportionately deprived of wealth and driven into debt (e.g., predatory lending, fines and fees of the criminal justice system, tax exclusions, penalties & a regressive tax code, etc.).

FO Design Questions (2019)

How might the Oregon IDA Initiative increase access to IDAs and create lifelong financial stability for eligible Oregonians, especially people of color?

How might the IDA Providers increase assets for people of color, especially in rural communities?

How might matched savings help support a saver/participant/client/human to reach their financial goals? How might we define success for the Initiative?

How might we better support asset building for low income Oregonians?

Breakouts:

What is our purpose? What’s the vehicle that will get us to our vision? What work are we good at and excited about?

What are the phrases, ideas, outcomes that resonate with you toward and IDA mission statement?

Draft 1-2 sentences. A pitch that would work across provider websites/marketing. That will be easy to share when advocating to legislators, that you’d feel comfortable whipping out when someone asks what you do.

What do IDAs offer?. What is it that savers can hope for? What story has energy that feels true?

**2021 Statute Revision for reference**

Investment through an individual development account system will help lower income households obtain the assets they need to succeed. Communities and this state will experience **resultant economic and social benefits** accruing from the promotion of the financial stability and resilience of lower income households.

NP brainstorm

IDAs provide Oregonians with resources and support to survive, thrive, and provide as they pursue their financial goals

IDAs allow folks who qualify to leverage state money along with their own money to move towards their own sustainability

IDAs are a wealth building resource that people with low income and wealth can use to support themselves and their communities, to move to stability thru to thriving.

IDAs build access to stability and wealth in marginalized communities

IDAs are a program to increase access to financial resources

IDAs are financial building resources that create opportunities for individuals and communities to have what they need to thrive and pursue wealth

**From breakouts:**

* **IDAs are a resource for Oregonians to leverage their savings in support of their financial goals. While in the IDA, savers have opportunities to enhance their understanding of financial systems.** 
  + **Other ideas**
    - **Include qualifying applicants?**
    - **enhance financial understanding?**
    - **Participants use IDAs to invest in their financial goals**
    - **Supporting Oregon communities**
    - **Provide a resource**
* **Group Likes this one:**
  + **IDAs provide Oregonians with resources and support to survive, thrive, and provide as they pursue their financial goals**
  + **Wanted to include partnership: IDAs partner with Oregonians to ?**
  + **And also one from the banner**
* **The IDAs supports participants on their individual joureys to pursue their financial goals by providing resources. Through matched savings, education, advocacy, coaching and counseling participants identify barriers, achieve financial stability, and work through building long-term wealth.**
* **ORIDA invests in individuals to build strong Oregon communities through matched savings and education.**
* **IDA partners with individuals in Oregon to build financial well-being through direct resources and education.**
* **Big story: stabilization thru wealth building**

**Afternoon Sessions**

Breakout by asset:

The afternoon breakouts are not about making big changes to anything, but an opportunity to do what we haven’t been able to do easily during the pandemic. Sit in a room of people that “get it”, with the goal of connection, collaboration, and learning from one another. You in this room are the experts at administering IDAs. And that’s a huge value in coming together as an FO body. But also, you don’t all do things the same, which is good! You adapt to the communities you serve, the organization you operate within, maybe leaning on your particular skills or approach, or maybe you are just following the instructions that the last person left you 4 years ago.

Those different approaches I believe are opportunities for learning from each other. That’s what this time is going to be about. These are prompt questions to get you talking, sharing ideas, asking each other questions about how you might approach things differently.

To do that we are going to break out into groups by asset. If your organization offers more than one of these assets, pick whichever one interests you. We don’t need you to be coming to any specific conclusions, unless you have something that you think needs follow-up or needs to be pursued further.

If you are a staff person that mostly helps process applications or withdrawals, and doesn’t interact as much with the specifics of that particular asset, that’s OK too! You can use these questions in ways that they also intersect with other parts of the work, like the enrollment process. What’s working well, what is challenging, and what would make this easier to administer?

Asset break-out- pick one: Microenterprise, Vehicle, Home Purchase, Education

Space for discussion and sharing with each other

* What is working well with savers pursuing this asset?
* What is the most challenging thing about this asset?
* What is something that would make this asset or overall process easier to administer?

Emergency Savings breakouts-

we are 2 years in now to IDAs having added emergency savings as an asset. First, I want us to each grab a sticky note pad and take a few minutes to reflect on this question, and put it up on the poster board. I assume that having emergency savings has provided opportunities for you to say YES to unique requests from your savers in a way that was previously not allowed. **What are some of the ways that savers are using emergency savings match?** Maybe there are some emergency savings requests that are completely mysterious to you, and you don’t know how it’s being used, but for situations where you do, while maintaining confidentiality, we want to see some of the ways that emergency savings has been used over the last 2 years.

**What are some of the ways that savers are using emergency savings match?**

* **Emergency need (x2)**
* **Rent (x5)**
* **Water bill**
* **$ just to survive**
* **Relocation (x3)**
* **Food**
* **Car (x3)**
* **Vehicle needs (reg, license, etc)**
* **Multiple small education expenses (x2)**
* **Help while a saver was waiting for school to release financial aid**
* **Start an emergency savings fund (x2)**
* **Medical expenses (x3)**
* **Things that aren’t allowed under primary asset goal (x2)**
* **When funds are needed more quickly (x3)**
* **Home repair**
* **Help savers exiting the program early (x3)**
* **Debt (x2)**
* **Last amount for closing their IDA (x3)**
* **Funds if they haven’t completed all asset-specific requirements**
* **Alternative to reimbursement when there is no receipt**
* **Business issues (x2)**
* **Family emergency**
* **Save for the future**
* **To get caught up on mortgage**
* **Student loans**
* **Mental health counseling**
* **Car loan**

Looking through a racial equity lens, when you think about who is most vulnerable in a financial crisis, it’s those who have been and continue to be excluded from financial systems and opportunities, those who have few assets or savings, those who have had wealth stripped from them. Because of institutional and systemic racism, this means that a crisis will hit BIPOC communities harder. Historically Initiative-wide, BIPOC savers exited the IDA without match at a higher rate than white savers. Our hope is that emergency savings is one tool that advances racial economic justice in the IDA by providing opportunities for you to say YES to requests from your savers in a way that was previously not allowed.

We know that there is no shortage of financial need in Oregon. So while offering emergency savings is a really important option available to savers, as an Initiative we have decided that meeting emergency needs can’t be the end goal of what we do, but we still see ourselves as a resource for building assets.

So, 2 years ago we tried to strike a balance which is this policy, there is also a simplified version in SOPs. Basically the policy is that you can have some, but not all of your match as emergency savings. You have to have saved your portion, and you have to have completed financial education. Minimum 3 month in the program for up to $1,500 in emergency savings and minimum 6 months for up to $3k.

Now, break out into 3 groups- here is the policy. Separate yourselves from staff at your same org. Discuss these questions.

* How would you describe the impact of emergency savings on your program?
* **Are there changes to the policy that you would recommend the Initiative consider?**

Notes

* All programs in one breakout group mention emergency savings up front, and discuss it more in depth when someone asks to withdraw their savings due to an emergency.
* Would like to see financial education not required before making a matched emergency savings withdrawal
* Interest in emergency savings-specific asset
* Eval: does it ask about emergency savings? Curious about data NP is gathering about the use of emergency savings