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**Social Innovation Fund awards \$11.3MM grant to LISC to expand education, career services for low-income individuals**

**NEW YORK – August 3, 2015** – As part of a vigorous new effort to help jobless Americans upgrade their reading and math skills to better prepare for employment, the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) has awarded an \$11.3 million grant to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national community development nonprofit. LISC will leverage the grant to expand a successful program that offers job training and financial coaching to low-income people whose skills deficit has kept them trapped in poverty.

“One of the biggest challenges facing people living in poverty who are struggling to find employment is a lack of education and skills—and that creates a mismatch with available jobs,” said Kevin Jordan, LISC senior vice president of national programs, who praised the government for honing in on this persistent challenge. “Even among those with a high school education, many still lack skills beyond the level of middle school. We’ve found a way to help close this gap—and we are seeing it bear fruit, helping people to gain knowledge and confidence, and find better-paying jobs.”

[Approximately 36 million U.S. adults between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills, and 62 million, or 30 percent, have low “numeracy” skills](#)—they lack the basic education needed to be successful for many jobs. These numbers are even higher among unemployed workers: 23 percent of unemployed adults have low literacy skills, and 42 percent have low numeracy skills.

With the support of an earlier \$21 million grant awarded over five years from SIF beginning in 2010, LISC developed an approach to help stabilize low-income families by engaging them in job training and placement, benefits counseling, and intensive, ongoing financial coaching. LISC now has a network of more than 75 [Financial Opportunity Centers](#) across the country that helps low-income individuals find jobs and stabilize their finances.

“We are thrilled to award the Local Initiatives Support Corporation this Social Innovation Fund grant that will provide those in poverty an opportunity to obtain the education and skills needed to secure employment opportunities with higher earning potentials,” said Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administers the Social Innovation Fund. “I am proud that CNCS is supporting this project, which will take an inventive approach to one of today’s most pressing issues. I extend my congratulations and gratitude to the private-sector partners that have joined them in making a commitment to help more people become financially secure and employed.”

While working with thousands of clients across the country, LISC recognized this skills gap and integrated a new “Bridges to Career Opportunities” into the work. This effort teaches core skills (such as math, reading, and English as a second language) along with so-called “soft skills” (including interviewing and workplace skills like teamwork and

conflict resolution) contextualized to specific industries or sectors.

LISC piloted this bridge program in Chicago and Indianapolis; it's now also in Houston, the Twin Cities, San Diego, and Detroit. The new SIF grant will expand the reach and opportunity of this program into at least 10 cities and regions.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, which manages the SIF, is awarding grants to seven other nonprofits along with LISC. LISC previously received a SIF grant of \$4.2 million per year from 2010 to 2015 to bring its Financial Opportunity Center model to scale, expanding it into dozens more cities and regions. In 2014 alone, the Centers helped 23,000 people tackle and stabilize their financial challenges and more than 5,700 to find employment.

“We are grateful for this investment, which will enable LISC to bring these opportunities to many more low-income individuals across the country,” said Jordan.

Jordan added that Financial Opportunity Centers illustrate the impact of strong public-private partnerships—noting that national funding for the network comes not just from the SIF but also from major corporations and foundations. They include Citi Foundation, MetLife Foundation, JPMorgan Chase, State Farm, Bank of America, Accenture, Walmart Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, U.S. Bank, and Capital One. Local funders in communities across the country further match those dollars.

### **About LISC**

LISC equips struggling communities with the capital, program strategy, and know-how to become places where people can thrive. It combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$14.7 billion to build or rehab 330,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 53 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more, visit [www.lisc.org](http://www.lisc.org).

### **About the Social Innovation Fund**

The Social Innovation Fund is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

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