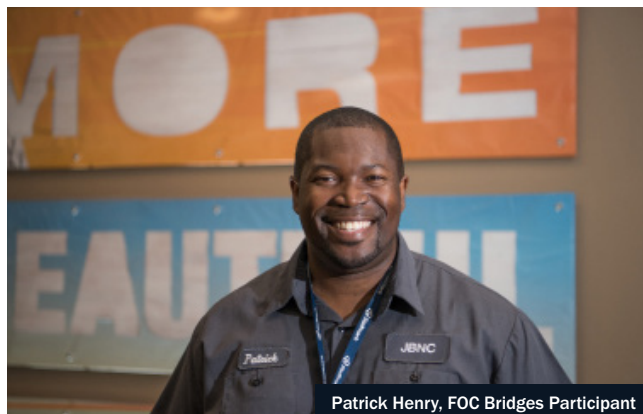


WORKFORCE, FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY AND INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY



Patrick Henry, FOC Bridges Participant

Healthy, vibrant communities are made up of people who have living wage jobs and feel confident about their economic futures. To get there, residents need the skills to advance along the path of employment and manage their money well. **That's why LISC actively expanded the Financial Opportunity Center® (FOC) program and invests in helping people tackle all the facets of financial life—earning a steady paycheck, budgeting, building good credit and saving for education and retirement.** FOCs produce impressive outcomes for clients and are an integral part of innovative local economic stability strategies. **The pathway to economic stability and the effectiveness of FOC sites are predicated upon adequate federal support for core and supplemental Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs.**

What is the Financial Opportunity Center® Model?

- The FOC model provides a cohesive suite of services that aims to broaden financial stability for people with low incomes and help form a more inclusive modern economy. **The FOC network provides career coaching and training, one-on-one financial coaching and education and low-cost financial products that help build credit, savings and assets..** It also connects clients to critical income supports that afford families with greater financial stability such as nutritional and utility assistance, and subsidies for childcare and healthcare. The services are embedded in local community organizations that are trusted, known for their history of providing quality services, and convenient to where people live and seek out services. The cornerstone of the FOC model is

providing these services in an integrated way – rather than as stand-alone services – and with a long-term commitment to helping clients reach their goals.

- Innovation in the FOC model led LISC to develop the Bridges to Career Opportunities (Bridges) initiative. **Bridges builds upon the traditional FOC model to help clients overcome the basic skills gaps often preventing them from accessing training and credentialing programs that can lead to living wage jobs.** Bridges provides contextualized literacy and numeracy training, connects clients to “middle skills” jobs with a career pathway, and helps local employers staff up with employees who can get the job done.

What are the outcomes?

- Integrated or “bundled” services lead to concrete gains, job retention, and positive financial behavior. **External [research](#) shows that 90 percent of Bridges clients completed their courses with 80 percent receiving credentials in post-secondary education and career-specific fields, leading to new employment or career advancement for 60 percent of participants. Prior research on the impact of FOCs found that clients who take advantage of combined services are more likely to retain their employment over time and make strides in financial capability, like paying their bills on time and building credit.**

- Our internal [research](#) shows a direct relationship between the FOC clients’ ability to grow their earnings and secure their finances. For instance, those who spent the most time on all three bundled services offered by the FOC partners (employment, coaching, and public benefits) had the highest job placement rates and the highest job retention rates – a **74 percent placement rate** and a **78 percent six-month retention rate**.

Federal Workforce Programs Critical to the Success of FOCs

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 overhauled the federal workforce system by incentivizing states to better coordinate programs across agencies and sectors, adopt models that advance career pathways, and use data to achieve outcomes that promote economic stability. **FOC organizations work within state and local workforce systems, targeting integrated services to vulnerable populations**, pushing innovation in the development of career pathways, and coaching clients to economic self-sufficiency.

The core WIOA programs are essential to this effort, and core partner programs – like the Career and Technical Education program (Perkins), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Program – ensure



Pedro Rodriguez, FOC Bridges Participant

that individuals with multiple needs are able to access services.

- To date, LISC supports **over 130 FOC programs** nationwide through grants, technical assistance and training, data collection tools and professional networking support. In addition to private and philanthropic funds, since 2010, LISC has received **\$37.9 million in federal funding** to expand and offer targeted services via the FOC network.

What can Congress do?

- **Provide WIOA with a five-year reauthorization and increase funding for WIOA programs, and identify state and federal opportunities for greater alignment between income and social services supports critical to success.**
- Robust Funding for the Department of Labor's **Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) program**. The REO program provides critical support to individuals who have been involved with the criminal justice system in gaining access to employment and training opportunities.
- **Support Bridge Programming and innovative bundled service delivery** programming administered by community based organizations that provide individuals with significant barriers to employment with foundational skills training in order to achieve gainful employment and financial stability.

- **Maintain robust funding and eliminate sharp benefit cliffs for income support programs** that help individuals and families on their path to financial stability, including through the expansion of SNAP Employment and Training grants and Technical Assistance resources.
- **Pass the Raise the Wage Act ([H.R. 603](#))**, sponsored by Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), which would gradually increase the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 per hour by 2025 to bolster household financial stability.

LISC is a national non-profit housing and community development intermediary with offices in 38 different cities and a national rural network of 146 organizations.

For more information about workforce, financial stability and integrated service delivery, please contact Michelle Harati at mharati@lisc.org.