

WORKFORCE, FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY



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 model's success is not achieved in isolation. 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 are Financial Opportunity Centers

- The FOC model provides a cohesive suite of services to help low- to moderate-income people build smart money habits and focus on the financial bottom line. The FOC network provides employment and career counseling, one-on-one financial coaching and education and low-cost financial products that help build credit, savings and assets. It also connects clients with income supports such as food stamps, utilities assistance, childcare subsidies and affordable health insurance. 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 FOC 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.¹

- 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.²

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 that individuals with multiple needs are able to access services.



- To date, LISC supports over 90 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 \$36.5 million in federal funding³ to expand and offer targeted services via the FOC network.

What can Congress do?

- Fully fund WIOA programs, particularly the Department of Labor WIOA Title I Adult Employment and Training Activities, the Reentry Employment Opportunities Program and the Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act programs administered by the Department of Education;
- Identify opportunities to prioritize addressing the needs of the hard to serve/hard to employ populations within existing workforce programs – especially via pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs;
- Support 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; and
- Maintain robust funding for income support programs (SNAP, TANF, LIHEAP, Housing Assistance, etc.) that help individuals and families on their path to financial stability.

¹ <http://www.lisc.org/our-resources/resource/liscs-financial-opportunity-centers-surpass-other-programs>

² <http://www.lisc.org/our-resources/resource/lisc-study-employment-and-financial-services-help-low-income-people-make-progress>

³ \$21 million CNCS Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Classic award in 2010, \$11.3 million CNCS SIF Classic award to implement the Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO) Program in 2015, \$4.5 million from the DoL to expand services for citizens returning from incarceration.

LISC is a national non-profit housing and community development intermediary with offices in 35 different cities and a national rural network of 89 organizations.

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