The Mayor’s Fund’s 18 SIF subgrantees are part of an initiative much larger than our project. They join 130 other innovative organizations from 31 states as the inaugural group of SIF subgrantees. The Mayor’s Fund is one of 11 grantee awardees of the SIF, an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Mayor’s Fund, and each of the 11 intermediary organizations conducted highly competitive sub-grant competitions to select local community organizations. Over 500 organizations engaged in these competitions. The selected organizations range from local non-profit organizations to academic institutions to local public agencies and more. To learn more about our partners in innovation, please visit the CNCS website. There you can find out more about the promising, innovative community-based providers that are having an impact in the third SIF community, a place of need opportunity, healthy futures and youth development.

Providers Launch Learning Network in New York City

The New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City (MF) were thrilled to welcome representatives of our 18 Social Innovation Fund (SIF) non-profit providers and their partners to New York City on May 5 and 6. Providers were joined by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City, Mayor AC Wharton of Memphis and other innovation leaders for the first convening of the CEO/MF Social Innovation Fund Learning Network.

The Learning Network offers a venue for providers and researchers to share best practices with the public, provide opportunities for non-profits to collaborate on program improvements, and engage additional stakeholders, including policymakers and other national experts. The CEO/MF SIF providers represent a range of organizations across eight cities, including social service agencies, community colleges, a city agency, an anti-harassment organization, a community college, a community development corporation, and a regional planning group.

This tax season, over 1,600 families in four cities chose to jumpstart their savings by opening a SaveUSA account. SaveUSA was our first SIF program to begin serving participants. SaveUSA builds on the opportunity for savings created by the sizable EITC refunds received by individuals in low-income working households. The program offers eligible individuals a 50% match if they deposit a portion of their refund to a “SaveUSA Account” and maintain the initial deposit for applicable one year. During the 2011 tax season, SaveUSA participants set aside more than $850,000 in savings, making them eligible for up to $426,000 in matched funds if the savings are retained for one year. The SaveUSA program operated in 16 sites managed by four SIF providers: the Community Action Project of Tulsa County, the Food Bank for New York City, the Mayor’s Fund to Advance NYC, and United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County.

Families Save for Their Futures through SaveUSA

NYC, Newark and the United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County. The providers did an amazing job launching the program in a very tight time frame, with the support of MDRC and the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs’ Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE). OFE provided valuable lessons from their SaveNYC experience in Tulsa and NYC, MDRC is evaluating the program using a randomized control trial that will follow program and control groups for several years to look at savings rates, debt reduction, and use of savings to support monthly and annual family purchases. We hope that positive research findings from this study will help this program become federal policy. The Savers’ Bonus bill, introduced by Senator Menendez in 110th Congress and to be reintroduced shortly, would support a similar tax-time savings incentive.
Mayoral Support of the Social Innovation Fund

Under Mayor Bloomberg’s leadership and through the Social Innovation Fund, the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity has created a network of mayors committed to reducing poverty through innovative new programs. As the only local government funded by the SIF, the CEO/MF project provides a unique opportunity for these mayors and their cities to work together to expand and test promising anti-poverty programs. As we have launched the initiative, mayors have found a variety of ways to express their support for the SIF solutions, including by holding press conferences and attending launch events.

One member of this network is Mayor AC Wharton of Memphis, who explained why he joined Mayor Bloomberg in this effort, saying, “When things get rough in New York City, they get rough in Memphis, Tennessee. That’s the real world we’re living in today.” Mayor Wharton’s commitment to innovation and the SIF stems from his belief in its impacts: “No, we cannot save the world, but we can empower the people and the people will save the world.”

The success of the CEO/MF SIF relies on local government leaders to support and design programs that can best respond to local needs and conditions. CEO/MF collaborates with dedicated staff members in each mayor’s office that support the SIF initiatives and plan to use program evaluation results to inform future policymaking and funding decisions. This partnership of local governments builds on other collaborative efforts, including Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) led by the NYC Office of Financial Empowerment. New York City, Newark, NJ and San Antonio, TX are all members of CFE, a coalition that brings together municipal governments to advance innovative financial empowerment initiatives. Through these and similar coalitions, local governments learn from each other’s successes and obstacles. CFE member and SIF-supporter Mayor Cory Booker of Newark (pictured below) joined Newark Now, the SaveUSA provider in Newark, to launch this tax savings program.

Mayor Bloomberg has described the potential of this partnership well, saying: “We can help more Americans become independent individuals and parents who invest in their own success, and the success of their families and their communities.”

Providers Launch Learning Network in New York City

(continued from page 1) administration has put resources behind a strategy that recognizes there are community-based solutions that are performing at an extraordinary level of effectiveness,” according to Gordon Berlin, President of MDRC, who discussed the value of evaluation. Read more about his remarks in the “Evaluation Highlights.”

The New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz discussed his dedication to the SIF project and shared advice on how to advocate for programs that work. Mintz emphasized that it is never too early in a project to begin outreach to decision makers, “the SIF is an extraordinary tool to move your ideas into policy.” Commissioner Mintz shared his team’s strategy, which uses “not just the promise of SIF, but the fact of SIF” when advocating for asset building programs and other initiatives.

The convening allowed grantees to understand how their organizations and their efforts fit into the larger SIF initiative, and to share their aspirations for their programs and the SIF. Mayor Bloomberg and Wharton addressed the attendees, explaining why the Social Innovation Fund projects are priorities for their cities. Each of the five program teams – Family Rewards, Jobs-Plus, SaveUSA, Project Rise, and Project Rise (formerly the Young Adult Program), had opportunities to gather and discuss program design and implementation. Three program teams visited New York City program sites, to see models in action, and meet staff and program participants. New York City Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs and SIF Program Coordinator Sinead Keegan facilitated a lively conversation about the future of the Learning Network.

Attendees participated in cross-program capacity building exercises, designed to equip providers with tools to tackle issues they will face as they launch their SIF program. The two popular sessions were a discussion of effective uses of social networking, and a panel on the management of SIF awards.

It was clear from this gathering that partners are eager to learn from each other, and to share experiences with fellow providers and with the wider social service community. The CEO/MF Learning Network will build on this initial success and continue to be shaped by the experiences and contributions of all partners, in order to build a robust network.

“The Learning Network is a key part of what we are trying to build and develop through the SIF. There is nothing like in-person conversations to establish lasting partnerships.”

- Veronica White, Executive Director, CEO

Evaluation Highlights:

Thoughts from MDRC President Gordon Berlin

The CEO/MF SIF grantees at our Learning Network launch in New York City had the chance to hear from Gordon Berlin, President of MDRC, who took the time to recognize the incredible opportunity presented by the Social Innovation Fund. Berlin challenged the audience to reflect on the enormous responsibility that comes with this honor. “As SIF winners we have an opportunity to change the public debate about whether social programs can work in urban areas,” Berlin explained, “about whether we can really make a difference for people.”

Berlin also spoke specifically about MDRC’s role in helping providers meet our collective goals of having an impact on the lives of low-income children, families, and adults, while also building a national body of evidence supporting what works. Through extensive technical assistance around the program models, MDRC will help partner cities with implementation, and lead program evaluations, ensuring that all SIF programs are having an impact on the lives of low-income populations and are strengthened for the future.

In this sense, MDRC’s independent evaluations will set out to answer three questions: What difference did this program make? How did it do so? And why did it do so?

While acknowledging that independent evaluation can at times seem threatening, Berlin stressed “that it is also essential for taking innovation to scale,” reminding us all of the importance of the SIF project’s mission of testing and expanding anti-poverty programs.
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WorkAdvance in Tulsa

(continued from page 2) Operations. He says he emulates this practice from innovative organizations like Google, and calls this the “Heads-Up” time, because “unlike most brainstorming, this comes with an expectation of really delivering.” In addition to contributing to innovative solutions, he credits this practice with helping to build motivation in his ownership among his team.

Chris is looking for MSG to make its mark within the “Multi-sector” local community, seeing the potential for WorkAdvance to be a catalyst for further cooperation among the many community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, businesses and government in Tulsa. “There is so much input and a lot of great collaboration occurring and I look forward to being part of that network,” he said.

According to Jim East of the Oklahoma Community Foundation, “Chris has been working overtime to meet with everyone, from members of the faith-based community to some of our largest employers. We’re all excited for the work and we’re looking forward to helping those who unemployed and underemployed here in Tulsa.”

During several trips in preparation for his eventual move, Chris was inspired by the kindness and concern he felt in Tulsa for low-income populations and by the vibrant, collaborative nature of the community. On a personal level, Chris was thrilled to make the move to Tulsa, his vision being that “family much closer to their native home of Dallas, Texas.
Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Update

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**Family Rewards, a conditional cash transfer program**
- Seedco, BronxWorks, and Children’s Aid Society (Bronx, NY)
- Seedco, Porter-Leath, and Urban Strategies Memphis (Memphis, TN)

**Jobs-Plus, a place-based workforce program**
- BronxWorks (Bronx, NY)
- San Antonio Housing Authority (San Antonio, TX)

**Project Rise, an education-conditioned paid internship program**
- Catholic Charities of Kansas City- St. Joseph (Kansas City, MO)
- FEGS (Bronx, NY)
- Full Employment Council (Kansas City, MO)
- Henry Street Settlement (New York, NY)
- Kingsborough Community College (Brooklyn, NY)
- Rutgers University T.E.E.M Gateway (Newark, NJ)

### SaveUSA, a tax time matched savings initiative

**Community Action Project of Tulsa County (Tulsa, OK)**
- Food bank for NYC (New York, NY)
- Newark Now (Newark, NJ)
- United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County (San Antonio, TX)

**WorkAdvance, a sector-focused employment program**
- Madison Strategies Group (Tulsa, OK)
- PerScholas (Bronx, NY)
- St. Nick’s Alliance (Brooklyn, NY)
- Towards Employment (Cleveland & Youngstown, OH)

**“What we want to do is find those solutions that’ll work not just in one place, but can work in five places.”**
- Linda Gibbs, NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

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