

ROLES FOR INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS IN FOSTERING FINANCIAL CAPABILITY INTEGRATION

Financial Capability Integration

Financial capability is the capacity—based on knowledge, skills, and access—to manage financial resources effectively. Integration refers to incorporating financial capability discussions, resources, and tools directly into existing services, rather than creating a stand-alone program. While financial capability integration may only be visible in the programs provided by direct service organizations, local intermediary organizations can play critical roles in fostering successful financial capability integration efforts.

How Intermediaries Can Promote Integration

For the purposes of this brief, the terms *intermediary organizations* or *intermediaries* are used to describe organizations that perform any of these roles: **convener**, **capacity builder**, and **thought leader**. This brief shares lessons learned from three United Ways¹ that have supported nonprofits in their financial capability integration efforts. These organizations are one example of local intermediary organizations, and other intermediary organizations that play similar roles in their communities will likely find these lessons learned applicable to their work.²

*Building Financial Capability: A Planning Guide for Integrated Services*³ (the Guide) provides a series of tools to walk organizations through the key decision points for planning to integrate financial capability services into existing programs. Tools from the Guide are highlighted throughout this brief as key resources for intermediary organizations promoting financial capability integration in their communities.

Financial capability services include financial coaching, credit building, access to safe and affordable financial products, and incentivized savings programs. To learn more about ten key financial capability services, see *About Financial Capability Services*.⁴

¹ The examples in this brief are gathered from technical assistance provided to United Way California Capital Region, United Way of Central Ohio, and United Way of Greater Houston from November 2015 to June 2016 to support financial capability integration work in their communities.

² It should be noted that the lessons highlighted in this brief are pulled from a small sample of intermediary organizations with certain characteristics and resources. All United Ways in this cohort were located in metropolitan areas and had dedicated staff and funding to engage in this work. Intermediary organizations should not necessarily expect that they will be able to fulfill all of the roles outlined here. These examples can provide a context for assessing the opportunities in local communities.

³ Online at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/afi-resource-guide-building-financial-capability>

⁴ Online at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/financial-capability-services>



Convener

Intermediaries can act as conveners to facilitate connections between organizations, coordinate community-wide activities, and tie together national, regional, and local conversations.

Facilitating connections to reduce barriers to access

Identifying financial capability service providers in their communities and connecting other organizations to these providers can reduce barriers to accessing financial capability services. United Way of Central Ohio (UWCO) facilitated a connection between Community Properties of Ohio, a community-based organization, and a local financial institution. This partnership helped support unbanked or underbanked clients with low-cost financial accounts. UWCO is also exploring strategies to assess the capacity of local financial capability service providers to serve its grantees' clients so that UWCO can facilitate connections between these providers and grantee organizations.

Coordinating community-wide activities

As conveners, local intermediaries can coordinate community-wide activities, serve as lead organizations for networks of financial capability service providers, and establish common data measures to demonstrate collective impact. United Way California Capital Region (UWCCR) coordinates a local financial coaching network that provides training and ongoing support to providers throughout its service area.

Tying together national, regional, and local conversations

Local intermediaries can leverage regional and/or national networks to which they belong. Promising practices and other resources shared by networks can be translated to meet local community needs.

Intermediaries may be able to tie together local, regional, and national conversations by hosting local events that raise awareness about strategies from other parts of the country, convening other local intermediaries to discuss common challenges and promising solutions, and creating and sharing resources with their networks. UWCCR hosted a meeting organized by the California Asset Building Coalition to discuss financial capability work in their state with state policy experts and local advocates.

TOOL 5: Inventory of Community Service Providers and TOOL 6: Assessment of Community Service Providers

Tool 5 provides a structure for identifying financial capability service providers through a community scan. Tool 6 serves as a questionnaire to assess the capacity of those service providers to provide financial capability services and determine how those services meet the needs of different populations. These tools could also be used to identify other kinds of local service providers.

With information on local service providers, intermediaries can identify opportunities for partnerships and referral relationships, make connections, avoid duplication, and identify gaps.

TOOL 3: The Theory of Change

Intermediary organizations can use Tool 3 to create compelling narratives for integrating financial capability services by highlighting community members' current financial lives, desired financial capability outcomes, and the services needed to support community members to achieve those outcomes. A strong theory of change can be critical to justifying the effort to potential partners.



Capacity Builder

Intermediaries can act as capacity builders by providing technical assistance and supporting training and development.

Providing technical assistance

Technical assistance is a key tool for building the capacity of partners. Intermediary organizations may deliver technical assistance directly or connect partners to other technical assistance providers. United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) launched and leads THRIVE, a network of organizations focused on delivering workforce development and financial capability services. UWGH works in partnership with THRIVE members to identify the type of support organizations need and then provides technical assistance to address those needs. UWGH has also helped its partner agencies design continuous quality improvement plans. Technical assistance focused on areas for improvement benefits from a common understanding of the challenge to be addressed and an existing relationship between the intermediary organization and the organization receiving the technical assistance.

Supporting training and development

There are many ways intermediaries can support staff training and development to build capacity on critical needs, including organizing and hosting training sessions, providing funding to access external training, and sharing information and resources related to skill development. UWCCR identified financial coaching as a promising practice and subsequently increased the capacity of local organizations to provide financial coaching to clients by funding staff training and ongoing professional development opportunities for these organizations. UWGH also provided financial coaching training to a network of organizations.

TOOL 8: Current Program Workflow

Tool 8 can help intermediary organizations support local organizations in understanding the client's experience through their programming, and in identifying gaps and opportunities to offer financial capability services.

Thought Leader

Intermediaries can act as a thought leader in financial capability integration by building support for integration, supporting data and outcome-tracking efforts, and supporting sustainability planning.

Building support for financial capability integration

Intermediaries can support partner organizations by advocating for financial capability integration, both internally within organizations and externally with potential partners and funders. UWCCR focuses on cultivating support at all levels within partner organizations. For example, frontline staff are required to submit a letter of support from senior staff when applying for a UWCCR scholarship to receive financial counseling accreditation. Additionally, UWCCR was able to secure support from new funders for this work.

TOOL: Key Stakeholder Support

The work to integrate financial capability services will need support from multiple stakeholders. The Key Stakeholder Support tool can help intermediary organizations think through each audience's priorities and perspectives.



Supporting data collection and outcome tracking efforts

Many organizations struggle with data collection and outcome tracking. Intermediaries can play a helpful role in promoting data collection practices and encouraging a common set of outcomes to measure program success. Access to high-quality data can also help intermediaries identify and address needs in their communities. UWGH created a data dictionary for THRIVE members to standardize data collection across THRIVE organizations and works closely with a third party evaluator to develop and track outcomes.

Supporting sustainability planning

Intermediaries can help partners look ahead and plan for program sustainability. UWGH requests THRIVE partners include sustainability plans in funding proposals. These plans address sustainability by ensuring that UWGH is not the sole funder for the THRIVE partners' programs and by ensuring THRIVE partners have staff succession plans in place.

About This Brief

The audience for this brief is local intermediary organizations interested in strategies to support and sustain the integration of financial capability services in their communities. This brief is a companion resource for the Guide, intended to provide real-world examples of financial capability integration efforts stemming from technical assistance provided using the Guide. This practice brief was produced by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) under contract to the Office of Community Services in the Administration for Children and Families, a division of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Each of the United Ways that received technical assistance worked on and achieved different goals. Brief summaries of their work are provided below.

United Way California Capital Region (UWCCR) focused on a financial coaching network of six UWCCR-funded organizations, including one lead organization and five participating organizations. The network members received financial coaching training through the lead organization, integrated financial coaching into their programs, and met regularly to share challenges and lessons learned. All six organizations were interviewed and lessons learned were used to develop a strategy for how UWCCR can build the capacity of organizations in Sacramento to deliver financial capability services.

United Way of Central Ohio (UWCO) worked with a grantee organization, Community Properties of Ohio (CPO), to finalize a plan for integrating financial capability services into CPO's eviction prevention program. CFED worked with UWCO and CPO to gain a deeper understanding of the financial barriers of residents in CPO's eviction prevention program, to identify financial capability services that would be a good fit for CPO residents, and to develop plans for coordinating and evaluating financial capability service delivery to CPO residents.

United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) worked with a grantee organization, Star of Hope, which focused on ending homelessness, to finalize a plan for integrating financial capability services into their workforce development program. Client interviews and mapping the client flow in Star of Hope's Transitional Living Center led to a deeper understanding of residents' experiences, and conversations among staff led to streamlined processes and strengthened internal communications.

